



## What does Super Bowl LIII have to do with children in foster care?

Children in foster care and those at risk of entering foster care are generally at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. While human trafficking occurs every day, there is a concentrated influx of buyers and sellers for major events such as the Super Bowl.



In fact, 33 people were arrested in metro Atlanta for human trafficking mere days before this year's Super Bowl. (Read more details [here](#).)

With January designated as National Human Trafficking Prevention Month and with the Super Bowl quickly approaching, it's important to be attuned to the risks and red flags associated with trafficking, and particularly for children in foster care and those that are otherwise at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.

See [Trafficking](#), page 4

## Editorial: Children in Foster Care vs. Foster Children



By Rachel Davidson  
OCA Interim Director

**Is there a difference?** And does it matter? Children in foster care are people – not labels and not statistics. When we refer to children in foster

care as “foster children”, it acts as a label. When using that label, it may inadvertently perpetuate the stigmas that often accompany that label and identifies them only by the circumstances that have happened to them, not by the attributes that make them unique.

Using the term “foster child” is considered identity-first language as opposed to “child in foster care” being considered people-first language. Identity-first vs. people-first language is a topic that has been discussed at great length within the community of people with disabilities. While some people within this or any other similarly situated community may have a preference for one over the other, it should be their decision to choose. And until you know their preference, people-first language is generally deemed to be more respectful.

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*OCA's monthly platform for the unedited voices of young people who have been in care....*

## Youth Voice

By Casey Mangum

**Hello my name is Casey Mangum,** I was a child that was brought up in the system for 85% of my childhood. I experienced good and bad along the way, but one thing that I held on to was the amazing love and devotion of some of my foster parents.

The most memorable moment was when I was 14, I lost my step dad tragically. My mom lost herself when he passed she wasn't able to provide or love us the way we needed her to, so DFCS stepped in and took us into care. I was placed with an amazing family, in the beginning I was so mad and hurt I was lost, I did not understand why this was happening. I remember my foster mother telling me one day "Casey, you have to remember who you are, not what you came from". That hit me so hard because everyone I came in contact with saw so much in me, and I never saw my worth because I was a broken child, I came from a broken family.

However, my last stay in the system taught me so much about who I was. When I left I was 16, instead of going down all the negative roads that were placed in front of me I fought every single day to be better than what I was given. I didn't have to fight alone I still stayed in contact with my foster parents who continued to help guide me who still loved me even though I was not in the home with them anymore, my child attorney stayed in contact with me, she helped me fight for who I wanted to be and they still do. I am 26 now, still in contact with all of them.

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## Voice cont'd...

I have a beautiful life now, I make everyday a good day, and I have a beautiful family now. I am not completely where I want to be but in time I will be doing more than I could of ever imagined and this is with the help of the amazing people that have followed along with me in this journey of life.

Something I say a lot now is "the best thing in life is the storm" I say that because if I never would of experienced the love and devotion from everyone that works or has a role in being with children in the system I would of never known my self worth. As a young child or teen you are not thinking of how this is going to affect your future your just thinking of the time you have to stay and what you can do to get away from the situation.

What the adults can do to help these children with this going on is love them do not give up on them, don't make them feel like they are just there because they have no other option let them know that they are somebody to you to this world. Teach them love discipline structure, show them that you care. Most importantly let yourself love those kids, even if they do go home, be proud, cheer them on, call them, stay in touch, write them a letter every now and again to remind them that you have faith in who they are and who they will be don't let them start to feel alone again. You will be surprised what a simple "how are *See [Voice](#), page 5*

## MAAC Day at the Capitol

**The Georgia Senate recognized** January 17, 2019 as Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC) Day at the state capitol. MAAC is a collaborative of agencies serving youth and young adults across Georgia and also serves as the lead agency for Georgia EmpowerMENT, a youth leadership and advocacy group for



young people who are currently or have experienced foster care. MAAC and their partners spent time in the South Lobby educating on the work they do. MAAC partners are: CHRIS 180, Creative Community Services, Deveraux, Elks Aidmore Inc., Georgia Baptist, Goshen Valley, Hillside, The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, Twin Cedars Youth and Family Services Inc., Youth Villages Georgia and affiliate member Child Kind. For more information on MAAC, please visit their website at [www.maac4kids.org](http://www.maac4kids.org).

### Upcoming Events:

- ✓ Mental Health Day at the Capitol, February 8, 2019, Atlanta, GA. More info [here](#).
- ✓ CASA Day at the Capitol, February 14, 2019, Atlanta, GA. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Deadline to submit a nomination for the Chief Justice Hines 2019 Awards for an Attorney and a Case Manager of the Year, February 28, 2019. More info [here](#).
- ✓ Deadline for children in grades K-3 to submit a story for the PBS Kids Writers Contest, March 29, 2019. More info [here](#).





