



# THE DFCS INSIDER



# THE DFCS INSIDER DECEMBER 2011



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# THE DFCS INSIDER

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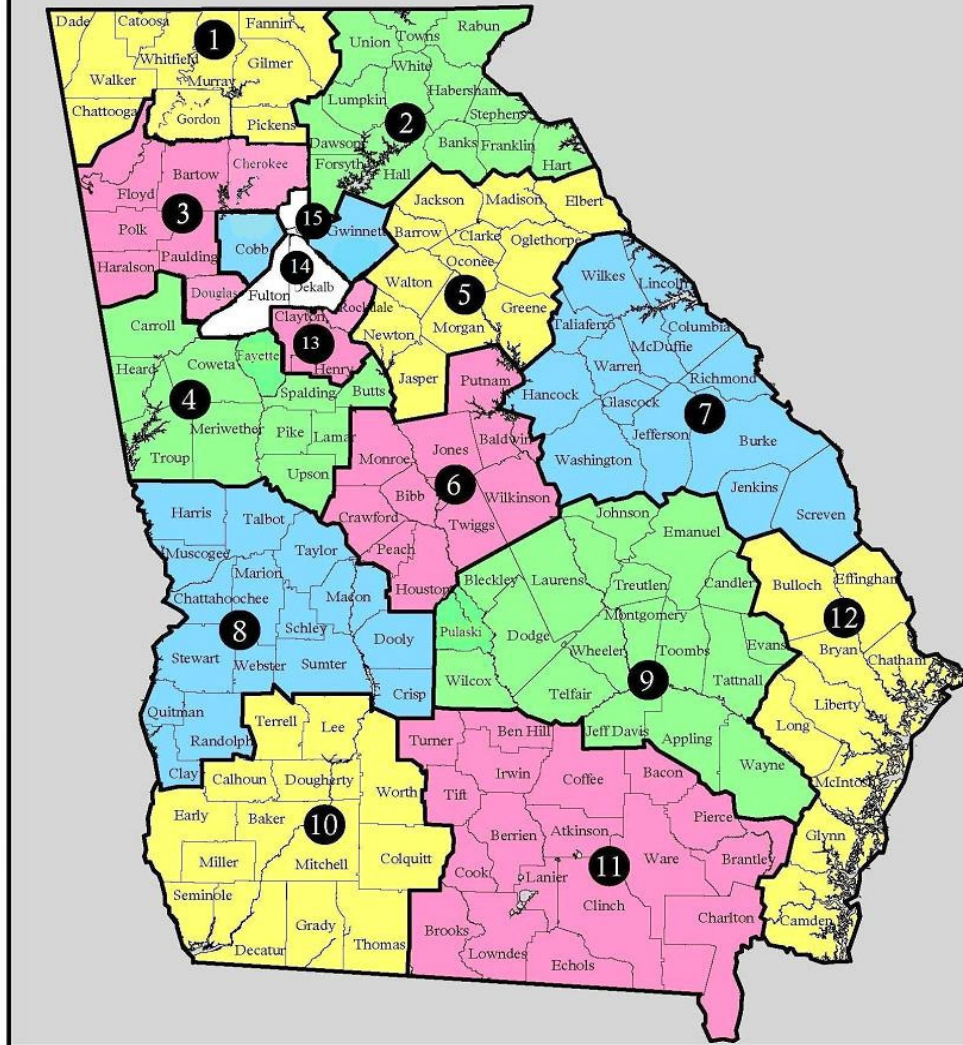
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## NEW REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

### DFCS Regions



#### Region 1: Jeffrey Lukich

Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, Pickens, Walker, Whitfield

#### Region 2: Marilyn Dixon

Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White

#### Region 3: Ross Collins

Bartow, Cherokee, Douglas, Floyd, Haralson, Paulding, Polk

#### Region 4: Lon Roberts

Butts, Carroll, Coweta, Fayette, Heard, Lamar, Meriwether, Pike, Spalding, Troup, Upson

#### Region 5: Mary Havick

Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Walton

#### Region 6: Bob Brown

Baldwin, Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Monroe, Peach, Putnam, Twiggs, Wilkinson

#### Region 7: Carolyn Christopher

Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Jenkins, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Screven, Taliaferro, Warren, Washington, Wilkes

#### Region 8: Margaretha Morris

Chattahoochee, Clay, Crisp, Dooly, Harris, Macon, Marion, Muscogee, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Webster

#### Region 9: Stacey Barfield

Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Pulaski, Tattall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, Wilcox

#### Region 10: Sherry Bailey

Baker, Calhoun, Colquitt, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, Worth

#### Region 11: Vicki Townsend

Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, Ware

#### Region 12: Vicky Riggins

Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh

#### Region 13: Cathy Ratti

Clayton, Henry, Rockdale

#### Region 14: Glenda McMillan

DeKalb, Fulton

#### Region 15: Keith Bostick

Gwinnett, Cobb



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

### SIMPLY BEING THERE

I have developed a habit of looking through the Sunday paper, focusing on the abundance of merchant flyers; I am especially fond of Best Buy. I look through the flyers and find myself longing to have some of the new and better advertised items. I am envious of people who can buy new big screen plasma entertainment centers complete with in-theatre audio components. I suppose it is human nature to want to accumulate things, especially shiny new things.

