

**Georgia's
Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
(CAPTA) Citizen Review Panels' State Plan**

2025-2029

Overview

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), codified at [42 U.S.C. Chapter 67](#), is a federal law that provides grants to states to support the prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution and treatment of child abuse and neglect. CAPTA was enacted in 1974 to recognize the problem of child abuse and to provide federal financial support and policy direction to address it. The Act has been reauthorized and amended many times since its enactment. When CAPTA was amended in 1996, each state, to be eligible for a CAPTA state grant, was required to establish at least three citizen review panels 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 ([§5106a](#) of CAPTA).

In 2024, Georgia’s citizen review panels were restructured from existing state-level entities to establish three district-level panels, comprised of professionals with experience and expertise in child welfare. The panels draw their membership from the north, metro, and south regions of the state. Each district panel maintains a membership of 7-11 members. A fourth panel is comprised of youth and young adults from regions across the state with lived experience in the child welfare system. During the restructuring process, members elected to review and revise the existing CAPTA State Plan to better reflect the collective inquiries and interests of the panels.

Georgia’s CAPTA Panels elected to prioritize the following goals in their 2025-2029 State CAPTA Plan.

- 1. Improve workforce retention and development**
- 2. Improve timeliness and quality of service delivery to children and families**
- 3. Improve services and outcomes for youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care**

Plan Development Process

The DFCS Federal Plans Unit provided administrative support to the panels in their development of this Plan. In April 2025, the CAPTA All-Panel Retreat was held. The Panel Coordinator solicited several volunteer members from each of the four panels to convene as

a “CAPTA Plan Development Subcommittee” workgroup. The workgroup reviewed the legislative requirements of the law (42 U.S.C. 5106a) and initiated development of an updated state plan. The plan development workgroup also engaged several child welfare stakeholders, subject matter experts, and program leaders within the Division of Family and Children Services to participate in discussions that expanded the working group’s understanding of the rationale for the established CFSP goals and strategies.

The workgroup met three times (on July 11, 18, and August 8, 2025) to develop a draft plan. The workgroup members suggested three foundational improvement goals for the plan – workforce retention and development, timeliness and quality of services to families, and outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care. These goals represent the three areas that the panels collectively seek to impact. To finalize the plan development, the panels convened again in August 2025 for an All-Panel Retreat to confirm the priority focus areas and establish objectives for the plan. Members suggested objectives and activities that would lead to improvement of the three goals and that could be accomplished by community providers, child welfare stakeholders, the state legislature, and/or the state’s child welfare agency. Members considered how each suggested item would align or support other federal plans and state priorities. Panel members were also asked to align the selected goals and objectives with priority areas defined in the CAPTA legislation.

Alignment with Other Federal Plans

CAPTA grants are allotted to states for the purpose of improving child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment programs. The CAPTA Plan goals support several items within the federal [Child and Family Services Review \(CFSR\)](#), including Child Well-Being Outcomes (items 12, 17, 18), and Systemic Factors (items 26, 27, 29, and 30). The Plan goals also align with the goals of Georgia’s [2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan \(CFSP\)](#), which are to build workforce and staff competencies, increase front-end supports for families, and improve information technology and data sharing tools, and with #6, 7, and 13 of the CAPTA statute ([§5106a](#)).

1. The intake, assessment, screening, and investigation of reports of child abuse or neglect;

2.

A. Creating and improving the use of multidisciplinary teams and interagency, intra-agency, interstate, and intrastate protocols to enhance investigations; and

- B. Improving legal preparation and representation, including—*
 - i. procedures for appealing and responding to appeals of substantiated reports of child abuse or neglect; and*
 - ii. provisions for the appointment of an individual appointed to represent a child in judicial proceedings;*
- 3. Case management, including ongoing case monitoring, and delivery of services and treatment provided to children and their families;*
- 4. Enhancing the general child protective system by developing, improving, and implementing risk and safety assessment tools and protocols, including the use of differential response;*
- 5. Developing and updating systems of technology that support the program and track reports of child abuse and neglect from intake through final disposition and allow interstate and intrastate information exchange;*
- 6. **Developing, strengthening, and facilitating training including—***
 - A. **training regarding research-based strategies, including the use of differential response, to promote collaboration with the families;***
 - B. **training regarding the legal duties of such individuals;***
 - C. **personal safety training for case workers; and***
 - D. **training in early childhood, child, and adolescent development;***
- 7. **Improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families, and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruitment and retention of caseworkers;***
- 8. Developing, facilitating the use of, and implementing research-based strategies and training protocols for individuals mandated to report child abuse and neglect;*
- 9. Developing, implementing, or operating programs to assist in obtaining or coordinating necessary services for families of disabled infants with life-threatening conditions, including—*
 - A. existing social and health services;*
 - B. financial assistance;*
 - C. services necessary to facilitate adoptive placement of any such infants who have been relinquished for adoption; and*
 - D. the use of differential response in preventing child abuse and neglect;*
- 10. Developing and delivering information to improve public education relating to the role and responsibilities of the child protection system and the nature and basis for reporting suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect, including the use of differential response;*

