

Georgia's  
**CAPTA** Citizen Review Panel Program



Hand in Hand  
Making a Difference

2007 Annual Report

# CAPTA Georgia's Citizen Review Panels

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## Annual Report 2007

### Introduction

The establishment of citizen review panels for all state Child Protective Services (CPS) systems was mandated by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) reauthorization of 1996 for all states receiving a CAPTA grant. Under federal statute, these panels are required to review the compliance of state and local child protective services agencies in the discharge of their responsibilities with respect to:

- 1) their state's CAPTA plan;
- 2) coordination with Title IV-E foster care and adoption programs;
- 3) review of child fatalities and near fatalities; and
- 4) other criteria the panel considers important.

Legislative guidelines recommend that panel membership be broadly representative of their communities and include individuals with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect who are familiar with the intricacies of the CPS system.

The mission of the panels is to assure that children are protected from maltreatment, and children and families are provided the best possible services within the framework of available resources through:

- Evaluating and assessing the child welfare system
- Promoting quality child protective services practice
- Advocating for the strengthening of resources
- Recommending and advocating for policies and procedures that promote the highest practice standards
- Cross-system problem-solving involving both formal and informal support agencies, groups and individuals

The purpose of these panels is to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states are meeting their goals of protecting children from child abuse and neglect. Properly established, citizen review panels have the capacity to promote creative problem-solving; to recommend increased resources and system change; and to improve cooperation, coordination and collaboration in the child welfare community.

Georgia utilizes three existing, statewide committees/task forces to satisfy its CAPTA citizen review panel requirement – the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC), the

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC) and the Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP).

### **Georgia's Citizen Review Panel Program in 2007**

In 2006, the panels' recommendation that a statewide child abuse prevention plan be developed was supported by the Director of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services. In the agency's response to the annual report it was proposed that "the Division will convene a state prevention work group made up of representative stakeholders and prevention grantees, to map our shared populations, identify funding resources for prevention, agree on a common language and outcome indicators for prevention and what role each collaborating partner plays in the service continuum." More specifically, it was suggested that the Child Welfare Collaborative Initiative emphasis on child welfare collaboration would help to facilitate this process. Another key recommendation in the 2006 report being considered by the Division is the need to develop (update) and facilitate a statewide mandated reporter training protocol and a campaign to increase public awareness and promote the community's role in the identification and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Georgia's citizen review panels made great strides in 2007 and, with the continued support of the Division of Family and Children Services (Division), CRPs, both individually and collectively, have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the improvement of Georgia's child welfare system as well as advocate on behalf of the system. Significant activity in 2007 included initiation of a review of Georgia's prevention assets by two panels that will form the basis of a recommendation for a statewide prevention plan, participation in Georgia's Child and Family Services Review, and a strategic planning retreat.

Georgia's second federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) was conducted in 2007. Several citizen review panel members participated in the state self-assessment in preparation for the review, interviews during the CFSR, or work groups consulted in the development of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) to address areas identified as needing improvement during the CFSR. In addition to their involvement in the development of the PIP, panel members are directly involved in action items in the PIP or in monitoring state progress towards its goals.

In Fall 2007, a CRP strategic planning retreat was sponsored by DFCS and facilitated with assistance from the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services. Representatives from each of the designated panels met to discuss the goals and objectives of the CRP program and more specifically to clarify their respective roles in the citizen review process and their obligations as citizen review panels. Preserving the individual integrity of each panel was paramount among participants, and it was recommended that a steering committee be established to facilitate a more coordinated effort around their common purpose, identify common issues, eliminate duplication of effort, utilize resources more effectively, improve communication and increase collaboration among the groups. In the interest of effective and efficient exchange of information, a steering committee was created and has acted as liaison between the individual panels and Georgia's child welfare agency, and the Region IV Children's Bureau, particularly when the issues at hand were relevant to all panels.

