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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Citizen Review Panel Steering Committee Chairs

**FROM:** Rachelle Carnesale, Division Director   
Division of Family & Children Services

**RE:** CAPTA Citizen Review Panel  
FY2010 Annual Report and Panel Recommendations

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels 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. These panels are composed of volunteer members who broadly represent the communities in which they operate and include individuals with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The purpose of CAPTA citizen review panels is to examine the extent to which states are discharging their child protection obligations by examining the policies, procedures and practices of state and local CPS agencies and providing feedback on the effectiveness of the agency's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies in producing the desired child and family outcomes. In addition, CRPs are responsible for reviewing state and local CPS agency compliance with the state's CAPTA plan and any other criteria the panel(s) considers important. CRPs are required to prepare and submit an annual report of activities and recommendations to the child welfare agency.

The mission of Georgia's Citizen Review Panels (CRP) is to assure that children and families in the community are provided the best possible services within the framework of available resources and those children are protected from maltreatment. This mission, which is shared by DFCS, can only be achieved when the broader community has a better understanding of and voice in:

- 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
- Engaging in cross-system problem solving which involves both formal and informal support agencies, groups and individuals



### **Georgia Citizen Review Panel – FY 2010 Activities and Recommendations:**

The activities and recommendations provided by each of Georgia's Citizen Review Panels have been helpful in improving interagency collaboration and services for children and families throughout the state. We commend the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the panel membership. The coordination of activities among the three panels via the CRP Steering Committee has provided a unique opportunity for inter-panel collaboration to identify shared priorities and goals, support collective objectives and coordinate activities and planning with Georgia's child welfare agency. .

**Key CRP Recommendations:** The state has incorporated a number of CRP recommendations into ongoing efforts to make measurable progress in improving our state and local child protection systems. Specific CRP Panel recommendations and the state response regarding each one follow:

#### **CRP Recommendation #1:**

Diversion:

- Identify and appoint a qualified individual to shepherd the agency through the development and implementation of an effective statewide system
- Establish a work group of internal and external stakeholders, including current Diversion caseworkers, as a body of experts to develop a comprehensive, statewide system
- Enlist the support and guidance of experts from the National Resource Center for Differential Response

#### **State Response to Recommendation #1:**

DFCS partnered with a national consultant from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to evaluate the state's diversion practice. From this report, it was evident that, although families were being referred to supportive services, the procedural steps to make this happen varied from county to county. The state plans to address this by establishing a differential response model and associated policies and practice protocols that can be applied uniformly around the state to help assure practice fidelity.

A Safety Collaborative was formed (comprised of the Council of Juvenile Judges, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Barton Child Law and Policy Center and DFCS) to review the practice of the use of Safety Resources, protective orders, differential response and court reviews of children in the temporary custody of a guardian until age 18 were identified as areas to address.

At the first official Safety Collaborative meeting, the issue of court reviews of children in the temporary custody of a guardian until the age of 18 was a key topic. An action plan requiring the development of new policies was developed and subsequently completed.



A second collaborative meeting was held on April 01, 2011, to discuss Differential Response (DR). This meeting afforded collaborative members an in-depth examination of different DR models and how they are implemented in various child welfare systems around the country. Ultimately, the collaborative will examine next steps for full implementation of a uniform DR model/protocol for Georgia.

Currently DFCS with the assistance of the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services is developing a safety assessment and differential response system (DRS) models which will be implemented statewide. DRS, which will be supported by policy and practice, will replace the Family Support Services (formerly known as Diversion) as our statewide alternative response system. The lead consultant assigned to Georgia is Theresa Costello, executive director of Action for Child Protection. The Atlanta Costal Child Welfare Implementation Center has been engaged for the purpose of assisting Georgia in implementing these models statewide and to ensure sustainability of fidelity to the chosen models. Safe models from West Virginia and Nevada, the Casey Safety Framework and the Texas model (currently in SHINES) are being considered in the development of Georgia's safety model. Several states including Hawaii, South Carolina and Missouri are being reviewed in the development of our DRS model.

In conjunction with implementing the DRS model, Georgia will implement its revised safety assessment model. The DRS model in Georgia will include a safety assessment as well as an assessment of protective capacities. These models will require the assessment of safety to begin at intake and be a key component in determining intake disposition and track assignment. The project plan will include development of new safety and DRS policy, SHINES enhancement and support, training, mentoring, coaching, quality assurance and ongoing fidelity reviews. The development of support/documentation tools and focus on safety decision making will be incorporated into every case stage (intake, investigation, DRS, CPS ongoing and foster care). With safety being the decision making foci DFCS will create new case supports to assist staff in safety decision making, identifying deficits in parental capacity and with the families guidance outline specific behavioral changes that must be observed to ensure child safety and end the families involvement with DFCS.

