



>>> OPERATION NOT FORGOTTEN <<<



By *Martha Dukes*
DFCS CDNFSI Review
Team Manager

For the second time in two years, the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has partnered with the US Marshal Service in an effort to locate youth missing from foster care. "Operation Not Forgotten" is a multi-agency collaborative involving not only DFCS and the US Marshals Service but also includes the Georgia Bureau of Investigations, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the Georgia Attorney General's Office, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and numerous local law enforcement precincts. Additional supporting agencies specialized in working with victims of sex trafficking are also involved as they provide helpful follow up services to children who may have been the victim of human or sex trafficking, or for those who have additional needs upon their recovery.

Preparation for an operation like this happens well in advance, and multiple agencies worked tirelessly to ensure information about the identified missing children was accurate and up to date. Many of the children highlighted for this Operation and who were recovered, were in the custody of DFCS. In addition to the agencies listed above, family, friends and acquaintances were utilized to help recover and bring these children to safety. Children whose life circumstances have *See [OPERATION](#), Page 6*



Donald Washington, Director of the U.S. Marshals Service, giving his remarks on Operation Not Forgotten.

>>> OCA WEBINAR <<<

**COVID-19 and Students in Foster Care:
Expectations, Advocacy, and Special Needs**

Craig Goodmark is an education civil rights attorney and a specialist in special education law. On behalf of OCA, Craig Goodmark presented to 500 webinar attendees on updates and requirements related to the educational needs and rights of students in foster care while Georgia and the nation continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. With more than 700 registered participants, the webinar forum was able to allow only 500 to participate in the webinar live. In case you missed it, the webinar recording can be accessed [here](#) on the OCA website along with questions and answers, contact information, forms, and memorandum mentioned in the webinar. Thank you for attending OCA's webinar!

>>> YOUTH VOICE <<<

**Highlighting Voices of Young Professionals with
Lived Experience in Foster Care**

For NACC's 43rd National Child Welfare Law Virtual Conference, members of the National Foster Care Youth & Alumni Policy Council (young adults with lived experience in foster care) presented at the NACC Conference, focusing on youth voice and advocacy. The Council is involved from the community to national level in improving policy and practice to lead to better outcomes for children and youth served by the system. In light of the recent enactment of the Family First Prevention Services Act, the Council members shared their priorities on reforming the child welfare system.

Quality Legal Representation

Courtney Canova explained that quality legal representation should be strength-based, trauma informed, and involve youth engagement. Courtney Canova explained, "Recognize that youth have their own goals and ideas of how to *See [VOICE](#), Page 4*



Imani Watson

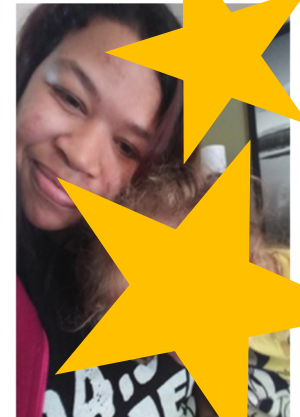
Celebrating Reunification MVPs!

After almost four years in foster care and being a part of the Cold Case Project, a daughter was reunited with her mother in Cobb County! Since 2016, the mother fought and worked endlessly to ensure she completed all her case plan goals—even in light of barriers and uncertainties along the way. The mother was always loving and attentive to her daughter. Despite the negative comments about the mother's past and doubts from others, the mother never gave up, even when a termination of her rights was being considered. The odds were stacked against this mom, but her perseverance helped her supporters believe in her and cheer her on.

DFCS Supervisor, Kelsey Presiozo, shared her pride for this mother and case manager Imani Watson stating, "[This work] is about being the cheerleader when someone needs it the most, the voice for those who are not able to speak for themselves yet, the support system for those that are struggling and the champion for our families when things get tough. I just cannot be hap-

pier for this family and I encourage everyone who sees this to use this as an example of stepping back and taking a fresh perspective on the families you are working with."

Kudos to the entire team, including case manager Imani Watson, supervisor Kelsey Presiozo, administrator Sharenda Robinson, and County Director LaSondra Howard-Boddie, and all the others who worked together to support this family towards achieving their goal of reunification!



Mother and Daughter

Taking the Cake for Athens-Oconee CASA's 30th Birthday!