It is my belief that no material item, no matter how expensive or luxurious, has ever added meaning or increased the capacity for love in a person's life. Growing up on my grandparents' farm I can remember using the pump in the kitchen to get water, making my way in the cold to the old wood outhouse, and eating food almost exclusively picked from the garden, butchered from the pasture, and hunted or fished in the nearby countryside. There was nothing new and shiny anywhere to be found. Yet, I do not ever remember feeling unloved or poor. Back then, my days were spent with family and friends. Many nights were highlighted with listening to the Cincinnati Reds on WLW radio. The simple things surrounded me and not only sustained me but helped me to grow.

A few years ago I went on a nine day medical mission trip to a small village in Venezuela. This was my third trip of this nature. Each time I was taken aback at how the simple things in life matter most. I awoke at 5am every morning in the guarded compound where the clinic was set up, gazing out at the gate and to see a line of villagers forming prompting me to contemplate the old saying, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." The majority of the line was comprised of women carrying small babies while surrounded by children. These people patiently stood in line, sometimes for more than four hours in temperatures upwards of ninety-seven degrees, waiting to see a nurse, a visit that would span perhaps twenty minutes. Post visit, volunteers provided medications and vitamins in accord with the nurse's diagnosis, usually consisting of Tylenol, an antibiotic, and medication for parasites. Imagine waiting in these conditions for what some might consider such a minimal return. During the week I spent in Venezuela we saw over 1,400 people and no one complained about the waiting conditions or the meager amount of help we were able to provide. On the contrary, almost every volunteer was thanked with a smile.

Here at the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), we are blessed to be able to provide the families and youth we serve with more than just a meager amount of medical assistance. But, it is important to remember that no matter how many things or experiences DFCS is able to provide, none are more important than providing a sense of family and belonging. My grandparents provided me with a sense of self and belonging through their presence. In Venezuela, the twenty-three member mission team felt overwhelmed by the needs of the many villagers who sought assistance, yet we were constantly reminded by these same villagers that it was our presence that mattered most. At DFCS it is not only our mission, but also our obligation to create a sense of family and belonging with the youth and families we serve.

I hope each of you find time this holiday season to be with those you love, and to create a sense of family and belonging with those whose lives you touch. **Happy Holidays!**

*Ron Scroggy*



## COMMON POINT OF ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES



Georgia COMPASS is a web-based application that serves as a single point of access for customers to apply for, renew, and make changes to Food Stamp, Medicaid, TANF, and Child Care benefits. COMPASS is designed to provide user-friendly access and remove barriers customers may encounter when seeking help from local county Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) offices. COMPASS receives eligibility-related data from the customer and submits the application, renewal, or change electronically.

The application component of COMPASS became available for the Food Stamp program in November 2009. Since that time, the number of Food Stamp applications submitted electronically has grown steadily, with approximately 50,000 applications submitted through COMPASS in September 2011. Customers can screen for potential eligibility prior to completing and submitting an application. Child Care applications became available online October 2010, and the ability to apply for other program benefits through COMPASS will be added in 2012.

DFCS Regions Ten (10) and Sixteen (16) were pilot sites for the *Renew My Benefits* component which launched June 2011. These sites provided valuable information as to what did and did not work. On August 22, 2011, *Renew My Benefits* became available statewide for all programs, giving customers the ability to submit their request for renewal online. Since August 22, 2011, more than 142,000 renewals have been submitted through COMPASS.

On the fifteenth (15<sup>th</sup>) of each month, notices are generated for mailing to customers who are due for renewal in the upcoming month, instructing them to go to [www.compass.ga.gov](http://www.compass.ga.gov). Customers must first create a MyCOMPASS account with a client identification number which is included on the notice. Customers must also create a unique user identification and password in order to submit a renewal online.

Paper renewal forms are not included with the notice but continue to be available to those who do not have access to a computer or who do not want to submit a renewal electronically. Paper renewal forms can be obtained from local DFCS offices or by calling the COMPASS Support Center at 1-888-295-1769.

A temporary COMPASS Support Center became operational on August 22, 2011, to respond to requests for paper forms and to provide technical support to customers in creating MyCOMPASS accounts and setting up user identifications and passwords. The COMPASS Support Center will be integrated as a subset of the Customer Contact Center effective November 1, 2011, with full-time staff responding to COMPASS inquiries.

Efforts are under way to develop a network of community partners who will help increase access to COMPASS by providing customers with additional computer resources. Community partners will also be available to assist customers with the online application and renewal processes.

Diane Simms





## CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

More than three years ago Shelley Cyphers, Director for the Office of Quality Management (OQM), began a discussion with staff about the need for a continuous quality improvement process for the state of Georgia that included both the Office of Family Independence and Social Services. That vision has evolved over the years bringing the OQM closer to fulfilling a long term goal which will move the older and outdated top-down Quality Improvement Planning concept to a front-line, field driven process. This move will bring about the ongoing improvement of outcomes and services for all individuals who receive services from the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services. The greatest power, and often times the best ideas, are fostered among those who do the work, not those who oversee it.

