

Annual Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) Payment Policies

Quality Rated Policy: QRWB Payments	Effective Date: 4/11/25	Revision Effective: 5/14/26
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Policies are subject to change at the sole discretion of Quality Rated and DECAL. Changes to policies will be communicated to providers upon revision and effective dates added to this document.

A glossary of terms is included following the policies.

Section 1 - Program and Staff Eligibility for QRWB Payments

- 1.1 To be eligible for Annual Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) payments, child care program **staff** must be employed by an open and operating child care program with a current 1-, 2- or 3-Star Rating at the time of application.
- 1.2 Eligible program staff must have an on-site work history of at least 90 calendar days with the child care program at the time of their application.
- 1.3 Eligible program types include child care learning centers, family child care learning homes, stand-alone School-Age Only programs, Georgia Head Start, Georgia Early Head Start, Department of Defense, and Technical School or University child care programs.
- 1.4 Eligible program staff must be full-time employees of the child care program, working a minimum of 30 or more hours per week, physically on-site as part of the child care program staff.
- 1.5 Eligible program staff working in programs or classrooms with only school-age children (5-12 years), must work 15 or more hours per week, physically on-site as part of the child care program staff.
- 1.6 All program staff meeting eligibility requirements are eligible for QRWB payments, regardless of job title.
- 1.7 Eligibility is not dependent on **CAPS** participation.
- 1.8 QRWB payments are funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and are subject to the availability of funds. All applicable provisions, rules and regulations of the funding source must be followed. Programs may be reduced or discontinued at any time if the Department (DECAL) determines that adequate funds are not available.
- 1.9 If program staff are employed by more than one Quality Rated child care program, and meet the eligibility requirements for both, they are only eligible for one annual QRWB payment and will need to decide as to which program they would like to apply for.
- 1.10 Program staff reaching 90 days of employment within the **Payment Application Month** for their program are eligible to apply. They will not be able to apply until they reach the 90th day, however. If the 90-day falls at the end of the **Payment Application Month**, staff must wait until that date in order to apply.

- 1.11 Program staff must be currently employed by the rated program during the **Payment Application Month** to be eligible for the QRWB payment. Staff who leave employment before the **Payment Application Month** are not eligible for payment regardless of employment during the rating process.
- 1.12 Programs experiencing a rating loss or closure within or near their Payment Application Month will be reviewed by Care Solutions and DECAL on a case-by case basis to determine staff's eligibility for payment.
- 1.13 Program staff are not required to have been employed at the program at time of program ERS observations or program rating to be eligible for the bonus if they otherwise meet all eligibility requirements.
- 1.14 In the event of a Change in Ownership for the program, QRWB eligibility for staff is determined based on the program's rating status. If the program's 1-, 2-, or 3-star rating is successfully transferred to the new owner, eligible staff may still apply for the QRWB payment during the designated Payment Application Month. If the rating is not transferred, staff will become ineligible until the program earns a new Quality Rated star rating. Eligibility resumes the month following the new rating date.
- 1.15 Staff who are not directly paid by the licensed child care program, including maintenance staff employed by parent organizations or substitutes paid through staffing agencies, may still qualify for QRWB payments. Care Solutions will review and verify supporting documents on a case-by-case basis to confirm eligibility. To be eligible, the following must be completed:
 - Staff members must meet all standard eligibility requirements (e.g., 90-day on-site history, required weekly hours).
 - The program director or owner must submit a signed letter verifying the staff member's hours worked and dates of service at the facility.
 - Pay documentation from the employment agency must accompany the director's letter.
- 1.16 If program staff believe they meet the eligibility criteria but are notified of ineligibility for payment, they may contact Care Solutions at support@decalsqrpayments.com or 800-227-3410, ext. 613.

Section 2 – QRWB Payments

2.1 – Payment Overview

- 2.1.1 Each eligible **staff** member will receive an annual payment of no less or more than \$500.
- 2.1.2 Care Solutions is the payment vendor for all QRWB Payments.
- 2.1.3 Eligible child care providers will have the option to receive QRWB payments through direct deposit or paper check by mail from Care Solutions. Quality Rated highly recommends selecting the direct deposit option to receive payments in a timely manner with minimum risk of delay.

- 2.1.4** Staff are required to ensure all submitted documents are current, accurate, authentic, and complete.
- 2.1.5** For **FCCLH** program owners, Schedule C is required documentation to receive payment, and the Owner's Schedule C may be used to evaluate eligibility for FCCLH employees.
- 2.1.6** For **FCCLH** providers, payments can be received by up to three (3) eligible staff members: one (1) owner and two (2) associates. If more than three (3) applicants apply for the bonus payment, additional review by Care Solutions and DECAL will be conducted.
- 2.1.7** Any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation in a statement to a government agency may be guilty of a felony of a violation of Code Section 16-10-20 of the Official Code of Georgia. Any person, firm, corporation, or other legal entity that 1) knowingly presents or causes to be presented a false or fraudulent claim for payment or approval or 2) knowingly makes, uses, or causes to be made or used a false record or statement material to a false or fraudulent claim, shall be liable for civil penalties. The civil penalty can range from \$5,500 to \$11,000 for each false or fraudulent claim, plus three times the amount of damages sustained by the government because of such act pursuant to Code Section 23-3-121 of the Official Code of Georgia.
- 2.1.8** If an individual is found to have submitted fraudulent information to or within any DECAL program, they may be deemed ineligible for future payments.
- 2.1.9** QRWB payments are subject to review by DECAL's Audits and Compliance Division.
- 2.1.10** If DECAL becomes aware of an active criminal investigation into a program staff member, QRWB payment will be held pending the outcome of the investigation.

