

Georgia's Citizen Review Panel (CAPTA Panel) Program

Children's Justice Act Task Force • Child Protective Services Advisory Committee • Child Fatality Review Panel

2016 Annual Report



*Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is the key federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA provides federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities and also provides grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations, including Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, for demonstration programs and projects. Additionally, CAPTA identifies the federal role in supporting research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities; established the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect; and mandates Child Welfare Information Gateway. CAPTA also sets forth a minimum definition of child abuse and neglect.

CAPTA was first passed into law in 1974 - Public Law 93-247, and re-authorized in 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, in 2003 as Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, in 2010 by P.L. 111-320, the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, the Adoption Opportunities program, and the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act, and was most recently amended and reauthorized in 2015. Amendments have been made to expand and refine the law with each reauthorization¹.

CAPTA allows the Federal government to provide leadership and assist states in their child and family protection efforts by:

- promoting coordinated planning among all levels of government
- generating and sharing knowledge relevant to child and family protection
- strengthening the capacity of states to assist communities
- allocating financial resources to assist states in implementing plans
- helping states to carry out their child and family protection plans by promoting the competence of professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer resources
- providing leadership to end the abuse and neglect of the nation's children and youth

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels

CAPTA, Section 106, is the enabling legislation for citizen review panels. When the Act was amended in 1996, each state, in order to be eligible for a CAPTA state grant, was required to establish at least three citizen review panels by July of 1999. Citizen review panels were intended to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that communities and the state are meeting the goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect. When institutionalized and well-supported, panels have the capacity to promote creative problem solving with the involvement of community members who represent a variety of disciplines and perspectives. In addition, panels have the potential to bring about system change as they recommend needed changes, highlight successes and encourage

¹ The most recent CAPTA legislation can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/resource/capta2010>.

creative collaborations among child welfare systems, other service delivery systems and community members.

CAPTA citizen review panels are composed of volunteer members who broadly represent the community in which they operate and include individuals with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Panels are required to meet quarterly, provide for public outreach, and prepare an annual report on activities that provides feedback on the effectiveness of the state's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies and presents recommendations for improvements. State child welfare agencies are required to provide access to information that panels desire to review, to provide administrative support so that the panels can fulfill their duties, and to respond to panel recommendations included in their annual reports.

Federal law authorized these panels to evaluate the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child welfare agencies. Citizen review panels evaluate the extent to which these agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the state's child protective services system plan, which is required for funding under CAPTA and the specific child protection standards that are contained in CAPTA. Panels may review any other criteria that they consider important to ensure the protection of children, including the extent to which the state child protective services system is coordinated with the title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act, and child fatalities and near fatalities.

Georgia's Citizen Review Panels

In 2006, three existing committees were officially designated to serve as Georgia's citizen review panels (CAPTA Panels)²: the Children's Justice Act Task Force (Task Force), the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC), and the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP). The Task Force serves a dual role as a CAPTA Panel and as a task force on children's justice. The CFRP serves as both a CAPTA Panel and a state-mandated body charged with reviewing the circumstances in all child deaths and identifying opportunities for prevention. The CPSAC serves only as a CAPTA Panel.

² In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are known as 'CAPTA Panels' to distinguish them from the foster care review process known as the Citizen Panel Review Program that utilizes volunteers to conduct legally mandated reviews of the status and welfare of children placed by the Juvenile Court in the legal custody of the Division of Family and Children Services to ensure that reasonable efforts are being made to reunify the family or otherwise provide permanency for a child. The program uses volunteers to staff panels which meet monthly to review cases and to ensure that all case plans are appropriate for the family's needs.

Meeting Our CAPTA Obligations

Georgia's CAPTA Panel program meets all statutory requirements for citizen review panels.

Membership: Each of Georgia's CAPTA Panels is composed of 15-25 members representing a wide spectrum of experience and expertise from communities around the state. Panels may include, but are not limited to, members representing:

- Foster parents
- Adoptive parents
- Relative caregivers
- CASA
- Child welfare staff
- Community-based service providers
- Childcare
- Judges
- Law enforcement
- Attorneys
- Health and mental health professionals
- Business
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Education

Meetings: Each of Georgia's CAPTA Panels meets 4-6 times per year. In addition to regular meetings, individual committee meetings or conference calls are scheduled to sustain momentum on work plans developed at the annual all-panel retreat in September.

The co-chairs from each CAPTA Panel serve on a joint steering committee to promote inter-Panel collaboration and coordination of activities. The steering committee meets 2-4 times per year, as needed.

Public Outreach: Georgia's CAPTA Panels maintain a website, www.gacrp.com, to allow public access to information on CAPTA citizen review panels. Information and links to state and national child welfare resources are also available on the website.

Annual Report and State Response: Reports are prepared and submitted to the Division of Family and Children Services (Division) annually describing the activities of the CAPTA Panels. Panel members also meet with the Division Director and his leadership team to discuss priorities and recommendations, as well as to identify new opportunities to work together. A written response to the annual recommendations is received and also posted on the website.

Division leadership also committed to meeting quarterly with CAPTA Panel members to discuss shared and individual concerns, priorities and interests, in addition to providing an update on actions taken by the Division in response to previous recommendations.

Administrative Support: The Division provides ongoing administrative support through:

- A Federal Grants Manager³ position created in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Panels, and whose responsibilities include facilitating communication and the exchange of information between the Division and the Panels
- A contract with a firm for the services of an independent coordinator who provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance

Collaboration with Georgia's Child Welfare Agency

CAPTA Panels continued to reinforce the importance of early and meaningful engagement of stakeholders, including CAPTA Panel members, in any planning or consultative process to ensure effectual stakeholder contribution. In 2016, CAPTA Panel members were invited to participate in state sponsored activities, such as:

- Joint planning, including participation at meetings hosted by Region IV Child Welfare Specialist
- Contribute to, and review of, the Annual Progress and Services Report
- Contribute to, and review of, the Program Improvement Plan
- Review of State CAPTA Plan
- Continuous Quality Improvement Leadership Committee

CAPTA Panel members also participate on several state advisory groups or committees such as the Human Trafficking Task Force, Georgia Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Coalition, and Georgia Child Welfare Training Collaborative Advisory Committee, to name a few.

The Division's efforts to improve system transparency and willingness to work in partnership with CAPTA Panels and other external partners are to be commended.

³ Beth Locker, Federal Grants Manager, assumed her new position in March 2016.

2016 Activities and Recommendations

Georgia's CAPTA Panels have a statewide systemic approach to examining issues that impact the effectiveness of the state's child protection system. Although each CAPTA Panel has its own unique vision and mission, the common goal among all three is to improve the child welfare system and community response to protecting victims and supporting families. In 2016, CAPTA Panels interests and activities included:

- Policy and practice related to safety resource and relative caregiver placements
- Basic and specialized foster parent training
- Mandated reporter training guidelines and standards
- Updated model child abuse protocol
- Improving the identification of maltreatment-related fatalities
- Developing criteria for reviewing maltreatment-related fatalities

Individual reports, detailing the 2016 activities and resulting recommendations, from each of Georgia's CAPTA Panels has been prepared and attached.

We want to express our sincere appreciation to Director Cagle and the leadership team at the Division for their continued support of the Panels and the validation of our contributions. We are especially appreciative of the respect, transparency, and responsiveness of the Division in helping to fulfill our mandate as CAPTA Panels. We look forward to continuing our excellent working relationship.

Respectfully,

Melissa D. Carter
J. David Miller
Children's Justice Act Task Force

Karl Lehman
Amy Rene
Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Judge LaTain Kell
Judge Peggy Walker
Child Fatality Review Panel

'Never doubt that a small, dedicated group of citizens can make a difference. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

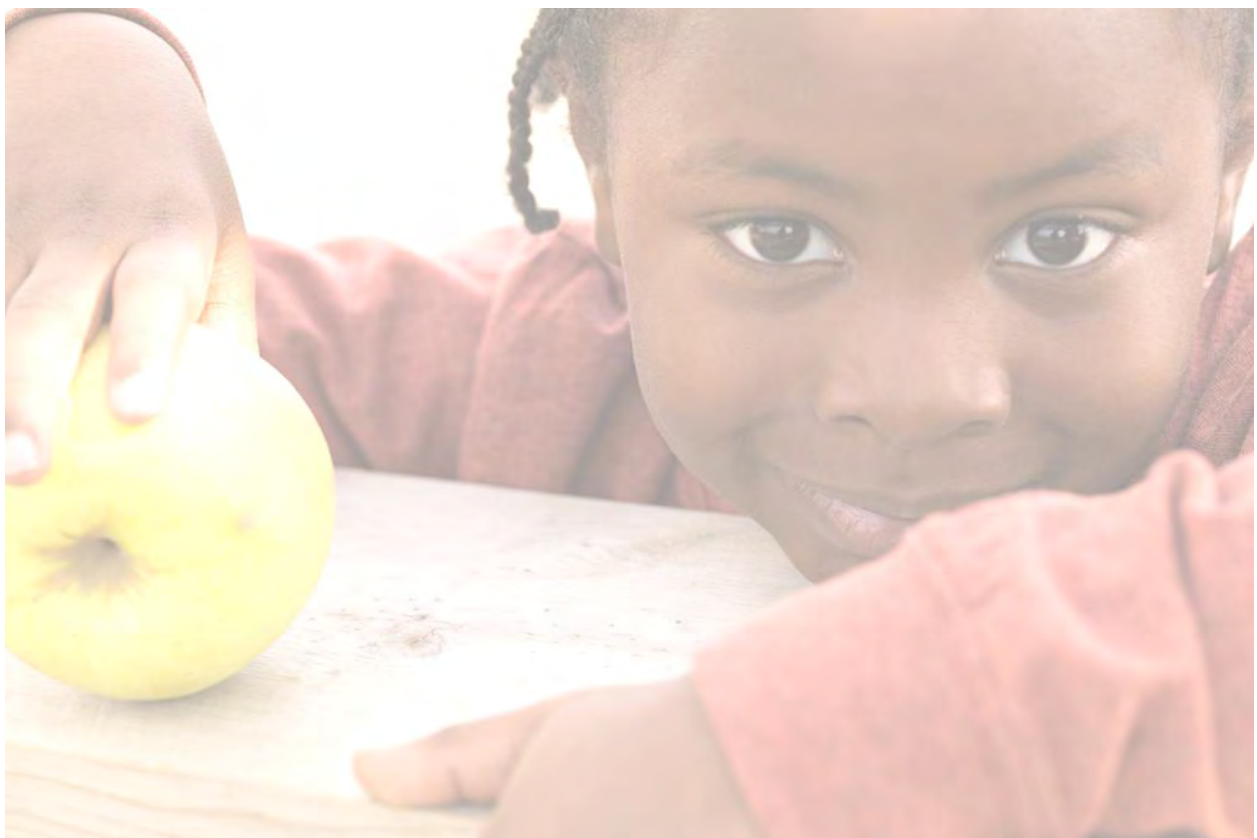
...Margaret Mead



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Children's Justice Act Task Force ♦ Child Protective Services Advisory Committee ♦ Child Fatality Review Panel

Children's Justice Act Task Force 2016 Annual Report



Vision

All of Georgia's children will receive the best possible protection from all forms of child abuse and neglect from a system of highly trained professionals who thoroughly investigate alleged abuse and adequately prosecute those who abuse children, while protecting children from repeat maltreatment.

Mission

To identify opportunities to reform state systems and improve processes by which Georgia's child welfare system responds to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and child abuse or neglect-related fatalities; and, in collaboration with the state's child protection agency and its external partners, make policy and training recommendations regarding methods to better handle these cases with the expectation that it will result in reduced trauma to the child victim and the victim's family while ensuring fairness to the accused.

In memory of the Honorable Judge Willie Lovett 1963-2017

The Mandate

The Children's Justice Act

The Children's Justice Act (CJA) provides grants to states to improve the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim. This also includes the handling of child fatality cases where child abuse or neglect is suspected and cases involving children with disabilities or serious health problems who are the victims of abuse and neglect. The source of CJA funds is the Crime Victims Fund, and grants are awarded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, as outlined in Section 107 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)¹, as amended by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. CJA grants are intended to address issues at the front end of the state's multidisciplinary response to protect children when abuse and neglect occurs. Use of CJA funds specifically for prevention activities or treatment services is prohibited.