Statewide Social Services Regional Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) teams are currently in various stages of formation and implementation. Regional Directors tapped staff with specific leadership qualities to serve as facilitators for home CQI teams. These teams consist of regional staff from all levels that are expected to act as change agents and culture bearers for improvement. The Education and Training Section collaborated with the OQM on the development of this project, and provided facilitators with training in Performance Consulting and facilitation skills. The



Performance Consulting Model provides a framework for developing behaviorally based practices for staff.

Each region will target well-being based outcomes for the first year; however, any issues deemed important to improving the work of protecting Georgia's children can be addressed. The brilliance of such a process is that resulting action plans are tailored to fit the diverse and specific needs of each region.

The OQM CQI Unit provides oversight, tracking, training, and coordinating of this statewide effort. Team facilitators participate in monthly conference calls and quarterly face-to-face meetings led by the Unit Manager. These group activities are fertile ground for the sharing and supporting of positive growth. The exchange of information and the examination of techniques and ideas for building successful practice-based models occur in these settings. Facilitators from those regions most successfully entrenched in the building process have opened their doors allowing others to observe their team in action. This collaborative propels regional CQI teams to drive practice improvements, resulting in better outcomes for Georgia's children and families.

*Mary Franklin Barmore*

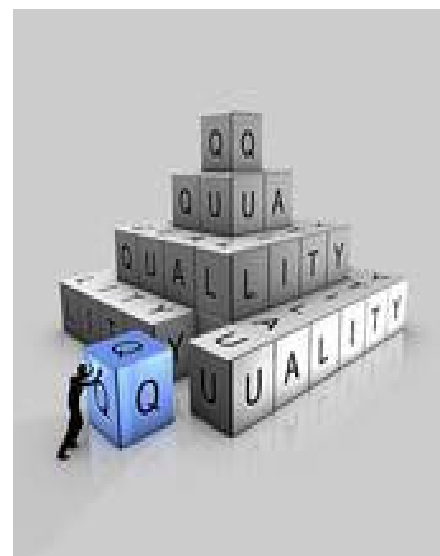
## OFFICE OF FAMILY INDEPENDENCE QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

The Office of Family Independence Quality Assurance Unit conducts reviews of Food Stamps and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) based on criteria provided by the federal management evaluation process which has its foundation in national trends. Trends for Federal Fiscal Year 2012 continue to include program access (initial certifications, denials, terminations, and re-certifications), error prone cases, claims, and Electronic Benefit Transfers. Additionally, the review includes civil rights, voter registration, TANF mandatory forms, and employment services.

The review process offers a chance for Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) regions to assess their status and

also allows for the sharing of best practices both internal and external to each region. The review process provides an opportunity for DFCS to compare its compliance with federal and state policies and procedures, and helps identify trends for the regions. These times of review should be viewed as learning opportunities as DFCS continues to grow in the new business process.

DFCS must be dedicated to working as a team to make certain the citizens of Georgia who are in need receive accurate and timely benefits. As DFCS continues to grow, the focus remains on those whom we serve.



*Mary Franklin Barmore*



## DEKALB COUNTY QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT



The DeKalb County Quality Assurance (DCQA) Unit was created as a result of the *Kenny A. Consent Decree* and is comprised of a supervisor and four (4) veteran staff. Melissa Folds, DCQA Supervisor, joined the unit in April 2011. Ms. Folds hails from Carroll County where she supervised Quality Assurance (QA), Family Team Meetings, and Family Preservation; Ms. Folds also served as a case manager in both the Investigations and Family Preservation units in Carroll County and has been with the Department of Human Services (DHS) for ten (10) years, three (3) of which were spent as a private contractor. Lead Worker Gainelle Stewart, formerly of the DeKalb Adoptions Unit, joined in August 2006. Ms. Stewart has worked for DHS for nine (9) years. Don-Fiona Gould, also formerly of the DeKalb Adoptions Unit, joined the group in July 2008. Ms Gould has been with DHS for seven (7) years, six (6) of which were spent in DeKalb County. Anthony Bingham joined the unit in August 2008. Mr. Bingham came to DeKalb from the Fulton County Special Investigations Unit and has been with the DHS for nine (9) years, three (3) of those years spent in DeKalb County. Nikki Venisee joined the unit in August 2010. Ms. Venisee has a background in Child Protective Services (CPS) and has worked in Fulton, Rockdale, Hall, and Douglas counties; Ms. Venisee has also supervised an investigations unit.

The success of the DCQA unit is attributed to low turnover, over thirty-five (35) cumulative years of experience, and the wide variety of knowledge and skills inherent in this group. Each month the DCQA Unit reviews one hundred percent (100%) of Placement/Permanency documentation and provides in person feedback and coaching to help improve the overall quality of documentation. The unit also completes a number of targeted and/or Field Operations Review Guides (FORGs) for CPS each month, again providing the necessary feedback and coaching aimed at the overall improvement of quality documentation. Subsequently, targeted review tools are developed utilizing feedback provided by the Program Evaluation and Analysis Section in response to the Child and Family Service Review (CFSR). The utilization of this information has created the opportunity to focus on areas needing improvement while building capacity.

