

# The Great Start Georgia Vision



The experiences a child has prior to entering kindergarten affect how the brain develops and provide the foundation for success in school and life.

The Governor's Office for Children and Families and the Georgia Department of Public Health work with communities throughout the state to ensure that our children and families are edu-

cated, healthy, safe and growing—and Great Start Georgia is the first step in this process.

Great Start Georgia provides communities with a framework for reaching out to new and expectant families, offering support and services to improve the well-being of Georgia's children and families.



## Great Start Georgia Information & Referral Center

**1-855-707-8277**

[www.GreatStartGeorgia.org](http://www.GreatStartGeorgia.org)



The Early Years Last a Lifetime

Sponsored by:



Governor's Office for  
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In partnership with:



This project was supported in part by the Governor's Office for Children and Families through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program grant. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Governor's Office for Children and Families or the HRSA, MIECHV Program.



# Great Start Georgia

Sponsored by the Governor's Office for Children and Families, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health



The Early Years Last a Lifetime

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Great Start Georgia?**

Great Start Georgia (GSG) represents a milestone in the development and implementation of comprehensive, community-based systems for expectant parents, children birth to age five, and their families in Georgia. Great Start Georgia provides communities with a framework for reaching out to new and expectant families, offering support and services to improve the well-being of Georgia's children and families.

GSG provides a welcome for every child, emphasizing prevention and early intervention services that are community-based and voluntary.

### **Who is behind Great Start Georgia?**

GSG is spearheaded by the Governor's Office for Children and Families (GOCF), which works with communities throughout the state to ensure that children and families are educated, healthy, safe and growing—and Great Start Georgia is the first step in this process. GOCF received a Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to implement evidence-based home visiting programs within maternal and early childhood systems in some Georgia communities. Great Start Georgia provides the framework for a community-based system of supports and services within which home visiting programs are embedded. The Georgia Department of Public Health has partnered with GOCF to provide a Central Intake function to help support the efforts of GSG.

### **What services are available?**

GSG connects expectant mothers, children, and their families to a range of services in the areas of evidence-based home visiting, maternal and child health, child safety, school readiness, community and family safety, and family economic self-sufficiency.



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### **Where is Great Start Georgia available?**

GSG is unfolding in various stages in communities across Georgia. Currently, seven counties have received federal funding from GOCF to embed evidence-based home-visiting in their local Great Start Georgia system. This funding affords Georgia the opportunity to create a statewide home visiting infrastructure to expand and improve existing home visiting services, to replicate a home visiting model, and to link home visiting to other community efforts focused on promoting early childhood health and development. Other communities in Georgia are using existing resources to develop the system one step at a time.

### **Which seven counties are implementing the Great Start Georgia system?**

The seven counties are Clarke, Crisp, DeKalb, Glynn, Houston, Muscogee and Whitfield.

### **Who is eligible for Great Start Georgia?**

Great Start Georgia is available to all expectant parents, children birth to age five, and their families in the seven counties listed above. Families desiring services and supports are linked with the specific community resources that they need. Evidenced-based home visiting services are available for families needing extra support for themselves and their children.

### **How are individuals or/families referred into Great Start Georgia?**

Families may be referred to GSG in several ways. Community service providers, families, friends, neighbors or other interested community members may refer families to:

- Local GSG representatives designated by each county implementing the system. These representatives include GSG home visiting program staff and district or local public health department staff.
- The GSG Information and Referral Center (IRC) through a toll-free number (1-855-707-8277).
- The GSG website ([www.greatstartgeorgia.org](http://www.greatstartgeorgia.org)), which provides an online referral form.

Once a referral is made, the family will be contacted by a trained professional to assist in determining the next step in ensuring that family needs are met.

### **How are referrals to Great Start Georgia made locally?**

Designated community representatives are available to accept referrals from local child and family service providers and families within the community. Contact information for the community representatives is provided locally by GSG partners and is also available through the GSG Information and Referral Center at 1-855-707-8277 and the GSG website ([greatstartgeorgia.org](http://greatstartgeorgia.org)).



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### **What information is available on GreatStartGeorgia.org?**

The purpose of the GSG [website](#) is to provide more information about GSG and assist families, service providers, advocates and community leaders in learning about the community system in each county. Resources and materials, such as brochures, posters and local directories, are available for download.

The website also serves as an entry point into the GSG system. All expectant parents, children birth to age five, and their families may be referred into the system by entering basic contact information through an online referral form. The website also includes a listing of the local contacts for each of the seven counties.

### **What does the GSG Information and Referral Center (IRC) provide?**

The GSG IRC increases the capacity of the GSG system to identify families for screening and referral to needed services by:

- Reviewing all birth certificates in GSG communities in a timely manner and verifying birth certificate information.
- Answering calls from families, providers, and other stakeholders daily and providing information on basic parenting and community resources.
- Following-up on referrals made through the website within one business day.

### **Is information on GSG available in languages other than English?**

Yes. Spanish-speaking representatives are available at the IRC. Interpretation is also available at the IRC for a wide variety of languages. Brochures and other written materials are available in Spanish, as well.

### **Where should I go for more information on GSG?**

Please visit Great Start Georgia [website](#) for general information about GSG. Or call the IRC through the toll-free number – 1-855-707-8277—to speak with a live person. You may also contact a GSG community representative in one of the seven counties where GSG is being implemented. The list of names and contact information is available through the IRC or the GSG website.

**For more information, call 1-855-707-8277**

**or visit [www.greatstartgeorgia.org](http://www.greatstartgeorgia.org)**



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## What We Do

The mission of **Great Start Georgia** is to provide wide-ranging support services for families and children to ensure that families have the information and support they need to provide a great start in life.

