



Bright from the Start Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, 670 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334
 Phone: (404) 657-5562 WWW.DECAL.GA.GOV

Date: 4/27/2026 **VisitType:** Monitoring Visit

Arrival: 10:00 AM **Departure:** 3:30 PM

CCLC-65961
Steps of Excellence Learning Center LLC
 1101 Courtland Ave Macon, GA 31204 Bibb County
 (478) 260-3424

Process & QI Unit Consultant
 Stacy Igarashi
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 stacy.igarashi@decal.ga.gov
 Joint with: Trinity Dennis

Mailing Address
 Same

Quality Rated: ★ ★

<u>Compliance Zone Designation</u>			Compliance Zone Designation - A summary measure of a program's 12 month monitoring history, as it pertains to child care health and safety rules. The three compliance zones are good standing, support, and deficient. Good Standing - Program is demonstrating an acceptable level of performance in meeting the rules. Support - Program performance is demonstrating a need for improvement in meeting rules. Deficient - Program is not demonstrating an acceptable level of performance in meeting the rules.
04/27/2026	Monitoring Visit	Deficient	
12/09/2025	Licensing Study	Good Standing	
07/11/2025	Complaint Investigation & Monitoring Visit	Good Standing	

Ratios/License Capacity

Building	Room	Age Group	Staff	Children	NC/C	Max 35 SF.	35 SF. Comp.	Max 25 SF.	25 SF. Comp.	Notes
Main Building	Room A 2 year	Two Year Olds	1	8	C	13	C	NA	NA	Floor Play
Main Building	Room B Infants	Infants	1	5	C	11	C	NA	NA	Floor Play,Nap
Main Building	Room C 1 year	One Year Olds	1	6	C	10	C	NA	NA	Floor Play
Main Building	Room D 3 year	Three Year Olds	2	8	C	14	C	NA	NA	Centers
Main Building	Room E 4year	Four Year Olds	2	16	C	21	C	NA	NA	Centers
Main Building	Room F Afterschool		0	0	C	20	C	NA	NA	
Total Capacity @35 sq. ft.: 89					Total Capacity @25 sq. ft.: 0					
Total # Children this Date: 43					Total Capacity @25 sq. ft.: 0					

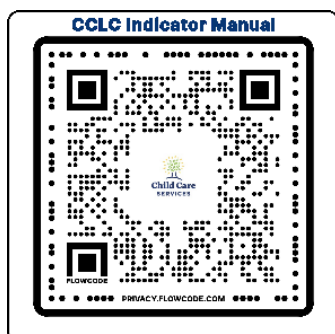
Building	Playground	Playground Occupancy	Playground Compliance
Main Building	Playground A Infants to 3 year	25	C
Main Building	Playground B 4 year and up	44	C
Main Building	Playground C 4 year and up	25	C

Enrolled Children						
Under 1 years	1 years	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years (Prekonly)	5 years and older
9	7	11	13	14	0	21

Comments

Discussed compliance with State rules and regulations to support ongoing health and safety of children in care.

Plan of Improvement: To Be Submitted 05/11/2026



For additional information regarding any licensing topics discussed during this visit, please consult the Rules and Regulations Indicator Manual. This manual provides comprehensive clarification of each rule, including evaluation indicators, related best practices, and relevant considerations to support your program's continued and sustained compliance.

To access the Indicator Manual, please scan the QR code below or visit our website at <https://www.dec.state.ga.us/CCS/RulesAndRegulations.aspx>.

Any rule violation which subjects a child to injury or life-threatening situation or any rule violations previously cited but not corrected, may result in the imposition of an adverse enforcement action. Serious or continued noncompliance may also jeopardize participation in one or more DECAL program(s).

Please refer to the website, <http://www.dec.state.ga.us/CCS/RulesAndRegulations.aspx>, for information regarding October 1, 2018 rule changes about Criminal Records Checks that may affect your facility. In summary,

- New records checks will be required to be completed if a staff member experiences a six month break in service from the child care industry
- New clearance is required at least once every five years
- Any staff member solely responsible for supervising children will be required to have completed a comprehensive background clearance
- All staff members are required to have completed at least a national fingerprint based clearance check
- Any staff member with only the national fingerprint based clearance, must be under constant and direct supervision of a staff member with a satisfactory comprehensive records check clearance
- Facilities are required to use DECAL KOALA for Criminal Records Checks, including to verify portability of an employee

O.C.G.A. Section 42.1.12(i)(2) requires Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to notify licensed child care programs on accessing and retrieving from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's (GBI) website a list of the names and addresses of all registered sexual offenders. Please see GBI's website located at <http://gbi.georgia.gov> to access the Georgia Sex Offender Registry.