Who took the cake to celebrate Athens-Oconee CASA's 30th birthday? Mary Barrett Yancey, Clarke and Oconee Counties DFCS Director, and Audrey Brannen, Care-giver Recruitment and Retention Unit (CRRU) Administrator for DFCS Region 5! They teamed up for a friendly competition to raise money for Athens-Oconee CASA's 30th birthday. Together, they raised over \$2,000! The donations made will help support CASA's ongoing advocacy efforts for children in foster care. Thank you for the fun and everyone's dedication to children in foster care!

Stop, Spot, and Support!

The Division of Family and Children Services created a "Stop, Spot, and Support" microsite as a resource for all mandated reporters to help recognize child abuse in virtual settings and further assist families during these uncertain times. As we continue to navigate the pandemic through a more virtual world, mandated reporters play an essential role in identifying and reporting suspected abuse and neglect.

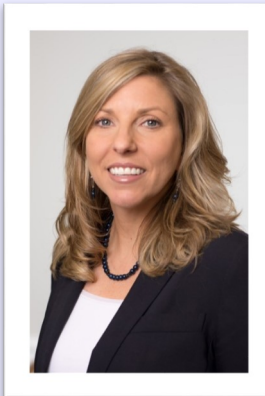
Child abuse reports are trending down nationwide as many children are spending less time outside the home, where most reporters see signs of abuse or neglect. Although students and teachers are separated physically, regular connection via virtual classrooms presents an opportunity for teachers to detect abuse.

While many have found creative ways to ease tensions, others are struggling to manage the stress and anxiety that comes with the current uncertainty. As school districts proceed with virtual learning, parents and educators have an opportunity to work together to recognize abuse in virtual environments. Click [here](#) to visit this great resource and please share with your networks!



Judicial Spotlight in the Virtual Legal World

For the past few months, courts throughout the state have made significant changes to the courtroom and the legal world to ensure timely and effective service to children and families. In the virtual legal world, judges have made many accommodations to allow all parties to a case an opportunity to be heard. OCA recently heard from some of Georgia's juvenile court judges about some of these accommodations—whether hearings are being held in person, virtually, or a hybrid of the two. These judges shared some of their tips and techniques for conducting timely hearings and ensuring due process; maintaining compliance with COVID-related restrictions and precautions; and their frustrations with technical and etiquette issues that accompany virtual hearings. A somewhat unexpected benefit of virtual hearings seems to be more parties connected to hearings and engaged in the proceedings. Cherokee County Juvenile Court Judges Jennifer L. Davis and John B. Sumner shared with us in more detail about how the courtroom has changed in light of the pandemic and insights that others may find beneficial.



Judge Jennifer L. Davis
Cherokee Co. Juvenile Court

How are you able to continue having meetings and hearings during the pandemic?

In Cherokee County, we are currently under Orders of judicial emergency by both the Georgia Supreme Court and a local Order of judicial emergency issued by our Chief Superior Court Judge, Hon. M. Ellen McElyea. Our local order limits live access to our building so we are handling the majority of our juvenile matters virtually via Zoom. There is a very strict process for any live hearings such as moving to a larger courtroom that is marked off for social distance, no more than ten people are allowed in the courtroom, all parties are required to wear masks and the courtroom is cleaned in between each live appearance. We have all of the parties remain in their vehicles, they are scheduled individual times for court and notified when to come into the building where their temperatures are checked, Covid questions are asked and they are processed through security. The safety of the children and families we serve is of the utmost importance and we try to do as much as we can virtually to prioritize the health needs of all of the parties.

See [DAVIS](#), Page 7



Judge John B. Sumner
Cherokee Co. Juvenile Court

What advice would you give to juvenile court judges (and their staff) on making sure cases are still heard to avoid a backlog of cases?

I have taken a three prong approach to try and prevent an avalanche of a back log of overlooked families and children: First, I maintained the court calendar, even if we can't provide in person hearings. This keeps the rhythm of our local collaborative and provides some normality. We have always had a rotating basis of hearing delinquency one week and dependency the following week. I maintained that calendar so cases were assigned actual court dates for initial review, judicial review, and permanencies. Based on current restrictions on large gatherings, we have not conducted arraignments, but have appointed counsel when requested and accepted admissions on cases when requested. Second, we created a spreadsheet of all pending juvenile court cases. That was very helpful in the initial first few months to stop us from free falling. We reviewed the spread sheet every week. We have now stopped that practice as I am comfortable with where we stand on the cases. Third, I hold a pretrial conference calendar call with

See [SUMNER](#), Page 8



VOICE, CONT'D...

