

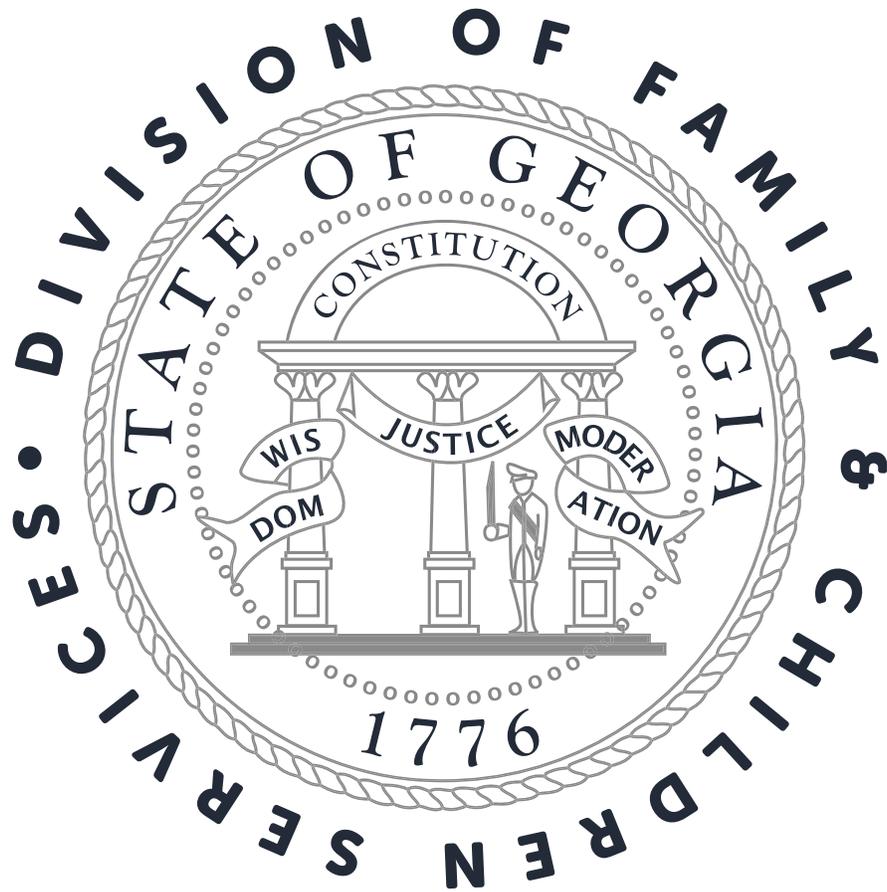
GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES

STATE FISCAL YEAR

2018

ANNUAL REPORT

TOM RAWLINGS
Interim Director



SFY2018 Annual Report

Tom Rawlings | Interim Director

■ TABLE OF CONTENTS

DFCS achieves multiple successes	6
Letter from the Director: A plan to move the division forward	8
Gearing up for the Family First Act took big plans	10
Safe at Home campaign tackles foster care entries	12
Beyond the Nuclear Family: A look at kinship care	16
New roadshow format connects DFCS leaders with communities	20
Adoption activity was brisk	22
Blueprint for Change Pillars	24
Practice Model	24
Workforce Development	26
Constituent Engagement	28
Timeline	30
Training prepares SNAP recipients for self-sufficiency	32
SNAP Works helped one woman start a career	33
Georgia experiments with food stamp work training program	35
Project gets homeless quick housing, services	36
Georgia Gateway	40
Innovative strategies aim to improve services	42
State of Hope	42
Strategic Partnerships	43
Bright Spots	44
Secret Santa Program: Snow doesn't stop Santa	44
Partnership Parenting: Creating a new extended family	45
DFCS employees recognized for excellence	46
New Supervisor Mentor Program aims to stabilize workforce	47
Appendix: Visit dfcs.ga.gov/dfcs-annual-report	

■ DFCS ACHIEVES MULTIPLE SUCCESSES

The fiscal year 2018 had lots in store for the child welfare system, and the state's main agency for safeguarding children and supporting families was at the forefront.

As you'll read in this annual report, the Division of Family and Children Services has had a full year.

One of our proudest moments was making the State of Hope initiative become a reality. After years of planning – with some of the nation's most inventive minds – things started off in a big way. Non-profits, faith-based groups, government agencies and others were invited to submit their "big ideas" for evaluation by committees of child-welfare supporters. More than 60 applied, and 53 across Georgia were designated as State of Hope sites.

The five ideas most ripe for funding received grants and organizational support. Most applicants have ongoing operations they wanted to expand. A handful were dubbed "emerging sites," giving them encouragement to develop their nascent ideas into functioning projects.

Another momentous event was passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, described by experts as the most significant child-welfare funding change in 30 years. Congress passed it in February and let states choose their implementation dates. Georgia chose an ambitious target of Sept. 29, 2020.

Between now and then, the Division will hustle to make preparations for this shift from funding traditional

group homes to financing prevention and therapeutic services. Successful implementation would mean children at risk of needing removal from their families would instead be able to safely stay at home while they and their parents or other caregivers get services they need to avoid risk of harm.

This report features other developments during the year, from innovative ways for reducing foster care to national recognition for a job-training program helping SNAP recipients. This was the final full fiscal year of Gov. Nathan Deal's administration, and some of his actions bore fruit, such as a reduced employee turnover rate and improved caseloads due to added case managers and a frontline pay raise.

The Division accomplished most its goals during the 2018 session of the General Assembly in terms of proposed legislation enacted, with all but one passing unanimously. And the appropriations for the fiscal year and the current one included increases reflective of the added expense of the growing population of foster children.

The Division's top legislative priority sought to correct a backlog in adoptions caused by a trio of decisions by the Georgia Court of Appeals that complicated the termination of parental rights. The legislature voted unanimously on Senate Bill 131 to restore the traditional requirements for termination, namely proving the parents are unfit and that reunion would not be in the best interest of the child. The appellate court had added an additional burden of proving that indefinite foster care would also be harmful, a difficult

hurdle to clear and one that had made juvenile judges and attorneys hesitant to even seek new adoptions.

A legislative favorite of Division staff was House Bill 972 because it created the mechanism to qualify for federal funding to extend voluntary foster care to age 21. The Division uses state dollars now to underwrite the support of these young adults as they attend school, job training or entry-level employment, so the added federal money will allow this transition program to expand.

For years, Division case managers and other state employees have been protected from the disclosure of their home address, bank account numbers and even their mother's maiden name, but the Open Records Act had required that we turn over that same information about foster parents to anyone who requests it from our files. House Bill 906 extended common-sense protections to foster parents.

Ironically, it took a court order for the Division to access its own files after an adoption, even to research allegations of an adopted child's maltreatment. House Bill 920 gave the director authority to access those files to investigate allegations or in the instance of a child's serious injury or worse.

Internally, one of the biggest projects during the year was the rollout of the Georgia Gateway consolidated eligibility system. Building it was the state's largest information-technology contract ever, but the result is more user friendly for our clients and a tool against fraud for our taxpayers. All in one place is

the application process for Medicaid, PeachCare for Kids, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, plus those of other agencies like Child Support Recovery from another division of the Department of Human Services and the Childcare Assistance Program from the Department of Early Care and Learning.

The DFCS staff is proud of what was accomplished for the benefit of children and families. This report is a broad overview, although the many individual successes could fill volumes.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

A plan to move the Division forward



Dear Partner,

Thank you for taking the time to review the Division of Family and Children Services' Annual Report for fiscal year 2018. It has been a busy year at the Division as we've worked to implement new laws, policies, and systems to improve our service to Georgians. I was honored when Governor Nathan Deal asked me to serve as Interim Director last July. Having served as the state's ombudsman for several years, I was a close partner of the Division's and have worked to continue the positive momentum started by my predecessors. I have come to the Division with several goals for the agency: to recruit and retain world-class employees, implement the Family First Prevention Services Act, develop a certified therapeutic foster care program, and build strong partnerships in communities across Georgia.

