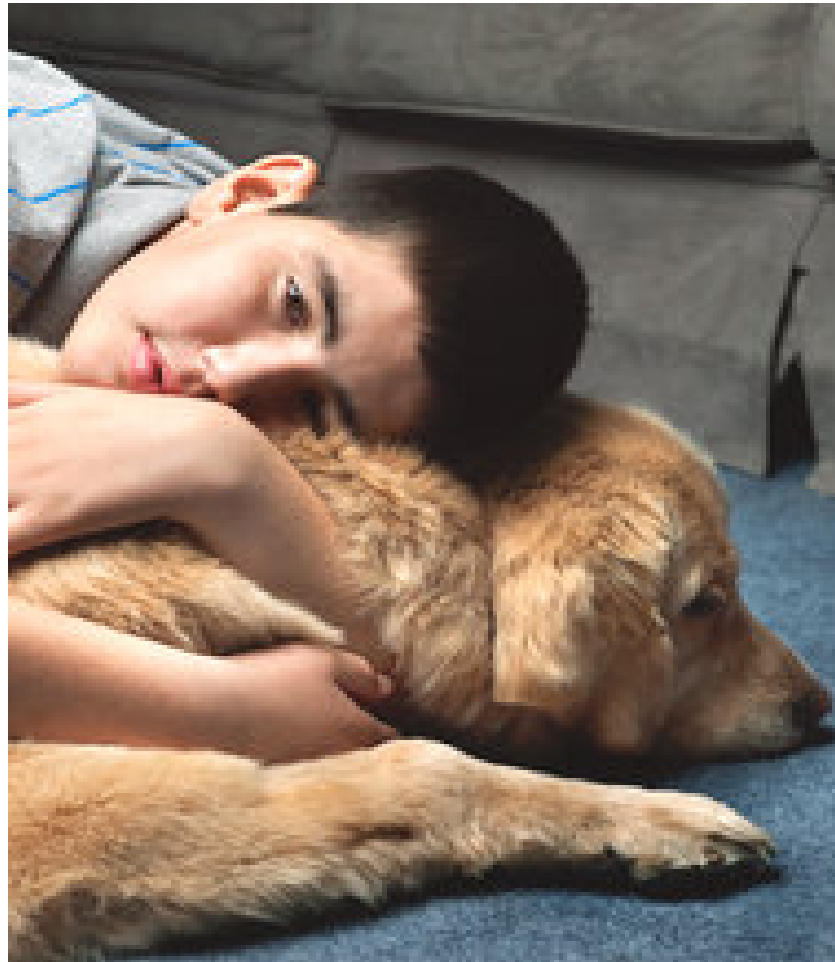


YOU CAN'T SEE WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

2018 Georgia CASA Conference



3 Special Words



Staggering Statistics In Foster Care

- ❖ 75% of children in foster/adoption homes may be fetal alcohol exposed
- ❖ 90% of children are removed from their homes where parents abused alcohol
- ❖ 88.1% out of 914 foster placements for adoption in Georgia were identified as children or adolescents with special needs
- ❖ 40 to 50% had never completed high school
- ❖ 80% of our prison population was once in foster care

What Causes Difficult Behaviors?

- ❖ Behaviors are caused by brain dysfunction, not conscious choices to be stubborn or bad
- ❖ To create effective strategies, focus on behaviors caused by that brain dysfunction
- ❖ Compromised environment
- ❖ Physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Multiple placements

What Is A Developmental Disability? (DD)

- ❖ A disability that is manifested before the person reaches 22 years of age. This disability results in a significant impairment to a person's daily functioning.
- ❖ There are many different types of developmental disabilities and most are not easily recognized.
- ❖ What is most relevant to CASAs is understanding behavior and effectively communicating with the child, the family, and community resources.
- ❖ Not all developmental disabilities involve cognitive limitations (for example, Asperger's syndrome)
- ❖ Persons may have co-occurring conditions

