

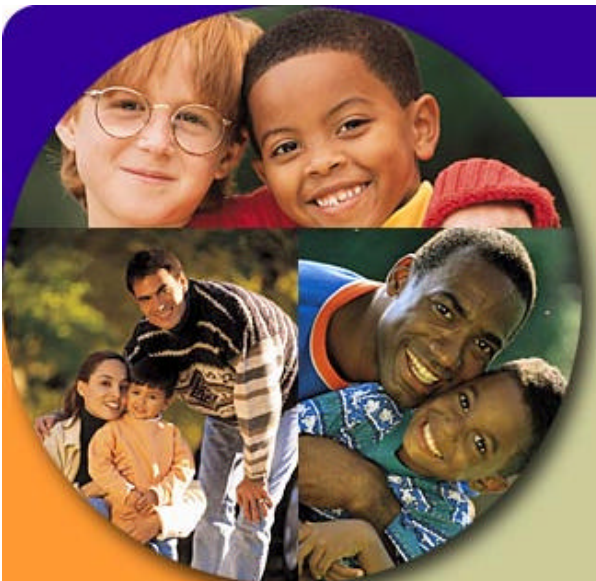


OCA Office of Child Advocate

# OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

*For the Protection of Children*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2002



**DeAlvah Hill Simms, Esq.**  
**Child Advocate**  
Office of the Child Advocate  
3330 Northside Drive  
Suite 100  
Macon, Georgia 31210  
(478) 757-2661  
dsimms@gachildadvocate.org  
[www.gachildadvocate.org](http://www.gachildadvocate.org)

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with my statutory responsibility as the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children, I respectfully submit this annual report reviewing the period from January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002.<sup>1</sup>

## HISTORY

During recent years the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (“DFCS”) has come under intense scrutiny concerning inadequate and untimely responses to cases of abuse and neglect of children in Georgia. Several of these cases resulted in fatalities and eventual prosecution of either foster or natural parents. Media coverage intensified the growing concern of Georgia’s citizenry and in late 1999 Georgia received national exposure in a segment of 60 Minutes that highlighted failures within the protective services system in the state. The focus of the 60 Minutes segment was on the death of Terrell Peterson, a five-year-old Atlanta youth who died of severe abuse despite repeated warnings from medical personnel to DFCS that he was in extreme danger.

During the 2000 session of the Georgia General Assembly, legislation designed to improve the state’s child protective services and to bring more accountability to DFCS was introduced. With the creation of the Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”) in 2000, Georgia became the twelfth state to open an independent ombudsman office designed to protect the rights of children in state care and to monitor the agencies charged with protecting those children. The Child Advocate serves for a term of three years and may be reappointed. The Child Advocate acts independently of any state official, department, or agency in performing the duties of office. The OCA is given independent oversight of DFCS and others responsible for providing services to or caring for children who are victims of child abuse or neglect, or whose domestic situation requires intervention by the state.

The rights, powers, and duties of the Child Advocate are set forth in O.C.G.A. § 15-11-170 through §15-11-177 and a complete version has been included in this report as Appendix A. Most notable of the powers and duties are those to:

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<sup>1</sup> The 2001 Annual Report covered a period ending on November 30, 2001 so this report does highlight some of the details from December 2001.

- 1) Investigate and seek the resolution of complaints made by persons where it appears that the health, safety, or welfare of a child has been adversely affected;
- 2) Communicate privately with any child and with the child's parents or guardian;
- 3) Have access to all records and files of DFCS concerning or relating to a child;
- 4) Inspect, copy and subpoena records held by clerks of the various courts, law enforcement agencies, service providers, including medical and mental health, and placement providers;
- 5) Review the facilities and procedures of any institution or residence, public and private, where a child has been placed by DFCS or a court and is currently residing;
- 6) Engage in programs of public education and legislative advocacy concerning the needs of children requiring the intervention, protection, and supervision of courts and state and county agencies.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Office of the Child Advocate is to oversee the protection and care of children in Georgia and to advocate for their well-being. In furtherance of this mission the OCA seeks to promote the enhancement of the State's existing protective services system to ensure that our children are secure and free from abuse and neglect. The primary responsibility of this office is to monitor and oversee DFCS' operations at both the state and local levels and it is in keeping with the mission of the OCA to ensure the adequate protection of Georgia's children. We will always advocate strongly for those changes needed to enhance the protection of our children and we will strive to support communities in meeting the growing needs of abused and neglected children. The OCA's Mission and Statement of Goals are included in this report as Appendix B.

## STAFF

**DeAlvah Hill Simms** is the Child Advocate. Ms. Simms is an attorney with over fourteen years of experience. She taught middle and high school prior to attending law school. As an Assistant District Attorney in the Macon Judicial Circuit, she prosecuted crimes against children until 1997 when she left the DA's office to become the Director of Crescent House, a children's advocacy center and member of Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia, Inc. ("CACs"). Ms. Simms had returned to prosecution in the Towaliga Judicial Circuit when she was appointed by the Governor to become Georgia's first Child Advocate for the Protection of Children. Ms. Simms has served on the Board of Directors for CACs, Prevent Child Abuse Heart of Georgia, Macon-Bibb County Family Connection, the Children's Hospital Board for the Medical Center of Central Georgia, the Advisory Committee to Middle Georgia CASA, and the Board of Trustees for the Georgia Children's Museum. Ms. Simms is a member of the American Bar Association, the Georgia Bar Association, the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children ("APSAC"), the Child Welfare League of America ("CWLA") and the United States Ombudsman Association.

**Sandra Darby** is the Administrative Assistant to the Child Advocate and serves in an administrative operations role, including office manager. Recently, Ms. Darby served as a mock judge for a Young Careerist candidate going to national competition from the American Business Women's Association. Since 1999, Ms. Darby has had adjunct instructor status at Central Georgia Technical College for Finance and Business Law, Office Systems and Administration and Management. She attended Brewton Parker College and comes to the office with over twenty years of experience as an executive assistant, investigative assistant, supervisor and system administrator. Ms. Darby is active in various community and professional organizations serving in positions of leadership.

**Tammy Varnadore Taylor** had served as the Assistant Child Advocate since the opening of the office. She has a dual graduate degree in Industrial/Organizational

Psychology and Clinical Psychology from Valdosta State University and currently is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Georgia. Ms. Taylor was instrumental in developing the policies of the OCA and she coordinated and supervised the investigative unit of the office and presented at many training conferences. She has extensive experience as a professional trainer, providing supervision and coordination of the training staff while at the Georgia Academy. Ms. Taylor served as the coordinator of services to severely emotionally disturbed children while employed at River Edge Behavioral Health Center. Since 1984, she has provided psychotherapeutic services to children and families. Ms. Taylor has been involved with Georgia's Family Connection Collaborative initiative at the local, regional and state levels since its inception. Ms. Taylor's last day with the office was December 31, 2002 and we wish her well in her new position with the Department of Juvenile Justice.

**Russell A. Lewis, Sr.** is the Chief Investigator for the office. Prior to joining the office, Mr. Lewis had over twenty years experience in law enforcement where he was honored on numerous occasions both by law enforcement and community groups. Most notably, Mr. Lewis was awarded the Purple Heart by the City of Macon and was recognized for bravery, courage and dedication in the line of duty by the Georgia State Ladies' F.O.P. He was also awarded the Legion of Honor Award by the American Law Enforcement Officers' Association. Mr. Lewis won the Academic Excellence Award for criminal investigations. Mr. Lewis leads the investigative unit of the office and serves as the liaison with the State Division of Family and Children Services' fatality and serious injury review team.

**Robert Z. Hernandez** is an investigator with the Office of the Child Advocate. Prior to joining the staff of the OCA, Mr. Hernandez was a captain with the Macon Police Department with over thirty years of investigative experience. Mr. Hernandez supervised a violent crimes investigative unit with the Macon Police Department and worked closely with the Bibb County DFCS. Under his supervision and leadership, a liaison office for a Bibb County DFCS Case Manager was created to improve the working partnership between law enforcement and child protective services. Mr. Hernandez has a Bachelors

Degree in Criminal Justice and is P.O.S.T. certified. Mr. Hernandez is of Mexican ancestry and he is bilingual, fluent in both the Spanish and English languages.

**William A. Herndon** is an investigator with the OCA. He is a graduate of Mercer University and a veteran child protective services investigator with over 7 years of service to the Department of Family and Children Services. While working in the Child Protective Services Unit at Bibb County DFCS, he was assigned for 3 years as the in-house investigative liaison to the Bibb County Sheriff's Department, Macon Police Department, and the Medical Center of Central Georgia where he coordinated interactions between Law Enforcement, Medical Personnel, and DFCS and completed joint investigations on serious injuries, molestations and the deaths of children. Mr. Herndon has served on the Bibb County Multi-Disciplinary Team, Bibb County Child Fatality Review Committee, Central Georgia Council on Family Violence, and has conducted forensic interviews for a local Child Advocacy Center.

**Bobbi Nelson** is an investigator with the Office of the Child Advocate. Ms. Nelson has 6 years of experience in child protective services with the Department of Family and Children Services. Ms. Nelson has investigated over 500 child abuse cases and has trained as a forensic interviewer of children suspected of being sexually abused. Ms. Nelson has worked extensively with Law Enforcement and the Judicial System on cases of child abuse.

**Susie Tompkins** is also an investigator with the OCA. Ms. Tompkins, who joined the office in December, came to the OCA from the Department of Corrections, where she had over 16 years of experience as a Probation Officer, most recently supervising sex offenders.

**Chris Williams** is also in the investigative unit of the office. Mr. Williams has over fifteen years experience in law enforcement where he was assigned to the Criminal Investigation Division investigating violent crimes, including crimes against children. Mr. Williams has received the Officer of the Year Award and also the Crimes Against

Persons Unit Officer Award. Mr. Williams won the Academic Excellence Award for criminal investigations.

**Marsha Stone** has been OCA's Intake Technician since June 2002. She performs preliminary investigations to determine whether complaints fall within the scope of our mission; and if so, assigns cases to the Investigators. Additionally, she is responsible for investigating cases sent to OCA from the Governor's Office. Ms. Stone has been instrumental in the development and maintenance of the office's tracking and case management system so that it can be used multi-functionally for staff and advisory committee meetings and in preparation of the annual reports. Ms. Stone graduated from a three-year professional program through the State Merit System in 1997 and has worked for the State of Georgia for the past 13½ years. Ms. Stone previously worked with the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrections, and the State Board of Pardons and Parole. Ms. Stone has been an executive board member of the Georgia Juvenile Services Association since 1998 and was appointed the position of interim-Secretary in 1998 and then elected Treasurer in 1999, serving in this position until the current term. She now serves in the position of Second Vice-President.