PREVIOUS LEADERSHIP



VIRGINIA PRYOR
DIRECTOR
Nov. 2017 - July 2018



BOBBY CAGLE
DIRECTOR
May 2014 - Nov. 2017

Improving child safety was a major focus in Governor Deal's administration, and great strides were made under the leadership of Division Directors Bobby Cagle and Virginia Pryor with the support of our General Assembly. A key part of this effort has been the state's focus on recruitment and retention of high-quality case workers. The 19 percent (on average) pay raises given to staff at the beginning of this fiscal year had an almost immediate impact on retention and in reinforcing the importance of the work of our child welfare staff across the state. My goal is to continue building on the Blueprint for Change, which was championed by Director Cagle, and to keep us focused

on building a team of competent, well-supported and experienced social workers.

This year was monumental for child welfare on a national scale with the passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act. The new law will require the Division to implement systematic changes to our child welfare information system, update policies and procedures, work with private providers to adjust their business models, and work with other contracted providers to adjust their service array. We will begin a staggered rollout approach, with a goal of final implementation by September 2020. We will continue to advocate for the children and families we serve, and work with legislative and community partners alike to make implementation as seamless as possible. FFPSA also affords us the opportunity to examine the services provided to children in foster care to see how we can provide more therapeutic services to children who have experienced significant trauma in their lives. I know many rural areas across the state are lacking in these services, and my goal is to use FFPSA to build out more resources for these areas.

In addition to the Family First Act, the Division and its core team partners launched the first State of Hope application process at the end of the fiscal year. After a year of planning, researching and networking, the State of Hope application was brought to life in a creative and interactive format. The application cycle opened in

late June and over 60 organizations around the state applied to receive funding to become a State of Hope site and join the “Hope Ecosystem” to receive technical assistance, access to opportunities for funding and partnership, and connect with each other. Our expectation is that the Hope Ecosystem will foster even more innovation and impact as the statewide network of sites come together to build relationships, share ideas and learn.

I feel confident that my staff can lead each of these initiatives successfully, which in turn, will result in better outcomes for the children and families we serve. I look forward to continuing our work with community and advocacy groups, legislative partners, and many others who want to see every child and family be successful and self-sufficient.

Thank you for the privilege to serve.

Sincerely,

Tom C. Rawlings
Interim Director

GEARING UP FOR THE FAMILY FIRST ACT TOOK BIG PLANS

The prospect of preventing foster care is the premise of federal legislation that's been described as the most sweeping child-welfare change in a generation. For the first time through the Family First Prevention Services Act, Congress is offering federal funds for the kinds of services experts say are needed to forestall maltreatment, such as parenting training, drug treatment and mental-health services.

But the bill, passed in February, requires some big steps to get ready and adjustments in services that will no longer be funded. For example, group home placements won't be funded for more than two weeks unless the child is at risk or a victim of sex trafficking, over 18 and preparing to live independently, in drug treatment or in another therapeutic setting. That will mean existing group homes will have to change their business model. It also means providers of preventive services will have to gain accreditation in the programs the federal government agrees to fund.

"We know that strong families make for strong communities," said its sponsor U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Fla. "This bill is so important given that we're in the middle of an opioid and heroin crisis, which creates many, many vulnerable children. This bill is a departure from an outdated system that focuses on caring for children only after they enter into foster care, and instead invests in proven prevention services, including substance abuse treatment, that will keep families together. This legislation offers the types of support that parents need to provide the safe and

stable home every child deserves."

The legislation's primary cosponsor, U.S. Rep. Sandy Levin, D-Mich., noted its broad support in Congress.

"We worked across the aisle on this legislation because we recognize the importance of ensuring that kids grow up in safe, loving, and stable homes," he said when it passed. "Our foster-care system provides an essential safe haven for abused and neglected children. However, when it comes to our system today, it's clear that federal funding has been stacked against prevention efforts. That means our federal dollars aren't being used to effectively help families and prevent child abuse and neglect in homes."

Over 50 state and national child-welfare organizations supported the bill in 2016 when it was first debated, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Children's Defense Fund, the Child Welfare League of America and the North American Council on Adoptable Children.

Since Congress allowed each state to select its implementation date as long as it was before the end of 2022, Georgia officials picked an ambitious target of Sept. 29, 2020 to get all that done.

These changes in placement types and prevention services will require new state regulations, policies, legislation and monitoring. Preparation for the administrative changes needed for Family First has

already begun. A task force across various departments formed and began mapping out the multiple steps necessary for implementation.

This includes addressing policy, practices and legislation. Also, modifications will need to be made to the SHINES computer system to be able to track the new services as each child receives them to ensure proper documentation and billing.

Training will be another important component. Case managers, juvenile-court judges, attorneys, advocates and others in the child-welfare system will need to learn about the new types of placements, services and procedures.

Finally, the providers of prevention services and group homes will need to adjust their business model to be able to fulfill contracts in compliance with the demands of the new federal law. That will also require additional monitoring of program fidelity and licensing by the Division.

While the Division's task force just began outlining its job in the 2018 fiscal year, the outreach campaign was gearing up. Its goal was to educate people about the law, including legislators and other policymakers, and to invite all stakeholders to offer suggestions and feedback. Speeches by Division leaders to civic clubs, provider organizations and advocacy groups demonstrated the commitment to transparency and openness during this transformation.



SAFE AT HOME CAMPAIGN TACKLES FOSTER CARE ENTRIES



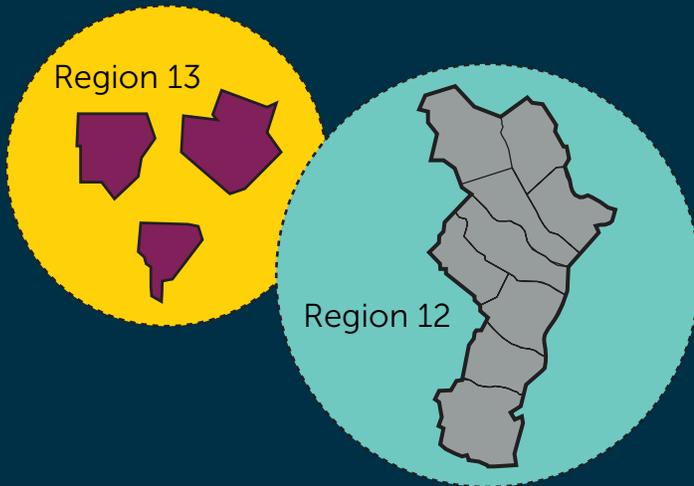
The Safe at Home campaign was developed in 2016 as a direct response to the rising number of children entering Georgia's foster care system. Georgia experienced a 58 percent increase in its foster care population since January 2014. The goal of the campaign is to increase the effectiveness of serving children in their own homes and is ultimately focused on preserving families. Through this campaign, the Division has been able to examine its policies to ensure the necessary resources are being provided to families so that children can safely remain with their parent(s) in their home. The team who led this campaign focused on ensuring child safety, preserving families and reducing the need for and duration of foster care placements.