Great Start Georgia's Information & Referral Center provides families with a localized community resource guide and connections to relevant resources and age-appropriate information. Services include:

- ◆ Maternal and Child Health
  - ◇ Children 1st
  - ◇ Babies Can't Wait
  - ◇ Children's Medical Services
  - ◇ Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- ◆ Home and Child Safety
- ◆ Community and Family Safety
- ◆ School Readiness
- ◆ Family Economic Self-sufficiency
- ◆ Home Visiting

## Every Georgia Child Deserves a Great Start...

And we're here to make that happen.

Great Start Georgia connects families to parenting resources and a wide range of community services that improve child and family well-being. Families can enter the program several ways, including through the Information & Referral Center.

Know someone who could use a great start? Call our toll-free number today or visit the website to complete a referral form!

## Great Start Georgia Information & Referral Center

# 1-855-707-8277

[www.GreatStartGeorgia.org](http://www.GreatStartGeorgia.org)

## How You Can Help

If you know about an expectant parent or family with a newborn or young child, you can help make sure they have the information and support they need to provide a great start for their children by calling our toll-free number or visiting the website to submit a referral. Messages can be left 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will be returned. This service is free and confidential.

Professionally trained Information & Referral Center staff will then contact the families to conduct a comprehensive screen to determine their needs and connect them with the appropriate resources.

Home visiting programs are available for families with more intensive needs in many counties across the state. Contact the Information & Referral Center or visit the website to learn what counties near you offer home visiting services.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 7, 2013

### **First Lady Launches Great Start Georgia**

*New initiative dedicated to ensuring children get a great start in life*

**Atlanta, Georgia** ---- Georgia's First Lady, Sandra Deal, announced the launch of **Great Start Georgia** from the Capitol on January 7, 2013. State Leaders, communities, and families joined Mrs. Deal as she expressed Georgia's commitment to making sure all expectant parents, new parents, and children get a great start!

Administered by the Governor's Office for Children and Families, **Great Start Georgia** is an overall effort to ensure that Georgia's families and communities are able to meet the needs of expectant parents and children birth to age five and their families. In partnership with the Department of Public Health, the system is designed to create a community culture of care, encouragement, and support for all families before and after the birth of a child. A toll-free Information & Referral Center offers connections to relevant local resources and information.

A major service strategy in the **Great Start Georgia** system is evidence-based home visiting services for families needing support in providing safe, nurturing, and healthy environments for their children. The long-term goal is statewide implementation. Currently, seven counties have received federal funding from the Governor's Office for Children and Families to embed evidence-based home visiting in their local Great Start Georgia systems, affording Georgia the opportunity to create a statewide home visiting infrastructure and better coordinate community-based services and supports focused on promoting optimal early childhood health and development.

The Governor's Office for Children and Families works with communities throughout the state to meet the Governor's goals of ensuring that our children and families are educated, healthy, safe and growing. **Great Start Georgia (GSG)** is the first step in this process. By providing communities a framework for creating a coordinated system for reaching out to all new and expectant families, and offering needed supports and services, **GSG** has the potential to significantly improve the well-being of Georgia's children and families. We now know how important these early years are. We know that the experiences a child has prior to entering kindergarten affect how the brain develops and lay the foundation for success in school and life. *The early years really do last a lifetime.*

For more information about Great Start Georgia, visit [www.greatstartgeorgia.org](http://www.greatstartgeorgia.org) or call the Information & Referral Center at 1-855-707-8277.

# ***MEDIA ADVISORY***



## **GEORGIA FIRST LADY SANDRA DEAL, THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH HOST PRESS EVENT TO LAUNCH GREAT START GEORGIA**

*An initiative dedicated to ensuring children get a great start in life*

**WHAT/NEWS:** Join government leaders and community stakeholders for the launch of **Great Start Georgia** – a new initiative dedicated to improving the well-being of Georgia's children and families, sponsored by the Governor's Office for Children and Families in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Event to highlight the benefits of Great Start Georgia, a milestone in the development and implementation of comprehensive, community-based services for expectant parents, children birth to age five, and their families.

**WHO:**

- Georgia First Lady Sandra Deal
- Katie Jo Ballard, Executive Director, Governor's Office for Children and Families
- Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald, Department of Public Health
- Kirrena Gallagher, Former Participant, Prevent Child Abuse Athens, Inc.

**WHEN:** **Monday, Jan. 7, 2013; 9:30 am**

**WHERE:** North Wing of State Capitol Building  
206 Washington St. SW, Atlanta, GA 30334

**MEDIA CONTACTS:** Kate Grusich, Cookerly Public Relations  
[kate@cookerly.com](mailto:kate@cookerly.com); office: 404.816.2037; cell: 404.617.0421

**BACKGROUND:** Great Start Georgia provides communities with a comprehensive framework for reaching out to new and expectant families, offering home visiting and local early intervention services so that children get a great start in life. A toll-free **Information & Referral Center** makes the process easy – and offers connections to relevant local resources and information.

For more information, visit [www.greatstartgeorgia.org](http://www.greatstartgeorgia.org).

###

Because every Georgia child deserves a Great Start



**Great Start Georgia** connects families to parenting resources and community services to ensure children get a great start in life.

Know someone who could use support?

**Call today or visit our website to complete a referral form!**

**1-855-707-8277 (toll free)**

**Open every day, 8 am to 8 pm**

**[www.GreatStartGeorgia.org](http://www.GreatStartGeorgia.org)**



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