Refutation Process:

You have the right to refute any of the citations noted in this report with which you disagree. To refute a citation(s), do the following:

- 1) Log into DECAL KOALA www.decalkoala.com with the userid for your program
- 2) On the home page scroll down to the Inspection Reports and select 'Refute Citation' for the visit report in dispute
- 3) Select the specific rule number(s) that you are refuting, add the reason for disagreement regarding the rule citation, and upload supporting documentation
- 4) Submit the refutation in DECAL KOALA to Child Care Services (CCS) within 10 business days of the completion date.

Your refutation will be forwarded to the appropriate CCS manager, who will follow up with you about your concerns. If you have any questions about this process, contact our office at 404-657-5562.

Bright from the Start recommends that all licensed child care providers carry liability insurance coverage sufficient to protect its clients. If you do not have this liability insurance, you are required to post a notice with ½ inch letters in a conspicuous location in the program, notify the parent or guardian of each child in care in writing, obtain their signature to acknowledge receipt and maintain this written acknowledgment on file at the program at all times while the child attends the program and for 12 months after the child's last date of attendance. (O.C.G.A. Section 20-1A-4)

Important Quality Rated/CAPS Update:

As January 1, 2022, child care providers must be Quality Rated to receive Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS). Newly licensed, or new to CAPS providers may be eligible for the new CAPS/QR Provisional Status, allowing for scholarships while working toward a star rating.

Contact the Quality Rated help desk at 855-800-7747 or qualityrated@dec.al.ga.gov for more information. Free technical assistance is available!



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Summary Report

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The following information is associated with a Monitoring Visit:

Activities and Equipment

591-1-1-.03 Activities

Met

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.03(2) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Consultant observed up to date lesson plans were available for all classrooms. Consultant discussed with staff that lesson plans should be current and available for all teachers in the classrooms, daily.

591-1-1-.12 Equipment & Toys(CR)

Not Met

Finding

591-1-1-.12(4) requires that equipment and furniture is secured if it is of a weight or mass that could cause injury from tipping, falling, or being pulled or pushed over. It was determined based on observation that in Room D 3 year, one child's wooden play mop/broom set was stored on top of a box, on top of the children's cubbies, and in Room A 2 years, 16 child-sized chairs were stacked, both posed a tipping hazard.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 1/8/2026

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.12(6) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. A variety of age-appropriate toys and play materials were available and accessible to children in all classrooms.

Technical Assistance

591-1-1-.12(8) - Consultant discussed with Staff to monitor toys and plastic containers in all classrooms and remove any cracked or broken items as needed.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

591-1-1-.35 Swimming Pools & Water-related Activities(CR)

N/A

Comment

Center does not provide swimming activities.

Facility

591-1-1-.06 Bathrooms

Technical Assistance

Comment

Bathrooms observed to be clean and well maintained.

Technical Assistance

591-1-1-.06(1) - Consultant discussed with Staff to repair or replace the sink in Room E 4 year, to ensure the center maintained the adequate number of sinks for the facility's licensed capacity.

Correction Deadline: 5/27/2026

591-1-1-.19 License Capacity(CR)

Met

Comment

Licensed capacity observed to be routinely met by center on this date.

591-1-1-.25 Physical Plant - Safe Environment(CR)

Not Met

Technical Assistance

591-1-1-.25(11) - The Consultant discussed with Staff that the flooring in Room B infants was in need of repair or replacement where it had begun to detach near the diaper-changing table, to ensure the surface remained smooth and free of tripping hazards.

Correction Deadline: 5/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.25(12) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. The center had adequate air conditioning/heating and classrooms were observed to be at a comfortable temperature.

Finding

591-1-1-.25(13) requires that potentially hazardous equipment, materials and supplies be stored in a locked area inaccessible to children. It was determined based on observation that the following hazards were accessible to children:

-Room A 2-year-old: five empty plastic bags and two packs of baby wipes were stored in low, children's cubbies, a laminator was stored in a low, unlocked cabinet

-Room D 3-year-old: a small plastic container with empty plastic bags and one pack of baby wipes were stored in low children's cubbies

-Room E 4-year-old: baby wipes and one container of Vaseline were stored in low children's cubbies, two bottles of aquarium water conditioner were stored on a low black shelf, in the children's play area.

All items were labeled "keep out of reach of children."

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Finding

591-1-1-.25(3) requires the Center and surrounding premises to be kept clean, free of debris and in good repair. Hygienic measures such as, but not limited to, screened windows and proper waste disposal procedures shall be utilized to minimize the presence of rodents, flies, roaches and other vermin at the Center. It was determined based on observation that the following areas were in need of repair:

-Room A 2-year-old : one piece of wooden trim was missing from the baseboard, and a hole was present, in the corner by the children's bookshelf ; one window by the children's play kitchen area had a crack in the glass.

