

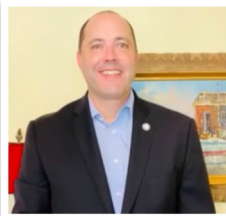


Reflecting on the 2020 Summit: Georgia's Child Welfare Conference



Governor Brian Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp

For the first time, Georgia's Annual Child Welfare Conference hosted hundreds of attendees through a virtual hub. While presenters gave live presentations at The Hotel at Avalon in Alpharetta, virtual participants viewed and engaged in the workshops in real time. In planning this hybrid Summit, the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate was pleased to partner with the Supreme Court of Georgia's Committee on Justice for Children, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services, and the Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates. In the virtual hub, attendees and presenters were able to connect with each other, discuss challenges in our practice, highlight breakthroughs, learn from one another, and affirm our commitment to this challenging and critically important work. The Summit featured videos highlighting the experiences and successes of those involved with the Cold Case Project, youth and parent engagement and advocacy, kinship caregivers, and reunification. The videos can be accessed [here](#).



*Georgia Attorney General
Chris Carr*

DFCS Director Tom Rawlings kicked off the Summit with welcome videos from Governor Brian P. Kemp, First Lady Marty Kemp, and Attorney General Chris Carr who have been strong advocates of children and families involved in the child welfare system and consistent supporters of the professionals who play important roles in their journeys to permanency. Click [here](#) to read their welcoming remarks to not only our Summit attendees but to all professionals in the child welfare community.



Dr. Phyllis Holditch Niolon

Dr. Phyllis Holditch Niolon was the keynote speaker in the opening plenary session. She is a senior scientist with the Division of Violence Prevention of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Niolon focused on adverse childhood experiences (commonly referred to as "ACEs") and how ACEs can impact outcomes later in a person's life. Dr. Niolon gave an expansive view of

See [SUMMIT](#), Page 8

YOUTH VOICE FEATURED IN SUMMIT



As a keynote speaker in the Summit, Adrian McLemore presented on "Prioritizing Family & Youth Engagement: Strategies to Improve Outcomes". Below are some key points offered by Adrian to help build a bridge among community members, providers, the legal profession, and other stakeholders involved in the child welfare arena to lead to better outcomes for children and families in Georgia.

Before providing his key points, Adrian emphasized a quote from a teen in foster care to illustrate the purpose of this keynote session and to help the audience understand how youth in foster care may feel and think: "Expect me to do or say some really crazy things, just to See [VOICE](#), Page 7



DFCS Region 7 and 9 Sponsored Virtual Teen Summit

In the spirit of National Adoption Month, DFCS Regions 7 and 9 co-hosted a virtual teen summit. The purpose of the event was to inspire teens who are patiently waiting to become adopted but yet to find their forever family. According to the two regions, they often hear youth expressing they do not want to be adopted. The guest speaker was

Alexandra White who re-entered foster care after a dissolved adoption. She met her forever family while in high school and achieved permanency two weeks before turning 18 years old. The youth who are in care were given the opportunity to ask questions to a panel of guests to help shed light on their current thoughts surrounding adoption. The panelists' stories inspired and encouraged the youth of which one stated that "you have changed my perspective about adoption." The ILP specialist for Region 9, Wynecoka Thompson, presented and answered questions related to services about post adoption services through the independent living program. The two regions worked together to plan and carry out this unique opportunity and share inspiring information with teens. Way to go, Region 7 and Region 9!



Guest speaker Alexandra White (upper right corner) speaking during the Virtual Teen Summit.

Going Purple for Adoptions!

In celebrating National Adoption Day and Month, the Mercedes-Benz Stadium went purple to support adoptions across the state. Looking to grow your family? Consider adoption, and fill out the DFCS inquiry form [here](#). You can also visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway [here](#) for more resources.



Georgia's First Virtual National Adoption Month Kickoff!

To kickoff National Adoption Day and Month, DFCS held its first virtual kickoff for National Adoption Month with DFCS Director Tom Rawlings, Deputy Director Mary Havick, and State Adoption Director Deborah Burrus to celebrate Georgia's successes. The celebration included regional adoption stories and a personal story from one of Georgia's own celebrated adoptive families. In case you missed it, you can click [here](#) to watch the celebration!





