

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is proud to support and encourage Georgia's early care and education professionals through the DECAL Scholars programs. These innovative programs help create a high quality, stable early care and education workforce that benefits families, contributes to the state's economy, and helps prepare Georgia's young children for success in school.



Pre-Qualification and Application Form

INCENTIVES is a salary bonus program that encourages early care and education professionals to increase their level of education and that rewards job stability. Research confirms that high levels of caregiver/teacher education and reduced teacher turnover positively impact the quality of care provided to children. Eligible participants receive a maximum of two payments for earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an Introduction to Child care TCC and a maximum of four payments per educational level achieved beyond the CDA. The master's degree is the highest level awarded.

TO BE ELIGIBLE:

- ✓ You must be able to document that you are a United States citizen, legal permanent resident, qualified alien or non-immigrant.
- ✓ You must be a teacher, assistant teacher, director, or assistant director (all other positions do not qualify) employed and paid by one of the following:
 - ✦ A child care learning center licensed by DECAL or the Department of Defense
 - ✦ An exempt Head Start center
 - ✦ A Georgia Pre-K teacher/assistant teacher in a public school
 - ✦ A DECAL registered family child care learning home
- ✓ You must earn \$18.50 per hour or less, including bonuses.
- ✓ You must work a minimum of 25 hours per week in your primary role as a teacher or assistant teacher in an infant, toddler, three-year-old **OR** Pre-K classroom during the instructional part of the day (before/after school program personnel do not qualify) or 40 hours per week as a director, assistant director or family child care learning home provider. Volunteer work does not qualify.
- ✓ You must be employed with your current employer in an eligible position or be a registered family child care learning home provider for 12 consecutive months by the close of the INCENTIVES period.
- ✓ You must have a Georgia Professional Development System Profile reflecting your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer, and a "Pending" or "Active" status. See instructions on page six.
- ✓ Your work setting must be **ONE** of the following:
 - ✦ A program that has earned a Quality Rated designation
 - OR**
 - ✦ Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or other approved national accreditation. See www.DECALscholars.com for a full list
 - OR**
 - ✦ A participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - OR**
 - ✦ Serving children of whom 25% or more receive a child care subsidy from the Child and Parent Services (CAPS) program.
 - OR**
 - ✦ Is a Georgia Pre-K program in a public school
- ✓ You must have earned an early childhood education, child development or child care administration credential or degree **five years or less from the year you apply for INCENTIVES**. The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential™ must be valid as of April 15 for the spring payment and as of October 15 for the fall payment.

INCENTIVES applications must be dated and postmarked between February 15 and April 15 for the spring payment **OR** between August 15 and October 15 for the fall payment. For additional information, contact the DECAL Scholars office at **800-227-3410** or **770-642-6722**.

Rev 8/2021

All rules and eligibility requirements are subject to change without notification. Applications are updated when program revisions occur. Visit www.DECALscholars.com to download the most recent application or to apply online.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What are the INCENTIVES application deadlines?** Applications must be postmarked between February 15 and April 15 for the spring payment and between August 15 and October 15 for the fall payment. INCENTIVES payments are typically mailed to approved applicants within six to eight weeks of the close of the application period.
2. **I received an INCENTIVES payment in the past. Am I eligible for future payments?** The number of INCENTIVES payments you may receive is determined by your previous INCENTIVES payment history and your current educational level. Call 770-642-6722 or 800-227-3410 to determine your eligibility at your current educational level.
3. **I am paid a salary. How is my hourly wage calculated?** Your hourly wage is calculated by dividing your annual salary (including bonuses) by the actual number of hours you work all year to determine your hourly wage. Regardless of whether you are a 10 or 12 month employee, your actual hourly wage must be \$18.50 or less to qualify for INCENTIVES.
4. **What is the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)?** The Professional Development System (GaPDS) is an innovative resource developed by DECAL for early care and education (ECE) professionals. It allows individuals to track their career, training hours, and any credentials or degrees earned. See page six for instructions.
5. **Where can I find a Notary Public to notarize the "Affidavit for Lawful Presence Verification"?** A Notary can often be found at your local bank, post office, public library or court house. A notarized affidavit and required documentation must be submitted to the INCENTIVES program one time by US Citizens, but Georgia law (O.C.G.A. 50-36-1) requires all legal permanent residents, qualified aliens and non-immigrants to submit a new Affidavit every 12 months.
6. **Are all ECE degrees accepted?** No. Your degree must have been earned through a college or university that is regionally accredited. See <https://www.chea.org/search-institutions> for a list of regional accrediting agencies.
7. **How many ECE credit hours must my associate or bachelor's degree have to qualify for INCENTIVES?** The INCENTIVES program requires your associate degree to have at least 30 semester (39 quarter) hours in ECE-specific courses. A bachelor's degree must have at least 36 semester (48 quarter) hours in ECE-specific courses.
8. **Achieving national accreditation is one way an employer can meet the work setting requirement. What national accreditations are accepted by DECAL as meeting this work setting requirement?**
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
 - National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
 - National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)