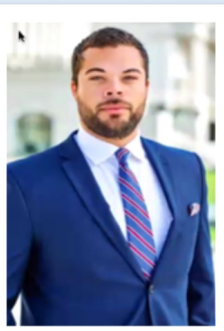


Courtney Canova

achieve them.” She shared the voice of Joshua Christian, a youth who experienced foster care in the state of Indiana, who shared this: “For example, I was lacking tools I need to be successful and given tools that were not relevant to both my medical diagnoses and education needs. If I had a legal representative to stand up for me in court, I feel my education journey would have been significantly different. As a young person, I was lingering around in care for almost 18 years because I did not have proper legal representation. If young people have proper legal representation, they would be more likely to have a plan that benefits them that goes with their permanency plan.”

Normalcy and Well-being

The Council recognizes that “the legal community makes a direct impact on normalcy and well-being for youth – not just by accessing services and resources but advocating for the quality of services for their clients.” Courtney explained that this normalcy and well-being can be achieved by providing visitation services (supporting lower levels of supervision when safe), access to technology, and access to extracurricular activities. She shared a collective voice of the Council: “We should be allowed to experience the same opportunities as our non-foster youth peers in the most normal, healthy, and safest method possible. We believe normalcy is a critical component to establishing well-being and normalcy for foster youth deserves a greater degree of consideration and legitimacy by policymakers, practitioners, caregivers, and other stakeholders of the child welfare system.”



David Samuel Hall

Quality Residential Services

David Samuel Hall stated that “child welfare agencies should be pressed to prove it is in the best interest [of the child] to be placed in a qualified residential treatment program.” David explained that child welfare professionals should “exhaust all efforts to find a placement that meets their needs”, “ensure all **See VOICE, Page 9**

#GaCASAConf

[This amazing video](#) highlighting the work of 3 CASA volunteers in Georgia was shared during Georgia CASA’s virtual conference held August 11-13, 2020. We found it extremely inspiring and impactful and we hope you do as well!

Thank you to Cindy Evers, Dr. Felicia Tillman, and Jeff Sprinkle (and all their colleagues!) for being a voice for children in foster care.



Cindy Evers, Tifton, Coastal Plain CASA



Dr. Felicia Tillman, Atlanta, Atlanta CASA



Jeff Sprinkle, Clayton, Northeast Georgia CASA



Our office will be closed on September 7th to observe this state holiday.



Building and Understanding Resilience

As highlighted by New York Times' Series on Resilience

The New York Times featured a series on resilience in troubled times highlighting what we can learn about it from history and personal experiences. The series can be accessed [here](#). One of the featured articles focused on the importance of relationships, especially those developed at an early age: "The most significant determinant of resilience — noted in nearly every review or study of resilience in the last 50 years — is the quality of our close personal relationships, especially with parents and primary caregivers. Early attachments to parents play a crucial, lifelong role in human adaptation." The article also highlighted shared characteristics of resilient individuals who have experienced a great deal of adversity and have come through it successfully:

- They have a positive, realistic outlook. They don't dwell on negative information and instead look for opportunities in bleak situations, striving to find the positive within the negative.
- They have a moral compass. Highly resilient people have a solid sense of what they consider right and wrong, and it tends to guide their decisions.
- They have a belief in something greater than themselves. This is often found through religious or spiritual practices. The community support that comes from being part of a religion also enhances resilience.
- They are altruistic; they have a concern for others and a degree of selflessness. They are often dedicated to causes they find meaningful and that give them a sense of purpose.
- They accept what they cannot change and focus energy on what they can change. Resilient people reappraise a difficult situation and look for meaningful opportunities within it.
- They have a mission, a meaning, a purpose. Feeling committed to a meaningful mission in life gives them courage and strength.
- They have a social support system, and they support others. Very few resilient people go it alone.



Speaker Series:
Conversations on Early Childhood
featuring

Dr. Rosemarie Truglio

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

2:00PM - 3:00PM EDT



Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students is hosting this free, virtual event where parents and caregivers can learn again with those at Sesame, and in turn, learn more with our children. Click [here](#) to register and learn about how Georgia can better learn, grow, and play with our kids!



OPERATION, CON'T...

brought them to a place in their lives where running away may initially seem like a way out, often find themselves becoming re-victimized and suffering additional trauma and/or abuse. Many of these children were located in the presence of illegal drugs, guns and violent criminals and some of these children expressed their thanks to officials for finding them.