Expressions of Gratitude

Great Work!

Tift and Turner County DFCS Director Annie Clark shared the following on social media in recognition and celebration of her staff:

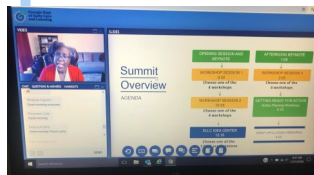
“The below post is about one of my workers. I could not be any prouder of her or the other people that serve in my county. Our jobs helping families can be very difficult @ times. It can be both rewarding & heartbreaking. I am so proud of Oprah Leach & the other staff who selflessly give of themselves everyday to ensure the safety of children & to try to make a difference in the lives of families!! Tift/Turner DFCS rocks!! Thank u Tawanna Denise Woods for acknowledging Oprah—u r pretty awesome as well!! ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ “

This original post was shared by Tawanna Woods:

“I have a new case. Have been on it for a month. I see the family twice a week bc of the number of children in the home. You would think that their former case manager moved away or passed away within in the last 24-48 hrs bc EVERYTIME I’m there or on the phone with the foster parent or biological parent I hear about the one and only Miss Oprah Leach. This speaks VOLUMES about the woman, case manager and overall person that you are. They ask about you and wanting you back on their case EVERYTIME I’m with them in person and or phone. They talk about the level of care that you provided, how you made them feel personally and you really connected with the kids. You have blessed so many and bring something special to a job that is so difficult. I once remember hearing the judge say in open court “if you have a problem with Miss Leach then something’s definitely wrong bc everyone gets along with Miss Leach. You are staple at your job and in the community and you ask for nothing in return. Thank you! The legacy that you are leaving is one that will make your children so proud bc as they are older they will meet your colleagues, people from the courts and maybe even families that you have served so graciously and they will hear “oh, you’re Oprah’s child. Let me tell you about your mom.” There will be families that testify to encourage and uplift other people that are going through how they met a woman name Oprah that changed their lives. That is the mark that you have left and the bar that you have raised! Well done!”

Building Resilience

It takes all of us to prevent and treat trauma. Building resilience is an important component of that and, in fact, increasing family resiliency is one of the objectives of the state’s newly revised [Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan](#). The plan and strategies supporting this objective were shared during the #Summit2020. We were also pleased to learn of another recent effort focused on this topic—a virtual summit on Collaborating for Child Resilience in Early Care and Learning presented by DECAL and Georgia State University.



Success!

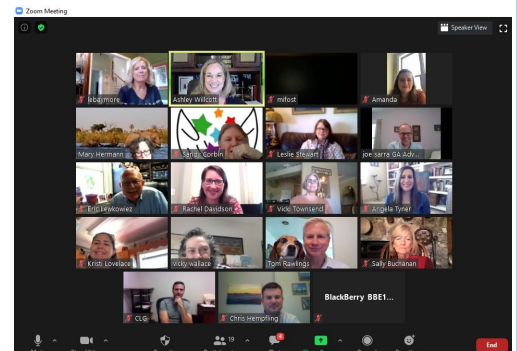
Cherokee County Juvenile Court Judge John Sumner and his team celebrated a youth’s success with “Team [Youth]” shirts for a virtual hearing. This youth’s success was due, in part, to collaboration and a “don’t give up” approach from the adults in this youth’s life. We love seeing this sort of support and creative celebration for successes—big or small!



The Cold Case Project

The Cold Case Project (CCP) has been in existence for more than a decade and has helped achieve remove barriers and achieve permanency for many youth in care! CCP’s Think

Tank/Coaching Team had the opportunity this month to connect virtually to continue sharing resources and expertise as we continue to help more children in care. Learn more about the Cold Case Project from [this video](#) showcased at the #Summit2020.





Celebrating and Reflecting on National Adoption Day



*As written and shared
on [social media](#) by
Whitney Gilliard,
CEO of Gilliard and Co.*

On national adoption day, I wanted to also take this time to raise some awareness on what other forms of "adoption" may look like, and hopefully also change a bit on the narrative of permanency.

For those who don't know, I have never been legally adopted. All over our nation, 397,122 children are living without permanent families. Out of that, 20,000 age out of foster care each year without permanency.

Here's the truth, returning home and adoption is not always the answer. In my case, neither of those were an option.