Challenges For Persons With Developmental Disabilities

- ❖ May not understand appropriate social rules when in contact with community
- ❖ Are taught that police are friends and helpful, may not be able to recognize or adjust to the role change of an officer who is an interrogator
- ❖ May exhibit incomplete or immature concepts of blameworthiness or culpability
- ❖ May feel compelled to answer a question even if the question exceeds her/his ability to answer- *“I don’t know/understand”* is too hard to admit.
- ❖ If offered the opportunity to make a phone call, may not know how

Meet My Son, Iyal, My Hero



Our Story

- ❖ The CDC states 1 in 20 school age children in the US may be fetal alcohol exposed
- ❖ Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)
- ❖ Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)
- ❖ Dysmaturity
- ❖ Comorbidities

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) And Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)

- ❖ **Difficulty with memory, attention, and thought processing**
- ❖ **Poor impulse control; it affects one's ability to connect actions between cause and effect**
- ❖ **Sensitivity to pressure, sound, and bright lights**
- ❖ **Poor motor skills**
- ❖ **NO amount, time or kind of alcohol is safe if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant**

Children In Foster Care Are At Higher Risk For FASDs

- ❖ 80% of children with FASDs are in foster or adoptive care
- ❖ The prevalence of FAS in the foster care system is 10 times higher than in the general population
- ❖ History of mental illness , drug and/or alcohol abuse
- ❖ Challenges to parent – becoming overwhelmed and frustrated
- ❖ Multiple placements
- ❖ Increased trauma for the children

Transitions Into And Out Of Foster Care Homes

- ❖ translating body language and expressions
- ❖ understanding boundaries
- ❖ focusing their attention
- ❖ understanding cause and effect
- ❖ Children with FASD can be easily frustrated and require a stable, structured home and school environment

Children With FASDs Can Benefit From:

- ❖ Adjusting to a new home, a new family, and a new school can be particularly difficult.
- ❖ Consistent routines
- ❖ Limited stimulation
- ❖ Concrete language
- ❖ Multi-sensory learning
- ❖ Realistic expectations
- ❖ Supportive environments
- ❖ Supervision

Protective Factors

- ❖ Stable & nurturing home for 72% of life
- ❖ Diagnosis prior to age 6
- ❖ Never experiencing violence against oneself
- ❖ Staying in each living situation > 2.8 years
- ❖ Good quality home from ages 8-12 years
- ❖ Applied and eligible for II/DD services
- ❖ Basic needs met for at least 13% of life



Neglect And Abuse Often = PTSD

❖ What is PTSD?

PTSD is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event — either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, as well as invasive thoughts about the event.

❖ 30% of foster alumni are diagnosed with PTSD

❖ Rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was double the rate of PTSD found in U.S. combat veterans.



Mental Health Issues

- ❖ A significant number of the estimated 20,000 young people who leave foster care each year face inordinately bleak futures.
- ❖ According to researchers, just over half of these young people – 54 % – earn a high-school diploma and a quarter of them become homeless.
- ❖ On average youth aging out of the foster care system with psychiatric disabilities fare even worse.

Foster Care And Mental Illness

- ❖ NIMH study - 47.9% present clinically significant emotional or behavior problems when placed
- ❖ Casey Family Programs – Between $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of children entering foster care warrant mental health services
- ❖ One in ten children between the ages of one and 15 has a mental health disorder
- ❖ Rates of mental health problems among children increase as they reach adolescence



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ❖ Lifelong disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. Autism is on a spectrum of symptoms and may be characterized by:
- ❖ Lack of social responsiveness
- ❖ Lack of communication abilities
- ❖ Persistent compulsive behaviors
- ❖ Resistance to change in routines, schedules, and familiar environment

Safety Nets

Family And Community



Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

- ❖ A growing problem
- ❖ NAS occurs when newborn babies experience withdrawal after being exposed to drugs in the womb
- ❖ NAS can occur with a variety of both illicit and prescription drugs
- ❖ NAS can cause low birth weight and other complications leading to prolonged hospitalization

NAS Symptoms

- ❖ Seizures
- ❖ sweating
- ❖ vomiting
- ❖ born premature
- ❖ Intense shaking and tremors
- ❖ High pitched intense screams
- ❖ Muscle stiffness/ tight muscle tone
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Sleeping Problems



What Are The Challenges?