**Sherry Bryant** is the Victim Advocate Program Manager. Ms. Bryant was a child protective services investigator with 9 years of experience with the Department of Family and Children Services. She worked 2 years with the Bibb County Solicitor's Office where she created the Victim Witness Assistance Program for the State Court of Bibb County. Ms. Bryant has trained as a forensic interviewer through CornerHouse Children's Advocacy Center, based in Minnesota. She serves on the Central Georgia Council on Family Violence and was a member of the Bibb County Domestic Violence Task Force.

The OCA now has ten state-funded positions: the Child Advocate, the Administrative Assistant to the Child Advocate, the Assistant Child Advocate, the Chief Investigator, five Investigators and the Intake Technician. The Victim Advocate Program

Manager is funded through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's ("CJCC") Victims of Crime Act Grant Program.

The OCA enjoyed the services of seven students made possible through the Governor's Intern Program, the Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at Emory University, the Child Advocacy Project of Central Georgia CASA and Mercer University School of Law and a sub grant from the Children and Youth Coordinating Council ("CYCC") of a grant under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. They include Diane Fisher of California Western School of Law and San Diego State University, Carolina Watts of Pepperdine University School of Law, Lori McDowell, Amy Bell and April Lee of Walter F. George School of Law at Mercer University, Mercedes Shuler of Wesleyan College, and Anita Reynolds of Valdosta State University. We offer our sincere gratitude to each of these programs and schools for providing these interns to work with the office.



## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The OCA is fortunate to have an advisory committee of seven individuals dedicated to helping fulfill our mission of protecting our children. The members include:

- Allyson Anderson<sup>2</sup>, an attorney and Director of Advocacy for Georgia CASA, was appointed by former Governor Barnes and served as the chair of the committee.
- Dr. Alma Noble is the Director of Baby World Daycare Center in Albany and was appointed by Lt. Governor Mark Taylor.
- Dr. Joy Maxey is a practicing pediatrician in Atlanta and was appointed by the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Honorable Tom Murphy.
- Susan Krysalca is a social worker and was appointed by former Governor Barnes.
- Dr. John Adams is a practicing psychologist in Statesboro and was appointed by Lt. Governor Taylor.
- J. Branson Parker is a practicing attorney in Athens and was also appointed by the former Speaker of the House.
- Judge Tracy Graham is the juvenile court judge in Chayton County and Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Norman Fletcher reappointed her to a second two-year term during the summer 2002.

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<sup>2</sup> Ms. Anderson joined the OCA as the Director of Policy and Evaluation effective February 1, 2003, replacing Ms. Taylor who joined the mental health staff of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

## INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

The OCA opened 654 cases for investigation during its first year of operation<sup>3</sup> and opened another 547 cases for review and investigation in 2002. Investigative graphs are included in this report as Appendix C. In so many of the cases opened for investigation, the common problematic themes that are evidenced again this year relate to caseload sizes, poor training, general lack of best social work practices and inconsistent application of existing policies. A representative sample of investigative and advocacy summaries of the type of cases OCA handles is set forth in Appendix D.

The OCA opened 547 cases from 105 different Georgia counties from January through December of 2002. The following chart shows the number of cases per county, grouped by DFCS classification code.<sup>4</sup>

Class	County	#Cases	Class	County	#Cases	Class	County	#Cases
6	Fulton	47	3	Camden	1	2	Hancock	1
5	Bibb	30	3	Coffee	6	2	Haralson	7
5	Chatham	9	3	Columbia	2	2	Harris	1
5	Clarke	5	3	Crisp	2	2	Heard	3
5	Clayton	11	3	Decatur	2	2	Jeff Davis	2
5	Cobb	11	3	Effingham	2	2	Johnson	2
5	Dekalb	27	3	Fayette	7	2	Jones	7
5	Dougherty	2	3	Forsyth	2	2	Lamar	2
5	Floyd	10	3	Gordon	4	2	Lee	2
5	Gwinnett	18	3	Greene	2	2	Long	1
5	Lowndes	2	3	Hart	3	2	Lumpkin	3
5	Muscogee	6	3	Jackson	2	2	Madison	2
5	Richmond	11	3	Meriwether	3	2	McIntosh	2
4	Baldwin	8	3	Mitchell	1	2	Monroe	5
4	Bartow	3	3	Murray	2	2	Morgan	1
4	Carroll	7	3	Paulding	6	2	Oconee	2
4	Cherokee	11	3	Peach	2	2	Pickens	4
4	Colquitt	4	3	Polk	5	2	Pierce	1
4	Coweta	13	3	Stephens	5	2	Pike	5
4	Douglas	12	3	Toombs	1	2	Pulaski	3
4	Glynn	5	3	Upson	5	2	Rabun	4
4	Hall	11	3	Walker	6	2	Screven	1
4	Henry	12	3	Walton	2	2	Telfair	2
4	Houston	10	3	Wayne	3	2	Twiggs	2
4	Laurens	5	3	Worth	8	2	Union	6
4	Liberty	6	2	Berrien	1	2	White	3
4	Newton	2	2	Brantley	1	2	Wilkes	1
4	Rockdale	3	2	Butts	4	2	Wilkinson	1
4	Spalding	10	2	Chattooga	1	1	Atkinson	1
4	Sumter	1	2	Crawford	4	1	Banks	3
4	Thomas	1	2	Dodge	4	1	Clay	1
4	Tift	1	2	Dooley	2	1	Dade	2
4	Troup	7	2	Elbert	1	1	Echols	1
4	Ware	1	2	Evans	1	1	Talbot	2
4	Whitfield	7	2	Fannin	4	1	Towns	4
3	Barrow	10	2	Franklin	3			
3	Burke	1	2	Gilmer	4			

<sup>3</sup> This number includes the data from December 2001 when 43 cases were opened for investigation by the OCA which data was not included in the 2001 Annual Report.

<sup>4</sup> Classification codes are based on county population and size

The lack of consistency in the counties' application of DFCS' policies and procedures continued to be a concern noted by investigators in the office this year. DFCS did initiate a training program designed to minimize the inconsistencies in the practice from county to county and to clarify questionable policies. Some improvement has been noted; however, stronger training measures to ensure consistency in the practice must be implemented. Again this year, many common problems were noted by the OCA through the investigations and they are discussed below. The order in which these issues are discussed is in no way indicative of their importance. Each of these problems presents a serious impediment to securing the well-being of Georgia's children and must be addressed before significant positive improvement in the child welfare system will be forthcoming. Appropriate funding to develop the necessary resources for DFCS to be successful is an absolute must.

#### Case Management:

The OCA conducted a DFCS staff survey of all Georgia counties in September. The results of the survey indicate that Georgia not only has a crisis in caseload numbers within the frontline workers but that we also have mismanagement of the positions that are filled. There is a great discrepancy in caseload sizes within the same county department amongst workers holding the same positions. This must be addressed and equalized in order to better utilize the available workforce. The detailed analysis of the staff survey is found at the OCA website.

Georgia DFCS continues to operate in crisis mode, especially in the more populous counties. The county caseworkers that deal directly with children and families still suffer from high caseloads and high staff turnover and the vacancy rate remains high. Inexperienced frontline workers coupled with inadequate supervision result in bad outcomes for the families and children that are so dependent on an effective protective services system. The resulting low morale, and negative public image only serve to compound the problems of the struggling system. The need to lower caseloads among the caseworkers is paramount. Caseworkers in Georgia have caseloads that significantly exceed national standards of 15 to 1<sup>5</sup>. All professionals know that there is a direct link

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<sup>5</sup> See the Final Report of the Governor's Action Group for Safe Children at [www.Georgia-kids.com](http://www.Georgia-kids.com)

between workloads and the resulting safety of children because of the vital importance of the relationship among the child, the child's family and the caseworker.

DFCS has the major role in child protection. An adequate and well-trained workforce is the critical component in increasing the safety and well-being of children in Georgia. Too many caseworkers appear to have a lack of understanding of basic social work principles, which results in a myriad of problems impacting the level of success achieved by families. The pervasive problem with these high caseloads has led to many policy violations within DFCS. The lack of true supervision was evidenced in numerous cases. Very little evidence exists to suggest supervisors were involved in case assessment and determinations. The need for direct supervision is great due to the high turnover within the department.

We found little information in case files to indicate that mandated visits with family and children were substantive, and related to the issues for which the case had been opened. Families, and most especially the children, seldom are truly involved in the development of their own case plans. Caseworkers frequently fail to review previous case histories that can often provide very valuable insight into the families and children with whom the worker has to interact. Meaningful communication between protective services and placement workers is often lacking. There is a true disconnect between child protective services and child placement services resulting in poor and sometimes dangerous placement decisions. Too often inexperienced caseworkers make critical placement decisions without the benefit of adequate supervisory input.

The lack of communication between DFCS and outside agencies, including those providing services to the children and families is problematic. DFCS fails to provide information to service and placement providers when such information is absolutely necessary to successful treatment of the child. If the lines of communication are not open and those working with the children are not fully informed, the treatment and proper placement of the children is in jeopardy.

Cases are closed routinely without thoroughly evaluating risk or safety. While DFCS did implement stronger risk assessment criteria this year, this remains an area of concern worth noting in this report. Of particular concern is the fact that the caseworkers still seem to miss some of the basic indicators of a family in crisis when evaluating for

continued risk before closure. The OCA noted again this year that cases involving a substance abusing parent were often closed prematurely and without appropriate supports in place to foster success in staying substance free. Substance abuse by parents remains one of the greatest challenges to successful reunification and DFCS needs to strengthen the programs designed to work with families on these issues. All of the problems noted combine to create a system of case management that does not ensure the safety of children.

#### Mental Health:

Despite numerous reports citing the deficiency in mental health resources for Georgia's children, Georgia remains critically deficient in such services for abused and neglected children and their families who so often are in dire need of help. Children routinely suffer significant delays between entering state custody and initiation of services appropriate to their needs. Provision of mental health services for this population is fragmented, inconsistent, under-funded and difficult to access.<sup>6</sup> In many cases, assessments were conducted and the information and recommendations in the assessments were used to develop case plans for the children and families. Far too often the OCA discovered a complete breakdown in the provision of mental health services as set forth in the case plan. The failure to provide mental health services resulted largely from the overwhelming caseloads or from the fact that the services simply were not available in the community.

Georgia is currently piloting a new service delivery system in Fulton and DeKalb Counties based upon a Levels of Care model ("LOC") incorporating wrap-around services. Under LOC each child will be "leveled" for need and services, which in turn will provide resources and services that follow that child while in care, regardless of the location of placement. LOC better ensures that children get the treatment and services they need from the provider they need. This system should also help to maximize the federal funds available to offset the state's cost in the provision of appropriate services to the children in foster care. The OCA strongly recommends expanding its usage throughout the state. Statewide implementation of LOC holds the promise of efficiency,

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<sup>6</sup> See the Final Report of the Governor's Action Group for Safe Children

effectiveness, flexibility of services and greater success for children in state care. The LOC system will enable Georgia to address deficiencies in both the mental health system and the placement system. Emphasis is on placing children so that their needs can be met rather than where a vacancy happens to exist in the system.