Several of the Safe at Home strategies for success include:

- Strengthening the internal process for child protective services assessments, which determine whether or not a child will be brought into foster care
- Safely utilizing services to preserve families when a child's safety isn't in jeopardy
- Conducting targeted case reviews to ensure that veteran case workers are able to weigh in and provide feedback and other solutions
- Increasing permanency and adoption efforts to ensure that if and when children come into foster care, the Division is expeditiously working toward permanency for that child (whether through reunification or adoption)
- Increasing the utilization of aftercare services to ensure that extra support is provided to families who may need assistance with child care

SAFE AT HOME

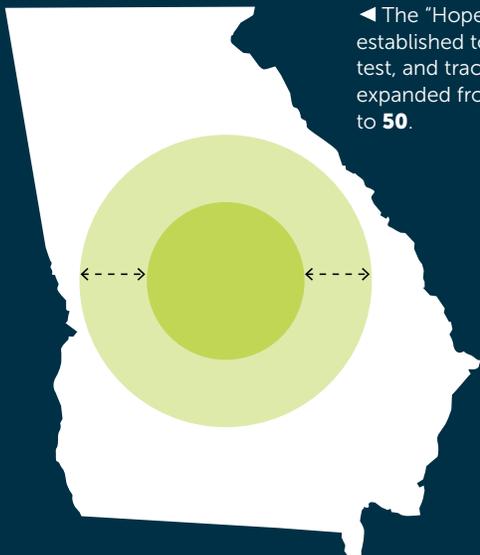
A look back: Two years



▲ A Promoting Reasonable Efforts Team (PRE-Team) pilot is currently underway in Regions 12 and 13 prior to a statewide rollout.



▲ In June 2016, the **number of children in foster care** in Georgia was projected to reach 16,000 by December 2017. Through the implementation of Safe at Home, the Division has been able to arrest Georgia's rising foster care population and keep children safely in their homes.



◀ The "Hopefuls group, established to create, test, and track practices, expanded from **36** counties to **50**.



▲ Prior to the initiation of the Safe at Home campaign, Georgia experienced 19 consecutive months of foster care entries above 600. With the initiation of the campaign, the state experienced eight months (out of the following 19) at or below 600 entries.

To implement these strategies, the Division created a standing Hopefuls group to provide a regular venue to discuss methods, ask questions, create and test hypotheses, track progress and modify practices. The Safe at Home Hopefuls group comprised seven regions and 36 counties that collectively made up over 70 percent of the state's overall foster care increase.

In June 2016, the number of children in foster care in Georgia was projected to reach 16,000 by December 2017. Through the implementation of Safe at Home, the Division has been able to arrest Georgia's rising foster care population and keep children safely in their homes. Prior to the implementation of Safe at Home, Georgia experienced 19 consecutive months of foster care entries above 600. Following the creation of the campaign, the state experienced eight months (out of the following 19) at or below 600 entries.

One of the Safe at Home campaign strategies is to hold a county-level pre-removal staff meeting prior to bringing a child into custody and these have proven successful in maintaining children safely in their homes. The Promoting Reasonable Efforts Team, or PRE-Team is to strengthen removal decisions and prevent unnecessary foster care entries, and more significantly, the trauma children experience as a result of those entries.

The primary goal of the PRE-Team is to ensure that reasonable efforts have been made prior to pre-authorizing a county to seek custody of a child. This means that every resource, every relative and every possible solution to keep a family intact has been considered. The PRE-Team initiative is being piloted in

Regions 12 and 13 to test successes and failures, prior to a possible statewide rollout. PRE-Team meetings involve DFCS regional specialists, MSW-level staff, county leadership, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) and the county's Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG).

Through Safe at Home and PRE-Team efforts, the Division aims to continue a thoughtful, focused approach to family preservation and child safety with the hope that one day, children won't need to enter foster care.



BEYOND THE NUCLEAR FAMILY: A LOOK AT KINSHIP CARE

Kinship care, or relative care, is a practice by which family members or “kin” – family friends – step in as caregivers for a child (or children) when parents are unable to care for their child(ren) or it is deemed a threat to the child’s health, safety or wellbeing to remain in their parent’s care. Research shows that children do best in kinship care settings, as placement with a relative or familiar family friend limits the trauma they experience. Kinship care also helps preserve children’s cultural identity and relationship to their community.

In 2016, more than 263,000 grandparents in Georgia were living with their grandchildren. The Division launched the Kinship Navigator Program in direct response to the increasing number of grandparents, relatives and other caregivers who have assumed responsibility for raising another relative’s children.

Kinship caregivers may serve as short- or long-term caregivers for relative children and can be a grandparent, aunt, uncle, sibling or other relative or family friend who has established a kin-like bond with a child.

The Division’s Kinship Navigators provide a one-stop-shop of information and referral services for kinship caregivers. The overarching goal of the Kinship Navigator program is to close the gaps or delays in service to kinship families. Some services that may be available to kinship families (depending on eligibility) include: child care services, community support services, financial support services like the

Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) or Medicaid, legal services, and health and wellness services.

In 2016, then-Director Bobby Cagle announced that moving forward, the Division would work on becoming a kin-first agency. Director Cagle set a goal for the agency to place 50 percent of children in foster care with relatives or kin by summer 2019. The Division has made great strides in this effort. During FY 2018, the Division placed just over 30 percent of its children with relatives or kin, rather than in private foster homes or other settings.

Gwinnett County DFCS recognized the importance of maintaining family connections when two children entered foster care due to their father’s battle with substance abuse. The department was able to secure a substance-abuse assessment for the father, and the children were returned to him under a protective order. During this period, the department continued to provide support to the father, as he was progressing well with his case plan goals. While the case was in family preservation, the family’s case manager continued to engage and encourage the father to identify additional familial or other supports to assist him with the children. This was done by exploring and updating his genogram of relatives (both in and out of state).

Although the father made progress in his case plan, he recognized that he was relapsing. Thus, he reached out to his maternal relatives in Alabama, who were willing to assume responsibility of the children

while he continued to work through his addiction. The department moved forward with a motion to grant permanent guardianship to the relatives. The end result was permanency for the children in a relative setting and continued services in place for the father.

The situation gave Gwinnett County DFCS an opportunity

to explore kinship options available to the father while he worked through his case plan, but also gave the children a sense of permanency and stability without the trauma of entering foster care. In the end, the children are in a safe, stable and loving home, and their father is continuing to receive services from the Division so that he can work toward reunification.





Number of grandparents responsible for raising grandchildren in the U.S.



Percentage of those grandparents who are in the workforce.



Amount of those grandparents living below the poverty line.

KINSHIP CARE IN GEORGIA

263,332

grandparents in Georgia are living with their grandchildren, according to the 2016 American Community Survey.

12

percent of older adults age 60 and older in Georgia live below the poverty level.

23.5

percent of all grandparents responsible for grandchildren live below the poverty level.

25.3

percent of all grandparents responsible for grandchildren have a disability, and 29.0 percent of grandparents over age 60 responsible for grandchildren have a disability.

58.1

percent of grandparents who are responsible for grandchildren are still in the work force.

46.7

percent of grandparents living with grandchildren but not responsible for them are still in the work force.

KINSHIP SERVICES

Community support services

The Division of Aging Services provides supportive services to grandparents and relative caregivers of any age, throughout each 12 regional Area Agencies on Aging.

Visit: aging.georgia.gov/locations

Financial support services

Programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child support, relative care subsidy, Right from the Start Medicaid and many more.

Visit: dfcs.georgia.gov/temporary-assistance-needy-families

Legal services

The Relative Caregiver Hotline / Georgia Senior Legal Hotline of the Atlanta Legal Aid Society provides advice, brief services and referrals on issues such as custody, adoption, public benefits and housing.

Georgia Legal Services Program: 800-745-5717

Health & wellness services

A number of health and wellness services are available through state agencies to support kinship families in achieving the healthiest lifestyle possible.

Project Healthy Grandparents - Metro Atlanta: 404-413-1118

Georgia Health Matters: Life Enriching Programs

Visit: georgiahealthmatters.org

Child care services

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program helps low-income families in Georgia pay for early childhood and school age care programs. The CAPS program subsidizes the cost of child care for eligible children age birth to age 13, or up to age 18 if the child has special needs.