CJA Task Force

To be eligible for CJA funds, the state must also be eligible for a CAPTA basic state grant. As a CJA grant recipient, the state is required to establish and maintain a multi-disciplinary task force on children's justice. Georgia's Children's Justice Act Task Force (Task Force) was established to satisfy this requirement and is composed of representatives from selected disciplines involved in the assessment and investigation of cases of child abuse and neglect. The purpose of a CJA task force is to review and evaluate practice and protocols associated with the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect and to make policy and training recommendations that will improve the handling of these cases and result in reduced trauma to the child victim and victim's family while ensuring fairness to the accused.

Dual Role as a CAPTA Citizen Review Panel (CAPTA Panel)²

Georgia's CJA Task Force also serves as one of Georgia's three CAPTA Panels. The purpose and objectives of a CJA multi-disciplinary task force and a CAPTA citizen review panel³ are complementary. Although the priorities of the Task Force are rooted in the investigation,

¹ CAPTA is the primary federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect and authorizes funding to states to support prevention, identification, assessment, investigation and treatment activities.

² In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are referred to as "CAPTA Panels" to distinguish this stakeholder group from similarly named "Citizen Panel Review", which are foster care review boards.

³ CAPTA citizen review panels are charged with the examination of child welfare policy, practice and procedures to determine the extent to which the state is meeting its child protection responsibilities, and making recommendations for improvement.

prosecution and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, interests span the full spectrum of family involvement in the child protection system, for all types of families and children of all ages. Serving this dual role provides unique opportunities to examine overlapping mandates.

They also share several legislative requirements, such as meeting and reporting requirements and the goal to improve child welfare policy and practice.

Georgia's CJA Task Force History

Georgia's CJA Task Force⁴ was reestablished in 2005 and has strived to satisfy all CJA obligations since that time. The Task Force's early activities focused on nurturing ongoing, interactive relationships between criminal justice and the child welfare agency. It played a key role in the child welfare continuum by successfully facilitating, supporting and funding innovations in the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, and child sexual abuse. Early goals included:

- Improving multidisciplinary education and training
- Improving preparation and collaboration in the handling of child abuse cases
- Improving the collection, analysis and exchange of data
- Improving the evaluation of projects and activities supported with CJA funds

Since 2005, the Task Force has been responsible for identifying activities that support CJA objectives, and soliciting, reviewing and recommending projects to the child welfare agency for funding annually. Some longstanding or re-occurring projects funded by the CJA grant since 2005, include:

- Multidisciplinary training
 - Forensic interview training for investigators
 - Training for child death investigators and first responders
 - Legal training for child protective services and foster care caseworkers
 - Training for Special Assistant Attorneys General who represent the child welfare agency in dependency proceedings
 - Training for child advocates
- Internships for law students in the fields of child welfare and juvenile justice⁵

Since 2005, the Task Force has completed 3 three-year assessments. The first, in 2009, focused on child sexual abuse training, mandated reporting and practice regarding the

⁴ The Task Force was formerly known as the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee. The name was changed in 2013 to distinguish the group as a task force for children's justice.

⁵ This project was featured in a session on innovative programs at the 2010 CJA Grantee meeting.

appointment of representation for children in dependency cases.⁶ The 2012 assessment evaluated policy, practice and training related to the handling of cases involving special needs victims. The most recent, in 2015, addressed concerns related to reported inconsistencies in how various agencies respond to allegations of child abuse when a report is made.

The ongoing priorities and activities of the Task Force reflect its desire and commitment to continued improvement in the policy and practice areas identified in each of the three-year assessments. Members continue to monitor system change, provide additional resources to support ongoing efforts, or strengthen previous recommendations as a result of the 2009 and 2012 assessments to insure progress, toward intended results.

Membership

A task force on children's justice is required to maintain membership representing the following disciplines:

- Judges⁷ and attorneys, including civil and criminal, prosecution and defense
- Law enforcement
- Child protective services
- Child advocates
- Court-appointed special advocates (CASA)
- Health and mental health professionals
- Parents and parent groups
- Individuals who specialize in working with children with disabilities
- Individuals with experience in working with homeless children and youth
- Adult former victims

At this time, all mandated positions on the Task Force have been satisfied with the exception of that by an adult former victim. Georgia has active foster youth advocacy groups that are effective in their efforts to represent the unique interests of that segment of the foster care population. Although the Task Force has had limited success engaging a youth willing to commit to another advocacy project or obligation to fill this position on the Task Force, when input is needed from this stakeholder group on CJA interests and priorities, these advocacy groups are consulted.

Georgia's Task Force has maintained a stable and committed core membership for many years. It is currently chaired by Melissa Carter, Emory University School of Law, and David

⁶ CAPTA requires that state grant recipients have "provisions for the appointment of an individual appointed to represent a child in judicial proceedings" and that these individuals have pre-appointment training that includes child development.

⁷ In Georgia, juvenile court judges may preside over both civil and criminal cases.

Miller, Senior Assistant District Attorney for the Southern Judicial Circuit. Ms. Carter has been a member since 2007 and Mr. Miller since 2015. Mr. Miller previously served as Vice-Chair on the state's Child Fatality Review Panel.

New members are recruited not only to maintain CJA membership requirements but also to provide additional expertise and experience relevant to Task Force priorities and its mandate as a CAPTA Panel. New members this past year whose professional affiliation is mandated by CJA include:

- Jennifer Bartl (Mental Health)
- Sarah Blake Smith (Experience with Homeless Youth)
- Rachelle Carnesale (Disabilities)
- Darice Good (Parent Attorney)
- Dr. Stephen Messner (Health Professional)
- Megan Paul (Foster Parent)
- Kelly Tonelli (Law Enforcement)
- Ashley Willcott (Juvenile Court Judge Pro Tem)

Based on needs identified in its last three-year assessment⁸, the Task Force added representatives from the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Education (DOE) to support ongoing work related to the interface of those agencies with families and with child welfare agency. The Task Force also includes individuals who represent the following fields:

- Post-secondary education, both in law and social work fields
- Child fatality investigation
- Child abuse prevention

A recent graduate of Georgia State University College of Law, Megan Gaither, joined the Task Force in 2016 and is currently serving a law clerk in Superior Court in Whitfield and Murray counties. She brings a unique perspective having participated in the Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program⁹ in 2016 serving as an intern under Judge Peggy Walker, Douglas County Juvenile Court.

Even though the Task Force has an established membership, ongoing recruitment efforts by individual Task Force members, child welfare agency leadership and a variety of professional and advocacy groups help to identify new candidates, when needed.

⁸ A three-year assessment was conducted in 2015.

⁹ Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program (ESCAP) supports 10-15 summer interns in professional child welfare advocacy environment with a grant from Georgia's Children's Justice Act. Providing opportunities for law and social work students in the field of child welfare is an ongoing priority for the task Force.

CJA membership requirements also satisfy CAPTA citizen review panel membership requirements.

Meetings and Conferences

Task Force Meetings

In 2016, the Task Force held five regularly-scheduled meetings, satisfying the federally-mandated minimum requirement for quarterly meetings for both a CJA task force and a CAPTA Panel. During FFY2016 these meetings occurred on:

- November 13, 2015
- January 8, 2016
- March 11, 2016
- May 13, 2016
- August 5, 2016

Special guests invited to meet with the Task Force during the year included:

- Emory University law students to present results of research conducted on child abuse and neglect definitions¹⁰
- Tripp Jones, Practice Coach Manager, DFCS Education and Training Unit, to present on the design and implementation of the Division's new "solution-based casework" practice model
- Andrew Agatston, Georgia Child Advocacy Centers to present on the update to the Multi-Disciplinary Team Information System (MDTIS) tracking system¹¹ used to document child abuse investigations

Committee meetings, special meetings, and conference calls were held as needed. Task Force members consulted regularly with each other and the CJA Coordinator for updates on work in progress; projects supported with the CJA grant; recent events related to Task Force goals, objectives and interests, collaboration opportunities, recruitment needs and efforts; and to identify and coordinate additional resources.

¹⁰ Project was supported with CJA funds. Results were incorporated into ongoing priority of the Task Force identified in the 2015 Three-Year Assessment to address inconsistencies in terminology related to child abuse and neglect in Georgia Code and state agency policies.

¹¹ Project was supported with a CJA funds. Activity supports CJA objective, and Task Force priority, to improve the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect by enhancing data collection and reporting capabilities.

Annual Retreat

In addition to regular meetings, the Task Force members participated in the annual retreat for all CAPTA panels on September 22, 2016. Hosted at Cobb Superior Court, the day-long event was attended by 18 Task Force members. The agenda at the 2016 retreat included:

- A refresher session on the CAPTA Panel and CJA Task Force mandates
- A report on the national CAPTA Panel conference attended by David Miller, Co-Chair
- A report on CJA Grantee meeting attended by Melissa Carter, Co-Chair
- A workshop on writing effective recommendations
- A session on the state's current CAPTA Plan and input on upcoming revision, facilitated by Federal Grants Manager, Beth Locker

In the afternoon, the Task Force broke into committees to develop working plans based on identified priorities for 2017. These committees included:

- Mandated reporter training
- Neglect
- Child abuse protocol
- Child fatality investigations

Annual CJA Grantee Meeting: August 29-30, 2016, Washington, DC

The Children's Bureau hosts annual grantee meetings for all discretionary and formula grant programs. The 2016 CJA grantee was scheduled in conjunction with the National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN) held August 31 - September 2, 2016. Georgia's State Liaison Officer (SLO), Beth Locker, Division of Family and Children's Services, Federal Grants Manager, Task Force Co-chair, Melissa Carter, and the CJA Coordinator attended the one-and-a-half day meeting¹². The annual grantee meeting provides an opportunity for CJA grantee states to receive a legislative update from federal representatives, learn from national experts, as well as network with CJA task force representatives from other states.

The meeting opened with a joint session for CJA and SLO representatives who were provided latest news from the Children's Bureau staff and the Director, Office of Child Abuse and Neglect. This was followed by policy update on CAPTA legislation and reauthorization¹³. The afternoon of the first day wrapped up with a facilitated networking activity for CJA and SLO that included program innovations related to the CJA mandate and domestic violence, substance abuse, child fatalities and commercial sexual exploitation.

¹² Attendance at the annual CJA grantee meeting is a requirement for all state grant recipients.

¹³ CAPTA updates included 2015 reauthorization included change in definition of child abuse and neglect to include sex trafficking; change in definition of sex trafficker to included 'any person' (not limited to caregiver); extending age of sex trafficked victims to 24; and changes resulting from the Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act 2016 (CARA) addressing the needs of infants affected by any substance abuse and implementation and monitoring of plans of safe care.

Morning sessions on day two were facilitated by representatives from Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for States, and included:

- Peer-to-Peer Problem Solving
- Developing a CJA/SLO Community of Practice

A representative from the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare presented on “Resources to Help Child Welfare Professionals and Partners Understand the Heroin and Prescription Medication Epidemic” in the early afternoon. The grantee meeting wrapped up with a session on “CJA Maintenance and Revitalization” revisiting the federal requirements related to Task Force membership and roles, that included presentations from several states.

Annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference: June 6-9, 2016, Glendale, AZ

David Miller, Task Force Co-Chair and the CJA Coordinator, attended the annual conference with representatives from Georgia’s two other CAPTA panels¹⁴. The theme for the two-and-a-half day conference was “Achieving Meaningful Impact: Citizen Involvement in Child Welfare.” Representatives from 27 states attended the conference. Hosted by the Arizona citizen review panels and Arizona State University Center for Child Well-Being, the conference included a broad range of topics relevant to both the CAPTA mandate of citizen review panels and the CJA mandate of the Task Force.

The keynote address was delivered by Travis Lloyd, Vice President of the national non-profit, Our Fields of Hope. Mr. Lloyd himself experienced foster care, group homes and institutionalization as a child in the child welfare stem. His address highlighted the importance of the professionals who work with youth in the foster care system in helping them to reach their full potential.

