



Child Abuse Protocol

Each county/jurisdiction is required to have a child abuse protocol for the investigation and prosecution of alleged cases of child abuse. This protocol is designed to ensure coordination and cooperation between agencies involved in these efforts to support increased efficiency in handling these cases; minimize the stress to the child throughout the process; and ensure effective treatment is provided.

GEORGIA MODEL CHILD ABUSE PROTOCOL



Note: The Model Child Abuse Protocol is inclusive of the current abuse and sexual exploitation provisions found in O.C.G.A. § 15-11-100.

OCA has revised Georgia's model Child Abuse Protocol for use by local child abuse protocol committees. The model protocol is designed to be a sample that protocol committees throughout the state may use as a guide to develop

or revise their local protocol. The revisions made incorporate necessary updates and reflect valuable feedback provided by committee members and partners.

The revised model protocol can be found [here](#).

Best Interest Advocacy Guide

Georgia CASA and the Georgia Supreme Court Committee on Justice for Children (J4C) recently embarked on a joint project to strengthen best interest advocacy across the state and published *The Guardian ad Litem in Dependency Proceedings: A Guide to Best Interest Advocacy*. OCA Director Rachel Davidson had a chance to sit down with the Guide's co-authors, Angela Tyner (CASA) and Jerry Bruce (J4C) and chat about this important effort.

OCA: Can you give us some background on the Guide? Tell us about why Georgia CASA and the Committee on Justice for Children co-authored it, its purpose, the intended audience, and why the timing of this is important?

CASA: This project fit squarely into both the programmatic goals of the CIP and strategic framework for Georgia CASA. Writing this guide was really an effort to create some uniformity in practice and to capitalize on the momentum of a statewide movement to

See [GUIDE](#), Page 9

YOUTH VOICE

Highlighting Youth Voice Speaker from 2021 Georgia CASA Day



**By Gabrielle Willis,
President, Georgia
Peers Advocating for
Change (GPAC)**

When I got the email asking me to [speak at CASA Day] I was elated! I was feeling myself! I felt confident, like me? Wow, I'm kinda awesome. Then my first immediate thought after that was fear. This is big for me. And I had no idea what I was going to say.

I was reassured that I didn't have to talk about my personal experience, it was going to be more about the legislative side, but I slowly started to realize they are connected, and they go hand in hand. I wouldn't even have had a personal experience without important legislation.

So, here is my heart.

My life could have turned out much differently. Sometimes I get scared to think about it. If I would even be here.

Last week, I was invited to my first policy review meeting. It is essentially trying to ensure that our young people who may need additional support with making decisions get the support they need.

See [VOICE](#), Page 5



A Message from DFCS Director Tom Rawlings

I recently received confirmation from Georgia's Department of Public Health that frontline staff—those case managers who enter the home and interact directly with families—are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine under Phase 1A+. Caregivers of children with medically complex needs are also qualified to receive the vaccine as caregivers for those children. If you qualify under these guidelines and run into difficulties obtaining the vaccine, please let me know by sending an email to TalkwithTom@dhs.ga.gov, operation.dfcs@dhs.ga.gov, or Letsconnect@dhs.ga.gov.

Everyone interested in receiving the vaccine is encouraged to pre-register for it at <https://myvaccinegeorgia.com/> whether they currently qualify to receive it or not. If you do not yet qualify, pre-registering will ensure you are notified when you are eligible to receive the vaccine.



**MyVaccine
Georgia.com**

Sometimes We Are All They Got

By Sonya Carlisle, DFCS Case Manager

For youth in foster care ages 14 and older, their permanency plan is often emancipation. As a case manager, I have developed a bond and somewhat of a parental relationship with each child that I have served over the past 4 years. But there are some bonds that are indescribable and undeniable that transcend the call of duty. In those bonds, the youth identify me as “mom” and I identify them as “son” or “daughter” in the most literal sense of the word.

