

# Incentives

Incentives is Georgia's program that encourages early childhood educators to maintain tenure and increase their education. Eligible participants can apply to receive an annual payment if their credential or degree was earned in the past 5 years, based on their tenure.

**Please complete this application only if you are eligible for the 2024 Winter Incentives (eligibility information can be found on page 2). Applications can be completed and returned to support@decalscholars.com. Mailed-in applications will not be accepted.**

## Eligibility Requirements

### Legal Status

You're one of the following:

- United States citizen
- Legal permanent resident
- Qualified alien

### Education

You have earned one of the following degrees or credentials in an early childhood education, child development, or elementary education (Pre-K-5) program of study **in the past 5 years**:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
- Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC)
- Technical College Diploma (TCD)
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- MACTE-accredited Montessori Program Credential

### Employment

You must have maintained **12 months of continuous employment** in one of the following roles (volunteer work, practicums, and internships do not qualify):

- Teacher
- Assistant teacher
- Floater
- Director
- Assistant director
- Owner
- You must work a minimum of **15 hours per week** if your employer is one of the following:
  - A child care learning center licensed by DECAL or the Department of Defense
  - A family child care learning home licensed by DECAL
  - A before/after school program licensed by DECAL
  - An exempt Georgia Head Start center
  - A Georgia Lottery-funded Pre-K program in a public school

**Please note:  
 The eligibility  
 requirements  
 will change  
 in 2025.**

## How Much will I Receive and When Should I Apply?

In 2024, eligible participants can apply to receive an annual payment if their credential or degree was earned in the past 5 years, based on their tenure:

- For remaining 1-3 years with your current employer: \$1,500
- For remaining 4(+) years with your current employer: \$2,500

 **Please note: Starting in 2025, the Incentives award will be \$1,000 annually for all approved applicants.**



### Summer Incentives

Were you hired by your current employer during the months of December – May? You're a Summer Incentives applicant.

**Submit your application between April 3 – June 30.**



### Winter Incentives

Were you hired by your current employer during the months of June – November? You're a Winter Incentives applicant.

**Submit your application between September 5 – November 30.**

## Include the Following Documents with this Application:

- A copy of your credential or degree in early childhood education (ECE) that you earned in the past 5 years:
  - Non-expired Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition OR
  - Official transcript from credential or degree awarded by a college or university that is regionally accredited (visit [www.chea.org/search-institutions](http://www.chea.org/search-institutions) to check yours):
    - Technical Certificate of Credit
    - Technical College Diploma
    - Associate Degree (must have 30 semester hours in ECE-specific courses)
    - Bachelor's Degree (must have 36 semester hours in ECE-specific courses)
    - Master's Degree (in early childhood education or elementary education (pre-k) only)
    - MACTE-accredited Montessori Program Credential (Infant/Toddler or Early Childhood)
- Copy of two recent pay stubs reflecting your name, the name of your employer, and your gross (before deductions) wages. Family child care learning home providers and owners who do not pay themselves W2 wages submit a copy of last year's Schedule C or other federal tax form documenting net business income.
- Copy of your Georgia Professional Development System profile reflecting your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer and valid license number, and a pending or active status (see page 6 for more information).
- Copy of the FRONT and BACK of a secure and verifiable document (see page 7 for more information).

**Submit your application and supporting documents to [support@decalscholars.com](mailto:support@decalscholars.com).**

**Document formats DECAL Scholars will accept:** Legible PDFs, screenshots, photo copies, scans, and photos. Please do not send documents as links. **ALL documents must be received by the close of the period you're applying to in order to be considered.**

**Applicant to Complete this Section:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
Full name as it appears on your social security card

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street address (including apartment number) OR post office box

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Gender:**

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to answer
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Race:**

- White
- Black / African-American
- Asian
- Native American / Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Bi- / Multi-Racial
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:**

- Hispanic/Latino
- Not Hispanic/Latino

**Employer/Director to Complete this Section:**

Name of Facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
As it appears on license/registration

Facility Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
As it appears on license/registration

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

License/Registration Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

**Facility Type (check one):**

- Child Care Learning Center
- Family Child Care Learning Home
- After School Program
- Georgia Lottery-funded Pre-K
- Georgia Head Start Center

**Licensed By (check one):**

- Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
- Department of Defense (DOD)

**Applicant's Employment Information:**

Applicant's Primary Job Title:  Floater  Assistant Teacher  
 Teacher  Assistant Director  Director  Owner

Is the applicant a Georgia lottery-funded Pre-K teacher?

Is the applicant a Head Start or Early Head Start teacher?

Number of hours applicant works each week: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of months per year applicant works:  9  10  12

Number of months per year applicant is paid:  9  10  12

Applicant's currently hourly wage: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant is paid:  Weekly  Bi-Weekly  Bi-Monthly  Monthly

Applicant's date of hire: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (original hire date if employment is continuous with present employer at different locations)

If applicant is in the classroom, # of children in classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Ages of children in classroom:

- Birth-1
- 1-2
- 2-3
- 3-4
- 4-5
- 5-12

**Family Child Care Learning Home Owners Only:**

Date you opened your facility: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Number of hours your facility operates each week: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children currently enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_

Ages of children currently enrolled:

- Birth-1
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Net income from previous year's IRS Schedule C tax form: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?