The greatest result of implementing the LOC model is the positive impact it will have on the children: children will be provided with services based on their needs. Other benefits of fully implementing the LOC model include: 1) increased flexibility in the provision of services to children who are in the custody of the State; 2) improved outcomes for children in State care; 3) more mental health services, and; 4) improved efficiency and effectiveness in service provision.

All levels of care provide individualized treatment and support services based upon an individual written service plan that identifies for each child and family the treatment goals and needed services and resources. Each child is to be served in the least restrictive, most family-centered and community-based setting that meets his or her treatment needs and ensures the safety of the child, the family and the community. The success of LOC will be based on its implementation with funding that is sufficient to cover the cost of services to children. Under the LOC model, placements are designed to meet the child's needs and are to be consistent with placing the child permanently and in a timely manner.

#### Placement:

The lack of appropriate placement resources remains among the most serious of issues plaguing DFCS. The Governor's Action Group for Safe Children (the "Action Group") was established in January and was charged with developing a plan for safe placements for children in state custody who could not be maintained safely in their own homes. The Governor instructed the Action Group to focus its work on ensuring that within Georgia's placement system: 1) First placement is the right placement; 2) Statewide access to safe and appropriate placements exists; and 3) A seamless system of placement options exists.<sup>7</sup> The LOC model described above, if fully implemented

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<sup>7</sup> See the Final Report of the Governor's Action Group for Safe Children

throughout the state, will help significantly with the problems surrounding the lack of sufficient safe and appropriate placements for children in the state's custody.

Georgia needs more family foster homes. Many remain overcrowded due to the continued practice of obtaining waivers on the limits set for the approved number of children in the homes. Overcrowding of foster homes has resulted in several serious problems. Relationships between foster parents and DFCS are not maintained at a partnership level. Foster parents are no more able to handle the overcrowding of their homes than caseworkers are able to handle the overwhelming caseloads. The overcrowding in the homes has resulted in the placement of children that should not be placed together, often times creating a danger to all persons living in the home. Through the OCA's work with the serious injury and fatality review committee of the state Division of Family and Children Services, recommendations have been made with regard to the number of children that may be placed in a home and the narrow circumstances under which waivers should be granted. Waivers should only be utilized to keep sibling groups together. The implementation of these policy changes is strongly encouraged by the OCA.

With the statewide implementation of the LOC system, the increased demand for therapeutic group home placements will better be met. Again this year the OCA noted many cases where children were in basic level foster care when it was obvious from just a file review that a higher level of care was indicated. Unfortunately for many of these children, they suffered due to escalating mental health problems while awaiting proper placement. The resulting costs to the state are far higher than they would have been if the state had addressed the issues upon the child's entry into care. The state must implement a system that properly identifies and meets a child's needs on the front end rather than waiting for the foreseeable disruption in placement after placement.

#### Medical and Dental Health:

DFCS must place high priority on the physical health of the state's children and ensure a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary health, mental health and developmental assessment within one month of a child's placement. Ongoing primary and preventative health care services are absolutely a must and should include reassessments at a

minimum of every six months. All records should be maintained in the case file. These children are totally dependent on the state for the provision of health related services and the state should do no less for them than we would do for our own children.

#### Attorney Guardians ad Litem:

The OCA continued to identify issues regarding the representation of children by attorney guardians ad litem ("GALs") in a number of judicial circuits this year. The children involved in deprivation proceedings should have knowledgeable and trained attorneys to ensure their rights are protected. To address the issues identified through the office's investigations, the OCA sponsored its first ever training for Guardians ad Litem in September and that training is described in detail later in this report. Our investigations indicated that attorney GALs continue to be appointed just prior to the hearings and often do not meet with the child or the child's caseworker, family or other witnesses before court. Indeed, the *OCA actually had to pay* for the services of a GAL in one circuit when the Court would not appoint a GAL to ensure that the interests of the infant child were protected. Advocacy on behalf of a child necessitates knowledge of the juvenile court system and the circumstances on which the petitions of deprivation are based. Adequate preparation for the court proceedings is a must and it involves more than sitting with the child at a table in the courtroom.

#### Special Assistant Attorneys General:

The problems noted in the 2001 Annual Report remain largely unchanged despite the efforts of many. The county DFCS offices are penalized for failure to comply with state and federal regulations as a direct result of decisions made and documents prepared by the Courts and Special Assistant Attorneys General ("SAAGs"). SAAGs are the attorneys who represent DFCS in the juvenile courts. Many counties continue to have difficulty in obtaining timely court orders with wording that satisfies all state and federal requirements. Before beginning practice in this area, specialized training on DFCS policy and procedure should be mandatory for all SAAGs. Many of the SAAGs are unfamiliar with the basic policies of the department and render advice inconsistent with the best practice of child protection. DFCS caseworkers and SAAGs need more training



to assure that legal documents meet federal and state requirements and that children are not languishing in the system because of avoidable delays.

The state must also address the deficiency in the compensation of the SAAGs who represent DFCS when compared to the SAAGs who represent the other agencies of the state. Most notable is the difference in the standard hourly rate paid to a SAAG representing DFCS in deprivation cases (\$52.50/hour) and the standard hourly rate paid to a SAAG representing the Department of Transportation (\$125.00/hour). The following chart further illustrates the differential in compensation to SAAGs representing various agencies and departments within state government.

<b>Type of Case</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>
DFCS - Deprivation Cases	\$ 52.50
DFCS - Termination Cases	\$ 55.00
Child Support Cases	\$ 52.50
DOT/Standard SAAG rate	\$125.00
DOT/Certain Business Loss Cases	\$140.00
DOAS/DOT Worker's Comp Cases/Standard Rate	\$ 85.00
Inmate Litigation - Pro Se Cases	\$ 75.00
Inmate Litigation - Inmate Represented by Counsel	\$100.00
Tort Cases	\$100.00
Post-Conviction Habeas Corpus Cases	\$ 60.00

This hourly rate differential cannot continue if Georgia is serious about protecting the abused and neglected children of this state.

### **EMERGENCY SHELTER INVESTIGATIONS**

Within the first six months of opening, the OCA conducted extensive investigations of the two publicly operated emergency shelters for children located in Fulton and Dekalb counties. The full investigative reports can be found on the OCA website at [www.gachildadvocate.org](http://www.gachildadvocate.org). Of primary concern in both shelter investigations

was the lack of any regulatory oversight of the facility by the Office of Regulatory Services – Child Care Licensing Section (“ORS”). The resulting problems from this lack of oversight are discussed in each investigative report. The conclusion of the OCA was that these facilities are sub-standard, and if owned and operated by a private provider, they would never pass inspection and would never be licensed to care for children. The state cannot continue to hold itself to a standard lower than that to which it holds private providers. While each of the shelters is now closed and the OCA monitored the closings, the closures were not implemented timely in response to the shelter investigations conducted and reported by the OCA. As a result, the State of Georgia currently is involved in a substantial and costly federal lawsuit based in large part on the conditions at these shelters and the DFCS’ practice of continuing to place children in shelters despite the reports from the OCA. This resulting lawsuit and expenditure of taxpayer money in defense thereof rather than on services for the children exhibit the need for the OCA to have the independent authority to initiate suit on behalf of the abused and neglected children in the state of Georgia. The enabling legislation for the Office of the Child Advocate should be amended to allow for such authority.

Similar lawsuits in other states have proven outrageously expensive and utilize funds that could be better spent on direct services to children and enhancement of the child protective services system. The OCA recommends that Georgia push toward a quick settlement of this lawsuit. The OCA monitored the closings of each shelter and could also monitor and ensure DFCS' compliance with the terms of such a settlement if agreed to by the Court.

## **TRAINING AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

Specialized training and education of all those working in child protection and deprivation are necessary. In September, the OCA held its first ever training conference for guardians ad litem and it is discussed in detail below. The OCA participated in numerous training conferences and collaborative efforts throughout the year in order to promote a well-trained workforce across the various disciplines. Presentations conducted by the OCA are listed in Appendix E. Further training initiatives are needed to address specific concerns outlined in the investigative findings of this report. Cross-training is a

positive and cost effective way of meeting the educational needs of the various disciplines and encouraging communication. A few topics for inclusion in future training are DFCS policies and procedures, child development, medical and psychological aspects of child abuse and neglect, family dynamics and legal issues in deprivation proceedings.

#### Child Placement Conference

Since the opening of the OCA, we have been an active participant in the Child Placement Conference, the largest annual cross-training conference offered in Georgia. The hosts of this conference include DFCS, the Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children ("GAHSC"), the Supreme Court's Child Placement Project, Georgia Court Appointed Special Advocates ("CASA") and the Department of Juvenile Justice ("DJJ"). The attendees of this conference include new and experienced DFCS case managers and supervisors, juvenile court judges, attorneys, CASAs, independent living coordinators, DJJ case managers, mental health professionals, group home staff and caseworkers, citizen panel review staff and volunteers and others working in the area of foster care and placement.

The overall evaluations from the Child Placement Conference show consistently high marks and the workshops are well attended. Now in its fourth year, the Child Placement Conference has emerged as the best cross-training opportunity available to child welfare professionals in Georgia. To save resources, OCA is a key planning partner in the October 2003 Child Placement Conference and is involved in the curriculum development for the upcoming conference. A specialized training track with classes geared for GALs and SAAGs is in development in order to build better results for our children. Plans to include a legal track for attorney GALs and SAAGs will increase the opportunities for communication and will be a cost effective means to address some of the issues identified in this report. Further, this will allow us to focus the conference workshops on the greatest areas of practice deficiency emerging in the OCA's data. The OCA highly recommends the Child Placement Conference for all people working in or connected to the child welfare system.

## 2002 Guardian ad Litem Conference

With funding approved by the General Assembly in the 2002 legislative session, the Office of the Child Advocate hosted its first-ever training seminar for 154 of Georgia's attorney and volunteer Guardians ad Litem on September 19-20, 2002 in Macon. GALs are charged with representing our children's best interests and must present adequate information to the court so that sound decisions about our children's safety and futures can be made.

In OCA's 2001 Annual Report, significant deficiencies were identified in the legal representation of our children in abuse and neglect cases. OCA's investigations revealed that attorney GALs are often appointed just prior to court hearings and often do not meet the child or other interested parties before court. We stated then, and repeat it now, that this practice is unacceptable. Effective advocacy requires knowledge of the juvenile court system and adequate preparation. Our children are depending on GALs to navigate them through the complex juvenile court and foster care systems so that they have safe and permanent homes as quickly as possible and do not languish in state care.

