



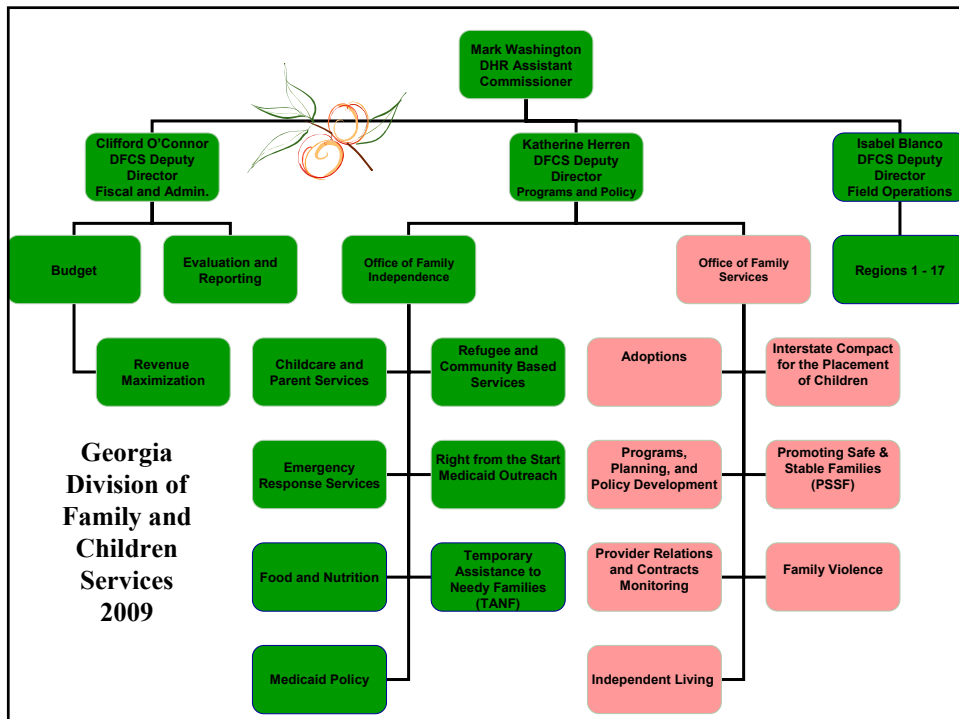
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Programs and Policy Updates
March 2009

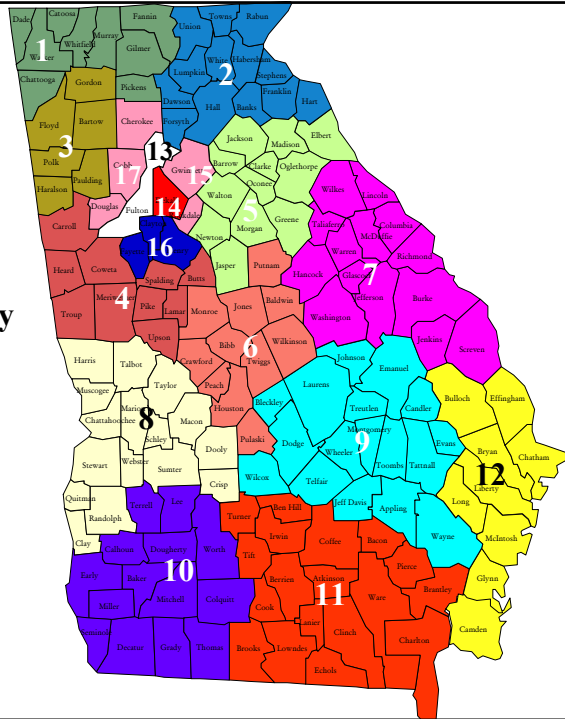
Guide to Available Programs and Services

Bobby Cagle,
Family Services
Director

Georgia Division of
Family and Children
Services



**Division of Family
and Children
Services
17 Regions**



Presentation Outline

- Legislation
- Programs and Services
 - Prevention
 - Preservation
 - Placements
 - Permanency
- Technology
- Contacts

Legislative Updates



Senate Bill 79 – Social Services

2/24/09 Passed the Senate

As of 2/26/09 been read two of three times in House

Subjects: Who may have access to child abuse and deprivation records
Confidentiality of records related to child fatality or near fatality

Legislative Updates – SB79

Proposed Amendments

Who may have access:

Old: A legally mandated, public or private, child protective agency

New: “Any federal, state, or local government entity, or any agency of any such entity, that has a need for information contained in such reports in order to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse and neglect;”

Legislative Updates – SB79

Proposed Amendments

Who may have access:

Old: Any adult requesting information regarding a **deceased child** when such person specifies the identity of the child...

