

GA CAPTA Panel 2016 Recommendations

Georgia's CAPTA Panels utilize a statewide systemic approach to examining the state's child protection system and issues that impact its effectiveness. Each CAPTA Panel has its own vision and mission.

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The recommendation from the *Child Protective Services Advisory Committee* is to improve the policy and practice related to safety resources and relative caregiver placements. The committee stated that although consensus was that policy was reasonable, reports they received suggest that policy is not always followed by the agency. They are concerned that some children remain in the care of a safety resource beyond the 45 day period and it is not apparent how this is the best placement option for the child. The committee plans to continue their review of this area throughout the 2017 year.

DFCS Response

The Division recognizes and acknowledges the importance of children being placed with their relatives when and if possible. The Division is committed to building quality caregiving with a goal of having 50% of children placed with kin by July 2019.

Through collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Division was provided an opportunity to participate in the "Building Quality Caregiving through a Kin First Organization" learning journey in Nashville, Tennessee. The purpose of this trip was to explore how the Tennessee Department of Children Services became a KIN FIRST Organization.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation Child Welfare Strategy Group continues to work with the Division by providing consultation services and working with front line staff. They are currently working with staff from DFCS Regions 5 and 6 on developing policy and recommendations for leadership to review and approve regarding our work with Kinship including relative caregiver placements.

The Division has made progress over the past two years showing a decrease in the number of safety resources over 45 days, from 71.4% in December 2015 to 58.2% in November 2017. However, we acknowledge that we have work to do with our safety resource policy and practice. We continue to track safety resource placements specifically where children are out of their homes more than 45 days.

We have developed a Safety Resource Checklist that has been presented to the field. This checklist would be completed for each safety resource placement and would be uploaded into SHINES as a case document.

We are committed to reviewing our actions in the field and ensure that they are in line with our currently approved policy and practice.

Recommendation 2

The recommendation from the *Child Protective Services Foster Parent Training and Professional Development Committee* is regarding the efficiency of IMPACT training as a model for preparing and

retaining foster families. Committee members have expressed concern regarding the 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 provide care for children with special medical or health needs, teen parents, and children with behavioral mental health needs. The committee also identified a need concerning specialized training for relative and kinship caregivers.

DFCS Response

The Division currently provides ongoing training opportunities in each region for caregivers. This training is contracted with a vendor who coordinates summits to allow in-person training on the following topics:

- Partnering and Supporting the Family – *includes topics such as maintaining birth family connections, supporting sibling connections and the tenets of partnership parenting.*
- Understanding Trauma and Brain Development: *How to build resilience for children in foster care – caregivers are provided insight on the effects of trauma on brain development, and how to employ caregiving techniques to improve behavior.*
- Trauma Mapping and Managing Stress through Self-care - *caregivers explore how a child's traumatic experiences and behaviors could trigger past experiences of their own. They learn how to recognize their behavior response to trauma triggers and how to manage resulting stress.*

The Division provides an online training platform for all caregivers where they are able to complete webinar trainings. These training opportunities are available to both caregivers and staff. Training for all foster parents continues to be tracked and monitored on a yearly basis.¹

The Division recognizes the continued need for more specialized training and ongoing supports for both foster and kinship placements. We are committed to exploring additional training opportunities for caregivers who have children with medical or health needs, who are teen parents, and children with behavioral or mental health issues.

Children's Justice Act Taskforce Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The recommendations from the [Children's Justice Act Task Force Mandated Reporter Committee](#) is to improve the consistency and quality of mandated reporter training guidelines and standards for mandated reporters and in particular those employed at, or regulated by, state agencies with child caring responsibilities. They see the need to establish an approval mechanism for all mandated reporter training to ensure consistency and compliance with child welfare policy, practice, and federal and state law. In addition, require 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 committee is evaluating the mandated reporter requirements by various child caring agencies and is gathering information on those agency standards and requirements and expects to develop future recommendations related to the above concerns in the 2017 year.

DFCS Response

¹ Source- Candis Jones, DFCS Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit Manager

The Division requires completion of mandated training courses that are currently being provided through Pro Solutions. These courses are designed to help Georgia mandated reporters recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect, their legal obligations related to reporting suspected abuse and neglect, and how to make a report. There are four courses currently provided.

1. *Child Abuse and Neglect: Mandated Reporting Requirements for Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors of Georgia Public School*

This course was written specifically for individuals employed, contracted, or volunteering with local education agencies (like public school teachers, principals, coaches, bus drivers, school volunteers, cafeteria workers, etc.) in frequent contact with children.

2. *Mandated Reporters: Critical Links in Protecting Children*

This course has been reviewed and approved by the Governor's Office for Children and Families, the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services and Bright from the Start.

Upon completion of the course the objective would be for the participants to have the ability to:

- * Describe the mandated reporter's role in reporting suspected abuse and neglect
- * Identify physical and behavioral indicators of the legally recognized types of abuse and neglect in Georgia
- * Identify which groups of children may be at higher risk of being abused or neglected
- * Describe the steps necessary to report suspected abuse or neglect.

3. *Mandated Reporting Requirements: A Track for Georgia Medical Professionals*

This course was written specifically for medical professionals (like doctors and nurses) in frequent contact with children. Medical professionals will learn about their legal responsibility to report suspected abuse and neglect.