Over 150 GALs from across Georgia participated in this training endeavor and the evaluations from this effort overwhelmingly affirmed the need for more training. Training seminars were conducted on such topics as trial skills and preparation, direct and cross-examination, legal principles of juvenile court, substance abuse and mental health, DFCS programs, emotional abuse and its invisible scars, and many others. Ninety-six (96%) of participants rated their overall conference experience as "Excellent" or "Good" and the majority of written comments stated that the "variety and quality of the workshops and information provided by presenters" were the best things about the conference. Indeed, when asked what action they would take upon leaving the conference, the most common response was that GALs would incorporate the information and suggestions learned into their daily practice. Many participants simply said "thank you!" for conducting a quality training experience and urged OCA to offer it again.

OCA is committed to further raising the bar on representation of abused and neglected children in Georgia. To achieve this objective, OCA has established a Georgia chapter of the National Association of Counsel for Children whose mission is to improve

the lives of children through legal advocacy. The Georgia Association of Counsel for Children will provide relevant and current information on GAL practice through electronic list serves, updates on changes in federal and Georgia child welfare statutory law as well as case law, and DFCS policy and procedure. We will also identify and utilize our best and brightest GALs to provide advanced courses in trial techniques and complex case litigation.

During the summer of 2003, student interns with OCA and the Supreme Court of Georgia Child Placement Project plan to undertake a review of the quality of representation for children in our courts. With research-based information, we can utilize that data to refine and target our training initiatives to raise the bar even higher so that Georgia is a model for other states and leads the way in legal advocacy for children.

#### *Finding Words Georgia*

The National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse and CornerHouse Children's Advocacy Center have developed a model multi-disciplinary forensic interviewing course entitled *Finding Words*. Because of the extremely long waiting list that has occurred each time the course has been offered, the National Center and CornerHouse decided to offer the training through approved states in a program called Half a Nation By 2010. In 2001, the OCA, in collaboration with DFCS and Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia ("CACs"), successfully applied for the contract to bring *Finding Words* to Georgia. The OCA was the lead agency and wrote the application package. We are pleased that Georgia was one of the six states chosen and the *Finding Words Georgia* held its first class in January 2003. At the close of the third weeklong training session in June 2003, Georgia will have faculty trained and certified to teach the rest of the state. The training sessions scheduled for April and June of 2003 already have waiting lists, exhibiting the great need for such a training program in Georgia. The OCA intends to continue to offer *Finding Words Georgia* training opportunities to the teams in Georgia in order to promote consistency in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse throughout the state.

## **MONITORING TO BRING POSITIVE CHANGE**

During our second year, the OCA continued to monitor DFCS through participation in various initiatives and membership on certain important committees. The committees are listed in Appendix F. In order to make recommendations to correct the identified practice deficiencies, the OCA must be aware at all times of the changes envisioned by DFCS. Currently, DFCS is involved in a number of initiatives designed to enhance the practice within the department. The OCA has worked with these committees to promote the best plans possible for Georgia's children.

### SACWIS:

DFCS is working with the Georgia Technology Authority ("GTA") to build a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System ("SACWIS"). SACWIS should be designed to support national best practice standards in child welfare and, when the system is complete, the automated case management tool will enable DFCS to provide more effective and efficient services to families and children. The system is also designed to ensure compliance with all federal reporting requirements. The OCA is participating in this effort with DFCS and GTA in order to ensure that the final SACWIS product actually improves the quality of services to children and families and that the implementation of the system helps workers in completing the requirements of their jobs. The Office of the Child Advocate will continue to monitor this effort until a final, useable product is implemented.

After 14 years and numerous failed attempts to build a child welfare information system, the latest SACWIS project timeline puts delivery of a partially working system some time around December, 2004 and the SACWIS team has not yet defined what functionality will be delivered at that time.

DFCS managers and community partners have been working for two years on detailed work plans to lift the agency out of crisis. To measure progress, efficiently allocate resources, gauge the needs of the children in the state's care, and ensure accountability, those plans depend on the delivery of information not available from the

current systems. Failure to meet the ambitious goals DFCS has set for itself will carry significant federal fines.

Because of poor data quality and the failure to incorporate a street address, the current DFCS information systems cannot tell us the number of placements that a child experiences. The information systems cannot identify overcrowded foster homes. It is impossible to gauge what resources are needed and where they are needed, because assessment information is not recorded into an information system. Expensive assessments are often repeated, because previous assessments are not available. Georgia loses millions of dollars in federal Title IV-E reimbursements because juvenile court orders do not contain required language, a problem easily remedied by minor modifications to current information systems.

As far as the OCA can determine, there are no plans for improving the current systems or managing the information needs of the organization over the next two years. Most of these needs could be met through minor modifications to the current systems that could be implemented in a matter of a few months. The cost of these modifications would be a tiny fraction of the cost of the SACWIS planning process during that same period of time.

#### Federal Review - Georgia's Program Improvement Plan:

DFCS participated in the Family and Children Services Federal Review during the summer of 2001. The Child Advocate served on the Child Welfare Advisory Committee which was established to help DFCS prepare for the Federal Review. Three counties participated in the review: Fulton, Carroll and Toombs Counties. The Federal Review is designed to evaluate how well Georgia is performing in protecting and providing for our children. Georgia failed in many, but not all, areas of the review and DFCS was required to develop a Program Improvement Plan ("PIP") to address each of the practice deficiencies identified through the review process. The Federal Review noted many of the same problems identified in OCA investigations and outlined in our first annual report. The common theme throughout the report is that Georgia is seriously lacking in resources to support children and families identified as "at risk".

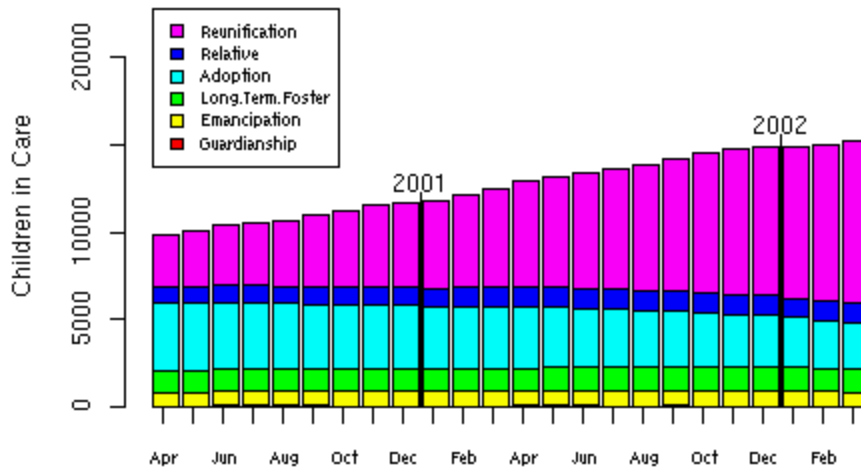
The OCA participated in the development of Georgia's PIP. The federal partners have approved the PIP and the OCA continues to monitor Georgia's progress under the plan.

Foster Care System's Resource Needs and Achieving Timely Permanency:

In April 2000, at approximately the time the General Assembly passed legislation creating OCA, nearly 10,000 children were in foster care in Georgia. By March 2002, that number had exploded to nearly 15,000 children, representing an increase of 50%. The chart below illustrates this dramatic trend according to the permanency plan for these children.

**Figure 1<sup>8</sup>**

**Numbers of Children in Care by Permanency Goal, April 2000 through March 2002**



To better forecast future resource requirements, we must account for both the number of children in the system at any time and the length of time that those children remain in the system. Having many children in foster care with short stays can require

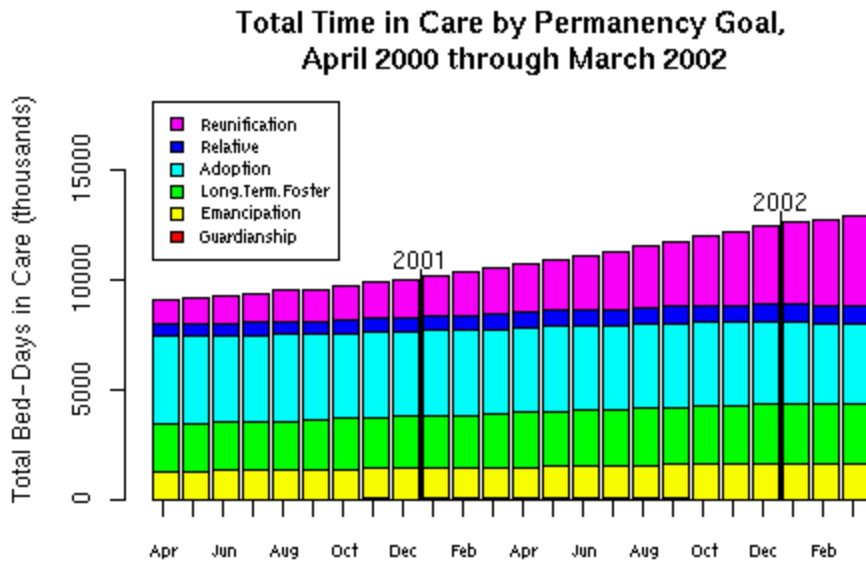
<sup>8</sup> Figures 1 and 2 are profiles of the permanency goals of the children in state foster care. The bars in the figures are made up of color-coded segments whose heights reflect the numbers of foster children having each of the six permanency goals. Note that so few children have a permanency goal of guardianship that they do not show up on this illustration. These figures were derived from data reported by Georgia to the federal government through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) covering children in state care between April 2000 and March 2002. Analysis done by Andrew Barclay, Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic at Emory University.



just as many resources as having few children in the system with long lengths of stay. Public health researchers often refer to this as measuring “person-time”.

During the same two-year period, the aggregate person-time that children spent in foster care increased by 42% as illustrated in Figure 2 below. In fact, as of March 31, 2002, more than 800 children still remained in state care more than 24 months after their parents’ rights were terminated.

**Figure 2<sup>9</sup>**



This is unacceptable. Our children need safe and permanent homes as quickly as possible so that they do not languish in an already overloaded foster care system that does not adequately meet their needs. The negative consequences to children who spend too much time in foster care are far reaching. Research demonstrates that children who grow up in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school and are at significantly greater risk of juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, homelessness, and public dependency as adults. We owe our children an opportunity for a far brighter future.

<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 uses “Bed-Days” as its basic unit of measure: A child in an out-of-home placement for 1 year consumes 365 bed-days of resources. The number of bed-days that each foster child consumes is arrived at by simply adding up the number of days that the child has been in out-of-home care. If we add up the total number of bed-days for all children in foster care we have our indicator. Three children staying 100 days each will have the same weight as a single child staying for 300 days, thus giving us a truer picture of resources consumed in caring for those children.