- ❖ Training of providers, foster care workers, and foster parents
- ❖ Lack of coordination between child welfare staff and mental health providers
- ❖ Failure of the system to conduct screening assessments
- ❖ Failure of community providers to identify mental health needs
- ❖ Limited collaboration between providers and biological parents
- ❖ Financial resources

What Is The Response?

- ❖ While nearly half of the youth in the child welfare system need mental health intervention, only 1/4th of these youth received care during a one year in a NIMH study.
- ❖ Other research shows that older youth are more likely to be receiving services.
- ❖ Children in foster care who had experienced sexual abuse were almost five times as likely to receive services when compared to children in care with no sexual abuse history.
- ❖ Yet almost 1/4th of the children scoring above the 98th percentile on a clinical measure of symptoms did not receive services.

They Count On Us



Implications For CASA Advocates

- ❖ **DDs are present in about 10-11% of the population**
- ❖ **Persons with DDs do not typically tell others that they have a disability**
- ❖ **Most disabilities are not readily visibly evident, but interaction and observation often provide clues that a DD is present and needs to be considered**
- ❖ **Federal laws require reasonable accommodation**
- ❖ **Wherever /whenever a crime is committed, police are responsible for investigating and enforcing the law**

Intellectual Disabilities (IDs)

How To Advocate For Your Clients

- ❖ Do not expect ID to jump out at you. “Masking, invisible client”, pleasing authoritative figures
- ❖ The dx has many facets; slurred speech, physical features as an example
- ❖ Educate, enlighten and address stereotypes and explain IQ (and standard deviations in assessments)
- ❖ Understand the how and why of daily living. What support systems are in place for the client?

Challenges In Court For People Living With DDs

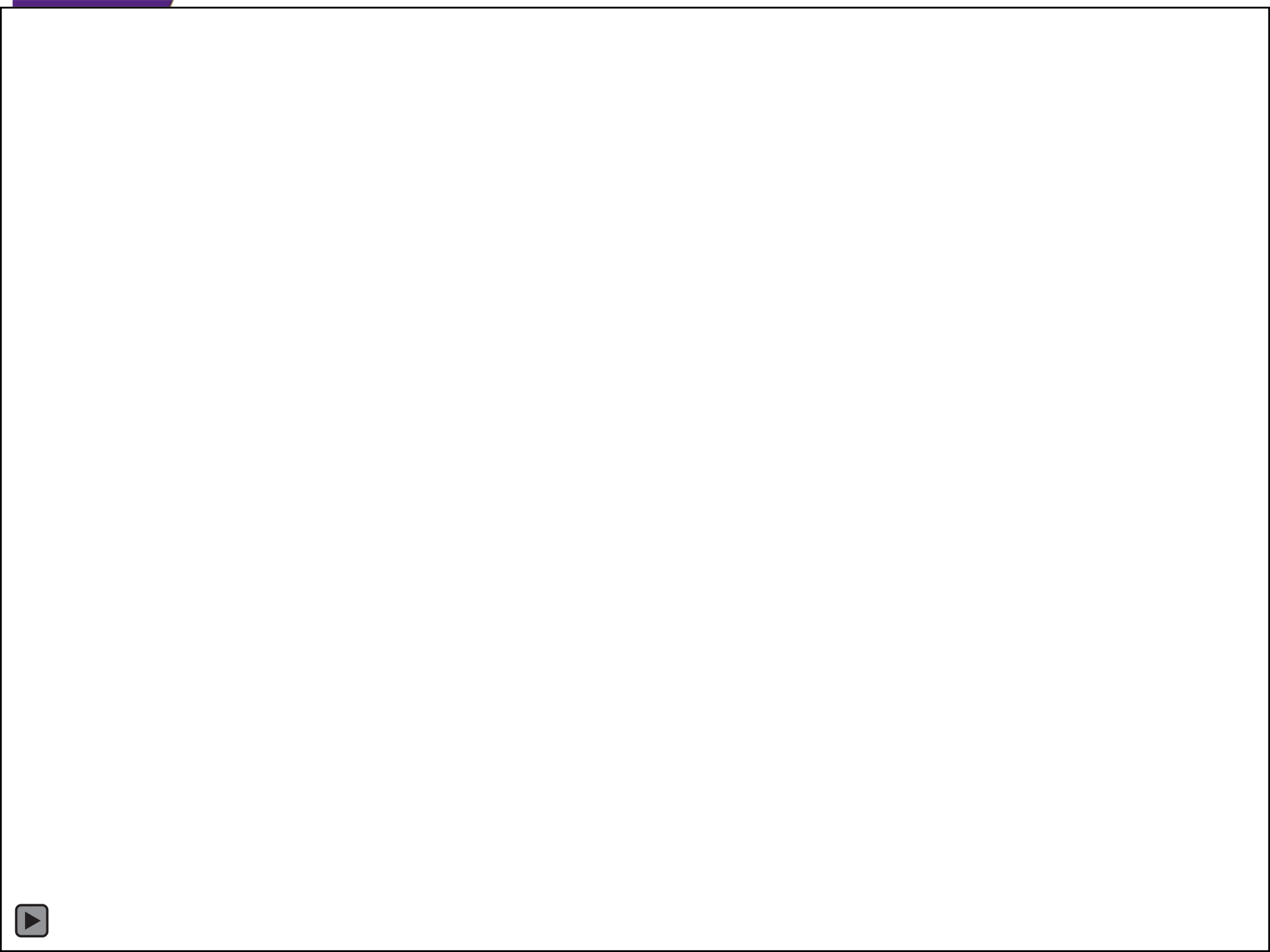
- ❖ According to the Justice Department, 1 in 7 encounters police officers have, are with someone with a disability
- ❖ May not understand potential for harm if she/he engages in suspicious/aggressive behavior
- ❖ May become frightened or frustrated due to lack of understanding
- ❖ May have been taught not to talk to strangers
- ❖ May interpret attempts to be helpful as alarming
- ❖ Because he/she is under pressure, may not be able to process information, answer questions, follow directions