Plenary sessions offered during the conference included:

- Perception of Citizen Review Panels by Child Welfare Administrators – A National Study
- Family Empowerment
- Challenges, Opportunities and Building Citizen Review Panel Capacity
- Value of Youth Engagement, Advocacy and Youth/Adult Partnerships
- Substance Abuse in Child Welfare
- Medication-Assisted Treatment

¹⁴ The other two Georgia CAPTA Panels are the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee and the Child Fatality Review Committee

Twenty workshops were offered in four tracks:

- Building Citizen Review Panels
- Child Welfare Topics
- Collaboration for Change
- Other Assets for Citizen Review Panels

These sessions covered topic areas related to the citizen review panel mandate, its overarching objectives, and presentations by some state panels on effective strategies and innovative approaches utilized. Sessions were facilitated by a wide array of national, state and local experts, from both the academic and professional fields of child welfare, as well as stakeholder advocacy groups and citizen review panel members. The Georgia CJA Coordinator facilitated a World Café session on the “Enterprise of CRP” which focused on developing and sustaining effective citizen review panels.

The Work

Collaboration with Georgia’s Child Welfare Agency

The relationship between the Task Force and Georgia’s Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) can be characterized as a collaborative and mutually respectful working relationship. The Division consults regularly with members of the Task Force, formally and informally, as a resource, as advocates or as representatives of a constituent group. The expertise and opinions of the Task Force are valued and opportunities for stakeholder involvement often happen organically, without the need for a federal mandate. This positive relationship contributes to the stability and effectiveness of Georgia’s Task Force.

To sustain the efforts of the Task Force and ensure that it continues to meet its CJA obligations, the Division provides ongoing administrative support¹⁵, including:

- Creating a Federal Grants Manager¹⁶ position in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Task Force, and whose responsibilities include facilitating communication between the Division and the Task Force, and management of CJA contracts related to Task Force recommendations
- Contracting with a firm for the services of an independent coordinator who provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance, including participating in

¹⁵ CAPTA requires that states’ provide operational support to assist the panels in carrying out of their mandated duties.

¹⁶ Beth Locker, Federal Grants Manager, assumed her new position and attended her first CJA Task Force meeting in March 2016.

quarterly CJA grantee conference calls¹⁷ and webinars, and coordination of communications with other states' Task Forces, as needed

With the creation of the Federal Grants Manager position, Division Director, Bobby Cagle, committed to meeting quarterly with CAPTA Panel and Task Force members. These meetings provided an opportunity for open dialogue between the Task Force and the Division's leadership team on shared and individual concerns, priorities and interests, in addition to updates on actions taken by the child welfare agency in response to previous recommendations. These meetings are always informative and productive.

For many years, Georgia's Task Force members have been involved to varying degrees in several strategic planning activities and invited to participate on various advisory groups, providing input or feedback, to the state agency on its development, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation and revision of its various plans. In 2016, this included:

- Joint planning, including participation at meetings hosted by Region IV Child Welfare Specialist
- Georgia Performance Improvement and Planning Meeting
- Contributions to and review of the Annual Progress and Services Report
- Contributions to and review of Program Improvement Plans
- State CAPTA Plan
- Child welfare policy development, review and approval process and policy advisory committee by-laws

Opportunities were also made available to the Task Force to comment on or contribute to:

- Child welfare policy rewrite
 - The Task Force responded to requests to review updated sections of the policy in addition to completing its own extensive review of the section on investigations.
- Legislative priorities
 - The Task Force provided input on legislative actions on issues identified in the 2015 three-year assessment. These included child abuse definitions, the child abuse protocol and the child abuse registry. Legislative activity related to CJA mandate included:
 - HB770 amending O.C.G.A 16-5-46, relating to trafficking a person for labor or sexual servitude, to expand the definition of "sexual servitude"

¹⁷ Conference calls were held November 4, 2015, February 3, 2016, and May 5, 2016. Call scheduled for August 4, 2016 was cancelled.

to include individuals who have a developmental disability and those whom the accused believed to be a minor under the age of 18.

- HB 905 amending O.C.G.A 19-7-5, the child abuse mandated reporting statute, to add child endangerment as a type of child abuse that must be reported and to revise the definition of “sexual abuse” to include acts of consensual sex between minors if any individual is less than 14 years of age while excluding from the definition consensual acts between a minor and an adult who is not more than four years older than the minor.

The bill also amended Title 19 provisions relating to child abuse protocol committees to add “child advocacy center” and to include representatives of child advocacy centers and sexual assault centers as required members. Additional changes would allow for the development of circuit-wide protocols and require that written protocols be filed with the Office of the Child Advocate in addition to the state child welfare agency.

Title 49, Chapter 5, Article 8, relating to the central child abuse registry, was amended to eliminate requirements for information on convicted child abusers to be collected and maintained on the child abuse registry, to provide an expungement process for minor alleged child abusers, and to add access to the registry by CASA.

- Online mandated reporting training¹⁸ updates
 - The Task Force was represented on a committee to review and update mandated reporter training to ensure compliance with CAPTA reauthorization

In addition to these opportunities to work more closely with Georgia’s child welfare agency, Task Force members participate on a variety of local, state and/or national boards or organizations that increase the collaborative potential for furthering the goals and objectives of the Children’s Justice Act. This includes groups or organizations, such as:

- Georgia Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Coalition
- Strengthening Families Georgia
- Human Trafficking Task Force
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- National Parent Representation Project
- HEAL (health, education, advocacy and leadership) Trafficking Committee

¹⁸ The Division’s Office of Prevention and Family Support (OPFS) sponsors online-training on Georgia’s mandated reporting requirements. This training is available at no cost to the public and to designated reporters, who are required to obtain mandated reporter training. In 2016, 45,150 individuals, including 2,109 medical professionals, obtained certificates for successfully completing training on the website.

- Georgia Advisory Council on Special Education
- Georgia Child Welfare Training Collaborative Advisory Committee

Ongoing Task Force Priorities

The Task Force continues its support of coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches that improve the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, and in particular, training related to victims with special needs, commercial sexual exploitation of children and maltreatment-related child fatalities. This includes the following long-standing priorities related to its mandate:

1. Multidisciplinary training and education to improve the quality, consistency and successful identification, investigation, intervention, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, including child fatalities
2. Reducing trauma to child victims of abuse
3. Encouraging and supporting advocacy in the field of child welfare
4. Encouraging and supporting collaborative efforts between Georgia's child welfare agency, its partners and community stakeholders
5. Ensuring that the handling of cases involving child victims with special needs is developmentally and culturally appropriate

Based on the results of the 2015 CJA three-year assessment¹⁹, the Task Force added several new priorities:

6. Improving the consistency of maltreatment terminology and its alignment with child welfare policy and practice among agencies with child caring or protection responsibilities
7. Improving the quality and consistency of state and local child abuse protocols – the community's collaboration response to allegations of child abuse
8. Improving the consistency and quality of mandated reporter training

These priorities are the primary factors considered in the development of annual CJA funding recommendations.

¹⁹ Assessment was conducted in 2014 for inclusion in the 2015 CJA application.

Task Force Activities

During 2016, the Task Force has continued its efforts to address issues identified in the 2015 three-year assessment, in addition to its ongoing priorities.

Child Abuse and Neglect Terminology: Address inconsistencies in the definitions of child abuse between sections of the Georgia Code and among state agencies

Update²⁰: In its most recent system assessment, conducted in 2015, the Children's Justice Act Task Force (Task Force) undertook an exhaustive study of the statutory approaches to defining child maltreatment and its various forms throughout the Georgia Code. Specific focus was placed on the definitions codified in the Social Services Act (Title 49), the Juvenile Code (Title 15, Chapter 11) and select provisions contained within Title 19 (Child Custody), particularly those concerning mandated reporting of child abuse. Additionally, the Criminal Code (Title 16) and the Education Code (Title 20) were reviewed. This research was supplemented by a limited number of qualitative interviews with child welfare agency staff, law enforcement personnel, and children's hospital staff, and examination of the model Child Abuse Protocol.

Task Force members had observed that while the definitions were not in conflict, inconsistencies in the way child abuse and neglect are conceptualized in statute produce inconsistent responses in the way various authorities (e.g., education, law enforcement) respond to allegations of child maltreatment. Discrepancies in statutory schemes had developed because of the piecemeal fashion in which legislative amendments occur, and investigatory practices had followed. Particular challenges had been revealed in Division of Family and Children Services (Division) investigations of maltreatment in care reports and subsequently, in the implementation of the child abuse registry.

After the Task Force submitted its recommendations to Division leadership, Director and General Counsel initiated follow-up with the Executive Director of the Barton Center and Task Force Co-chair about the potential for collaborating to devise a definition of abuse which could be included in the mandated reporter statute and juvenile code definitions, and be widely accepted for purposes of substantiation decisions and court determinations of dependency. A broad and inclusive stakeholder engagement process and further research is necessary to prepare a proposal for legislative consideration.

The Task Force remains committed to this priority. Members are interested in addressing this policy and practice gap in order to promote best practice in multidisciplinary investigations of

²⁰ Update was prepared by Melissa Carter, Task Force Co-chair and Director of The Barton Child Law and Policy Center.

child abuse, consistency in response to allegations, and lessening of trauma to child victims. Division leadership also remains committed to collaborating to develop a legislative proposal suitable for introduction in an upcoming legislative session, potentially as part of the agency's administrative request.

Child Abuse Protocol: Improve effectiveness of state model and local child abuse protocols

Update: The Task Force continues its efforts to support continuous improvement in the multidisciplinary response to allegations of child abuse and neglect, from report to resolution, through effective collaboration, communication and coordination between state and local agencies and organizations involved. The Task Force advocates for continuous quality improvement of the CAP by regular review and update of the model protocol by its constituents groups to ensure its effectiveness²¹. The Task Force's CAP committee continues to monitor legislation, policy and practice changes and the potential impact on the multidisciplinary response to allegations of child abuse and neglect.

The Task Force is considering evaluating the CAP as the subject of the next three-year CJA assessment in 2018.

Mandated Reporter Training: Improve the quality and consistency of mandated reports

Update: With the implementation in 2013 of Georgia's 24/7 statewide, centralized call line²² for reporting suspected child abuse, the number of reports received increased dramatically. In 2012, a total of 70,512²³ reports (total referrals) were received. Of these reports, 17,636 (25%) were screened out and 52,876 (75%) were accepted and assigned. Data comparison for 2013 is not available as full implementation of the centralized call system occurred in July 2013. The first full year of implementation was 2014 which showed a dramatic increase from 2012. An increase of more than 23% occurred from 2014 to 2015, the second full year of implementation.

²¹ In 2016, the Task Force supported a multidisciplinary summit hosted by the Office of the Child Advocate to review and update the current state model CAP. In 2017, the Task Force supported efforts to distribute the revised model CAP, update local CAP, and provide training.

²² Georgia's 24/7 statewide call line for reporting child abuse and neglect is known as CPS Intake Call Center (CICC)

²³ Source: Child Maltreatment 2012, Table 2-1 Screened-In and Screened Out Referrals

2015 Child Abuse and Neglect Reports²⁴

	Reports Received ²⁵	Reports Accepted ²⁶	% change OPY
2014	190,618	107,053	N/A
2015	216,096	132,296	+24
2016	207,747	126,735	-4

The dramatic increases in the number of reports received in 2014-2016 are not entirely the result of an increase in incidents of child abuse and neglect. Other factors that may have contributed to the increased number of reports include:

- Increased awareness due to marketing of the 24/7 hotline
- Increased awareness of mandated reporters on their role as a mandated reporter²⁷
- Multiple reports documented for single case
- Improved consistency in the assessment of reports
- Improved training for intake staff who receive the reports

Assignment of Reports Accepted 2015 and 2016

	<u>2015</u>		<u>2016</u>	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Priority Assignment²⁸ (immediate, 24 or 72 hour response)</i>	N/A	N/A	31,772	25
Investigation	43,582	33	32,305	24
Family Support	34,234	26	17,692	15
Screen Out/Screen Out & Referral	26,159	20	24,523	19
Information and Referral	22,775	17	17,146	14
Other	5,546	4	3,297	3
Total	132,296	100	126,735	100

Of particular concern to the Task Force is the increased percentage of reports assigned as screen outs, information and referrals, and 'other' from 25% in 2012 to 44% in 2015 and 36% in

²⁴ Source: Division of Family and Children Services, Field Operations, CPS Intake Call Center, SHINES data

²⁵ Report sources include CICC, emails, faxes and web forms

²⁶ Number of child abuse or neglect reports accepted and documented in SHINES, Georgia's child welfare data collection and reporting system

²⁷ The Division's Office of Prevention and Family Support sponsors free online mandated reporter training that was accessed by more than 47,000 individuals in 2016.