-Room D 3 -3-year-old: one water spot was present on the ceiling in the children's bathroom.

-Room C 1-year-old: broken pieces of loose floor tiles were stored on a low shelf, accessible to children.

-Room F Afterschool: one floor tile was cracked and broken, by the right wall, under the bulletin board.

Correction Deadline: 5/11/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.25(8) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Unused electrical outlets were covered as required.

591-1-1-.26 Playgrounds(CR)

Not Met

Technical Assistance

591-1-1-.26(3) - Consultant discussed with Staff that the boxes and supplies in the hallway and mirror in the stairwell, leading to Playground B, needed to be removed to prevent hazards from being accessible on the route to the playground.

Correction Deadline: 5/27/2026

Finding

591-1-1-.26(4) requires that playgrounds be protected from traffic or other hazards by a (4) four foot high fence or other barrier approved by this Department. Fencing material shall not present a hazard to children and shall be maintained so as to prevent children from leaving the playground area by any means other than through an approved access route. Fence gates shall be kept closed except when persons are entering or exiting the area. It was determined based on observation that the following areas of fencing were in need of repair:

Playground A:

- The front fencing had two poles detached from the fencing
 - One pole was detached from the fencing on the left side
 - The bottom of the fencing was detached from the ground.
- All above areas had gaps measuring more than 3 and a half inches.

Playground B :

- There was a gap between the gate leading to the playground and pole which measured more than 3 and a half inches, and the gate did not latch.
 - One portion of the fencing on the left side leaned and was not stable and had one bent top pole.
 - The gate at the back side of the fencing had a gap at the bottom, measuring 6 and half inches, and the gate did not latch.
 - The fencing at the back side was detached from the ground, and a gap that measured more than 3 and a half inches was present.
- -----

Correction Deadline: 5/11/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Finding

591-1-1-.26(7) requires that climbing and swinging equipment be anchored. It was determined based on observation that the yellow bus and the red table on Playground B were not anchored and posed a tipping hazard

Correction Deadline: 5/4/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 12/19/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.26(8) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Playground equipment height did not to require resilient surfacing.

Technical Assistance

591-1-1-.26(9) - Consultant discussed with Staff that the electrical cord hanging by the brick wall on Playground B needed to be secured to the wall without loops to prevent a strangulation hazard. Also discussed with Staff that the rubber mats under the swings on Playground A needed to be repaired or recovered, where rolling up, and wooden trim pieces missing by the sidewalk needed to be repaired or replaced, so that an even surface was maintained and tripping hazards were prevented.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Food Service

591-1-1-.15 Food Service & Nutrition

Met

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.15(1) -The previous citation was observed to be corrected on this date. Consultant observed the center's menu met the USDA guidelines and did not list any choking hazard foods on the menu.

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.15(2)(g) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Consultant observed children to be seated while eating and foods were appropriately sized.

Health and Hygiene

Finding

591-1-1-.07(5) requires Center Staff to not permit children to wear around their necks or attach to their clothing pacifiers or other hazardous items. It was determined based on observation that one 1-year-old child in Room C 1 year, had a pacifier attachment clipped to their clothing and one 2-year-old child in Room A 2 year had a necklace around their neck.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

591-1-1-.10 Diapering Areas & Practices(CR)**Met****Comment**

Hand washing requirements for diapering were discussed with the director on this date.

591-1-1-.17 Hygiene(CR)**Not Met****Comment**

Please ensure lids remain on trash containing organic waste.

Finding

591-1-1-17(7) requires that children wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water upon arrival for care, when moving from one child care group to another, upon re-entering the child care area after outside play, before and after eating meals and snacks, handling or touching food, playing in water; after toileting and diapering, playing in sand, touching animals or pets, and contact with bodily fluids and after contamination by any other means. It was determined based on observation that a Staff member in Room C 1 year did not wash a child's hands after changing their diaper and the child was placed on the floor to go play immediately after diapering.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Finding

591-1-1-.17(8) requires staff to wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water upon arrival for the day, when moving from one child care group to another, upon re-entering the child care area after outside play, before and after diapering each child, dispensing medication, applying topical medications, handling and preparing food, eating, drinking, preparing bottles, feeding each child, assisting children with eating and drinking, after toileting or assisting children with toileting, using tobacco products, handling garbage and organic waste, touching animals or pets, handling bodily fluids and after contamination by any means. It was determined based on observation that a Staff member in Room C 1-year-old, changed a child's diaper and did not wash their hands before they began to diaper a second child.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

591-1-1-.20 Medications(CR)

N/A

Comment

The Provider currently does not dispense/administer medication.

