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June 28, 2013

## MEMORANDUM

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

**FROM:** Ron Scroggy, Director, Division of Family and Children Services

**RE:** CAPTA Citizen Review Panel  
FY2012 Annual Report and Panel Recommendations

The mission of Georgia's three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) 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 that involves both formal and informal support agencies, groups and individuals

As noted earlier, the CRP is comprised of three panels: the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC), the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC) and the Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP). 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.

Over the past 18-months, the agency has partnered with panel members in the continued refinement of a statewide Differential Response model, implementation of an after-hours Centralized Intake System, the redeployment of a Multi-Disciplinary Training Symposium and the development of a Safety Response System. In addition, the state, in coordination with the CRPs, reviewed and worked together to complete the state's 2009 CAPTA Program Improvement

Plan which was finalized January 2013. CRP members assisted in the development of 2012 CAPTA PIP. The CRPs will continue their responsibility for reviewing state and local child protective services (CPS) agency compliance with the state's revised (August 2012) CAPTA plan. At the request of the CRP's (particularly the CJA) the agency implemented a grants review committee which reviews all applications for grants and sets spending priorities based on state plans and agency strategies.

As the state's primary CPS agency, we are proud to continue to support the CAPTA Citizen Review Panels as they examine the extent to which the state is fulfilling its 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 order to ensure ongoing opportunities for collaboration, CRP representatives have been meeting quarterly with DFCS leadership to discuss priorities, trends and shared strategies for meeting the needs of Georgia's families.

### **Georgia Citizen Review Panel – FY 2012 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 recommendations and the state's response regarding each are attached.

Thank you for your diligence, dedication, and service to Georgia's most vulnerable citizens.

cc: Clyde L. Reese III, Commissioner, Esq., Department of Human Services  
Ruth Walker, Region IV ACF Program Manager  
Tracy Fava, Region IV ACF Program Specialist  
Susan Denney, Director Strategic Planning  
Deb Farrell, CRP Program Coordinator



### Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC) 2012 Recommendations

CPSAC members decided to focus on two issues during 2012: Service array and community-based resources necessary to support an effective differential response system and child welfare policy and practice in cases involving children 0-3.

Area of Focus / Recommendation	DHS/DFCS Response
<p>1. Use of community services supports framework to engage in dialogue with partners, at both the state and local level, to assess community resources, identify gaps and collaborate to develop a shared plan that ensures that sufficient community-based supports are available to meet the needs of families assigned to Family Support, Georgia's differential response track. Active engagement of stakeholders and particularly consultation with consumers for whom differential response is designed are critical to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In preparation for the IV-B Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP), the agency is in the process of developing tools for conducting a statewide service array assessment. In conjunction with service array assessments completed by internal stakeholders (i.e Promoting Safe and Stable Families Statement of Needs) and community partners (CPSAC service array assessment, Governor's Office of Children and Families assessments), the agency will be surveying frontline staff, birth parents, the legal system stakeholders, foster parents, youth impacted by child welfare, private providers and community partners to identify available services and gaps in services. The results will be used to enhance current resource guides within regions as well as inform the strategies and priorities of the CFSP.</li> <li>• In addition to the Service Array Assessment, the agency is conducting regional needs assessments in preparation for full implementation of the Safety response System (see attached timeline for statewide SRS roll-out). Through the efforts of a Communications workgroup, front-line managers were given talking points and presentation materials to assist them with differential response discussions with mandated reporters and community partners. Each region developed an implementation plan that included collaboration and communication with key stakeholders in each county.</li> <li>• The DFCS Safety Response System (SRS) implementation is currently underway. We will incorporate the CPSAC framework into the SRS statewide implementation, particularly as it relates to family support. The timeline for statewide SRS roll-out is attached.</li> <li>• Through the efforts of a Communications workgroup, front-line managers were given talking points and presentation materials to assist them with differential response discussions with mandated reporters and community partners. Each region developed an implementation plan that included collaboration and communication with key stakeholders in each county.</li> </ul>
<p>2. CPSAC reiterates its 2011 recommendation to enhance the statewide automated system for data collection (SHINES) to include documentation on engagement and service coordination for families who are assigned to Family Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Support services rendered to children and families are documented in Georgia SHINES, the state's SACWIS system. This includes: <i>Contacts with household members (and collateral contacts), Person information (demographic, relationships/roles, health, education, etc.), Record checks history, Service Authorizations and Services and Referrals.</i> This allows case managers to document needs identified and provided for families served through Family Support, including engagement in those services, and how services were paid for (either by the Department or another agency).</li> <li>• In June 2012, to support the Social Services County Letter No. 2012-03 (May 24, 2012), enhancements were made to Georgia SHINES to allow case managers the ability to document Present Danger Assessment outcomes, as detailed in the Differential Response (DR) Protocol. The protocol is designed to ensure a <b><i>standard of practice and clarity</i></b> regarding the types of Intake referrals progressed to either the Investigation track or <b>Family Support</b> track.</li> <li>• DFCS is currently developing policy/practice specific to the new Safety Response System model, which is being piloted in three counties in Georgia. The purpose of this initiative is to improve how case managers assess safety throughout the life of a case (including Family Support) and how families are engaged during that process. The Georgia SHINES team has begun analyzing the components of SRS to determine potential system changes. These changes will impact all of the Child Protective Services modules;</li> </ul>