I have been in my eldest “son’s” life for over the past 4 ½ years. I have been his advocate, cheerleader, confronter but most importantly his “mom”. I’ve experienced the highest of highs and lowest of lows with him. As his 21st birthday approached, he realized that there would be a transition in the dynamics of our relationship so, he decided to sever the relationship. During a virtual meeting, he verbally attacked me and his support team. The attack was out of the blue because previous meetings had gone so well. To ensure he severed his relationship with me, he degraded my role as his “mom” with every hurtful comment that could be made by a child to his mother. Although I knew where the attack was coming from- his fears, anxiety and previous disappointments by other adults who failed him, my heart broke into a million pieces.

Several hours later, I was able to compose myself. I remembered some words of guidance that were given to me by my “Special Mother”. She told me that once you have done all everything that you know to do, its ok to let go. There have been so many times on our journey it appeared that I should let go—times of frustration, disappointment, weariness. I knew her words meant that once my actions and heart agreed it was ok to let go. Although there has been a shift in how I relate to my “son”, my love and care for him has never changed. Because I realize that “Sometimes We Are All They Got.”



In celebration of Black History Month, we reflect on and honor the accomplishments of several leaders and activists who made way to secure the rights and freedoms we enjoy in our state and throughout the nation:

"If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just...you have moral obligation to do something about it."

- U.S. CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

- HARRIET TUBMAN

"You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it's right."

- ROSA PARKS

"Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own."

- FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

"I ask only that justice which every American citizen has the right to ask and which Congress has the power to grant."

- HENRY O. FLIPPER

"I knew then and I know now, when it comes to justice, there is no easy way to get it."

- CLAUDETTE COLVIN

"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

- JACKIE ROBINSON

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

- PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA



Connections Matter

The **Connections Matter Georgia®** statewide initiative, launched by the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, is focused on raising awareness and providing a community-based prevention response to Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Connections Matter® addresses the intersecting topics of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, brain development, and resilience. It explores how the connections we make in life profoundly impact our brain's ability to grow and our own individual abilities to cope and thrive. During this four-hour training participants learn about a community-based approach, appropriate for both urban and rural settings, that can build resilience in children and their communities.

Workshops and Train the Trainer opportunities are available. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

Foster Caregivers of the Year Award Nominations are Open

DFCS' Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit (CRRU) will host its Annual Foster Caregiver of the Year Awards Celebration during National Foster Care Month in May! CRRU is asking for participation of all DFCS staff to nominate Foster Caregivers who exemplify what it means to go above and beyond, by not only providing a safe home for the children in their care but also working toward achieving family reunification. This year DFCS is asking you to dig VERY DEEP in going above and beyond to document why the nominated caregiver(s) deserve your vote and the distinct title of Caregiver of the Year!

To submit a nomination, please complete the following survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HNJP5L2> by Friday, March 12, 2021, at 5 p.m. Your responses must provide very detailed descriptions and examples to illustrate why YOUR nominee should be Foster Caregiver of the Year!

Meet One of DFCS' Kinship Navigators, Eric Jackson

DFCS Region 8 Kinship Navigator, Eric Jackson, has been hailed as a champion for Georgia's Blueprint for Family First as he is one of many who embodies the state's philosophy for evolving the child welfare system so more children can safely grow up at home and with loved ones.

Eric makes sure people who are taking care of their loved ones —grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, fictive kin—have the resources they need to raise the young people in their care. "There's nothing like family," he says, "whatever that family looks like." Hear more from Eric [here](#).

Thank you to Eric and so many others like him that help support children and their caregivers!

Building Life Skills and Connections

Georgia EmpowerMENT recently

started a new webinar series to help young people learn an important life skill—cooking! Adult supporters share their favorite recipes while a young person makes the recipe during the webinar. At the same time, young people have an opportunity to learn more about these adult supporters and the support they offer.

OCA Director Rachel Davidson was featured in the first installment along with her family's favorite recipe for Corn Spoon Bread. In case you missed it, check it out [here](#). (Start it around the 36-minute mark.)

Georgia EmpowerMENT also partnered with Georgia Credit Union and GARYSE-ILP to be able to give away cookware to young people. Do you know a young person who might like to be a part of this cooking webinar? Share [this link](#) with them!