But through my time in foster care, RIGHT when I was about to age out, God immediately placed in my life- a mother, a father, and a sister. I lived with my parents for about a year and then moved to an independent living program mentor for a year before I aged out.

Still, how did that short time allow for life long relationships? That is because while I was not adopted through paperwork, I was certainly adopted through pure love. People who signed up for fostering and MEANT IT.

No matter how inconvenient my calls were when I was having a bad day, no matter the troubling situations that I found myself in, or the really amazing days where I thought I had no one to share it with: Rosemary Brown Wright (mom-pictured below), Bill Wright (dad-pictured below), and Esther Sherrard (sister-pictured right) were there. They were there when I couldn't muster up the courage to go to school, they were there when I reacted destructively, and then they were there when I assumed the responsibility of welcoming motherhood. My son (pictured right) calls them Momma Bear, Poppa Bear, and Aunty. They are as real as real relationships can be.



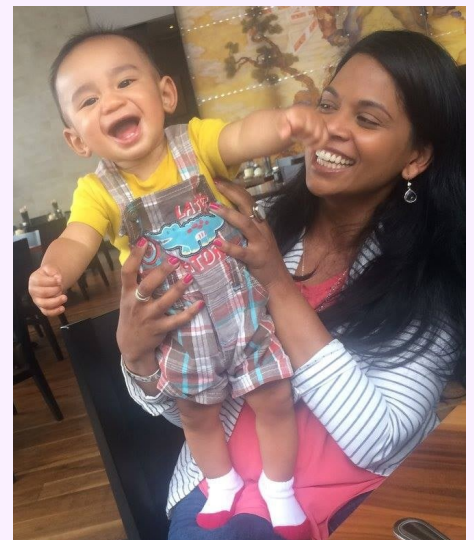
Please make time for our older youth. If you can't see anything else in these personal pictures of my family, I hope you see one thing: that generational curses can be broken through single acts of human compassion.

As I have shared, life was not a walk in the park for my then foster parents (all three). But if you ask any biological parents why they love their children

and then ask my family- you will find the same answers. If it wasn't for the color of my skin, you wouldn't be able to tell I wasn't biological. With them, I am treated like family.

They love me. They know me. They accept me. Ask me how you can have a permanent impact for older youth in foster care. If this testimony moves you to want to be involved in our program, I empower you to be obedient and learn more on how you can do that with [Gilliard and Company](#).

The definition of permanency: "Simply put, "permanency" means family. It means having positive, healthy, nurturing relationships with adults who provide emotional, financial, moral, educational, and other kinds of support as youth mature into adults. Ideally, permanency takes the form of a relationship that has a legal component that provides a parent-child relationship."- Juvenile Law Center





State Elected Officials Give Encouraging Remarks to the Child Welfare Community

Highlighting welcoming remarks from the Summit

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp

“As the parents of three daughters, Brian and I know that it takes all of us working together to support our children and prepare them for the future. We also know that while DFCS is an important part of the child welfare system, it takes all of you — the entire child welfare community — to protect children and strengthen families. Marty and I commend each of you — especially our frontline workers — for giving it your all every single day, for your commitment to this important work, and for doing the right thing for Georgia’s children and families. It’s clear that even in these times of uncertainty, those in the child welfare community remain resilient, working hard to keep children and families thriving. As we continue our fight to protect the lives and livelihoods during this pandemic, we know that each of you will continue to be a strong voice for folks in every corner of our state. As you keep working hard to take care of them, remember to also take care of yourself. Thank you for all that you do. God bless.”



Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr

“Hi, I’m Attorney General Chris Carr. We are grateful for the entire child welfare community, and we’re committed to supporting you as we all work together to strengthen Georgia’s judicial system to better serve all families. In 2018, the Children’s Bureau issued updated guidance focused on improving the quality of legal representation within the nation’s child welfare system. When the agency, parents, and children all have strong legal representation, it leads to improved outcomes, quicker timeliness to permanency, and an overall improved experience for those directly involved in and impacted by the child welfare system. With this understanding, I would challenge this group of child welfare leaders to continue to work towards this goal and our office will be there to support you. I know that this is hard work that directly impacts people’s lives. On a normal day, this work can be emotionally and mentally draining. When you compound that with a pandemic, it can be even harder. I appreciate your flexibility and continued commitment to this most important work of keeping children safe. I encourage you to continue to take care of yourself as you help others.”