Childcare And Parents Services: caps.decal.ga.gov/en/EligibilityRequirements

NEW ROADSHOW FORMAT CONNECTS DFCS LEADERS WITH COMMUNITIES

State of Hope engagements

The Destination Hope engagements are a reboot of the Blueprint for Change Roadshows of recent years that were designed as an opportunity for the DFCS Director to conduct statewide visits to meet with staff, stakeholders, and the public at large. The purpose of these meetings is to gather feedback from staff and stakeholders across the state about agency reform efforts and to build consensus on a plan to make Georgia a safer place for children and a state where vulnerable families can access services that put them on a path to self-sufficiency.

During the roadshow visits, the Division engages community and civic organizations, contracted providers, faith-based organizations, foster parents, foster youth, general public, judges, law enforcement, legislators, media, staff, superintendents and school systems, and selected State of Hope sites and emerging State of Hope sites.

In 2017, the Division's leadership team made several rounds across the state for the Blueprint for Change Roadshows. Savannah, Blue Ridge, Metro-Atlanta, Douglasville, and Valdosta were visited during the fiscal year.

The Division's executive leadership held meetings with foster parents and youth, the faith-based communities, as well as all levels of DFCS staff to discuss ways to better their support. Law enforcement, judges, and the

Department of Juvenile Justice were also included in the roadshow meetings. The law enforcement meeting during the Augusta roadshow included a training facilitated by the Child Welfare Training Collaborative.

The Division launched the State of Hope initiative in June 2018 at the final Destination Hope event of the fiscal year in Augusta. State of Hope encourages nonprofits, philanthropies, government, businesses and other community members to collaborate in building local safety nets that will focus on four areas: education, trauma-informed treatment, quality caregiving, and economic self-sufficiency.

The Division, in partnership with Georgia State University and Georgia Family Connection, announced at the Augusta event that it was accepting applications from community-based organizations to participate in the Hope initiative. As a result, over 60 big ideas from all over the state were submitted for consideration, and 53 were selected to be State of Hope sites.

The new Destination Hope format was designed so that State of Hope sites could be recognized during the agency's leadership travel. The revised agenda includes a luncheon with local civic leaders and roundtable discussions where participating organizations can showcase their activities, share ideas, receive technical assistance, access opportunities for funding, build partnerships, and connect with each other.

Why Hope for Georgia?

In 2015

465,000

children under 18 had uncertainty about whether they would have food.*

OVER 15,000

children will not sleep in their own beds tonight.**

ONLY 11%

of foster youth graduate from high school each year.**

163,000 CHILDREN

have come to the attention of child welfare officials annually.**



Promoting community decision making

Supporting community leaders



Building on community strengths

Shining a light on positive community collaboration



Opportunities for Hope

The State of Hope focuses on four priority areas that are believed to have the greatest impact on keeping children safe, strengthening families and empowering communities. Applications for potential State of Hope projects are encouraged to focus on one or more of these opportunity areas.

EDUCATION



Develop children and youth who are ready for life

TRAUMA-INFORMED



Build communities that are trauma-informed and responsive

QUALITY CAREGIVING



Provide stable relationships through supported and responsive caregivers

ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY



Strengthen and support individuals and families to achieve independence

*Source: KIDS COUNT Data Center: A Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Updated as of February 2018.

**Source: Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. Data reflected as of May 2018.

ADOPTION ACTIVITY WAS BRISK

While the majority of children in foster care eventually return to their parents, there are some children who cannot because their parents have demonstrated to a judge through their behavior that they are unfit. Once a judge terminates parental rights, the child is available for adoption.

Decisions by the Georgia Court of Appeals had made it more difficult to terminate parental rights, but a state law enacted in 2018 removed that hurdle so that children would be less likely to stay in foster care for their remaining childhood.

Because the Division actively seeks to place foster children with relatives, many adoptions are by grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. During the fiscal year, about three of every 10 foster care placements were with relatives. The Division's goal is for every other one or half.

Altogether, there were 1,212 adoptions, a 2 percent increase from the previous fiscal year.

There were 1,460 children available for adoption at the end of the fiscal year. Most adoptive parents are seeking younger children, which means the older a child is, the harder it is to find a permanent home. National Adoption Month is celebrated across the nation during the month of November. Although adoptions are finalized year-round, November is the time of the year that the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services raises awareness of the need for adoptive parents and families to better support and raise Georgia's most vulnerable residents, our children.

The November 2017 National Adoption Month theme "Teens Need Families, No Matter What" centered on building an effective response system that will support efforts to achieve lasting permanency for teenagers in foster care. Information on how staff and communities can get involved in the adoption events happening in their areas was sent to regional and county leadership at the beginning of the month in the form of a toolkit.

The state office staff held a National Adoption Month kickoff on November 1 to raise awareness and educate local partners. Staff gathered to hear stories from adoptive parents, talk with adoption partners, and enjoy refreshment and giveaways.

The goal when fostering children is to help youth seek permanency. The importance of kinship is also pressed during National Adoption Month. This provides a better chance of recruiting families who are willing to adopt sibling groups

Earlier this year, the Division, in partnership with Georgia State University's Child Welfare Training Collaborative and the Georgia Family Connection partnership, launched an initiative called State of Hope. The goal of State of Hope is to transform Georgia into a collection of communities where children and families have the support they need to thrive and the security to be hopeful about their future.

With over 14,000 youth in care, it is important that we raise awareness to those in our communities about opening their homes to a child and/or a sibling group who wishes to find a forever home.

The Cannada family grows to 11

The Cannada family adopted little brother Will in March 2018. Will had been in foster care since December 2016 and the family had previously adopted his five older siblings. Everyone was excited to have him become an official member of their family.

The Cannada's value the uniqueness and individuality of each of their children, and no matter how full their home is, their hearts remain fuller.



November is National Adoption Month



Teens need families, no matter what.





Practice Model

2014

Economic assistance delivery offered through Georgia One, a process-oriented model managed by virtual supervision. The system lacked accountability and made access difficult.

**67%**

of food stamp cases completed on time

**6.49%**

rate of error in food stamp determinations

Lack of a practice model in child welfare led to inconsistent approaches to assessing child safety and well-being nationwide.

**56%**

of child welfare investigations completed on time

**4,000**

overdue child welfare investigations

2017-2018

Transition to "one caseworker, one family" economic assistance delivery model in August 2015 that strengthens accountability and localizes service. Georgia Gateway, the state's first integrated eligibility system, was implemented in September 2017.

**91%**

of food stamp cases completed on time

**6.05%**

rate of error in food stamp determinations

Implementation of Georgia's practice model for child welfare began in mid-2016, with statewide completion by the end of 2017. Staff will become certified in solution-based casework by the end of 2018.

**94%**

of open child welfare investigations are on schedule (not exceeding 45 days)

**222**

child welfare investigations exceed 45 days

2019

Place 50% of children in kinship care settings.



Fully implement Georgia Gateway system.

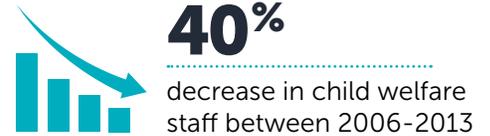
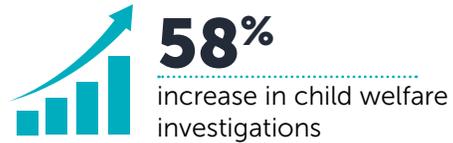
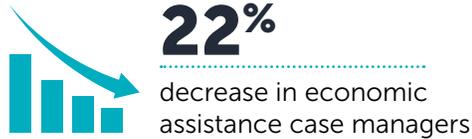
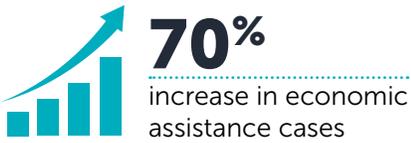


Update child fatality and serious injury review process.