2.2 – Payment Application Month

- 2.2.1** Child care programs are assigned a specific Payment Application Month that will remain in effect as long as the program remains rated. Payment Application Months can be identified by visiting <https://decalqrpayers.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus>.
- 2.2.2** During the program's Payment Application Month, program staff will have access to an "Apply Now" button and can complete the application process with Care Solutions at <https://decalqrpayers.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus>.
- 2.2.3** Quality Rated will update Care Solutions weekly to add new providers that receive an initial rating and to remove providers who are no longer rated due to expiration or program closure.
- 2.2.4** The Payment Application Month for child care programs receiving their initial star rating will be the month following their rating announcement. The recurring Payment Application Month in subsequent years will revert to the month the initial rating was received. For example, if a program earns a rating in October 2025, staff will be able to apply for their bonus during the November

2025 Payment Application Month. In 2026 and the years following, assuming the program maintains a rating status, the Payment Application Month will be October.

- 2.2.5** Program Application Month windows begin April 2025. Programs whose 2025 Payment Application Month would be January, February, or March will have their 2025 payments staggered into April, May and June as follows:

QRWB Payment Application Month 2025									
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Includes 2025 Payment Application Months	January	February	March	July	August	September	October	November	December
	April	May	June						

Section 3 – QRWB Verification and Preparation

3.1 – Child Care Program Staff Responsibilities

- 3.1.1** Program staff members are responsible for creating and maintaining an accurate and updated **GaPDS** account which will be used for verification of employment.
- 3.1.2** Program staff members are not required to upload transcripts or submit for a Career Level in **GaPDS** to be eligible for the QRWB, only the individual’s profile page with accurate employment information is required to be submitted with the QRWB application.
- 3.1.3** Only staff working in child care centers can be considered as School-Age only. The allowable 15+hr for School-Age Only applicants can only apply when working in a center-based program, not **FCCLH**.
- 3.1.4** Program staff members must maintain a satisfactory records check determination in accordance with DECAL’s policies and procedures. The check must be ported to the DECAL KOALA account for the program they are employed by and under which they are seeking their bonus.
- 3.1.5** Program staff are responsible for notifying Care Solutions of any changes to contact information or updates to submitted documents. Failure to maintain accurate contact and banking information may result in missed QRWB payments. Quality Rated and Care Solutions are not responsible for correcting missed payments due to outdated or incorrect information submitted by the applicant.
- 3.1.6** Program staff are required to submit their two most recent paystubs reflecting full-time employment with their application. Full-time employees whose last two paystubs do not reflect 30 hours per week, or 15 hours (school-age classroom staff), due to leave, temporary closures, holiday closure, etc. or who do not receive a typical pay stub showing year-to-date earnings, will be handled on a case-by-case basis by Care Solutions. Additional documentation may be requested before the application can be approved.

- 3.1.7** Unless eligible staff are U.S. citizens who have previously received funds from DECAL paid out by Care Solutions, such as DECAL POWER payments, DECAL Academic Scholarships or Incentives, Thrive stipends, Project LITTLE stipends etc., a notarized affidavit for lawful presence, signed within the current year, and an unexpired, verifiable identification document are required to be submitted at the time of QRWB application. A blank affidavit for lawful presence verification form can be downloaded here: <https://decalsrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus-resources/>.
- 3.1.8** A notarized affidavit for lawful presence, signed within the current year, and an unexpired, verifiable identification document are required to be submitted at the time of QRWB application for all eligible staff who are non-U.S. citizens, approved to work in the U.S., if they have not within the last 10 months received funds from DECAL paid out by Care Solutions. A blank affidavit for lawful presence verification form can be downloaded here: <https://decalsrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus-resources/>.
- 3.1.9** If any eligible staff who are either U.S. or non-U.S. citizens and have **never** received funds from DECAL paid out by Care Solutions, a notarized affidavit for lawful presence, signed within the current year, and an unexpired, verifiable identification document are required to be submitted at the time of QRWB application. A blank affidavit for lawful presence verification form can be downloaded here: <https://decalsrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus-resources/>.
- 3.1.10** Any eligible staff under the age of 18 will be required to sign and submit a QRWB Employment Verification for Minors form and an unexpired, verifiable identification document, in lieu of a signed and notarized affidavit for lawful presence. A blank QRWB employment verification for minors' form can be downloaded here: <https://decalsrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus-resources/>.
- 3.1.11** DECAL staff, not Care Solutions staff, review the signed and notarized affidavit for lawful presence and utilize the **E-Verify** system to verify lawful presence in the U.S.
- 3.1.12** Once the employer has verified the applicant's employment, Care Solutions will begin to process the application. If documentation or information is incorrect or insufficient, Care Solutions will email program staff who will need to upload missing or corrected information within 14 calendar days. If after 14 days the corrections or missing information are not completed, a 5-day grace period will be granted. If no response is received after a total of 20 days and the provider's **Payment Application Month** has ended, program staff will be notified that the application has been denied.
- 3.1.13** If a QRWB application is started and saved but not submitted within the **Payment Application Month**, it will be removed from the applicant dashboard and the applicant will not receive payment.
- 3.1.14** Failure to submit an application within the designated **Payment Application Month** is considered a denial. All exception requests must be submitted with supporting documentation and are subject to review and approval by DECAL.
- 3.1.15** If approved and awarded funds, (i) you may be issued IRS Form 1099 to report awarded funds as income if such awarded funds are deemed taxable (combined with any taxable funds) in any tax