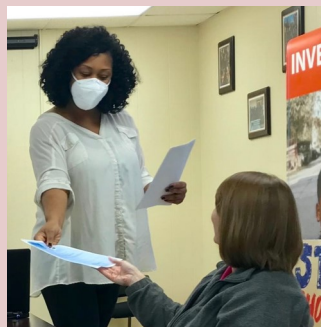
Clark's Christmas Kids Goes Virtual for its 30th Year!

For 30 years, Clark's Christmas Kids has had the mission of ensuring that every child in the Georgia foster care system has at least one gift on Christmas day. Clark Howard, WSB Radio, and DFCS have partnered for all 30 years to bring this opportunity to make a child's wish come true — and this year, the partnership welcomes Chris 180! Traditionally, shoppers attended live events in Walmart locations in the metro Atlanta area to purchase gifts from a child's wish list. Many have made shopping for these precious children a holiday tradition.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Clark's Christmas Kids have gone virtual this year. If interested and able, you can still see each child's wish list via our "[Shop Now](#)" page. You can choose to buy one, two, or all 3 gifts on a child's list. [Monetary donations](#) are also accepted and will be used to buy gifts for children in foster care. Every gift and donation is tax-deductible. Learn more [here](#).

Prioritizing Youth Mental Health

Staff with The Front Porch, a community-based risk reduction program in Savannah, recently received training to become certified in Youth Mental Health First Aid.



The Front Porch shared: "Thank you to Phylcia Anderson with Gateway's Apex program for providing Youth Mental Health First Aid Training to our staff this week! These tools will assist us in continuing to provide the best support for our youth and families."

CDC Tips for Safer Gatherings

The COVID-19 pandemic has been stressful and isolating for many people. Gatherings during the holidays can be an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. For this holiday season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided guidance on how holiday plans can be modified to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to keep friends, families, and community healthy and safe. Below are some considerations offered by the CDC which are in further detail [here](#):

- ✓ Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household poses the lowest risk for spread.
- ✓ Limit the number of attendees as much as possible to allow people (especially those from different households) to remain at least six feet apart.
- ✓ Host outdoor rather than indoor gatherings as much as possible.
- ✓ Avoid holding gatherings in crowded, poorly ventilated spaces with persons not from your household.

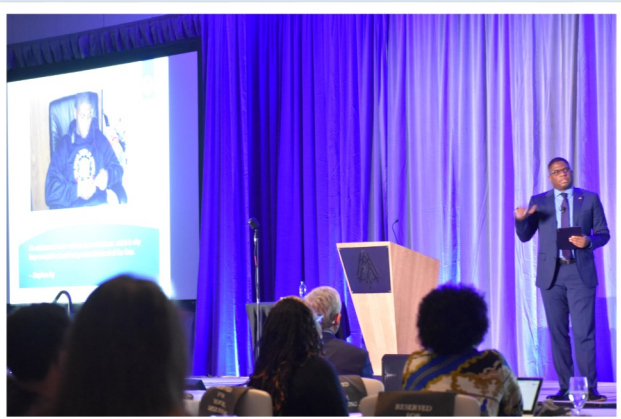


VOICE, CONT'D...

see if you can handle it. How do I feel safe until I know that there's nothing I can do to make you leave me? I will test you. I am an expert at testing people. I desperately want you to pass, but I expect you to fail.”

Below are key points from the session:

- ▶ *Young people want a meaningful relationship with an adult despite what they say or how they may act.*
- ▶ *In planning and practicing strategies for youth and family engagement: Do it. Do it well. Do it often.*
- ▶ *We have to help our young people understand that they are important. Young people carry these things with them throughout their lives.*
- ▶ *There are three types of youth: Dependent. Independent. Interdependent.*
- ▶ *All behavior has meaning.*
- ▶ *Young people [in foster care or with lived experience] are experience rich but language poor.*

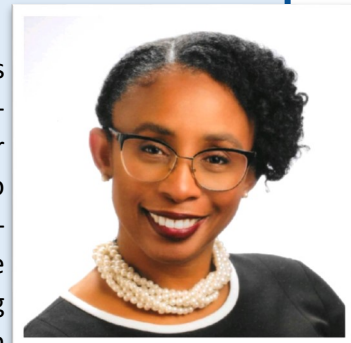


Adrian McLemore speaking during the closing plenary on how professionals in the child welfare community can better advocate for and support youth who become involved with the foster care system.

