



## Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education

### Survey on the Status of Implementation Efforts

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**Goal 1: All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.**

**1.1 *Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia continues to coordinate with Head Start and Pre K to ensure that eligible families receive extended day, full year care. Families who need extended day services received care through the subsidy program. The Georgia Office of School Readiness transfers state lottery funds to the subsidized child care program to help pay for extended day, extended year services for eligible four-year-olds. Funds are blended so that child care providers may attend training.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia has a history of coordinating with Head Start, Early Head Start and Georgia's Pre-K program to ensure that eligible families receive extended day, full year care. In 2002, Georgia contracted with Head Start and Early Head Start programs to serve over 3,000 children with CCDF. This year, children in Head Start who need extended day services are receiving care through the subsidy program rather than contracts. The Georgia Office of School Readiness transfers state lottery dollars to the subsidized child care program to help pay for extended day, extended year services for eligible four-year olds. Funds are blended so that child care providers can attend training. In 2003, a conference on teaching literacy was held for child care providers including Head Start and Pre-K teachers.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Enhancement funds and training were made available to providers to help meet licensing requirements and for staff education.

**1.2 *Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Child care workers in local county DFCS offices are equipped to link parents with health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, TANF assistance, transportation and parenting services. The statewide network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies also links families to community services. The Child Care Unit also collaborates with the Healthy Child Care Georgia initiative.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Childcare and Parent Services case managers received training at a statewide conference in October 2002 on linking families to resources. Case managers at the local DFCS office refer families to Medicaid and to PeachCare for Kids, the state's health

insurance program. In addition, families are referred to the Food Stamp and TANF programs that are available through the local DFCS office. CAPS offers seamless child care services for families as they transition from TANF to self-sufficiency. The transfer of funds from the TANF program to CAPS increases the number of families who receive subsidized child care. Adults interested in attending technical school programs are told of the state's HOPE grants which pay for tuition and books for adults who attend technical school. Families potentially eligible for WIC and health services are referred to the local health departments. Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) case managers link families to the local child care resource and referral agency, Head Start and Early Head Start programs and Georgia's Pre-K program.

The statewide network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies links families to child care providers and to community services. In 2002, Child Care and Development Funds began supporting the Inclusion Project and the work of the Inclusion Coordinators within each child care resource and referral district. The goal is to increase the number of high quality, inclusive child care settings available to families. The program refers families to child care providers, including family child care homes, child care centers and school age care programs for parents of children with disabilities; refers families to community resources that link parents to support services, financial aid information, medical equipment, and other information; distributes materials on finding child care, inclusive child care programs, benefits of inclusion, Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act, etc.; furnishes free technical assistance to providers through telephone consultation and site visits; offers training on a variety of topics related to children with special needs and the legal requirements for service provision; and offers access to a lending system of toys, manipulatives, books, posters, curriculum kits, etc. that can be checked out by providers and parents of children with disabilities.

The Childcare and Parent Services Section collaborates with Healthy Child Care Georgia initiative.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child care workers in the local DFCS office are equipped to link parents with health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting services.

**1.3 *Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Child care policy training equips the child care worker with the necessary tools to coordinate seamless transition for children moving among the early care and education programs. The worker's priority is to meet child care needs of the family.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Child care policy training gives the child care case manager the tools to coordinate

seamless transitions for children moving among the early care and education programs. The case manager's priority is to meet the needs of the family.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child care policy training gives the child care worker the tools to coordinate seamless transitions for children moving among the early care and education programs. The workers priority is to meet the needs of the family.

**Goal 2: Rigorous licensing requirements and/or regulatory processes will be enacted to ensure that children are adequately protected in all early care and education settings.**

**2.1 States will establish staff-child ratios and maximum group sizes for centers and homes that meet NAEYC<sup>1</sup>, NAFCC<sup>2</sup>, APHA<sup>3</sup> or AAP<sup>4</sup> national standards.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia's child care licensing laws have not been amended to require smaller group sizes for child care programs. However, the CAPS subsidized child care program continues the tiered reimbursement program that was initiated in January 2002. Child care providers who meet higher quality standards (including lower child-adult ratios) may receive reimbursement rates up to 150% for children who are subsidized. This pilot which began in five counties has been expanded to fourteen counties. Center based, group and family child care providers may participate in the tiered reimbursement program.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia's child care licensing laws have not been amended to require smaller group sizes for child care programs. However, the CAPS program began piloting tiered reimbursement in January 2002. Child care providers who meet higher quality standards (including lower child-adult ratios) may receive reimbursement rates of up to 150% for children who are subsidized. This pilot began in five counties and has expanded to include 14 counties. Center-based, group and family child care providers may participate in the tiered reimbursement program.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Child Care Licensing Section recommended rule changes to adopt NAEYC ratios and group sizes. The recommendation was not approved.

**2.2 States will develop and enforce health, fire and safety requirements for all early care and education settings that reflect standards set forth by the APHA and the AAP.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

All legally operating early childhood care and education settings must meet state health and safety requirements. In addition, informal child care providers (kith and kin) who care for children receiving subsidized care must meet basic health and safety requirements

and attend eight hours of health and safety training annually. Surveyors from the Child Care Licensing Unit monitor informal providers to ensure compliance. During the site visit, the surveyor may furnish a smoke detector or fire extinguisher if the home needs either.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

All legally operating early childhood care and education settings must comply with state health and safety requirements. In addition, informal providers (kith and kin) who care for children who receive subsidized child care must meet basic health and safety requirements and attend six clock hours of health and safety training annually. Standards surveyors from the Child Care Licensing Unit monitor informal providers to ensure compliance. During the site visit, the surveyors furnish smoke detectors and fire extinguishers to these informal providers at no cost to the informal providers.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

All legally operating early childhood care and education settings must meet state health and safety requirements.

**2.3 State law will require strict enforcement of licensing requirements. States will use a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia uses a wide range of sanctions that include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet state requirements.

The Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) investigates all complaints alleging licensure violations. The action taken is appropriate for the violation. Serious health and safety violations require a corrective action plan. ORS surveyors make follow-up visits to assure compliance with the corrective action plan. Facilities have the opportunity to correct rule violations. When violations are not corrected several penalties are possible. Monetary fines may be imposed or the services that a facility may provide can be restricted and license revocation may become necessary.

