

## **Cold Case Project Summary - distributed by Georgia CASA to its network of affiliate CASA programs in July 2010**

The Cold Case project, in partnership with DFCS and the Office of the Child Advocate, reviewed 214 cases where children experienced extended stays in foster care without achieving permanency. Many of these children experienced multiple placement moves and were living in a group home or institution. The vast majority had some type of identified disability. The majority of children had family and caregivers that were not willing or unable to have custody or adopt because of the needs of the child, support for the caregivers, lack of stability, and non-compliance with case plans.

The policy recommendations are listed below. It is striking that at least half of these recommendations can be influenced by a CASA volunteer's individual case advocacy. Consider how your CASA role supports and brings attention to these specific areas. Consider what additional steps you could take that would influence the length of time until permanency is achieved for more and more children.

1. Make timely and detailed diligent search a priority
2. Limit the use of APPLA as a permanency plan
3. Ensure children have connections to family or other adults
4. Involve children in permanency planning and Written Transition Living Plans
5. Improve consistency and availability of Independent Living Program (ILP) Services
6. Improve education to children about the benefits of remaining in case beyond the age 18
7. Ensure children receive meaningful representation and attend judicial proceedings
8. Improve legal advocacy for all parties involve in deprivation cases
9. Improve judicial oversight on permanency issues
10. Provide services and support to adoptive families to reduce adoption dissolution
11. Prosecute child sex abusers and ensure sexual abuse victims receive proper treatment
12. Provide independent oversight for children receiving mental health treatment
13. Improve access to information on reproductive health for children in DFCS custody
14. Utilize adoption counselors and specifically trained staff to reduce resistance to adoption
15. Expand family dependency treatment courts statewide

For additional training in many of these areas, view the Child Welfare Training Series at <http://www.law.emory.edu/centers-clinics/barton-child-law-policy-clinic/presentations.html#c19628> and review the written materials. These

training videos are available immediately and can be a great education tool for both staff and volunteers looking to increase their knowledge base and advocacy tools.

The executive summary and full report are accessible at <http://w2.georgiacourts.org/cj4c/>.