ABA Recognizes Anissa Patton as “Fearless Children’s Lawyer of the Month”

Every day, lawyers across the United States represent children in a variety of legal matters including education, child welfare, juvenile justice, and immigration cases. This representation is exceedingly challenging and mostly goes unrecognized. Each month, the Children’s Rights Litigation Committee of the American Bar Association launches its “Fearless Lawyer of the Month” series to recognize and celebrate the lawyers who accomplish remarkable results. [Editor’s Note: To nominate a lawyer for this series, please contact cathy.krebs@americanbar.org.]

Georgia attorney Anissa Patton was recognized as Fearless Children’s Lawyer of the Month in October for her tireless efforts and remarkable work to ensure her transgender clients’ identities are respected and their needs are met, including access to life-saving health care. During October — and in fact, the day of her “fearless lawyer” interview — she had a big win for one of her youth who is transgender. She successfully convinced the court to order an agency to allow her client to begin hormone therapy as prescribed by the youth’s doctor who is a specialist in gender-affirming health care.



Through her advocacy with the Fulton County’s Office for the Child’s Attorney, Anissa often represents LGBTQ youth. Anissa frequently contends with entrenched homophobia, transphobia, and strong religious viewpoints attempting to dictate law and policy. She feels the need to find what is best for the each child, not what society thinks is best. She has helped push for training for judges on legal obligations, professional standards, and practices for working with LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system.

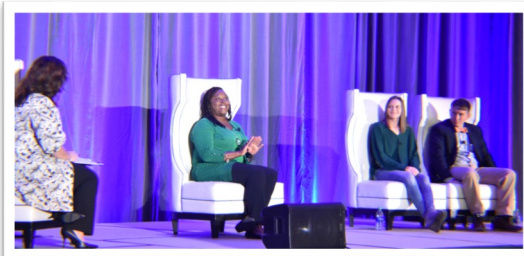
We are proud to have such a strong advocate in the legal profession in Georgia recognized nationally by the ABA and in 2019 as a [Justice Hines Award winner](#). Congratulations, Anissa!



SUMMIT, CONT'D...

ACEs to include experience with discrimination, bullying or peer violence, teen dating violence, housing insecurity or homelessness, food insecurity, living in extreme poverty, and witnessing violence in the community.

On the second day of the Summit, OCA Director Rachel Davidson introduced Lieutenant Governor Geoff Duncan as a guest speaker who has been a strong advocate for youth in foster care, especially the older youth and making sure our older youth are getting the support they need



Georgia CASA Executive Director Jen King leading discussion on permanency and achieving positive outcomes.

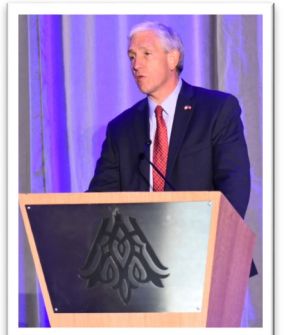
during the pandemic and beyond. Lt. Governor Duncan and his team have also worked diligently on listening to and addressing the challenges faced in the work of the child welfare community, particularly those related to mental health. Lt. Governor Duncan: "I want to personally thank you, on behalf of myself, my family, the senate, and the State of Georgia for your work—your tireless commitment to making a difference in these communities." In addition, Georgia

CASA Executive Director Jen King led a discussion with a panel of family members with direct experience with DFCS and achieving permanency for youth in foster care. One of the families was recently featured by the Atlanta Journal Constitution—read more about the youth's adoption experience [here](#).

During the closing plenary session, CIP Director Jerry Bruce introduced Presiding Justice David E. Nahmias of the Supreme Court of Georgia who reminded each individual in the child welfare system that the work they do is meaningful and gives hope to children and families that need it the most. Justice Nahmias highlighted that the number of youth in foster care went from about 15,000 to about 12,000 and that fifty percent of youth entering foster care are being reunified with their families or caregivers within 12 months. Justice Nahmias also highlighted President Donald J. Trump's executive order that was issued in June of 2020 that gave directives to further support youth in foster care and enhance services needed even more so during the pandemic.



Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan



Georgia Supreme Court Presiding Justice David E. Nahmias



*National Youth Advocate and Policy Strategist
Adrian McLemore*

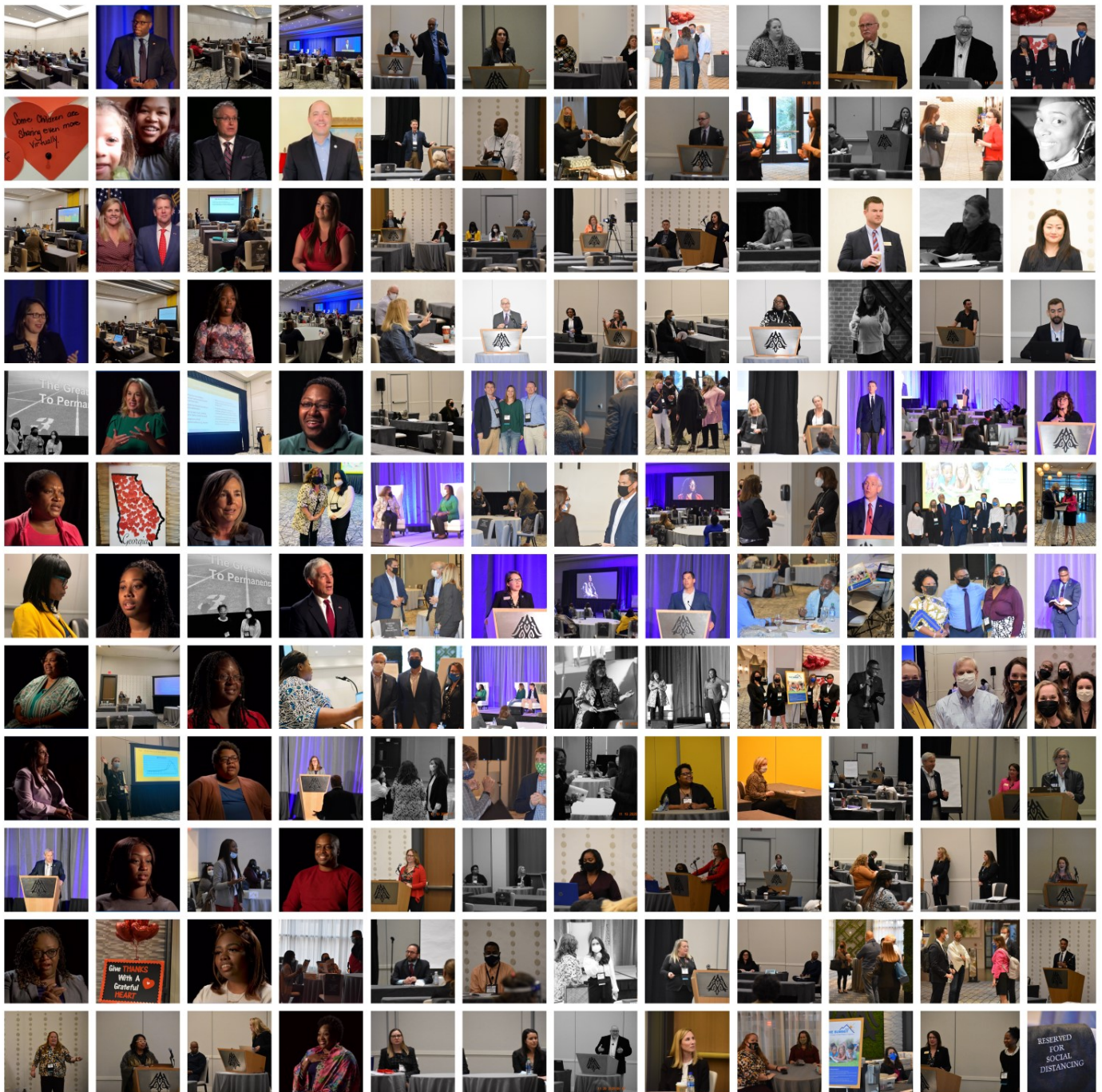
Justice Nahmias introduced Adrian McLemore who is an advocate and policy strategist to improve experiences and outcomes for youth in foster care throughout the nation. With his lived experience and humility, Adrian shared his experience leading to, during, and following foster care. Adrian's plenary session is featured in the Youth Voice feature of this month's newsletter to highlight a few points Adrian emphasized.