Priority must be given to ensuring compliance with existing federal and state mandates to achieve more timely permanency for our children. County by county data on achieving timely permanency, whether by reunification or adoption, as compared to federal standards, appears in Appendices G and H.

If Georgia's leadership is to be proactive in reforming our child welfare system, they must employ methods to monitor and forecast resource requirements before the system lapses into further crisis. The trends in Figures 1 and 2 above are undeniable – Georgia's foster care system is removing more children and those children are spending more time in out-of-home care. Current staffing levels cannot sustain this pace of growth and the resulting drain on available resources.

### **VICTIM ADVOCACY GRANT**

In October of 2001, the OCA secured a federal Victims of Crime Act ("VOCA") grant through the CJCC to begin a victim advocacy program. Through the addition of this program, the office is able to represent children in state care in accessing victim compensation funds and appropriate services. We assist children who are involved simultaneously in child welfare, law enforcement and the various court systems to ensure the protection of the child victim's rights. We offer our thanks to the CJCC for such a generous grant award.

The Victim Advocacy Program served 108 victims in the year 2002. These victims were from 35 counties around the state. Most of these victims received referral information for resources in their community. Three victims were assisted in receiving Temporary Protective Orders and criminal justice advocacy was provided in other cases. Victim Compensation information was also provided to a number of victims. The victim advocate works closely with Victim Assistance programs around the state in providing victims with information regarding counseling, child advocacy centers, CASA and victim compensation funds and the criminal justice process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Expanded Medicaid Eligibility for Foster Youth:

The Federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 authorizes, but does not require, states to extend Medicaid benefits to age 21 for former foster children. Twenty-six states now have some form of expanded Medicaid eligibility for their foster youth but Georgia is not one of them. The Youth Leadership Council (“YLC”), an organization of current and former Georgia foster youth whose mission is to be an effective voice for children in foster care, identified access to healthcare and expansion of their Medicaid eligibility as one of their top legislative priorities for the upcoming year. The OCA strongly recommends expanding the Medicaid eligibility for these youth. To do so exhibits a strong commitment to the children in the state's care and is sound evidence of Georgia's priority to ensure the well-being of our children. To learn more about the YLC, please visit their website at [www.youthleadershipcouncil.org](http://www.youthleadershipcouncil.org).

### Accreditation of DFCS:

The Office of the Child Advocate again recommends that Georgia DFCS place gaining full accreditation with the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services as a top priority of the agency. This will require DFCS to provide services and case management that meet the highest national standards in child welfare. Devotion and a strong financial commitment to this goal from our lawmakers will be necessary, but Georgia can and should do better in meeting the needs of the children and families involved with the state's child welfare system. Georgia cannot continue to rank at the bottom nationally on children's issues.

With the economic decline that Georgia and the nation have seen in the last year, the numbers of children and families needing services is continuing to increase. We will not soon see a decline in the numbers involved with DFCS. Knowing this to be true, Georgia must plan accordingly. Georgia must devote the financial resources necessary to reduce the caseloads of workers to comply with the national standards. DFCS desperately needs better case management and staff retention efforts need to be bolstered. This is the only way caseworkers will ever be able to do the job that is required of them

to adequately meet the needs of the families and children that depend on DFCS. Supervisors need specific training in how to manage staff and should be required to have advanced level social work degrees or appropriate experience to offset the lack of formal education.

#### Mental Health:

Georgia must commit to building a mental health system that prioritizes services to our state's families and children most in need. Children in the custody of DFCS should have priority within the state's mental health system. The state must provide adequate funding to meet the demands of children with intensive therapeutic needs. We cannot continue to place children in basic level care simply because we have "run out of money". Full statewide implementation of the LOC system discussed in this report would greatly reduce the inadequacies of the mental health service provision to children in the state's custody and we encourage its full implementation.

#### Placements:

Appropriate placement for the children in the custody of the state is a must. Concerns linger about the practice of DFCS where waivers have been utilized to place more children in homes than the homes are approved to keep. These practices must cease immediately and recruitment efforts to build foster home resources need to be strengthened. Policy revisions to further restrict the number of children in foster homes and to define the proper use of waivers to situations necessary to accommodate sibling groups should be adopted. A fully implemented LOC system will also address many of the issues with finding appropriate and safe placements for the children in the state's care.

#### Continuum of Care:

Georgia must develop an adequately funded continuum of care for the families and children identified as "at risk." Prevention, intervention and treatment are all necessary components of a good child welfare system. To prevent abuse and neglect before it ever occurs should be a primary focus. Early intervention with families identified as "at risk" is a must. Adequate funding for prevention programs is essential

and we will continue to focus attention on this need. DFCS must partner with those in the non-profit community proven successful with prevention programs.

The OCA also recommends that in counties where CASA programs are active, CASA and GALs could make an excellent team to ensure the best interests of the child are protected. CASA representation for children has proven both effective and cost efficient in the areas where an active CASA program is available. The OCA recommends that each of the judicial circuits explore the opening of a CASA program.

#### Partnership with Education:

Georgia's Department of Education must commit to a better working relationship with the other agencies and departments that work to protect the children in the state's care. Georgia's educational system does not share information and too often introduces problems into the prosecution of child abuse and neglect case by failing to report such situations in a timely manner as mandated by law. Too often DFCS professionals are the last to know of suspected abuse or neglect that was revealed in the school system. DFCS workers are often denied the opportunity to speak with children who have disclosed abuse or neglect while at school. This must change. The very systems that should be working together to enhance the protection of children too often work against each other to the detriment of the children who need their protection. The OCA recommends that the Department of Education and DFCS begin work immediately on a statewide plan of operation for handling such situations. The plan should detail a cooperative relationship designed to enhance the safety and well-being of those children in need of the state's protective services.

In conclusion, the office would like to thank the General Assembly for the Child Welfare Initiative funded and passed in the 2002 legislative session. The addition of the investigative positions for the OCA has been extremely valuable in our efforts to provide timely and thorough investigations. Without these positions, it would have been difficult for OCA to meet current investigative demands. We respectfully request that the commitment to the well being of Georgia's children continue with appropriations necessary to meet the needs as set forth in this report.

With the dawn of the new millennium we have an opportunity for all of Georgia's citizens to be advocates for Georgia's children. Together we can make a difference and the OCA will continue work to coordinate the actions of those seeking positive change within the protective services system. I look forward to continuing our work with the people, organizations and agencies that share the common goal of ensuring that our children are safe and free from abuse and neglect.

## APPENDIX A

### CHILD ADVOCATE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Effective date. - This article became effective April 6, 2000.

15-11-170

(a) This article shall be known and may be cited as the "Georgia Child Advocate for the Protection of Children Act."

(b) In keeping with this article's purpose of assisting, protecting, and restoring the security of children whose well-being is threatened, it is the intent of the General Assembly that the mission of protection of the children of this state should have the greatest legislative and executive priority. Recognizing that the needs of children must be attended to in a timely manner and that more aggressive action should be taken to protect children from abuse and neglect, the General Assembly creates the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children to provide independent oversight of persons, organizations, and agencies responsible for providing services to or caring for children who are victims of child abuse and neglect, or whose domestic situation requires intervention by the state. The Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children will provide children with an avenue through which to seek relief when their rights are violated by state officials and agents entrusted with their protection and care.

15-11-171

As used in this article, the term:

- (1) "Advocate" or "child advocate" means the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children established under Code Section 15-11-172.
- (2) "Agency" shall have the same meaning and application as provided for in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of Code Section 50-14-1.
- (3) "Child" or "children" means an individual receiving protective services from the division, for whom the division has an open case file, or who has been, or whose siblings, parents, or other caretakers have been the subject of a report to the division within the previous five years.
- (4) "Department" means the Department of Human Resources.
- (5) "Division" means the Division of Family and Children Services of the Department of Human Resources.

15-11-172.

(a) There is created the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children. The Governor, by executive order, shall create a nominating committee which shall consider nominees for the position of the advocate and shall make a recommendation to the Governor. Such person shall have knowledge of the child welfare system, the juvenile

justice system, and the legal system and shall be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the office as set forth in this article.

(b) The advocate shall be appointed by the Governor from a list of at least three names submitted by the nominating committee for a term of three years and until his or her successor is appointed and qualified and may be reappointed. The salary of the advocate shall not be less than \$60,000.00 per year, shall be fixed by the Governor, and shall come from funds appropriated for the purposes of the advocate.

(c) The Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children shall be assigned to the Office of Planning and Budget for administrative purposes only, as described in Code Section 50-4-3.

(d) The advocate may appoint such staff as may be deemed necessary to effectively fulfill the purposes of this article, within the limitations of the funds available for the purposes of the advocate. The duties of the staff may include the duties and powers of the advocate if performed under the direction of the advocate. The advocate and his or her staff shall receive such reimbursement for travel and other expenses as is normally allowed to state employees, from funds appropriated for the purposes of the advocate.

(e) The advocate shall have the authority to contract with experts in fields including but not limited to medicine, psychology, education, child development, juvenile justice, mental health, and child welfare, as needed to support the work of the advocate, utilizing funds appropriated for the purposes of the advocate.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of state law, the advocate shall act independently of any state official, department, or agency in the performance of his or her duties.

(g) The advocate or his or her designee shall be an ex officio member of the State-wide Child Abuse Prevention Panel.

15-11-173

The advocate shall perform the following duties:

(1) Identify, receive, investigate, and seek the resolution or referral of complaints made by or on behalf of children concerning any act, omission to act, practice, policy, or procedure of an agency or any contractor or agent thereof that may adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of the children;

(2) Refer complaints involving abused children to appropriate regulatory and law enforcement agencies;

(3) Report the death of any child to the chairperson of the child fatality review subcommittee of the county in which such child resided at the time of death, unless the advocate has knowledge that such death has been reported by the county medical examiner or coroner, pursuant to Code Section 19-15-3, and to provide such subcommittee access to any records of the advocate relating to such child;

(4) Provide periodic reports on the work of the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children, including but not limited to an annual written report for the Governor and the General Assembly and other persons, agencies, and organizations deemed appropriate. Such reports shall include recommendations for changes in policies and procedures to improve the health, safety, and welfare of children and shall be made expeditiously in order to timely influence public policy;



(5) Establish policies and procedures necessary for the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children to accomplish the purposes of this article including without limitation providing the division with a form of notice of availability of the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children. Such notice shall be posted prominently, by the division, in division offices and in facilities receiving public moneys for the care and placement of children and shall include information describing the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children and procedures for contacting that office; and

(6) Convene quarterly meetings with organizations, agencies, and individuals who work in the area of child protection to seek opportunities to collaborate and improve the status of children in Georgia.

