

Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act
CAPTA Panel Program

2018 Annual Report



*Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.*

Georgia

Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act

Citizen Review Panels

(CAPTA Panels)

2018 Annual Report Summary

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is the key federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA was first passed into law in 1974 - Public Law 93-247, and re-authorized in 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, in 2003 as Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, in 2010 by P.L. 111-320, the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, the Adoption Opportunities program, and the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-22) and was last reauthorized on July 22, 2016, by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-198). Amendments have been made to expand and refine the law with each reauthorization¹. Most recently, certain provisions of the act were amended on January 7, 2019, by the Victims of Child Abuse Act Reauthorization Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-424).

CAPTA provides federal funding and guidance to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities and also provides grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations, including Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, for demonstration programs and projects. Additionally, CAPTA identifies the federal role in supporting research, evaluation, technical assistance, and data collection activities; establishes the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect; and establishes a national clearinghouse of information relating to child abuse and neglect.

¹ The most recent reauthorization of CAPTA can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/capta.pdf>.

CAPTA allows the federal government to provide leadership and assist states in their child and family protection efforts by:

- promoting coordinated planning among all levels of government
- generating and sharing knowledge relevant to child and family protection
- strengthening the capacity of states to assist communities
- allocating financial resources to assist states in implementing plans
- helping states to carry out their child and family protection plans by promoting the competence of professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer resources

CAPTA also sets forth a federal definition of child abuse and neglect. In 2015, the federal definitions of “child abuse and neglect” and “sexual abuse” were expanded by the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act to include a child who is identified as a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking in persons.

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels

CAPTA, Section 106, is the enabling legislation for citizen review panels. When CAPTA was amended in 1996, each state, to be eligible for a CAPTA state grant, was required to establish at least three citizen review panels to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that communities and the state are meeting the goal of protecting children from abuse and neglect. Federal law authorized these panels to evaluate the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child welfare agencies and the extent to which these agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the state’s child protective services system plan and the specific child protection standards contained in CAPTA. Panels may review any other criteria that they consider important to ensure the protection of children, including the extent to which the state child protective services system coordinates with the title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act, and child fatalities and near fatalities.

In 2006, three existing committees were officially designated to serve as Georgia’s citizen review panels (CAPTA Panels)²: Children’s Justice Act Task Force (Task Force), Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC). The Task Force serves a dual role as a CAPTA Panel and as a task force on children’s justice³. The CFRP, also has a dual role, serving as both a CAPTA Panel and a state-mandated body charged with reviewing the circumstances in all unexplained, unexpected child deaths and identifying

² In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are known as ‘CAPTA Panels’ to distinguish them from the foster care review process known as the Citizen Panel Review Program that utilizes volunteers to conduct legally mandated reviews of the status and welfare of children placed by the Juvenile Court in the legal custody of the Division of Family and Children Services..

³ As a Children’s Justice Act state grant recipient, Georgia is required to maintain a task force on children’s justice.

opportunities for prevention. This includes all maltreatment-related deaths. CFRP established the Maltreatment Committee in 2009 to help meet its new obligations as a CAPTA Panel. The CPSAC serves solely as a CAPTA Panel.

Operations

Georgia's CAPTA Panels are composed of members that represent the full spectrum of stakeholders that include families and youth, foster, adoptive and relative caregivers, experts in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect in addition to professional disciplines involved in the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of these cases.⁴ All Panels meet at least quarterly, provide for public outreach⁵, and prepare an annual report on activities that provides feedback on the effectiveness of the state's child abuse prevention and treatment strategies and includes recommendations for improvements. Each of Georgia's CAPTA Panels meets all the statutory requirements for a citizen review panel as demonstrated in each of their individual annual reports.

Annual Retreat

All CAPTA Panel members participated in the annual day-long retreat in September hosted at Cobb County Superior Court. The retreat provided opportunities for networking, inter-panel planning, and information gathering. The agenda for the 2018 retreat included:

- An overview presentation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and the opportunities for CAPTA Panels
- A dialogue with Division leadership on FFPSA legislation implications for Georgia's child welfare system
- Presentations from each of the three Task Force members who presented at the 2018 national citizen review panel conference in Michigan
- Presentation from Division leadership on a variety of statewide initiatives and/or pilot programs under consideration or in a stage of implementation
- Presentation from Dr. Alaina Steck, Emory University, on the opioid epidemic and responding to the needs of children and families affected by substance use
- Exploratory session on developing a new state CAPTA plan facilitated by the Federal Plans Manager

Relationship with the Division of Family and Children Services

The state child welfare agency is required to provide access to information that Panels desire to review, to provide administrative support so that the Panels can fulfill their duties, and to respond to the Panel recommendations included in their annual reports. Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) meets all its

⁴ Panels that serve a dual role have additional membership requirements/criteria that are described in their individual reports.

⁵ Georgia's CAPTA Panels maintain a website, www.gacrp.com, to allow public access to information on CAPTA citizen review panels. Information and links to state and national child welfare resources are also available on the website.

statutory obligations with regard to its CAPTA Panels. The Division provides ongoing administrative support through:

- A Federal Plans Manager position created in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Panels, and whose responsibilities include facilitating communication and the exchange of information between the Division and the Panels
- A contract for the services of an independent coordinator who provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance

The Division Director and the leadership team meet as needed with CAPTA Panel members to discuss current recommendations, shared and individual concerns, priorities and interests, in addition to providing updates on actions taken by the Division in response to previous recommendations.

CAPTA Panels continue to reinforce the importance of early and meaningful engagement of stakeholders by the Division, including CAPTA Panel members, in any planning or consultative process to ensure increased system transparency and effectual stakeholder contribution. In 2018, CAPTA Panel members had the opportunity to participate in several state-sponsored activities, such as:

- Contributing to and review of the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR)
- Development of 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)
- Implementation and monitoring of Program Improvement Plans (PIP)
- Child welfare policy development, review and approval process
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Leadership Committee

CAPTA Panel members are also closely involved in the revision of the state's CAPTA Plan, due with the CFSP. During the annual retreat in September, the Federal Plans Manager facilitated an exercise to identify spending priorities. The Federal Plans Manager and CAPTA Panel & CJA Task Force Coordinator have solicited input on priority areas for the plan from CAPTA Panel members and other stakeholder groups to ensure coordination and collaboration with other state plans.

National Citizen Review Panel Conference: June 5-7, 2018, Mackinac Island, MI, "Navigating the Road Ahead"

Three CAPTA Panel members and the Coordinator represented Georgia at the annual citizen review panel conference. Each of the Georgia delegates presented at the conference. Nancy Chandler presented on "Utilizing the Child Abuse Protocol as a Tool for Cross Agency Collaboration." Donnie Winokur did a presentation on "Human Trafficking – The Lost Children" that focused on the increased risk of this type of victimization for children with disabilities. Jennifer Bartls, LMFT, CACII, CCS, provided a two-session training for mental health professionals on

“Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.” Georgia’s CAPTA Panel & CJA Task Force Coordinator, Deb Farrell, who serves as the Chair of the National Citizen Review Panel Advisory Board⁶ provided an update on the recent activities of the Advisory Board and its plans for 2019 in a joint session with Dr. Blake Jones⁷.

Representatives from more than 25 states attended the conference. The agenda included a broad range of topics relevant to the CAPTA mandate of citizen review panels, task forces on children’s justice and child fatality review. Sessions were facilitated by a wide array of national, state and local experts, from both the academic and professional fields of child welfare, as well as stakeholder advocacy groups and citizen review panel members. This included:

- The Challenge of Neglect
- Developing Best Practice Protocols for the MDT Response to Child Abuse Cases (DE)
- Drug Exposed Infants (NY/MI)
- Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Role of Citizen Review Panels in Mitigating its Effects on Child Welfare Staff (WI)
- Abusive Head Trauma (NY/MI)
- Enhancing Strength-Based Supervision in Child Welfare – The Wayne County Collaborative (MI)
- Engaging Community Partners for Prevention through Collaboration (WY)
- Creating a Multi-Agency Collaborative Statewide System of Child Abuse Prevention (NC)
- The Federal Role in Child Protection
- Exploring the Layered Problem and Applying Practical Solutions for Children Victimized by Domestic Violence (MI)
- The Impact of Family Finding Work in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (WI)

Several state panels, including Oregon, Ohio and Michigan also presented on their CAPTA panels’ operational models.

Other Training and Networking Opportunities for CAPTA Panel Members

In addition, CAPTA Panel members have also been able to take advantage of trainings, informational webinars and/or virtual events on topics relevant to their mandate and offered by a variety of federal state and local sources such as the Children’s Bureau, the Capacity Building Center for States, National Criminal Justice Training Center, National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, throughout the year.

⁶ The purpose of the Advisory Board is to support and advocate for the citizen review panel community and to serve as a resource for citizen review panel (CAPTA panel) community.

⁷ Dr. Jones is under contract with the Capacity Building Center for States to provide technical assistance to CAPTA citizen review panels.

Summary of 2018 Activities and Recommendations

Georgia's CAPTA Panels have a statewide systemic approach to examining issues that impact the effectiveness of the state's child protection system. Although each CAPTA Panel has its own unique vision and mission, the common goal among all three is to improve the child welfare system and community response to protecting victims and supporting families. In 2018, CAPTA Panels' interests and activities included:

- Caseworker safety, working environment and culture
- Special investigation of critical incidents
- Mandated reporter training standards
- State model child abuse protocol (CAP) and governing legislation
- Identification of maltreatment-related fatalities
- Child fatality review and governing legislation
- Child representation

Recommendations include:

- Convening of a work group to assess child representation standards and practice
- Exploring training alternatives to support multidisciplinary practice related to the child abuse protocol
- Evaluating the state's 24-hour call center
- Developing and implementing a protocol for investigating child fatalities
- Conducting a thorough review of legislation governing child fatality review
- Advocating for sufficient budgetary resources for the Office of the Child Fatality Review
- Reconstituting a multidisciplinary process for reviewing child deaths of children involved with child protective services and publication findings, actions taken and prevention opportunities
- Improving policies, procedures and practices related to worker safety and well-being
- Addressing inconsistencies between policy and practice related to the investigation of critical incidents

It should be noted that the Division supported all funding recommendations proposed by the Children's Justice Act Task Force.