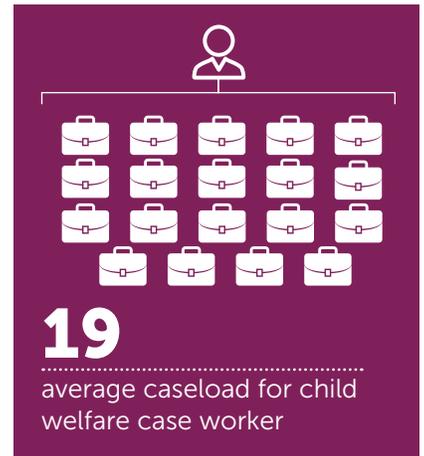


Workforce Development

2006 - 2014



2017 - 2018



Training Opportunities

- Privately funded training on trauma, substance abuse and mental health
- Renewed partnership with universities to train social workers
- Launched a supervisor mentor program

2019

Retention efforts



Increase employee satisfaction



Reduce turnover

- 18% for child welfare workers
- 11% for family independence workers



Implement a safety solution to protect frontline staff



Constituent Engagement

2014



Limited engagement with external stakeholders contributed to lack of understanding, collaboration, support and trust

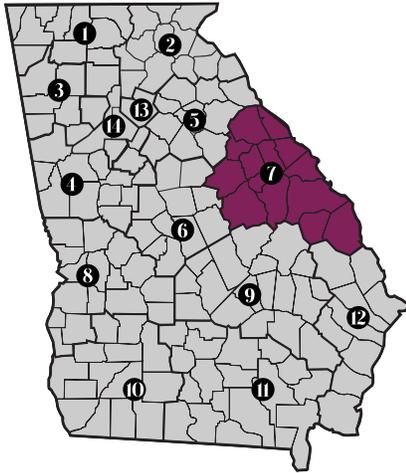


Lack of structured process to solicit feedback and input from constituents and general public resulted in failure



Lack of consistent internal method to share information and solicit feedback from staff

2018



The 2018 Destination: HOPE | Community Conversations will kick off in Region 7 in June. To follow, the remaining events will be held in the three selected Region of Hope sites in the fall.



State of Hope is an initiative that encourages nonprofits, philanthropies, government, businesses and communities to collaborate closely to build local safety nets that will prevent conditions that contribute to disparities in education, threaten a family's self-sufficiency and could lead to child abuse and neglect.

Destination: HOPE | Community Conversations seek to gather feedback from staff and stakeholders across the state to discuss the agency's way forward, building a State of Hope in Georgia. Destination: HOPE | Community Conversations engage:

Foster youth

Judges

Law enforcement

Legislators

Foster parents

Media

Faith-based organizations

Staff

Contracted providers

General public

Community leaders

Juvenile justice

2019



Establish the first three Regions of Hope



Build a faith-based support network through Care Portal



Timeline



2013

Economic assistance was delivered through **Georgia One**, a system that lacked accountability and made access difficult.



2015

The Georgia legislature passes **Senate Bill 138**, reforming Georgia's child welfare system.



2017

All child welfare staff have been trained in **solution-based casework (SBC)**.

All eligibility staff transition to using **Georgia Gateway**, the state's first integrated eligibility system.

2014



Lack of a practice model in child welfare led to inconsistent approaches and interactions with families statewide.

2016



The Division leadership embarks on annual **roadshow tours** around the state to solicit feedback from staff, partners and the public and educate them on reform efforts.

2018



The Division's mission is to create a **State of Hope** in Georgia, with the goal of establishing three Region of Hope sites.

TRAINING PREPARES SNAP RECIPIENTS FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As a social-services agency, the Division seeks to do more than merely distribute tax-paid benefits, but instead aims to guide recipients toward becoming financially independent and self-reliant.

The Division's Food Stamp Employment and Training Program offers a range of voluntary courses. Some teach how to stretch benefits for the whole month. Some provide tips on nutrition.

One, named SNAP Works, assists food stamp recipients who are unemployed or underemployed with opportunities and resources to gain skills to improve their employment prospects and reduce reliance on public-assistance programs. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates there are 1.4 million chronically unemployed Americans, those out of a job for more than 27 weeks.

"A simple explanation for why workers' job-finding success drops as the duration of their unemployment rises is that the workers whose skills are in shortest supply will tend to be re-employed fastest. These workers thus tend to leave the unemployment queue before they have been jobless for long," wrote Brookings Institute economic fellow Gary Burtless. "A disproportionate number of the chronically unemployed simply lack skills currently prized by employers."

To address those skills deficits, SNAP Works is a voluntary program, except for unemployed able-

bodied, working-age adults without dependents in counties where jobless rates are low.

"While SNAP is intended to ensure that no one in our land of plenty should fear going hungry, it also reflects the importance of work and responsibility," notes the federal Food and Nutrition Service. "SNAP rules require all recipients meet work requirements unless they are exempt because of age or disability or another specific reason."

Participants may receive training from one or more of the Division's many partners, which include the Technical College System of Georgia, Goodwill Industries and CareerRise. Goodwill of North Georgia, for example, reports that it has removed barriers to employment for nearly 100,000 people, or 93 percent of SNAP Works participants, in the last five years alone.

The training focuses on specific job know-how and credentials as well as so-called soft skills. Help also includes:

- Résumé writing
- Job placement assistance
- Supportive services like small grants for work clothing, tools and transportation assistance

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

SNAP Works helped one woman start a career

Meet Leigh H. who found a job after participating in the SNAP Works Program.

She expresses, in her own words, her appreciation for the program and for LaShaun White, SNAP Works Employment Services Specialist I, and her supervisor, Melodie Hayes, SNAP Education and Training Administrator.

In Leigh's own words...

In November of 2017 I was released from an 18-month, long-term treatment program, another starting-over point. My life has been described as disappointing even hopeless.

Without getting into too much of the backstory, I have struggled with abuse and then addiction since I was 11 years old. This time I was determined to make a difference, not only for me but also for my 11-year-old daughter. I did not want to be the cause of any more pain.

In December of 2017, I applied for food stamps, and I was asked if I'd like to participate in their work program. I agreed, and I was set up for a meeting with Ms. White. I kept my appointment, and she asked if I would like to fill out 30 applications a week or as she recommended I could go to the Goodwill program. There I would meet a great group of people whose sole mission it is to put people to work.

This has changed my life. I thank God every day for Ms. White and the Goodwill program.

I started with Goodwill early January 2017. It is now April, and in that very short time, so many good opportunities have come my way.

At 46, I am now certified by The American Red Cross in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. I am certified in OSHA 10 and have become a certified welder. I have three job offers at this time, all very lucrative and promising to give me real financial security. I no longer have the self-doubt that I'll never accomplish anything good and productive.

I wake every morning with a sense of gratitude and promise. My whole life has changed.

I have been offered a two-year scholarship with Athens Technical College for free. I will start classes in the fall. During the last four months I've faced some obstacles with transportation and health issues, but I found a way and made it work.

I would encourage everyone to take advantage of this program from the Division of Family and Children's services. Without them, and especially Miss White, I just don't know where I would be. I can't express my gratitude on any way that would be deserving.

My only regret is that I waited so long to participate in this program. If you are young or older; if you have no hope; if life seems like it's just not worth it, please give this program a shot. Ms. White you are my guardian angel. Thank you and your organization so very, very much.

*"I wake every morning with a sense of gratitude and promise.
My whole life has changed."*

By working with these partners, the Division draws on their connections with employers so that participants are matched with jobs that need workers in their communities, such as in the fields of manufacturing, warehousing, transportation, medical, automotive, building maintenance, welding and more.

Georgia was awarded a \$15 million grant in 2015 for the Division of Family and Children Services, the Georgia Department of Labor and the Georgia Local Workforce Investment Agency to provide services to able-bodied adults without dependents in 10 Georgia counties. That expanded to 93 counties in fiscal year 2018. The approach of coordinated case management services through an integrated system was based on the model of health-maintenance organizations. Primary case managers work closely with secondary case managers in partner organizations, each applying their respective expertise to meeting the needs of participants and continuously sharing information and insights via a centralized web-based system.