The Hopeful Review completed in August 2011 resulted in marked improvement in many of the CFSR Outcomes for DeKalb County; it must be noted that this improvement was the direct result of team effort by case managers, frontline supervisors, administrators, administration, and the DCQA Unit. The preparation for this review included a three-tier case review process that commenced with the DCQA Unit completing FORG reviews on each sample case, ensuring that all requested corrections/enhancements were tracked until completed. The DCQA Unit has plans to resume semi-monthly in-house training on trends noted in the review process with hopes that this will foster a continuous improvement in CFSR scores and the overall ability to meet the *Kenny A. consent decree* mandates.



Mable Gibson

**From left to right:** Nikki Venisee, Don-Fiona Gould, Melissa Folds, Gainelle Stewart, Anthony Bingham

## 2012 DFCS STATEWIDE MEETINGS



Month / Date	Type of Meeting	Who Should Attend
January 10 January 19	Regional Director Meeting Leadership Meeting	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
February 8-9 February 14 February 15 February 16-17	Service FPS Meeting Regional Director Meeting OFI GROW Meeting Supervisor Summit (No CSS)	Service FPSs and others Regional Directors RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others Front Line Supervisors
March 13 March 22 – <b>Tentative Meeting</b>	Regional Director Meeting Leadership Meeting	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
April 10 April 25 April 26 * 4 <sup>th</sup> week of the month	Regional Director Meeting OFI GROW Child Safety Symposium	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others RDs, CDs, and others (pursuant to topic)
May 8 May 9-10 May 16 * On Wednesday	Regional Director Meeting Service FPS Meeting Leadership Meeting	Regional Directors Service FPSs and others RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
June 20 June 21 – <b>Tentative Meeting</b>	OFI GROW Child Safety Symposium	RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others RDs, CDs, and others (pursuant to topic)
July 10 July 19 – <b>Tentative Meeting</b>	Regional Director Meeting Leadership Meeting	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
August 8-9 August 14 August 15 August 16	Service FPS Meeting Regional Director Meeting OFI GROW Child Safety Symposium	Service FPSs and others Regional Directors RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others RDs, CDs, and others (pursuant to topic)
September 11 September 20	Regional Director Meeting Leadership Meeting	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
October 9 October 17 October 18	Regional Director Meeting OFI GROW Child Safety Symposium	Regional Directors RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others RDs, CDs, and others (pursuant to topic)
November 15 – <b>Tentative Meeting</b>	Leadership Meeting	RDs, CDs, invited SO staff
December 4 December 5-6 December 5 * Moved to 1 <sup>st</sup> week of Month due to holiday December 6 – <b>Tentative Meeting</b>	Regional Director Meeting Service FPS Meeting OFI GROW Child Safety Symposium	Regional Directors Service FPSs and others RDs, CDs, Regional Managers and others RDs, CDs, and others (pursuant to topic)

### Meeting Locations:

All OFI GROW and Child Safety Symposiums will be held at the Methodist Home for Children and Youth in Macon, GA. / All Regional Directors meetings will be held at the DHS Training Center on the 3rd floor. / All Service FPS meetings will be held at the Bibb County DFCS Office in the 3rd floor training room.

### Note:

Tentative meetings dependent on funding; please schedule accordingly. / Attendees may change pursuant to meeting subject matter.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 03, 2011

### Presidential Proclamation--National Domestic Violence Awareness Month

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH, 2011

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

#### A PROCLAMATION

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we recognize the significant achievements we have made in reducing domestic violence in America, and we recommit ourselves to the important work still before us. Despite tremendous progress, an average of three women in America die as a result of domestic violence each day. One in four women and one in thirteen men will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. These statistics are even more sobering when we consider that domestic violence often goes unreported.

The ramifications of domestic violence are staggering. Young women are among the most vulnerable, suffering the highest rates of intimate partner violence. Exposure to domestic violence puts our young men and women in danger of long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. Children who experience domestic violence are at a higher risk for failure in school, emotional disorders, and substance abuse, and are more likely to perpetuate the cycle of violence themselves later in life.

My Administration is working not only to curb domestic violence, but to bring it to an end. Last year, we announced an unprecedented coordinated strategy across Federal agencies to prevent and stop violence against women. We are empowering survivors to break the cycle of abuse with programs to help them become financially independent. We have prevented victims of domestic violence from being evicted or denied assisted housing after abuse. And we are promoting tools for better enforcement of protective orders, while helping survivors gain access to legal representation.

In addition, as part of the Affordable Care Act, the Department of Health and Human Services announced historic new guidelines that will ensure women receive preventive health services without additional cost, including domestic violence screening and counseling. The Affordable Care Act also ensures that insurance companies can no longer classify domestic violence as a pre-existing condition.

