

## SOLVE PROGRAM FAQs

### OVERVIEW

#### **What is the SOLVE Program?**

SOLVE stands for Supporting Onsite Learning for Virtual Education. The Program is part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding allocated to Georgia through the CARES Act and is in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. It is administered by the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program located within the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

#### **How does the SOLVE Program help families?**

The SOLVE Program provides financial assistance to families with students enrolled in a Georgia public school system that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>).

#### **What are SOLVE Scholarships?**

A Solve Scholarship is a financial award for qualifying families to pay for a specific child (ages 5-12, kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup> grade) to attend a licensed child care program that offers full-time care for school-age students or a licensed exempt day camp program while the child is engaged in virtual learning.

#### **Who is eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship?**

Working families with children ages 5-12 (kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup> grade) can receive SOLVE Scholarships to help them pay for the care, supervision, and support of those students at a licensed child care program or licensed exempt day camp program while they are engaged in virtual learning. The students must be enrolled in a school system that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>).

### INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

#### **What are the requirements to qualify for a SOLVE Scholarship?**

Families must meet four requirements:

- Students must attend a school system that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>).
- Students must be ages 5 through 12 (kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup> grade).
- Family income may not exceed 85% of the state median income (SMI).
- Parents must be involved in an approved activity, such as working, attending school, or a combination of the two.

#### **How can I apply for a SOLVE Scholarship?**

Families apply through the Georgia Gateway System at <https://gateway.ga.gov/access/>. Eligibility will be verified by CAPS staff. Families must select a provider when they apply.

#### **When can I apply?**

Families can apply and select a SOLVE Scholarship provider beginning September 1. Applications will be accepted as long as funding is available.

#### **Do SOLVE Scholarships cover the entire cost of full-time care?**

Depending on the provider, SOLVE Scholarships may only pay for a portion of the care. Therefore, providers that accept SOLVE Scholarships may require families to pay the difference between the SOLVE Scholarship rate and the provider's stated rate.



### **Will the SOLVE Scholarships cover the costs of care for the entire school year?**

The Scholarships are good for three months. This period may be extended if the school system continues to provide **primarily virtual learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>).

### **How can I find a list of eligible school districts? How often is this listed updated?**

A list of currently approved virtual only school districts can be found here:

[http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf)

This list is provided by the Georgia Department of Education and updated by DECAL on the SOLVE website and in Georgia Gateway. While the list cannot be updated in “real time”, it will be updated as soon as possible in both places.

### **My school system is offering in-person learning for certain grade levels, but not all grade levels. Does this mean that I am not eligible for a SOLVE scholarship?**

If a school district does not offer in-person learning for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>, that school system is approved for SOLVE scholarships since many families in these schools are not able to participate in in-person learning. A list of all eligible school districts is available at

[http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf).

### **My school system gave me the option to send my child to school or take virtual classes from home. I am worried about the risk of coronavirus infection at school and I work full time, so I chose the virtual learning option. Am I eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship?**

Only students whose school systems are **primarily using a virtual learning model** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual) are eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship. Families will not be eligible for a SOLVE scholarship if their school system uses a primarily in-person learning model (meaning that over 50% of classroom instruction is in-person) or gives them a choice between classroom and virtual learning. However, suppose a school system only offers in-person learning for certain grade levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>. In that case, families in that school system are considered eligible for a SOLVE scholarship, pending other eligibility requirements.

### **If a school system transitions to a primarily virtual model later in the school year, will affected families be eligible for SOLVE Scholarships?**

Yes, if school systems change to a primarily virtual model (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>), then families in those school systems will be able to qualify for SOLVE Scholarships as long as funding is available. A list of all eligible school districts is available at [http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf).

### **If a school district switches from a virtual-only model to a hybrid model, does that mean that those families no longer qualify for SOLVE Scholarships?**

Once awarded, SOLVE Scholarships are good for three months. If the school district changes to a primarily in-person learning model (meaning that over 50% of classroom instruction is in-person), affected families would no longer be eligible after their current scholarship expires. However, if the school district only offers in-person learning for certain grade-levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>, families who attend that school district would still be eligible for a SOLVE scholarship, pending other eligibility requirements. Additionally, if the district decides to return to a primarily virtual learning model (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual) for any grade level after the scholarship has expired and there is still funding available, families may apply again and qualify for SOLVE Scholarships.



**If I have more than one child in a school that is providing primarily virtual learning, can I get SOLVE Scholarships for all of them?**

Yes, families may receive a SOLVE Scholarship for any eligible child.

**Do families whose school districts provide primarily virtual learning qualify for SOLVE Scholarships if their child is at an eligible provider located in a different school district?**

Yes. SOLVE Scholarships will pay for the care of a student whose school system is providing **primarily virtual-only learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>), even if the care is provided at an eligible facility that is outside the student's school district. Parents must attest that the child is enrolled in the eligible school system.