Georgia DFCS SNAP Works case managers conduct a brief employability assessment. The participant is then referred to Labor Department case managers who guide the participant from beginning to end, while coordinating the efforts and inputs of all partner case management contributions. The primary case manager develops a plan for each participant, with the establishment of an occupational goal, a career path, potential barriers, and a mitigation plan for those barriers.

If the Labor Department case manager determines a

participant is immediately employable, the customer will receive pre-employment and work readiness services as needed, and a staff-assisted and self-directed job search will begin. If the participant needs education or training, a case manager with Workforce Investment guides the participant to the Georgia Technical College System and other approved Georgia education and training providers. After training is completed, the case manager will refer participants back to the Labor Department for job placement.

Georgia's SNAP Works Program was profiled in a National Public Radio article regarding the success of one of our participants.

Georgia experiments with food stamp work training program

By **Susanna Capelouto**

National Public Radio, Marketplace | August 13, 2018

At a body shop in Atlanta, Leigh Anne Hatfield just finished taking apart the front of an SUV.

"This is a brand new Toyota Highlander. Got smacked in the front," she said. Hatfield said she loves her job here at the body shop. It's her first job since she became a certified welder. A few months ago she was so poor, she had to apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP or food stamps.

"I went to the Department of Family and Children's Services and there was a wonderful lady there named Miss White and she sent me to Goodwill for their training program and I decided to get in to the welding program because it's really good money actually," Hatfield said.

Georgia's SNAP program uses federal dollars to pay for half of the cost of job training at Goodwill Industries for SNAP recipients. When Hatfield entered a 13-week welding class, she had only held low-wage service jobs, off and on. Goodwill offers training in 16 occupations and it costs between \$4,000 and \$6,000 to train someone like Hatfield. That's money well spent, said Keith Parker, the CEO of Goodwill of North Georgia, because low-income people often earn higher wages once they acquire a skill.

"If we can help that person dramatically improve their financial situation, that's a win for us, the individual, the state, the federal government, all the above," he said.

The SNAP work program started in Georgia two years ago with a pilot in three counties and so far 8,000 food stamp recipients have gone through it. The state is now expanding it statewide and wants to re-brand what it means to have a work requirement with food stamps.

"A work requirement doesn't have to be something that's punitive and that discontinues your food stamps. It could be something that actually connects you to a career," said Tatrina Young, who runs Georgia's SNAP works program.

State agencies that work with low-income people are closely



SUSANNA CAPELOUTO | Marketplace

A welding student at Goodwill Industries.

watching the debate in Congress over the possible expansion of work requirements for SNAP recipients. In most states only adults who have no children have to work or get training, but Congress could add people with kids over 6-years-old to the roll.

Work is the best way out of poverty, but even in a super strong economy, it's not that simple, said Russ Sykes with the American Public Human Services Association, which advocates for state agencies that work with SNAP recipients.

"Let's be honest, in a lot of our programs we have people who don't have as much labor market experience and yes jobs are going begging and there's no doubt about that. But skilling people up among our population quite often will take more time and money," he said.

Congress is looking to add \$1 billion for training if lawmakers decide to expand work requirement for 3 million more people. That works out to about \$330 per person, not nearly enough, under a program like Georgia's, to get someone like Leigh Anne Hatfield into a welding job.

PROJECT GETS HOMELESS QUICK HOUSING, SERVICES

In 2017, leadership within Georgia's Department of Family and Children Services identified the need for rapid rehousing funding within the city of Atlanta. Using block grant funding from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) program, matched with private dollars, DFCS contracted with Partners for Homes, Inc. to house 100 families with children over the course of a year.

Homeless individuals had to meet four criteria to be eligible for TANF rapid rehousing funding and services:

- Custody of a child under 18
- Income under 200 percent of the federal poverty level
- Georgia residency
- Homelessness within in the city of Atlanta

SYSTEM PROCESSES

Coordinated entry

In Atlanta, all homeless services are allocated through a coordinated-entry system. Any individual needing services is directed to a central access point for assessment, verification, and assignment of service. Coordinated entry also engages people in need of housing through a street outreach team. At these coordinated-entry points, and depending on the need of the person, services can range from emergency shelter or medical care to benefit application.

The rapid rehousing program allowed our vendor to expand coordinated entry beyond the existing static

entry point, located at the Gateway Center near downtown Atlanta. For example, a contracted vendor sent out teams to conduct mobile coordinated entry on a rotating schedule among several of Atlanta's emergency and family shelters that were previously untouched by coordinated entry. Casting a wider net allowed the rapid rehousing program to meet families in need where they were, rather than forcing them to navigate the city with belongings and small children. This expansion also cut down the amount of time families experienced homelessness, as they were able to get connected to services and housing more quickly.

Youth Coordinated Entry

Prior to the rapid rehousing program, there was no specific coordinated-entry system for homeless youth. All youth ages 18-24 were provided services under the existing adult coordinated-entry system, despite specific needs and barriers to successful housing unique to their age. The rapid rehousing program allowed one of our vendors to establish a transitioned-aged youth coordinated-entry system to serve homeless youth ages 18-24 – which is a best practice for ending youth homelessness.

Many homeless youth are victims of domestic violence, or are survivors of sexual abuse, and have specific difficulties with housing as well as connecting to services. The rapid rehousing project's youth coordinated-entry system quickly identified young parents, then coordinated bed space and stability. This specific population of youth heads of household had not been previously addressed before the implementation of this project, and housing for parenting youth was

minimal. For the first time, the transitioned-aged youth coordinated-entry team also went mobile, establishing times and utilizing space at four existing youth drop-in centers in the city of Atlanta.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Prioritizing Families

Previously in coordinated entry, homeless families were mixed with single individuals during the assessment phase and scored for risk using the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, producing a vulnerability score. The higher the number, the more trauma a family has most likely experienced and the less likely they will be able to self-resolve from homelessness without an intervention. Once a score is determined, the homeless individual is matched with a resource: emergency shelter (based on bed space and entry requirements) or permanent housing, and various services the client identifies as a need.

With rapid rehousing funding, families were identified earlier and immediately provided resources for permanent housing along with needed support services. They were no longer grouped with the larger population, delaying services. Instead, they are processed and screened for services upon identification and entry.

Using the Homeless Management Information System, one of the funded agencies in this initiative, Project Community Connections, Inc., was able to reach out to families who had previously been identified and were awaiting resources. The families were also found

using the mobile coordinated-entry process and recruited for the rapid rehousing program. This also freed up bed spaces and available housing for single individuals experiencing homelessness. Since families were referred to a housing intervention specifically to meet their needs, capacity expanded in all areas of the coordinated-entry system resulting in more people being housed.

Case management

The TANF rapid rehousing program added several valuable components to the vendor’s case-management team. In addition to fundamental oversight and case-management positions, positions for housing locators, childcare navigators, and coordinated-entry assessors were funded to work directly with the families enrolled. Using in-depth assessments and a holistic approach, the team worked to identify and produce service plans to address multiple barriers in addition to homelessness. With this funding, vendors were able to break down typical barriers to housing: access, employment, childcare, and affordability. By dedicating staff to these issues, this project has reduced the length of time the enrolled clients experienced homelessness.