Technical assistance received from the National Resource Center provided the committee with valuable insight and guidance, which will help advance Georgia's CAPTA Citizen Review Panel program. Ongoing strategic planning includes:

- Development of guidelines for improvement of organizational structure
- Improvement of internal and external communications
- Effective recruitment, training and engagement of panel members
- Update of mission, goals and objectives

**Recommendations proposed by the steering committee in 2007 to support the advancement of Georgia's Citizen Review Panel program include:**

- Establish a steering committee to facilitate open and timely exchange between CRPs and the child welfare agency and promote communication, coordination and collaboration among the CRPs
- Extend an open invitation to Region IV Children's Bureau representative and DFCS leadership to attend meetings
- Request that DFCS keep CRPs abreast of changes in the agency's child welfare priorities
- Solicit a list of issues for which DFCS would like additional input from CRPs so that the issues may be considered and incorporated into CRP activities
- Consult with DFCS to identify areas of the CFSR and Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) in which CRPs might play a role
- Request that DFCS assign a CPS policy specialist as CRP liaison
- Meet bi-monthly during 2008
- Continue CRP program with independent program coordinator
- Investigate the possibility of utilizing a website to facilitate seamless communication between the panels and provide a venue for public outreach

**Georgia's Three Citizen Review Panels**

*Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC)*

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The Child Protective Services Advisory Committee was established in 2000 in response to Section 106 of CAPTA Title I to solicit input from citizens regarding the activities of the state's Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services. CPSAC supports strategies identified in the state's CAPTA plan essential to the improvement of Georgia's child welfare outcomes including:

- More effective intake, assessment, screening and investigation of suspected child maltreatment
- More effective case management, including the monitoring and delivery of services and treatment
- Better qualified, trained and experienced staff
- Improved training for mandated reporters

- More effective interagency collaboration among public health, mental health, juvenile justice, Child Protective Services, Department of Education, child care and community-based organizations and service providers

The committee continues to support these elements of the CAPTA plan, emphasizing the importance of improved supervisory training for staff, and support and ongoing outreach, training and monitoring of a mandated reporter network.

In 2006, the CPSAC recommended that the state agency take the lead in engaging with community-based prevention efforts through the development of a public relations campaign aimed at providing families and communities with a better understanding of child abuse and neglect prevention and DFCS' role in child welfare. These continue to be a priority for the CPSAC, however, two specific areas were the focus of their efforts in 2007 – a review of Georgia's differential response system (Diversion) and a statewide plan for child abuse prevention.

**Diversion:** There were 92,185 incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect reported in Georgia in 2007. Although not meeting the criteria for investigation, 30% of these reports were considered at-risk for child abuse and/or neglect and referred for Diversion services for follow-up and community supports and services.

**Child Protective Services: State Fiscal Year 2007  
Reports of Child Maltreatment**

<b>Disposition</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Substantiated Open	12,059	13
Substantiated Closed	9,721	11
Unsubstantiated Open	1,545	2
Unsubstantiated Closed	26,826	29
Total Cases Investigated	50,151	54
Screened Out	14,402	16
<i>Diversion</i>	<i>27,632</i>	<i>30</i>
Total Reports	92,185	100

*Source: Georgia DHR DFCS, Child Protective Services Data System*

Georgia's Diversion practices are ultimately determined at the local level, where county departments interpret broad guidelines. Anecdotal concerns from the field and the community-at-large prompted the committee to review Georgia's Diversion program to determine what impact, if any, the lack of statewide policy, consistent practice models and minimum standards/guidelines had on:

1. The effectiveness of the differential response as an alternate strategy to address at-risk families early on the child welfare continuum,
2. The ability of DFCS to adequately assess its effectiveness as an early intervention strategy, and,

### 3. Community awareness and perception of the practice as an alternative to CPS involvement.

Examination and review of county and regional protocols is an ongoing project, and it is expected that results and recommendations will be presented to the state agency in 2008. Preliminary research supports the committee's position on the need to develop a statewide policy to guide and support Georgia's Diversion program.

**Child Abuse Prevention Plan:** With more than 92,000 reports of possible child maltreatment in Georgia in 2007, this committee remains steadfast in its belief that education and prevention is the most effective tool in reducing child maltreatment. In 2007, the CPSAC initiated a review of Georgia's child abuse prevention efforts, including resources available, to support the development of a comprehensive, statewide, sustainable plan to promote the awareness and prevention of child abuse and neglect and reduce its resulting impact on child welfare. The child abuse and neglect prevention focus of the CPSAC review and resulting recommendations, combined with the child injury prevention plan conceived by the Office of Child Fatality Review and developed in conjunction with the Injury Prevention section of the Division of Public Health, has the potential to provide Georgia with a comprehensive plan addressing the full prevention continuum.