New: “Any adult requesting information...regarding the findings or information about the case of child abuse or neglect that **results in a child fatality or near fatality** unless such disclosure of information would jeopardize a criminal investigation or proceeding.”

Legislative Updates – SB79

Added Confidentiality Clause

The subject of an investigation, report, referral, or complaint **shall not be confidential, provided** however, **that any identifying information** is withheld to **preserve the confidentiality of the child**, other children in the household, and the child’s parent, guardians, custodians, or caretakers.

Upon the release of documents, the department may comment publicly on the case.”

Legislative Updates



House Bill 254 – Social Services

As of 3/5/09 has been read two of three times in House
Received favorable report

Subjects: Locating adult relatives of a child removed from
 the custody of his or her parents

 Notice to be provided to family members

 Juvenile proceedings regarding stable placement
 of child following a termination order

Legislative Updates – HB254

Proposed Amendments

Change to diligent search requirements

Old: a **reasonably diligent search** for a parent or relative, or other persons who have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the child shall be completed **within 90 days** from the date on which the child was removed from the home

New: ...shall be completed **within 30 days** from the date of removal; the department shall **exercise due diligence** to identify a parent or relative, or other persons who have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the child

Legislative Updates – HB254

Added Who Should Be Provided Notice And The Kind of Information They Should Receive

- The court shall order the parent or other legal guardian to provide, within ten days, the names and addresses of all relatives and other persons who might be considered as possible placements for the child.
- Should inform all of the child's identified relatives of child's removal from parental custody
- Should provide explanation regarding how the relative can participate in the care of the child
- Should explain consequences or options that may be lost if they fail to respond

Legislative Updates HB254

Adjusted the Ranking of Placement Options In Favor of A List of Favorable Criteria

- **OLD** order of priority for placement options:
 - 1) With person related to child by blood or marriage
 - 2) DHR or Child Placing Agency until adoption
 - 3) A suitable individual who will eventually become the guardian of the child
 - 4) DHR Foster Care
 - 5) Agency or organization authorized to provide care for children
 - 6) Other suitable measures for the care and welfare of the child

Legislative Updates – HB254

Eliminated the Ranking of Placement Options In Favor of A List of Criteria To Be Considered

- **NEW** criteria for placement options:
 - 1) Placement must be in the best interest of the child and in accordance with the child's court approved permanency plan
 - 2) Placement should offer the greatest degree of legal permanence and security
 - 3) Must be the least disruptive placement alternative for the child
 - 4) Child's sense of attachment, need for continuity of relationships, and other factors the court deems relevant should be taken into consideration

Legislative Updates – HB254

Conditional Terms

- The placement shall be conditional upon the guardian agreeing to abide by the terms and conditions of the court order
- In cases where the child is under a permanency plan of adoption, the court shall review placement circumstances at least every six months while child remains unadopted or subject to the jurisdiction of the court.

Programs and Services

Georgia Division of Family and Children
Services

Family Services

Prevention
Preservation
Placement
Permanency

“The more you narrow your focus, the greater your chance of achieving your goals with excellence.”

--Stephen R. Covey

Prevention and Family Support

- Reduce the risk of harm to children
- Ensure children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
- Ensure children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate
- Provide services, when appropriate, to prevent removal of children from their homes



Family Violence Unit

Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

To progress in providing quality services for clients, initiating best practice standards within 100% of domestic violence shelters through a departmental standardized system

- Collaborated with shelters to develop best practice standards.
- Will implement new best practice standards throughout 2009

Promoting Safe and Stable Families

Enables State to develop, establish, expand and/or operate coordinated programs of community-based support services to prevent child abuse and neglect, protect children from further abuse and promote the expeditious permanency for children in care.