Recipe: Corn Spoon Bread

This recipe is brought to us by our very own adult supporter Rachel Davidson with the Office of Child Advocate. This recipe is a very quick and easy comfort food that is best shared with family and friends.

Rachel Davidson
Director
Georgia Office of the Child Advocate
7 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive | Suite 347 | Atlanta, GA 30334
Email: rdavidson@oca.ga.gov | Office: (404) 656-4200 | Fax: (404) 656-5200



Shopping List

Recipe serves		Prepared for		Ingredients		
		4	8	Have it	Quantity	
Ingredient	Amount	Scaled amount				
Jiffy	8 oz	1	lb	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Jiffy corn bread mix (8 oz. size)
Cream of corn	15 fl oz	60	tbsp	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	cream of corn (15 oz.)
Whole Kernel corn	15 oz	1 7/8	lb	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	whole kernel corn (15 oz.)
Sour cream	8 oz	---	---	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Sour Cream (8oz)
Butter	1	---	---	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Eggs
				<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Butter/Margarine

Instructions

- Mix above ingredients, except the butter/margarine.
- Melt the butter/margarine and add to the previously mixed ingredients.
- Pour into a greased 9x12 pan.
- Bake 45 minutes at 350 degrees. (It sometimes takes longer, but it should be able to pull away from the edges.)



National Parent Leadership Month

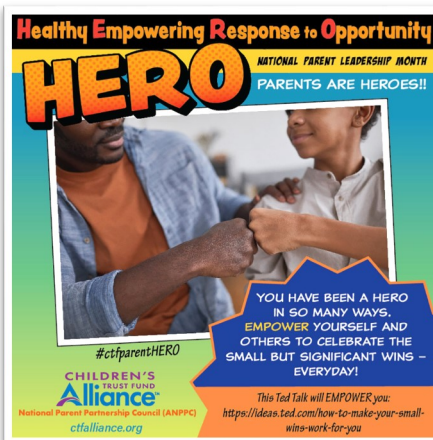
In honor of National Parent Leadership, an opportunity to recognize and show appreciation for parents who work to improve the lives of their families, neighbors, and communities, DFCS staff had the opportunity this month to hear from three members of Georgia's Parent Advisory Council (GAPAC).

GAPAC is comprised of a diverse group of parents from across the state who have a range of expertise and lived experiences. Their role is to advise DFCS regarding child welfare services, especially services that help strengthen and support parents to prevent child abuse and neglect.

As one participant reflected upon hearing one of the GAPAC member's stories, "I love this framing. Not about what I can do FOR them, it's about what WE can do together." Powerful lessons and positive change can happen when we take the time to learn from each other and work together.

Learn more about ways to honor and recognize parents as leaders [here](#) and parents as heroes [here](#).

Do you know a parent who may be interested in joining GAPAC? Applications are available [here](#). To request a GAPAC member speak at or attend an event, contact Lindsey Dale, PCS Program Specialist and Georgia Parent Advisory Council Liaison at Lindsey.Dale@dhs.ga.gov. Additional information about GAPAC can be found [here](#).



VOICE CONT'D...

I read through that policy with a fine toothed comb. I was so nervous, I even called one of our adult supporters because I felt like I had no idea what I was doing, but I came with all of my notes and questions. I felt that I need to apologize for doing what I was asked to do, I felt like I was being annoying.

But the people in that meeting, they helped me understand and remember that what we were doing there is important. It's not about me. So being extra is needed. What I was doing there especially as a former foster kid, it's important. That's why I'm here today.

Somebody and honestly some of those people in that zoom meeting probably sat at a table together (pre 'Rona) and did their due diligence so I had a safe group home to live in.

I had therapy because of someone's diligence. I got to stay with my sister because of someone's diligence.

Whether you realize it or not, coming together to create legislation, the way I see it, we are all in a way, the invisible parent. We are trying to create rules, make sure these kids have support, money, and the guidance they need to live their lives while in care, and beyond.

We all have the same goal - for them to be happy, successful and the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, like any parent would want.

I was in my last placement for a year before I went off to college. You think 18 year olds are a little slow on the uptake? I certainly was. I already felt like I was behind my peers. But I would have not even had the opportunity to even go and graduate from college and learn from my mistakes if there were not people who sat in those meetings like I did.