Descriptions of 2018 CAPTA Panel activities and details on the resulting recommendations are included in the individual Panel reports that follow.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Georgia's CAPTA Panels

Prepared by Deb Farrell, CAPTA Panel & CJA Task Force Coordinator, Care Solutions, Inc.

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Vision

Every child will live in a safe and nurturing home, and every family will have the community-based supports and services they need to provide safe and nurturing homes for their children

Mission

To work in partnership with Georgia's child welfare system to ensure that every effort is made to preserve, support and strengthen families, and when intervention is necessary to ensure the safety of children, that they and their families are treated with dignity, respect and care

2018 Annual Report

The Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC) serves as one of Georgia's three Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Panels.¹ All state CAPTA grant recipients are required to establish and maintain CAPTA Panels to increase system transparency and accountability and provide opportunities for community input by:

- Examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies, and, where appropriate, specific cases
- Evaluating the extent to which state and local child protection agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with:
 - a) The state's CAPTA plan
 - b) Child protection standards required by CAPTA
- Any other criteria that the CAPTA Panels consider important to ensure the protection of children, including:
 - a) Reviewing the extent to which the state and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs established under Title IV Part E of the Social Security Act
 - b) Reviewing child fatalities and near fatalities

¹ The other two CAPTA Panels are the Children's Justice Act Task Force and the Child Fatality Review Panel.

Georgia's CPSAC focuses its efforts on the prevention, early intervention, and placement stability efforts of the state's child protection system. The committee's current interests and priorities relate the policies and practices that guide the important work of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services staff, primarily at the county level. Based on their 2018 priorities, the following report represents a summary of their operations, activities and resulting recommendations.

Membership

The CPSAC includes members from both rural and urban communities, some of whom travel several hours to attend meetings. Although the size of the state presents a challenge when recruiting and engaging members that represent all its geographic areas, most geographic regions are represented on the CPSAC. The diversity of personal and professional backgrounds and the wide range of experience and expertise of CPSAC members bring many unique perspectives to their common interest - the safety and well-being of Georgia's families, children and youth.

CPSAC Members

Angie Boy, Program Manager Children's Healthcare of Atlanta <i>Adoptive Parent</i>	Jennifer King, Executive Director Georgia CASA
Angela Burda, Program Director Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center	Karl Lehman (Co-Chair) President & CEO Childkind, Inc.
Molly Casey, Teen Parent Connection Multi-Agency Alliance for Children, Inc.	Mike Patton, Program Manager Healthy Grandparents Program Augusta University
Yvette Dennis <i>Grandparent Caregiver</i>	Amy Rene, LCSW (Co-Chair) Vice President of Clinical Programs Hillside, Inc.
Suzanne Dow*, Executive Director Georgia Mountain Women's Center, Inc.	Jennifer Stein, Executive Director PCA Habersham, Inc.
Michelle Girtman, Executive Director Battered Women's Shelter, Inc. <i>Foster/Adoptive Parent</i>	Sherelle Thomas, Executive Director Rainbow House, Inc.
Sarah Jones <i>Foster Parent</i>	Belisa Urbina, CEO Ser Familia, Inc.

*New member in 2018

CPSAC membership remained stable during 2018. One addition to the CPSAC was a community member from a domestic violence shelter in northwest Georgia. Ongoing recruitment efforts continue to identify and engage individuals from the community with an interest in improving Georgia's child welfare system or who have expertise

in a subject matter of interest to the CPSAC. Identifying and engaging consumers, parents and youth who have been involved in the system is most challenging; however, the CPSAC is committed to providing those opportunities whenever possible.

Meetings

In 2018, the CPSAC satisfied the federally mandated minimum requirement for quarterly meetings. Meetings in FFY2018 were held in:

- November 2017
- January 2018
- March 2018
- May 2018
- August 2018

Additional committee meetings, special meetings, and conference calls were held as needed. Consultation with child welfare agency representatives were scheduled when requested. CPSAC members attended an annual all-panel retreat² held in September and hosted by the Cobb County Superior Court. Panel members also met during the year with the Division Director and the leadership team to discuss current activities and obtain updates on state actions related to previous years' recommendations.

CPSAC History

A Statewide Child Protective Services Advisory Panel (SCPSAP) was established in July 2000 by the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) to increase system transparency by soliciting input from stakeholders on the activities of the Child Protective Services Unit. The purpose of the SCPSAP had been to support the Division's child welfare goals by examining issues, identifying best practices and making recommendations for improvement. Early priorities included improving the Division's negative public image and addressing workplace culture.³ In 2005, the SCPSAP was designated as a CAPTA citizen review panel as the Children's Bureau sought to increase accountability of all CAPTA state grant recipients.

In 2006, the SCPSAP was renamed the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee. Since that time, the CPSAC's interests have spanned the full child welfare continuum from the early intersection of families with the child

² See Overview for a description and summary of 2018 retreat activities.

³ Since 2005, additional recommendations related to both the public's image of the child protection system and workplace environment have been included in several CPSAC annual reports.

protection system - the initial report, its screening and disposition - to policy and practice related to treatment and services when children are placed in out-of-home care. These interests have been reflected in their annual reports and have included recommendations related to:

- Interagency collaboration and data-sharing
- Development of a statewide prevention plan
- Mandated reporting
- Safety and risk assessment and alternative response
- Worker recruitment and retention
- Safety resources and relative placements
- Foster parent training

'Never doubt that a small, dedicated group of citizens can make a difference. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

...Margaret Mead

Additionally, the CPSAC also has had an ongoing interest in the state's CAPTA plan and has contributed to its review and subsequent revisions including the most recent plan approved in 2017.⁴

2018 CPSAC Activities

Since conducting a survey of Georgia's child welfare workforce on issues related to caseworker job satisfaction and agency recruitment and retention practices in 2015, the CPSAC has had an ongoing interest in decreasing the high turnover rate for frontline workers. Recommendations from the CPSAC at that time were well received, and intervening actions taken by the Division, legislators and child welfare advocates have shown some promising and positive changes. Although staffing levels and compensation have increased, and efforts have been made to improve the quality and consistency of supervisory practice, staff turnover remains high. Stress due to unrealistic performance expectations and a punitive culture contribute to low job satisfaction and high turnover. In 2018, the CPSAC, recognizing that its recommendations from previous years and the agency's response were making some progress, decided to try to identify additional opportunities to improve caseworker job satisfaction and retention and established a Worker Safety committee to evaluate the frontline staff work environment.

Worker Safety Committee

The objective of the committee was to improve caseworker emotional well-being and physical safety by enhancing the Division's culture and prioritizing worker safety through policies, procedures, and practices. The Worker Safety committee conducted a review of policies and practices regarding critical incidents involving caseworkers. This included training caseworkers regarding personal safety, the process for reporting and documenting incidents, and

⁴ CPSAC members have been invited to participate on a work group to develop a new state CAPTA plan in response to new federal legislation, the Families First Prevention Services Act.

the response to those incidents. They also reviewed employee benefits, including the Health and Flex Plan, SHBP Wellness Plan, TEAM Georgia and Employee Assistance Program, recognizing that these benefits would be critical for caseworkers who often experience secondary trauma as a result of their work environment. In developing recommendations, committee members consulted publications from:

- Capacity-Building Center for States - The Child Welfare Worker Safety Guide and Championing the Role of Child Welfare Professionals;
- National Association of Social Workers - Guidelines for Social Work Safety in the Workplace; and the
- University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center - Field Safety Checklist.

Based on its findings, the Worker Safety committee developed the following recommendations:

Policies	Procedures	Practices
<p>State leadership's commitment to creating a culture of safety both in the field and in the office environment, physical, emotional, and psychological.</p> <p>Budget funds specifically for mandatory worker safety prevention training <i>upon hire and annually</i>, including funding for education on trauma and a support system to prevent vicarious trauma.</p> <p>Establish incident reporting and analysis system including the ability to have incidents logged with the case in GA SHINES. Behavior concerns and incidents reported on any individual associated with the case would be flagged in GA SHINES.</p> <p>Establish clear definitions of reportable incidents.</p> <p>Establish a safety plan to include creation of a Worker Safety Committee and a system of open communication.</p>	<p>Develop shared agreement of standards for worker safety.</p> <p>Create a Worker Safety Committee: establish its purpose and include appropriate stakeholders and field agents from all sectors across the state, department leadership and members of law enforcement.</p> <p>Develop a written procedure for pre-visit risk assessment and protocol based on outcome of assessment.</p> <p>Develop written procedures for Field Safety Checklist and protocol for use.</p>	<p>Worker Safety Committee meetings and recommendations from committee reviewed annually.</p> <p>Routine use of pre-visit risk assessment according to recommended protocol.</p> <p>Routine use of Field Safety Checklist according to recommended protocol.</p> <p>Non-punitive approach to incident reporting.</p> <p>Positive promotion of self-care activities at all Division levels.</p> <p>Use of open communication among peers and supervisors for continuous quality improvement regarding safety of employees and clients.</p>

Evaluate training needs annually based on incidents reported, open communication and recommendations from the Worker Safety Committee.		
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Special Investigations Committee