- Services are delivered through a coordinated network of about 175 community-based, non-profit organizations and collaborative partnerships, state agencies and 159 county Departments of Family and Children Services
- Approximately 25 CASA units statewide receive PSSF funding
 - This funding (time-limited reunification service category) is provided to ensure children that are subject to a deprivation case are represented in court.
 - Go to www.pssfnet.com for information on RFP application process and contract requirements

Independent Living Program

- Assists teens and young adults (who were formerly or are currently) in foster care in making a successful transition to adulthood.
- Services include tutoring assistance, college and technical school preparation, employment preparation and opportunities, supervised housing and life skills training (i.e. financial literacy, work readiness skills, job retention and career planning)



Independent Living Program

Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

To increase participation of eligible youth between the ages of 14 – 17

- 2008, increased participation from 36% (2,551) to 73% (2,935)
 - Would like to increase to 85% by September 2009
- 2008, increased overall participation of all eligible youth ages 14 – 17 by 9%
- Average monthly participation was 71% across the 17 regions
- For 2009 would like to ensure 70% of eligible youth complete an ACLSA, and at least 75% of youth turning 18 receive an ILP informational packet/passport prior to their 18th birthday.

Child Protection Services

- **Active Cases in January**

(Investigations and Family Preservation)

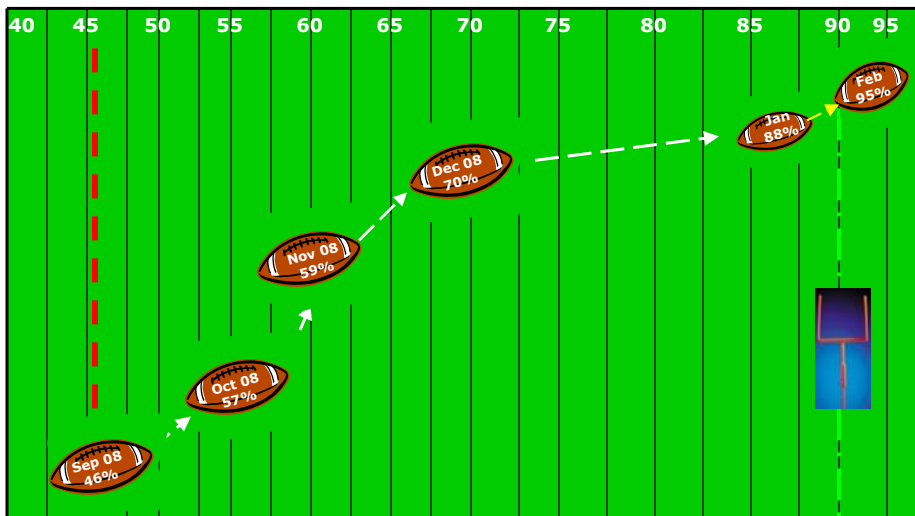
2007	19,139	(9.5% increase)
2008	12,428	(37.2% decrease)
2009	11,391	