²⁸ It should be noted that a change in child welfare policy in 2016 adding of priority response times to ensure early identification of threats to child safety, and the implementation of the Initial Safety Assessment (ISA) practice resulted in a redistribution of response assignments. These changes are reflected primarily with an increase in Investigations and a decrease in Family Support.

2016 calling into question the appropriateness of reports made. This suggests an opportunity to better educate mandated reporters and the public on what is child abuse and neglect, what should be reported to the child welfare agency, and what community resources are available to address the needs of families for whom reports were inappropriate.

In 2016, the Task Force's Mandated Reporter Committee initiated an assessment of Georgia's mandated reporter training requirements and standards to identify opportunities to improve both the quality of training and consistency with current child welfare law, policy and practice. The committee is evaluating the mandated reporter training requirements by various child caring agencies and is gathering information on those agency standards and requirements and expects to develop future recommendations (2017) related to:

- Training guidelines/standards for mandated reporters, and in particular for those employed at, or are regulated by, state agencies with child caring responsibilities (DECAL, DOE, etc.)
- Establishing an approval mechanism for all mandated reporter training to ensure consistency and compliance with child welfare policy, practice and federal and state law
- Requiring approved mandated reporter training for individuals at state agencies with oversight of child-caring facilities and staff at those facilities, if not already required

The dramatic increase in investigatory response to reports from 33% in 2015 to 49%²⁹ in 2016, with the implementation of immediate, 24 or 72 hours priority assignments, presents another opportunity that the Task Force will explore further in 2017/2018.

Additional Task Force Priorities in 2016

In addition to furthering their agenda related to the 2015 three-year assessment, the Task Force established the following committees to examine the impact of current policy and practice on the investigation of child fatalities and the impact of long-term neglect on the assessment of an allegation of child abuse or neglect. Work plans initiated in 2016 will continue through 2017-2018.

Child Fatality Investigations Committee

Examination of the mechanisms used in the review of all child deaths has suggested that additional training on maltreatment for first responders and investigators would help to improve the likelihood that child fatalities where maltreatment is a contributing factor, would be identified more consistently. In 2016, the Task Force established a Child Fatality

²⁹ Includes 25% assigned to immediate, 24 or 72 hour Priority Response and 24% assigned to Investigations

Investigation Committee and in 2017-2018 their efforts will focus on evaluating investigation protocols and training to:

- Strengthen collaboration between Office of Child Fatality Review/Georgia Bureau of Investigations³⁰ and the Division in the development and delivery of a curriculum on identifying maltreatment-related child fatalities for first responders and investigators
- Supplement state model child abuse protocol with a section on the investigation of child fatalities

Neglect Committee

Task Force members have expressed concern regarding the impact of long term neglect, including the increased risk for child fatality, near fatality and serious injury. More specifically, their concern is that the family history of chronic neglect is not sufficiently factored into response decisions when a report is received. The Neglect Committee will continue its efforts in 2017 to identify and assess gaps and develop recommendations to include, but are not limited to:

- Improving the identification of and response to chronic neglect during initial safety assessment and investigations

Projects Funded in 2016

The Task Force collaborates with Georgia's child welfare agency on the administration of the CJA funds, including the solicitation and review of proposals and funding recommendations. To further its primary objectives as a task force on children's justice and meet its mandate, the Task Force continues to recommend supporting those activities that improve and strengthen the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and maltreatment-related fatalities, in addition to supporting projects that address the new priorities identified in the three-year assessment.

The Task Force recommended CJA awards for several projects that were responsive to CJA objectives, Task Force interests and state agency priorities. Each project reflects the CJA emphasis on advocacy, multidisciplinary approaches, collaboration and Task Force special interests. Additionally, projects that address children with special needs and/or commercial sexual exploitation of children are encouraged, and supported, whenever possible. CJA grantees have been identified below with brief descriptions of activities funded in 2016.

³⁰ In 2015, responsibilities for child fatality review were transferred from OCA to GBI.

Grantee: Cherokee Child Advocacy Center, Inc.

Project: ChildFirst Training

Task Force Priorities: #1, 2 & 5

ChildFirst™ Georgia is a forensic interview training program offered by the Cherokee Child Advocacy Council, Inc. through partnerships with the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) and the Children's Justice Act. The ChildFirst™ model is designed to improve the investigative, administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, cases involving children with special needs, and maltreatment-related fatalities, while minimizing additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family. The purpose of the ChildFirst™ Georgia program is to provide nationally-recognized, comprehensive forensic interview training on a statewide level to teams of frontline professionals who investigate child abuse.

During 2016, 120 professionals from 51 counties were trained on ChildFirst™ Georgia (basic, forensic interview training), Advanced ChildFirst™ training, and ChildFirst™ Update training.

Grantee: Georgia Office of the Child Advocate

Project: State Model and Local Child Abuse Protocols

Task Force Priorities: #1, 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7

Each of Georgia's counties are required by state law to develop, implement and evaluate a multidisciplinary response to allegations of child abuse and neglect as spelled out in their Child Abuse Protocol (CAP). The CAP outlines the multidisciplinary approach used to investigate and prosecute alleged cases of child neglect, physical and sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The purpose of the CAP is to ensure coordination and cooperation between agencies involved in the investigation of child abuse cases to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the handling such cases and to minimize the trauma to child victims.

In 2016, the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) hosted a summit to solicit input from the multidisciplinary community to update the CAP and establish a protocol for future revisions when changes in law, policy and/ or practice impact the CAP and the community's response to allegations of child abuse and neglect. Multidisciplinary representation included state agencies, law enforcement, child advocates, attorneys (child, parent and prosecuting), medical and mental health, juvenile court, disabilities and special needs and sex trafficking. The morning session included presentations on each of the disciplines with CAP response responsibilities on changes in policy and practice with implications for the CAP. The afternoon session provided time for each discipline to review and update their respective sections of the CAP. The day

wrapped up with agreement on a collective recommendation and tentative approval on an updated state model CAP for distribution.

The 2016 state model CAP update incorporated Task Force recommendations, including:

- Reference of the appropriate definitions in O.C.G.A. §15-11-2 (Juvenile Code)
- Mandate for a multidisciplinary response to child abuse allegations
- Requirement for consistent participation (particularly by Division and local prosecutors/district attorneys) on both child abuse protocol committees and related multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and
- Mandate to adhere to local child abuse protocols

Several law, policy and best practices were also incorporated into the state model CAP based on recommendations identified during the Summit.

2016 legislative amendments were also incorporated into the state model CAP, including:

- The new definition of ***sexual servitude*** in the trafficking statute
- New legislation on accessing the forensic interview documents and video recordings
- Changes to the definition of child abuse under mandated reporter law to include child endangerment
- Protocol committee member changes to include two (2) new mandated protocol committee members: the local Child Advocacy Center and the Sexual Assault Center
- The ability for protocol committees to elect to have a circuit-wide, rather than a county-wide, protocol committee in those circuits with more than one county
- The new filing date of September 1st of each year for local updated protocols
- The change of agency from Child Fatality Review (CFR) to OCA to file the updated protocols and annual reports

In 2016, ongoing efforts by OCS provided information on the CAP at 25 community events to 1,278 participants. Additionally, 598 first responders representing 22 counties in 10 judicial circuit received CAP training at 22 day-long events. Individual training and technical assistance was also provided, as needed, to local CAP committees to ensure consistency and compliance of local CAP with current law, policy and practice to improve the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary response to child abuse investigations and prosecutions in their respective communities.

Grantee: Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia

Project: One Team Conference

Task Force Priorities: #1, 4, & 5

On November 4, 2015, the Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia held its 9th annual One Team Conference, providing multidisciplinary training on a wide spectrum of topics on child sexual abuse, child commercial sexual exploitation, and children with special needs to more than 242 professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases. Disciplines represented at the conference were:

- Child advocacy center professionals
- Child welfare caseworkers and supervisors
- Law enforcement
- Prosecutors
- Medical and mental health professionals
- Service providers
- Volunteers
- Faith-based groups

Presenters included a Task Force member whose workshop, Presenting the Perfect Storm, addressed challenges facing investigators when child victims have disabilities. Other workshops included:

- Forensic Interviewing: Digging Deep into Multiple Protocols
- Children and Teens Who Act Out Sexually
- Physical Signs of Child Abuse
- Wellness/Survival and the MDT Approach to Child Abuse
- Ethical Challenges Facing Children's Advocacy Centers

Grantee: Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia

Project: Extended Forensic Interview Training

Task Force Priorities: #1, 2, & 5

Training on the National Children's Advocacy Center's (NCAC) Extended Forensic Interview (EFI) was provided to 33 child advocacy center forensic interviewers. The 3-day training was designed for forensic interviewers with prior training in forensic interviewing techniques, knowledge of child development, knowledge of children with cognitive disabilities or developmental delays, the impact of trauma on memory and development, and dynamics of child abuse.

The EFI training introduced a model for a multi-session forensic interview of a child who is potentially a victim or witness of child abuse or other violent behaviors. Attendees learned that an EFI is appropriate for children for whom the results of a single interview are inconclusive or when there are serious concerns about the child's ability to participate in a single-session forensic interview, such as for a very young child, a child with developmental delays or cognitive disabilities, or an extremely traumatized child. Further, attendees learned that cultural considerations might also indicate a need for an EFI, rather than a single-session interview.

The NCAC EFI model is grounded in research of empirically based forensic principles. Topics addressed during the EFI training included: forensic questioning of children, developmental and cultural screening, memory and suggestibility, the use of media in forensic questioning, incremental and direct approaches to substantives issues, and consideration of alternative hypotheses in forensic questioning.

Grantee: Emory University – Barton Child Law and Policy Center

Project: Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program

Task Force Priorities: #1, 2, 3, 4 & 5

Emory's Summer Child Advocacy Program (ESCAP) is an established interdisciplinary summer internship program designed to support the dual goals of increasing the service capacity of the Georgia child welfare system and promoting careers in the child advocacy field. The program is intentionally designed to support CJA priority to improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

The 2016 ESCAP program included an intensive, 4-day orientation training followed by 10 weeks of a paid internship for 12 graduate students³¹ from law and social work programs across the United States. Placements are carefully selected to represent a range of opportunities, from direct practice settings to agency administrative and public policy positions. In 2016, placements included juvenile courts, non-profit policy and advocacy organizations, child representation office and with providers of child welfare services.

The students contribute their skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm to further the work of their internship placement setting, providing valuable staff support to under-resourced and overburdened juvenile courts, law offices, service providers, and agencies. In exchange, the interns benefit from meaningful engagement in, and exposure to, the work of the people and

³¹ In addition to 12 ESCAP interns, training was provided to 16 child welfare professionals and students interning with other local child serving agencies.

institutions that serve children and families involved in the child welfare system, and encouragement to pursue a career in the child welfare advocacy field³².

Grantee: Georgia State University – Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Project: Mandated Reporter Train-the-Trainer

Task Force Priorities: #1, 4 & 8

A one-day Mandated Reporter Training of the Trainer (TOT) was developed to provide in-depth knowledge and training skills to professionals across Georgia, who are now able to deliver in-person mandated reporter trainings to their communities. The TOT was designed to provide training to professionals who in turn are able to train individuals in their communities on how to recognize child abuse and neglect and understand their responsibility to report suspected maltreatment. The underlying mandated reporter curriculum was developed in collaboration with Georgia Division of Child and Families Services policy and training staff and as well as other subject matter experts. The curriculum is consistent with the Division's current standards and guidelines for mandated reporter training³³.