For a complete list of national accreditations accepted by DECAL as meeting this work setting requirement, visit www.DECALscholars.com and click on the INCENTIVES Retention Program tab.
9. **What is Quality Rated?** Quality Rated, developed by Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early education and care programs. Similar to rating systems for other service related industries, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating (one, two, or three stars) to early education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in Georgia's voluntary Quality Rated, early education programs embark on a path of continuous quality improvement.
10. **Should I send a copy of my credential/degree or do I need to send an official transcript?** If you earned a CDA credential submit a copy of your credential. If you earned a Technical Certificate of Credit, or Technical College Diploma Associates, Bachelor's, or Master's degree, submit a copy of your official transcript from the Registrar's office. Unofficial transcripts are not accepted.
11. **When will I find out if I have been approved for an INCENTIVES payment?** You should receive an email letter indicating the status of your application within two to three weeks. If you have not heard from DECAL Scholars within three weeks, contact us (770-642-6722, 800-227-4310, support@DECALscholars.com) to confirm receipt of your application.
12. **When do I have to earn my credential/degree?** As of the spring 2017 INCENTIVES period, the award date of the highest-earned qualified credential or degree must be five years or less from the year applying for INCENTIVES (i.e. 2021 applicants must present a credential or degree dated 2016 or later). This applies to all new INCENTIVES applicants and re-applicants applying at a higher education level.

Name: _____ County of Residence: _____
First-middle initial-last (as it appears on your social security card)
 Home Address: _____ Apartment Number: _____
Street or post office box (Enter only one)
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Home Phone: () _____ Cell Phone: () _____ Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____
 Social Security Number: ____ / ____ / ____ E-mail: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY	Gender:	Race:	Ethnicity: (any race)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Non Binary <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer not to answer <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black / African-American <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Native American / Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Bi- / Multi-Racial <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic / Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic / Latino

Note: You will receive an IRS Form 1099 as required and must report INCENTIVES income on your tax return.

Employment Information (Employer must complete, sign, and date):

Name of Facility: _____
Enter name as it appears on DECAL license/registration
 Work Address: _____
Enter address as it appears on DECAL license/registration
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 License/Registration Number: _____ County: _____
 Phone: () _____

Facility type (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Learning Center <input type="checkbox"/> Family Child Care Learning Home	Home or center is licensed by (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Defense (DOD)	OR	<input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Pre-K in a Public School <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt Georgia Head Start Center
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Family Child Care Learning Home Owners Only

Date you opened your family child care home: ____/____/____

Number of hours your family child care home operates each week: _____

Number of children currently enrolled in your family child care home: _____

Ages of children currently enrolled (circle all that apply):
 Birth - 1 1 2 3 4 5

Your Net Income from previous year's IRS Schedule C tax form: \$ _____

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?
 Yes No

Serve GACAPS subsidized children?
 Yes No

Applicant's Employment Information

Applicant's Job Title (mark all that apply):
 Asst. Teacher Asst. Director Owner
 Teacher Director (other positions do not qualify)

Is the applicant a Georgia lottery-funded Pre-K teacher? Yes No

Is the applicant a Head Start or Early Head Start teacher? Yes No

Number of hours applicant works each week: _____

Number of months per year applicant works (circle one): 9 10 12

Number of months per year applicant is paid (circle one): 9 10 12

Applicant's current hourly wage: \$ _____

Applicant is paid: Weekly Bi-Weekly Bi-Monthly Monthly (circle one)

Applicant's date of hire: ____/____/____ (use original hire date if employment has been continuous with present employer, but at different locations)

If applicant is in the classroom, # of children in applicant's classroom: _____

If applicant is in the classroom, ages of children in class (check all that apply):
 Birth-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 5-12

As Owner, Director, Principal, or Human Resources Manager, I verify that the above employment information for this applicant is true and accurate. I understand and agree that receipt of INCENTIVES monies by the applicant will not affect any salary adjustments the applicant may be eligible to receive through our program.

Name (print): _____ Title (print): _____
 Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPLICANTS MUST COMPLETE THIS SECTION

INCENTIVES award levels are not related to the Georgia Professional Development System Career Levels.

INCENTIVES Award Levels:

Eligible Applicants may receive a maximum of two payments per education level for the following:

1st	<input type="checkbox"/> Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™	\$250
	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Child Care Technical Certificate of Credit - The 3 courses required to complete this program do not move into higher levels of education in any ECE program.	