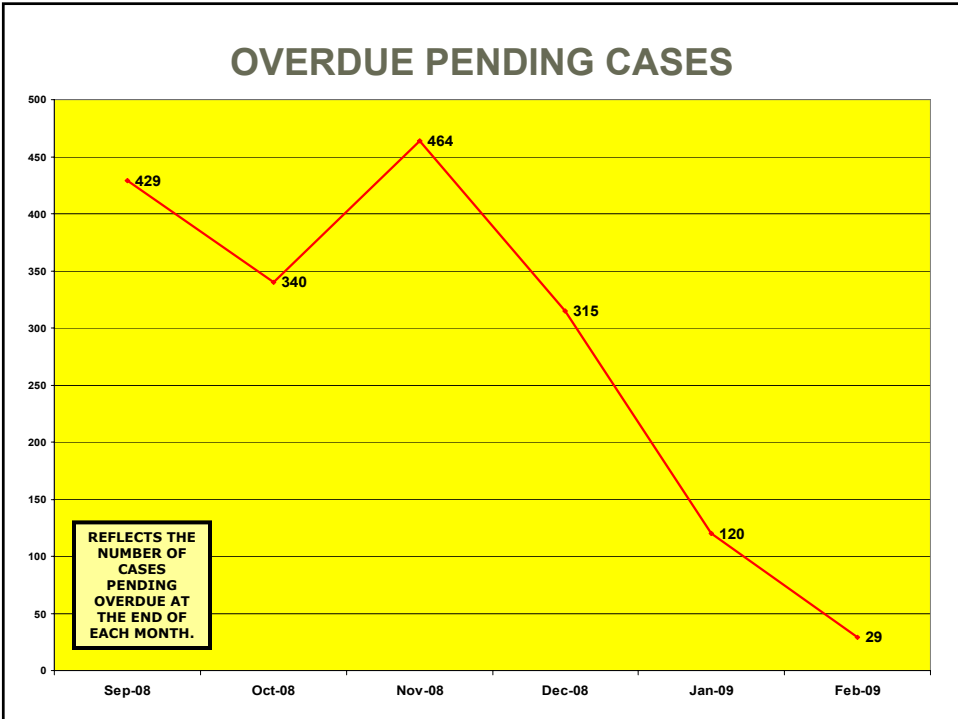
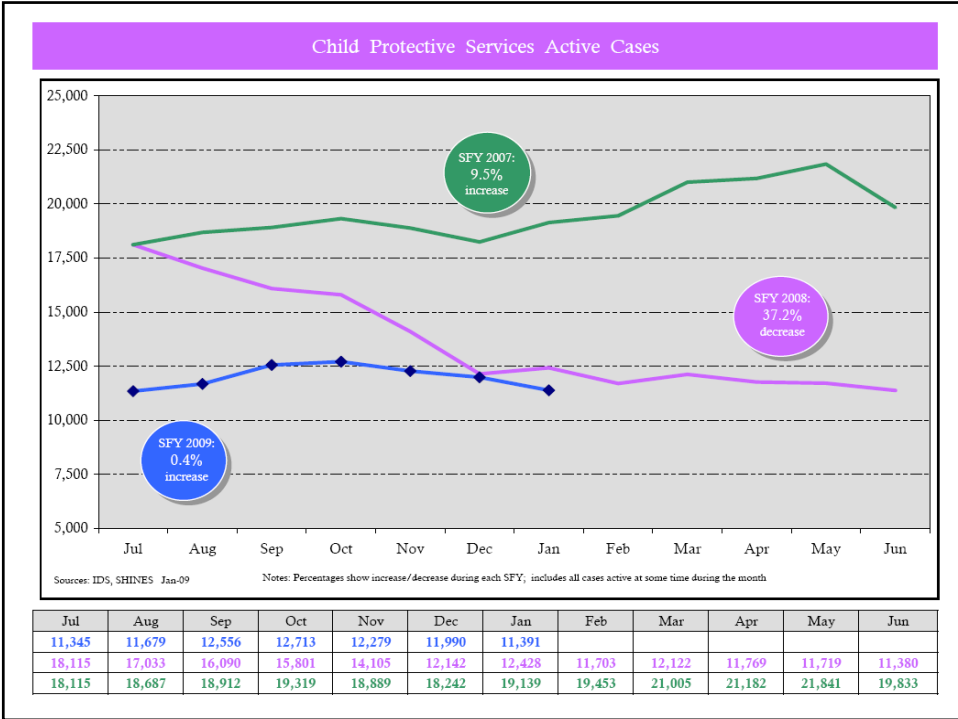
- **January 2009**

Investigations	4,604
Family Preservation	6,787



Increase Timeliness of Responses to Reports of Abuse/Neglect from 46% to 90% by June 2009