15-11-174

(a) The advocate shall have the following rights and powers:

(1) To communicate privately, by mail or orally, with any child and with each child's parent or guardian;

(2) To have access to all records and files of the division concerning or relating to a child, and to have access, including the right to inspect, copy, and subpoena records held by clerks of the various courts, law enforcement agencies, service providers, including medical and mental health, and institutions, public or private, with whom a particular child has been either voluntarily or otherwise placed for care or from whom the child has received treatment within the state. To the extent any such information provides the names and addresses of individuals who are the subject of any confidential proceeding or statutory confidentiality provisions, such names and addresses or related information which has the effect of identifying such individuals shall not be released to the public without the consent of such individuals;

(3) To enter and inspect any and all institutions, facilities, and residences, public and private, where a child has been placed by a court or the division and is currently residing. Upon entering such a place, the advocate shall notify the administrator or, in the absence of the administrator, the person in charge of the facility, before speaking to any children. After notifying the administrator or the person in charge of the facility, the advocate may communicate privately and confidentially with children in the facility, individually or in groups, or the advocate may inspect the physical plant. To the extent possible, entry and investigation provided by this Code section shall be conducted in a manner which will not significantly disrupt the provision of services to children;

(4) To apply to the Governor to bring legal action in the nature of a writ of mandamus or application for injunction pursuant to Code Section 45-15-18 to require an agency to take or refrain from taking any action required or prohibited by law involving the protection of children;

(5) To apply for and accept grants, gifts, and bequests of funds from other states, federal and interstate agencies, independent authorities, private firms, individuals, and foundations for the purpose of carrying out the lawful responsibilities of the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children;

(6) When less formal means of resolution do not achieve appropriate results, to pursue remedies provided by this article on behalf of children for the purpose of effectively carrying out the provisions of this article; and

(7) To engage in programs of public education and legislative advocacy concerning the needs of children requiring the intervention, protection, and supervision of courts and state and county agencies.

(b) (1) Upon issuance by the advocate of a subpoena in accordance with this article for law enforcement investigative records concerning an ongoing investigation, the subpoenaed party may move a court with appropriate jurisdiction to quash said subpoena.

(2) The court shall order a hearing on the motion to quash within 5 days of the filing of the motion to quash, which hearing may be continued for good cause shown by any party or by the court on its own motion. Subject to any right to an open hearing in contempt proceedings, such hearing shall be closed to the extent necessary to prevent disclosure of the identity of a confidential source; disclosure of confidential investigative or prosecution material which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or persons; or disclosure of the existence of confidential surveillance, investigation, or grand jury materials or testimony in an ongoing criminal investigation or prosecution. Records, motions and orders relating to a motion to quash shall be kept sealed by the court to the extent and for the time necessary to prevent public disclosure of such matters, materials, evidence or testimony.

(c) The court shall, at or before the time specified in the subpoena for compliance therewith, enter an order:

(1) Enforcing the subpoena as issued;

(2) Quashing or modifying the subpoena if it is unreasonable and oppressive; or

(3) Conditioning enforcement of the subpoena on the advocate maintaining confidential any evidence, testimony, or other information obtained from law enforcement or prosecution sources pursuant to the subpoena until the time the criminal investigation and prosecution are concluded. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, an investigation or prosecution shall be deemed to be concluded when the information becomes subject to public inspection pursuant to Code Section 50-18-72. The court shall include in its order written findings of fact and conclusions of law.

#### Annotations

The 2001 amendment, effective July 1, 2001, designated the existing provisions of this Code section as subsection (a) and added subsections (b) and (c).

15-11-175. Penalty provision.

(a) No person shall discriminate or retaliate in any manner against any child, parent or guardian of a child, employee of a facility, agency, institution or other type of provider, or any other person because of the making of a complaint or providing of information in good faith to the advocate, or willfully interfere with the advocate in the performance of his or her official duties.

(b) Any person violating subsection (a) of this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

15-11-176

The advocate shall be authorized to request an investigation by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation of any complaint of criminal misconduct involving a child.

15-11-177

(a) There is established a Child Advocate Advisory Committee. The advisory committee shall consist of:

- (1) One representative of a not for profit children's agency appointed by the Governor;
- (2) One representative of a for profit children's agency appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (3) One pediatrician appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- (4) One social worker with experience and knowledge of child protective services who is not employed by the state appointed by the Governor;
- (5) One psychologist appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (6) One attorney appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives from the Children and the Courts Committee of the State Bar of Georgia; and
- (7) One juvenile court judge appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia.

Each member of the advisory committee shall serve a two-year term and until the appointment and qualification of such member's successor. Appointments to fill vacancies in such offices shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(b) The advisory committee shall meet a minimum of three times a year with the advocate and his or her staff to review and assess the following:

- (1) Patterns of treatment and service for children;
- (2) Policy implications; and
- (3) Necessary systemic improvements.

The advisory committee shall also provide for an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the Office of the Child Advocate for the Protection of Children.

## **APPENDIX B**

### MISSION AND STATEMENT OF GOALS

The Office of the Child Advocate will promote the enhancement of the State's existing protective services system to ensure that our children are secure and free from abuse and neglect.

To achieve this mission, the OCA will have three primary functions.

1. Through investigation, we will provide independent oversight of those responsible for providing services to children who are victims of abuse and neglect in order to ensure that the best interests of our children are met.

2. Through advocacy, we will seek needed changes in the laws affecting children and promote positive revisions in the system's policies and procedures.

3. Through education, we will promote better training of caseworkers and service providers and more awareness about the issues surrounding the protective services system.

We have identified the following goals with each of the primary functions.

#### **Investigative Goals**

To establish a comprehensive data management system for the office, including a web based complaint-filing process. In order to effectively investigate complaints and identify needed systemic changes, a computer based complaint management system has been created and it will be utilized to promote the enhancement and consistency of child protective services in Georgia.

To identify service delivery deficiencies within Georgia's child protective services system and develop recommendations for comprehensive improvements.

To intervene in specific child abuse and neglect cases in order to ensure effective and prompt action by DFCS.

To prevent the placement or retention of children under the custody of DFCS in dangerous environments.

### Advocacy Goals

To identify and advocate for needed changes in the laws that affect our children.

To promote the development of more and better resources for those children that are deemed to be especially high risk for DFCS.

To contract with legal, medical, mental health and other professionals to provide services regarding specific cases as needed.

To expand the availability of placement resources for Georgia's abused and neglected children and to reduce overcrowding in Georgia's foster homes.

### Educational Goals

To promote programs that heighten community awareness about child abuse and neglect.

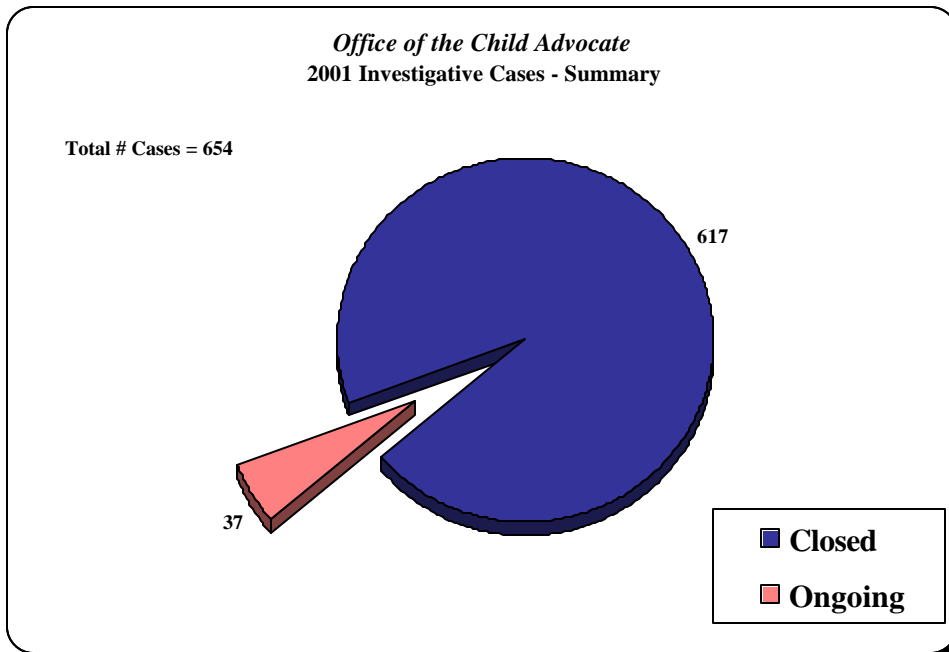
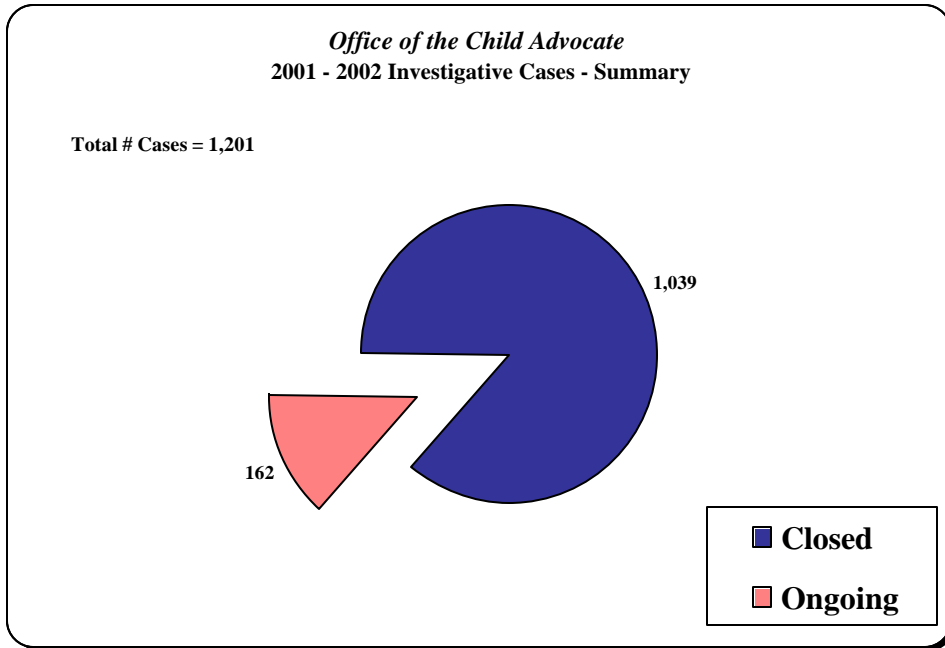
To promote the development of a statewide multi-disciplinary approach to the investigation and prosecution of child maltreatment.

To promote appropriate partnerships between DFCS and other public and private agencies dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and the treatment of its victims.

To promote better understanding of the policies and procedures of DFCS by those entities that most directly impact the health and welfare of Georgia's children, including the courts, law enforcement, Special Assistant Attorneys General ("SAAG"), Court Appointed Special Advocates ("CASA") and attorney guardians ad litem ("GAL").