Capacity Building

One of the key goals of the rapid rehousing project was to increase the capacity for serving homeless families in the Metro Atlanta area. It was done in three ways:

1. Prioritizing Families

When families have a separate funding stream, an additional service queue opens to serve them. Families

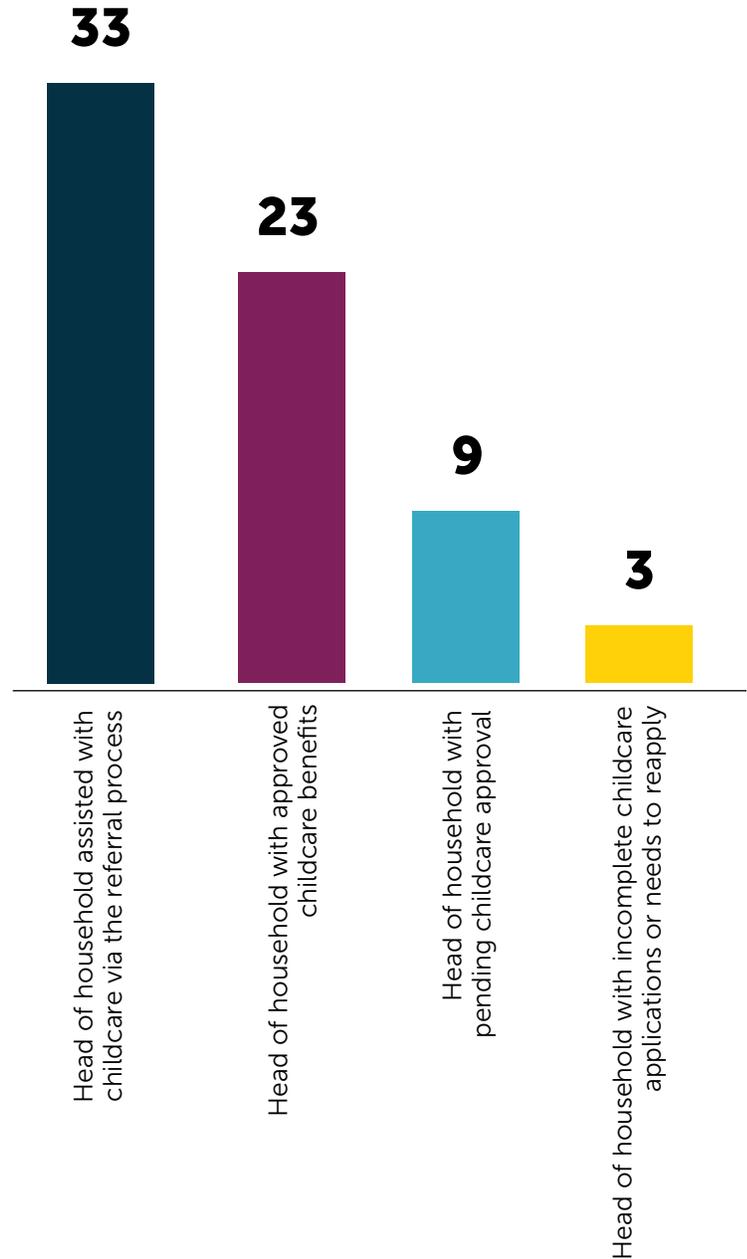
are no longer trapped on a list, waiting behind higher-risk individuals. Their removal from the main coordinated entry waiting list allows others to access services quicker.

2. Youth Coordinated Entry

Before the rapid rehousing program, there was no youth coordinated entry. The TANF funding allowed a well-established youth service non-profit, CHRIS 180 – which has worked with homeless youth and those who are under the custody of DFCS since 1981 – to create a framework for identifying homeless youth with children. Data trends show that many of the children in this demographic are fleeing domestic violence or are former foster youth.

3. Linking Agencies

In addition to building capacity around homelessness, rapid rehousing has brought various systems to the table to work together in an effort to ensure families are stabilized and do not return to homelessness. Homeless families have additional service needs, such as childcare, employment, mental health, etc., often met by agencies other than TANF. The rapid rehousing project has forged connections around childcare and started discussion around employment and other life skill services. This project has led to a partnership with the Department of Early Care and Learning that prompted that agency to change its referral system in order to prioritize homeless families. An Employment Collaborative between Atlanta Worksource, Partners for HOME, and other workforce and homeless-service providers was created to specifically address the needs of the families in this program.





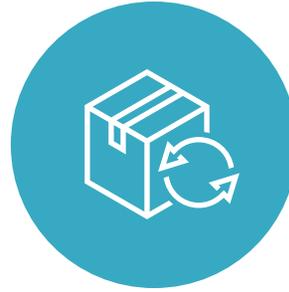
64

Families housed



97

Families enrolled



5

Pending move-in



2.9

Average household size



12

Foster care / DFCS
involvement



19

Head of household is
former foster youth



3

Head of household
is grandparent



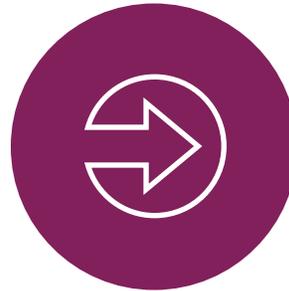
64

Head of household
is employed



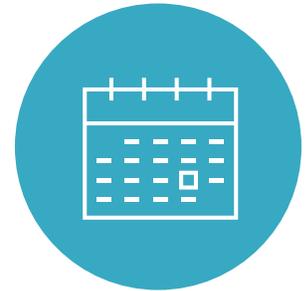
49

Head of household has
experienced domestic violence



1

Discharged



36

Number of days
to housed

■ GEORGIA GATEWAY

Georgia's new system for administering public benefits, Georgia Gateway, has received an award by a national association of technology professionals.

Georgia Gateway is the recipient of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers' (NASCIO) Cross-Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships award.

Thanks to the public and private partnerships that made this system possible, low-income Georgians now have a one-stop-shop to manage their benefits, which reduces paperwork, time spent in local offices and time on the phone with case managers. Georgia Gateway is designed with working Georgians in mind and built to support them on their path to self-sufficiency.

The largest IT project in state history, Georgia Gateway

serves as a single point of entry for Georgians seeking economic assistance and support with childcare, healthcare or feeding their families. The system was implemented in 2017. Its development required the collaboration of Georgia's departments of Human Services, Community Health, and Early Care and Learning and the Georgia Technology Authority.

This marks the third time Georgia Gateway has been nationally recognized for its innovative use of technology in streamlining access for multiple benefit programs.

Georgia has received the State IT Innovation of the Year award from StateScoop 50 and an ISM Recognition Award for Excellence in Health and Human Services Technology from the American Public Human Services Association related to the development of Georgia Gateway.



■ INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AIM TO IMPROVE SERVICES

The Office of Innovation was established in late 2017 to serve as a catalyst for the development and execution of human-services innovation. It is committed to incubating, anchoring and advancing the Division's key priorities and initiatives that will aid in ensuring that children are safe, individuals and families are strengthened, and Georgia is ultimately stronger.

STATE OF HOPE

One of the office's most visible efforts was the State of Hope initiative, an effort to spur nongovernmental organizations to provide services in their communities that will strengthen families and minimize the need for foster care. A State of Hope is the Division's ultimate vision: a place where public and private organizations – nonprofits, philanthropies, government, businesses and communities – collaborate closely so that children are safer, families are stronger, and all Georgians thrive.

To get the initiative off the ground, the Office of Innovation continued its partnership with Georgia State University and the Georgia Family Connection Partnership. It designed branding assets for State of Hope, including logos, letterhead and a one-page infographic. And it partnered with IDEO, a global design company, to incorporate human-centered design practices into State of Hope efforts.

Once the preliminaries were complete, the Division announced on June 25 at a Destination Hope event in Augusta that organizations around the state had until July 20 to apply to have their "big idea" endorsed. Sixty-three applications were submitted, and at least one application was received from each of the Division's 14 regions across the state. Teams from communities across the state reviewed the

applications, and 53 were selected to be State of Hope sites. Five of these received funding for their projects.

All sites were offered the opportunity to be a part of a larger community, the Hope Ecosystem, a platform designed to serve as a means to connect State of Hope sites to one another, match them to additional resources and opportunities, and link them to other potential funding sources. In alignment with human-centered practices, each State of Hope site had an opportunity to meet face-to-face and provide input into Ecosystem design.