#### **CPSAC Recommendations and Ongoing Activities for 2008:**

- Review Georgia's existing Diversion program (differential response system)
- Review national research on differential response and strategies, policies, and outcomes in states utilizing differential response as a CPS strategy, and develop best practice and/or policy guideline recommendations
- Assess Georgia's child abuse prevention resources and collaborate on the development of a comprehensive statewide prevention plan that includes child abuse and neglect prevention
- Expansion of mandated reporter training to possibly include annual 'renewal' training, evaluation of training protocols, and monitoring of mandated reporters

#### *Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC)*

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Established in response to the Children's Justice Act (CJA), authorized in 1997 as part of CAPTA, the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee plays a key role in the overall continuum of child welfare service provision by facilitating, supporting and funding innovative practices. More specifically, the panel seeks to improve the investigation and prosecution of child sexual abuse and exploitation through activities designed to improve investigative, administrative and judicial handling of child maltreatment and related fatalities. In 2006, 5% of all reports of child maltreatment involved allegations of sexual abuse. Of those allegations, 35% were substantiated. Of 1,831 child fatalities in 2006, 4% were directly attributed to child abuse or neglect.

*Sources: DHR DFCS Protective Services Data System Annual Report 2006 and Division of Public Health Online Analytical Statistical Information System)*

The CJAAC promotes and supports activities that:

- Prevent child maltreatment and repeat maltreatment
- Increase awareness and educate the community about child abuse and neglect
- Strengthen intervention and prosecution in child abuse and neglect cases
- Build and support a network to promote the best response to child maltreatment
- Provide training and education that promotes an effective multi-disciplinary approach to the identification, intervention, treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect

In 2007, the CJAAC focused considerable effort on improving its organizational structure through the recruitment of panel members, identification of leadership, and establishment of a framework for addressing its obligations as a task force and as a citizen review panel. The development of a strong foundation to support its goals and objectives is expected to attract and engage a committed membership that will ensure its success as both a CJA task force and a CRP. In its role as a task force, the CJAAC continues to provide recommendations on utilization of the state's CJA grant. In 2007, these grants supported the following projects:

- Pre-appointment training for 150 Guardians ad Litem (GALs), in their specialized role as an advocate for children in juvenile court deprivation proceedings
- “Finding Words” seminars, developed by the National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse and Corner House Children’s Advocacy Center, to train 150 investigators in multi-disciplinary interviewing techniques
- Summer internships for graduate students at Mercer Law School in the field of child advocacy
- Summer internships for law students at Emory University in placements with Special Assistants to the Attorney General (SAAGs) and District Attorneys involved in the prosecution of child abuse and child sexual abuse cases
- Specialized training for Child Protective Services and Foster Care staff to increase their knowledge of the justice system and enhance their skills so that they more effectively utilize and collaborate with the legal system in their efforts to protect children
- Support for a new advocacy center for families and child victims of abuse and sexual abuse
- A conference, co-sponsored by Georgia Department of Law and DFCS, for 120 attorneys (SAAGs) representing DFCS in deprivation and termination proceedings
- Child Abuse Investigative Support Center crisis intervention training for law enforcement officers in techniques to de-escalate crisis situations and ensure the appropriate treatment of children with emotional, behavioral and mental health problems

### **CJAAC Recommendations and Ongoing Activities for 2008:**

- Review and revise framework for determining Children’s Justice Act funding recommendations
- Review training curricula from professional fields involved in the investigation, treatment and prosecution of child sexual abuse cases
- Review supports and services available to victims of child sexual abuse and their families
- Review policy and practice on “reasonable efforts” in cases of child sexual abuse to maintain children in their homes
- Examine resources (service and supports) for child victims with mental health issues or disabilities
- Identify items in Georgia’s PIP where the committee could be a part of monitoring progress or results
- Review Georgia policy on children’s legal representation

### *Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel*

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The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel was established by state legislation in 1990 to prevent child fatalities, where preventable, by establishing an effective review and standardized data collection system to:

- Improve response to child fatalities
- Improve understanding of how and why children die
- Influence legislation, policies, and programs that affect the health, safety, and protection of children

The mission of the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) is to provide the highest quality child fatality data, training, technical assistance, investigative support services and resources to any entity dedicated to the well-being and safety of children. This mission is accomplished by promoting more accurate identification and reporting of child fatalities, evaluating the prevalence and circumstances of both child abuse and child fatalities, and developing and monitoring the statewide child injury prevention plan.