**Reading is fun. And healthy!**

During Get Georgia Reading's January Cabinet meeting, Dr. Angela Hernandez, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology at Emory & Children's Institute presented about a unique program designed to assist infants and their families within the NICU. This program provides parents with books to read to their infants while in the NICU and connects them with resources once they "graduate" from the NICU. These efforts to promote early reading help

combat the potential negative effects associated with preterm births that can lead to lifelong developmental and intellectual disabilities. One program participant acknowledged that sometimes a parent can run out of things to say to their baby or just not know how to engage them while in the NICU. Reading to babies—whether in the NICU or not—helps with bonding and promotes language nutrition.

**FACTORS THAT AFFECT CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO READ**

SCHOOL CLIMATE	MATERNAL EDUCATION	ATTENDANCE	QUALITY CHILD CARE ACCESS
PRETERM BIRTH	PHYSICAL HEALTH	K-3 OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION	SUMMER LEARNING LOSS
LOW BIRTHWEIGHT	CHILD CARE CLIMATE	EARLY LANGUAGE EXPOSURE & DEVELOPMENT	MENTAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE CAN DO
<p><b>BIRTH OUTCOMES</b></p> <p>Premature birth can lead to lifelong developmental and intellectual disabilities for babies. In the first few years of life, babies' brains are forming the neural connections for social, emotional, cognitive, and language development that shape their capacity to read by third grade and subsequently access their full potential.</p> <p>Very Preterm (32 weeks)    Moderately Preterm (34 weeks)    Late Preterm (36 weeks)    Early Term (39 weeks)    Full Term</p> <p>Babies born prior to 39 weeks of gestation are more likely to experience <b>poor health outcomes</b> than those born at full term. <i>Obstetrics &amp; Gynecology (2013)</i></p> <p>Increased parent-infant language interactions in the NICU is associated with improved language and cognitive outcomes of preterm babies at 18 months of age. <i>Pediatrics (2014)</i></p> <p>Children born at 30 weeks are 3.5X more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder than children born at 40 weeks, while those born at 25 weeks are almost 6X more likely. <i>Pediatrics (2015)</i></p> <p>Early-term infants born at 37 weeks face a 33% increased risk of <b>severe reading impairment</b> compared to 3% of those born at 40 weeks. <i>Pediatrics (2012)</i></p> <p>Late-preterm babies born between 34 to 36 weeks are: 36% more likely to have a developmental delay or disability; 14% more likely to be suspended in kindergarten; and 10-13% more likely to be placed in special education and retained in kindergarten. <i>Pediatrics (2009)</i></p> <p>Newborns admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) are 6X more likely at 36 months to develop disorganized attachment than their counterparts—an indicator highly predictive of later mental health disorders. <i>Early Human Development (2015)</i></p> <p>Kangaroo Mother Care (continuous skin-to-skin contact between parent and infant) for preterm and low-birthweight infants is linked to better school attendance, reduced hyperactivity, and less aggressiveness in young adults. <i>Pediatrics (2017)</i></p> <p>Children born before 28 weeks of gestation, but without severe neurodevelopmental disorders, are still up to 8X more likely to have symptoms indicating <b>mental health problems</b> by age 11. <i>Pediatrics (2016)</i></p> <p>Participating in a shared reading program in a NICU significantly reduces a child's likelihood of hyperactivity, separation anxiety, and behavior problems; improves attachment; and provides parents with an <b>increased sense of control and a source of comfort</b>. <i>Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics (2011); Reading Research Quarterly (1995)</i></p>	<p><b>BIRTH OUTCOMES</b></p> <p>When we uncover underlying factors that affect a child's ability to read, we increase our opportunity to improve outcomes. Here are just a few actions that are impacting those factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Develop and support efforts</b> that increase the number of infants and toddlers who receive Language Nutrition from their parents and caregivers.</li> <li><b>Provide Language Nutrition coaching</b> for parents of premature babies in NICUs.</li> <li><b>Provide opportunities for parents</b> of infants admitted to a NICU to share reading experiences with their babies.</li> <li><b>Expand the use of Centering Pregnancy</b>, an integrated approach to prenatal care in a group setting incorporating peer support and education, which is shown to decrease the likelihood of preterm birth at no additional cost to parents.</li> <li><b>Promote the understanding of waiting</b> until 39 weeks of gestation to give birth, unless medically indicated.</li> <li><b>Support Kangaroo Mother Care</b> (continuous skin-to-skin contact between parent and infant) for preterm and low-birthweight infants to improve physical, social, and emotional development, which is linked to better school attendance, reduced hyperactivity, and less aggressiveness in young adults.</li> <li><b>Promote and increase utilization of the statewide Planning for Healthy Babies program</b>, developed by the Georgia Department of Community Health, to help reduce the number of low-birthweight and preterm infants.</li> <li><b>Continue to invest in Children 1st</b>—Georgia's single entry point into all public health services and a wide range of community programs for children birth to 5. Children 1st is the primary way for all children born in Georgia to be identified for conditions that would otherwise result in poor health and development.</li> </ul>



**Editorial continued...**

Being in foster care does not define someone. Yes, it is a part of their situation. But the child did not choose to be in foster care. And the child is more than a “foster child” – whether they embody the typical stereotypes or not. Using people first language can help everyone involved in the child’s life be more sensitive to and aware of everything else that is part of the child’s make up, including their strengths and interests and serve as a reminder of that child’s needs, hopes and goals.