Safety

591-1-1-.11 Discipline(CR)

Met

Comment

Age-appropriate discussion and/or redirection observed.

591-1-1-.36 Transportation(CR)

Met

Comment

A current/completed inspection was observed for all vehicles used in transporting children this date.

Comment

Complete documentation of transportation observed on this date.

Comment

The vehicle had an approved fire extinguisher and first aid kit on this date.

Correction Deadline: 12/10/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.36(4)(b) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. The seats in vehicle tag # SKB2799 were observed to be in good repair and free of stains and the seat belts were observed to be operable. Staff stated this was the only vehicle in use for transportation.

Sleeping & Resting Equipment

591-1-1-.30 Safe Sleeping and Resting Requirements(CR)

Not Met

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.30(1)(b)4 - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. All classrooms stored blankets and sheets separate and individual use was maintained.

Finding

591-1-1-.30(2) requires the Center to provide a safe sleep environment in accordance with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) recommendations as listed in these rules for all infants. Center Staff shall place an infant to sleep on the infant's back in a crib unless the Center has been provided a physician's written statement authorizing another sleep position for that particular infant that includes how the infant shall be placed to sleep and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed. When an infant can easily turn over from back to front and back again, Staff shall continue to put the infant to sleep initially on the infant's back but allow the infant to roll over into his or her preferred position and not re-position the infant. Sleepers, sleep sacks and wearable blankets that fit according to the commercial manufacturer's guidelines and will not slide up around the infant's face may be used when necessary for the comfort of the sleeping infant. Swaddling shall not be used unless the Center has been provided a physician's written statement authorizing its use for a particular infant that includes instructions and a time frame for swaddling the infant. Center Staff shall not place objects or allow objects to be placed in or on the crib with an infant such as but not limited to toys, pillows, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys, or other soft items and shall not attach objects or allow objects to be attached to a crib with a sleeping infant, such as, but not limited to, crib gyms, toys, mirrors and mobiles. It was determined based on observation, one infant slept in a crib in Room B infants, with a pacifier attachment clipped to their clothing.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Staff Records

Records Reviewed: 13

Records with Missing/Incomplete Components: 3

Staff # 4 Not Met

Date of Hire: 01/26/2026

"Missing/Incomplete Components"

.14(2)-CPR missing,.14(2)-First Aid Missing

Staff # 5 Not Met

Date of Hire: 06/10/2025

"Missing/Incomplete Components"

.14(2)-CPR missing,.14(2)-First Aid Missing

Staff # 13 Not Met

Date of Hire: 02/24/2026

"Missing/Incomplete Components"

.14(2)-CPR missing,.14(2)-First Aid Missing

591-1-1-.09 Criminal Records and Comprehensive Background Checks(CR)

Met

Comment

Director provided four file(s) for employees hired since last visit.

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.09(1)(f) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. All Staff had evidence of completed comprehensive background check letters on file.

591-1-1-.14 First Aid & CPR(CR)

Not Met

Finding

591-1-1-.14(1)(a) requires all Staff who provide direct care to children must obtain certification in a biennial training program in pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and a triennial training program in pediatric first aid within the first 45 days of employment. Current and valid evidence of the successful completion of such training shall be maintained on the Center's premises. The hours obtained completing this certification will not count towards the required annual training hours. It was determined based on observation that Staff number four, with a hire date of January 26, 2026, Staff number five with a hire date of June 10, 2025, and Staff number 13 with a hire date of February 24, 2026, did not have evidence of completing the required CPR/First Aid training within the first 45 days of employment.

Correction Deadline: 5/4/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 12/19/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.14(3) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. The center first aid kit and vehicle first aid kit were complete.

591-1-1-.31 Staff(CR)

Not Met

Comment

Discussed that all lead staff must enroll in an approved education program within 6 months of hire and complete degree within 18 months.

Finding

591-1-1-.31(13) prohibits Center Staff from committing any criminal act, as defined under Georgia law, in the presence of any child enrolled in the Center and requires Center staff to comply with all applicable laws and regulations. It was determined based on observation that vehicle tag# SKB2799 had an expired tag dated October 2025. Staff provided copy of new tag obtained during visit, on this date.

Correction Deadline: 4/27/2026

Recited on 4/27/2026

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.31(2)(b)2. -The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Professional Learning Plans were in place for new Staff who served as Lead Teachers.

Staffing and Supervision

591-1-1-.32 Staff:Child Ratios and Group Size(CR)

Met

Comment

Center observed to maintain appropriate staff:child ratios.

591-1-1-.32 Supervision(CR)

Met

Correction Deadline: 12/9/2025

Corrected on 4/27/2026

.32(7) - The previous citation was observed corrected on this date. Consultant observed adequate supervision in all classrooms.