**My child's school recently switched to a primarily virtual learning model, but when I complete my SOLVE application in Georgia Gateway it says my child is ineligible because they are not in an approved school district. How do I resolve this?**

The list of school districts that are providing primarily virtual learning is provided by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). DECAL works closely with GaDOE to get the list of school district updates as soon as possible. A list of eligible school districts can be found at:

[http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf](http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf)

DECAL updates the list of approved SOLVE districts to the SOLVE website and in Georgia Gateway. While the lists cannot be updated in "real time", they will be updated as quickly as possible. If you experience the error described above, try checking again the next day to allow time for the system to be updated.

Please note that if your school district is offering in-person learning for certain grade levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>, your school district is approved for SOLVE scholarships. Additionally, if your school district uses a hybrid model where virtual learning constitutes at least half of all classroom instruction, then your school district is recognized as using a primarily virtual learning model and will be included in the list of eligible school districts.

**Am I eligible for a SOLVE scholarship if my school offers in-person learning for part of the week?**

If your school district is using **virtual learning for 50% or more of classroom instruction per week**, the SOLVE program recognizes the school system as a virtual-only school district. This includes:

- School districts that alternate between in-person and virtual learning each week,
- School districts that offer in-person learning for less than half of each school day, and
- School districts that use other hybrid models where in-person learning constitutes less than half of the days of the week.

Once a school district begins using **in-person learning for more than 50% of classroom instruction per week**, the SOLVE program will no longer recognize that school district as being eligible for SOLVE scholarships, and new applicants in that district will no longer be eligible for a SOLVE scholarship as well.

**NOTE:** If your school system is **using in-person learning in certain, but not all, grade levels kindergarten – grade 7**, your school system will be included in the list of eligible school systems.

## **Can I use a SOLVE Scholarship at any child care facility?**

SOLVE Scholarships can be used at licensed child care learning centers, licensed family child care learning homes, government-owned-and-operated child care facilities, and providers with an approved day camp exemption. Eligible providers have to offer full-time care for school-age students while they are engaged in virtual learning. Any participating child care facility must also be an eligible CAPS provider and currently accepting CAPS Scholarships.

## **What's the difference between a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship?**

SOLVE Scholarships are separate from CAPS Scholarships. While the SOLVE Scholarship requirements and benefits follow many of the CAPS rules and processes, there are important differences:

- **FEES:** Many families who receive a CAPS Scholarship are assessed a family fee. SOLVE Scholarships do not include a family fee. However, recipients of both CAPS Scholarships and SOLVE Scholarships may be responsible for paying the difference between the Scholarship and the Provider's stated rate.
- **BENEFIT TERMS:** CAPS Scholarships provide a 12-month benefit for children under the age of 13 (with some exceptions) that can be renewed annually until the family no longer meets eligibility requirements or until the family no longer needs child care. SOLVE Scholarships are only available to school-age students (ages 5–12) for a three-month eligibility period, while their school systems provide primarily virtual learning (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>).

## **Where can I find a provider that accepts SOLVE Scholarships?**

Families should search for eligible providers by visiting <http://qualityrated.org> and selecting the “fulltime care for school age children” check box on the search page. Families can also call 1-877-255-4254 and talk to a referral specialist.

## **Can a child hold a CAPS Scholarship and SOLVE Scholarship at the same time?**

No, children cannot hold a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship at the same time. DECAL will work with the families of children eligible for both scholarships to ensure a seamless transition between the two if needed.

## **Can I convert my CAPS Scholarship into a SOLVE Scholarship?**

The CAPS Scholarship is a 12-month benefit for children under the age of 13 (with some exceptions) that assists a family in paying for child care as long as the family meets CAPS eligibility criteria. While some families may pay less for care under a SOLVE Scholarship than a CAPS Scholarship, it is important to remember that the SOLVE Scholarship is a temporary benefit offered while schools provide primarily virtual learning (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7<sup>th</sup>). Families with CAPS Scholarships who want to transition to the SOLVE Program would have to close their CAPS Scholarship. This would result in the loss of all CAPS Program benefits, even after the SOLVE Program ends. DECAL will work with the families of children eligible for both scholarships to determine the best option for them and to ensure a seamless transition if needed.

## **Will the providers who accept SOLVE Scholarships require or furnish masks? Will providers enforce social distancing guidelines to protect the students from COVID-19?**

All providers offering care and education services to children and school-age students engaged in virtual learning must follow the COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Providers established by DECAL and the Georgia Department of Public Health. These guidelines are posted at

[http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/covid\\_guidanceGeorgia\\_ChildCare\\_8\\_12\\_2020.pdf](http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/covid_guidanceGeorgia_ChildCare_8_12_2020.pdf).



### **Are SOLVE Scholarships only for families with low incomes?**

SOLVE scholarships are for families who meet the income requirement. To be eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, a family's income may not exceed 85% of the state median income (SMI). Income limits can be found in the SOLVE Family Eligibility document located at:

[http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibilityRequirements.pdf](http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibilityRequirements.pdf).