11. *Developing and enhancing the capacity of community-based programs to integrate shared leadership strategies between parents and professionals to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect at the neighborhood level;*
12. *Supporting and enhancing interagency collaboration between the child protection system and the juvenile justice system for improved delivery of services and treatment, including methods for continuity of treatment plan and services as children transition between systems;*
13. **Supporting and enhancing interagency collaboration among public health agencies, agencies in the child protective service system, and agencies carrying out private community-based programs—**
 - A. ***to provide child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment services (including linkages with education systems), and the use of differential response; and***
 - B. ***to address the health needs, including mental health needs, of children identified as victims of child abuse or neglect, including supporting prompt, comprehensive health and developmental evaluations for children who are the subject of substantiated child maltreatment reports; or***
14. *Developing and implementing procedures for collaboration among child protective services, domestic violence services, and other agencies in—*
 - A. *investigations, interventions, and the delivery of services and treatment provided to children and families, including the use of differential response, where appropriate; and*
 - B. *the provision of services that assist children exposed to domestic violence, and that also support the caregiving role of their non-abusing parents.*

Description of Goals and Activities

Goal 1: Improve workforce retention and development

Improving workforce retention and development relates to the need for a qualified and experienced professional child welfare workforce to address the needs of children and families in Georgia. The Panel articulated several potential approaches and activities to support improved workforce retention and development, some of which may be explored more fully during the effective dates of this plan.

Examples of Suggested Activities for the Child Welfare Agency

- Promote work-life balance by prioritizing flexible scheduling where applicable

- Improve organizational climate and staff support through peer support groups and access to mental health/self-care resources
- Enhance marketing and visibility of employee assistance programs, incentive programs, and services for staff, including EAP, Title IV-E Education Program.
- Enhance partnerships with colleges and universities to recruit potential future applicants and create formal support, in addition to the Title IV-E Program, for internships in multiple disciplines in the Division
- Enhance peer support, coaching, and mentorship programs to support new case managers and supervisors
- Develop ongoing training protocols to improve utilization of technology platforms used in the Division, including GA@Work, Unite Us, SHINES, Argo, Microsoft TEAMS, CarePortal, ClickSafe, and Concur.

Examples of Suggested Activities for Providers and Stakeholders

- Provide ongoing trainings for foster parents, providers, and DFCS staff on trauma-informed care, wellness, self-care, and stress management, including:
 - Professional organizations for improved collaboration with stakeholders
 - Invoice training with providers (CMOs) and other billing entities to expedite payment processes.
 - Safety and sensitivity training in relation to adolescent behavior and culture.
 - Basic pharmacology training to ensure that foster parents and staff understand the child’s diagnosis
- Create localized, planned opportunities for information-sharing and collaboration with stakeholders in district, regional, and county activities and events related to child welfare. For example, include stakeholders in announcements that market local themed events and planning of activities for Foster Care Month, Kinship Month, Reunification Month, recruitment efforts, etc.

Goal 2: Improve timeliness and quality of service delivery to children and families

Improving timeliness and quality of service delivery to children and families will lead to better outcomes for families impacted by Georgia’s child welfare system. The Panel articulated several potential approaches to support improved service delivery, some of which may be explored more fully during the effective dates of this plan.

Examples of Suggested Activities for the Child Welfare Agency

- Prioritize and monitor the timely scheduling of Family Team Meetings (FTMs) resulting in the development of individualized, signed plans with active parent involvement.
- Prioritize and monitor an ongoing diligent search for relatives and fictive kin, ensure relatives and fictive kin are timely and properly notified of necessary responsibilities should they wish to be considered for placement.
- Develop strategic, data-driven recruitment plans that build and sustain a pool of resource families to meet the placement needs of children in foster care by engaging with stakeholders and in community-based efforts.