20 children in DFCS custody were recovered between August 3rd and August 14th, however this is only a small portion of the children in custody who are identified as missing or on runaway status from their foster care placements. At any point in time, DFCS averages approximately 150 children across the state of Georgia who are actively on runaway status and has policies and practices to locate them and support them upon their return. Caring about their well-being, it is imperative that all people in these children's lives work together to try and find them so their safety can be obtained.

The Division of Family and Children Services greatly appreciates the collaborative efforts made to locate these youth and the ongoing efforts being made to pursue criminal charges to those who brought harm to them. Working hand in hand with the agents involved in this operation, we were able to see first-hand the compassion and commitment these agents have who are working to locate these youth. They often put themselves in harm's way to make sure these kids were found.



Ivanka Trump @IvankaTr... · 1d
The U.S. Marshals Service found 39 missing children in Georgia over two weeks in a mission known as "Operation Not Forgotten."

God bless these children and the officers that rescued them.



U.S. Marshals say they found 39 missing children in Georgia...
cbsnews.com

Ivanka Trump's tweet highlighting this operation.

One person **can make a difference**, if you see something, say something, do something!

For more information on the US Marshal Service and photos of this specific operation go to:

<http://www.usmarshals.gov>

<https://www.flickr.com/gp/usmarshals/F3210D>

GBI Launches H.E.A.T. Unit to Combat Human Trafficking

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation announced a new unit called "Human Exploitation and Trafficking" or "HEAT" unit as a new effort to combat human trafficking. "You will not sell human beings in the State of Georgia. We are committed to ending the scourge of modern-day slavery and we're committed to ending it now," said GBI Director Vic Reynolds.

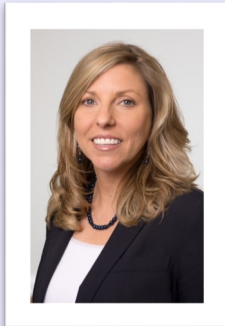


GBI Director Vic Reynolds announces new HEAT Unit. Photo credit: GBI

The HEAT unit will focus on enforcement efforts of commercial sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and rescuing adult trafficking victims. The new unit will be based out of GBI's headquarters in DeKalb County but will investigate cases throughout the state. GBI Director Reynolds was joined by Governor Brian Kemp, First Lady Marty Kemp, Attorney General Chris Carr, and others. "We've made huge strides in the fight against human trafficking in Georgia, but as you know, there is still much work to be done and we are not letting up," said Governor Kemp. Click [here](#) for the full announcement.



DAVIS, CONT'D...



Judge Jennifer L. Davis

Have you done virtual meetings and hearings prior to the pandemic? If not, what barriers or challenges did you experience in learning the virtual world and having your cases navigate through a virtual platform?

Honestly, prior to the pandemic, we never handled ANY matters virtually so there were a lot of changes that we had to make in our court to accommodate the new way of conducting business safely. Our county was very supportive in providing updates and added strength to our internet, new mobile equipment, VPN access and electronic licenses and permissions to our staff to effectuate the new format. It has been a learning curve for all of us but I do see the benefits of virtual communication and believe it will forever be part of our future in Juvenile Court.

How did you overcome those barriers or challenges?

Technology can be frustrating and we work to overcome barriers daily. Each day presents a new challenge and a new issue to address. Together, we have attended trainings, searched for patience and found education in trial and error support from the other levels of the court in our building. We are all in this together and work together to support each other so that we can serve our community to the best of our ability under unprecedented circumstances.

What advice would you give to juvenile court judges (and their staff) on making sure your cases are still heard (whether in-person or virtual) to avoid a backlog of cases?

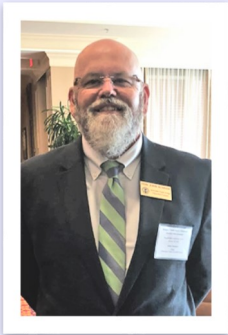
We are fortunate to have a great dialog with our local DFCS office, the lawyers that serve in juvenile court, our Guardian ad Litem, and CASAs so we have seen everyone rally to work together to support our families and the children in care. Our lawyers have been amazing, they have been accessible on weekends, nights and evenings to discuss cases. We have essentially removed the backlog by teamwork. We provide our calendars ahead of time so the parties can begin communicating and our stakeholder's have worked to ensure that the children's needs are being met, services are being provided to the children and their parents. Virtual meetings, therapy, and visits have been key to monitoring the progress for our families. Our DFCS office and our SAAGs have bent over backwards to accommodate the new needs of our families and submit orders in timely fashion to maintain funding and support where needed. My best advice is to be flexible and accessible. Each case has its own barriers and struggles to obtain permanency for the children; take the time to look at each matter and problem solve together to find solutions.