Charged with tracking the numbers and causes of child deaths, CFRP is responsible for identifying and recommending prevention strategies that could reduce the number of child injuries and deaths and has been instrumental in the expansion of Child Fatality Investigative Teams (CFIT), a network of qualified professionals who investigate child fatalities. Its activities in 2007 that supported the expansion and enhancement of the CFIT network included:

- Providing training to two new Child Fatality Investigative Teams (CFIT) and ongoing training to 24 existing teams
- Providing support and technical assistance to existing CFITs and Child Fatality Review Committees in collaboration with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation



- Adding new training and consultation components to CFITs to assist with sexual abuse and neglect cases and to address all types of cases involving special needs victims and witnesses, particularly medically fragile children and children with autism disorders
- Providing training at 19 sites across the state for child fatality review members on domestic violence and child abuse
- Developing an on-line tutorial to offer immediate training to CFIT members new to the child fatality review process
- Co-sponsoring Child Abuse/Child Fatality Conference and providing training to 790 participants
- Assisting in the development of a training protocol for investigations involving drug-endangered children

In its continued efforts to advance its “prevention” agenda in 2007, the CFRP:

- Initiated collaboration with the Office of Planning and Budget to identify state and federal prevention resources
- Coordinated a committee to facilitate the development of a statewide injury prevention plan
- Enhanced their strategic plan to include:
  - Public awareness
  - Development of an annual legislative agenda
  - A modified mission statement to better reflect the broad goals of the CFRP

**CFRP Recommendations and Ongoing Activities for 2008:**

- Finalize and adopt statewide injury prevention plan
- Enhance training and improve compliance of local child fatality review committees
- Develop legislative agenda that supports the identification, investigation and prevention of child abuse and related fatalities
- Advocate for update of mandated reporter training video, its continued distribution, enforcement of refresher training and monitoring or enforcement of Georgia mandated reporter laws
- Research and review strategies utilized in the Community Partnerships for the Protection of Children (CPPC) model and their impact on child injury and death

## **Opportunities for Georgia's Citizen Review Panels**

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Although each of Georgia's citizen review panels has a unique position in Georgia's child welfare system, they share several common ideals:

- Prevention of child maltreatment and repeat child maltreatment
- Education of families, communities and those engaged in child protection about child maltreatment
- Multi-disciplinary training to individuals involved in the prevention, intervention, investigation, treatment and prosecution cases of child maltreatment
- Collaboration with their partners to improve child welfare policy, practice, legislation and law

In addition to their individual projects and activities in 2008, CRPs will have the opportunity to participate in several new opportunities, including:

- Child Protective Services policy revision process
- Georgia's PIP and/or Quality Assurance (QA) process
- Region IV Child Welfare Collaborative Initiative

The current environment in child welfare at federal and state levels is both supportive and encouraging of stakeholder involvement. However, commitment of panel members and our child welfare leaders is just the beginning. Positive change in Georgia's child welfare outcomes will come with true collaboration around a common ultimate purpose: the protection of Georgia's most fragile resource, its children.

Prepared by: Debra Farrell, CAPTA Citizen Review Panel Project Coordinator

APPENDIX A

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

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**Liz Ferguson, Services Coordinator (Chair)**  
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Sandra Barnhill, Executive Director  
Aid for Children of Imprisoned Mothers, Inc.

Angie Burda, Program Coordinator  
Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center

Elaine Butler, Parent Education Director  
Family Support Council, Inc.

Will Doss, Associate Pastor & Director  
Spalding Family Connections Collaborative

Patty Eagar, Executive Director  
Advocates for Bartow's Children, Inc.

Robin Eschman  
Consumer Representative (grandparent caregiver)

Jana Glass, Community Programs Director  
CHRIS Kids, Inc.

Dr. Frankie Holt  
CASA Volunteer

Karl Lehman, Executive Director  
Childkind, Inc.