Last December, I reauthorized the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, giving communities life-saving tools to help identify and treat child abuse or neglect. It also supports shelters, service programs, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline, linking tens of thousands of victims every month to the resources needed to reach safety. I encourage victims, their loved ones, and concerned citizens to use this hotline for more information at 1-800-799-SAFE or visit [www.TheHotline.org](http://www.TheHotline.org).

This is not just a job for government; it is a job for all of us. Vice President Joe Biden's "1is2many" initiative reminds us that everyone has a part to play in ending violence against youth. By engaging men and women, mothers and fathers, and

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schools and universities in the fight, we can teach our children about healthy relationships. We are asking everyone to play an active role in preventing and ending domestic violence, by stepping up to stop violence when they see it. During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we recommit to making sure that no one suffers alone, and to assisting those who need help in reaching a safer tomorrow.



NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2011 as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I call on all Americans to speak out against domestic violence and support local efforts to assist victims of these crimes in finding the help and healing they need.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

BARACK OBAMA

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Test your knowledge of domestic violence by answering: FACT or FICTON

**FACT or FICTION? :** Alcohol Abuse causes domestic violence.

**FICTION:** *Although there is a correlation between alcohol, or other substance abuse, and battering, it does not cause violence. Batterers use drinking as one of many excuses for their violence and as a way to place the responsibility for their violence elsewhere. Stopping the abuser's drinking will not stop the violence. Battering and substance abuse need to be addressed separately.*

**FACT or FICTION? :** Domestic violence is only physical.

**FICTION:** *Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors that some individuals use to control an intimate partner. Domestic violence can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, stalking behaviors, and other controlling behaviors. Some victims may never receive physical bruising but instead are emotionally threatened or abused.*

**FACT or FICTION? :** Anger causes violence and Anger Management classes can resolve the violence of the batterer.

**FICTION:** *Violence is a learned behavior, whereas anger is a normal, human emotion. Violent actions are chosen. Batterer intervention programs provide more guidance towards the learned act of violence versus anger management classes that target triggers.*

**FACT OR FICTION? :** Victims put themselves in abusive relationships and can leave easily.

**FICTION:** *Women who leave an abuser are at a seventy-five percent (75%) greater risk of being killed by the abuser than those who stay. Other reasons victims remain in abusive relationships include financial dependence on a mate, limited job skills, or religious, cultural or family pressures. Additionally, abusers may have threatened to take the children, or further harm the victim.*

**FACT OR FICTION? :** When domestic violence is involved in the home, there is no way that a caretaker can have protective capacities.

**FICTION:** *A Protective Capacity is defined as a behavioral, cognitive and/or emotional characteristic that can be directly associated with a person's ability to care for and keep a child safe. Protective capacities in domestic violence situations include strategies the victim has used to stay safe and keep any children safe. Possible questions may be: Can you describe some of the ways you try to protect the children from physical or emotional harm? Have you ever had to instruct the children to leave for their own safety or yours? Diminished protective capacities occur when the children are intervening or are likely to intervene in physical violence, children are in close proximity to physical violence, the alleged batterer shows disregard for the children's safety or the child(ren) exhibits emotional or physical impairment in the ability to function as a result of domestic violence.*



**FACT:**

- In 2011, Georgia ranked sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) in the nation for domestic violence homicides of women by men. In 2010, Georgia ranked fifteenth (15<sup>th</sup>).
- **One in every four women (1:4)** will experience domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking in her lifetime. 1 in 4 (1:4) adolescents report incidents of verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a peer each year.

**HELP IS AVAILABLE:**

For Child Welfare cases involving domestic violence:

Contact Kim Washington, DFCS Collaborative Services at 404-657-3413, or [kiwashington@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:kiwashington@dhr.state.ga.us).

Services offered: technical assistance, consultation, improving local collaboration, and advanced training.

For Intimate Partner Violence training:

Contact DFCS Education and Training or Lee Biggar at 404 229-8409, or [lbiggar@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:lbiggar@dhr.state.ga.us).

Services offered: training to include assessment, safety planning, and case planning of domestic violence cases.

For families in crisis:

Contact The Georgia Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-33-HAVEN.

Services offered: Domestic violence services and shelter assistance for victims and their children.

For batterers services:

Contact The Family Violence Intervention Program at 404-657-3412.

Services offered: resources, information, and counseling groups for batterers.

*Kim Washington*



## NOVEMBER: NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) partnered with individuals, advocacy organizations, and private and community agencies in celebration of National Adoption Month. During November, DFCS took time to celebrate families impacted by adoption and brought awareness to the plight of the many children in foster care nationwide who are awaiting adoption. Additionally, DFCS and its partners collaborated to promote National Adoption Month via various events across the state such as a Heart Gallery Display at the Sam Nunn Federal building, Georgia's Sixteenth (16<sup>th</sup>) Annual Adoption Celebration in Metro Atlanta, and candlelight vigils in southeastern Georgia and Dalton; there were also many events held in individual counties such as festivals, church seminars, and appreciation dinners. Many counties had displays available at churches, libraries, and businesses detailing these events. For more information on future National Adoption Month events visit [www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/adoptions](http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/adoptions).