What other advice would you give to those who are involved in the meetings/hearings (whether that's DFCS staff, children, families, attorneys, etc.)?

I suppose the best advice I could give to all parties involved in these cases is to remain in communication with each other. We really want to address each case and each child's needs. We want to be available to support our families and if there are problems, address them as quickly as possible. We are worried about the state of our children and their families' safety and health. We do not want to delay a return of custody or delay a change in permanency because of the current state of Covid-19. We do want to find new and innovative ways to address the needs of these cases to the best of our ability so if you have a new idea or suggestion for your courts, make it. Most of us are open to learning new ways to serve our families and we are grateful to have all available options when navigating this new way of operating court.



SUMNER, CONT'D...



Judge John B. Sumner

the attorneys and CASA coordinators on Tuesday afternoon before my dependency week. Many of the cases are worked out on a consent or are continued for specific actions to be taken. Those that are still pending are then set the following week for remote hearings on a regularly scheduled hearing date. This procedure has worked great for my cases. We are able to ensure the work is being done and hearings are being provided when needed. The calendar call may take over an hour, but a lot of work is done for the families as well as identifying issues that the court may need to address with a hearing.

What other advice would you give to those who are involved in the meetings/hearings (whether that's DFCS staff, children, families, attorneys, etc.)?

First and foremost, explain to the participants that we are in a pandemic and doing the best we can. We want to ensure due process is met and that we are able to meet our basic function of a court system. We may be using remote technology, but it is still a court hearing and basic decorum is expected. Just recently, I gently reminded a young man to remove his hat although he was sitting in a group home over 200 miles away from me in Albany. I make it a point to explain the process and put everyone at ease over conducting court remotely. I also ensure they understand it is a court hearing. I wear my robe and the attorneys know I expect decorum.

Be patient, listen to people's legitimate frustrations with court via remote technology, and take a moment to make an accommodation for a weak wifi signal or other practical issues that comes up in remote hearings. People want to be reassured that the process is authentic and they are having a fair day in court. Once everyone is at ease, I find everyone accepts the process and fully participates. It is up to the court to take the lead in setting the ground rules for the remote hearing.

Be sure to see if there are any objections to a remote hearing. If I conduct the hearing over objection, I allow the motion to be reargued if something occurred during the trial that could undermine the proceedings, such as a witness not looking at the screen or could not be heard. I have had witnesses or litigants who can verbally participate but for technical problems cannot be seen. I stop the hearing at that point since I feel it is mandatory to be able to see whoever is testifying.

Be patient and flexible. Twice, I have had computer mics stop working. In each case, the witness called an attorney on the Zoom who held the phone to her computer mic so the person could be heard while on our zoom. During Zoom hearings I have had the following occur: a delivery man continuing to knock on a home door, lawn mowers and leaf blowers in the background, fighting cats behind an attorney, barking dogs, and more barking dogs, an adorable puppy, an attorney who had to be excused to turn off her dishwasher, a smoke alarm battery going off in the background, a litigant who face-timed in for the hearing and walked around his apartment complex during the hearing, and more lagging signals than I want to count. Through all of this and with a lot of patience we have been able to hear many cases and keep some order to our caseload. The goal is to ensure due process with a sufficient opportunity to be heard and participate in a meaningful way. If you take the time and work through the practical issues and maintain decorum, we can meet our essential court functions and see that families and children are served.

Lengthy hearings can be a challenge. I have had several remote hearings last for hours and a few all day hearings. I find that long hearings can be exhausting. I am not sure if it is due to processing the information with everyone on a video screen or the fact that we are covering more information. Either way, you need to pace See [SUMNER, Page 12](#)



Tips for Preparing Youth for Virtual Hearings

The National Association of Counsel for Children held a webinar focused on meaningful youth engagement in a virtual legal world. Below are some highlights from the webinar and a source shared by NACC. The American Bar Association also published resources on [privacy considerations for remote client conversations](#) and on [privacy and confidentiality for virtual hearings](#). Click [here](#) for more resources from the webinar.

1. Make sure the youth has access to technology and the internet.

- ⇒ Do they have access to a computer or phone with video feature and internet/WiFi? Do they have enough data to participate in the hearing and meet their other communications needs?
- ⇒ Do they know how to use the equipment?
- ⇒ Is there a back-up plan, like phone access, if there are technical difficulties?
- ⇒ Is there a need for an interpreter?