Centers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K program are licensed by the Office of School Readiness (OSR). This agency investigates all complaints that allege licensing violations. When there are violations, the child care center administrator develops a plan of improvement and follow-up is provided by OSR staff to determine compliance. OSR may impose adverse actions if a center is out of compliance. Penalties may be civil, services may be restricted or license revocation may be necessary.

Child care providers are required to report injuries to children that require medical attention within 24 hours to either the Department of Human Resources or to the Office of School Readiness, whichever licenses the program. The licensing consultant tracks the incident reports that require further investigation. When injuries to children involve suspected abuse, the investigation is conducted jointly by the licensing consultant and the county Department of Family and Children Services, Child Protective Services staff.

Child care programs that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are reviewed to ensure that the participant is operating the program properly and to provide technical assistance as needed. The review is an analysis of the provider's compliance with program rules and regulations. A corrective action plan will be developed to address any program violations discovered in a previous review. In addition to scheduled reviews, CACFP sponsors or standards surveyors may visit a program participant to provide technical assistance, follow-up on violations, or conduct an investigation due to a complaint.

Through the collaborative efforts of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services, Childcare and Parent Services Section (CAPS) and OSR, informal child care providers (kith and kin) were given an opportunity to participate in CACFP. Not only will the informal provider receive monitoring visits from the OSR staff but they will receive two additional monitoring visits from CACFP staff along with training on food safety and nutrition.

### **Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The DHR Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) investigates all complaints alleging licensure violations. The action taken is appropriate for the violation. Serious health and safety violations require a corrective action plan. ORS surveyors make follow-up visits to assure compliance with the plan. Facilities have the opportunity to correct rule violations. If they do not comply, several penalties are possible. ORS may impose monetary fines, restrict the services that the facility can provide, deny an application for noncompliance, or revoke the license to operate.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) licenses child care centers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K program. OSR also investigates all complaints that allege licensing violations. The child care center administrator develops a plan of improvement and follow-up is provided by OSR staff to determine compliance. Should a child care center not maintain compliance or if there are incidents of harm to a child as a result of the center's non-compliance, OSR may impose adverse actions such as civil penalties, restriction of services, or revocation of the center's license.

Child care providers are required to report injuries to children that require medical attention within 24 hours to either DHR or to OSR (whichever licenses the child care program). The licensing consultant tracks the incident reports that require further investigation. When injuries to children involve suspected abuse or neglect, the investigation is conducted jointly by the licensing consultant and the county Department of Family and Children Services Child Protective Services staff.

Child care programs that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are reviewed to ensure that the participant is operating the program properly and to provide technical assistance as needed. This review is an analysis of the provider's compliance with program rules and regulations. A corrective action plan will be developed to address any program violations discovered during the course of the review. In addition to scheduled reviews, CACFP sponsors or standards surveyors may visit a program participant to provide technical assistance, follow-up on violations discovered in a previous review or conduct an investigation due to a complaint of the program. Program participants who have repeat violations and are unable to correct the deficiencies may be terminated from the program.

ORS and OSR maintain information regarding complaint investigations in state licensure files. Under the provisions of the Georgia Open Records Law, O.C.G.A. Sections 50-18-70 through 50-18-77, this information is available to the public. State and federal laws consider all licensure files open records except for that specific information otherwise protected. Persons may review files. The request can be by telephone or in writing. When there are rules violations and pending adverse action, the legal action could include revoking or suspending the facility's license to operate, limiting admission, or imposing a civil monetary penalty.

The Office of Regulatory Services began posting reports of the most recent monitoring visits to child care programs in August 2002 on the Internet (<http://www2.state.ga.us/Departments/DHR/ORS/>). Families can access the site, enter the name of the child care program and other identifying information and view the most recent inspection. Information about rules violations and adverse actions is posted on this web site.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia uses a range of sanctions that will include license revocation when a provider is unable or unwilling to meet requirements.

**2.4 States will conduct at least three unannounced monitoring visits per year to verify compliance with requirements.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Office of Regulatory Services (OSR) inspects licensed centers and group homes before the facility is open and on average, three times annually. The surveyors inspect all new applicants for family day care homes within six months of application. Each year surveyors inspect 20% or more of the current registered homes. The Office of School Readiness (OSR) licenses child care centers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K program. OSR makes at least three visits per year to each center to evaluate the center's compliance with state licensing rules. These visits include visits to provide technical assistance related to health and safety issues and quality improvements.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The DHR Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) inspects licensed centers and group homes before opening, and, on average, three times annually. The surveyors inspect all new applicants for family day care homes within six months of application. Each year, they inspect 20% or more of the current registered homes. The Office of School Readiness licenses child care centers that participate in Georgia's Pre-K program. OSR makes at least three visits per year to each center to evaluate the center's compliance with state licensing rules. These visits include visits to provide technical assistance related to health and safety issues and quality improvements.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia does make unannounced monitoring visits.

- 2.5 States will require that child care providers, early childhood teachers and others who have regular access to children in early childhood settings have federal and state background checks using fingerprinting and screening against the state child abuse registry.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia requires child care program directors to be fingerprinted; all other staff must have criminal background checks.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See action taken prior to 2001.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia requires child care program directors to be fingerprinted; all other staff must have criminal background checks.

- 2.6 States will ensure that all licensing and early care and education staff are educated in recognizing signs of child abuse and are trained in the state's child abuse reporting laws.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

State licensing rules require all staff to receive two hours of training in recognizing, reporting and meeting the needs of abused, neglected /deprived children.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See action taken prior to 2001.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

State licensing rules require all staff receive two hours of training in recognizing, reporting and meeting the needs of abused, neglected/deprived children.

- 2.7 States will have a well-trained regulatory workforce with average caseloads between 50 and 75 per staff person<sup>5</sup> and a system capable of providing technical assistance.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Childcare and Parent Services Unit provides funds for increased monitoring of Family Day Care and informal child care provider homes through collaboration with the Child Care Licensing Unit. This collaboration makes it possible for all new family day care homes and informal child care provider homes to be monitored. An additional 20% of existing family day care homes and informal provider homes are also monitored annually.