The highlight of the National Adoption Month was National Adoption Day, celebrated on Saturday, November 19, 2011. For the last eleven (11) years, courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies, and advocates worked together to find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care and to finalize those adoptions on that special day. The Fulton County Juvenile Court was a pioneer in embracing this celebration and hoped to finalize the adoptions of approximately twenty (20) children on National Adoption Day.

Coincidentally, November 19, 2011 was a significant date in that it marked the anniversary of the *Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA, Public Law 105-89)* signed into law by former President Clinton in 1997. ASFA was enacted in an attempt to clear obstacles in the foster care system that deterred the adoption of children with special needs. Considered a sweeping change to the United States adoption and foster care system, the law led to major changes in child welfare practice in Georgia. ASFA requires states to move toward the termination of parental rights for children who are in foster care fifteen (15) out of twenty-two (22) months and to aggressively recruit adoptive homes. In addition, ASFA offers financial incentives to states that improve their outcomes in adoptions. Prior to 1997, five hundred (500) to six hundred (600) children from Georgia's foster care system



were adopted annually. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2000, three (3) years after the passage of ASFA, the number of children adopted from Georgia's foster care system rose to 1,169; the number of adoptions continued to rise over the next decade, averaging 1,200 to 1,300 annually. In SFY 2010, approximately 1,220 children reached permanency through adoption. Today the number of children in foster care has declined from a one-time high of 16,000 children to approximately 8,100; of the approximately 8,100 children awaiting adoption, 1,111 have an actual goal of adoption. The goal of DFCS is to provide a successful outcome for each of the 1,111 children awaiting adoption, and DFCS remains diligent in its efforts to find permanent homes for children who are unable to return to their birth families and/or relatives. Committed to national standards of good practice in the field of adoptions, DFCS asserts that there is a home for every child, and vigorously recruits through efforts such as Wednesday's Child ([www.wednesdayschildga.com](http://www.wednesdayschildga.com)) and Its My Turn Now GA ([www.itsmyturnnowga.com](http://www.itsmyturnnowga.com)).

Permanency Unit staff members, including Regional Adoption Coordinators and Adoption Exchange Consultants, are always available to assist with the achievement of positive adoption outcomes; please call for questions, guidance, or assistance. Make it happen for Georgia's children!

Deborah Burrus



## SECRET SANTA PROGRAM

This year's Secret Santa Program will provide holiday gifts to over 4,600 children in foster care in approximately ninety-seven (97) Georgia counties. Each year the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) is honored to partner with other government entities, corporate sponsors, and private citizens, all of whom donate generously to this worthy cause.

As the result of last year's donations of cash, gift cards, and toys, DHS was able to serve seventy-two (72) Georgia counties, making last year's campaign extremely successful. This year, with the support of Clark Howard (WSB-Radio) and his on-air promotions, DHS is well on its way to another successful year. Mr. Howard began this Secret Santa program twenty-one (21) years ago, and with each subsequent year the program has grown exponentially in the number of counties and children served.

Several DHS employees volunteered to participate in this year's program by shopping at Wal-Mart for those special items on each child's carefully crafted wish list. The collaboration required between the public and private sectors

to complete the shopping for and distribution of gifts is phenomenal and results in a holiday filled with happiness and joy for both those who give and those who receive.



After all the wish-list items are collected, they are grouped and sorted. Each participating county is designated a station where a representative can retrieve the donated items that are then distributed to the children by county case managers.

This Secret Santa program is coordinated through the Office of the Director of Child Welfare Services, Kathy Herren. If anyone is interested in being "Santa's Helper" in upcoming years, please contact Donna Pettigrew-Jackson, Secret Santa Program Manager at [dkpjackson@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:dkpjackson@dhr.state.ga.us) or 404.657.5957. You are promised a joyful and heart-felt experience.

Happy Holidays!

*Donna Pettigrew-Jackson*



## MOVING FROM PROVIDER G TO PRACTICE MATTERS: PUBLIC/ PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS



Practice Matters is the new name for the public/private partnership meetings formerly known as Provider G. The moniker “Practice Matters” represents the two-fold purpose of the meeting: exploring best practices and addressing practice concerns. The change in name emphasizes the notion that it matters how child welfare is practiced and how programs and services are delivered. Best practices, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) policy, Office of residential Child Care (ORCC) and Room, Board, and Watchful Oversight minimum standards will be regular meeting topics. Practice Matters will also provide a standing forum for both DFCS and providers to discuss outstanding issues as well as collaboratively bring about resolutions. Clarity around expectations, roles, responsibilities and the exploration of best practices should provide a means by which both parties benefit, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for children and families.

Practice Matters meetings highlight data exploration related to meeting topics with the goal of making tangible practice improvements. Key areas of exploration for future meetings will include family centered practice, concurrent planning, youth engagement, family team meetings, Systems of Care, maltreatment in care, Significant Events (reportable events that occur in Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) and Child Caring Institutions (CCIs) although they may not rise to the level of

maltreatment), performance based contract scores, ORCC Investigations and other pertinent initiatives related to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.

*Practice Matters* is also the title of the bi-weekly newsletter published by the Office of Provider Management (OPM) with providers as the target audience. Using the same label for both meetings and newsletters provides continuity as well as reiterates partnership expectations: best practices and open dialogue.