3. Explain the platform and basics of how it works.

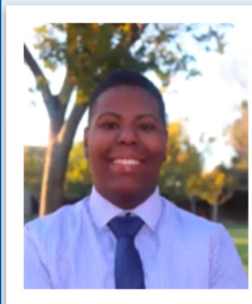
- ⇒ Does the youth know how to mute and unmute?
- ⇒ Does the youth understand what can be seen when on camera?
- ⇒ Does the youth understand who will be part of the hearing and can hear what he or she says?
- ⇒ Does the youth understand that any chatting you do through the platform may not be private?

3. Make sure the youth has a place where he or she can privately participate in the hearing.

- ⇒ What arrangements have been made to ensure that the youth can participate without the presence of a caregiver or staff so they can speak freely?
- ⇒ What arrangements have been made to ensure that the youth has a quiet space that is private?

VOICE, CONT'D...

young people, as required by law, are placed in the least restrictive and most-family like environment”, and “ensure the youth has been assessed by an independent evaluator and that the evaluator explicitly states that the youth needs a QRTP and that specific QRTP meets those needs.” He then shared the voice of a former youth in foster care: “Too many youth in foster care cite instances where behaviors that they would identify as normal or indicative of trauma and a need for intervention are being used as reasoning to disrupt their placement or lead to placement in a more restrictive setting.”



Christina Parker

Youth Engagement

David emphasized the need for youth engagement. He explained that professionals should “speak directly with the youth, not an employee” and to “see the youth with your own eyes when possible.” For attorneys, “speak privately with your client as you are entitled to be able to do”, “request additional review hearings”, “request a requirement of youth input prior to review hearing”, and “request expedited emergency placements if and when youth disclose abuse/neglect”. Christina Parker shared a youth’s voice with lived experience in Florida: “I don’t want to be on the menu. I want a seat at the table.”

More information about the Council is available at nationalpolicycouncil.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

We have heard from many children in foster care about their needs and desires for normalcy. During the pandemic, so many of us have also pined for normalcy, underscoring the appreciation we can have for the impact foster care has on a child's sense of normalcy. We encourage you to have empathy in this respect and continue to implement the [Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard](#).



TOP TEN THINGS YOU NEED

**Before You Leave Foster Care*



HEALTH INSURANCE

If you were in care on your 18th birthday, you are automatically enrolled in Amerigroup Georgia Families 360. **You can call their member line 24/7 at 1-855-661-2021**



PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

Per **OCGA 49-5-3**, you should have access to and copies of: Your birth certificate, your Social Security card, and any medical documents or your green card, if applicable.



WRITTEN TRANSITIONAL LIVING PLAN

You are entitled to a Written Transitional Living Plan (Form 391). If you're not sure what is in your plan, you can ask to review it. You have a right to help make decisions about your future after foster care.



DRIVER'S LICENSE

The following people can take you to get your license:

A DFCS or DJJ employee, your foster parent, a foster care agency or group home employee, or a designated official for a private agency or group home.



OPPORTUNITY PASSPORT

This program can match your savings with additional money towards adult purchases like a car, house, apartment, and more. For more info, **email IDA@maac4kids.org**.

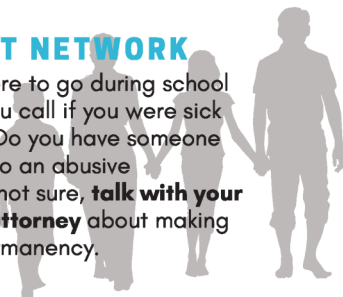


HOUSING

It's important to know where you plan to live after transitioning from care! **Make sure you know your options**, including support from ETV and Opportunity Passport!

YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

Do you have somewhere to go during school breaks? Who would you call if you were sick or in a car accident? Do you have someone to talk to if you get into an abusive relationship? If you're not sure, **talk with your case manager and attorney** about making sure that you have permanency.



ETV/EMBARC

If you're planning to attend college or trade school in GA, **make sure you take advantage of your Educational Training Voucher to pay for it!** Contact your Independent Living Specialist for more information.



ILP GRIEVANCE PROCESS

If you have an issue, you have a right to use the grievance form! Download one at **www.garyse-ilp.org**



CONNECTED BY 21

You can stay in care until age 21, so you now have to elect to sign yourself out at 18.