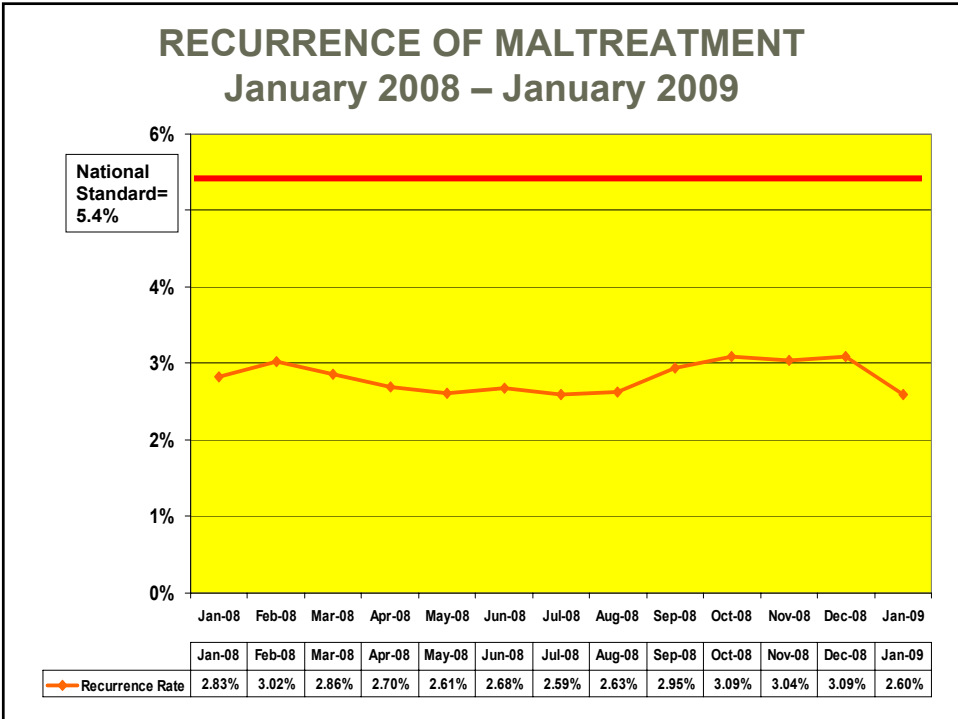
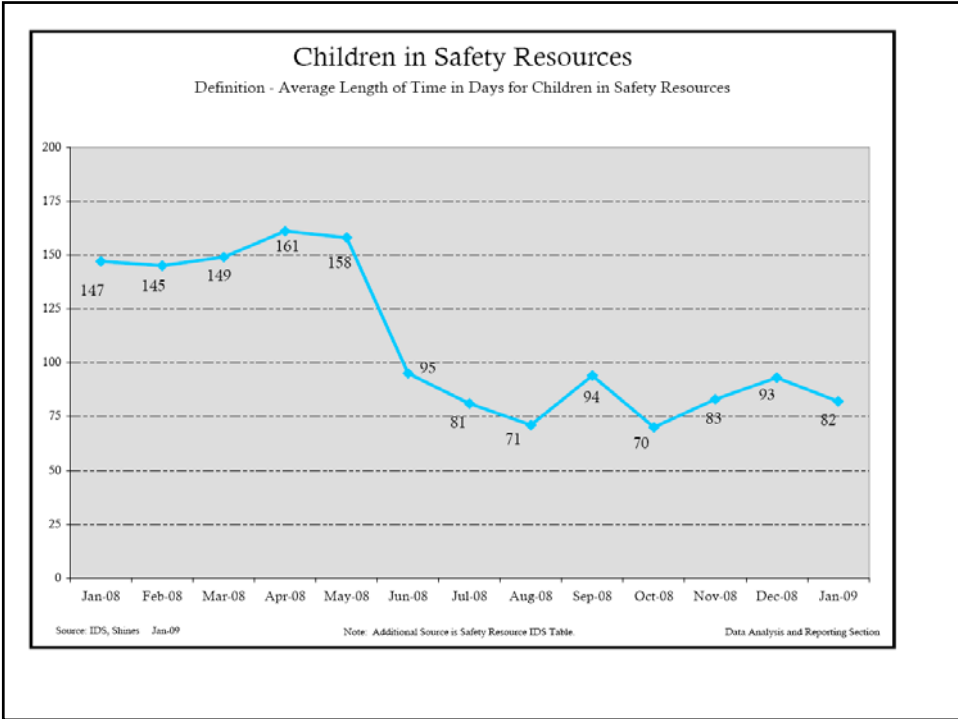
Family Preservation

