



GCCA Virtual Training
Autism & Play in Early Learning

Presented by Dr. Sheila Thompson, Mercer University

-  **Date:** Saturday, October 10, 2026
-  **Time:** 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. ET
-  **Format:** Live Virtual Training (Zoom)
-  **Credit:** DECAL-Approved Professional Development Hours Request Pending (7/22/26)
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Session Overview

Discover practical, play-based strategies that help create inclusive classrooms where every child can learn, participate, and thrive. Dr. Sheila Thompson will share real-world techniques for supporting children with autism while strengthening communication, engagement, and learning for all children.

Training Agenda

8:15 – 8:30 a.m. Virtual Check-In

Log in, test your audio, housekeeping, and get settled before we begin.

8:30 – 8:40 a.m. Welcome & Opening Remarks Georgia Child Care Association

8:40 – 10:00 a.m. Training Session: Autism & Play in Early Learning

- Understanding autism in early childhood
- Why play matters for every child
- Practical strategies to support communication and social development
- Creating inclusive learning environments
- Classroom examples and best practices

10:00 – 10:10 a.m. Break

10:10 – 10:50 a.m. Putting It Into Practice

- Everyday play strategies you can implement immediately
- Supporting families through partnership
- Building confidence as an educator
- Questions and discussion

10:50 – 11:00 a.m.

Closing Remarks & Resources

What You'll Leave With

- Practical classroom strategies you can use immediately
- Greater confidence supporting children with autism
- Ideas for creating more inclusive learning environments
- Tools to strengthen relationships with children and families
- DECAL-approved professional development hours

Registration is required. We look forward to learning with you on October 10!