COVID-19 Economic Impact Payments: FAQs for Child Welfare Attorneys



The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, is a federal statute intended to help mitigate the significant economic consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic. Signed into law on March 27, 2020, the Act provides financial relief to individuals, organizations and businesses. The National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) published a FAQ sheet that summarizes NACC's current understanding of how the CARES Act (and related legislation) may impact youth and families in the child welfare system. It aims to provide child welfare practitioners with information that may be relevant to their clients and to raise awareness regarding eligibility for these payments. Click [here](#) to access NACC's FAQ sheet.

Tip Sheet: Advocacy and Child's Attorney-Client Relationships During COVID-19

In the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, many aspects of life have dramatically changed — schools, court hearings, social events. What has not changed, however, are the critical and urgent needs of youth involved in the child welfare system. Many attorneys, and particularly those who represent young people, may be struggling with questions regarding their obligations in a moment of social distancing and widespread anxiety. Youth involved in the child welfare system need and deserve robust advocacy in this time period. The underlying needs of youth — the what — remains the same; it is the method of advocacy and service delivery — the how — that may need to be adjusted. Click [here](#) to access NACC's tip sheet.



Keeping Yourself and Your Kids Safe and Health in the Pandemic: Tips for Judges, Legal Professionals, and Court Personnel



Helping the kids that we serve stay safe and healthy can be a challenge under ordinary circumstances, but now with the health hazards of COVID-19, the various guidance around what is safe, and the stress associated with social distancing or not being able to socially distance, the challenge may feel insurmountable. The calming presence and steadying influence that you provide to youth, their families, and your co-workers is the single most powerful antidote to the fears, frustrations, confusion, and grief caused by these uncertain times that can escalate into a meltdown or crisis. To have that crucial positive influence, it's essential that you "put on your oxygen mask first" by monitoring how you are handling the stressors that we are all facing. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) published a fact sheet that offers helpful questions to think about it and provides basic steps to help youth navigate through their stress during the pandemic. Click [here](#) to access NCTSN's tip sheet.



VIRTUAL, CONT'D...

- 4. Communication with the attorney during the hearing.**
 - ⇒ What is the plan for how you and the youth will communicate confidentially during the hearing? Text, email, google hangouts?
 - ⇒ Does the youth understand he or she can ask to pause the hearing so that they can talk privately with their lawyer?
- 5. Clarify expectations for the hearing.**
 - ⇒ Does the youth understand if there are expectations about dress for the hearing?
 - ⇒ Does the youth know when the hearing will start, if there is a chance for delays, and how long it will last?
 - ⇒ Have you explained to the youth who will be at the hearing and how he or she can see that on the screen?
- 6. Prepare with the youth to identify key issues to raise at the hearing.**
 - ⇒ Are there any COVID-19 specific issues to raise? Health? School? Visitation, etc.?
 - ⇒ What are the ongoing issues that need to be flagged?
- 7. Prepare with the youth to determine if they want to speak at the hearing.**
 - ⇒ Prepare with the youth for participation in the hearing, including what they want to say. Does the youth want to present anything during the hearing?
- 8. Make a plan to debrief with the youth and ensure that the youth has emotional support.**
 - ⇒ Make a plan to talk with the youth about the hearing as soon as possible following the hearing.
 - ⇒ Help the youth identify someone in the home or placement or someone he or she can reach out to if they need support after the hearing if you are not available.

SUMNER, CONT'D...

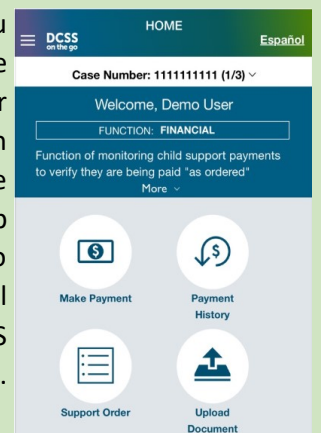
yourself for long remote hearings.

I do plan to continue remote technology once we are beyond this pandemic. It is an ideal tool for allowing participation by children who are placed far from court or are in residential treatment. I would like to also expand for participation by incarcerated parents. Remote technology will be invaluable with expert witnesses, particularly for issues of treatment plans and services. I also plan to maintain the pretrial conference calendar calls for dependency cases as it is a great case management tool.

Has your court implemented an innovative practice in response to the pandemic? We'd love to hear more about it and share it with others. Email Rachel Davidson at rdauidson@oca.ga.gov or Jansen Head at jhead@oca.ga.gov with your creative ideas!

DCSS on the Go!