I'm sure my Independent Living Spe-



February 2021

Page 6



Piedmont CASA



2021 Proclamation for CASA Day at the Capitol



Dougherty CASA



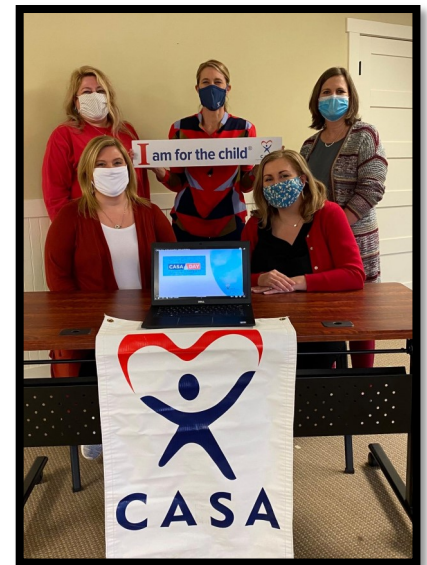
Murray-Whitfield CASA

CASA Day at the Capitol

For 20 years, Georgia CASA has hosted an advocacy day at the state Capitol. This year's 21st CASA Day at the Capitol involved nearly 400 people tuning into a virtual event. Georgia CASA Director Jen King says, "None of this would be possible without the trust and collaboration among the Georgia CASA team and a statewide network of committed individuals." If you missed this year's #GACASADayatCap, you can check it out [here](#).



CASA Ogeechee



The Children's Haven



Chattahoochee CASA



The Georgia CASA Team



Language as a Missing Link in Children & Teens

Efforts are underway for a pilot project focused on the critical role of language skills and the ways in which frequent and positive connections and language-rich environments help ensure successful, practical, and sustainable child welfare and juvenile justice outcomes.

Difficulties with language skills are frequently misinterpreted and mischaracterized and they are often the missing link when a child cannot appropriately channel frustrations, express themselves effectively, or clearly understand what is going on, leading to acting out in anger as a form of release.

The pilot project will work with children and teens from Richmond, Troup, and Fulton counties with the aim of piloting a set of tools to: notice language skills expected by age level; monitor language skill usage and engagement; screen language skill development; and enhance environments to foster language skills.

We are looking forward to learning and sharing more as efforts progress.

Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report

The Labor Trafficking Roundtable Report is the first of its kind in Georgia and marks a renewed commitment to end all forms of human trafficking in the state. Focused on labor trafficking, Work Group 6 of Georgia's Human Trafficking Task Force held several roundtables with stakeholders throughout the state to have cross sectional and collaborative conversations centered on areas of raising awareness about labor trafficking, victim care and services, data collection and measurement, and state level action needed to combat this form of trafficking in Georgia. The report includes specific recommendations and action steps to guide the state in its effort to combat labor trafficking and support survivors. Click [here](#) to read the full report.



On the Horizon

March is recognized as National Social Work Month. This year's theme is "Social Workers are Essential." DHS will be honoring the compassionate social workers who assist people in need to overcome barriers to achieve safe, stable, and fulfilling lives. If you'd like to be spotlighted as part of their efforts by sharing your experiences as a social worker and the ways you have helped transform the lives of those you serve, please submit information [here](#) while being mindful of client privacy.



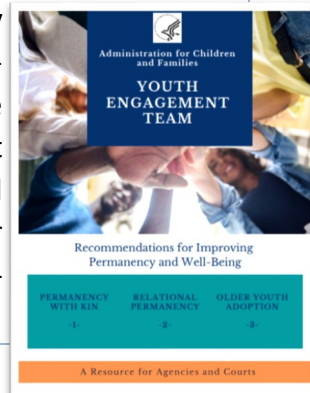
Whole Child Primer

Voices for Georgia's Children and the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network partnered to publish a one-stop guide to child policy in Georgia. The 2021 Whole Child Primer address youth policy ideas from physical health to mental health, child protection and safety to juvenile justice, early care to youth enrichment—and a whole lot more! Click [here](#) to access the Whole Child Primer.



