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Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

July 2024

Dear Child Care Professionals of Georgia:

You've probably heard by now that DECAL is revising the Quality Rated program. This is the first major revision since the program was established in 2012, and it presents an opportunity for us to reaffirm the core child care practices that help children grow, thrive, and succeed. Our hope is that the redesign of the rating process will also make the system more supportive and easier for providers to navigate.



When we at DECAL talk about high-quality child care, we're talking about the quality of child care environments that foster strong, positive relationships between young children and their classroom teachers, the other adults they interact with, and their peers. This understanding is shared across all DECAL programs—CAPS, CCS, Instructional Supports, Professional Development, Georgia's Pre-K, and Quality Rated.

Children's interactions with caregivers who are nurturing, supportive, and responsive to their needs and interests are the foundation of high-quality early care and learning, and this won't change with the new system.

The changes we will make with the new Quality Rated program are based in large measure on your feedback. Last year we collected extensive data from providers and other stakeholders about what it's like for you to complete the rating process. One of the things we heard from many providers is that the formal ERS observations can be stressful for classroom teachers and students. And therefore the ratings may not fully capture the quality of your work with children.

It is our goal for the new system to put you, the provider, in charge of a cycle of continuous quality improvement. You will have more options in the rating process, and we hope to include resources for a program improvement planning team. It is our plan to create a new structure that will make the formal observations more predictable and less stressful.

We will be soliciting feedback from providers and other stakeholders throughout the design and implementation of the new system. We held a webinar in May and fielded a stakeholder survey afterward. We are in the process of analyzing that feedback now, and we plan to hold another webinar later this year to update you on our progress.

We're all excited about creating a new system that works better for everyone, and we look forward to sharing it with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bentley Ponder".

Bentley Ponder
Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations & Partnerships