

Childcare and Parent Services

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program assists families with low-income with the cost of child care while they work, go to school or training, or participate in other work-related activities.¹ Subsidies can be used to pay for quality child care, afterschool, and summer programs for children up to age 12 and for children up to age 17 with special needs.²

The purpose of CAPS is to:³

1. Provide access to high-quality and affordable early learning, afterschool, and summer environments for families with low-income.
2. Increase positive school readiness outcomes.
3. Assist families in achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency by providing financial supports for child care costs

FUNDING FOR CAPS⁶

CAPS is funded by state and federal dollars.

Federal Funding

Federal funding is provided from the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and is administered by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). Georgia typically receives approximately **\$230 million** in federal child care subsidy funds. However, with available pandemic-related federal stimulus funding available, DECAL has been able to increase funding for CAPS by **\$165M** for a limited time. DECAL used these funds to support an expansion of CAPS priority and eligibility populations, increase provider payment amounts and eliminate family fees to temporarily reduce the financial burden on families, as well as increase the tiered reimbursement that quality rated providers receive (see below for more details).

State Funding

In State Fiscal Year 2022, Georgia appropriated and made available approximately **\$56 million** for CAPS.

PRIORITY GROUP ELIGIBILITY

Because CAPS scholarships are limited, children in the following situations are given priority:⁵

- Child Protective Services
- Custody of the Division of Family and Children Services
- Domestic violence situations
- Disability status
- Enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Participating in or transitioning from TANF
- Experienced a natural disaster
- Lack fixed, regular and adequate housing
- Very Low Income, as defined by CAPS
- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Minor parents
- Need to protect
(e.g., family with substantiated Child Protect Services case closed within the last 12 months, caregiver other than biological or adoptive parents has taken over full-time care of child)
- Student parent (effective as of May 1, 2022)

While federal and state funding temporarily allowed DECAL to expand priority groups and serve additional families, continued, and increased, investments are crucial to reaching eligible but not served individuals. For example, the limited funding for the state's child care subsidy program means that it is only able to support a small percentage of the children and families who qualify for it (approximately five to seven percent in 2022).⁴

INCOME ELIGIBILITY



To qualify for entry into the CAPS program, family income must not exceed 50% of the state median income.^{7*}

For example, a **family of four** cannot initially make more than **\$76,443** a year.

To qualify for the Very Low Income priority group, a **family of four** cannot make more than **\$41,625** a year.⁸

*This threshold was set at 85% of the SMI November 1, 2022 through December 15, 2022, due to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and expanded CAPS to serve 10,000 additional children. Families currently enrolled in CAPS are not affected by these changes and can still remain in the program as long as their income does not exceed 85% SMI and they meet other eligibility requirements.

PARENT APPROVED ACTIVITIES

Parents who receive CAPS must complete 24 hours per week of approved activities to stay eligible for the CAPS scholarship.⁹

Approved activities can include:¹⁰



Employment

Paid employment or volunteering at Head Start or Early Head Start facilities



Education

Participation in middle or high school, GED programs, vocational training programs, technical college, technical credits, associate degree and bachelor's degree programs**



Job Search

Parents who lose their job or stop attending state-approved training or education programs may be authorized for up to 13 weeks of job search.^{***}

**For parents enrolled with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG): every credit hour equals two hours towards the required 24 hours per week of approved activities. For example, if a parent is enrolled in a class that counts as 3 credit hours with TCSG, they earn 6 credit hours per week towards the required 24.¹¹

***Parents who meet eligibility requirements for certain priority groups may be authorized with job search as their state-approved activity for the entire 12-month eligibility period.¹²

CHANGES TO THE CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF)



In FY 2022, CCDF mandatory and matching federal funds totaled approximately **\$73.5 million**,* which included an approximate \$17 million permanent increase authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act.¹³



As of September 17, 2018, parent fees were significantly reduced, not to exceed **7%** of family income.¹⁴



All providers serving children receiving CAPS subsidies are required to participate in Quality Rated.¹⁵

*The \$73.5 million appropriation does not include pandemic-related one-time funding amounts for DECAL.

Sources for Childcare and Parent Services

- 1 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "About CAPS." Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/About>.
- 2 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "CAPS Policy – Eligibility." Accessed August 4, 2022. https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/06-CAPS_Policy-Eligibility%20Requirements.pdf.
- 3 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "About CAPS." Accessed August 4, 2022. <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/About>.
- 4 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Approximate number of child care scholarships are 74,500 in August 2022. Professional Communications. (September 2022). United States Census Bureau. 2021 American Community Survey 1 – year estimate detailed table B17024, Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 month at 199% and 299% FPL. (October 2022). <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=%20B17024&g=0400000US13&tid=ACSDT1Y2021.B17024>.
- 5 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "CAPS Policy – Priority Groups." Accessed August 4, 2022. https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/07-CAPS_Policy-Priority%20Groups.pdf.
- 6 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Professional Communication. Accessed November 2022.
- 7 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "CAPS Maximum Income Limits." Accessed December 19, 2022. <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/AppendixA-CAPS%20Maximum%20Income%20Limits%20by%20Family%20Size.pdf>.
- 8 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "CAPS Maximum Income Limits." Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/AppendixA-CAPS%20Maximum%20Income%20Limits%20by%20Family%20Size.pdf>.
- 9 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. "CAPS Policy – Eligibility." Accessed August 4, 2022. https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/06-CAPS_Policy-Eligibility%20Requirements.pdf.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. "GY 2022 CCDF Allocations (Based on Appropriations)." Accessed October 26, 2022. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/gy-2022-ccdf-allocations-based-appropriations#>.
- 14 The Center for Law and Social Policy. "Budget Deal Includes Unprecedented Investment in Child Care." Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/02/Budget%20Deal%20Includes%20Child%20Care%20Investment%20.pdf>.
- 15 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, professional communication, August 2022.