To promote more in-depth training for caseworkers regarding the legal system and the caseworkers' responsibilities to the courts.

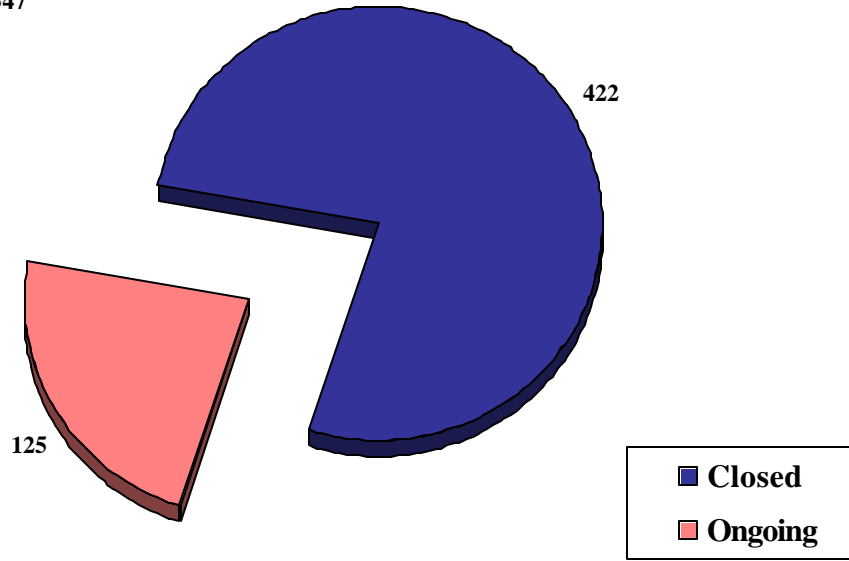
**APPENDIX C**



*A number of cases from 2001 remain open for monitoring purposes to ensure that the case management and provision of services are delivered and completed in accordance with policy, procedure and best practices.*

*Office of the Child Advocate*  
2002 Investigative Cases - Summary

Total # Cases = 547



## APPENDIX D

### INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARIES

1. Southeast: An OCA referral was received from a Nurse Practitioner who shared that County A was knowingly leaving an infant at risk. This infant's mother was being prosecuted for critically injuring her first child when he was only six (6) weeks old; County B's DFCS was seeking termination of her parental rights with regard to the first child who had had to spend months in the hospital. County B reported the failure of County A to take appropriate action to protect the second child and our office intervened immediately to insure the safety of the second child. When our office initially spoke with the Field Director, County Director, CPS Supervisor, and Caseworker, they all felt taking this child was not necessary. However, we continued to work with all parties to get the child removed before the end of the workday. Since his removal, his biological mother has been sentenced to prison for cruelty to children and falsifying information and County A is filing for termination of her parental rights on the second child. No one in County A or that region was responding appropriately and this case very easily could have ended in the death of a child at the hands of a mother known to the DFCS.

2. Middle Georgia: The complaints on this foster home cover allegations of excessive discipline, overcrowded conditions, abusive treatment of foster children and a potential conflict of interest with foster mother also having a security contract with the local Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). Through all of the allegations the county DFCS had many opportunities to intervene and properly address these concerns with corrective action but failed to do so. The long history of allegations against this foster home for abusive treatment of foster children was largely ignored by the county DFCS. The county never substantiated the allegations and the OCA felt this to be in error. The investigative process was not as thorough and complete as it should have been. The focus of the investigations conducted by the local DFCS was always on supporting the foster home and keeping the home open as a resource and not on the protection of children in the state's care. Although policy concerns were noted in the case file documentation, no real action was ever taken to correct them. The OCA recommended the removal of any children currently dependent upon this foster home for care as well as the permanent closure of the home. After our recommendations the State DFCS office closed the home.

There is no doubt that this foster home would have remained open with children at risk, without the involvement of the Office of the Child Advocate.

3. Metro Atlanta: An OCA referral was received concerning a 10-year-old girl being physically and possible sexually abused by her 12 year old brother. A report was made to the local DFCS concerning this matter. Upon completion of the DFCS investigation, there was great concern by OCA of the case manager not doing a thorough



investigation. OCA had concerns that the family needed to be monitored by DFCS. OCA remains involved, working with the local DFCS to ensure proper provision of protective services to the family.

4. Southwest: OCA was contacted concerning a 12-year-old female being sexually abused by her two half-brothers and no one was doing anything to protect her. The OCA investigation found that the local DFCS had investigated two cases at the same time with the half-brothers being the perpetrators in both cases. One case was substantiated and closed (child was not in the home and the boys did not have access to her). The other case was unsubstantiated and closed due to this young girl recanting her story. The brothers were arrested and charged for the sexual molestation of both girls. The local DFCS did nothing with the information of the boys' arrests. OCA learned that the boys were placed voluntarily in another county with a family friend that had an 11-year-old daughter. DFCS had done nothing to ensure the proper and safe placement of these two boys thus exposing yet another child to significant risk of sexual abuse through the failure of the DFCS to take the appropriate actions. After OCA's involvement and recommendations, the case was reopened and OCA continues to monitor the case for compliance with policy and safety of the children.

5. Metro Atlanta: Due to multiple complaints with the same caseworker in this county, OCA did a review of the caseworker's files as well as a random review of other caseworkers' files under the same supervisor. OCA reviewed twenty-one of the identified caseworker's files finding multiple problems with the records. Several of the problems found consisted of documentation being unorganized and hard to locate, a lack of current court orders, multiple expired court orders, and a lack of and incomplete case documentation. A random review of thirteen cases from four other caseworkers under the same supervisor was also done. Problems with documentation and current court orders were found in those cases as well.

Six months after the initial review, the OCA returned to review 12 of the identified caseworker's cases to check for improvements. The case files were better organized. The files still lacked current case plans and detailed documentation. The biggest concern is that the caseworker continues to allow court orders to expire, leaving the agency with no legal authority and without legal custody of the child. An Emergency Shelter Care Order is necessitated by this lapse. The gap in the time frame for the expired Court Orders has exceeded 6 months in some cases.

The OCA has recommended termination of this employee before a tragic injury or death occurs to a child in her care.

6. Southeast: A fifteen-year-old girl was the victim of child molestation. The perpetrator was her stepfather who was in the military. The County Director knew the perpetrator. The perpetrator was acquitted of child molestation through the military

court. The Director personally wrote the perpetrator a letter indicating the DFCS case had been unsubstantiated and closed through their agency. The perpetrator had been acquitted in criminal court, however the Juvenile Court had found evidence to substantiate the child's case for Deprivation. Additionally, the child's Guardian Ad Litem was uncooperative with OCA during the investigation. The GAL's work was far less than the child deserved and was not adequate to protect the child. The special training for Guardians Ad Litem resulted from this and other cases. The child was placed safely away from the perpetrator and was pleased with the results OCA was able to accomplish.

7. Middle: We received a referral on a four-year-old child who has cerebral palsy, development delays, mental retardation functioning at the age of infancy who is legally blind. The foster parent had the child for approximately three and a half years and was seeking to adopt the child. The foster parent was seeking an increase in nursing childcare from 30 hours to 40 hours. The foster parent works in order to provide for her family. The State had refused to provide the additional hours even with a physician's recommendation that the services were necessary and medically justified. OCA advocated for the increase in nursing service hours to provide the child with the care needed. If the foster parent were unable to care for this child, then the state would have to fund services to provide care for this child for twenty-four hours a day and seven days of the week. Through the advocacy of OCA the additional nursing childcare hours were approved and the foster parents are proceeding with adoption of this medically fragile child.

8. Northwest: A member of the Georgia House of Representatives notified us that a family in the northwest area was interested in adopting a child with emotional issues. The family members expressed their strong desires to adopt and committed to funding the medical and educational needs of the child. This Representative and friend of the family confirmed that the family was stable in the community and had the means to meet their commitment to the child's welfare. DFCS was adamantly opposed to the adoption yet the child was languishing with no appropriate permanency plan. After OCA's review of the child's medical records and discussion and advocacy on the issues with DFCS, DFCS permitted the family to pursue adoption of the child.

9. Northeast: The OCA received a complaint involving two children who had been involved with three county DFCS offices throughout their lives. This case clearly reflects nine years of gross neglect of two children's physical and emotional needs by the local DFCS offices and the mother. As the case was investigated, one could easily track the decline in the children's emotional well being, due to chronic physical, emotional and sexual abuse coupled with the additional problems of family violence. The decline in the children's emotional well being can easily be tied to the children's environment and lack of appropriate action by the county DFCS. The case investigation revealed that this county DFCS had not taken the necessary steps to secure funding for the needed

institutional treatment for the oldest child. However, DFCS was telling counselors and others local professionals that they could not place her until they received approval. Because they had not completed the necessary forms and initiated the process for the placement, the child could have languished in the abusive environment had the OCA not intervened on behalf of this child. Because of the serious delays in arranging for appropriate services for these children, the boy had already gotten involved in delinquent behavior, but the OCA was instrumental in his placement in an outdoor therapeutic camp.

## VICTIM ADVOCACY SUMMARIES

1. South: This is a victim advocacy case where a 3-month-old child received two broken ribs and a skull fracture. The baby was removed from both parents and placed in a foster home. A deprivation hearing was scheduled and both parents and both sets of grandparents were asking for custody of the baby. DFCS asked the court to appoint a Guardian ad Litem or a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer. The court said that there is not a CASA office in their area and that the court could not afford a Guardian ad Litem. The county DFCS called our office requesting assistance or suggestions regarding this case. The OCA is paying for the services of the attorney Guardian ad Litem as well as consulting with DFCS and the SAAG on how this case should be handled.

2. Middle: In this victim advocacy case a 9-year-old girl was sexually molested by a relative. DFCS and Law Enforcement investigated the case and the relative was arrested. However, the victim assistance coordinator for the DA's office was out on maternity leave and the victim's family was unfamiliar with the criminal justice system. The family called our office for assistance as they felt the case was not progressing to court quickly enough. Our office offered victim assistance (counseling, victim's compensation, etc) to the family and assisted them through each step of the criminal justice process.

3. Metro Atlanta: A 10-year-old boy was severely abused by his mother. He has been in foster care for several years and through many placements. Counseling services have not been provided for him on a consistent basis and case information was not being communicated with the service providers. In addition, he was placed in a foster home where the foster father had a criminal record. Termination of Parental Rights had not been pursued on the mother although she has been sentenced to twenty years probation for the horrible abuse inflicted on the child and she is not allowed to have contact with any children. Our office has been a liaison between DFCS and the service providers in order to communicate his needs.