Practice Matters meetings are an alliance among: OPM, ORCC, Federal Regulations and Data, CCIs, CPAs, providers, and Regional DFCS Directors. The meetings are held quarterly at the Southwest Fulton DFCS office; however, CCIs and CPAs meet separately to allow for time to focus on issues unique to each provider. All meetings occur on the same day.

The next Practice Matters meeting is scheduled for January 24, 2012, from 10am until Noon for CPAs, and 1pm until 3pm for CCIs; DFCS staff is encouraged to attend.

For more information, visit [www.gascore.com](http://www.gascore.com) or email [opmrequests@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:opmrequests@dhr.state.ga.us).

Dianne Yearby



Initial Practice Matters meeting held on October 18, 2011 at the Fulton County DFCS office located on Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway .



# INSIGHTS

*... making information available and usable to communicate results and influence change in programs, policies, and practices*

## **ASSESSMENT OF CASEWORKER FATHER ENGAGEMENT AFTER COMPLETION OF THE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH FATHERS TRAINING<sup>1</sup>**

### **CONTEXT**

Fathers play a critical role in the development and growth of their children. Far too frequently, however, fathers are a missing piece in a child's life. The critical importance of a father's involvement with his children is supported by research and is a current focus of the child welfare system. Skills and Strategies for Working with Fathers (SSWF) is a two (2) day training developed to assist case managers with identifying, locating, engaging and involving fathers in the child welfare case process. The course is designed to equip Social Services case managers and supervisors to work successfully with fathers in a wide range of family situations and structures.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions were drawn at the close of the evaluation of the SSWF training:

- SSWF training provided case managers with new information as well as familiar concepts related to engaging fathers.
- Case managers applied the information learned in SSWF training to everyday practice.
- The completion of SSWF training did not determine whether or not a caseworker made the requisite number of visits with fathers.
- Factors outside of the training influenced how learning was applied.
- The percent of foster care and family preservation family team meetings held with fathers for a four (4) month period was reviewed. Although results were inconsistent from month to month, overall there was an increase in the percent of family team meetings held with fathers.
- Barriers to engaging fathers encountered by case managers included lack of time and lack of services. Additionally, historical bias toward fathers was viewed as a barrier to quality father engagement; engagement efforts have primarily focused on the mother and until recently, father engagement has been ignored.
- Initially, systematic pre and post training activities and formalized support mechanisms were not in place to reinforce the concepts learned in SSWF training. However, the region in conjunction with the Education and Training Section have partnered to support father engagement training by developing ancillary training activities such as:
  - A task group to develop regional protocol for engaging fathers,
  - A father engagement specialist's development program, and
  - Father engagement performance expectations.
- In recent years, father engagement was targeted as a performance indicator; however, messaging about expectations and constants around quality father engagement did not lead to the development of methods and approaches that resulted in consistent region and agency wide impact. On the contrary, unintended consequences arose.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Training should continue to be a major vehicle for assuring that case managers have knowledge that supports outcomes and best practice interventions.

2. Transfer of training knowledge to the job should be supported by the organizational environment via:
  - Pre- and post- training activities,
  - Formalized practice activities after completion of training,
  - The time and opportunity to use skills learned in training,
  - The opportunity to talk with colleagues about new skills and the training experience,
  - Supervisor interventions that increase understanding of how training links to agency goals, and
  - Performance feedback related to training.
  
3. In addition to consistent messaging about quality father engagement, leadership and management staff should actively participate and support the development of methods and approaches that lead to consistent and successful achievement of quality father engagement.
  
4. Organizational acknowledgement that the transfer of knowledge and skills from training to the job is complex and affected by factors outside of training, such as individual attributes and organizational environment, is essential as a catalyst for organizational progress. By eliminating a false sense of expectation around training, the agency can move toward a comprehensive process that supports practice interventions by bridging training with the realities of our work force, support from the local offices, and organizational responsiveness.

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<sup>1</sup>For this study, Data Analysis, Accountability, Research and Evaluation (DAARE) reviewed internal documents related to father engagement and training, examined literature on father engagement and linking child welfare training and outcomes, and conducted interviews with agency staff to gather information on agency practice, training, and messaging related to father engagement and training. The purpose of the evaluation was to understand the impact of training on father engagement in one Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) region.

*Janice Saturday*



## EPAC: PAVING AN EDUCATION PATHWAY FOR GEORGIA'S FOSTER YOUTH



Education inspires hope and can be a springboard toward a productive future! The newly formed Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation Unit (EPAC) is doing its part to help propel Georgia's foster youth toward a positive future through supporting educational stability and academic excellence. Youth who range in age from 5 to 17 are eligible to be referred to the EPAC unit to receive educational support services.

EPAC is fashioned under the auspices of a conceptual framework intended to develop and improve ways in which the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) engages children and families as well as Georgia's education system. EPAC encourages these agencies to work in a way that ensures youth in Georgia's foster care system receive a quality education while also reaping the benefits of the educational provisions of the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act* and the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

EPAC provides comprehensive educational support services, focusing on improving educational outcomes and academic achievement. Services provided include diagnostic educational assessments, tutoring, and coordination of local educational resources.