Eligible Applicants may receive a maximum of four payments per education level for the following:

2nd	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical Certificate of Credit	\$375
3rd	<input type="checkbox"/> Technical College Diploma	\$500
4th	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate of Applied Science Degree	\$750
5th	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor’s Degree OR	\$1,000
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor’s Degree in Birth-5	\$1,150
6th	<input type="checkbox"/> Master’s Degree	\$1,250

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning DECAL Scholars Program

Are you currently pursuing a credential or degree in early childhood education, child development or child care administration? You may be eligible for **SCHOLARSHIPS**, which offers tuition assistance and a stipend for academic programs at Georgia’s HOPE-eligible colleges, universities and technical colleges.

Did you earn your credential or degree in early childhood education, child development, or childcare administration within the last 12 months? You may be eligible for the **AWARDS for Early Educators** program, which awards a cash bonus for having earned ECE credentials and degrees.

Visit our website at www.DECALscholars.com for more program information and access to applications.

Attach the following documents to your INCENTIVES application:

- A copy of your valid Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™. OR a copy of an official transcript if you hold a Technical Certificate of Credit, Technical College Diploma Associate, Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree
- A copy of two recent paystubs reflecting the name of your employer, your name, and your gross (before deductions) wages. Family child care learning home providers and owners who do not pay themselves W2 wages submit a copy of last year’s Schedule C or other federal tax form documenting net business income
- A copy of your Georgia Professional Development System profile reflecting your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer, and a “Pending” or “Active” status
- A copy of the notarized Affidavit and the **FRONT** and **BACK** of a secure and verifiable document (See page eight for instructions.)

Sign and date the application:

STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION: Read carefully before signing and dating. Unsigned applications will not be processed.

I _____, (applicant's name) attest that all of the information appearing on this application and in supporting documentation is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false or incomplete information knowingly provided on this application or in supporting documents may be grounds to be denied participation in this program and may prevent me from future participation in any DECAL Scholars programs. I understand that intentionally providing false information on this application or in supporting documents is a violation of state law and may result in civil or criminal proceedings. I authorize any agent or employee of Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to verify this information and release it to any necessary party for my consideration in this program. I understand that, if approved and awarded funds, I will receive a 1099 tax form and am required by the IRS to report the income on my tax return. I also understand and agree that my personal information may be shared with the Georgia Professional Development System. Under penalty of perjury, I certify that:

1. The number shown on this form is my correct taxpayer identification number (social security number or I am waiting to be issued to me); and
2. I am not subject to backup withholding because: (a) I am exempt from backup withholding, or (b) I have not been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that I am subject to backup withholding as a result of a failure to report all interest or dividends, or (c) the IRS has notified me that I am no longer subject to backup withholding; and
3. I am a U.S. citizen or other U.S. person (defined below); and
4. I understand I am being paid as an "individual" in regards to tax status; and
5. The (FACTA) code(s) entered on this form (if any) indicating I am exempt from FACTA reporting is correct.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Submit your completed application with supporting documents to:

DECAL Scholars Programs
 c/o Care Solutions, Inc.
 1117 Perimeter Center West, Suite W-300 Atlanta, GA 30338
 support@DECALscholars.com Fax 678-822-5272

INCENTIVES is funded by Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning through the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

If you have any questions, call 800-227-3410 or 770-642-6722. or email support@decalscholars.com
www.DECALscholars.com



DECAL Scholars programs are managed by Care Solutions, Inc.

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All rules and eligibility requirements are subject to change without notification. Applications are updated when program revisions occur. Visit www.DECALscholars.com to download the most recent application or to apply online.

GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

All individuals applying for the INCENTIVES must register with the Georgia Professional Development System for Early Childhood Educators (GaPDS) as a part of the application process. The GaPDS is separate from DECAL Scholars. It records and maintains your professional development information – your training and/or any credentials or degrees you earn, in one convenient location.

Registering is easy! You can sign up immediately, even if you have not earned a credential or degree, by entering any recent early childhood or related training you have received.

1. Gather your relevant training certificates, credentials, and/or transcript(s).
2. Go to <https://gapds.decal.ga.gov>. Click the Login/Register button.
3. Click **“Create new account for GaPDS.”**
4. Select **“I want to create and manage my Georgia Professional Development System profile or enroll in training”** and click Continue.
5. Follow the directions, including selecting your employer, to create your confidential account. Be sure to record your username and password and secure them for future use. You will receive a confirmation email. Follow the instructions in the email to complete your account.
6. After completing and saving the Contact, Education, Employment, and Training sections, scroll to the bottom of the page and look for the message **“Ready for Submission?”** Click on **“My Profile”**.
7. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the **“Continue to Submission”** button.
8. Check the box next to **“I certify that the statements I have made to DECAL: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning . . .”** and click Submit. This will change your GaPDS status from Incomplete to Pending and you will be assigned a GaPDS Number.
9. Click the **“Profile”** link in the Reports box on the left side of the screen, print your GaPDS profile and submit with your **INCENTIVES** application. Your GaPDS profile must reflect your name, your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer, and a Pending or Active status.
10. You will receive an email identifying what you need to submit to the GaPDS to verify the information you entered. **The documents are not shared with the DECAL Scholars programs.**

Two other tabs appear when you enter the system to view your profile: Other Career Data and Demographics. Completing the information under these tabs is voluntary; this data is used by DECAL to determine additional supports and services needed across the state.