- Assure children's safety within the home and preserve intact families in which children have been abused or neglected, when the family's problems can be effectively addressed
- Provide services, when appropriate, to prevent removal of children from their homes
- Help children in foster care return safely to their families when appropriate

Programs and Policy Unit

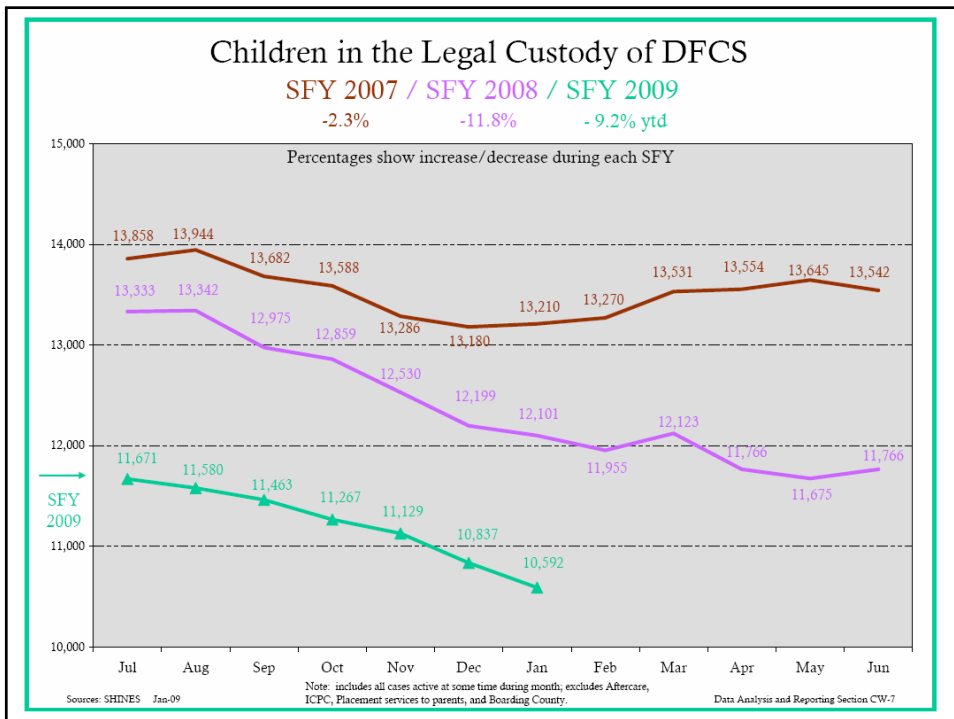
WIGS – Family Team Meetings and Safety Resources

- Strengthening FTM policy to support earlier meetings during investigations, to assess the availability of relatives or significant others to eliminate the need for removal
- FTMs to clearly provide information regarding resources, financial support and custody alternatives (temporary custody or guardianship)
- Refine safety resource policy
- Develop and distribute safety resource field guide (checklist and sign-off process) that identifies all information that should be disseminated