In light of Child Support Awareness Month, the Georgia Division of Child Support Services is reminding communities about their free "DCSS On the Go" mobile app that engages custodial and noncustodial parents in self-service options by allowing them to securely access their child support cases on any mobile device. Did you know that you can receive information about your case online and through your mobile phone? The DCSS On the Go mobile app provides easy access to case details and general information about DCSS programs and services. Click [here](#) for more info.





Hotline Help: Connecting Your Needs to Resources

A Highlight of Many Free Resources Available to Assist You

**GA Crisis & Access Line
1-800-715-4225**

GCAL is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year to help you or someone you care for in a crisis.

**1-855-GA-CHILD
(1-855-422-4453)**

Report concerns or suspected child abuse.

CRISIS TEXT LINE

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor. Free support is available 24/7.

**GA COVID-19
Emotional Support Line
1-866-399-8938**

The Georgia COVID-19 Emotional Support Line provides 24/7 free and confidential assistance to callers needing emotional support or resource information as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emotional Support Line is staffed by volunteers, including mental health professionals and others who have received training in crisis counseling.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255**

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233**

Highly trained expert advocates are available 24/7 to talk confidentially with anyone in the U.S. experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.

**CARES Warm Line
1-844-326-5400**

Call or text the CARES Warm Line for substance abuse challenges every day of the year from 8:30AM - 11:00PM.

**Peer2Peer Warm Line
1-888-945-1414**

The Warm Line provides Georgians the opportunity to receive peer support over the phone 24 hours a day.

**SAMHSA's National Helpline
1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

Free, confidential, and available 24/7/365, this service from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) can help you find treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations in your area.

Virtual Events: Available Now and Upcoming!



- ✓ J4C Webinar on GAL Advocacy in Dependency Cases. Access webinar [here](#). Use access passcode: **2Z@8+\$51**.
- ✓ J4C Webinar on Advocacy in a Judicial Emergency. Access webinar [here](#). Click [here](#) for presentation slides. Use access passcode: **5s*x+VJ2**.
- ✓ OCA Webinar on COVID-19 and Students in Foster Care: Expectations, Advocacy, and Special Needs. More info [here](#).
- ✓ September 2: Protecting Children in a New Normal—Resources for School Personnel provided by PCA Georgia, GaDOE, DFCS, CHOA, GCCA, and ProSolutions. More info [here](#).
- ✓ September 10: Deepening Engagement—Keeping Kids in School during a Pandemic by Georgia Appleseed and Truancy Intervention Project. More info [here](#).
- ✓ September 22: QIC-CCT Virtual Mini Summit on Trauma, Substance Use Disorder, and Plans of Safe Care. More info [here](#).



BE A SUMMIT SPONSOR/EXHIBITOR!

The Georgia Office of the Child Advocate, Supreme Court of Georgia's Committee on Justice for Children, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, and Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates are pleased to host the 4th Annual Summit: Georgia's Child Welfare Conference on **November 18-20, 2020** at **The Hotel at Avalon**. The Summit is an exciting opportunity for child welfare professionals throughout the state to share best practices and continue the advancement of child welfare practice in Georgia. Attendees have included policy advocates, judges, attorneys, guardians ad litem, court appointed special advocates, judicial staff, providers, and several other professionals who serve an important role in caring and supporting the children and families throughout the state.

As you begin allocating your annual sponsorship budgets, please be aware of the many opportunities available at the 2020 Summit. Each sponsorship offers a variety of benefits, visibility, and a return on your investment. Only child welfare service providers and partners may purchase a conference exhibit table. Exhibitors/Sponsors are prohibited from selling products or taking orders for future sales.

With a significant increase in participation, there is a limited number of exhibit tables available for the 2020 Summit. We hope you will join us to greet over 600 attendees at #TheSummit for another successful conference. Please contact AK Consulting Group to register as a sponsor and/or exhibitor by calling 850-523-4200 or emailing judy@akconsultinggroup.org.

Georgia Office of the Child Advocate
Rachel Davidson, Director
7 MLK Jr. Blvd, Ste. 347
Atlanta, GA 30334

For general inquiries, assistance, or to file a complaint, please contact us by phone at (404) 656-4200 or on our website at <https://oca.georgia.gov/webform/request-oca-assistance-or-investigation>

To submit an article, photo, or event for the newsletter, please contact Deputy Director Jansen Head at jhead@oca.ga.gov.

Join us on Social Media!



Facebook: @GeorgiaOfficeoftheChildAdvocate



Twitter: @georgia_oca



Instagram: @georgia_oca



LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/gaoca/>



YouTube: "Georgia OCA"