Child care providers are linked to local agencies that can offer on-site technical assistance to meet licensing standards. The local agencies include child care resource and referral agencies, child care health consultants and various technical assistance programs working to meet licensing standards. Through the Office of School Readiness (OSR), technical assistance is available to OSR licensed centers from licensing consultants on health and safety topics as well as quality improvement areas. Licensing consultants also provide training to center staff and owners when requested. The Standards of Care program (a statewide voluntary quality improvement program for out-of-home-care) makes training available for child care center directors and staff through regional meetings.

Child Care and Development funds are set aside for quality improvement and training for school age programs in selected locations across the state. Mini grants are available to programs seeking to improve the quality of their environment and staff. Programs seeking accreditation from the National School Age Care Association may also receive mini grants to purchase equipment, learning materials and supplies.

#### **Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Childcare and Parent Services collaboration with Child Care Licensing funds increased monitoring for family day care homes. Before this collaboration, licensing surveyors monitored new family day care homes but did not have adequate staff to monitor existing family day care homes. Now, in addition to monitoring all new family day care homes, the licensing surveyors monitor 20% of existing family day care homes annually.

Child care providers are linked to local agencies that can offer on-site technical assistance to meet standards. The local agencies include child care resource and referral agencies, Child Care Health Consultants, and various technical assistance projects that assist programs working to meet standards. Through the Office of School Readiness (OSR), technical assistance is available to OSR-licensed centers from licensing consultants for health and safety topics as well as quality improvement areas. Licensing consultants also provide training to groups of center staff and owners when requested. This training is provided to improve the center's compliance and level of quality services to children. Training is also available for child care center directors and staff through regional meetings and the Standards of Care program (a statewide, voluntary quality improvement program for out-of-home care). This training is available for OSR-licensed centers statewide and for DHR-licensed centers in the 14 Smart Start Georgia Plus counties for directors and early childhood educators for children age 0-5 years.

Some Child Care and Development Fund quality set aside funds provide technical assistance and training for school age programs in selected locations across the state. Currently operating programs, as well as start-up programs, may qualify. The technical assistance emphasizes best practices and is provided to programs that serve elementary children, middle school youth, and children with disabilities. Mini-grants are available to programs seeking to improve the quality of their environment and staff. Programs seeking accreditation from the National School Age Care Association may also receive mini-grants to purchase equipment, learning materials and supplies.

Each Child Care Resource and Referral district is staffed with an Inclusion Coordinator. Inclusion Coordinators support children with disabilities in child care settings throughout the state. They provide training and on-site technical assistance to programs that serve a child with special needs. The technical assistance is specific to the child's disability. Inclusion Coordinators work to increase the number of high quality, inclusive child care settings available to families and link families to community services. The Infant Toddler Network initiative is increasing the quality and capacity of infant and toddler care in the state by providing individualized on-site technical assistance that is based on an evaluation of program needs. The Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) is used. A quality improvement plan for infant and toddler programs is developed based on the evaluation. The project also provides technical assistance to centers and homes with a low regulatory compliance history to bring them to and above an 80% licensure compliance level.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**2.8 States will ensure parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

State law requires parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Same action taken prior to January 1, 2001. State licensing and registration rules require unlimited access by parents to their children while in care. Rules require that a sign be posted in a public place stating that parents have access to all child care areas. Informal providers who are not required to be licensed or registered are also required to allow parents unlimited access to their children.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

State law requires that parental right of access to their child's early care and education facilities.

**Goal 3: States will support development of quality early care and education programs for all children.**

**3.1 States will provide all early care and education providers with resources to help them improve the quality of care and education they deliver, such as technical assistance and training, accreditation support, grants to meet health and safety requirements and grants to support family child care home networks.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Smart Start Georgia is a public/private partnership that provides the following;

education based salary supplement to early care educators; statewide scholarship program to support early care and education professionals to begin or continue their education at state institutions; voluntary tiered reimbursement program for qualified early childhood educators who choose to increase their level of quality; and training and technical assistance to help providers in selected counties to achieve higher levels of quality ([www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org)).

The homes of quality program is a statewide initiative to improve the quality of family child care and group child care homes through Smart Start Georgia. The homes of quality program is voluntary. The program recognizes child care providers who provide interactive learning environments for children not yet enrolled in school. The Family Day Care Rating Scale, a nationally recognized tool, is used to measure the level of quality provided.

Georgia developed a system of training and technical assistance to meet the needs of the diverse child care provider population in the state.

To help child care providers access approved training, the quarterly Georgia Childhood Care and Education Calendar continues to be published. The calendar lists all Department of Human Resources approved training statewide. The calendar is published bi-monthly with a circulation of over 10,000 and is published on the internet at [www.caresolutions.com](http://www.caresolutions.com). Training sessions are community-based and are arranged by geographical region.

Through the Office of School Readiness (OSR), technical assistance is available to OSR licensed centers from licensing consultants for health and safety topics as well as quality improvement areas. Licensing consultants also provide training to groups of center staff and owners when requested. The training is provided to improve the center's compliance and level of quality services to children. Training is also available for center directors and staff through regional meetings and the standards of care program (a statewide, voluntary quality improvement program for out-of-home care). This training is available for OSR licensed centers statewide and for DHR licensed centers in the Smart Start Georgia Plus counties for directors and early childhood educators for children age 0-5 years.

#### **Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Georgia Infant and Toddler (ITQI) Network formed in 2000, serves teachers and family child care providers caring for infants and toddlers. The focus is on counties with high concentrations of infant and toddler programs and/or a high need for child care but limited availability. The network completed in August 2002, the Georgia Outcome and Indicator Framework for Birth through Three Year Olds. The framework provides measurable outcomes to evaluate programs serving children up to age four years. The framework is designed to provide benchmark indicators for tracking and to guide policy decisions and proposal-funding initiatives. The four goals of focus within the Georgia Outcome and Indicator Framework focuses on developmental outcomes for young children; child and family well-being; quality of and access to services, and systems capacity.

The Infant Toddler Network initiative is designed to increase the quality and capacity of infant and toddler care in the state through the following:

Provides individualized on-site technical assistance that is based on an evaluation of program needs. The Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) is used. A quality improvement plan for infant and toddler programs is developed based on the evaluation.