Examples of Suggested Activities for Providers and Stakeholders

- Provide ongoing trainings and development opportunities for DFCS staff and providers on trauma-informed care, wellness, self-care, and stress management including,
 - Referral and invoice training with provider entities to expedite rapid referrals and timely reimbursements.
 - Best practices for working with and supporting older and transitional age youth, ages 18-21.
- Increase the number of trauma-informed, male, and bilingual service providers statewide
- Expand utilization of family preservation services to reduce the number of children entering or re-entering care, by deploying mobile service units to deliver in-person therapy and services, particularly in rural areas of the state.
- Promote and support family engagement of incarcerated parents in non-dependency cases.
- Increase timeliness and continuity in the services delivered to children and families impacted by the child welfare system.

Examples of Suggested Activities for Legislators

- Improve reimbursement rates for service delivery providers to be compensated at rates that are comparable to other state agencies
- Advocate for Georgia Department of Community health to pay providers at a higher rate when serving children in foster care.

Goal 3: Improve services and outcomes for youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care

Improving services and outcomes for youth and young adults transitioning out of foster care is a critical factor in developing a capable and self-sufficient young adult population who can thrive in adulthood. The Panel articulated several potential approaches to support young people during the transition period.

Examples of Suggested Activities for the Child Welfare Agency

- Prioritize and monitor the timely scheduling of youth transition meetings, according to DFCS policy, resulting in the development of individualized, signed plans with active youth involvement. Ensure each meeting includes representatives from all service areas and the youth's advocates
- Monitor adherence to DFCS policy for timely development of WTLP (Written Transitional Living Plan) beginning at age 14, with regular six-month reviews to track progress and update goals and life skills related to the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD).
- Create authentic partnerships that support housing and homelessness prevention for youth transiting out of foster care.

Examples of Suggested Activities for Providers and Stakeholders

- Explore increased options for continuity and flexibility of service provision, especially telehealth services, that prevent youth from having to change therapists due change in placement.
- Implement youth-centered programs offering housing navigation, tenant education, and financial literacy training to support independent living.
- Increase availability of transitional and permanent supportive housing with wraparound services.
- Expand and enhance the availability of mental health services, educational support, life skills training, and mentorship programs to address the diverse needs of young adults transitioning out of foster care. (Highly Trained Professionals)
- Foster stronger partnerships with community organizations, schools, healthcare providers, and government agencies to create a seamless network of support for youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Support improvement of high school graduation rates, enrollment in post-secondary education, and job placement for youth aging out of foster care.

Examples of Suggested Activities for Legislators

- Create a HIPAA-compliant, centralized resource hub or online platform that provides easy access to information, resources, and support services for youth in transition.
- Increase high school graduation rates, enrollment in post-secondary education, and job placement rates for youth aging out of foster care.
- Provide career counseling, vocational training, internship opportunities, and job readiness skills development to enhance employment outcomes for youth and young adults.
- Create opportunities for youth participation and leadership in decision-making processes, program development, and policy advocacy related to the child welfare system.

Affirmation of Compliance with CAPTA Legal Requirements

The CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, Public Law (P.L.) 111-320 was signed into law on December 20, 2010. The law reauthorized and amends the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment, and Adoption Reform Act of 1978. Grants to States for child abuse or neglect prevention and treatment (CAPTA State Grants), grants to States for programs relating to investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect (Children’s Justice Act grants), community-based grants for the prevention of child abuse and neglect (CBCAP), CAPTA discretionary research and demonstration grants, the Adoption Opportunities program and the Abandoned Infants Assistance program are reauthorized with no increase in the amount of existing authorizations through fiscal year 2015.

As required by the amended CAPTA, Georgia affirms that it will:

1. Periodically review and revise the state plan to reflect any changes in the State’s strategies or programs under the grant program (section 106(b)(1)(B)(ii);
2. Provide notice to HHS of any substantive changes relating to the prevention of child abuse and neglect that may affect the State’s eligibility for the grant program (including statutory and regulatory changes (section 106(b)(1)(C)(i);
3. Continue to prepare and submit to HHS an annual report describing how the funds provided under CAPTA were used to address the purposes and achieve the objectives of the grant program (section 108(e).