In Scotland, the term for children in foster care is “looked after children”. Advocacy efforts by “looked after children” led to changing that terminology to “care experienced”. Additionally, many youth involved with EmpowerMENT (a youth advocacy organization in Georgia for youth involved in the foster care system) refer to having lived experience, or simply as a “young person”.

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This sign is posted in OCA’s office as a reminder to see children as more than their situation.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**KNOW THE SIGNS**

- Dressed inappropriately for the time or event
- Appears fearful, anxious, or nervous/paranoid
- Avoids eye contact
- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse
- Does not or is not allowed to speak for themselves
- Does not respond when asked questions
- Appears malnourished
- Has few or no personal possessions

**GET HELP**

Call 911

Text HELP or INFO to BeFree (233733) for the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888)

Download the See Something, Send Something App



**Trafficking cont’d...**

Earlier this month, Governor Brian Kemp said,

“We encourage all Georgians to learn the warning signs for human trafficking and the appropriate ways to report suspicious activity to law enforcement.”

Georgia’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) developed the flyer to the left that shares some of the signs associated with trafficking and efforts you can take if you see something suspicious.

During this awareness month, the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services hosted an anti-trafficking summit for over 250 providers. Additionally, DFCS has a protocol in place for cases involving the commercial sexual exploitation of children. That protocol can be found [here](#).

Georgia’s Attorney General, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and many organizations, including Delta Airlines, have increased their prevention and intervention efforts as well. In conjunction with the “Stop Traffick” event at the beginning of January, Attorney General Chris Carr said, “By Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 3, all buyers and traffickers will know that Georgia does not tolerate those who seek to exploit our state’s children.”

To learn more about ongoing efforts and resources, visit the Georgia Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force page on CJCC’s website [here](#).



**Voice, cont'd...** you, I've been thinking of you" would do for a child.

When a child comes in to your home don't let them go a day without telling them the worth they have in themselves. Don't let these kids fight alone, don't let them lose a smile that could light the whole world up, stay boosting these children up, because without you guys we are nothing.

If we don't have a strong team we have no team, its not easy feeling like your not wanted by anyone, so your jobs are to not only protect and provide but make sure that these children know who they are know what they can do know that they are somebody, stand up for them and make a change. The benefit you all get from being foster parents is that you get to instill these things in these children and watch them become wonderful adults, and parents themselves.

We depend on you all to help change the way we think and the way we live in our present and future! To all of you thank you for what you do, and to all who feel alone and broken, you are not alone you are loved and you will succeed. Remember no day is a bad day unless you make it a bad day, get up every morning and tell yourself I can do this I can be better than what I was yesterday that isn't just for the children this is for all of you who struggle being a foster parent this is a new day!

*Editor's note: While this is aimed towards foster parents, the sentiments are the same for everyone else working to support a child.*

**Editorial, continued...** While it should ultimately be up to

the child to choose if they have a preference, I would argue that those of us working in this field can come across more respectfully towards children and help others see a child in foster care as more than a label when we don't automatically resort to using the term "foster child".

Indeed, this distinction may be of little to no interest for some children in foster care. But for those that do care, they would likely prefer to be considered a child in foster care. A recent conversation with a youth who had spent some time in foster care gave credence to this assumption. While he was not bothered either way, he did understand the distinction, and believed that if a child did care, they would lean towards being seen as more than a label.

While it can take some time to train your brain to using the term "child in foster care" if you are otherwise accustomed to using the term "foster child", I believe it ultimately is a sign of respect to children that subtly lets a child know that they are seen as more than a label or the circumstances that led them to being placed in foster care. "Foster child" hides all the other things that a child is or can be – kind, smart, capable, a student, an athlete, a pilot, a veterinarian, a friend, loving AND loveable – and any other aspects them make them that unique child.

I challenge you to ask children how they would like to be referred to, retrain yourself to refer to the children you work with as children in foster care or in some other way that does not lend itself to be a label, and continue to see those same children for their whole selves.

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*To submit an article for the newsletter: [rdauidson@oca.ga.gov](mailto:rdauidson@oca.ga.gov)*

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