Serve GACAPS subsidized children?

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

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Title (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Statement of Affirmation and Frequently Asked Questions

## Final Signature

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

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

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last 4 Digits of Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What are the Incentives application deadlines for 2024?** Applications must be sent between September 5 to November 30 for 2024 Winter Incentives applicants.

**Can I receive Incentives if I earned my degree more than 5 years ago?** No. Applicants are only eligible if their credential or degree was earned 5 years ago or less from the year of the application (i.e. 2024 applicants must present a credential or degree dated 2019 or later).

**Do I have to send an official transcript with my application?** Yes, unless you received a CDA, then submit a copy of your CDA credential. If you earned a Technical Certificate of Credit, Technical College Diploma, Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, or Master's Degree, you must submit a copy of your official transcript from the Registrar's office. Unofficial transcripts and unofficial TCC certificates will not be accepted.

**Is the Incentives payment taxable?** Yes, the Incentives payment is considered taxable income. You will receive an IRS Form 1099 as required and must report the Incentives payment as income on your tax return. Please contact a tax professional with any questions you have about how to report this on your taxes.

**Am I eligible for Incentives if I've earned a graduate-level certificate or teaching certificate?** No, if your credential or degree is not included in the list on page 1, it does not qualify.

## DECAL Scholars Contact Information

Phone: (770) 642-6722 ext. 602

Email: [support@decalscholars.com](mailto:support@decalscholars.com)

Website: [www.decalscholars.com](http://www.decalscholars.com)

## Affidavit For Lawful Presence Verification For DECAL Scholars Programs

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

Name of Person Receiving Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1: Status

Check only ONE of the following:

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

My alien registration number issued by the Department of Homeland Security or other federal immigration agency is:

\_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2: Documentation

- I verify I am providing A COPY OF THE FRONT AND BACK of at least one secure and verifiable document, as required by O.C.G.A. Sec. 50-36-1(e)(1), with this affidavit. **A complete list of acceptable documents is on page 7 of this document.**

The secure and verifiable document I am providing with this affidavit is:

\_\_\_\_\_

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

### Section 3: Applicant Signature

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

Do not sign and date this document until you are in the presence of a notary.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 4: Notary Signature

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME ON THIS THE \_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

Notary Public Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Georgia Professional Development System Information

**All individuals applying for DECAL Scholars programs must register with the Georgia Professional Development System for Early Childhood Educators (GaPDS) as a part of the application process.**

The GaPDS is separate from DECAL Scholars. It records and maintains your professional development information – your training and/or any credentials or degrees you earn, in one convenient location.

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

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

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

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

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

If you have questions or need technical support, contact the GaPDS by phone at 404-334-6461 or email at [gapds@decals.ga.gov](mailto:gapds@decals.ga.gov).

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

*Issued February 20, 2018, by the Office of the Attorney General, Georgia*

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 (“IIREA”), as amended by Senate Bill 160, signed into law as Act No. 27, (2013), provides that “[n]ot later than August 1, 2011, the Attorney General shall provide and make public on the Department of Law’s website a list of acceptable secure and verifiable documents. The list shall be reviewed and updated annually by the Attorney General.” O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(g). The Attorney General may modify this list on a more frequent basis, if necessary.

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

- **An unexpired United States passport or passport card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired United States military identification card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired driver’s license** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, provided that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]<sup>1</sup>
- **An unexpired identification card** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, provided that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired tribal identification card of a federally recognized Native American tribe**, provided that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer. A listing of federally recognized Native American tribes may be accessed at: <https://bia.gov> [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired United States Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired Employment Authorization Document** that contains a photograph of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired passport issued by a foreign government**, provided that such passport is accompanied by a United States Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) Form I-94, DHS Form I-94A, DHS Form I-94W, or other federal form specifying an individual’s lawful immigration status or other proof of lawful presence under federal immigration law<sup>2</sup> [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired Merchant Mariner Document or Merchant Mariner Credential** issued by the United States Coast Guard [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An unexpired Free and Secure Trade (FAST) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 22 CFR § 41.2]
- **An unexpired NEXUS card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 22 CFR § 41.2]
- **An unexpired Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 22 CFR § 41.2]
- **An unexpired driver’s license** issued by a Canadian government authority [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Certificate of Citizenship** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-560 or Form N-561) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- **A Certificate of Naturalization** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-550 or Form N-570) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- **Certification of Report of Birth** issued by the United States Department of State (Form DS-1350) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- **Certification of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-545) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- **Consular Report of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-240) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- **An original or certified copy of a birth certificate** issued by a State, county, municipal authority, or territory of the United States bearing an official seal [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 6 CFR § 37.11]
- In addition to the documents listed herein, if, in administering a public benefit or program, an agency is required by federal law to accept a document or other form of identification for proof of or documentation of identity, that document or other form of identification will be deemed a secure and verifiable document solely for that particular program or administration of that particular public benefit. [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(c)]