Permanency and Well-Being

The Administration for Children and Families and the Children's Bureau recently published a report with key recommendations from three roundtable discussions about how to support permanency with kin, relational permanency, and successful older youth adoption. Click [here](#) to access the full report.





Through a Child's Eyes

Take the time to hear [what Black History Month means to children](#). Then take the time to ask the children in your life what it means to them. If you or the children in your life would like to learn more, a simple internet search will provide a wealth of recommendations for where to get started.

Legislative Updates

Are you interested in staying up-to-date on Georgia's legislative session and child welfare-related bills? Sign up to receive legislative updates through both the Barton Child Law and Policy Center [here](#) and Voices for Georgia's Children [here](#).

**3RD ANNUAL
DFCS HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
PROVIDERS SUMMIT
2021**

REIGNITE THE *Vision*

3.11.21
9AM - 1PM

Register at dfcshumantraffickingsummit2021.eventbrite.com.

Events: Available Now and Upcoming!

- ✓ J4C Webinar on GAL Advocacy. Access webinar [here](#). Use access passcode: **2Z@8+\$51**.
- ✓ Webinar on Protecting Children in a New Normal—Resources for School Personnel provided by PCA Georgia, GaDOE, DFCS, CHOA, GCCA, and ProSolutions. Access webinar [here](#).
- ✓ Webinar on Deepening Engagement—Keeping Kids in School during a Pandemic by Georgia Appleseed and Truancy Intervention Project. Access webinar [here](#).
- ✓ Webinar on Georgia's Response to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children provided by PCA Georgia and CACGA. Access webinar and materials [here](#).
- ✓ Mar. 3: Application due for Connections Matter Georgia: Train the Trainer. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Mar. 5: Virtual Film Screening & Conversation on the importance of early education. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Mar. 11: 3rd Annual DFCS Human Trafficking Providers Summit. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Mar. 21-24: National Conference on Juvenile Justice in Dallas, Texas. More info [here](#).
- ✓ April 30: Deadline for PBS Kids 2021 Writers Contest. More info [here](#).
- ✓ May 4-6: CWLA 2021 Virtual Conference, *Lessons Learned from 2020: Reaching New Heights for Children and Families*. More details coming soon [here](#).
- ✓ June 23-24: Virtual Georgia System of Care Academy. More info soon.



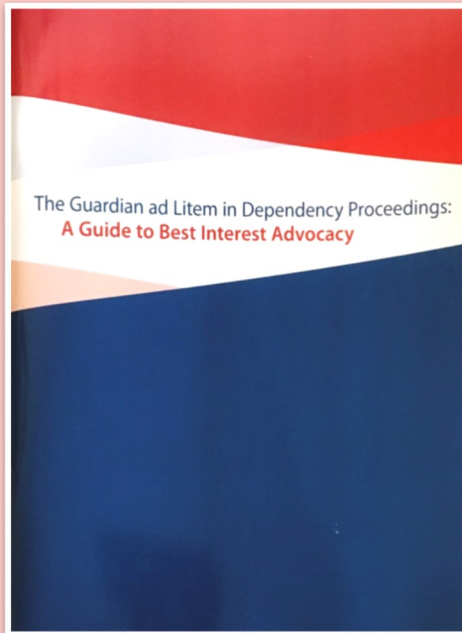


GUIDE CONT'D...

improve the quality of legal representation for children, parents, and agencies. It's written for juvenile court judges and practitioners, and we include legal authority for the positions we take relating to the full inclusion of the GAL, an officer of the court, in all aspects of court proceedings.

OCA: Knowing there is a national and statewide movement to improve the quality of legal representation for all parties in dependency proceedings, why the interest in the GAL role specifically?

J4C: Since 2014, Georgia's Juvenile Code has required that all children in dependency cases have a guardian ad litem (GAL) and that a CASA should be the GAL whenever possible. While the code outlines the roles and responsibilities of the GAL, there are ambiguities. The Code does not offer much guidance as to how that role is to be exercised; therefore, there continues to be a disparity of practice in best interest advocacy across the state. Part of the confusion stems from the conflation with the GAL role in other classes of court. Some has to do with the disparities from the previous code that only outlined the role of the CASA, not others who serve as GAL.