A total of 49 people were trained in 2016 and each, in turn, committed to deliver three in-person mandated reporter trainings in their communities.

Grantee: Georgia CASA

Project: CASA Advocacy Training

Task Force Priorities: #2, 3, 4 & 5

The Advocacy Training project was designed to strengthen the advocacy skills of 170 CASA staff and 2,200 volunteers at 47 affiliated CASA programs across the state. Advanced training was provided by webinar, in-person and made available on the CASA website. Topics covered by specialized trainings included:

- Permanency and well-being
- Education advocacy for children with special needs
- Supporting LGBTQ youth, foster and adoptive families
- Medically fragile children

³² Since its inception more than a decade ago, ESCAP has had an impact on over 200 interns, many of whom have pursued careers in the child welfare field. Results from a voluntary survey conducted by Barton Center in 2013 indicated that 92% of respondents reported that they had used the skills acquired during ESCAP. This same percentage indicated that they are, or have, engaged in a paid position in the field of child advocacy and 60% indicated that they are, or have, engaged in pro bono volunteer work in the field.

³³ Consistency with law, policy and practice was verified by the Division of Family and Children Services, Policy and Regulations Unit, Knowledge Management Section.

A set of quick reference guides³⁴ was developed to provide tools and resources to support CASA's ongoing advocacy efforts. Ten new guides were developed that included:

- Reinstatement of Parental Rights
- CASA Access to Case Information
- Case Planning (2 cards)
- Education Advocacy
- Special Education Advocacy
- Trauma and Well-Being (2 cards)
- Permanency Options
- Older Youth

Onsite court visits were also conducted to connect training to practice ultimately improving the handling of child abuse and neglect cases by helping to limit additional trauma to child victims, including those with special needs, as well as strengthening the quality of representation and advocacy through well-trained, educated CASA advocates.

Grantee: Division of Family and Children Services

Project: Special Assistant Attorneys General Conference

Task Force Priorities: #1, 2, 4 & 5

Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, Legal Services Unit, sponsors an annual training event for Special Assistant Attorneys General (SAAG) who represent the Division in juvenile court in dependency proceedings. The two-day conference provided training to 123 attorneys, associates and Division staff on such topics as:

- Professionalism and ethics
- Appellate child welfare case law
- Compliance with LEP/SI and ADA requirements
- Discovery under the juvenile court code
- Sex trafficking
- Utilizing ICPC and border agreements in the prosecution of child abuse
- Preparing and prosecuting termination of parental rights cases

³⁴ Two of the ten previously created Quick Reference Guides were also updated to include relevant law and policy changes, bringing the total number to twenty.

Grantee: Division of Family and Children Services

Project: 2015 Child Death Analysis

Task Force Priorities: #1 &4

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (Division) engaged the Georgia State University, Mark Chaffin Center for Healthy Development in a review and analysis of its 2015 child fatality data to assist in writing an annual report identifying potential interventions and prevention activities, including media campaigns, for presentation to and consideration by multiple constituencies. The goal of the project was to provide information on the circumstances and environmental factors surrounding 2015 child fatalities to help community members, policy-makers and the media have a better understanding of the data, policy implications, and the Division's response to child fatalities and its prevention efforts.

2017 Recommendations for CJA Funding³⁵

Task Force recommendations for continued support of the following activities in 2017, included:

- Cherokee Child Advocacy Center, Inc.: ChildFirst Training
- Georgia Office of the Child Advocate: State Model and Local Child Abuse Protocol Maintenance and Training
- Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia: One Team Conference
- Emory University – Barton Child Law and Policy Center: Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program
- Georgia CASA: CASA Advocacy Training
- Georgia Division of Family and Children Services: Special Assistant Attorneys General Conference

New projects also recommended for CJA funding in 2017 included:

- Georgia Division of Family and Children Services: Courtroom Training for Caseworkers
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta:
 - Bumps, Bruises and Broken Bone Training for Caseworkers
 - Pilot to develop network of pediatric medical professionals who complete forensic medical exams

³⁵ Proposals were received for all recommended projects and 2017 contracts awarded based on Task Force recommendations.

In closing....

The Task Force respectfully submits its report to Division leadership on its 2016 activities, including findings and resulting recommendations. Additionally, priorities and plans for 2017 have been identified highlighting collaborative opportunities so as to better coordinate efforts on shared goals and objectives in the coming year.

The Task Force would like to express its appreciation to Division Director Cagle and his leadership team for their responsiveness to, and continued support of, the Task Force, its mandate and recommendations, and looks forward to working together in 2017.

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Georgia's Citizen Review Panel (CAPTA Panel) Program

Children's Justice Act Task Force ♦ Child Protective Services Advisory Committee ♦ Child Fatality Review Panel

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee 2016 Annual Report



Vision

Every child will live in a safe and nurturing home, and every family will have the community-based supports and services they need to provide safe and nurturing homes for their children

Mission

To work in partnership with Georgia's child welfare system to ensure that every effort is made to preserve, support and strengthen families and, when intervention is necessary to ensure the safety of children, that they and their families are treated with dignity, respect and care

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Originally enacted in January 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is a key piece of federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA has been amended several times, most recently in December 2010, and reauthorized through 2015. Although the primary responsibility for addressing the child welfare needs of children and families lies with each state agency, CAPTA provides federal funding to support child abuse prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities for the purpose of improving the state's child protection systems.

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels

With each reauthorization, including the most recent in 2015, CAPTA has evolved in response to the child welfare climate, shifting its focus to safety as well as a desire to increase accountability in the child protective services (CPS) system. The CAPTA reauthorization of 1996 established citizen review panels (CAPTA Panels)¹ as a requirement for all states receiving a CAPTA state grant. States were required to establish and maintain a minimum of three CAPTA Panels to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states meet their goals of protecting children from child abuse and neglect.

Section 106 of the CAPTA legislation further stipulates that CAPTA Panels be 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. Panels are required to meet quarterly, provide for public outreach, and prepare an annual report on activities that provides feedback on the effectiveness of the state's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies and presents recommendations for improvements. State child welfare agencies are required to provide access to information that CAPTA Panels desire to review, to provide administrative support so that the Panels can fulfill their duties, and to respond to Panel recommendations included in their annual reports.

The purpose of CAPTA Panels is to increase system transparency and accountability and provide opportunities for community input by:

- Examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies, and, where appropriate, specific cases
- Evaluating the extent to which state and local child protection agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with:
 - a) The state's CAPTA plan
 - b) Child protection standards required by CAPTA

¹ In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are referred to as "CAPTA Panels" to distinguish this stakeholder group from similarly named "Citizen Panel Review", which are foster care review boards.

- Any other criteria that the CAPTA Panels consider important to ensure the protection of children, including:
 - a) Reviewing the extent to which the state and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under Title IV Part E of the Social Security Act
 - b) Reviewing child fatalities and near fatalities

The Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC) serves as one of Georgia's three CAPTA Panels.

Membership

The CPSAC includes members from both rural and urban communities, some of whom travel several hours to attend meetings. Although the size of the state presents a challenge when recruiting and engaging members that represent all of its geographic areas, most regions are represented on the CPSAC. The diversity of personal and professional backgrounds, and the wide range of experience and expertise of CPSAC members, brings many unique perspectives to their common interest - the safety and well-being of Georgia's families, children and youth.

CPSAC membership was stable during 2016. Additions to the CPSAC in 2016 included a foster parent, a local business representative, and a provider and advocate for Latino families. Ongoing recruitment efforts continue to identify and engage individuals from the community with an interest in improving Georgia's child welfare system or who have expertise in a subject matter of interest to the CPSAC. Identifying and engaging consumers, parents and youth who have been involved in the system is most challenging; however, the CPSAC is committed to providing those opportunities whenever possible.

Meetings

In 2016, the CPSAC satisfied the federally-mandated minimum requirement for quarterly meetings. Dates for these meetings in FFY2016 were:

- November 19, 2015
- January 20, 2016
- March 16, 2016
- May 18, 2016
- August 16, 2016

Special guests invited to meet with the CPSAC during the year included:

Dianne Kelly, Division of Family and Children Services, Director, Foster Care Services Unit²

Ms. Kelly was invited to meet with the committee in response to member concerns regarding the recruitment, training and retention of suitable foster and relative caregiver homes. These concerns included:

- Current foster care capacity³
- Shortage of foster homes for special populations or children/youth with special or complex needs
- Use of hoteling⁴ as a temporary placement when there is not a qualified foster home available
- Length of time to approve foster homes (delay between recruitment and approval)
- Shortage of dedicated Resource Development staff (due to budget constraints and/or length of time to hire new staff)

Ms. Kelly shared the Division's plans⁵ to enhance and strengthen its Resource Development program by improving the effectiveness of regional teams using innovative partnerships, exceptional on-boarding experience for foster, adoptive and relative placements, and optimal caregiver retention. "CRRU" (caregiver, recruitment, retention, utilization) teams will be established in each region to:

- Implement recruitment initiatives
- Assign a navigator (mentor) to each foster care inquiry on the 877-210-KIDS line
- Provide ongoing resources for foster parents through a warm line and volunteer support
- Provide on-going foster parent training
- Handle grievances

Panel members were encouraged by, and supportive of, the initiatives described by Ms. Kelly that addressed several of their foster care recruitment and retention concerns.

² Ms. Kelly has since resigned from the Division.

³ Ms Kelly reported that 11,800 children were currently in foster care (November 2015)

⁴ Due to a shortage of qualified foster homes, hoteling was the practice of providing short-term, temporary placement with direct supervision of children by a caseworker.

⁵ Strategies included in the 2015-2019 Child and Family Services Plan

Lee Biggar, Division of Family and Children Services, Assistant Director, Knowledge Management Unit, Laurence Nelson, Division of Family and Children Services, Education and Training Unit, and Joanne Weather, Director, Department of Human Services Management and Development (OHRMD) and staff members from Recruitment and Compensation and Workforce Analysis sections

The work of the CPSAC in 2015 focused on issues related to child welfare workforce job satisfaction including recruitment and retention of staff. Several recommendations were submitted for consideration by the Division. In 2016, the CPSAC continued to monitor actions related to the Division's response to those recommendations and asked for an update on progress toward addressing concerns identified in the 2015 report. As a result, the above mentioned guests were invited to meet with CPSAC members to provide an update on recruitment efforts, hiring practices and training.

As the Division does not have its own human resources department, these functions are conducted by OHRMD. The representatives from OHRMD provided an overview of the recruitment, vetting and hiring protocols for the Division. Although hiring standards and practices seem reasonable, completing them in a timely manner, such as criminal background checks, can be a barrier. Unexpected or unreasonable delays can result in the loss of a good candidate. The CPSAC was heartened to hear that the OHRMD was committed to improvement in its recruitment and retention practice.

Mr. Biggar responded to CPSAC member questions on how vacancies were filled and how decisions were made on critical hires. He also responded to questions on current caseloads⁶, turnover rates⁷ and supervisory support. Mr. Nelson described the extensive training for new hires. The Division is also piloting a mentoring program⁸ for supervisors.

Additional concerns were raised by CPSAC members regarding the new solutions-based casework practice model and the challenge to implement and sustain it successfully when the workforce is unstable.

⁶ At the recent Child and Family Services Review debrief meeting (January 2016), caseloads of 19 were cited.

⁷ Mr. Biggar indicated that the current turnover rate is 35% (January 2016) with the biggest loss occurring between 12-24 months of initial hire.

⁸ The CPSAC has previously recommended the re-establishment of the mentoring program for supervisors. The limited mentoring program is being supported with a \$225,000 line item in the current budget.

Lynn Barmore, Metro⁹ District Director, Division of Family and Children Services

CPSAC members invited Ms. Barmore to meet with them to share her perspectives on managing recruitment and retention challenges as the manager of the large metro region. Since accepting the position as district manager, she has reorganized and redistributed existing resources or implemented new management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness. These positive changes included a training academy for new hires, mentoring of certified caseworkers and combining pools of practice experts to maximize the impact on metro counties. In addition, Ms. Barmore shared information on the Division's new Initial Safety Assessment (ISA) practice, comparing the current response to a report and the new ISA response, and spoke briefly on the training and implementation of the Solution-Based Casework practice model.