In conjunction with the Division's Destination Hope engagements (formerly known as Roadshows), several State of Hope events were held. These events took place in Augusta, Griffin and Macon between June and November. At each stop, the Office held meetings with organizations designated as State of Hope sites or emerging sites as well as local groups seeking to apply in the next cycle and held a luncheon with community leaders to hear from the newly designated State of Hope sites in each geographic area. This also provided attendees a forum for conversations exploring how safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments are essential to the healthy development of all children.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Division continued building on the relationships with several foundations – Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Woodruff Foundation and the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. Over the past year, it expanded relationships with the faith community. Two significant partners in this effort have been Promise686 and the Interfaith Children’s Movement. Both organizations have representatives who participate on the State of Hope Advisory Council, and they continue to engage DFCS leadership in support of several efforts (Family First Prevention and Services Act, the CarePortal, etc.).

Additionally, the Office of Innovation has engaged organizations that serve culturally specific communities that may also interact with the Division. One such organization is Ser Familia, an organization that serves Latino families across the state through a number of support services. One outcome of this new partnership included the Interim Division Director and Chief Innovation Officer speaking at the annual Latino Summit in November 2018 – an event that engages Latino leadership from around the state. The Summit was hosted by Ser Familia and the Latino Community Fund. We will continue to build on these relationships in calendar year 2019.

As part of the strategic partnership work, the Office of Innovation has begun reaching out to district, regional and county DFCS leadership to support them and build on their capacity to establish local partnerships and increase community partners. This work will continue to be expanded in 2019.

It worked with Georgia State University School of Social Work in providing internships to second-year graduate students pursuing a master’s degree in social work. And it partnered with Voices for Georgia’s Children, Inc. to initiate a statewide campaign focused on the recruitment, retention and support of foster parents and kin caregivers. Called Children Need Amazing Parents (CHAMPS), the national effort is affiliated with the Annie E. Casey Foundation with support from several national organizations.

For the past year, the Division has collaborated with Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta’s Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children on the continued implementation of the Medical Provider Network. The Medical Provider Network is a pilot project in 27 counties that allows frontline case managers to have access to specialized medical expertise (including an exam) in cases where the determination of abuse is unclear. As this project is now ready to be officially transferred to another unit within the Division, the Safety Services Section will assume responsibility for the maintenance and expansion of the Medical Provider Network in January 2019.

BRIGHT SPOTS

SECRET SANTA PROGRAM: SNOW DOESN'T STOP SANTA

At the end of 2017, the Division was gearing up for its annual Secret Santa program, which provides up to three Christmas gifts for every child in foster care. This effort requires months of planning and coordination and is heavily reliant on the generous donations of everyday Georgians, foundations and corporate sponsors.

Last year, the Division set and exceeded a record goal: to provide gifts for more than 9,100 children. The ambitious program was on track until an unusual December snowfall cancelled several Wal-Mart shopping events, leaving nearly 2,000 children's Christmas wish lists unfulfilled.

DFCS, along with its partners, organized a call to action, and the response was overwhelming. In only four days, the public raised more than \$265,000 –

exceeding the Division's goal. The 2017 drive was the largest collection of gifts in the program's 27-year history, with a total of about \$1.5 million in purchased gifts and monetary donations. Georgians supported the program through in-kind donations of gifts to fulfill individual children's wish lists and through nearly 2,450 individual online donations.

Clark Howard, host of the WSB-AM/WSB-FM's The Clark Howard show, said, "I am grateful and stunned. I was amazed at the enormous response Sunday, our largest ever single donation day, but at the same time, I was deflated knowing that we finished Sunday with 2,000 of Georgia' foster children having the prospect of no gifts to open on Christmas morning. But our listeners responded! Their incredibly generous cash donations have closed the gap, and now more than 9,100 children will have their Christmas wishes fulfilled."



Secret Santa
PROGRAM

presented by
CLARK HOWARD

Help provide a happy holiday season to the more than **9,000** children in foster care in Georgia. Donate a gift today!

Visit **dhs.ga.gov** for more info.



PARTNERSHIP PARENTING: CREATING A NEW EXTENDED FAMILY

Bethany's three children came into foster care in May 2015, and her two daughters were placed in Christy's foster home. Christy was a special force in Bethany's life and supported her 100 percent as she worked tirelessly to get her life in order so, ultimately, she could be reunited with her children.

Christy kept in constant contact with Bethany – which is not always common in a foster parent-birth parent relationship – and was a friend and cheerleader to the struggling mother.

On October 7, 2016, once all safety threats were removed and it was no longer contrary to the welfare of the children to be placed with their mother, Bethany regained custody of her children. She maintained her friendship with Christy, who supported and advocated for her throughout the process. In October 2017, Bethany successfully graduated from family treatment court and celebrated the success of not only completing the program but being reunified with her children. Christy remains a major part of the children's lives.

In October of this year, Christy got married, and Bethany's girls were by her side as her flower girls. This relationship is a prime example of partnership parenting and how the Division can engage its foster parents to be an extra layer of support to families in need as they work toward stability.





DFCS EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

In early 2018, then-DHS Commissioner Robyn Crittenden honored three members of the DFCS family for their excellence in service.



Mandy Gravitt, Region 1 Foster Care Case Manager, was awarded the Excellence in Innovation Award for her exceptional problem-solving skills and for the development and implementation of a user-friendly tool to assist case managers in the field.

Mary Havick, Region 5 Director (current District North Director), was awarded the Outstanding Organizational Leadership Award for her exceptional guidance and engagement in her work with Home in 5. Home in 5 is an effort focused on keeping children in foster care in their home county and region, as this lessens the trauma they experience when entering foster care.

Tracey McMahon, Region 7 C3 Coordinator, was awarded the Positive Impact Award for her dedication to the Department and community for her work in creating the organization Adventure Bags. Adventure Bags provides necessities to children when they come into foster care.

NEW SUPERVISOR MENTOR PROGRAM AIMS TO STABILIZE WORKFORCE

The Division's Education and Training Services arm launched a Supervisor Mentor Program in early 2018 to focus on specific functions of supervision by using measurable processes and tools to work with child welfare supervisors. A total of 23 veteran workers were hired and assigned to mentor supervisors in the counties of their assigned region. New supervisors are the priority group for receiving mentors and will be coached by their mentor for several weeks as they carry out their day-to-day functions. This program was supported by Governor Nathan Deal and the General Assembly for FY 2018.

As part of the Division's reform effort – the Blueprint for Change – building a strong, competent workforce is high on the agency's priority list. The Supervisor Mentor Program allows veteran workers the chance to pour into and provide guidance to less-seasoned workers who may be first-time managers. The hope is for this program to help arrest turnover of case managers on the frontlines by ensuring that they have supportive managers to guide them through the highs and lows of their jobs.

Supervisor Mentor Program

The Education and Training Services Section (ETS) is pleased to announce the Child Welfare Supervisor Mentor Program. A total of 23 mentors will be assigned to mentor supervisors in the counties of their assigned DFCS District.

What exactly is a Child Welfare Supervisor Mentor?

While career mentoring is certainly not a new idea or process, this program is designed specifically for child welfare supervisors to meet their unique needs. Mentors will coach supervisors over a 2-3 week period as they carry out their day-to-day functions. Our goal is to build strong supervisory capacity in the four main areas of quality supervision: Administrative, Supportive, Educative and Technology.

The mentor program will focus on these specific functions of supervision by utilizing measurable processes and tools to work with supervisors:

Managing
Engaging
Navigating
Technology
Organizational Leading
Relationships

ETS anticipates launching the mentor program in February 2018

Mentors will mentor supervisors in their respective counties where they will provide shoulder-to-shoulder support in the supervisors' everyday functions.

New supervisors will be the priority group for receiving mentors.

Child welfare supervisors are the cornerstone for quality child welfare practices and their jobs are complex. In Georgia, our approach is to strengthen the foundation of frontline supervision which will result in a stable and robust workforce.