4. *Recognizing and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse*

This course is designed to provide better recognition when there are indicators of abuse and neglect, understand ones role in responsible reporting, and identify the groups of children that may be at a higher risk of being abused or neglected.²

The Division recognizes the need and is committed to exploring steps as needed to enhance the quality and consistency of mandated reporter training.

² Source Pro Solutions-prosolutionstraining.com

Children's Justice Act Taskforce Child Fatality Investigations Committee

Recommendation 1

The recommendation from the *Children's Justice Act Taskforce Child Fatality Investigations Committee* is to improve effectiveness of state model and local child abuse protocols. The committee recommends supplementing the state model child abuse protocol with a section on the investigation of child fatalities. The taskforce advocates for continuous quality improvement of the child abuse protocol by regular review and update of the model protocol by its constituents groups to ensure its effectiveness.

The taskforce is considering evaluating the child abuse protocol as the subject of the next three-year CJA assessment in 2018.

DFCS Response

Georgia law requires each county to have a Protocol to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from alleged child abuse and sexual exploitation. Georgia law requires each county to establish a Protocol Committee which is responsible to adopt a written protocol, amend the protocol to keep it up to date, conduct semi-annual meetings and issue a yearly report on July 1st. (O.C.G.A. §19-15-2)³

The statewide Model Protocol is a written document outlining in detail the procedures to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from alleged cases of child abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) and child sexual exploitation and to assist counties with the development of local protocols which reflect the best practices in investigation and management in these cases. The protocol is an agreement between agencies involved with child abuse cases. The purpose is to increase the awareness of each agency and to minimize the trauma created for the allegedly abused child.

A statewide Model Protocol was revised in 2014. Local Protocol committee members are charged with keeping their local protocol updated and filed with the Superior Court. In 2016 the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) conducted a Protocol Summit to collaboratively update the Statewide Model Protocol. Division representatives from State Office and Field Operations continue to meet with the OCA along with other partners to establish and update the model child abuse protocol. Protocols from around the state will be monitored and reviewed for compliance, quality, and consistency as well as alignment with the child welfare policy and practice.

Recommendation 2

The recommendation from the *Children's Justice Act Taskforce Child Fatality Investigations Committee* is to improve the identification of maltreatment-related child fatalities. Through their examination of the mechanism used in the review of all child deaths has suggested that additional training on all 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.

DFCS Response

Division representatives from State Office and Field Operations met with representatives from the Office of the Child Advocate for a discussion regarding strengthening policy and practices related to child deaths and serious injuries. Consensus was reached that current policies and practices, though well-intended, are likely not producing sufficient opportunity for in-depth understanding of how systemic factors either foster or hinder our work to best respond to, and more importantly, prevent cases of

³ Source-Office of Child Advocate-oca.georgia.gov

death or serious injury. The division will work on next steps in the development and/or strengthening of policy and practice, particularly in the following domains:

- Investigative response , safety planning and notification
- Thoughtful, collaborative and holistic case review
- Systemic and individual level factors (trends)
- Debriefing and employee assistance

Annual reporting/Data usage The State of Tennessee currently has an effective and acclaimed critical incident review model called “Safety Systems Analysis” (SSA). Representatives from the Division had the opportunity to learn first-hand about SSA during a State-to-State convening.⁴ The Division will continue to look further into the practice of Tennessee.

Recommendation 3

The recommendation from the *Children’s Justice Act Taskforce Child Fatality Investigations Committee* is to develop criteria for reviewing maltreatment-related child fatalities.

DFCS Response

In addition to the previously mentioned steps above, the Division continues working with the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) in reviewing the current practice for reviewing maltreatment-related fatalities. There are proposed revisions from OCA that are currently being reviewed. These revisions include the following:

- *Clearly defining the CDNFSI process, cases to be reviewed and by whom, and how recommendations resulting from review are conveyed and implemented.*
- *Continue the practice of sending out notification of all child deaths, near fatalities, and serious injuries meeting the following criteria:*
 - a. *The child is in the agency’s custody; or*
 - b. *The child’s family has had contact with the agency within the past three years.*
- *Consultation providing additional resources to front-line workers who are assessing and making decisions regarding maltreatment substantiation and safety of an injured child or other children in the home.*
- *DFCS should expand its injury and death analysis team. Georgia needs an expanded team that can review serious injuries and deaths and consult immediately on complex cases.*
- *The injury and death analysis team, working with OCA, should select cases for further peer review. Full CDSI reports should be prepared on these matters and the findings and recommendations resulting from the review communicated.*
- *Policy and practice to ensure we are taking adequate measures to prevent reoccurrence to the victim child or other children in the home.*
- *Updated Review tools must be developed to successfully implement a review practice requires good tools.*

⁴ Source- Martha Dukes, DFCS Manager (Child Fatality, Serious Injury& CHOA) Knowledge Management

The Division will continue to work with the OCA and additional partners to strengthen the review process and continue to explore tools from other states that are affective.⁵

DFCS Closing Remarks

The Division would like to express their sincere appreciation for the members of the Georgia CAPTA Panels. Through their support and contributions they have continued to add immeasurably to the work of the Division. We look forward to developing this relationship further as we all strive to strengthen the supports and services for the children and families of Georgia.

⁵ CDNFSI Proposal Tom Rawlins, Director Georgia Office of the Child Advocate