Supplements technical assistance with quality improvement grants based on an evaluation of program needs to ensure that classrooms and facilities are safe and well equipped.

Recruits accomplished teachers to mentor the less experienced teachers. Mentors new and existing child care centers through the NAEYC national accreditation process. Provides technical assistance to centers and homes with a low regulatory compliance history to bring them to and above an 80% licensure compliance level.

Increases the availability and accessibility of training for infant and toddler teachers and family child care providers that advance their careers.

Provides financial assistance to centers engaged in accreditation programs.

Provides scholarships to support infant and toddler teachers who wish to enroll in formal certificate, diploma, and degree programs at technical colleges, four year colleges, and universities.

At this time, the project is collecting baseline data for the identified measures of quality in the Georgia Outcome and Indicator Framework for Birth through Three Year Olds. Continuation of the Infant Toddler Network initiatives is contingent on CCDF reauthorization and funding availability.

Smart Start Georgia is a public/private partnership that provides the following: education based salary supplement to early care educators; statewide scholarship program to support early care and education professionals to begin or continue their education at state institutions; voluntary tiered reimbursement program for qualified early child educators who choose to increase their level of quality; and, training and technical assistance to help providers in selected counties to achieve higher levels of quality ([www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org)).

The Georgia Child Care Council funds various organizations through a competitive bid process to offer training and technical assistance to providers statewide. Currently, the Council funds partners to offer partial or full scholarships for child care providers seeking Child Development Associate (CDA) training. The CDA training is available statewide.

The Georgia Child Care Council funds the Homes of Quality Program. The program is a statewide initiative to improve the quality in family child care and group child care homes through Smart Start Georgia. The Homes of Quality program is voluntary. The program recognizes child care providers who provide interactive learning environments for

children not yet enrolled in school. The Family Day Care Rating Scale, a nationally recognized tool, is used to measure the level of quality provided. This project is establishing a stronger infrastructure for quality home settings and provides a statewide system that parents can use to judge program quality.

Georgia has developed a system of training and technical assistance to meet the needs of the diverse child care provider population in the state. To help child care providers access approved training, the Georgia Child Care Council partners with others to issue the quarterly Georgia Childhood Care and Education Calendar. The calendar lists all Department of Human Resources approved training statewide. The calendar is published bi-monthly, with a circulation of over 10,000, and is published on the Internet at [www.caresolutions.com](http://www.caresolutions.com). Training sessions are community-based and are arranged by geographical region.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential is available for center-based staff working with infants and toddlers or preschool children. The CDA is also available to family child care providers. CDA has a credential for home visitors who work with parents and children in home-based programs ([www.gactr.uga.edu/GC/cda.html](http://www.gactr.uga.edu/GC/cda.html)).

The Certified Child Care Professional (CCP) credential is available for staff working in licensed center-based early childhood programs. The CCP credentialing program is designed to ensure that child care providers have the opportunity to enhance their professional development through 15 Professional Ability Areas. It is designed to accomplish three fundamental objectives: individual recognition; quality education and experience; and ongoing professional advancement ([www.NCCANET.org](http://www.NCCANET.org)).

The Infant and Toddler Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) is a specialized program of study available through the technical colleges (<http://www.dtae.tec.ga.us/teched/schoollist.html>). The Infant and Toddler TCC is Georgia's first statewide formal academic certificate with a specialization for infant and toddler teachers. The TCC involves five courses for a total of 25 credit hours and offers instruction in theory, methods, and practices. The Infant and Toddler TCC courses are based on the West Ed Program for Infant & Toddler Caregivers Trainer Institutes. Competencies for the courses are aligned with the Child Development Associate (CDA) standards from the Council for Professional Recognition and serve as a bridge to the Early Childhood Care and Education Diploma and Associate degree options at technical colleges. Georgia currently has 15 technical colleges offering the Infant and Toddler TCC.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programs is to provide educational opportunities to individuals that will enable them to obtain the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to succeed in the field of Early Childhood Care. Program graduates are to be competent in the general areas of English, math and interpersonal relations. Graduates are to be competent in the occupational areas of physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of the child; CPR and first aid training; health; safety; nutrition; creative activities for children; and curriculum development. The ECCE program is offered at 28 of the state's technical colleges.

The National Administrator Credential (NAC) is the only nationally recognized credential for center administrators and is designed to help administrators grow professionally and improve their management and leadership skills. The National Child Care Association (<http://www.nccanet.org/profdev/nac.asp>) awards the NAC. The 40-hour course covers all nine Administrative Competency areas required by the Georgia Childhood Care and Education Professional Development System.

Through the Office of School Readiness (OSR), technical assistance is available to OSR-licensed centers from licensing consultants for health and safety topics as well as quality improvement areas. Licensing consultants also provide training to groups of center staff and owners when requested. This training is provided to improve the center's compliance and level of quality services to children. Training is also available for child care center directors and staff through regional meetings and the Standards of Care program (a statewide, voluntary quality improvement program for out-of-home care). This training is available for OSR-licensed centers statewide and for DHR-

licensed centers in the Smart Start Georgia Plus counties for directors and early childhood educators for children age 0-5 years.

Scholarships are available for child care providers to assist them with the cost of training.

The National Child Care Association offers partial scholarships for qualified individuals wishing to earn the Child Care Professional (CCP) credential or the National Administrator Credential (NAC).

The HOPE Grant Technical Institution Diploma Program funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education, provides financial assistance to students seeking a certificate or a diploma at a Georgia public technical institute. The HOPE Grant (<http://www.dtae.tec.ga.us/hope.html>) covers the cost of tuition and fees not covered by Pell or other federal grants.

The Partners in Quality Mentor Program provides preparation for programs to implement a system for mentoring as well as prepare experienced and knowledgeable directors, teachers, and family child care providers to mentor their colleagues. The twenty-hour Mentor System Design Seminar and the 50-hour Mentor Preparation Course provide CEU credit and are offered quarterly.

Scholarships are funded through CCDF by the Georgia Child Care Council ([www.gachildcare.org](http://www.gachildcare.org)) for providers in early childhood and school age programs that serve 19 or more children. Family and group home care providers can apply for Child Care Development Funds through their local resource and referral agency. In general, these funds pay for program improvements, programs for children with disabilities for early childhood and school-age children, and technical assistance and training. Funded projects target low income, working families.