### **How can I figure out if my family income exceeds 85% of the state median income (SMI)?**

A chart found at the link below will help you determine if your family income meets the SOLVE Scholarship eligibility requirements. Final determination is made by a DECAL Scholarship specialist.

[http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE\\_EligibilityRequirements.pdf](http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibilityRequirements.pdf)

### **Can SOLVE Scholarships be applied retroactively to payments for students who have already started school under a virtual-only model and are enrolled in full-time care at a provider?**

A SOLVE Scholarship begins payments on Monday of the week the application is approved. The SOLVE Scholarship will not pay retroactively to the date of enrollment if that was before the date the application was approved.

## **INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS**

### **What requirements do I have to meet to be eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships?**

Providers accepting SOLVE Scholarships must be:

- a licensed child care learning center, a licensed family child care learning home, a government-owned-and-operated child care facility, or a facility operating with an approved day camp exemption from DECAL
- an eligible CAPS provider currently accepting CAPS Scholarships
- listed as open and providing full-time care for school-age students in DECAL's KOALA System.

### **How do I indicate that my facility is open and providing full-time virtual learning for school-age students?**

Providers interested in accepting SOLVE Scholarships should follow these instructions to update their DECAL KOALA accounts to indicate that their facility is open and providing virtual learning for school-age students:

- Log in to your DECAL KOALA account at [www.decalkoala.com](http://www.decalkoala.com)
- On the green Menu Bar, click Facility Update
- Click Operating Details
- Enter your program's COVID-19 information in the blue area, including dates closed and open
- Indicate whether your program is open to serve school-age students all day to facilitate supervised distance learning

### **How can I become eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships if I don't currently meet the licensing requirements?**

Providers not meeting the licensing requirement need to apply for a license or day camp exemption through DECAL's Child Care Services (CCS) division. Application instructions for licensing and information about day camp exemptions are available at <http://www.decals.ga.gov/CCS/Exemptions.aspx>. For additional information, interested providers can call 404-657-5562 or email [ChildCareServices@decals.ga.gov](mailto:ChildCareServices@decals.ga.gov).

### **How can I become eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships if I don't currently meet the CAPS requirements?**

CAPS Registration and documentation requirements are available at <https://caps.decals.ga.gov/en/CAPSProviderHowTo>.

### **What reimbursement rates will apply if I accept SOLVE Scholarships?**

Providers will be reimbursed at current CAPS rates. Quality Rated providers accepting SOLVE Scholarships will receive the Tiered Reimbursement amount.

### **Will children at my facility who already have CAPS Scholarships be eligible for SOLVE Scholarships as well?**

Children will not be able hold a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship at the same time. DECAL will work with the families of children eligible for both to ensure a seamless transition if needed.



**My facility has an exemption, but not for a day camp. I also have indicated in KOALA that I am providing supervised distance learning for school-age students. Can I accept SOLVE Scholarships?**

Providers with day camp exemptions and those that are government-owned-and-operated are the only license-exempt facilities that can accept SOLVE Scholarship. Although other parents searching for full-time care for school-age students on [qualityrated.org](http://qualityrated.org) can find and choose your facility, parents who are SOLVE Scholarship applicants can only select exempt providers with a day camp exemption or that are government-owned and operated. Information about whether you may qualify for a day camp exemption is available at <http://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/Exemptions.aspx>.

**What personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing accommodations will I need to make in my facility for the school-age students with SOLVE Scholarships?**

All providers offering care and education services to children and school-age students engaged in virtual learning must follow the COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Providers established by DECAL and the Georgia Department of Public Health, posted at [http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/covid\\_guidanceGeorgia\\_ChildCare\\_8\\_12\\_2020.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/covid_guidanceGeorgia_ChildCare_8_12_2020.pdf).

**How are these CARES Act funds different from the funds distributed earlier by DECAL through the STABLE Grants?**

Both the SOLVE Scholarships and the STABLE Grants provide financial assistance to support families and child care providers during the COVID-19 health crisis. However, STABLE Grants provide financial assistance to child care providers whereas SOLVE Scholarships provide financial assistance to families who need full-time child care while school systems offer virtual-only learning. A provider will only receive payments through the SOLVE Program if the provider cares for a family with a SOLVE Scholarship.

**Will DECAL provide more STABLE Grant funds in the future?**

STABLE grants were DECAL's initial effort to provide support to child care providers impacted by the COVID-19 health crisis with CARES Act funds. DECAL intends to offer additional funding opportunities in the future and will inform providers when these opportunities become available.

**Where can I get more details?**

DECAL will provide additional information for families about the SOLVE Scholarships, including details about income eligibility and activity requirements, at <http://www.decal.ga.gov/CAPS/Solve.aspx>. If you have additional questions, please email us at [solve@decal.ga.gov](mailto:solve@decal.ga.gov) or call 1-833-442-2277.