As the agency moves forward with adopting a DRS Model, external stakeholders, inclusive of Citizen Review Panel members, the judiciary, birth parents, and other external stakeholders, will be engaged in reviewing and critiquing the model.

#### **CRP Recommendation #2:**

Early Intervention services for victims of child abuse and neglect ages 0-3

- Convene stakeholders serving children age birth to three years who are victims of substantiated abuse and neglect to conduct a cross-system programmatic and fiscal analysis of currently funded social and emotional services to identify overlap, gaps and action priorities
- Consult with Zero to Three and other national leaders on early childhood mental health



- Enhance SHINES, the state's child welfare data system, to capture and track screening results for all referrals, service utilization for eligible children, and unmet needs (including social-emotional/ mental health related needs) for children ages 0-3 who did not meet eligibility requirements for BCW enrollment

### **State Response to Recommendation #2:**

Our agency is happy to partner with other state agencies, community partners and stakeholders in the assessing and development of systems of care which can meet the needs identified for this population of children.

As a component of the CAPTA PIP the agency has revised the policy and technology for referring children for developmental assessments. Revised policy requires that all children under the age of three in a household where there has been a substantiation of maltreatment be referred to Children's 1<sup>st</sup>. Children 1<sup>st</sup> will assess the child and determine if the child meets the requirement to refer to the "Babies Can't Wait" program. Policy also requires case managers refer children under the age of three, who appear to have a developmental delay in unsubstantiated cases as well. A Memorandum of Understanding was jointly approved between the agency and the Department of Public Health in May 2010.

In collaboration with Public Health, the agency updated technology within SHINES to ensure compliance with these policy components. The Children's 1<sup>st</sup> referral form was incorporated into SHINES and is automatically populated for each unique applicable child (this form may also be used to refer older children for additional services) The system includes functionality which will not allow a case to be staged progressed or closed if there is a child that meets the aforementioned criteria and there has not been a Children's 1<sup>st</sup> referral.

SHINES currently allows for the tracking of receipt of health checks (physical, dental and mental) in the person detail as well as the health tab. Dates of service, diagnosis, medications and follow-up needs can be documented in the health detail screen narrative.

### **CRP Recommendation #3:**

*Intake: To improve consistency in the handling of reports of child abuse and neglect*

- Evaluate current handling of reports of child abuse and neglect to identify gaps in service and inconsistencies in practice
- Explore the feasibility of centralizing, or regionalizing, a call center for handling reports of child abuse and neglect

### **State Response to Recommendation #3:**

The quality intake and screening tool was updated in May 2009, and training on the tool was incorporated into new worker and supervisor training. Consistent watch over work production coupled with an intense campaign to highlight the importance of a family-



centered approach to determining the level of intervention assigned based on intake information. There has been much concern over the assignment of cases with elements of maltreatment to diversion. As a direct result of these concerns as well as the plan to implement differential response, the state will be reviewing the intake and screening process for possible additional improvements and practices.

The state will also begin piloting a centralized intake process using existing resources. The agency is currently engaged in developing an after hours CPS intake model that allows for the receipt of referrals into the SHINES system as it currently is designed and assure documented, quality intakes of reporters that need to make referrals after hours, on holidays, furloughs and during emergencies. The goal of this pilot is to:

- Ensure reporters of CAN have immediate access to making a referral of their concerns related to a child in our state 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Standardize what constitutes a referral based on policy and not determinations made by geography or quality of the intake.
- Ensure response times assignments are determined by policy and not dependent on factors outside of policy or 911 calls to law enforcement.

#### **CRP Recommendation #4:**

**Mandated Reporter Training:** *To improve the training of individuals required to report suspected child abuse and neglect by establishing training standards*

- Collaborate to develop and support a web-based mandated reporter training curriculum with multi-disciplinary modules that include a comprehensive evaluation component

#### **State Response to Recommendation #4:**

The agency remains committed to partnering with related agencies and other community partners in the provision of mandated reporter training. Care Solutions developed training for Georgia Mandated Reporters. Training is available online at the Care Solutions website at <https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/content/page.cfm/321>. Training is available to the general public as well as to DFCS staff and partner organizations. CAPTA funds will be utilized to support and improve current online mandated reporter training.

#### **CRP Recommendation # 5:**

**Multi-Disciplinary Training:** *To provide a forum for inter-disciplinary collaboration and improve coordination of training resources*

- Convene a planning committee of stakeholders to develop a comprehensive five-year plan for multi-disciplinary training with respect to the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation and maltreatment-related fatalities



- Collaborate with stakeholders in the planning and delivery of a statewide multi-disciplinary conference (as determined in the five-year plan)

**State Response to Recommendation #5:**

The agency will be offering the Building Successful Teams (BST) Conference again in March 2012. A planning committee of stakeholders met on Friday, May 20, 2011. The group of stakeholders includes law enforcement, Child Advocate's Office, an assistant district attorney, CDC representatives, Public Health, DJJ, a juvenile court judge, DFCS staff, and others.