Georgia School Age Care Association (GSACA) administers educational scholarships available through the School Age Leadership in Education Program (S.A.L.E.). This

program is funded by CCDF from the Council and administered by GSACA (<http://www.gsaca.com/>). The program provides educational scholarships for school age professionals currently working to return to school part-time as they work toward a Technical Certificate of Credit in School Age and Youth Care (TCC). This scholarship program is based on partnership among the technical schools, scholarship recipient, sponsoring school age care program and GSACA. To be eligible, teachers, administrators, directors, school age care providers, or staff must be working a minimum of 30 hours per pay period in before and after school care. Participants will also commit to working at their current program for one year after they complete their training.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Mini grants were made available to centers in need of meeting licensing requirements.

**3.2 States will have Child Care Resource and Referral networks to deliver quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers, such as outreach, training and technical assistance.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Georgia Child Care Council continued funding the child care resource and referral agencies. The child care resource and referral agencies link consumers with providers, increase the supply of child care and providers statewide. These services include training out reach, technical assistance and compliance assistance. These agencies also furnish services to informal providers who wish to become registered family day care providers as well as assist informal child care providers remain in compliance.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Georgia Child Care Council plans to continue funding the child care resource and referral system. The child care resource and referral agencies link consumers with providers, increase the supply of child care and providers' access to training, collect data on child care needs, and furnish training and technical assistance to providers. In addition, resource and referral agencies furnish services to informal providers who wish to become registered family day care home providers. They help informal providers reach or remain in substantial compliance with child care licensing regulations.

Since January 1, 2001, each Child Care Resource and Referral district is staffed with an Inclusion Coordinator. Inclusion Coordinators support children with disabilities in child care settings throughout the state. They provide training and on-site technical assistance to programs that serve a child with special needs. The technical assistance is specific to the child's disability. Inclusion Coordinators work to increase the number of high quality, inclusive child care settings available to families and link families to community services.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child Care Resource and Referral networks provided a variety of quality early care and education enhancement support services to providers statewide. These services include training, outreach, technical assistance, and compliance assistance.

**3.3 States will implement a rating system to recognize providers for incremental levels of quality.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

During 2003 and 2004 the Childcare and Parent Services program continued tiered reimbursement in some areas of the state. Tiered reimbursement is for providers who meet quality standards that exceed the state's minimum licensing standards and who care for children up to age five. The tiered reimbursement rates are 100% of the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) rate for providers who meet regulatory requirements. Registered family day care providers, licensed group home providers and center based providers who meet enhanced quality standards may receive reimbursements at 115% or 135% of the DFCS rate, depending on the enhanced quality level met. Providers who achieve national accreditation may receive reimbursement at 150% of the DFCS rate.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

During 2002, the Childcare and Parent Services program began piloting tiered reimbursement in some areas of the state. Tiered reimbursement is for providers who meet quality standards that exceed the state's minimum licensing standards and who care for children up to age five. The tiered reimbursement rates are 100% of the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) rate for providers who meet regulatory requirements. Registered family day care providers, licensed group home providers and center-based providers who meet enhanced quality standards may receive reimbursements at 115% or 135% of the DFCS rate, depending on the enhanced quality level met. Providers who achieve national accreditation may receive reimbursement at 150% of the DFCS rate.

Preliminary results from the tiered reimbursement pilot indicate that child care providers are ready to increase the quality of their programs if reimbursement rates support the quality improvements. If funds become available, the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program would like to expand tiered reimbursement statewide.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**3.4 States will implement tax and other incentives to develop and expand early care and education programs that demonstrate a higher level of quality.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Same as action taken on or after January 2001. Georgia promotes the state corporate tax credit provisions that allow companies to take 75% of their investment in employer sponsored care as a tax credit; the provision also allows 100% of their investment in construction of on site facilities as a tax credit.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Same as prior to January 1, 2001. Georgia promotes the state's corporate tax credit provisions that allow companies to take 75% of their investment in employer sponsored

care as a tax credit; the provision also allows 100% of their investment in construction of on site facilities as a tax credit.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

A tax credit is available to businesses to develop early care and education programs.

**3.5 States will use a formal mechanism to seek parental input in program evaluations and will use that information in making policy decisions related to early care and education programs.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia continues to seek parental input in the subsidized child care program via public CCDF hearings. However, CAPS website continues to afford the public an opportunity to have their opinions and thoughts heard.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia's formal mechanism for seeking parental input in the program is the public hearing process. However, Childcare and Parent Services web site has generated an unexpected opportunity for gathering input from the public. Designed in 2001 to simply provide information about the subsidized child care program, the site includes an e-mail address so that visitors can request additional information or make comments. Each month, the Childcare and Parent Services program receives 75-100 e-mails from the Web site. Consultants send individualized replies to the e-mail within 48 hours.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Public hearings are held in conjunction with the state CCDF plan where parents have an opportunity to have input related to early care and education programs.

**3.6 States will identify and support the use of effective research based curricula.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Office of School Readiness has developed learning goals for four year old Children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program. The learning goals and standards have been expanded to focus on literacy, numbers and science.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) continues its Standards of Care program that is an integral part of the Early Care and Preschool Service continuum which complements Georgia's Pre-K Program. The Standards of Care Program provides child from birth to 30 months with learning opportunities through appropriate music, reading, nurturing and well equipped rooms. Child care programs that meet the Standards of Care criteria are awarded the Center of Distinction designation.

In Head Start programs that serve children age three through five years, the Georgia Head Start Quality Initiative provides a road map for programs seeking accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Accreditation is based on the Academy's Criteria for High Quality Early Childhood Program.

### **Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Various stakeholders have developed researched-based early learning guidelines. However, the guidelines have not been assessed to ensure that they align with the state's K-12 standards. At this time, the state Department of Education is in the process of developing broad-based content standards and revising the curriculum for Pre-K-12.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) has developed learning goals for four-year-old children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program. The learning goals and standards in Georgia's Pre-K have been compared with the Quality Core Curriculum standards for kindergarten and OSR has implemented a plan that provides literacy training for lead Pre-K teachers. Additionally, OSR will focus its Pre-K training on literacy, numeracy and science during the next year.