You can update your profile at any time by submitting documentation of state-approved trainings, credentials, degrees, conference attendance, etc. as you complete them.

The GaPDS is a tool that benefits the early care and education community in Georgia, and we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. Thank you for your continued dedication to your professional development and your commitment to improving the quality of care for young children.

If you have questions or need technical support, contact the GaPDS at 404-334-6461 (866-258-7737 outside the metro Atlanta area) or email gapds@decal.ga.gov.

**Affidavit For Lawful Presence Verification
For
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
INCENTIVES**

By executing this affidavit under oath, as an applicant for an INCENTIVES payment or for other public benefit as referenced in O.C.G.A. §50-36-1(a)(3)(A), I hereby swear and affirm that the following is true and correct with respect to my application for an INCENTIVES payment from DECAL: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Name of Person Receiving Benefit: _____

Check only ONE of the following:

- 1) _____ I am a United States citizen 18 years of age or older.
- 2) _____ I am a legal permanent resident of the United States, 18 years of age or older.
(You must submit a copy of the FRONT and BACK of your Legal Permanent Resident card).
- 3) _____ I am a qualified alien or non-immigrant under the Federal Immigration and Nationality Act, 18 years of age or older, with an alien registration number issued by the Department of Homeland Security or other federal immigration agency
(You must submit a copy of the FRONT and BACK of your Alien Registration Receipt card).

My alien registration number issued by the Department of Homeland Security or other federal immigration agency is: _____ **(Required if #2 or #3 is checked).**
(You must submit the FRONT and BACK of your LPR/QA card).

I also verify I am providing **A COPY OF THE FRONT AND BACK** of at least one secure and verifiable document, as required by O.C.G.A. Sec. 50-36-1(e)(1), with this affidavit. **A complete list of acceptable documents is on page 8 of this application.**

The **FRONT AND BACK** of the secure and verifiable document I am providing with this affidavit is:

(Identify the document, such as driver’s license, birth certificate if last name is still the same, permanent resident card, etc.)

In providing the above information under oath, I understand that any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation in an affidavit in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of state government shall be guilty of a violation of O.C.G.A. §16-10-20 and face criminal penalties as allowed by such criminal statute.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Printed Name: _____

Printed Address: _____
Mailing Address

City

State

Zip

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME ON THIS THE ____ DAY OF _____, 20__

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: ___/___, 20__

Secure and Verifiable Documents Under O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2

Issued August 1, 2012 by the Office of the Attorney General, Georgia

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 (“IIREA”) provides that “[n]ot later than August 1, 2011, the Attorney General shall provide and make public on the Department of Law’s website a list of acceptable secure and verifiable documents. The list shall be reviewed and updated annually by the Attorney General.” O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(f). The Attorney General may modify this list on a more frequent basis, if necessary.

The following list of secure and verifiable documents, published under the authority of O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2, contains documents that are verifiable for identification purposes, and documents on this list may not necessarily be indicative of residency or immigration status.

- **A driver’s license** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, providing that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States passport or passport card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An original or certified copy of a birth certificate** issued by a State, county, municipal authority, or territory of the United States bearing an official seal [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States military identification card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An identification card** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, providing that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A tribal identification card** of a federally recognized Native American tribe, provided it contains a photograph of the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer. A listing of federally recognized Native American tribes may be found at: <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre?BIA/OIS/TribalGovernmentServices/TribalDirectory/index.htm> [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An Employment Authorization Document** that contains a photograph of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A passport issued by a foreign government** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Merchant Mariner Document or Merchant Mariner Credential** issued by the United States Coast Guard [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Free and secure Trade (FAST) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A NEXUS card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A driver’s license issued by a Canadian government authority** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Certificate of Citizenship** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-560 or Form N-561) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Certificate of Naturalization** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-550 or Form N-570) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Certification of Report of Birth** issued by the United States Department of State (Form DS-1350) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Certification of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-240) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Consular Report of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-240) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- In addition to the documents listed herein, if, in administering a public benefit or program, an agency is required by federal law to accept a document or other form of identification for proof of or documentation of identity, that document or other form of identification will be deemed a secure and verifiable document solely for that particular program or administration of that particular public benefit. [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(c)]



If you have any questions,
call 800-227-3410 or 770-642-6722
www.DECALscholars.com
support@DECALscholars.com



DECAL Scholars programs are managed by Care Solutions, Inc.