A second committee was established in response to concerns arising from allegations against foster parents, including DFCS and Child Placing Agency (CPA) foster homes and relative placements. The committee reviewed all related policies and commends the Division on the thoroughness and soundness of its policies related to special investigations as policy is intended to set the standard for best practice. However, the committee’s concerns arose as the result of a disparity reported between the family-focused, trauma-informed investigation described in policy and the reported practice in the field which was described as reactive and disproportionate. Based on the committee’s review, it developed the following recommendations:

- Skilled and well-trained foster or kinship caregivers should anticipate multiple critical incident reports, some of which lead to investigations that, assuming there was no actual maltreatment or neglect, are ultimately unsubstantiated. It is important to acknowledge and prepare temporary caregivers - foster and kin – as well as others who have regular, direct contact with children and youth in foster care, that there is an increased risk of a report of abuse or policy violation due to necessary regulations, escalated child behavioral responses, and heightened scrutiny of care for children in DFCS legal custody. DFCS and providers should prepare caregivers and their families for common situations that may result in a report or policy violation, provide skills and opportunities for de-escalation, and inform caregivers of the prescribed process and need for objectivity. Furthermore, DFCS staff should be cognizant of the need to retain high quality temporary homes, especially for children with significant special needs. Investigations of reports, therefore, should be handled respectfully and fully in accordance with the Foster Parent’s Bill of Rights in order to ensure the state does not inadvertently lose such homes.
- Requiring CPS investigators to partner with CPA’s are included, and included early, in the investigation when allegations involve one of their foster homes.
- Special Investigations require a high level of experience and competence. Individuals charged with investigating reported abuse of children in foster care settings should receive training specific to that role to ensure not only that those caregivers are treated fairly but that children, whether foster or biological, are not further traumatized. It is recommended that the Division develop standards for special investigator

qualifications, design specialized training, and implement a plan to ensure that all designated special investigators receive appropriate training.

CPSAC Priorities for 2019

The CPSAC plans to continue its focus on job satisfaction and worker retention. It has established a Worker Retention committee to further investigate opportunities to address factors resulting in high staff turnover. Additionally, a committee has been established to address concerns arising from a disconnect observed between current policy and reliance on another state agency for all assessments when cases involving substance-affected infants are reported. The CPSAC will explore opportunities to evaluate the state's Plan of Safe Care policy and practice. As both workforce development and Plans of Safe Care will be included as priorities in the state's new CAPTA plan, the 2019 efforts of both of these committees is appropriate and timely.

Another identified concern is the drop in the state's performance on Safety Outcome 1, Item 3: Risk Assessment and Safety Management reported in the "Rolling Trend Comparison Report October 2018-March 2019," which indicated a drop from 43% in the 2015 Child and Family Services Review to 28% for the period. Appropriate assessment of families when a report is received is critical to ensuring the safety of children, preventing additional trauma to the family, and preventing unnecessary removal to foster care. Improving initial safety assessments will be critical to improving this outcome and to the success of the state's Families First Prevention Services (FFPSA) plan. In 2019, the CPSAC will determine how best to respond to the concerning Item 3 to identify causative factors and opportunities to improve.

Acknowledgement

Effectiveness of any CAPTA Panel is largely dependent on an open and mutually supportive relationship with the state's child welfare agency. The Division and its leadership team are commended for their responsiveness to the committees' many requests and recommendations. The CPSAC would especially like to acknowledge the Division's continued support of its efforts to meet its mandate as a CAPTA Panel. The CPSAC looks forward to ongoing dialogue to improve the safety, permanency and well-being of Georgia's children and their families.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Karl Lehman (Co-Chair)
CEO Childkind, Inc.

Amy Rene (Co-Chair)
Vice President Clinical Programs, Hillside, Inc.

Children's Justice Act Task Force

Vision

All of Georgia's children will receive the best possible protection from all forms of child abuse and neglect from a system of highly trained professionals, who thoroughly investigate alleged abuse and adequately prosecute those who abuse children, while protecting children from repeat maltreatment.

Mission

To identify opportunities to reform state systems and improve processes by which Georgia's child welfare system responds to cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and child abuse or neglect-related fatalities; and, in collaboration with the state's child protection agency and its external partners, make policy and training recommendations regarding methods to better handle these cases, with the expectation that it will result in reduced trauma to the child victim and the victim's family while ensuring fairness to the accused.

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Children's Justice Act

The Children's Justice Act (CJA) provides grants to states to improve the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim. This also includes the handling of child fatality cases where child abuse or neglect is suspected and cases involving children with disabilities or serious health problems who are the victims of abuse and neglect. The source of CJA funds is the Crime Victims Fund, and grants are awarded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, as outlined in Section 107 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. CJA grants are intended to address issues at the front end of the state's multidisciplinary response to protect children when abuse and neglect occurs. Use of CJA funds specifically for prevention activities or treatment services is prohibited.

CJA Task Force

Georgia's Children's Justice Act Task Force (Task Force) was established to satisfy the legislative requirement to maintain a multi-disciplinary task force on children's justice as a CJA state grant recipient. The Task Force is composed of representatives from selected disciplines involved in the assessment and investigation of cases of child abuse and neglect. The purpose of the CJA Task Force is to review and evaluate practices and protocols associated with the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect and to make policy and training recommendations that will improve the handling of these cases and result in reduced trauma to the child victim and victim's family while ensuring fairness to the accused.

Since its establishment in 2003, Georgia's Task Force has played a key role in the administration of the state's CJA grant by facilitating and supporting innovative practices in child abuse investigation and prosecution. The Task Force also provides technical support in the administration of the CJA grant, including funding recommendations and administrative oversight.

Dual Role as a CAPTA Citizen Review Panel (CAPTA Panel)¹

Georgia's CJA Task Force also serves as one of Georgia's three CAPTA Panels.² The purpose and objectives of a CJA multidisciplinary task force and a CAPTA citizen review panel³ are complementary and share several legislative requirements. Although the priorities of the CJA Task Force are rooted in the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, interests span the full spectrum of family involvement in the child protection system, for all types of families and children of all ages. Serving this dual role provides unique opportunities to address overlapping mandates.

CJA Task Force History

Georgia's CJA Task Force (Task Force) was reestablished in 2005 and has strived to satisfy all CJA obligations since that time. The Task Force's early activities focused on nurturing ongoing, interactive relationships between criminal justice and the child welfare agency. It played a key role in the child welfare continuum by successfully facilitating, supporting, and funding innovations in the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect and child sexual abuse. Early goals included:

- Improving multidisciplinary education and training
- Improving preparation and collaboration in the handling of child abuse cases

¹ In Georgia, CAPTA citizen review panels are referred to as "CAPTA Panels."

² Georgia's other two CAPTA Panels are the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee and the Child Fatality Review Panel.

³ CAPTA citizen review panels are charged with the examination of child welfare policy, practice and procedures to determine the extent to which the state is meeting its child protection responsibilities and making recommendations for improvement.

- Improving the collection, analysis, and exchange of data
- Improving the evaluation of projects and activities supported with CJA funds

The Task Force has been responsible for identifying activities that support CJA objectives and soliciting, reviewing, and recommending projects to the child welfare agency for funding annually. Some longstanding or re-occurring projects funded by the CJA grant since 2005 include:

- Forensic interview training for investigators
- Legal training for child welfare agency caseworkers
- Guardian ad Litem training
- Internships for law students in the fields of child welfare and juvenile justice⁴
- State model child abuse protocol – revisions, training, dissemination and evaluation

Since 2005, the Task Force has completed four three-year assessments. The first, in 2009, focused on child sexual abuse training, mandated reporting, and practice regarding the appointment of representation for children in dependency cases. The second, in 2012, evaluated policy, practice, and training related to the handling of cases involving victims with special needs. The third, in 2015, addressed concerns related to reported inconsistencies in how various agencies respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect. The most recent assessment,⁵ completed in 2018, focused on the training provided to individuals who respond to and investigate all forms of child maltreatment to identify potential training gaps or barriers and opportunities to enhance best practices. The priorities and activities of the Task Force reflect its commitment to continued improvement in the policy and practice areas identified in each of the three-year assessments.

Task Force at Work

Membership: A task force on children's justice is required to maintain membership representing the following disciplines:

- Judges and attorneys, including civil and criminal, prosecution and defense
- Law enforcement
- Child protective services
- Child advocates
- Court-appointed special advocates (CASA)
- Health and mental health professionals
- Parents and parent groups

⁴ This project was featured in a session on innovative programs at the 2010 CJA Grantee meeting.

⁵ A copy of the assessment is included in the 2017 annual CAPTA Panel report and is available at www.gacrp.com.

- Individuals who specialize in working with children with disabilities
- Individuals with experience in working with homeless children and youth
- Adult former victim

Georgia's Task Force has maintained a stable and committed core membership for many years. It is currently chaired by Melissa Carter, Emory University School of Law, and David Miller, Senior Assistant District Attorney for the Southern Judicial Circuit. Ms. Carter has been a member since 2007, and Mr. Miller since 2015.