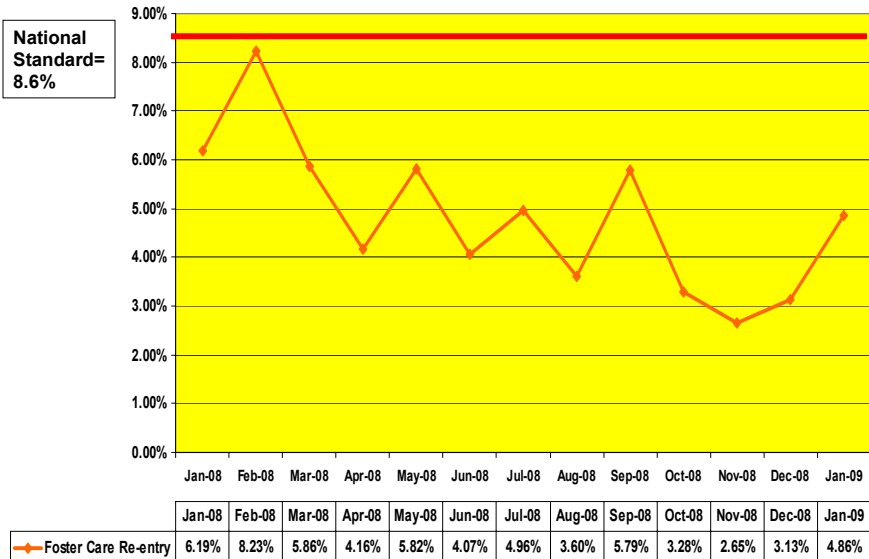


Safe Placements

- Minimize placement changes for children in foster care
- Place children close to their birth parents or their own communities or counties
- Ensure continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children
- Identify relatives who could care for children entering foster care



FOSTER CARE RE-ENTRY RATE January 2008 – January 2009



Field Operations

WIG

Drastically reduce the number of days that children are in out of home placements from 495 to 242 by December 31, 2009

- Have already achieved a 21% decrease in number of children in out-of-home placements since July 2006

Provider Relations

WIG

To have all private Child Placing Agency foster homes in full compliance and approval status

- 98% achieved by December 31, 2008



Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)

WIG

To ensure safety, protection and services to children who are placed across state lines for foster care and adoption by improving permanency outcomes, improving customer services and engagement with field operations

- Implement critical process and procedural changes
 - Uniform work plan for tracking, monitoring and accountability
 - Directory of ICPC cases distributed monthly, electronically to regional and county directors

Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)

WIG

To promote placement stability for children in care by increasing the frequency and quality of caseworker visits

- Every Child, Every Month initiative - increase percent of children without a permanent family who receive a purposeful visit from their case manager each and every month from 58% to 71%
- Increase staff competency to conduct purposeful and meaningful visits.
 - Began trainings July 2008
 - Will have trained 900 veteran placement staff by September 2009

Permanency

- Ensure children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- Prevent multiple entries into foster care
- Determine appropriate permanency goals for children on a timely basis
- Achieve timely adoption when that is appropriate for a child
- Establish planned permanent living arrangements for children in foster care, who do not have the goal of reunification, adoption, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives

Kenny A Permanency Reviews

WIG

Increase the positive permanency rate in Fulton and DeKalb by 5%,
from 85% to 90% by December 31, 2008

- Fluctuating statistical outcomes made progress difficult to measure
- Permanency Roundtable Pilot a success
- Will implement permanency roundtables throughout the other regions



Adoptions

Recognizing that children deserve safe, loving and nurturing relationships with permanent families, DFCS and its partners will provide a continuum of available, accessible and effective services that enable and support the placement of children in adoptive families

WIG

Eliminate all substantiated incidents in adoptive placements of children with special needs

- Working to lower the number of disruptions in adoptive placements or dissolutions of finalized adoptions
- Developed and distributed a comprehensive pre/post adoption services guide
- Distributed the guide to field staff and forwarded (with a letter) to all prospective adoptive parents

Adoptions

WIG

Increase field staff knowledge of targeted recruitment for older children and siblings groups

- By July 31, 2009, all regions will have been provided two trainings in the “Fit for A Lifetime” curriculum
- Trainings will include a comprehensive pre/post a customer service survey/assessment component to determine additional needs, supports and resources.

Technology

Advances and access to technology have helped to improve our ability to track and measure progress and to improve our practice and performance

- Accurant Family Searches
 - Assists us in performing “due diligence” searches for family members
- SACWIS/SHINES
 - Implemented statewide as of July 2008
 - All case managers are entering documentation and case record information into this system
- OBIE dashboards
 - Currently in pilot stage
 - Helps to develop visual charts such as the ones seen in this presentation
 - Will allow regional staff to do daily tracking of case manager activity



Office of Family Services Contacts

Policy (Child Protection Services and Foster Care)	Angela Coulon	404-657-3459
Adoptions	Debra Lookabill	404-657-3550
PSSF	Ann Pope	404-657-3306
ICPC	James Graves	404-657-3448
Provider Relations	Yvonne Rodgers	404-657-3572
CPPC	JoAnne Henry	404-463-0257
ILP	Ebony Harris	404-657-0037
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Questions

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