The BST Conference will focus on child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation, as well as prevention workshops.

**CRP Recommendation # 6:**

Administration of CJA Grant: *To streamline the administration and improve the utilization of the CJA grant*

- Reserve a portion of the total state grant to support "long-term", ongoing projects that remain DHS and task force priorities. Identify and acknowledge priority projects for long-term support so that recipients can enter into commitments as necessary, and provide predictability for the preparation of those contracts to maintain the seamless delivery of activities. These projects would be reviewed and reconfirmed each spring.
- Set aside remainder of state grant for "short-term" projects (6-9 month commitment), which will be allocated based on recommendations made by the task force after evaluating proposals and approval by the Division. Applications would be solicited between October (post confirmation of state grant amount) and December 31 for consideration.

Task force recommendations for Children's Justice Act funding allocations in 2010/2011 include:

- Long-term, ongoing CJA projects (*2011 proposals received*)
  - Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program\*
  - Youth Law Conference\*
  - SAAG training\*
  - Multi-disciplinary training for child fatality review teams\*
  - "Finding Words" training\*
  - Crisis Intervention Team training\*
- Short-term CJA projects (*these were funded in 2010*)
  - Data linkage project
  - Child sexual abuse training for foster parents
  - Advanced courtroom training for CASAs\*

- Future short-term CJA projects proposed (*potential projects for 2011/2012*)
  - Web-based GAL pre-appointment training\*
  - Web-based CAPTA-specific training for SAAGs
  - Development of curriculum and training protocol for investigators who interview child witnesses or victims of abuse who have developmental or communications disorders

**State Response to Recommendation #6:**

The Division supports the long term, on-going projects recommended by the CJA Task Force for FY2011 funding allocations. The recommended trainings are consistent with the Division's desire to provide on-going multi-disciplinary training opportunities to staff and stakeholders involved in the assessment, prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse.

Particular interest exists in continuing the data linkage work initiated during the prior FY10 grant cycle to support improved risk assessment, case review and trend analysis on cases, particularly those involving serious injury and child deaths.

Finally, the short-term CJA projects and training activities recommended by the task force will help to improve the quality of legal representation for children involved in child deprivation and dependency cases as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. Several of the short term projects, particularly the web-based training opportunities are an excellent supplement to the training provided to Guardian Ad Litem and the Legal Services training hosted for Special Assistant Attorney Generals.

**CRP Recommendation # 7:**

CRPs recommend that the Division take a leadership role in convening an advisory group of internal and external stake holders; both public and private, with a special interest and expertise in child abuse and child abuse prevention and charge them with designing a plan for an annual multi-faceted public campaign on:

- What constitutes child abuse and neglect and should be reported
- When and how to report suspected child abuse and neglect
- What to expect after a report is made
- State laws related to child abuse and neglect
- Obligation to report suspected child abuse as a citizen and as a mandated reporter
- Community-based child abuse prevention strategies
- The role and responsibility of the Division as the state's child welfare agency
- The roles and responsibilities of other state agencies, institutions and organizations that also have an interest in the safety, permanency and well-being of children
- National efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect



**State Response to Recommendation #7:**

The agency has established a collaborative partners unit, which includes child abuse subject matter experts who work with stakeholders and partners to promote best practices and facilitate better working relationships between DFCS personnel and partners. In addition to the newly convened collaborative partners unit, the agency has developed multiple forums for obtaining stakeholder input regarding the development of agency child welfare priorities, developing practice changes, as well as reviewing policy changes.

- Monthly Collaborative Meetings
- Policy Review Committee
- CAPTA PIP
- Whiteboard Projects
- Steering Committee for Differential Response
- Cold Case Project
- Casey
- Centralized Intake Pilot
- TA from the National Resource Center for CPS
- TA from the Atlanta Costal Child Welfare Implementation Center

The agency is collaborating with multiple sister agencies including the Court Improvement Project, the Barton Law Clinic, the Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Child Advocate to assess system wide outcomes for families and discuss shared accountability for these outcomes as well as shared strategic initiatives to improve performance. The agency is committed to partnering with other state agencies, institutions and organizations that also have an interest in the safety, permanency and well-being of children.

It is our hope that as we continue working together with shared responsibility we can develop and implement strategies that will greatly enhance the protective capacities of families and ensure the well-being of our children. It is crucial that we continue to improve collaboration, increase information sharing, share accountability and resource allocation as well as, advocate for needed system improvements. On behalf of the children and families of Georgia, we thank you for your efforts and support.

cc: Clyde L. Reese III, Commissioner Department of Human Services  
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