Task Force Members

Sandra Barrett, Volunteer Carroll County CASA <i>Court Appointed Special Advocate</i>	C. LaTain (Tain) Kell, Sr* Cobb County Superior Court <i>Superior Court Judge</i>
Jennifer Bartl, Program Director Wellspring Living <i>Mental Health</i>	Beoncia Loveless, Consultant/Trainer Child Death Investigation Specialist <i>Adoptive Parent (Former Relative Foster Parent)</i>
Cheryl Benefield, Program Manager Safe & Drug-Free Schools, Georgia Department of Education <i>Education</i>	Stephen Messner, MD, Medical Director Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Stephanie Blank Child Protection Center <i>Health Professional</i>
Lalaine A. Briones, JD Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault & Crimes Against Children Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia <i>Prosecuting Attorney</i>	J. David Miller, Sr. Assistant District Attorney Southern Judicial Circuit <i>Prosecuting Attorney</i>
Kyle Browne*, Child Advocate Attorney DeKalb Child Advocacy Center <i>Child Attorney</i>	Julia Neighbors, Executive Director Prevent Child Abuse Georgia <i>Prevention Specialist</i>
Rachelle Carnesale, Assistant District Attorney Cherokee County <i>Disabilities</i>	Amber Patterson Cobb County Juvenile Court <i>Juvenile Court Judge</i>
Melissa D. Carter, JD, Executive Director Barton Child Law and Policy Center Emory University School of Law <i>Child Law Advocate</i>	Megan Paul, Clinical Director AmericanWork, Inc. <i>Foster Parent</i>
Nancy Chandler, CEO - Retired Georgia Center for Child Advocacy <i>Advocate</i>	Stephanie L. Pearson, Ph.D., Director Child and Adolescent Services Programs Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities <i>Mental Health Professional</i>

Dena Crim, Special Assistant Attorney General* Georgia Department of Law Cobb County <i>Juvenile Victims</i>	Mitzie Smith, Unit Director Georgia Division of Family and Children Services Knowledge Management Section, Policy and Regulations Unit <i>Child Protective Services</i>
Latera Davis, Director of Victim and Volunteer Services Department of Juvenile Justice	Angela Tanzella-Tyner, JD Director of Advocacy & Program Development Georgia CASA <i>Court Appointed Special Advocate</i>
Nicholas Forge, PhD, MA, LMSW, Clinical Assistant Professor Georgia State University <i>Homeless Youth Advocate</i>	Kelly Tonelli, Sergeant Special Victims Unit Gwinnett County Police Department <i>Law Enforcement</i>
Darice Good, JD, CWLS Good Legal Firm, LLC <i>Parent Attorney</i>	Ashley Willcott DeKalb Juvenile Court <i>Judge Pro Tem</i>
Jordan Greenbaum, MD, Medical Director Global Child Health & Well Being Initiative International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children <i>Health Professional</i>	Deb Farrell Care Solutions, Inc. <i>Task Force Coordinator</i>

* New members

At this time, all mandated positions on the Task Force are filled. Ms. Crim’s engagement on the Task Force satisfies a previously unfilled, mandated membership - adult former victim. Dr. Forge satisfies another mandated position, individual with experience with homeless youth, filling a position that was vacated during the year. Mr. Browne brings a unique perspective to the Task Force having experience representing both children and parents. Ongoing recruitment efforts by individual Task Force members, child welfare agency leadership, and a variety of professional and advocacy groups help to identify new candidates when needed to provide additional expertise relevant to Task Force priorities and/or its mandate as a CAPTA Panel.

CJA membership requirements also satisfy CAPTA citizen review panel membership requirements, including that members be broadly representative of the community with experience and/or expertise in child welfare system.

Task Force members participate on a variety of local, state and/or national boards or organizations that increase the collaborative potential for furthering the goals and objectives of the Children’s Justice Act. This includes such groups or organizations as:

- Strengthening Families Georgia
- Human Trafficking Task Force
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

- National Parent Representation Project
- HEAL (health, education, advocacy and leadership) Trafficking Committee
- Georgia Advisory Council on Special Education
- Georgia Child Welfare Training Collaborative Advisory Committee
- National Citizen Panel Advisory Committee
- Child Welfare Training Collaborative
- Youth Protection Seminar Steering Committee

Task Force Meetings: The Task Force holds five regularly scheduled meetings each year, satisfying the federally mandated minimum requirement for quarterly meetings for both a CJA Task Force and a CAPTA Panel. These meetings occurred in:

- May 2018
- July 2018
- November 2018
- January 2019
- March 2019

Task Force members consult regularly with each other and the CJA Coordinator for updates on work projects supported with the CJA grant; recent events related to Task Force goals, objectives, and interests; collaboration opportunities; recruitment needs and efforts; and identification and coordination of additional resources.

Task Force members also attend an annual all panel retreat⁶ held in September and hosted by the Cobb County Superior Court. Committee meetings, special meetings, and conference calls were held as needed. Consultation with child welfare agency representatives are also scheduled when requested. Task Force members also met during the year with the Division Director and the leadership team to discuss current activities and obtain updates on state actions related to previous years' recommendations.

In June 2018, three of Georgia's Task Force members and the CJA Task Force Coordinator presented at the annual national citizen review panel conference⁷ on Mackinac Island, MI.

⁶ See CAPTA Panel Overview for a description and summary of 2018 retreat activities.

⁷ See CAPTA Panel Overview for a description and summary of presentations at the 2018 national citizen review panel conference.

Annual CJA Grantee Meeting: July 19-20, 2018, Washington, DC

The Children's Bureau hosts annual grantee meetings for all discretionary and formula grant programs. Georgia's State Liaison Officer (SLO) Safety Services Director LaResa Price; Federal Plans Manager Shelby Zimmer; Task Force Co-chair Melissa Carter; and CJA Coordinator, Deb Farrell attended the one-and-a-half day meeting, which provides an opportunity for CJA grantee states to receive a legislative update from federal representatives, learn from national experts, and network with CJA task force representatives from other states.

Joint sessions with state SLO's included presentations on:

- The Family First Prevention Services Act
- Plans of Safe Care
- Collaboration Between Child Welfare and Court Systems

Breakout sessions for CJA Task Force members included:

- Introduction to CapShare Platform
- CJA Task Force Structure and Function
- Information Sharing on Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- Using CJA Funding for Innovative Purposes

Collaboration with Georgia's Child Welfare Agency

The relationship between the Task Force and Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services (the Division) can be characterized as a collaborative and mutually respectful working relationship. The Division consults regularly with members of the Task Force, formally and informally. The expertise and opinions of the Task Force are valued and opportunities for stakeholder involvement often happen organically, without the need for a federal mandate. This positive relationship contributes to the stability and effectiveness of the Task Force.

To sustain the efforts of the Task Force and ensure that it continues to meet its CJA obligations, the Division provides ongoing administrative support, including:

- Creating a Federal Plans Manager position in 2016 to serve as a liaison with the Task Force, whose responsibilities include facilitating communication between the Division and the Task Force and management of CJA contracts related to Task Force recommendations. The Federal Plans Manager regularly attends CJA Task Force meetings to strengthen relationships with Task Force members, provide agency updates, and solicit feedback on Division initiatives. This facilitates the prompt sharing of information between the Task Force and the Division that supports its ongoing work.

- Contracting for the services of an independent coordinator who:
 - Provides day-to-day operational support and technical assistance to Task Force members and its committees
 - Facilitates the exchange of information between the CAPTA Panels and the Division
 - Participates in quarterly CJA grantee conference calls and attends the annual CJA grantee meeting
 - Coordinates communications with other states' Task Forces, as needed
 - Assists in the identification, recruitment, and retention of task force members
 - Coordinates intra- and inter-panel communications and promotes collaboration among the panels

With the creation of the Federal Plans Manager position, the Division Director committed to meeting regularly with CAPTA Panel and Task Force members. These meetings provide an opportunity for open dialogue between the Task Force and the Division's leadership team on shared and individual concerns, priorities and interests, as well as updates on actions taken by the child welfare agency in response to previous Task Force recommendations. These meetings are always informative and help build mutual respect and understanding. Members from the Division's leadership team also participated in the annual CAPTA Panel retreat in September, where ideas related specifically to current Panel activities are exchanged.

For many years, Georgia's Task Force members have been involved to varying degrees in child welfare strategic planning activities and invited to participate on advisory groups to provide input or feedback to the state agency on its development, revision, implementation, monitoring and/or evaluation of its plans, practice strategies, models and programs. These included:

- Contributions to and review of the Annual Progress and Services Report
- Development of the state's Child and Family Services Plan
- Revision of the state's CAPTA Plan
- Implementation and monitoring of Program Improvement Plans
- Child welfare policy development, review and approval

Georgia is actively engaging Task Force members in the development of its 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Members were invited and several attended the annual CFSP stakeholder meeting, where the Division shared an overview of the upcoming CFSP. Task Force Co-Chair Melissa Carter was in attendance at the state planning meeting held in Washington, D.C. in April of 2019 and is working closely with the Division and a group of stakeholders, including other Task Force members, the CJA Coordinator, and the State Court Improvement Project Director, to assist with identifying and synthesizing collaborative priorities and goals to inform the content of the CFSP.

The Task Force is also closely involved in the revision of the state's CAPTA plan which is due with the CFSP in June 2019. During the annual retreat in September 2018, the Federal Plans Manager facilitated an exercise to identify CAPTA spending priorities. The Federal Plans Manager and CJA Coordinator have solicited input on priority areas for the plan at Task Force meetings and will work with the Task Force, other CAPTA panels and individuals responsible for other state plans to collaborate and coordinate activities on shared objectives.

The Task Force has also worked to enhance its relationship with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) to coordinate work that supports mutual objectives. CIP Director Jerry Bruce was invited to a Task Force meeting and provided an update on CIP activities and priorities. The discussion was robust, and several opportunities were identified. The Task Force Child Representation committee has plans to work with the CIP and Division in 2019 to coordinate efforts to evaluate state practice with respect to related CAPTA assurances and child representation standards to develop recommendations for improvement. The CIP Director is also included in the development of the state's CAPTA Plan to ensure alignment of any goals related to child representation.