Annual Retreat

In addition to regular meetings, CPSAC members participated in the annual retreat for all CAPTA panels on September 22, 2016. Hosted at Cobb Superior Court, the day-long event was attended by 18 Task Force members. The agenda at the 2016 retreat included:

- A refresher session on the CAPTA Panel and CJA Task Force mandates
- A report on the national CAPTA Panel conference
- A workshop on writing effective recommendations
- A session on the state's current CAPTA Plan and input on upcoming revision, facilitated by Federal Grant Manager, Beth Locker

In the afternoon, the CPSAC broke into committees to develop a working plan for 2017. These committees include:

- Foster Parent Training
- Permanency and Placement Support

Annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference: June 6-9, 2016, Glendale, AZ

Sarah Jones represented the CPSAC at the annual conference with representatives from Georgia's two other CAPTA panels and the CAPTA Panel Coordinator. The theme for the two-and-a-half day conference was "Achieving Meaningful Impact: Citizen Involvement in Child Welfare." Representatives from 27 states attended the conference. Hosted by the Arizona citizen review panels and Arizona State University Center for Child Well-Being, the conference included a broad range of topics relevant to the CAPTA mandate of citizen review panels.

⁹ Counties included in the metro District include Fulton, Dekalb, Cobb and Gwinnett.

The keynote address was delivered by Travis Lloyd, Vice President of the national non-profit, Our Fields of Hope. Travis himself experienced foster care, group homes and institutionalization as a child in the child welfare system. His address highlighted the importance of the professionals who work with youth in the foster care system in helping them to reach their full potential.

Plenary sessions offered during the conference included:

- Perception of Citizen Review Panels by Child Welfare Administrators – A National Study
- Family Empowerment
- Challenges, Opportunities and Building Citizen Review Panel Capacity
- Value of Youth Engagement, Advocacy and Youth/Adult Partnerships
- Substance Abuse in Child Welfare
- Medication-Assisted Treatment

Twenty workshops were offered in four tracks:

- Building Citizen Review Panels
- Child Welfare Topics
- Collaboration for Change
- Other Assets for Citizen Review Panels

These sessions covered topic areas related to the citizen review panel mandate, its overarching objectives, and presentations by some state panels on effective strategies and innovative approaches utilized. Sessions were facilitated by a wide array of national, state and local experts, from both the academic and professional fields of child welfare, as well as stakeholder advocacy groups and citizen review panel members. The Georgia CAPTA Panel Coordinator facilitated a World Café session on the “Enterprise of CRP” which focused on developing and sustaining effective citizen review panels.

Sarah Jones, foster parent and CPSAC representative at the conference shares some thoughts on her experience:

“I was fortunate enough to attend the National Citizen Review Panel Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Because I was new to our state CAPTA panels, the conference served as both a crash course on the overarching mandate of the program, as well as a look at the work our communities are doing to support youth in foster care. I chose to attend sessions that emphasized the roles citizen review panels have in state policy, as well as educational sessions regarding trauma and other experiences youth in foster care have likely encountered.”

While attending sessions regarding panel operations it became clear that the Panels in Georgia were functioning quite well. I realized that the working relationship between the Georgia's CAPTA Panels and the Division of Family and Children Services is a special collaboration that many states do not enjoy. I believe this partnership is a main reason our Panels are so successful.

The sessions regarding youth experiences in foster care were both emotional and educational. I appreciated the academic nature of these presentations and enjoyed discussing ways citizen review panels can help to shape policy that ultimately impacts our most vulnerable youth.

Plenary sessions helped provide me with a better understanding of the valuable work citizen review panels undertake. Breakout sessions I attended focused on youth in foster care. I was inspired by the narratives youth shared and brought that inspiration back with me to Georgia, where I attend meetings now with a better understanding of the role citizen review panels can have in advocating for justice and equity for a population of youth most in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the panel and attend the conference."

CPSAC Members Engaged as Valued Stakeholders in 2016

During 2016, CPSAC members had several opportunities to provide input on child welfare policy and/or practice. Several provided feedback on revised child welfare policies. One member serves on the state's Continuous Quality Improvement leadership committee and another serves on the state's Policy Advisory Council.

The relationship between CAPTA Panels and Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) can be characterized as a collaborative and a mutually respectful working relationship. The Division solicits input from CPSAC members, as needed, as a resource, as advocates or as representatives of a constituent group. Expertise and opinions are valued and opportunities for stakeholder involvement often happen organically, without the need for a federal mandate. This positive relationship contributes to the stability and effectiveness of Georgia's CAPTA Panels.

To sustain efforts of the Georgia's CAPTA Panels and ensure that the program continues to meet its CAPTA obligations, the Division provides ongoing administrative support¹⁰, by:

- Creating a Federal Grants Manager¹¹ position in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Panels, and whose responsibilities include facilitating communication and the exchange of information between the Division and the Panels
- Contracting with a firm for the services of an independent coordinator who provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance

With the creation of the Federal Grants Manager position, Division Director, Bobby Cagle, committed to meeting quarterly with CAPTA Panel members. These meetings provided an opportunity for open dialogue between the CPSAC and the Division's leadership team on shared and individual concerns, priorities and interests, in addition to updates on actions taken by the child welfare agency in response to previous recommendations. These meetings are always informative and productive.

For many years, CPSAC members have been involved to varying degrees in several strategic planning activities and invited to participate on various advisory groups, providing input or feedback, to the state agency on its development, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation and revision of its various plans. In 2016, this included:

- Joint planning, including participation at meetings hosted by Region IV Child Welfare Specialist
- Georgia Performance Improvement and Planning Meeting
- Contributions to and review of the Annual Progress and Services Report
- Contributions to and review of Program Improvement Plans
- State CAPTA Plan
- Child welfare policy development, review and approval process and policy advisory committee by-laws

Opportunities were also available to comment on or contribute to:

- Child welfare policy rewrite
 - Reviewed updated sections of the policy manual, in addition to completing a review of the section on Resource Development and Safety Resource policies

¹⁰ CAPTA requires that states' provide operational support to assist the panels in carrying out of their mandated duties.

¹¹ Beth Locker, Federal Grants Manager, assumed her new position in March 2016.

- Legislative priorities
 - Advocated for an increase in the Division's budget to hire additional caseworkers to help reduce caseloads and improve retention, and to support a mentoring program for supervisors
 - Articulated concerns related to the implementation of the child abuse registry that including cost, impact on current recipients of CAPTA state grant funds and sustainability of the registry
- Online mandated reporting training¹² updates
 - Represented on a committee to review and update mandated reporter training to ensure compliance with CAPTA reauthorization

In addition to several opportunities to work, formally and informally, with Georgia's child welfare agency, CPSAC members are represented on a variety of local, state and/or national boards or organizations with child protection interests compatible with the CAPTA mandate. This includes groups or organizations, such as:

- Together Georgia
- Georgia Task Force on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Georgia Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Coalition
- Georgia Child Welfare Training Collaborative Advisory Committee

2016 CPSAC Activities

During calendar 2016 the CPSAC shifted its focus from workforce retention and development to reviewing the policies, procedures, and efficacy of 1) kinship care and 2) foster parent training. Committees were established and 2016-2017 work plans developed.

Kinship Care and Permanency Committee

With the Division's plan to significantly increase the use of relatives as placement resources, the CPSAC established a committee in 2016 to examine current policy and practice related to temporary, formal and informal, placements with relatives. Of particular interest to the committee, is how immediate and long-term needs are assessed and what resources and additional training and support is made available to meet these needs to ensure safety and stability.

¹² The Division's Office of Prevention and Family Support (OPFS) sponsors online-training on Georgia's mandated reporting requirements. This training is available at no cost to the public and to designated reporters, who are required to obtain mandated reporter training. In 2016, 45,150 individuals, including 2,109 medical professionals, obtained certificates for successfully completing training on the website.

Safety Resource

During 2016 the committee reviewed Georgia's Safety Resource policy. Although consensus was that policy was reasonable, anecdotal reports suggest policy is not always followed. It has been noted that in some areas children remain in the care of a safety resource (relatives) beyond the 45 day period and it is not apparent how it is determined that the safety resource identified (relative) is the best temporary placement option for the child.

In 2017, the committee plans to explore several safety resource case scenarios to identify specific reported practice anomalies and determine if the issues are the result of inconsistent application of policy or with the policies themselves. The committee will include case scenarios where there has been no subsequent child protective services intervention as well as case scenarios where there has been intervention but no permanency resolution. The committee is also considering conducting a review of cases that have been open an extended period to determine how outcomes could have been improved if policy was applied as written.

Kinship Care & Kin First Culture

With the Division's plan to significantly increase the use of relatives as placement resources, in addition to the trends resulting from this change in practice, the Kinship Care and Permanency committee plans to examine how the immediate and long-term needs of these families are addressed. During the course of 2017, the CPSAC will examine Georgia's use of kinship placements and supports, including, but not limited to:

- The number of relatives caring for children more than 45, 90, 180 and 360 days
- The number of relative care foster parents
- The number of children in the care of relatives
- The number of children that had to be removed from a relative home, both CPS/safety resource or foster care
- The number of children who were placed in a safety resource
- Policies specific to Kinship Navigators, particularly related to access, case status, engagement with families, outcomes evaluation, and collaboration with the child/family case manager
- General kinship care policies, supports and available resources

Foster Parent Training and Professional Development

IMPACT¹³ Training

Georgia currently utilizes IMPACT as its foster parent training curriculum. The CPSAC respects and appreciates the evolution of foster parent training in our state, as well as the Division's investment in, and provider commitment to, the current IMPACT training model. However, members of the Foster Parent Training and Professional Development committee, established in 2016, have some concerns regarding the efficacy of IMPACT training as a model for preparing and retaining foster families. A Georgia Child Welfare Reform Council¹⁴ report suggested the Department "engage university partners to study the curriculum for its constitutions to foster parent retention..." and that it should "determine whether an alternative would lead to better outcomes on these and other measures."¹⁵

Regarding IMPACT, the committee has observed:

- IMPACT training is only used in Georgia. Most states use MAPP, PRIDE, OR PATH.
- Recent iterations of national foster parent training models include a trauma-informed approach and incorporate modules for special populations, both child and caregivers.
- IMPACT training includes fewer modules than other programs: 15 to 20 compared to 24 for PATH, 27 for PRIDE, and 30 for MAPP.
- Delivery and content is inconsistent.
- Delivery is not sufficiently adult learning centered.
- Content is not sufficiently culturally diverse.
- In ACF Region IV, Georgia and South Carolina, the only two states to have developed their own foster parent training programs, have the lowest rates of placement stability. While we cannot make a direct correlation between specific training programs and placement success, it is suspected that there is some relationship.

Professional Development

Committee members have expressed concerns regarding the inconsistency of post-IMPACT or ongoing training for foster parents. They also feel there is an unmet need for specialized training, and ongoing supports, for foster parents who have children in their care with special

¹³ Georgia developed its Initial Interest 'Mutual Selection, Pre-Service Training Assessment, Continuing Development and Trauma-Informed Teamwork' (IMPACT) training for foster parents in 2004.

¹⁴ Georgia Child Welfare Reform Council Report to the Governor, February 10, 2016

¹⁵ An assessment of the IMPACT curriculum was conducted in June 2016 by Clark University. Although the sampling was small and the results suggested several improvements to both content and delivery, reinforcing the committee's that there was room for improvement.

medical or health needs, who are teen parents, and children with behavioral or mental health issues. There is also a need for specialized training for relative and kinship caregivers.

To support efforts to prepare, support and retain foster families as well as increase placement stability, the Committee will:

- Review the IMPACT curriculum (overall and for specific areas)
- Review standards and consistency in the provision and utilization of IMPACT training across both regional and local DFCS as well as CPAs
- Review guidelines and practice for the delivery of IMPACT training

Recommendations related to work undertaken in 2016 described above but not yet complete, will be forthcoming in the 2017 annual report. The CPSAC committee looks forward to working with the Division in its ongoing policy and practice analysis in these two priority areas.