Many thanks to the staff, presenters, video speakers, attendees, and others who made the #Summit2020 a success! Whether you were able to join us for this year's Summit, we hope each of you will save the date for November 17-19, 2021 to join us at the Summit next year. We may not know what 2021 will bring, but we know that — together — we'll overcome any challenges ahead. Thanks again for participating and for all the work you do every day to help achieve and improve positive outcomes for our children and families in Georgia!



Where's Waldo?

See if you can spot any familiar faces in these scenes from the #Summit2020!





Accepting Nominations for the Chief Justice P. Harris Hines 2021 Awards

Nominations are open for the 2021 Chief Justice P. Harris Hines Awards! The Supreme Court of Georgia's Committee on Justice for Children and the Office of the Child Advocate will honor one Georgia attorney with the Child Advocacy Award and one DFCS case manager with the Case Manager of the Year Award, both for dedicated services on behalf of children. The awards are named in honor of the late Chief Justice P. Harris Hines of the Supreme Court of Georgia. Click [here](#) to nominate a Georgia attorney and [here](#) to nominate a DFCS case manager.

Nominations must be submitted by February 28, 2021. The award recipients will be recognized at the State Bar of Georgia's Annual Meeting in June 2021. The award is given based on an individual's personal achievement and commitment. It is not given to groups of people, organizations, or posthumously. Previous nominees not selected may be re-nominated.

Pictured below are the 2020 Hines Awardees, DFCS Case Manager Charles Williams and attorney Afiya Hinkson. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to hear them speak about what the Hines Awards meant to them.



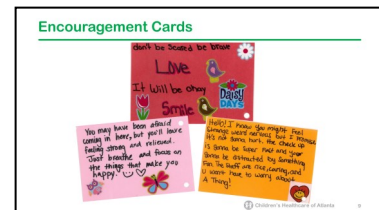
**Share your Summit photos on social media
and use #Summit2020 to tag us!**



In Case You Missed It

The #Summit2020 was filled with many great workshops with valuable information. Here's a snapshot:

- ▶ "Encouragement Cards" - written by children who have received a child sexual abuse medical examination for other children who will receive the same. Shared by Dr. Stephen Messner, "Medical Examination of Child Sexual Abuse".



- ▶ Dependency and delinquency appellate cases, "Georgia Case Law Update".
- ▶ Placement disruptions: a "short term problem with long term ramifications".—Lee Adams, "Come and Get This Kid! PAUSE Before Making a Move".
- ▶ "I am glad I 'sat' in this workshop. Really gave excellent information but also makes you think. Not overthink, just think and become intentional." - Virtual attendee regarding "Living Trauma Responsiveness"
- ▶ Suggestions for supporting reunification efforts, shared by Adrienne Forchilli and Audrey Brannen in "Reunification is an Action Word"

DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES		
How Can Foster Parents Support Reunification?	R	Reach out to parents within 24 hours of child coming into care
	E	Educate self on trauma
	U	Urge children, parents, CM's, attorneys etc. to follow through on commitments
	N	Nurture and model good parenting techniques
	I	Include parents in doctor's appointments, hair-cuts, school conferences
	F	Facilitate opportunities to share parenting and participate in case planning
	Y	Yield to judgement

- ▶ "Culture is our ways of knowing and being." - Donna Dunn, "Differences Are Good: An Exploration of Multicultural Competence"

If you were registered for The Summit—in person or virtually—you have access to all content until mid-February 2021 to catch what you missed!



PCA Georgia Helpline

Highlighted by Clarissa Seay, Helpline Coordinator

It takes parents, caregivers, and supportive **RESOURCES** to help children thrive. As family serving professionals you know parents are often in complex situations and need professional and community support. Here's how you can help:

- ✓ Encourage families you serve to **call the 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373) Helpline** to talk to trained, bilingual professionals to connect them with supportive programs in their area.
- ✓ Visit www.PCAGeorgiaHelpline.org to use the 1-800-CHILDREN Resource Map, which contains over 3,000 local and statewide programs designed to assist and support families. See what services are available in the areas where you serve families.