Task Force Legislative Interests

Child Abuse and Neglect Terminology: In its 2015 assessment, the Task Force undertook an exhaustive study of the statutory approaches to defining child maltreatment and its various forms throughout the Georgia Code. Specific focus was placed on the definitions codified in the Social Services Act (Title 49), the Juvenile Code (Title 15, Chapter 11) and select provisions contained within Title 19 (Child Custody), particularly those concerning mandated reporting of child abuse. Additionally, the Criminal Code (Title 16) and the Education Code (Title 20) were reviewed. This research was supplemented by a limited number of qualitative interviews with child welfare agency staff, law enforcement personnel, and children's hospital staff, and examination of the model Child Abuse Protocol.⁸

Task Force members observed that while the definitions were not in conflict, inconsistencies in the way child abuse and neglect are conceptualized in statute produce inconsistent responses in the way various authorities (e.g., education, law enforcement) respond to allegations of child maltreatment. Discrepancies in statutory schemes had developed because of the piecemeal fashion in which legislative amendments occur, and investigatory practices had followed. Challenges were revealed in the Division's investigations of maltreatment in care reports and subsequently in the implementation of the child abuse registry.

After the Task Force submitted its recommendations to Division leadership, the Director and the General Counsel initiated follow-up with the Executive Director of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center and Task Force Co-Chair

⁸ Update was prepared by Melissa Carter, Task Force Co-Chair and Director of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center.

about the potential for collaborating to devise a definition of abuse that could be included in the mandated reporter statute and juvenile code definitions and be widely accepted for purposes of substantiation decisions and court determinations of dependency. A broad and inclusive stakeholder engagement process and further research were undertaken, and a final proposal to amend O.C.G.A. 19-7-5, Georgia's mandatory reporter statute, was drafted in September 2017. That proposal formed the basis for a bill drafted for introduction in the 2018 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly and a legislative sponsor was identified. Ultimately, the sponsor failed to introduce the bill formally, for reasons having nothing to do with the merits of the proposal.

Update: As a reflection of its commitment to these statutory amendments, the Division submitted the legislative draft of the definitional changes as part of its package of requests to the Governor's office at the onset of the 2019 legislative session. Governor Kemp's office supported the need for the changes but ultimately did not elect to adopt the proposal as an administration bill, leaving the responsibility to the Division and its partners to move the legislation forward. Concurrently, the Barton Center, the Division, and other stakeholders were working together to support statutory changes to the state's child abuse registry and made an attempt to amend that bill with the mandated reporter definition changes. The sponsor of the underlying bill was unsuccessful and, given the advanced stage of the session at that point, the definitional changes could not be introduced as a standalone bill. The legislative session concluded on April 2, 2019 without further progress on this priority. Shortly thereafter, the Division resubmitted this request to Governor Kemp's office for consideration in the 2020 session.

The Task Force remains committed to this priority. Members are interested in addressing this policy and practice gap to promote best practice in multidisciplinary investigations of child abuse, consistency in response to allegations, and lessening of trauma to child victims.

Several Task Force members are legislatively active and provide updates on the status of bills related to the CJA mandate and Task Force priorities. At the close of the recent legislative session, the following bills relevant to CJA objectives had successfully passed both houses and were awaiting signature by the Governor:⁹

- HB 472 amending the Juvenile Code to require juvenile courts to consider temporary alternatives to foster care when determining where to place a child who has been alleged dependent but has not yet been adjudicated. The bill also mandates training for juvenile court intake officers with the authority to remove a child from his or her home.

⁹ Legislative summary provided by the Barton Child Law and Policy Center

- HB 478 amending Article 8 of Chapter 5 of the Social Services Code, relating to the central child abuse registry, to revise the requirements for notice to an alleged child abuser, to require that a person be named on the registry only after he or she has had an opportunity to be heard, and to provide for an expungement opportunity. This bill also prohibits the inclusion of alleged child abusers under age 18.
- SB 158 amending Titles 9, 15, 16, 17 and 41 of the Georgia Code, relating to civil practice courts, crimes and offenses, criminal procedures, and nuisances. It authorizes DFCS to provide emergency care for children who are trafficking victims and requires referral of such children to certified victims' services. It amends the offense of trafficking for sexual servitude, redefines prostitution to include only acts committed by persons 18 years of age or older, and eliminates the offense of pandering by compulsion. Finally, the bill adds using a place for the purpose of labor or sex trafficking to the list of activities that constitute maintaining a nuisance.
- SB 167 amending the Juvenile Code to require juvenile courts, when determining whether reasonable efforts have been made to finalize a permanent home for a child, to determine whether DFCS has completed the diligent search. The bill excuses DFCS from considering a relative placement resource if the relative has not demonstrated interest in providing a permanent home within six months after receiving notices from DFCS. It also creates a presumption that remaining in a home is in a child's best interests if the child has been in that home for 12 months and if removal would cause emotional harm to the child. Finally, the bill removes the requirement that the court must first attempt to place a child with a relative after the parent's rights have been terminated.

Task Force Priorities

The Task Force continues its support of coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches that improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, and in particular, training related to victims with special needs, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and maltreatment-related child fatalities. This includes the following long-standing priorities related to its mandate:

1. Promoting and supporting the quality and consistency of the multidisciplinary response
2. Promoting, supporting and improving multidisciplinary education and training
3. Improving communication, collaboration and coordination between agencies and among the professionals involved in the handling of child abuse cases
4. Improving the collection, analysis and exchange of data
5. Advocating for and supporting the development of child welfare professionals

The Task Force prioritizes projects that emphasize advocacy, multidisciplinary processes, collaboration and Task Force special interests. These additional priorities include:

6. Child victims with special needs, sexual exploitation of children and child abuse related fatalities
7. Education and training to improve the identification of child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child abuse related fatalities
8. Education and training to improve the investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases, both civil and criminal
9. Ensuring that all children have access to and are appointed qualified individuals to represent their interests in judicial proceedings
10. Ensuring that child abuse terminology and definitions are aligned with federal guidelines, O.C.G.A. and consistent among state agencies with child-caring and child protection responsibilities.

More specifically, this includes projects that:

- Demonstrate collaboration between Georgia's child welfare agency, its partners and community stakeholders
- Improve the alignment of policy and practice among state agencies with child caring or protection responsibilities with child welfare policy and practice
- Reduce trauma to child victims of abuse
- Ensure that the handling of cases involving child victims with special needs is developmentally and culturally appropriate
- Improve the quality and consistency of state and local child abuse protocols – the community's collaborative response to report of abuse
- Improve the consistency and quality of mandated reporter training

In addition to guiding the work of the Task Force committees, these priorities are the primary factors considered in the development of annual CJA funding recommendations.

The most recent three-year assessment, completed in 2018, examined the training provided to individuals who respond to and investigate all forms of child maltreatment to identify potential training gaps or barriers and opportunities to enhance best practices. From the findings of the assessment, the Task Force committees prioritized several areas of focus relating to the content and dissemination of the state Child Abuse Protocol and training on child maltreatment for first responders/EMS. This work will further the Task Force priorities of improving the identification of child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child abuse-

related fatalities and improving the quality and consistency of state and local child abuse protocols. The Task Force has also continued its efforts to address issues identified in the 2015 three-year assessment as well as its ongoing priorities.

Task Force has established several committees to support its ongoing priorities and further CJA objectives. These include:

- Child Abuse Protocol Committee
- Mandated Reporter Training Committee
- Child Fatality Investigations Committee
- Special Needs Committee
- CJA Grants Committee

"There is no more important measure of a people than how carefully and faithfully they attend to the wellbeing of their children. True justice begins today with the children, or there is no hope of justice tomorrow for the world."

...Barry Nolan

Two additional committees were added in 2018:

- The Child Representation Committee was established to improve child representation standards and compliance with CAPTA. Georgia's CJA Task Force has been involved in previous efforts to ensure that all children in dependency cases have representation. This included a PIP in 2009 that resulted in updates to policy and the state's GA SHINES to facilitate the collection of information on the appointments of attorneys and/or CASAs.

In response to recent changes in federal legislation allowing IV-E reimbursement for administrative costs related to legal representation and development of Georgia's new state CAPTA plan that includes a focus on child representation, the committee recommends that the Division convene a work group that includes, in addition to members of the Child Representation Committee, its General Counsel, CIP, OCA, CASA and other relevant stakeholders to assess current practice and coordinate efforts among the various state plans. Current child representation data, CAPTA requirements, and degree of compliance with CAPTA assurances should be evaluated to identify gaps, areas needing improvement and additional opportunities. Based on the results of the evaluation, a plan should be developed to address any legislative changes needed, documentation and reporting requirements, inter-agency data-sharing expectations, training standards and targets for improvement.

The Child Representation Committee looks forward to its collaboration with the Division and the CIP to improve the quality and consistency of child representation and limit additional trauma to child victims.

- The Sex Trafficking Committee plans to evaluate the state's current protocol for responding to trafficking victims and the reported lack of suitable placement options when returning home is not an option for these victims. The committee is in the early planning stage and developing its objectives.

Task Force Committees in Action

Child Abuse Protocol Committee

The committee has two primary objectives for its work on the state Child Abuse Protocol (CAP):

- To promote and support a collaborative and coordinated multidisciplinary response to child abuse and neglect
- To improve effectiveness of state model and local child abuse protocols

The state's model Child Abuse Protocol (CAP) outlines the procedures to be used in the multidisciplinary investigation and prosecution cases of suspected child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation and to assist local jurisdictions with the development of local protocols which reflect the best practices in the handling of these cases. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure coordination and cooperation between all agencies involved in a child abuse case so as to increase the efficiency of all agencies handling such cases, to minimize the stress created for the allegedly abused child by the legal and investigatory process, and to ensure that more effective treatment is provided including counseling. O.C.G.A. §19-15-2 (f).

Since 2015, the Office of the Child Advocate has invited representatives from all professional disciplines with an interest in the CAP to review and provide input on updates to the state's model CAP. In 2018, a mini-summit was held prior to the Child Welfare Summit in December for the purpose of convening stakeholders and obtaining input on updating and enhancing the state model protocol. The mini-summit included several presentations, including one by the Task Force Coordinator on CJA and the Task Force and its interest in the CAP. An updated state model protocol based on feedback collected at and following the mini-summit is in the final stages of review and approval.