## **APPENDIX E**

### PRESENTATIONS

2002 Session of the General Assembly: Testified at numerous committee meetings and hearings

Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS):

- Child Protective Services Advanced Investigative Skills Training
- Social Services Supervisor's Conference
- Georgia Statewide Child Protective Services Advisory Panel

Second Annual Child Welfare Advocacy Forum

Kiwanis Club - Covington, Georgia

Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia Annual Meeting

Children's Advocacy Center's of Georgia - Board of Directors presentation

Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention Annual Conference - Cobb County

Child Fatality and Serious Injury Conference

DJJ Detention Alternative Initiative Focus Group Meeting

Macon Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court Retreat

Exchange Club of Macon, Georgia

18th Annual Symposium - Prevent Child Abuse Georgia - The Power of Prevention

The Sunshine House Children's Advocacy Center Annual Meeting

The Guardian ad Litem Conference - Office of the Child Advocate

Third Annual Child Placement Conference

Early Childhood Institute - Child Abuse: Recognizing and Reporting

Multiple DFCS/DJJ Collaborative Meetings

Women's Policy Group Georgia Women's Assembly - Care and Protection of Children

Mitchell County Community Collaborative meeting

## **APPENDIX F**

### COMMITTEES

Governor's Action Group for Safe Children

- ? State Child Fatality Review Panel
- ? Supreme Court of Georgia Child Placement Project Implementation Committee
- ? Federal Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)

State DFCS Death and Injury Review Committee

- ? United Against Child Abuse Coalition
- ? Federal Review
  - Child Welfare Advisory Committee
  - Program Improvement Planning Committee

DFCS/DJJ Alternatives to Detention Collaboratives

Safe Futures Collaborative

## APPENDIX G

### Time from Removal to Reunification with Parent, Caretaker, or Relative April 2000 through March 2002

Statewide in Georgia, 77% of children removed from their homes were reunified within 12 months. The Federal Child and Family Services Review national standard is 76% reunified within 12 months.

Counties with 10 or more discharges from April 2000 through March 2002 are ranked on this indicator in the table below:

<b>County Data Ranked on Percent Reunified within 12 Months</b>						
County	% Reunified Within 12 Months	Rank	Number Discharged	Median Months to Discharge to Parent or Caretaker	Median Months to Discharge to Other Relative	
DAWSON	100%	1	30	0.4	0.1	
DECATUR	100%	2	29	0.1	0.6	
JENKINS	100%	3	19	0.7	11.9	
RABUN	98%	4	58	0.9	1.4	
COLUMBIA	95%	5	41	0.7	0.1	
HOUSTON	93%	6	152	0.4	0.5	
GORDON	93%	7	85	0.6	2.3	
NEWTON	93%	8	85	0.5	0.4	
WALTON	93%	9	21	0.6	1.8	
TOWNS	93%	10	18	4.4	5.8	
FRANKLIN	93%	11	19	0.1	5.8	
HARALSON	93%	12	29	0.6	8.7	
GRADY	93%	13	17	0.1	1.7	
ROCKDALE	92%	14	42	0.5	0.7	
COBB	91%	15	782	0.2	0.4	
BARROW	91%	16	78	1.2	2.8	
WAYNE	91%	17	41	1.6	1.5	
PAULDING	90%	18	76	2.0	0.7	
FANNIN	90%	19	39	0.8	8.3	
JACKSON	89%	20	64	3.0	3.1	
THOMAS	88%	21	35	1.5	10.3	
JEFF DAVIS	88%	22	26	2.0	6.2	
EFFINGHAM	88%	23	29	1.0	5.6	
CHATHAM	87%	24	433	0.3	1.5	
DOUGLAS	87%	25	272	0.5	0.5	
PICKENS	87%	26	37	3.9	9.1	
HEARD	87%	27	33	2.1	7.6	
TATTNALL	87%	28	38	0.9	7.6	
COWETA	86%	29	168	3.6	2.5	
MCINTOSH	86%	30	34	0.3	7.1	
HENRY	85%	31	161	0.5	0.9	
GILMER	85%	32	67	0.9	0.5	
RICHMOND	84%	33	309	1.1	4.9	
FAYETTE	84%	34	47	0.9	11.6	
SCREVEN	84%	35	29	11.5	7.9	

DEKALB	83%	36	1057	0.2	10.8
CLAYTON	83%	37	546	0.5	8.2
MACON	83%	38	35	0.3	4.7
BLECKLEY	83%	39	17	0.3	2.9
GWINNETT	82%	40	244	0.6	3.6
LOWNDES	82%	41	121	0.6	6.6
WHITFIELD	82%	42	145	0.7	3.4
EMANUEL	82%	43	74	1.0	8.2
CRISP	82%	44	42	0.0	5.1
WHITE	82%	45	33	1.1	NA
BUTTS	82%	46	37	2.3	1.6
PIKE	81%	47	52	8.9	4.0
COLQUITT	80%	48	73	0.7	3.7
LONG	80%	49	36	0.8	0.1
MURRAY	79%	50	79	0.3	8.1
LEE	79%	51	20	0.5	10.8
EVANS	79%	52	22	7.6	11.0
CLARKE	78%	53	94	0.8	12.6
CHATTOOGA	78%	54	52	0.5	7.8
CATOOSA	78%	55	44	0.8	11.5
Statewide	77%	56	10410	0.9	6.3
DOOLY	77%	57	15	0.5	3.3
SPALDING	76%	58	87	1.2	11.7
HABERSHAM	76%	59	40	1.5	7.6
BRANTLEY	75%	60	37	1.0	10.1
BERRIEN	75%	61	34	0.1	11.7
CANDLER	75%	62	26	0.1	3.4
WARREN	75%	63	13	4.8	19.6
WORTH	74%	64	94	1.9	12.8
MUSCOGEE	73%	65	86	4.9	6.5
UPSON	73%	66	67	0.5	10.6
TOOMBS	73%	67	59	1.2	9.0
TELFAIR	73%	68	20	0.1	2.9
MCDUFFIE	73%	69	16	0.1	8.1
BIBB	72%	70	208	2.3	10.3
BROOKS	71%	71	36	0.7	22.9
LAMAR	71%	72	30	1.1	12.0
CHARLTON	71%	73	32	3.0	24.5
WASHINGTON	70%	74	41	0.7	10.6
CHEROKEE	69%	75	138	10.3	5.9
LIBERTY	69%	76	113	1.5	17.0
FORSYTH	68%	77	58	11.0	7.1
IRWIN	67%	78	26	0.5	20.0
MERIWETHER	65%	79	61	0.6	14.5
DADE	65%	80	32	6.1	5.2
POLK	64%	81	58	3.0	12.6
BANKS	64%	82	27	6.3	7.5
BULLOCH	64%	83	25	1.1	13.1
FLOYD	63%	84	116	4.8	11.2
HALL	63%	85	46	6.1	13.3
CARROLL	62%	86	92	8.9	9.7
GLYNN	61%	87	122	2.6	14.3
WALKER	60%	88	72	0.6	12.9
LUMPKIN	60%	89	43	10.1	10.3
WILKINSON	60%	90	25	2.8	15.1
TROUP	59%	91	83	3.2	14.5

MITCHELL	59%	92	53	0.7	12.3
LAURENS	58%	93	91	8.0	14.9
STEPHENS	58%	94	42	18.0	11.5
STEWART	57%	95	18	0.2	15.5
BARTOW	56%	96	45	10.5	8.0
DOUGHERTY	55%	97	80	1.6	21.1
TIFT	53%	98	54	0.0	12.8
FULTON	50%	99	880	10.8	14.7
ELBERT	50%	100	24	3.4	67.8
MONROE	50%	101	23	8.4	10.9
BEN HILL	47%	102	30	2.0	14.3
WARE	47%	103	29	7.2	14.3
COFFEE	46%	104	29	1.6	20.4
JEFFERSON	42%	105	29	18.4	14.0
CAMDEN	40%	106	35	10.6	18.1
CRAWFORD	36%	107	16	17.5	9.0
OCONEE	35%	108	24	12.6	17.7
BRYAN	35%	109	19	15.6	12.6
SUMTER	31%	110	37	18.1	12.0
BALDWIN	22%	111	52	32.9	28.3



## APPENDIX H

### Time from Removal to Finalized Adoption April 2000 through March 2002

Statewide in Georgia, 18% of children removed from their homes were adopted within 24 months. The Federal Child and Family Services Review national standard is 32% adopted within 24 months.

Counties with 10 or more adoptions from April 2000 through March 2002 are ranked on this indicator in the table below:

<b>County Data Ranked on Percent Adopted within 24 Months</b>				
County	% Adopted Within 24 Months	Rank	Number Adopted	Median Months from Removal to Adoption
DOUGLAS	60%	1	10	22.3
HALL	56%	2	16	22.7
BARTOW	48%	3	23	26.1
PIKE	47%	4	17	29.4
BEN HILL	40%	5	10	26.8
TIFT	37%	6	19	31.8
JACKSON	36%	7	11	28.8
STEPHENS	35%	8	17	37.0
WHITFIELD	33%	9	42	26.6
MURRAY	33%	10	24	28.7
TROUP	33%	11	18	33.4
COLQUITT	32%	12	22	30.5
PAULDING	32%	13	19	31.8
TOOMBS	31%	14	13	31.8
TATTNALL	30%	15	10	60.2
LUMPKIN	30%	16	10	41.5
COWETA	28%	17	25	27.5
DEKALB	26%	18	76	43.0
CARROLL	26%	19	27	34.9
NEWTON	26%	20	23	46.6
BIBB	25%	21	51	40.9
CAMDEN	21%	22	14	38.4
FLOYD	20%	23	25	34.8
LIBERTY	20%	24	10	44.8
BALDWIN	19%	25	21	49.9
Statewide	18%	26	2010	39.3
COBB	18%	27	108	37.3
CLAYTON	17%	28	47	35.5
MUSCOGEE	17%	29	24	52.4
GLYNN	17%	30	24	49.2
RICHMOND	16%	31	56	49.8
FORSYTH	16%	32	25	31.6
CHATHAM	15%	33	98	34.0
CHEROKEE	14%	34	29	31.9
PUTNAM	14%	35	14	43.1
GILMER	14%	36	14	42.4
GWINNETT	13%	37	38	35.9
CLARKE	11%	38	35	59.7

FULTON	10%	39	258	46.7
MERIWETHER	10%	40	20	33.8
JEFFERSON	10%	41	10	68.9
HENRY	9%	42	22	36.7
LOWNDES	9%	43	11	52.7
BARROW	8%	44	26	43.4
UPSON	8%	45	13	71.0
ROCKDALE	8%	46	12	33.1
SPALDING	7%	47	45	53.8
COFFEE	7%	48	14	62.8
HOUSTON	6%	49	33	45.7
LAURENS	5%	50	21	32.9
DOUGHERTY	0%	51	27	59.5
MITCHELL	0%	52	15	58.3
GREENE	0%	53	12	54.8
WARE	0%	54	10	79.8
MACON	0%	55	10	33.4