

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Children's Protective Services

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) in the Department of Human Resources (DHR) investigated over 54,000 allegations of child abuse and neglect in calendar year 2000. Of these allegations, 34,079 incidents were confirmed as cases of child abuse and neglect. In addition, over 15,644 children were in the custody of the department at the end of June 2001.

Major initiatives are now underway to reform child welfare in Georgia. DHR has developed a strategic plan to implement this reform known as SAFE FUTURES. This plan brings to the table many of the same public and private partners who were involved in the Governor's Child Protective Services Task Force, thus continuing and expanding on the work of the Task Force. The major initiatives addressed in SAFE FUTURES are: improved accountability for achieving positive outcomes for children and families; new community partnerships focused on prevention and early intervention in child abuse and neglect; responsive child protective services investigations; redesigned child welfare practice; a well-trained and stable workforce; a fully developed foster care continuum; expedited permanency for children in foster care; and an integrated information system to support reform.

Part of DHR's child welfare reform plan also involves addressing major program issues identified by the recent Federal Child and Family Services Review. Georgia was the eighth state in the country to participate in this review. Reviews have been completed in 17 states to date and major problems have been identified in all states. Among the problems identified in Georgia were the need for additional caseworkers and support services for children including mental health.

In continuing his commitment to creating a strong child protective system that safeguards Georgia's most vulnerable citizens, Governor Barnes has recommended funding for a second year of child welfare reform. The Governor's recommendations address both the SAFE FUTURES plan and the federal review findings.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF CPS CASEWORKERS

Funding is recommended for 90 new Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers and 10 new supervisors to help reduce the average caseload per worker. All CPS workers will have additional training opportunities as the Governor has recommended funding for curriculum development and review including the creation of a computerized training component.

PREVENTION

The Governor supports services that prevent a child's unnecessary removal from the home and services that ensure a child is in the safest and most appropriate environment when removed from the home. To that end the Governor recommends new funding to perform the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) test for all children in DFCS out-of-home placements. CAFAS aids caseworkers to more accurately and thoroughly assess a child's progress and well being in the out-of-home setting. The Governor has also recommended an array of support services, including intensive mental health services, counseling, and transitional services to help prevent removal from the home or the return of a child to an out-of-home placement. Finally, to ensure the safety of children in out-of-home settings, the Governor recommends the addition of one regulatory services surveyor to monitor health and safety in out-of-home settings.

CAPACITY FOR OUT-OF-HOME SERVICES

When CPS caseworkers have determined that a child resides in a dangerous home setting, they must have resources available to place the child in a safe and protected place. The Governor recommends funding for several items that will provide capacity in out-of-home programs for children:

- Pilot sites in DeKalb and Fulton counties to expand private emergency foster care services
- A 2.5% increase in funds for foster care placements
- 135 institutional foster care placements
- 41 MATCH program wrap-around placements for severely emotional disturbed (SED) children
- A 5% increase in funds for adoption assistance
- Expansion of support services, including mental health, counseling, and transitional services for children in family foster care settings
- Additional funds to cover the increased costs for institutional foster care

FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION SUPPORT

To support and promote the successful future of Georgia's foster children, the Governor has recommended funding to expand the Foster Children Postsecondary Grant program. This program awards tuition grants and scholarships to children in foster care. There are currently 170 students assisted by this program. The Governor's recommendation supports an additional 40 students to achieve their academic goals at the state's technical schools and colleges.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

FATALITY REVIEW

In the extremely unfortunate incident of a child's death, the state has an obligation to thoroughly investigate the case to identify the cause of death and, if appropriate, to build a legal case for prosecution of the person(s) responsible. To

make certain that fatality investigations are handled correctly, the Governor recommends adding funds to support the operation of the Office of Child Fatality Review.

CHILDREN'S PROTECTIVE SERVICES FY 2003 Budget Summary

Use of Funds	FY 2003 State Funds	FY 2003 Total Funds
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF CPS CASEWORKERS		
- Additional 90 new child protection caseworkers and 10 supervisors	\$3,466,845	\$5,600,053
- Staff training (trainers, curriculum development, training sessions)	573,873	1,330,700
- Computers and equipment for new staff	885,284	885,284
PREVENTION		
- Funding for the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) to measure the progress and physical and mental well being of children in DFCS out-of-home placements	1,347,500	1,374,500
- Intensive mental health services to prevent children's removal from the home	700,000	1,000,000
- An array of support services including counseling, in-home case management, in-home parent support services, behavior aids and transition services	3,265,879	6,518,416
- Office of Regulatory Services additional contracted surveyor	60,000	60,000
CAPACITY FOR OUT-OF-HOME SERVICES		
- Funding to support a projected 2.5% increase in the number of children in foster care and a 5% increase in the number of children needing adoption assistance	2,143,677	2,873,349
- Provide 135 institutionally supervised family foster care placements	375,840	587,250
- Provide 41 Multiple Agency Team for Children (MATCH) wraparound slots	505,373	1,098,636
- Pilot sites in Fulton and DeKalb counties to expand private emergency foster care services	423,600	1,095,000
- Additional funds to cover increased costs for institutional foster care	354,838	887,095
FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION SUPPORT		
- Increased funds for students in the foster care higher education scholarship program using new eligibility criteria	260,000	260,000
FATALITY REVIEW		
- Operating funds for the Office of Child Fatality Review	<u>40,073</u>	<u>40,073</u>
Total Funds	\$14,402,782	\$23,610,356