OCA: What's the most frequently asked question or issue that the Guide addresses?

CASA: For me, it's the confidentiality of records and responding to discovery requests.

J4C: Definitely it's how to handle the admissibility of CASA reports, and GAL reports in general. I always point out that the Juvenile Code has to be read in light of the Evidence Code (unless the Juvenile Code provides some specific provision in derogation of the Evidence Code). So, the GAL report is a writing. The court can't consider a writing unless it's been tendered and admitted into evi-

dence. So let's get all GAL reports in evidence so that we can discuss them on the record and so that the court can consider them.

OCA: The guide discusses the importance of the best interest factors. How often do you see best interest factors cited in proceedings?

J4C: Almost never. The GAL is supposed to consider the statutory best-interest factors, and they're supposed to help the GAL objectify the recommendation. It's hard to see how the GAL has applied the factors if the GAL never talks about them. The court, of course, is also supposed to make reference to the best-interest factors applicable to courts. Sometimes it's hard to tell from a court's ruling how the factors contributed to the best-interest finding.

OCA: You all went through an external review process, as indicated by your acknowledgements in the Guide. What issues got the most feedback from your esteemed reviewers?

CASA: We spent a lot of time working on the dual role of a child's attorney and GAL, testimony of the GAL, and cross-examination of the GAL. We recommend a practice in each of these cases that maybe isn't that common across the state, but which we believe

is firmly grounded in state and federal law governing the role of the GAL. Check out the Guide for the full discussion!

OCA: Do you have a section or sub-section that is a personal favorite? Why?

CASA: I really like the section describing the Advocacy-Interest Continuum and the one discussing a child's rights, best interests, and family integrity. Unlike a party, the GAL must remain impartial, constant- *See [GUIDE, Page 13](#)*



Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention

Dating violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, one in three teens in the United States is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a partner. While teen dating violence can happen to anyone, the majority of the violence affects young women between the ages of 16 and 24.

Many abusive partners may seem absolutely perfect in the early stages of a relationship. Possessive and controlling behaviors do not always appear overnight. Rather, these behaviors emerge and intensify as the relationship continues to grow. In most of these relationships, when a partner acts nice, it is really just that: an act.

Domestic violence does not look the same in every relationship because every relationship is different. However, one thing most abusive relationships have in common is that the abusive partner does many different kinds of things to have more power and control over their partner. Below are some warning signs of dating violence, but you can learn more about it by clicking [here](#).

Warning Signs of Dating Violence

- ⇒ Tells you that you can never do anything right
- ⇒ Shows extreme jealousy of your friends and time spent away
- ⇒ Keeps or discourages you from seeing friends/family
- ⇒ Insults, demeans or shames you with put-downs
- ⇒ Controls who you see, where you go, or what you do
- ⇒ Prevents you from making your own decisions
- ⇒ Prevents you from working or attending school
- ⇒ Intimidates you with guns, knives or other weapons
- ⇒ Pressures you to have sex when you don't want to or do things sexually you're not comfortable with
- ⇒ Pressures you to use drugs or alcohol

VOICE CONT'D...

cialist, Ms. Gerrica was not always grateful to get my 5 calls in a row when I needed something, but I am so incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to be that annoying.

If there was no net, and a group of people like all of us looking out for people like me, my mistakes might have been detrimental. The determining factor in that is access to help.

What we all are doing day in and day out here is important. Working on legislative action is impacting the livelihood of these youth. It affects their current reality, their everyday lives. It can determine what kind of future they have.

It did for me.

Thank you to all of those people who sat in meetings and asked annoying questions so I could be the president of GPAC, Georgia Peers Advocating for Change, the board for current and former foster youth for the state, and do things like talk to you today.

I, now as a member of GPAC, I get to sit in, speak, and ask questions at policy meetings. I get to speak on panels and I get to speak at things like this because of legislative action.

It was one of things that got me here.