year and are at least \$2,000 for payments made after December 31, 2025, (ii) regardless of the amount of any awarded funds and regardless of whether you are issued Form 1099, you must comply with applicable law in reporting income on your tax returns, and (iii) neither the DECAL, nor any of its agents or employees, have provided you any tax or legal advice in connection with your application to this DECAL application or any awarded funds.

3.1.16 Applicants whose QRWB applications are denied may initiate a Denial Appeal by contacting Care Solutions via email or phone within 10 calendar days of the denial notification date. Upon initiating an appeal, applicants must submit supporting documentation requested by Care Solutions (e.g., program director’s letter, additional paystubs, or timesheets) within **14 calendar days**.

Applicants are allowed a maximum of two attempts to submit adequate documentation. After two failed attempts, the Denial will be final, and the application will not be eligible for further reconsideration within the current application.

Failure to respond to an incomplete application within 20 Calendar Days will result in a denial status without the option to appeal.

3.2 – Child Care Program Director/Owner Responsibilities

3.2.1 All email communication, including requests for employment verification, will be sent to the program’s primary email address listed in **KOALA**.

- a. While DECAL is committed to sharing communication and notifications in a timely manner, the administrator of the primary email address is responsible for notifying staff of the upcoming Payment Application Month and any relevant communication from DECAL, Quality Rated or Care Solutions.

3.2.2 The program director or other responsible party (program owner etc.) must ensure that their employees, as well as their own, current satisfactory records check determination has been ported to the child care program within **KOALA** Self-Serve.

3.2.3 After program staff completes the online QRWB application, the program director, owner, or other responsible party will receive an email request to verify the employment information, including the applicant’s date of hire. The email requests the employer to respond within seven (7) calendar days to verify the information. Applicant’s application will not be processed until the employment verification has been approved by the employer.

3.2.4 If no response to the verification of employment email is received from the program director or other responsible party after seven (7) days, Care Solutions will provide a reminder to the program director and the employee. The applicant may re-request the Employer Verification to be sent from their Applicant Portal up to three (3) times total.

- a. If there is still no response, Care Solutions will email the applicant in the following month (after their eligible application window has closed) informing them that they have not been employer-verified, and their application will be Archived. An Archived application will be removed from the Applicant Dashboard view to prevent future submission of the application after the eligible application window.

Policy Revision History

Date	Description of Changes
5/21/25	3.1.6-8 clarified that affidavit must be signed within the current year; 3.1.14 added
1/1/26	<i>Added: 1.8 CCDF Availability; 1.12 Rating Loss Policy; 2.1.5 FCCLH documentation; 2.1.6 Limit to number of FCCLH applicants; 2.1.8 Fraudulent information; 3.1.3 School Age Only Applicants; definition of FCCLH Revised with clarifying language: 1.1; 3.1.14</i>
5/14/26	<i>Added: 3.1.14 Failure to submit application; Added 3.2.1a Communication Responsibility; 3.1.15 Updated to reflect taxable amount of \$2,000 (previously \$600) based on new tax law.</i>

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Definitions

CAPS- Child And Parent Services, Georgia’s child care subsidy assistance program.

Change of Ownership- a new owner buys an existing child care business, building, or property that remains in continuous operation, or the current owner changes the ownership type (e.g., Inc. to LLC).

E-Verify System- is the internet-based system that compares information from your notarized affidavit for lawful presence to records available to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Social Security Administration (SSA) to confirm that you are authorized to work in the United States.

FCCLH- Family Child Care Learning Home.

GAPDS- Georgia Professional Development System is the online portal in which Georgia’s child care employees maintain a profile, and search, register for and complete approved trainings.

KOALA- is DECAL’s provider self-service website where providers can access their licensing information, available 24/7 for convenience ([Kids Online Administrative Licensing Application](#)).

Payment Application Month- every child care program has a designated month in which they are able to complete the application for the QRWB. Applications outside of this time frame will not be processed. Payment Application Months can be determined by entering program information at <https://decalsqrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus/#QRWBEligibility>.

Staff- includes all full-time employees working on-site at the child care program, and can include teaching, administrative, support, facility maintenance, transportation, and nutrition/food service staff etc. Full time is considered 30 hours or more or 15 hours or more for staff working with only school-age children (5-12 years).