	<p>Intake, Investigation, and Family Support, and Family Preservation. The effort to enhance the Child Protective Services modules requires the identification of changes needed, testing and deployment. Any additional methods of engagement or services not presently captured in SHINES will be included as part of the Safety Response System design for SHINES. The following groups (DFCS units) will be fully engaged in the development, implementation, and post-implementation support: Policy, Differential Response Experts (DRE), Pilot county participants and Data Integrity Specialists.</p>
<p><b>Zero to Three Recommendations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct a needs assessment to determine unmet service needs and barriers and/or gaps to meeting these needs for children 0-3 and their families</li> <li>2. Enhance regional quality assurance process to include additional specificity related to the 0-3 population</li> <li>3. Engage subject matter experts to assess current caseworker training related to 0-3 and enhance training with skill-based training including:</li> <li>4. Engage subject matter experts to develop policy related to the 0-3 population in foster care, including:</li> <li>5. Review and enhance current training for foster parents to include 0-3 and their special needs.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFCS Education and Training plans to develop a partnership with the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee to identify subject matter experts who can assess our current caseworker training to 0-3 and work with ETS to enhance our training with live case learnings, practicums, transfer of learning, and other training techniques.</li> <li>• DFCS Education and Training will review Foster Parent Training curricula and enhance any areas already covering children 0-3 years old and any special needs appropriate for that age group.</li> <li>• The Education and Training Services Section (ETS) in DFCS trains child welfare policy and practice in cases involving children 0-3 years old in cases of child abuse and neglect in KEYS to Child Welfare Practice, Child Protective Services Track Training, and Foster Care Track Training.</li> <li>• In addition, new case managers and new supervisors also take the National Children’s Advocacy Center’s “Child Development 101” online training as a part of their training certification requirements.</li> <li>• DFCS case managers and supervisors also watch “Understanding, Identifying and Responding to Childhood Trauma The Brain: Effects of Childhood Trauma” training video and debrief the video as a part of the training.</li> <li>• DFCS ETS partners with the Georgia Department of Public Health to offer DFCS case managers and supervisors and Public Health staff a course on Babies Can’t Wait, child development, and child maltreatment.</li> <li>• In the Six Month Trend Report, the DFCS Quality Management Unit will include a chart that breaks down outcome achievements by age group. The zero to five data shows that our major area of concentration needs to be on helping very young children to have permanency and stability in their living situations. Building and maintaining connections with family is also an area that work needs to be done for children and families to be successful.</li> <li>• Office of Provider Management (Second Chance and Maternity Home Providers) and the Independent Living Program plans to develop a partnership with G-CAPP (Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power &amp; Potential) to strengthen programming with pregnant and parenting youth in care. The goal of the planned partnership is to focus on increasing parental protective capacity, father engagement and development of skills needed to make a successful transition to adulthood while also parenting. Additionally, DFCS will increase focus on developing foster homes for pregnant and parenting youth rather than defaulting to placement in congregate care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CJA Task Force 2012 Recommendations</b>  To meet its CJA mandate to make training recommendations for the improvement of the investigation and assessment of cases of abuse and neglect, the task force reaffirms its priorities and recommends continued CJA investment in multidisciplinary training for professionals involved in the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.</p>	
<p><b>Area of Focus / Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>DHS/DFCS Response</b></p>