Findings from the 2018 three-year assessment were also incorporated into the CAP Committee's work plan. The committee continues to encourage the institutionalization of a process for the regular review, revision and distribution of the state model CAP. Additional related recommendations for 2018-2019 include:

- Address the challenge of Georgia's large geographic area and frequent turnover of professionals involved in the response to reports of child abuse, by exploring alternatives to 'in-person' events for disseminating information and providing training on the CAP
- Develop a mobile-friendly version of the CAP to increase the local use of the protocol and the efficiency of disseminating regular updated versions

The committee plans to continue its discussion on how best to evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Abuse Protocol in 2019. This includes a review of all child welfare policy referencing the Child Abuse Protocol, development of a standard report template for local Child Abuse Protocol Committee annual reports, and legislative recommendations to address any additional inconsistencies in the Georgia code that may negatively impact both the response to and assessment of reports of suspected child maltreatment.

Mandated Reporter Training Committee

The Task Force established the Mandated Reporter Training Committee partly in response to the dramatic increase in reports following implementation of the state's 24/7 call line for reporting suspected child abuse in 2013 and partly in response to additional findings in the 2015 three-year assessment. The objectives of the committee are:

- To improve the quality and consistency of mandated reports to ensure that when a report is received, the call center has the information to determine the appropriate response assignment by:
 - Promoting and supporting quality training for mandated reporters that is consistent with current child welfare policy and practice
 - Reducing the frequency of inappropriate reports and improving the quality and consistency of reports so that better assignment decisions can be made when a report is received

Based on the 2015 assessment findings, the Task Force identified several opportunities for improvement:

- To identify and evaluate both mandated reporter training requirements and mandated reporter training for each of the relevant state agencies
- To research other state training requirements for mandated reporters
- To develop standards for content and delivery to ensure that mandated reporter training is consistent with child welfare policy and practice
- To develop a review and approval mechanism for mandated reporter training
- To evaluate mandated reporter training

The committee has conducted research on other states' standards for mandated reporter training. Findings identified that several states, such as California, Pennsylvania and Oregon:

- Require training for specified mandated reporters with child-caring responsibilities such as school personnel or child-care institutions
- Have specified renewal periods and hours for mandated reporter training
- Maintain state-sponsored mandated reporter training (online) or lists of approved providers of training

Based on information collected, the committee continues to explore the feasibility of establishing a state-level multi-agency, multidisciplinary committee to develop a state-level agreement/protocol (analogous to local child abuse protocols with specified agencies and agency responsibilities) on training requirements and standards for mandated reporters. This would include all state agencies with any child-caring staff or contractors and state agencies/organizations with oversight of those with child-caring oversight involved in the investigation or prosecution of cases.

The protocol would include mandated reporter requirements and time frames; mandated reporter training requirements, standardized mandated reporter training for specific agencies/roles, and DFCS approval of mandated reporter training content; joint investigations and interviewing of child victims to minimize duplication and trauma to child; and communication and information-sharing.

The committee had completed several items and planned to proceed with next steps in 2018. However, this was postponed due to resources being diverted to conduct the three-year assessment. Planning has been resumed and in 2019, efforts will include interviews with professional standards and training divisions at other state agencies in Georgia with child-caring responsibilities to gather information on mandated reporter training policies and practices to aid in the development of a training standards recommendation for mandated reporters at those state agencies.

Recent data reported by the Division on the disposition of calls by the call center have raised some committee members' questions regarding the high number of calls and the low number of substantiations, a puzzling statistic considering Georgia's rising foster care numbers. The committee recommends that the Division conduct an evaluation of the state's 24-hour call center to assess not only the quality of reports by mandated reporters but also the subsequent assignment of and response to those reports by the state.

It should be noted that to further the objectives of this committee, the Division is planning to utilize its CAPTA state grant to support Prevent Child Abuse Georgia's mandated reporter Train-the-Trainer program.¹⁰ The Division will continue to support free online mandated reporter training in partnership with ProSolutions Training, which is supported in part, with funds from the Division's Prevention and Community Support Section.

¹⁰ This project was funded by the CJA grant in previous years.

Child Fatality Investigations Committee

The objectives of the Child Fatality Investigations Committee are:

- To promote and support timely, consistent, coordinated and effective investigations of maltreatment-related deaths
- To improve the identification of maltreatment in any child death, but particularly in medical/natural deaths or cases involving victims with special needs
- To improve the identification and evaluation of cases of prenatally exposed infants in sleep-related deaths

Based on findings in the 2018 three-year assessment, this committee decided to focus its efforts in two areas. The first is in the development of a statewide child fatality investigation protocol, having identified that the state model Child Abuse Protocol (CAP) did not include one. Although the 2017 updated state model CAP includes a reference to child fatalities, the committee felt that a comprehensive guide was needed. The committee recommends that the Division collaborate with the Office of the Child Advocate, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and other stakeholders with relevant expertise to develop and implement a protocol for investigating child fatalities to ensure not only that maltreatment-related child fatalities are identified, but also to insure that evidence is not compromised in the event that criminal charges are forthcoming. The committee is currently developing a proposed outline for the model protocol for consideration and plans to complete this in 2019.

The second focus will be on improving training on child abuse and neglect for first responders/EMS, as they are often first on the scene of a child fatality or serious injury. Additional training on child abuse and neglect would help to improve the likelihood that maltreatment would be identified earlier and more consistently. This would also help to improve the preservation of evidence should criminal charges be forthcoming. Development of specific training recommendations, content, and standards will be undertaken by the committee in 2019-2020. At this time, however, the committee is recommending that a section in the state model CAP also be developed for first responders/EMS.

Special Needs Committee

The Special Needs Committee continues to play a role on each of the other Task Force committees to ensure that their activities and recommendations align with CJA goals and objectives regarding child victims with special needs. This interest extends to child victims with complex health and medical needs.

CJA Grants Committee

This committee is responsible for soliciting proposals for projects that support CJA objectives and Task Force priorities, reviewing proposals, and providing funding recommendations to the Division annually. In 2018, the

committee updated its proposal solicitation document to improve alignment of proposed activities with objectives and priorities and to encourage applicants to clearly identify evaluation strategies in their proposals.¹¹

Projects Funded in 2018

The Task Force collaborates with Georgia's child welfare agency on the administration of the CJA funds, including the solicitation and review of proposals and funding recommendations. To further its primary objectives as a task force on children's justice and meet its mandate, the Task Force continues to recommend supporting activities that improve and strengthen the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases and maltreatment-related fatalities, in addition to supporting projects that address new priorities identified in the three-year assessment.

The Task Force recommended FFY2018 CJA awards for several projects that were responsive to CJA objectives, Task Force interests, and state agency priorities. Each project reflects the CJA emphasis on advocacy, multidisciplinary approaches, collaboration, and Task Force special interests. Additionally, projects that address children with special needs and/or commercial sexual exploitation of children are encouraged and supported whenever possible. CJA grantees have been identified below with brief descriptions of activities funded in 2018. See pages 11-12 for description of identified priorities addressed by each project.

FFY2018 grantees included:

Grantee: Cherokee Child Advocacy Council, Inc.

Project: ChildFirst Training

Task Force Priorities: 1, 2, 3, & 6

ChildFirst™ Georgia is a forensic interview training program offered by the Cherokee Child Advocacy Council, Inc. through partnerships with the National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) and the Children's Justice Act. The ChildFirst™ model is designed to improve the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, cases involving children with special needs, and maltreatment-related fatalities, while minimizing additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family. The purpose of the ChildFirst™ Georgia program is to provide nationally recognized, comprehensive forensic interview training on a statewide level to teams of frontline professionals who investigate child abuse.

The ChildFirst™ Georgia program provided six forensic interview trainings, including:

- Three ChildFirst Basic 40-hour Forensic Interview courses
- One 3-day Advanced ChildFirst course- Your Role in the Judicial Process
- Two 3-day ChildFirst Expanded courses

¹¹ A copy of the FFY2020 CJA solicitation document can be found at www.gacrp.com.

In FFY2018, 124 professionals from 40 counties received training. Professionals represented the following disciplines: Law Enforcement (58); Child Advocacy Centers (54); District Attorney's Offices (6); Department of Family and Children Services (4); and Other (2). Priority for participation was given to professionals who:

- Applied as part of a multi-disciplinary team
- Work in counties that do not currently have ChildFirst™ trained forensic interviewers and/or do not have access to a Child Advocacy Center
- Are able to conduct forensic interviews in languages other than English
- Would be providing forensic interviews to children with special needs
- Would be providing forensic interviews to children who have been commercially sexually exploited

Grantee: Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia

Project: One Team Conference

Task Force Priorities: 1, 2, 7, & 8

On October 26-27, 2017, the Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia held its 11th annual One Team Conference, providing multidisciplinary training on a wide spectrum of topics including child sexual abuse, child commercial sexual exploitation, and children with special needs, to more than 278 professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases.

In addition to a keynote address from an expert special victim's detective, workshops included topics such as:

- Discussion Regarding Interviewing Children with Special Needs
- Update on Forensic Interviewing Research
- A Comprehensive Overview of Strategies and Tactics in Child Sexual Abuse Trials
- A Discussion of the Most Recent Georgia Appellate Cases and Georgia Statute Amendments Related to Child Abuse Cases that Directly Impact the Entire MDT
- Best Practices for Working with Hispanic Families

Grantee: Emory University – Barton Child Law and Policy Center

Project: Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program

Task Force Priorities: 2, 3, 5, 6 & 8

Emory's Summer Child Advocacy Program (ESCAP) is an established interdisciplinary summer internship program designed to support the dual goals of increasing the service capacity of the Georgia child welfare system and promoting careers in the child advocacy field

The FFY2018 ESCAP program included an intensive, 4-day orientation training followed by 10 weeks of a paid internship for 11 graduate students from across the United States. Placements are carefully selected to represent a range of opportunities, from direct practice settings to agency administrative and public policy positions. In 2018, placements included juvenile courts, non-profit policy and advocacy organizations, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and the Wilbanks Child Endangerment and Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) Clinic at the University of Georgia School of Law.