Amy Leverette  
Attorney

Dee Dee Mize, Executive Director  
Prevent Child Abuse Gainesville

Lori Muggridge, Executive Director  
Ocmulgee CASA

Dr. William Perry, Executive Director  
Eurika Consulting, Inc.

Holly Rice, Executive Director  
Family Support Council, Inc.

Carole Steele, Director of Prevention  
Programs  
Governor's Office for Children and  
Families

Deborah Walker-Little, Program  
Coordinator  
Interfaith Outreach Homes, Inc.

Christy Ware  
Consumer Representative, Parent

Amy White, Community Services  
Hillside, Inc.

DHR/DFCS Support and Consultation

Ann Dennard Pope, State Director  
Promoting Safe & Stable Families

Kym Crooms, Project Administrator  
Promoting Safe & Stable Families

CAPTA/CRP Project Coordinator  
Deb Farrell, Care Solutions, Inc.

APPENDIX B

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee

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**Angela Tanzella, Director of Advocacy and Program Development (Co-Chair)**

Georgia CASA, Inc.

**Patricia McCann, Appellate and Juvenile Advocacy Attorney (Co-Chair)**

GPDS

Suzanne Lindsey, LPC

Program Director 1,

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases

Jenny Manders, Ph.D., Coordinator

Institute on Human Development and Disability, University of Georgia

Melissa Carter, JD, Deputy Director

Office of the Child Advocate

Karen Sullivan, MD

Fulton County Coroner's Office

Beth Locker, JD

Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Justice for Children

Administrative Office of the Courts

Lisa Ellis, Clinical Supervisor,

Family Relations Program, Inc.

Hon. Billy J. Waters, Civil Court Judge

Edward Washington (former foster care youth)

DHR/DFCS

Mary Jenkins

Program Planning & Policy Unit,

DHR/DFCS/CPS

Bobby Cagle, Family Services Director

DHR/DFCS

Ann D. Pope, State Director

Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program

DHR/DFCS/CAPTA

Charles M. Ferguson, District Attorney

Pataula Judicial Circuit

Charles Thurmond, Chief of Police

Byromville, GA

CAPTA/CRP Project Coordinator

Deb Farrell, Care Solutions, Inc.

APPENDIX C

Child Fatality Review Panel Members

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**Hon. Ed Lukemire (Chair)**

Judge Houston County Superior Court

Vanita Hullander, MD

Catoosa County Coroner

Hon. Velma Tilley

Judge Bartow County Juvenile Court

Gwendolyn Skinner, Director

Division of Mental Health/MHDDAD

Stuart Brown, MD, Director

Division of Public Health

Mary Dean Harvey, Director

Division of Family and Children Services

Vernon Keenan, Director

Georgia Bureau of Investigations

J. David Miller, District Attorney

Southern Judicial Circuit

Kevin Tanner, Chief Deputy

Dawson County Sheriff's Office

Hon. Melvin Everson

Member, Georgia House of Representatives

Hon. Gloria Butler

Member, Georgia Senate

Kris Sperry, MD, Chief Medical Examiner

Georgia Bureau of Investigations

Nancy Fajman, MD, Pediatrician

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Hon. Tom Rawlings, Director

Office of the Child Advocate

APPENDIX D

Citizen Review Panel Steering Committee

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Child Protective Services Advisory Committee Representatives

Liz Ferguson, Services Coordinator  
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Amy White, Community Services  
Hillside, Inc.

Carole Steele, Director of Prevention Programs  
Governor's Office for Children and Families

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee Representatives

Angela Tanzella, Director of Advocacy and Program Development  
Georgia CASA, Inc.

Suzanne Lindsey, LPC  
Program Director 1,  
Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases

Jenny Manders, Ph.D., Coordinator  
Institute on Human Development and Disability, University of Georgia

Mary Jenkins  
Program Planning & Policy Unit,  
DHR/DFCS/CPS

Child Fatality Review Panel Representatives

J. David Miller, District Attorney  
Southern Judicial Circuit

Melissa Carter, JD  
Representing the Office of the Child Advocate

Eva Pattillo, Executive Director  
Representing the Office of Child Fatality Review

DHR/DFCS

Bobby Cagle, Family Services Director  
Ann D. Pope, CAPTA/PSSF Program Director

Deb Farrell, CAPTA/CRP Project Coordinator, Care Solutions, Inc.