CPSAC members have recently expressed concern over unintended consequences of several legislative items introduced in 2016-2017, geared toward child welfare that often seem to have been developed without sufficient consultation with the Division and/or the constituent groups that would be most affected. This includes legislation around foster care privatization, additions to prudent parenting standards, and the child abuse registry. Working in partnership with other CAPTA committees, the CPSAC continues to monitor legislative activity, coordinating advocacy efforts, and collaborating with the Division and other stakeholders to help ensure state compliance and consistency with federal legislation and the intent of CAPTA.

In closing...

The CPSAC respectfully submits its report to the Division on its 2016 activities. Additionally, priorities and plans for 2017 have been identified to highlight opportunities to coordinate efforts on shared goals and objectives in the coming year.

Effectiveness of the CPSAC as a CAPTA Panel is largely dependent on an open and mutually supportive relationship with Georgia's child welfare agency. The CPSAC commends Division Director, Bobby Cagle, for his leadership in this regard. The CPSAC appreciates the efforts of the Division's management team, and that of state and field staff who have presented to the committee, as well as those who have facilitated the exchange of information in response to the many CPSAC requests. We would especially like to acknowledge the Division's continued support of our efforts to meet our mandate as a CAPTA Panel.

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee Members

Karl Lehman (Co-Chair)
CEO Childkind, Inc.

Amy Rene (Co-Chair)
Vice President Community Programs
Hillside, Inc.

Angela Burda, Program Director
Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center

Molly Casey, Teen Parent Connection
Multi-Agency Alliance for Children, Inc.

Rachel Ewald, CEO
Foster Care Support Foundation

Michelle Girtman, Executive Director
Battered Women's Shelter, Inc.

Sheralyn Hector
CASA and former educator

Sarah Jones
Foster Parent

Jennifer King, Program Operations Director
Georgia CASA

Mike Patton, Program Manager
Healthy Grandparents Program
Georgia Regents University

Ray Rene
Technology Development & Operations Manager
Biocure

Scott Rhoden, Executive Director
Compassion House, Inc.

Lawrence Shaw, Partner
Maverik Consulting Solutions

Belisa Urbina, CEO
Ser Familia, Inc.

*Prepared by
Deb Farrell
Care Solutions, Inc.
Georgia CAPTA Panel & CJA Task Force Coordinator*

Child Fatality Review Panel Maltreatment Committee 2016 Annual Report



Bobby Cagle, Director, Division of Family and Children Services:

On behalf of the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel, it is my honor as Chairman to present to you the Child Fatality Review Panel's CAPTA Maltreatment Committee 2016 Annual Report. This report summarizes the Committee's activities and examination of data, and resulting recommendations, related to child deaths occurring in Georgia during the 2015 calendar year.

As reported last year, child maltreatment-related deaths and accuracy in the identification and reporting of such deaths continue to be a priority with the Panel and with agencies and entities represented by the Panel. Strides have been made in the past year to improve and increase education for law enforcement and child protective agencies to identify and report these cases more accurately with a goal of prevention. The Committee continues to advocate for the collaborative review and reporting of these deaths to identify opportunities to both protect our most vulnerable children and prevent maltreatment-related deaths.

Thank you, as always, for your review of this report and for your ongoing efforts to support the work of this Panel and its mandate as a CAPTA Panel.

Sincerely

Judge LaTain Kell
Child Fatality Review Panel Chair

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Originally enacted in January 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is a key piece of federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA has been amended several times, most recently in December 2010, and reauthorized through 2015. Although the primary responsibility for addressing the child welfare needs of children and families lies with each state agency, CAPTA provides federal funding to support child abuse prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities¹ for the purpose of improving the state's child protection systems.

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels

With each reauthorization, including the most recent in 2015, CAPTA has evolved in response to the child welfare climate, shifting its focus to safety as well as a desire to increase accountability in the child protective services (CPS) system. The CAPTA reauthorization of 1996 established citizen review panels (CAPTA Panels)² as a requirement for all states receiving a CAPTA state grant.

The purpose of CAPTA Panels is to increase system transparency and accountability and provide opportunities for community input by:

- Examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies, and, where appropriate, specific cases
- Evaluating the extent to which state and local child protection agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with:
 - a) The state's CAPTA plan
 - b) Child protection standards required by CAPTA
- Any other criteria that the CAPTA Panels consider important to ensure the protection of children, including:
 - a) Reviewing the extent to which the state and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under Title IV Part E of the Social Security Act
 - b) Reviewing child fatalities and near fatalities

States were required to establish and maintain a minimum of three CAPTA Panels to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states meet their goals of protecting children from child abuse and neglect.

¹ This includes child fatality, near fatality and serious injury cases.

² In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are referred to as "CAPTA Panels" to distinguish this stakeholder group from similarly named "Citizen Panel Review", which are foster care review boards.

The Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) was designated to serve as one of Georgia's three CAPTA Panels³. The CFRP is a statutory body established in 1990 by the Georgia State Legislature and created to prevent child fatalities through the establishment of an effective review and standardized data collection system designed 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

In 2011, CFRP bylaws were amended to include its role as a CAPTA citizen review panel in the description of its purpose as a statutory body. The CAPTA Maltreatment Committee (MalTx Committee) was established by the CFRP to help address additional obligations of the CFRP as a CAPTA citizen review panel, including its CAPTA Panel obligations related to the examination of maltreatment-related deaths.

Membership

Section 106 of the CAPTA legislation stipulates that CAPTA Panels be 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 membership of the CFRP, as set forth in state law O.C.G.A. § 19-15-4, is comprised of the heads of all state agencies that play a significant role in the health and welfare of Georgia's children, as well as representatives of agencies/offices involved in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offenders. In addition to members prescribed by the statute, the Governor appoints other members, with the exception of one appointment by the Lt. Governor and one by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The MalTx Committee includes members of the CFRP as well as child welfare experts and advocates. MalTx Committee members are also invited to attend CFRP meetings.

Collectively, the members of the CFRP and the MalTx Committee satisfy the CAPTA membership requirements.

³ The other two designated CAPTA Panels are the Children's Justice Act Task Force and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee.

Meetings

THE CFRP meets quarterly satisfying the CAPTA requirement. In FFY2016, meeting dates were:

- October 16, 2015
- January 29, 2016
- April 29, 2016
- August 8, 2016

The MalTx Committee met November, 3, 2015, June 16, 2016 and August 2, 2016. The MalTx Committee was also represented at a CFRP Legislative Committee meeting on November 16, 2015 and Plan of Safe Care Work Group that met July 26, 2016.

The CFRP is required statutorily to prepare an annual report on all reviewable child deaths, including maltreat-related fatalities. In addition to presenting data on all the cause, manner and circumstances of child deaths, the report includes feedback on the state's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies and presents recommendations for improvements. The annual CFRP report and a summary of MalTx Committee activities are submitted annually to the child welfare agency satisfying the CAPTA requirement for an annual report .

Annual Retreat

In addition to regular meetings, CFRP and MalTx Committee members were invited to participate in the annual retreat for all CAPTA panels on September 22, 2016. The day-long retreat was hosted at Cobb Superior Court by CFRP Chair, Judge Tain Kell. The agenda at the 2016 retreat included:

- A refresher session on the CAPTA Panel mandate
- A report on the national CAPTA Panel conference attended by CFRP member Ashley Willcott, Director, Office of the Child Advocate
- A workshop on writing effective recommendations
- A session on the state's current CAPTA Plan and input on upcoming revision, facilitated by Federal Grants Manager, Beth Locker

Time was reserved during the afternoon for individual panel breakouts and CFRP and MalTx Committee members discussed their priorities and identified potential activities for 2017.

Annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference: June 6-9, 2016, Glendale, AZ

The theme for the two-and-a-half day conference was "Achieving Meaningful Impact: Citizen Involvement in Child Welfare." Representatives from 27 states attended the conference. Hosted by the Arizona citizen review panels and Arizona State University Center for Child

Well-Being, the conference included a broad range of topics relevant to the CAPTA mandate of citizen review panels.

The keynote address was delivered by Travis Lloyd, Vice President of the national non-profit, Our Fields of Hope. Mr. Lloyd himself experienced foster care, group homes and institutionalization as a child in the child welfare system. His address highlighted the importance of the professionals who work with youth in the foster care system in helping them to reach their full potential.

Plenary sessions offered during the conference included:

- Perception of Citizen Review Panels by Child Welfare Administrators – A National Study
- Family Empowerment
- Challenges, Opportunities and Building Citizen Review Panel Capacity
- Value of Youth Engagement, Advocacy and Youth/Adult Partnerships
- Substance Abuse in Child Welfare
- Medication-Assisted Treatment

Twenty workshops were offered in four tracks:

- Building Citizen Review Panels
- Child Welfare Topics
- Collaboration for Change
- Other Assets for Citizen Review Panels

These sessions covered topic areas related to CAPTA citizen review panel mandate, its overarching objectives, and presentations by some state panels on effective strategies and innovative approaches utilized. Sessions were facilitated by a wide array of national, state and local experts, from both the academic and professional fields of child welfare, as well as stakeholder advocacy groups and citizen review panel members. The Georgia CAPTA Panel Coordinator facilitated a World Café session on the “Enterprise of CRP” which focused on developing and sustaining effective citizen review panels.

In his welcoming remarks to conference attendees, Greg McKay, Director, Arizona Department of Child Safety, described his belief in the active oversight by CAPTA Panels. However, he cautioned panel members that in their examination of the effectiveness of their state’s child protection standards, to not only consider child protective services’ policy and practice, but also the complexities of these cases and the challenges facing the child welfare system when developing recommendations. He encouraged CAPTA Panels to serve as a catalyst for positive change.

Ashley Willcott, Director, Office of the Child Advocate, represented the CFRP at the annual conference with representatives from Georgia's two other CAPTA panels⁴ and the CAPTA Panel Coordinator. Ms. Willcott shared some insights she gained in networking sessions with CAPTA Panel members from other states. Most noteworthy were the challenges most frequently identified by other state panels that she saw as strengths in Georgia. These included:

- Regular, well attended, face-to-face meetings
- Committed panel members who are professionals and generally knowledgeable in some aspect of child welfare
- Strong relationship between CAPTA Panels and the state's child welfare agency
- Financial and logistical support

Members Engaged as Valued Stakeholders in 2016

The relationship between CAPTA Panels, including the CFRP, and Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) can be characterized as a collaborative and mutually respectful working relationship. The Division solicits input from CFRP members, as needed, as a resource, as advocates, or as representatives of a constituent group. Expertise and opinions are valued and opportunities for stakeholder involvement often happen organically, without the need for a federal mandate. This positive relationship contributes to the stability and effectiveness of Georgia's CAPTA Panels.

The Division provides ongoing administrative support⁵ to CAPTA Panels and the MalTx Committee, including:

- A Federal Grants Manager⁶ position was created in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Task Force, and whose responsibilities include facilitating communication between the Division and the Task Force, and management of CJA contracts related to Task Force recommendations
- Contracting with a firm for the services of an independent coordinator who provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance, as needed

For many years, CAPTA Panel members, including CFRP and MalTx Committee members, have been involved to varying degrees in several strategic planning activities and invited to participate on various advisory groups, providing input or feedback, to the state agency on its

⁴ Georgia's other two CAPTA panels are the Children's Justice Act Task Force and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee.

⁵ CAPTA requires that states' provide operational support to assist the panels in carrying out their mandated duties. State child welfare agencies are also required to provide access to information that CAPTA Panels deem necessary to fulfill their mandate, and to respond to Panel recommendations included in their annual reports.

⁶ Beth Locker, Federal Grants Manager, assumed her new position in March 2016.

development, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation and revision of its various plans. In 2016, this included:

- Joint planning, including participation at meetings hosted by Region IV Child Welfare Specialist
- Georgia Performance Improvement and Planning Meeting
- Contributions to and review of the Annual Progress and Services Report
- Contributions to and review of Program Improvement Plans
- State CAPTA Plan
- Child welfare policy review

In addition to several opportunities to work, formally and informally, with Georgia's child welfare agency, CFRP members are represented on a variety of local, state and/or national boards or organizations with child protection interests compatible with the CAPTA mandate.