The Office of School Readiness has initiated the voluntary Standards of Care program that is an integral part of the Early Care and Preschool Services continuum, which complements Georgia's Pre-K Program. The Standards of Care program provides children from birth to 30 months with learning opportunities through appropriate music, reading, nurturing and optimally supplied rooms. Child care programs that meet the Standards of Care criteria are awarded the Center of Distinction designation. The Standards of Care Program addresses specific cognitive, social/emotional, communication, physical and self-help domains. The Standards of Care developmental characteristics, goals, and recommended activities and materials are listed at: <http://www.osr.state.ga.us/pre-k/stdsofcare.pdf>.

Initially, the Standards of Care program was only available to child care programs that hosted a lottery-funded Pre-K program. Childcare and Parent Services coordinates with the Office of School Readiness to enable child care programs that do not host a lottery-funded Pre-K program to participate in the Standards of Care Program in the Smart Start Plus counties.

In Head Start programs that serve children age three through five years, the Georgia Head Start Quality Initiative (<http://www.osr.state.ga.us/ghsqi.htm>), provides a road map for programs seeking accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Accreditation is based on the Academy's Criteria for High Quality Early Childhood Program.

Voluntary guidelines for very young children were developed based on the brain development research findings. The guidelines, *Growing Smart and Healthy Babies*, are distributed by the Office of Regulatory Services, Child Care Licensing.

*Growing Smart and Healthy Babies* addresses characteristics, learning goals and suggested activities and materials in physical, cognitive/language, social/emotional, and self-help domains. These guidelines are created for children ages: 0-12 months, 12-24 months, 24-36 months, and 36-48 months. *Growing Smart and Healthy Babies* is on the Healthy Child Care Georgia site: <http://health.state.ga.us/pdfs/familyhealth/hccg/growinghealthysmart.0103.pdf>

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia recently provided training for providers on early brain development.

**Goal 4: Staff in early care and education settings will be appropriately credentialed and adequately compensated.**

**4.1 States will maintain a professional development system that ensures, at a minimum, providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC, NAFCC, APHA or AAP.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Professional Development Registry was the state of Georgia's voluntary professional development recognition system for early childhood care and education professionals. This registry tracked all of the Department of Human Resources approved trainings. It ended February 2004.

The competencies delineate the knowledge and skills for childhood care and education professionals working in a variety of settings. The purpose of these competencies is to provide a blueprint for individual professional growth as well as guidelines for training and education programs that will meet the needs of professionals in the field.

Georgia requires licensed/registered child care providers to complete at least 10 clock hours of DHR approved training annually.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education, in conjunction with the Advancing Careers through Education and Training (ACET) Collaborative Advisory Committee provides implementation of the Georgia Childhood Care and Education Professional Development System (<http://www.acetonline.org/>). The Professional Development Registry is the state of Georgia's professional development recognition system for early childhood care and education professionals. The Professional Development Registry tracks all of the Department of Human Resources approved trainings.

The competencies delineate the knowledge and skills for childhood care and education professionals working in a variety of settings ([www.caresolutions.com/calendar/key\\_comp.html](http://www.caresolutions.com/calendar/key_comp.html)). The purpose of these competencies is to provide a blueprint for individual professional growth as well as guidelines for training and education programs that will meet the needs of professionals in the field.

For example, the Professional Development Competencies for the early care and education professionals address growth and development, physical and intellectual competence, social and emotional development, learning environments, relationships with families, etc. Early intervention program competencies cover typical and atypical infant and toddler development, family systems and family involvement, assessment, program implementation and evaluation, administrative and team processes and professional development.

Georgia requires licensed/registered child care providers to complete at least 10 clock hours of DHR approved training annually. The Office of School Readiness maintains professional development plans for Pre-K lead teachers based on the Pre-K guidelines.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Georgia Early Learning Program initiated a professional development system that ensures providers in early care and education settings meet standards set forth by NAEYC.

**4.2 States will require approved ongoing annual professional development for staff, appropriate to their education levels and job requirements, as specified in APHA and AAP. States will provide and implement a professional development system that verifies trainers, approves training and tracks the training of participants.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia has in place a training approval process that is administered by the Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) in order for training to become DHR approved. ORS contracts with the University of Georgia to review training curriculum. The reviewer holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Approximately 75 applications for the approval of training modules/curriculum are reviewed each month. All training curricula are expected to be task-focused, competency-based, accurate and relevant. Training modules that are specialized in content, are referred to experts in the field for review.

The Professional Development Competencies for trainers include professionalism, instructional design and development, knowledge of content, presentation skills and program management. The Office of Regulatory Services maintains a database of approved trainers and the curriculum/workshops that they are authorized to provide.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

There is a training approval process before training for child care providers becomes "Department of Human Resources approved." The Office of Regulatory Services contracts with the University of Georgia to review training curriculum. The reviewer holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Approximately 70 applications for the approval of training modules/curriculum are reviewed each month. All training curricula are expected to be task-focused, competency-based, accurate and relevant. Training modules that have specialized content (such as early intervention, brain research, nutrition, and health) are referred to experts in each field for review. Additionally, trainers must meet standards before they are "DHR approved." The Professional Development Competencies for trainers include professionalism, instructional design and development, knowledge of content, presentation skills, and program management. The Office of Regulatory Services maintains a database of approved trainers and the curriculum/workshops that they are authorized to provide.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

- 4.3 *The federal government and states will provide universally available, comprehensive scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two- or four-year degree in child development, early childhood education, early childhood special education or child care administration. Scholarships will address the costs of tuition, fees and books and will support components such as travel costs, paid release time and child care.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Smart Start Georgia continues to administer the scholarship program for early child care and education providers. Participants may pursue a CDA, or two-year, or a four-year degree in child development, early childhood education. Scholarships address the costs of tuition, fees and books.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Smart Start Georgia (formerly the Georgia Early Learning Initiative) continues to administer the scholarship program for early care and education providers. The components of the program are the same as the components before January 1, 2001.

The Smart Start Georgia's early learning initiatives ([www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org)) include: the Early Childhood Educators INCENTIVE\$ program which is a salary supplement program available statewide; and the SCHOLARSHIPS program which is similar to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship program.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia Early Learning Initiative provided scholarships to early care and education providers who are pursuing a CDA or two or four year degree in child development, early childhood education. Scholarships addressed the costs of tuition, fees and books.