The students contribute their skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm to further the work of their internship placement setting, providing valuable staff support to under-resourced and overburdened juvenile courts, law offices, service providers, and agencies. In exchange, the interns benefit from meaningful engagement in, and exposure to, the work of the people and institutions that serve children and families involved in the child welfare system and encouragement to pursue a career in the child welfare advocacy field.

Grantee: Georgia CASA

Project: CASA Advocacy Training

Task Force Priorities: 2, 3, 6 & 8

The Advocacy Training project was designed to strengthen the advocacy skills of CASA staff and volunteers at 47 affiliated CASA programs across the state. Advanced training was provided by webinar in-person and made available on the CASA website. Topics covered by specialized trainings included:

- Juvenile Court 101 (60 volunteers and staff trained- recorded and accessible on CASA website)
- Courtroom Advocacy (85 volunteers and staff trained)
- Education Advocacy for Children (25 staff trained)
- Path to Permanence: Practical Considerations for CASA (39 volunteers and staff trained- recorded and accessible on CASA website)
- Education Advocacy Primer (13 volunteers and staff trained)
- In Pursuit of the Best Interest of the Child (80 volunteers and staff trained)

Five new quick reference guides were developed, and three existing ones were updated to provide tools and resources to support CASA's ongoing advocacy efforts. Topics of new reference guides included supporting LGBTQ youth; cultural humility; and identifying, engaging and supporting kin caregivers.

Twelve on-site court visits were also conducted to review cases, provide feedback to staff and volunteers and connect training to practice, ultimately improving the handling of child abuse and neglect cases by helping to limit additional trauma to child victims, including those with special needs, as well as strengthening the quality of

representation and advocacy through well-trained, educated CASA advocates. Because of the advanced training and access to specialized tools provided to CASA volunteers, judges are more likely to receive all relevant information needed to make sound decisions.

Grantee: Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Project: Medical Provider Network

Task Force Priorities: 7 & 8

In partnership with professionals from the Stephanie V. Blank Center for Safe and Healthy Children (CSHC) at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and staff from the Division, this project was designed to build a medical network of pediatric medical professionals who can provide forensic medical examinations to suspected victims of child abuse and neglect in communities that do not have access to this expertise. Local access to forensic medical exams decreases missed or erroneous diagnoses, subsequent escalation of abuse, wrongful accusations of caregivers, and further trauma to the child and family. Physicians and staff at the CSHC provide ongoing mentoring, training, and consultation to network providers to improve the assessment and investigation of child abuse and neglect.

In FFY2018, the Medical Network expanded to 28 counties and conducted 65 medical evaluations. This expansion provided resources for particularly underserved areas in south Georgia. CSHC provided in-person training to local Division staff to educate them about the network and how to access providers and consulted regularly with agency leadership about how to increase utilization of the network.

Grantee: Division of Family & Children Services/Georgia State University

Project: Analysis of 2017 Child Fatality and Serious Injury Reports

Task Force Priorities: 4 & 7

The Division partnered with the Georgia State University School of Public Health to produce an analysis of 2017 serious injury and child fatality data. The reports synthesize data collected by the Division to identify trends related to serious injuries and child deaths in cases where the family was previously known to the agency. The identification of trends and formulation of recommendations, including specific recommendations regarding children with special needs and children 0-2, inform case management techniques and training that can improve the investigative handling and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Grantee: Office of the Child Advocate

Project: Child Protection Summit

Task Force priorities: 2, 3, 5 & 8

The Office of the Child Advocate partnered with the Division and the Georgia Supreme Court's Committee on Justice for Children to host the inaugural Child Protection Summit November 26-29, 2017. The Summit hosted 453

participants, including frontline and state office Division staff, child welfare attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates, judges and law enforcement. The Summit provided multidisciplinary education for professionals on topics related to the investigation and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including:

- Georgia's Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Technical Resource Guide
- The Shared Role of DFCS and Medical Professionals
- Advocating for the Needs of Maltreated Children
- Dangerous Drugs and the Impact on Investigations

In 2018, the CJA Task Force Coordinator also conducted several informal site visits to observe grantee activities.

These included:

- Cherokee Child Advocacy Council's Expanded Interview Training Session
 - Observed debriefing session on final day of training
- Office of the Child Advocate's Child Protection Summit
 - Attended full conference
- Child Advocacy Centers of Georgia One Team Conference
 - Participated in workshops on topics most relevant to Task Force committees' interests
- Georgia CASA courtroom observation
 - Observed volunteer representation in Juvenile Court dependency hearing
- Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic
 - Attended training day that included presentations by Task Force members

The site visits helped to identify several opportunities related to the Task Force mandate and committee interests, and a more formal protocol for site visits will be developed by the CJA Grants Committee in 2019. The committee also has plans to strengthen performance requirements and streamline the reporting format for FFY2020 CJA contracts.

Recommendations for CJA Funding (Proposed projects funded for FFY2020)

In consideration of the recommendations made by the Task Force, which are based on CJA and CAPTA objectives, Task Force priorities, results from the three-year assessment, and in consultation with the state's child welfare agency with considerations of its CFSP goals, Georgia proposes to continue to utilize the Children's Justice Act grant to support programs or activities that encourage collaboration in the investigation, assessment, and prosecution of cases of child abuse. These efforts also include work to expand the use of multi-disciplinary investigation teams and enhance child advocacy in cases of child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and maltreatment-

related fatalities. The following projects have been recommended for funding in FFY2020 (* indicates FFY 2019 grantee).

<p><u>Cherokee Child Advocacy Center, Inc.*</u> Project: ChildFirst Forensic Interview Training Task Force Priorities: 1, 2, 3, & 6 Award: \$100,000</p>	<p><u>Children's Healthcare of Atlanta*</u> Project: Medical Provider Network Task Force Priorities: 7 & 8 Award: \$73,000</p>
<p><u>Children's Advocacy Center of Georgia*</u> Project: One Team Conference Task Force Priorities: 1, 2, 7, & 8 Award: \$25,000</p>	<p><u>Georgia Office of the Child Advocate*</u> Project: Georgia Child Protection Summit Task Force Priorities: 2, 3, 5 & 8 Award: \$50,000</p>
<p><u>Emory University – Barton Child Law and Policy Center*</u> Project: Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program Task Force Priorities: 2, 3, 5, 6 & 8 Recommended Award: \$100,000</p>	<p><u>Division of Family & Children Services</u> Project: Annual Special Assistants Attorney General Conference Task Force Priorities: 5, 6 & 8 Award: \$40,000</p>
<p><u>Georgia CASA*</u> Project: CASA Advocacy Training Task Force Priorities: 2, 3, 6 & 8 Award: \$25,688</p>	<p><u>Habersham County Sheriff's Office (new for FFY2020)</u> Project: Habersham County Special Victims Unit Patrol Task Force Task Force Priorities: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 & 8 Award: \$61,738</p>

In closing...

The Task Force submits its report to Division leadership on its 2018 activities, including findings and resulting recommendations. Additionally, priorities and plans for 2019 highlight several collaborative opportunities to better coordinate efforts on shared goals and objectives in the coming year.

The Task Force would like to express its appreciation to the Division Director and the leadership team for their responsiveness to, and continued support of, the Task Force, its mandate and recommendations. The Task Force looks forward to the Division's continued efforts to identify opportunities to strategically engage with the Task Force as a valued stakeholder in 2019.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Children's Justice Act Task Force by

Melissa D. Carter, JD (Co-Chair)
 Executive Director
 Barton Child Law and Policy Center
 Emory University School of Law

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 Senior Assistant District Attorney
 Southern Judicial Circuit

Child Fatality Review Panel

Child Fatality Review Maltreatment Committee 2018 Annual Report

As a state CAPTA grant recipient, Georgia was required to establish and maintain a minimum of three CAPTA Panels to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states meet their goals related to protecting children from child abuse and neglect. In 2007, the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP) was designated to serve as the third of Georgia's three CAPTA Panels,¹ and in 2011, CFRP bylaws were amended to include its role as a CAPTA citizen review panel in the description of its purpose as a statutory body. In 2014, the administrative responsibility for child fatality review transferred from the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). The CFRP is supported by staff who review and monitor the work of Georgia's 159 county Local Child Fatality Review (LCFR) committees, analyze results and develop recommendations based on their findings and issues raised by local committees and CFRP members.

The CFRP, committed to fulfilling its mandate as a CAPTA Panel, established the CAPTA Maltreatment (MalTx) Committee in 2009 to address additional obligations of the CFRP as a CAPTA citizen review panel, including its obligations related to the examination of maltreatment-related deaths. MalTx Committee objectives include:

- To improve the identification of maltreatment-related child fatalities
- To improve the collection of data and reporting on maltreatment-related fatalities
- To identify opportunities for prevention through examination of the cause and circumstances of maltreatment-related fatalities and the history of family involvement with state agencies that have safety, care and well-being responsibilities

Although maltreatment-related deaths are a small subset of all reviewable deaths, the identification and prevention of maltreatment-related deaths is an ongoing CFRP priority.