2016 Activities

The purpose of the CFRP includes providing high-quality data, training, technical assistance, investigative support services, and resources to prevent and reduce child abuse and fatalities and make statute, regulation, or policy recommendations to reduce the risk of child death. CFRP provides training, support and oversight to 159 local Child Fatality Review committees who conduct multidisciplinary reviews to determine the cause and circumstances around all unexpected child deaths. Activities of local review committee support the following CFRP objectives:

- To accurately identify and uniformly report the cause and manner of every reviewable child death
- To identify circumstances surrounding deaths that could prevent future deaths and initiate preventive efforts
- To promote collaboration and coordination among the participating agencies
- To propose needed changes in legislation, policies and procedures

In 2014, the administrative responsibility for child fatality review transferred from the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). The CFRP is supported by staff that review and monitor the work of the 159 county child fatality review committees, analyze results and develop recommendations based on their findings and the issues raised by the local committees and CFRP members.

During calendar year 2015, 1,599 death certificates were filed with Georgia Vital Records.

Table 1. 2015 Infant and Child Deaths⁷

Ages in Years	#
Under age 1	1,023 ⁸
1-4	160
5-9	99
10-14	122
15-17	195
Total	1,599

- Deaths of males (911) outnumber those of females (688) in all age categories - an average of 56.9% of all child deaths
- 52.9% of all child deaths are black African American (846)

All reported deaths, except those attributed to medical causes⁹, are considered reviewable. Medical causes attributed to 1,064 deaths, leaving 535¹⁰ reviewable deaths.

Table 2. 2015 Deaths by Cause¹¹

	Neonatal	Post Neonatal	Ages 1-17	Total
Medical	648	177	239	1,064
Sleep-Related	18	154		172
Injury (Unintentional)	2	10	198	210
Homicide		14	67	81
Suicide			54	54
Unknown Intent			7	7
Unknown			11	11
Total	668	355	576	1,599

- Homicide deaths increased to 81 over previous five-year average of 56
- Suicide deaths increased to 54 over previous five-year average of 30

⁷ Source: 2015 Death Certificates Georgia Vital Records

⁸ Neonatal infant deaths (deaths in the first 27 days of life) account for 63% of the 1,023 infant deaths. These are usually attributed to prematurity, congenital malformation, and 'other conditions originating from the perinatal period'.

⁹ All non-medical deaths (as defined by the cause of death coding in the death certificate) are determined to be reviewable. However, if a medical death is sudden or unexpected, then that death should also be reviewed.

¹⁰ Local Child Fatality Review teams reviewed and reported 561 deaths. Thirteen of the 561 reviewed deaths did not link to a death certificate. These 13 were reviewed by Office of Child Fatality Review and Vital Records, and the absence of the death certificates remains unexplained.

¹¹ Source: 2015 Death Certificates Georgia Vital Records

Local Child Fatality Review teams reviewed 561¹² sudden and unexpected deaths in 2015, completed reports and uploaded information to the National Child Death Review database.

Table 3. 2015 Deaths Reviewed by Georgia's Local Child Fatality Review Teams¹³

Cause	Under Age 1	Ages 1-17	Total
Medical	18	64	82
Sleep Related	170		170
Unintentional			
• Drowning	1	30	31
• Exposure	1		1
• Motor Vehicle	3	99	102
• Asphyxia		7	7
• Fall or Crush		6	6
• Fire		11	11
• Poison		10	10
• Weapon		6	6
Homicide ¹⁴	16	57	73
Suicide		50	50
Other Causes		6	6
Undetermined	3	3	6
Total	212	349	561

2015 Maltreatment-Related Deaths

To identify deaths where maltreatment is a causative or contributory factor, information documented in the following sections of the National Child Death Review Case Reporting System (CDRS) is considered:

1. Section A. Child Information, Question 23, asks if the child has a history of maltreatment. In 136 deaths, a history of maltreatment was reported. In these 136 cases, information on the type of maltreatment, the source of history information, and whether or not there was an open child protective services case was also collected.

¹² Thirteen of the 561 reviewed deaths did not link to a death certificate. These 13 were subsequently reviewed by Office of Child Fatality Review and Vital Records, and the absence of the death certificates remains unexplained.

¹³ Source: 2015 National Child Death Review Case Reporting System

¹⁴ Deaths as a result of child abuse or neglect are coded as homicides.

2. Section E. Investigation Information, Question 11 asks if the investigation found evidence of prior abuse, and if so, for the source of the evidence and whether or not child protective services action was taken. This identified an additional 18 deaths that had maltreatment history bringing the total to 154 (136+18).
3. Section I. Acts of Omission or Commission¹⁵, Question 1 asks if any act(s) of omission or commission caused and/or contributed to the death. There is also a follow up question on the type of abuse or neglect, and whether the person(s) responsible were caregivers, supervisors or other. Twenty-six deaths¹⁶ identified child abuse or child neglect as the cause, 23 and 3 respectively. In another 14 deaths, child abuse or neglect was reported to have contributed to, or probably contributed, to those deaths.

Additional questions during the child death review that may also suggest maltreatment is a factor include Section B. Primary Caregiver Information and Section C. Supervisor Information that ask if the caregiver(s) or supervisor(s) had a history of maltreatment as a victim or perpetrator. In 160 child deaths, caregiver(s) or supervisor(s) had a history as a perpetrator.

In summary, in 561 reviewed child deaths, the following are cases that the MalTx Committee feels should receive additional scrutiny:

- 154 with some history of maltreatment
- 26 that were directly caused by child abuse or child neglect and another 14 that identified child abuse or child neglect as a likely factor in the death
- 160 cases with caregiver(s)/supervisor(s) who had previously abused or neglected a child

The goal of the MalTx Committee is to propose a plan to further examination of the circumstances of cases, including applicable child welfare policy and practice, based on specified case selection criteria¹⁷ to identify prevention or intervention opportunities to reduce the number maltreatment-related child deaths. This is included in their plans for 2017.

¹⁵ Includes poor supervision, child abuse and neglect, assaults and suicide

¹⁶ Deaths as a result of child abuse and neglect are coded as homicides in Table 3.

¹⁷ For example, deaths of those infants who were prenatally exposed or only those with open Family Preservations cases at the time of death

At this time, the CFRP and its MalTx Committee submit the following recommendations that support their goals, objectives and priorities:

1. To develop a coordinated plan to reduce child abuse and neglect fatalities

The enactment of the Protect Our Kids Act in January 2013 established a Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. The Commission was charged with producing a national strategy and recommendations for eliminating fatalities across the country. The Commission began its system review in 2014, holding public meetings in 11 jurisdictions and conducting an analysis of efforts across multiple jurisdictions. The results were published in 2016. "Within Our Reach: A National Strategy to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities" included their recommendations for policy change, tools, and strategies needed to address the crisis.

The strategies included in the Commission's report were reviewed and the following were identified as priorities by the CFR Maltreatment Committee:

- Train all stakeholders on increased risk for death of any child:
 - Under the age of 5 with a prior CPS referral.
 - Has had a prior report of physical abuse or neglect.
- Train all stakeholders on increased risk for sleep-related death if there is a prior report of abuse or neglect.
- Share real time electronic information with law enforcement and DFCS on children and families.
 - Law enforcement officers responding to Domestic Violence cases need to know of prior CPS history and inform DFCS of the presence of children in a home with a DV call.
- Require cross notifications of allegations of child abuse and neglect between law enforcement and CPS agencies.
- Collect data from all sources on child abuse and neglect fatalities.
- Enable birth hospitals to have access to data on prior serious injuries and deaths to inform the planning for the baby's discharge and treatment. (ie. Plans of Safe Care)
- Review all relevant laws/regulations regarding the sharing of any child data by agencies with child welfare/care responsibilities.

- Develop standards for child death investigation protocol for medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement.
- Review all deaths and serious injury cases for the past five years to develop and implement a fatality prevention plan.
 - Implement case reviews of serious injuries and deaths of children known to CPS to inform and modify the plan based upon those findings.
- Require release of information within 48 hours of report of death or life threatening injury and require Critical Incident Review Teams review and publish findings (transparency).
- Transition from the present system of coroners to medical examiners with forensic pathologists to handle all suspected child maltreatment deaths.

During the next 12-18 months, the MalTx Committee will continue its examination of these strategies to develop more specific recommendations for future reports on its own priorities. However, at this time, the MalTx Committee recommends that the Division conduct its own gap analysis of the strategies identified in the Commission's report, and prepare a summary report identifying both system strengths and opportunities for improvement, priorities and barriers. Results of the gap analysis can then be used as a baseline for evaluating progress toward addressing priorities.

2. To improve the identification and investigation of maltreatment-related child fatalities¹⁸

- a) The collaboration of the child welfare agency (the Division) and law enforcement (GBI and other law enforcement agencies) to develop training standards/guidelines for law enforcement, first responders, child welfare investigators and coroners on identifying and investigating child fatalities, and more specifically, maltreatment-related fatalities, that includes, but is not limited to:
 - Law, policy and procedures
 - Communication protocol, including standards/guidelines for notification and sharing information
 - Clarification of roles and objectives during the investigation (differences and similarities)
 - Model Child Abuse Protocol standards
 - Red flags, best practices

¹⁸ Georgia's Children's Justice Act Task Force also has an interest in training for investigators related to their CJA mandate.

- Identification of opportunities to better coordinate efforts (improve efficiency and efficacy)

b) Roll out training developed

3. To i) produce more coordinated, consistent and constructive child fatality reports, ii) improve the identification of policy and practice improvement opportunities to prevent maltreatment-related child fatalities, and iii) identify cross-system opportunities to prevent child fatalities

Ideally, the MalTx Committee would like to see a single, annual, coordinated report on child fatalities. However, it recognizes that there are several mechanisms, in multiple systems for investigating and/or reviewing child fatalities with competing interests, objectives, roles and responsibilities that makes this challenging. There are frequently misconceptions or misunderstandings of the data or the reports generated by various entities due to the differences between sources of information, reporting periods, laws and regulations. At times, reports may seem to be at cross purposes, a duplication of effort, or provide conflicting results or it may be assumed that their efforts are satisfying a mandate or requirement that it is not. A consolidated report that incorporates the richness of all these sources is a long term goal of the Child Fatality Review Panel. Improved collaboration, coordination and data sharing will move us closer to that goal.

To take the first step toward this goal, the CFRP recommends that the Division convene a meeting of stakeholders and partners representing each of the entities with child fatality interests or responsibilities, both investigation and review, to clarify the role, responsibilities and mandate of each report process and to establish protocols to better coordinate the review and evaluation of child abuse and neglect fatalities.

Additional Ongoing Priority of the CAPTA Maltreatment Committee

The value of a multidisciplinary review of child fatalities, near fatalities and serious injuries cannot be underestimated. The MalTx Committee plans to develop a formal recommendation in the coming year to institutionalize an independent, objective review of child fatalities that includes:

- a. Case selection criteria¹⁹
- b. Frequency
- c. Disciplines
- d. Review protocol and objectives
- e. Facilitator
- f. Data and/or information to be included in the review
- g. Documentation and reporting

The CFRP and MalTx Committee also encourages the Division to identify and develop protocols for the review of near fatalities and serious injuries as these suggest critical safety risks, and immediate interventions have the most prevention potential. The Committee recommends that the Division include consultation with, or inclusion of, external professional experts, such as Public Health, Family Violence, CHOA, DBHDD Addictive Services, etc. in the staffing of these types of cases when they occur to maximize the real-time potential to protect the child, or other children in the home, and prevent reoccurrence.

In closing...

The CFRP, and CAPTA Maltreatment Committee, respectfully submit their report to the Division on its 2016 activities. Additionally, priorities and plans for 2017 have been identified to highlight opportunities to coordinate efforts on shared goals and objectives in the coming year.

The CFRP commends Division Director, Bobby Cagle, for his leadership in statewide efforts to reduce child fatalities. CFRP and the MalTx Committee look forward to coordinating efforts on our shared goals and priorities in 2017.

¹⁹ Cases, for example, when prenatal exposure of infants has occurred, when victims' families had an open CPS case at the time of death, or of victims recently reunified with their families

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