<p>1. Specialized forensic interview training, <u>Finding Words</u>, for professionals who interview victims of child abuse and child sexual abuse to improve investigative results and reduce trauma to victims.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency is very supportive of the continued Finding Words Training for case management staff and considers funding this training a priority.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Review and update local Child Abuse Protocols to improve consistency and compliance with 2010 CAPTA reauthorization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Child Abuse protocols are not regulated through DHS/DFCS, but instead through OCA. We are more than happy to collaborate with OCA if needed; however Georgia law stipulates that OCA will oversee this process including update the protocols as needed. <b>NOTE:</b> Through general discussions with OCA staff, we understand that they are in the process of updating and training statewide on the child abuse protocol currently.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Legal training for caseworkers to improve their preparation for court</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency currently provides face to face legal training presented by experienced SAAGS on the legal requirements of deprivation, court processes and procedures, and serving as witness. Recently a webinar providing training on being a witness was created and is online.</li> <li>• Legal training is also provided in the CORE curriculum for new case workers.</li> <li>• The legal training will be updated to reflect the changes made in the new Juvenile Court Code and all case managers and supervisors will be trained on the new code.</li> <li>• The Office of General Counsel provides county department legal training on request.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Annual cross-training for legal professionals and CASAs involved in juvenile court deprivation matters that include pre-appointment training for Guardians ad Litem (GALs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual legal training is provided to all SAAGs and attendance is mandatory absent a legal excuse (court conflict). [Training during the fall of 2012 was delayed until 2013 because the CJA funds used to finance the training were not received in 2012.]</li> </ul>
<p>5. Annual training for Special Assistant Attorneys General (SAAGs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency remains committed to partnering with related agencies and other community partners in the provision of specialized child welfare training as well as multi-disciplinary training. As funds are available, our agency is receptive to fiscally supporting and participating in the CRP requested training opportunities.</li> <li>• SAAG training will occur next in September 2013.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Juvenile court and advocacy training for CASA supervisors and volunteers, caseworkers, lawyers and judges to gain a better understanding of courtroom procedures, roles and expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agency remains committed to partnering with related agencies and other community partners in the provision of specialized child welfare training as well as multi-disciplinary training. As funds are available, our agency is receptive to fiscally supporting and participating in the CRP requested training opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Training and experience for students interested in the field of child welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFCS Education and Training Section works with the schools of social work across the state to provide opportunities for internships, field experience, volunteer opportunities, and other learning experiences through local DFCS offices.</li> <li>• Training curricula are available and have been shared with all of the schools of social work in Georgia.</li> <li>• Many universities partner with local DFCS leadership in providing guest speakers as a part of university classes.</li> </ul>

### Child Fatality Review Panel Maltreatment (CFRP) Committee 2012 Recommendations

The maltreatment committee's work during 2012 continued to emphasize its ongoing priority related to the improvement of data collection, reporting and sharing of information on maltreatment-related child deaths and as a result support the following recommendations:

Area of Focus / Recommendation	DHS/DFCS Response
<p>1. Strengthen data quality by:</p> <p>a. Providing additional training for child fatality review teams to improve the consistency of reports and prevention recommendations particularly for maltreatment-related child deaths.</p> <p>b. Including multidisciplinary child death review results in SHINES.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Collaborative Partners section is currently partnering with the Office of the Child Fatality Review to develop consistent definitions on areas of neglect and abuse. The Collaborative Partners section, in partnership with OCA/ CFR, developed training's and trained CFR members on the prevention of child maltreatment deaths for two years.</li> <li>• The multi disciplinary team, also known as the Child Death, Near Fatality, Serious Injury Prevention Committee, developed a goal to review child death cases, noting good prevention practices and missed prevention opportunities. The committee will utilize this information to educate and train DFCS staff statewide on prevention needs and to develop public awareness campaigns. The committee's recommendations are used for a state trends analysis and reporting, the committee will include their overall child death prevention results and trends within the DFCS quarterly report.</li> <li>• The agency has initiated joint planning sessions to identify those children deemed to be most at risk of maltreatment. Invites to participate in the Joint Planning Session included members from all three CRPs, Public Health, Courts, Children's 1<sup>st</sup>, Department of Education, Headstart, DECAL, GOCF, etc. The agency shared data related to maltreatment inclusive of demographics, household composition, historical allegations of abuse, red flags discerned from child death staffings and other indicators for risk of maltreatment. During these sessions external stakeholders were invited to share their data and resources.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Improve information sharing on maltreatment-related child fatalities such as an annual report of summary findings and actions resulting from 24-hour, multidisciplinary review of child death.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information obtained from the 24 hour staffing is captured quarterly and presented to the Commissioner of DHS and the Governor. The quarterly reports are made available to the DFCS field offices and are used for education and training purposes of DFCS staff.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Improve data sharing between the Department and other sources of child and family information to improve the identification of risk factors for maltreatment-related deaths and opportunities for prevention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFCS remains committed to increasing understanding of risk factors present in deaths caused by maltreatment. Over the last year DFCS has engaged in partnerships with other state agencies to better identify these factors. Though preliminary, DFCS has matched child-death records from 2010 from the Department of Public Health (DPH) with DFCS case records. This activity will take place again upon receipt of the 2011 file from DPH. This process has allowed for an even greater analysis of the risk factors leading to child deaths among those with DFCS history. Public law does limit the Department's ability to release certain identifiers of those children who have died. However, if this obstacle can be overcome, then there is greater opportunity to expand understanding through the importation of birth records that contain a wealth of information regarding the child and his/her parents. DFCS has also entered into data sharing agreement with the Department of Community Health for the importation of medical information related to foster children. While both of these data exchanges are relatively new, they provide a greater universe for analysis and future opportunities that can be explored with other agencies.</li> <li>• It is noteworthy to mention that in 2010, Georgia SHINES deployed functionality to improve how child deaths, near fatalities, and serious injuries incidents are documented. This includes improved tracking and reporting of all cases with an associated report of Child Death, Near Fatality or Serious Injury – whether a child is in DFCS custody or not. These enhancements supported Policy 2108.3 – Investigations of Child Death, Near Fatality and Serious Injury.</li> </ul>