- 4.4 *States will work with educational institutions to ensure that coursework is accessible in order to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends, in accelerated formats, on-line and in various languages. Courses will address the varying educational levels of the workforce.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Smart Start continues its collaboration with colleges and technical schools throughout the state to ensure that coursework is accessible to meet the needs of the early care and education workforce.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See action before January 1, 2001.

**Action Taken Prior to 2001**

The Georgia Early Learning Initiative collaborated with colleges and technical schools to ensure that coursework is accessible to meet the early care and education workforce training needs, such as courses offered at night, on weekends and in accelerated formats.

**4.5 *The federal government and states will provide financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Smart Start Georgia continues to administer the Early Childhood Educators "INCENTIVES\$ program. INCENTIVES\$ rewards teachers of children five and under for staying in the profession and for increasing their skill and knowledge through formal education programs. The supplement is paid directly to eligible early childhood teacher, directors and family child care providers.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Smart Start Georgia (formerly the Georgia Early Learning Initiative) continues to administer the Early Childhood Educators INCENTIVE\$ Program. INCENTIVE\$ rewards teachers of children five and under for staying in the profession and for increasing their skill and knowledge through formal education programs. The supplement is paid directly to eligible early childhood teachers, directors, and family child care providers. By supplementing teachers' salaries, INCENTIVE\$ encourages those who work directly with young children to stay in the field and continue to gain knowledge and refine their skills.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

The Georgia Early Learning Initiative implemented a program called "Incentives" that provides financial incentives that reward completion of approved levels of professional development.

**4.6 *The federal government and states will provide college loan forgiveness programs for persons earning an approved degree who work for a specified period of time in early care and education programs.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia's HOPE Grant Technical Institution Diploma Program funded by the Georgia lottery for Education, provides financial assistance to students seeking a certificate or a diploma at a Georgia public technical institute. The HOPE Grant covers the cost of tuition and fees not covered by Pell or other federal grants.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia's HOPE Grant Technical Institution Diploma Program funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education, provides financial assistance to students seeking a certificate or a diploma at a Georgia public technical institute. The HOPE Grant (<http://www.dtae.tec.ga.us/hope.html>) covers the cost of tuition and fees not covered by Pell or other federal grants.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**4.7 States will work toward a system whereby staff with approved degrees or credentials will receive employment benefits and compensation at comparable levels to the state's public education system.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No action taken.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**4.8 States will ensure meaningful agreements and processes to enable the transfer of credits between and among approved two- and four-year degree programs.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Efforts continue toward achieving standardizing requirements that would allow transfer of credits among Georgia Technical colleges as well as two-year and four-year degree programs.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) supports, enhances, and expands statewide coordinated childhood care and education efforts and professional development initiatives. A project funded by the Child Care and Development Fund has developed and implemented articulation agreements between DTAE technical colleges and the state's four-year institutions. The project also introduces high school students to the early childhood care and education profession thereby increasing the number of potential teachers in the state. These collaborations yield an effective assessment, delivery and evaluation system for DTAE's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) technical certificates of credit, diplomas, and degree programs; a progressive professional development system to enhance career development; articulation agreements throughout the state; and support for licensing surveyors and licensing consultants to enhance their knowledge and skills in assessing provider's professional development and for delivering training and technical assistance in the field.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**Goal 5: Families will have the information to make well-informed decisions about the quality of their child's care and education and to be actively involved in their child's care and education.**

**5.1 States will support Child Care Resource and Referral networks that are easily accessible to parents and that provide information on child development, quality indicators, provider choices, vacancies and linkages to additional information.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia supports the Child Care Resource and Referral networks with funding to ensure that parents have easy access to these agencies. Information on child development quality indicators, provider choices and linkages with other resources are available to parents

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

See action taken prior to January 1, 2001.

**Action Taken Prior to 2001**

Georgia supports the Child Care Resource and Referral networks with funding to ensure that parents have easy access to these agencies. Information on child development quality indicators, provider choices and linkages with other resources are available to parents.

**5.2 States will support early care and education providers in promoting parental involvement and in seeking parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Child care programs that participate in the voluntary Standards of Care program or Tiered Reimbursement demonstrate that they promote parental involvement and seek parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Child care programs that participate in the voluntary Standards of Care program or Tiered Reimbursement demonstrate that they promote parental involvement and seek parental input into the development and improvement of their programs.

**Action Taken Prior to 2001**

No action taken.

**Goal 6: Quality early care and education programs will be financially accessible to all children.**

**6.1 Federal and state governments will adjust the child care tax credit expense limits to accurately reflect the cost of quality care.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No action taken.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.2 States with income taxes will establish refundable child and dependent care tax credits.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No action taken.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.3 State and federal child and dependent care tax credit income-eligibility and expense limits will be indexed for inflation.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

No action taken.

Also, in 2004, income limits were lowered for families with special circumstances (i.e. having a child with special needs).

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.4 Federal, state, local and private funds will be sufficient to meet 100% of the need for direct early care and education financial aid, based on initial eligibility levels at 85% of the state median income. Federal law will allow and states will implement redetermination policies that allow families to retain early care and education financial aid until they reach 100% of state median income.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia began to base eligibility income limits on the federal poverty level rather than on the state median income level.

Also in 2004, income limits were lowered for families with special circumstances (i.e. having a child with special needs).