Counties that have youth in need of educational support and advocacy may refer them for EPAC services. For youth to receive these services, case managers must complete and submit the EPAC Student Referral/Enrollment Form. Once the form has been submitted, case managers will be contacted by a regional Education Support Monitor to begin the process of service provision. Contact information provided below includes the names and telephone numbers of individuals who comprise the EPAC unit. Give Georgia's foster youth an academic edge—contact EPAC!

Mary Mollay

### EPAC Staff Directory

**David Butler**, Program Manager

State Office: 404 657-5156 / 404 803-5250 or [dabutler@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:dabutler@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Kyle Berry**, Data Accountability Manager

State Office: 404 657-5122 / 404 617-2971 or [kyberry@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:kyberry@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Marilyn Peters**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 1 and 2: 706-632-2296 / 404-803-8196 or [mapeters1@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:mapeters1@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Christopher Jones**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 3 and 17: 404-657-0085 / 404-805-5601 or [cwjones@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:cwjones@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Corneil Montgomery**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 4 and 16 404-657-0088 / 404-895-6668 or [comontgomery@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:comontgomery@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Kell Fewox**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 5 and 7: 706-213-2001 x318 / 678-429-1045 or [kmfewox@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:kmfewox@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Jennifer Williams**, Education Support Monitor

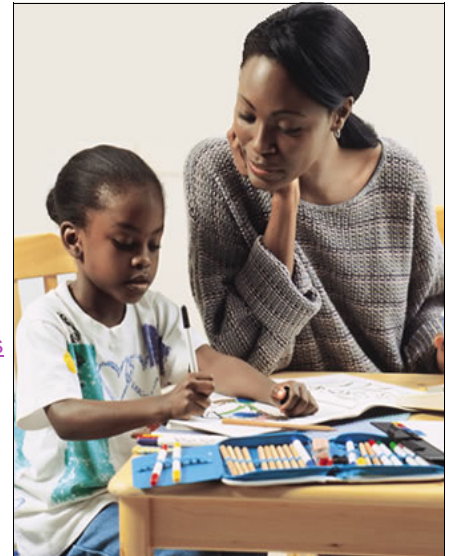
Regions: 6, 8, and 10: 404-576-7598 or [jlyoung1@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:jlyoung1@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Mary Mollay**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 9, 11, and 12: 404-617-4884 [mamollay@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:mamollay@dhr.state.ga.us)

**Suzette Ennis**, Education Support Monitor

Regions: 14 and 15: 404-657-0084 404-617-5645 or [suennis@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:suennis@dhr.state.ga.us)



# SPRINGBOARD GEORGIA

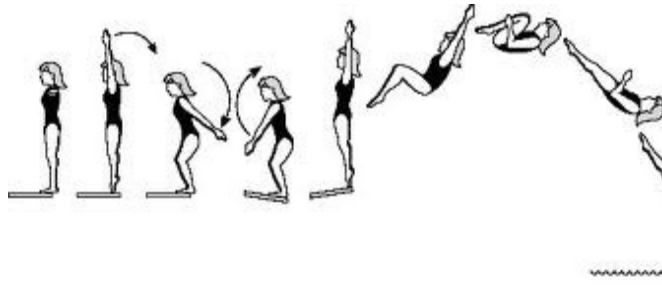


The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has partnered with the Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center (ACCWIC) and the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS) on a project titled *Springboard Georgia*. The goal of this project is to develop a state-of-the-art and safety-driven child welfare practice to incorporate full differential response.

The last thirty years has seen much evolution in national child welfare practice, moving from an incident-based approach to a safety approach. Georgia's DFCS Safety Response System will allow for the highest level of services to families, no matter the status of the case. Research has shown that a differential response model of child welfare provides measurable safety for children by strengthening families, a

Much of the current work of DFCS will remain unchanged, however, the incorporation of differential response will allow for several alternative responses to child protective services reports such as:

screen out, investigate, or provide support to the families; DFCS has attempted for several years to do the latter through diversion practice. The primary change in practice under the Springboard Georgia project will be related to diversion practice. Over the next several months, policy will be issued in an effort to standardize practices within diversion work allowing for all diversion cases to contain a safety assessment component. Subsequent to the issue of new policy, DFCS will conduct a comprehensive family functioning assessment that will initiate at intake, following a family's case to closure.



by-product of which results in families that are more engaged and supported by the agency and their community. This model of child welfare also furthers social worker job satisfaction.

Implementation of Georgia's Safety Response System will include training schedules, alterations to SHINES, communication to the field, as well as guidance and technical assistance. Implementation will occur in stages designated by geographic location, the determination of which is still in the process of being decided. At this point in time it appears that implementation will begin with Child Protective Services (CPS) intake policy, assignment of the CPS reports to the correct response track (investigations or family support), and investigative and family support case management practices. Be on the lookout for future updates on Springboard Georgia!

Lisa Lariscy



Atlantic Coast Child Welfare Implementation Center