1-800-CHILDREN

Here to Listen. Here to Help.

1-800-244-5373 | PCAGeorgiaHelpline.org



- Readily Available**
Available online 24/7 and by phone Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm
- Bilingual**
Connect with English and Spanish speaking resource navigators by phone
- Accessible Resources**
Connects parents and caregivers with state/regional resources
- Free**
Private and available statewide to families and professionals

WHEN KIDS SAY "NO!"

OUR INSTINCT

- WE MODEL REVENGE**
"Then no TV for you!"
- WE MODEL GASLIGHTING**
"You're totally overreacting."
- WE MODEL INTIMIDATION**
"Ten, nine, eight..."
- WE MODEL CONDITIONAL LOVE**
"You're disappointing me."
- WE MODEL MANIPULATION**
"How about a cookie after?"
- WE MODEL SHAMING**
"Go to your room!"
- WE MODEL DOMINATION**
"Then I have to MAKE you."
- WE MODEL JUDGEMENT**
"You're being so selfish."

* OUR GOAL

- WE MODEL CURIOSITY**
"You don't want to. How come?"
- WE MODEL EMPATHY**
"I get that! Tell me more..."
- WE MODEL DIVERSITY**
"We've got different needs here."
- WE MODEL CREATIVITY**
"We need ideas! How can this work?"
- WE MODEL SELF-REGULATION**
"I'm going to take some breaths."
- WE MODEL VALIDATION**
"You REALLY don't want to!"
- WE MODEL BOUNDARY-SETTING**
"I can't let you hit me, honey."
- WE MODEL RESPECT**
"Totally. Can I tell you why?"

RAISE & RESIST! #jointheupbringing @upbringing.co WWW.UPBRINGING.CO



Our office will be closed on Dec. 24-25 for state holidays.

Virtual 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](#).
- ✓ Dec. 2: Breaking Through Barriers—Elevating the Voices of Young People. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Dec. 2: Webinar on Poverty Perspective by PCA Georgia. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Dec. 5: Adulting 101 Youth Workshop by MHA Georgia. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Dec. 7: Last day to register to vote in the January runoff election. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Dec. 8: Webinar on Georgia's Response to CSEC. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Dec. 10: CHOA Webinar on Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse in Georgia. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Jan. 19: Mental Health Day at the Capitol. More info [here](#).



New Trafficking Hotline: 1-866-END-HTGA

Effective October 1, 2020, the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia (CACGA) CSEC Response Team Georgia began operating a new trafficking hotline number: **1-866-END-HTGA**. This 24 hour hotline receives reports of suspected trafficking, provides assistance to victims of human trafficking, and connects callers to additional resources.



CACGA's response to reports may include the provision of collaborative multidisciplinary team assessments and services for suspected trafficking victims; community based follow-up care and after care services through multidisciplinary coordination and intensive case management/enhanced family advocacy; and coordination with existing anti-trafficking organizations and law enforcement agencies to develop and conduct trainings for professionals serving trafficking victims and community members working to identify trafficking victims.

In addition to this new CSEC Response Team, CACGA and local Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) will continue providing the services they currently provide. For further information, visit [here](#). For additional information on recognizing the signs of human trafficking, visit [here](#).

Updated Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan

The Prevention and Community Support Section of the Division of Family and Children Services and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia has taken action to develop a statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan (CANPP). Since its last version 20 years ago, state agencies and organizations and various stakeholders, including state and local government leaders, community-based and human services providers, early childhood educators, parents, caregivers, and faith-based organizations, have developed a new vision for child and family well-being in Georgia.

Virtually, on September 16, 2020, the 10-year plan was launched at the Georgia Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. Click [here](#) to download the updated CANPP and to learn more about its implementation.

November is National Caregivers Month



**Caregivers make life possible.
THANK YOU!**



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**.

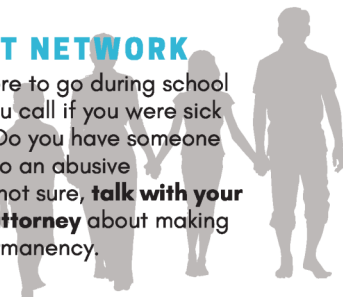


HOUSING

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.



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
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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.

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