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No action taken.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.5 *Federal and state governments should develop policies and systems to assure families receiving financial aid pay no more than 10% of their gross income for early care and education.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia's state Child Care and Development Fund State Plan for 2004-2005 propose a limit of 10% of the families' gross income for families who receive subsidized child care.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia's State Child Care and Development Fund State Plan for 2004-2005 proposes a limit of 10% of the families' gross income for families who receive subsidized child care. Pending approval by the Administration for Children and Families, this will be implemented in early 2004.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.6 *States will set payment rates at no less than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile based on a market rate survey conducted every two years for each level and type of care. Annual inflation adjustments to payment rates will be made between market surveys.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia's child care reimbursement rate is less than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for most providers. Child care programs that receive Tiered Reimbursement for exceeding minimum quality standards may receive payments at above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia's child care reimbursement rate is less than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile for most providers. Child care programs that receive Tiered Reimbursement for exceeding minimum quality standards may receive payments at or above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Georgia's reimbursement rate is less than the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**6.7 *States will implement payments to providers commensurate with the quality-rating level achieved by the early care and education programs.***

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Tiered reimbursement available in some counties makes payments to providers commensurate with the quality rating level achieved by the participating early care and education programs.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Tiered reimbursement available in some counties makes payments to providers commensurate with the quality rating level achieved by the participating early care and education programs.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.8 States will examine the financing of quality early care and education in their state and work toward providing payment rates that recognize the cost commensurate with the standards set forth in this action plan.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Georgia would like to expand tiered reimbursement to additional counties, however, expansion depends on CCDF reauthorization.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Georgia would like to expand tiered reimbursement to additional counties; however, the Child Care and Development Fund has not been reauthorized nor have funds been appropriated for October 1, 2003.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No action taken.

**6.9 States will design and aggressively implement outreach initiatives to provide families with easy-to-understand early care and education financial aid information and application assistance.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies via funding from the state inform families about child care options. Head Start and Georgia's Pre-K programs publicize the availability of child care services. The resource and referral agencies and the case managers at the county Department of Family and Children services offices inform families about these and other free/low cost child resources.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Child Care Resource and Referral agencies inform families about child care options and assist families in locating child care that meets the families' needs. Head Start and Georgia's Pre-K programs publicize the availability of child care services. The resource and referral agencies and the case managers at the local Department of Family and Children Services offices inform families about these, and other free or low cost child care resources.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Child Care Resource and Referral agencies via funding from the state inform families about child care options.

**Goal 7: States will ensure that accountability is built into all systems, programs and activities undertaken to achieve the goals of this action plan.**

- 7.1 States will convene appropriate stakeholders to develop written strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education programs in the state. These plans will include key goals, quantifiable measures of progress and program outcomes for all quality enhancement activities.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

The Department of Human Resources and the Office of School Readiness held meetings to develop a state plan for program coordination across state and federal agencies and funding streams. This group focuses on critical issues such as the alignment of program standards, regulation and oversight, evaluation of program objectives, accountability, the improvement of child and family outcomes, tracking and reporting family outcomes, and linkages between all major funding and state early care and education initiatives. These linkages would include assurances that state initiatives are coordinated with federal "Smart Start" objectives.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

The Department of Human Resources and the Office of School Readiness are organizing a planning team to develop a state plan for program coordination across state and federal agencies and funding streams. This team will focus on critical issues such as the alignment of program standards, regulation and oversight, evaluation of program objectives, accountability, the improvement of child and family outcomes, tracking and reporting family outcomes, and linkages between all major federal and state early care and education initiatives. These linkages would include assurances that state initiatives coordinated with federal "Good Start, Grow Smart" objectives, including such initiatives as professional development of early care and education staff, literacy and numeracy activities for preschool children and indicators of school readiness and success. Current initiatives underway in Georgia that will add critical information to this process are the revision of Georgia's kindergarten curriculum, the alignment of Pre-K learning goals with the revised curriculum, the work of the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning Strategic Planning Team, the Policy Advisory Team for Georgia's Outcome Implementation, the Evaluation Project for children 0-3 years old, and the CAPS Business Process Reengineering.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Stakeholders were convened in 1999 and organized the Georgia Early Learning Initiative to develop strategic plans for improving the quality of early care and education. The plans did include key goals, measures of progress and program outcomes for quality enhancement activities.

- 7.2 States will collect and analyze data and produce written annual reports on progress toward identified goals. Reports will be made readily available to the public.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Projects funded by the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Division of Family and Children Services, Childcare and Parent Services Section and the Office of School

Readiness include outcomes that are measurable. DHR's Division of Family and Children Services produced an annual report for state fiscal year '04 ending June 2004

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

Projects funded by the Department of Human Resources and the Office of School Readiness include outcomes that are measurable. Studies include: Improving Early Childhood Education in Georgia: Progress Report on Year One of the Georgia Early Learning Initiative, Jennifer L. Antinozzi, MSPP, Monica Herk, PhD, March 2002. Benefits Associated with Improved Child Care in Georgia, Laura Wheeler, Ph.D. and Lauren Waits, M.S., September 2001; Regional Child Care Trends: Comparing Georgia to its Neighbors, Lauren Waits, Malina Monaco, Lisa Beck, Jennifer Edwards, September 2001 available on the web at [www.gsu.edu/%7Ewwwghp/children/childpolicycenter/index.htm](http://www.gsu.edu/%7Ewwwghp/children/childpolicycenter/index.htm). Current research available from the ACET (<http://www.acetonline.org/>) includes comparisons of quality of centers based on teacher education and experience and an analysis of compensation by education level. Similarly, the Smart Start Georgia ([www.smartstartga.org](http://www.smartstartga.org)) has data demonstrating the increase in the number of child care programs that have attained national accreditation, Centers of Distinction, and Homes of Distinction as a result of participating in the program.

The Georgia Child Care Council ([www.gachildcare.org](http://www.gachildcare.org)) is legislatively charged with developing an annual Georgia report on child care including both an evaluation of the state planning process and of the state child care statistics. The Council staff are working on this annual report.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

Discussions began around how to best collect and analyze data to produce written annual reports on progress.

**7.3 States will use data and annual reports to make continuous policy improvements and evaluate quality enhancement activities.**

**Action taken between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004**

Annual report data is freely shared with all 159 local Departments of Family and Children Services. Additionally federal feedback from Administration for Children and Families (ACF) 801 report, is shared with county and state staff to facilitate local efforts to improve the quality of service in subsidized child care.

**Action taken between January 1, 2001, and June 30, 2003**

No response.

**Action taken prior to December 31, 2000 (the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care Quality Improvement Initiative began January 1, 2001)**

No response.

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<sup>1</sup> NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>2</sup> NAFCC – National Association of Family Child Care

<sup>3</sup> APHA – American Public Health Association

<sup>4</sup> AAP – American Academy of Pediatrics

<sup>5</sup> American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics. 2002. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance –Guidelines for out-of-home child care programs*. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.