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Originally enacted in January 1974, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is a key piece of federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. This act has been amended several times and was last reauthorized

¹ The other two designated CAPTA Panels are the Children's Justice Act Task Force and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee.

on July 22, 2016, by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-198). With each reauthorization, including the most recent, CAPTA has evolved in response to the child welfare climate, shifting its focus to safety as well as a desire to increase accountability in the child protective services (CPS) system. Although the primary responsibility for addressing the child welfare needs of children and families lies with state agencies, CAPTA provides federal funding to support child abuse prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities² for the purpose of improving state child protection systems.

Members

The membership of the CFRP,³ as set forth in state law O.C.G.A. § 19-15-4, is comprised of the heads of all state agencies that play a significant role in the health and welfare of Georgia's children, as well as representatives of agencies/offices involved in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offenders. In addition to members prescribed by statute, the Governor appoints other members, with the exception of one appointment by the Lt. Governor and one by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. CFRP membership includes experts in the fields of child abuse prevention, mental health, family law, death investigation, and injury prevention.

Section 106 of the CAPTA legislation stipulates that CAPTA Panels be composed of volunteer members who broadly represent the communities in which they operate and include individuals with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The current CFRP membership satisfies the CAPTA membership requirements. The MalTx Committee includes members of the CFRP as well as child welfare experts and advocates who provide additional expertise and experience relevant to MalTx Committee interests, priorities and its mandate.

CAPTA Maltreatment Committee Members

C. LaTain Kell, Chair* Judge Cobb Superior Court	Lisa Dawson MPH, Director Injury Prevention Program Georgia Department of Public Health
Peggy Walker, Vice-Chair* Judge Douglas County Juvenile Court	John Carter Epidemiologist
Rachel Davidson* Director Office of the Child Advocate	Martha Dukes Manager CDNFSI & CHOA Liaison Knowledge Management Section Division of Family and Children Services
Tiffany Sawyer* Prevention Director Georgia Center for Child Advocacy	Angela Boy, Program Manager Prevention and Training, Stephanie V. Blank Center
Julia Neighbors, Director Prevent Child Abuse Georgia	<i>*Also CFRP members</i>

² This includes child fatality, near fatality and serious injury cases.

³ See attached CFRP annual report on CY2017 child deaths for a list of appointed members.

Meetings

The CFRP meets quarterly, satisfying the CAPTA requirement. In FFY2018, meetings were held in January, April, August and November (annual retreat). The MalTx Committee met in February, April, June and October.

Additionally, CFRP and MalTx Committee members were invited to participate in the annual retreat for all Georgia CAPTA Panels in September. The day-long retreat was hosted at the Cobb Superior Court by Judge Tain Kell, CFRP Chair.

CFRP meets all statutory membership and meeting requirements for a CAPTA Panel.

The annual CFRP report and a summary of MalTx Committee activities are submitted to the child welfare agency to satisfy the CAPTA requirement for an annual report.

Mechanisms for Reviewing Child Fatalities

In Georgia, there are several mechanisms for investigating and/or reviewing child fatalities, in multiple systems, with varying interests, objectives, roles and responsibilities. It is important to recognize the different child fatality review mechanisms, each with unique timing, purpose, objectives and reporting obligations. These include state CFRP, local child fatality review committees, the Division of Family & Children Services (the Division) and the MalTx Committee. Following are brief descriptions of each.

State Child Fatality Review Panel (CFRP):

The CFRP is a statutory body established in 1990 by the Georgia State Legislature. It was created to establish a multi-agency review protocol to identify patterns and trends in child deaths and to identify strategies for prevention. State CFRP, as mandated by O.C.G.A. 19-15-4, reviews and analyzes annual aggregate data collected on all reviewable deaths.⁴ Its purpose is to identify systemic prevention opportunities and recommend measures to decrease the incidence of child death.

The CFRP is required statutorily to prepare and submit an annual report on all reviewable child fatalities, including maltreatment-related fatalities to the Governor and state Legislature on January 1. In addition to presenting data on all the cause, manner and circumstances of child fatalities, the report includes recommendations for improvement and identifies strategies for prevention to reduce child fatalities.

In summary, CFRP is charged with providing high-quality data, training, technical assistance, investigative support services, and resources to prevent and reduce child abuse and fatalities and make statute, regulation, or policy

⁴ Reviewable deaths are all deaths of children under age 18 that were sudden, unexpected and/or unexplained.

recommendations to reduce the risk of child death. This includes providing training, support and oversight to local child fatality review committees.

Local Child Fatality Review Committees:

Local child fatality review (LCFR) committees have been established in each of Georgia's 159 counties. Mandated by O.C.G.A. § 19-15-3, LCFR committees conduct multiagency reviews of all reviewable child deaths within 30-45 days. Information gathered during LCFR reviews is documented in the National Child Death Review Case - Reporting System (NCDR-CRS). Individual reports submitted by LCFR committees are monitored and carefully reviewed by Georgia Bureau of Investigations/Office of Child Fatality Review (GBI/OCFR) staff. LCFR committees are also mandated to publish an annual report on local review activity for the preceding year by the first of July.

Annual aggregate data on all reviewed fatalities is then analyzed with the help of state epidemiologists, child fatality experts, and prevention experts who assist in the development and preparation of the annual CFRP report. *The 2018 annual CFRP report on child fatalities reviewed by LCFR committees during CY2017 is attached as Appendix A.*

Child Fatality Review by the Division:

The Division responds to all child fatality reports to determine which cases warrant further additional review or staffing. Cases warranting additional review would include child fatalities that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The family has current Child Protective Services (CPS) or foster care involvement
- The family has had CPS history of involvement with the child welfare agency during last five years⁵
- The circumstances of the death suggest a high probability that maltreatment was a factor
- Immediate safety issues are identified for any surviving siblings

These reviews primarily involve Division management and county DFCS staff but external partners with special expertise may also be involved. The objectives of these reviews are:

1. To identify immediate actions needed, such to ensure the safety of any other children in the home
2. To identify and address any gap in policy, practice or procedures that may have failed to adequately protect the child
3. To identify additional intervention or prevention strategies to strengthen the safety response for children at risk

⁵ The Division's 'history' criteria is based on the family's CPS involvement during the five years preceding the death. LFR criteria includes family's involvement with all state agencies as 'history'.

4. To identify trends that may suggest the need to change or enhance policy, practice and/or procedures to prevent child fatalities

Objectives 2-4 are directly related to the CAPTA mandate with respect to maltreatment-related fatalities. The MalTx committee recommends and continues to advocate for the reconstitution of a multidisciplinary process that engages a variety of stakeholders and experts in the regular review of maltreatment-related deaths to identify opportunities not only to examine policy, practice, training, and culture, but to identify effective prevention strategies to reduce the incidence of maltreatment-related deaths. It further recommends that the Division publish summary findings from these multidisciplinary reviews annually in support of CAPTA's public disclosure intent.

Maltreatment Committee Activities and Recommendations

The primary objective of the MalTx committee is to ensure that no maltreatment-related death is missed, and when child abuse or neglect has been identified as the cause or a contributing factor in a child death, that circumstances are examined thoroughly so as to evaluate effectiveness of any contributory CPS policy and/or practice and identify prevention strategies to reduce the risk of future deaths under similar circumstances. The MalTx committee efforts in 2018 continued to be focused on the quality and consistency of data reported in the NCDR-CRS. Additional quality assurance concerns included the long delay that often occurs between a death, its review, and the completion of the report (data entered in NCDR-CRS).

In 2018, to further investigate its concerns regarding child fatality review, the committee developed a survey to help identify factors that may hinder the local child fatality review process. The survey, which will be deployed in 2019, includes questions on the legislative mandate and initial and ongoing training and technical assistance needs. The survey also includes questions on local conditions that impact the effectiveness of the review process, such as experience level of committee members, turnover and resources.

It should be noted that during the development of the survey, the MalTx committee reviewed legislation governing child fatality review and discovered that it had not been substantially updated since enacted in 1990. Several legislative concerns were identified, such as less than realistic timeframes, an outdated reporting protocol, and inconsistent terminology. To address these legislative issues, the MalTx committee recommends that the Division partner with the OCA to review current legislation, conduct research on legislation and best practices for child fatality review in other states, and develop recommendations to revise Georgia code.

GBI/OFCR assumed the responsibility for providing training and technical assistance to all LCFR committees when the administrative and financial responsibility for CFRP was transferred from OCA in 2014 without any state

budgetary support.⁶ Since that time, training and technical assistance responsibilities have been shared by two GBI/OCFR staff, each covering half of the state, and a staff member responsible for prevention activities. Additional financial resources are needed to meet the training and technical assistance needs of LCFR committees, and to monitor data integrity and compliance to improve the quality and consistency of child fatality reviews. The MalTx Committee suggests that without a fiscal note in the state budget to provide additional resources for GBI/OCFR, it will be difficult to affect improvement in any problem areas identified by the survey. The MalTx Committee recommends that the GBI/OCFR budget be increased to provide sufficient resources to meet its legislative mandates.

The MalTx Committee continues to monitor progress related to previous recommendations, encouraging the Division to work closely with GBI/OCFR to develop and implement an updated and thorough training on identifying maltreatment in child deaths for LCFR committees.

In closing...

The relationship between CAPTA Panels, including the CFRP, and the Division can be characterized as a collaborative and mutually respectful working relationship. The Division solicits input from CFRP members and its MalTx Committee members, as resources, advocates, or representatives of a constituent group, as needed. Expertise and opinions are valued, and opportunities for stakeholder involvement often happen organically, without the need for a federal mandate. This positive relationship contributes to the stability and effectiveness of Georgia's CAPTA Panels.

The Maltreatment Committee respectfully submits its 2018 report and recommendations to the Division.

"Safety and security don't just happen; they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."

...Nelson Mandela

⁶ Forfeiture funds were the primary source of funding for GBI/OCFR.