That day you are tired in that meeting remember, you are working hard to change things for a kid like me.

Editor's Note: You can view the recording of the virtual CASA Day at the Capitol [here](#).



Anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender can be a victim – or perpetrator – of domestic violence. It can happen to people who are married, living together or who are dating. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. It includes behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish or force them to behave in ways they do not want. It includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation. More info [here](#).



Department of Driver Services
375-3-1-.34: Applications of Minors



Access to State IDs, Instruction Permit & Driver's License for Youth

DDS' "Signature on Application for Minor" rule will assist with the access to a state ID or driver's license for young people in foster care by creating new provisions to allow adults who work with young people to assist them in obtaining their state ID and work towards their driver's permit and license.

Who is a Responsible Adult?



A "responsible adult" is an individual that is eighteen (18) years of age or older, competent to verify the application, and has personal knowledge of the applicant. Such as:

1. DFCS or DJJ Employee
2. Private foster care agency or group home employee
3. A foster parent with private agency or group home
4. Designated official for private agency or group home

O.C.G.A. 49-5-3

DDS Customer Service Center: What to Do?

At the Customer Service Center (CSC), the responsible adult will (1) sign a Responsible Adult affidavit and include the relationship to the young person, (2) provide a state ID or letter from state agency to verify your identity AND (3) submit paperwork such as school documents, driver's license or identification card.





24-Hour Trafficking Hotline: 1-866-END-HTGA (842-4842)

Effective October 1, 2020, the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia (CACGA) CSEC Response Team began operating a new 24/7 trafficking hotline number: **1-866-END-HTGA**. The hotline provides information to those who might be victims, assistance to law enforcement on the rescue of a victim, and referrals for victim assistance. The hotline operators will assist the caller in coordinating emergency services at all hours of the day and night for youth who may be a victim of exploitation or trafficking. The CACGA CSEC Response Team presented additional information about the new hotline and their process in a webinar facilitated by PCA Georgia—click [here](#) to access the webinar recording and the presentation slides. Referrals can be made through the hotline, fax (678-401-5955), online (click [here](#) for online form), or email (referrals@cacga.org). For further information, visit [here](#).



GUIDE CONT'D...

ly assessing his or her recommendations against weight of the evidence and own subjective opinion.

J4C: My favorite is the Practice Appendix, where we look at the GAL’s job in light of an actual case from the Court of Appeals. I hope that this section will help GALs think about their objectivity, and give them motivation to follow the evidence, no matter what their private opinions are about the outcome of the case.

OCA: You’ve tested some of the concepts and even witnessed some early results in practice. What has surprised you about the response thus far? Which existing practices have the longest way to go to match the Guide?

J4C: Statewide, we’ve seen some courts completely change their practice. They’ve stopped using a dually appointed GAL/Child’s Attorney in some places, which is a major practice change, the rapidity of which has been very surprising. Our early-adopters are enthusiastic! There are always things that need to be improved upon, though. Probably the biggest thing is courts allowing the GAL to stand up and give one-sentence oral recommendations. The GAL can’t usually stand on the report prepared before a hearing: there has to be some mention of what’s devel-

oped at the hearing. How has the evidence affected the recommendation? If it hasn’t, why not?

OCA: How is the Guide getting out to the larger child welfare community? What opportunities do we have to encourage its use?

CASA: The Guide is being shared electronically through email and newsletters; it’s posted to the CIP and Georgia CASA websites, and we’re mailing copies to judges, CASA programs, and attorneys/partners to whom we have addresses. Email us if you want/need hard copies. Ultimately, the broader child welfare community shares a joint commitment to raise the bar, strengthening the quality and consistency of legal representation and advocacy, and to improve outcomes for children and families. Share this Guide within your networks or within your local jurisdiction. Set time on a stakeholder meeting agenda for how practice can be strengthened in your county or circuit. It’s always been our intention that this would be the beginning to an ongoing conversation about court improvement efforts. We look forward to working together with you!

Click [here](#) to access the guide. Contact Angela Tyner at atyner@gacasa.org or Jerry Bruce at jerry.bruce@georgiacourts.gov.



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.



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.

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"