Developmental Disability And The Law: How You Can Advocate

- ❖ Describe developmental disability
- ❖ Explain difference between mental illness and DDs
- ❖ List/describe challenges in the interactions between police officers and persons with a developmental disability
- ❖ Describe methods to use in communicating with a person living with a DD
- ❖ Discuss possible ways of determining the appropriate placement/setting for a person with a DD

Best Practices For Assessment And Diagnosis

- ❖ Various organizations and professional groups have endorsed the concept that children entering foster care should be assessed for physical, developmental, and mental health problems so that appropriate interventions can begin early.
- ❖ Periodic assessment is also required as children adjust to new surroundings and relationships.
- ❖ Further, it is recommended that communities use a standardized procedure for screening and assessment so that information on each child is uniform and comprehensive.



Resources

www.thechancerchronicles.com

www.p2pga.org

www.betterendings.com

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd

www.samsha.gov

www.come-over.to/FAS/faslinks

www.faslink.org

www.Fasdforever.com

www.NOFAS.org

www.thearc.org/learn_about/fasd/www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/foster.pdf

www.dbhdd.georgia.gov/developmental_disabilities

References

- **All About Developmental Disabilities CIT Training**
- **Georgia State University, Center for Leadership in Disabilities: Parent Detailer Project**
- **The Arc of New Jersey**
- **Centers For Disease Control/Division of National Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities**
- **FASD Empowered**
- **Triumph Through The Challenges (NOFAS Ohio)**
- **Parent 2 Parent Georgia**

References

- ❖ (Landsverk et al., 2006).
- ❖ (Austin, 2005; Horwitz, Owens & Simms, 2000; Landsverk et al., 2006; Marshall, 2004; McMillen et al., 2004; Rosenkranz, 2006; Rubin et al., 2004; Zima, Bussing, Crecelius, Kaufman, & Belin, 1999):
- ❖ Bureau of Justice Statistics
- ❖ Special Report
- ❖ October 2009, NCJ 227814
- ❖ U.S. Department of Justice
- ❖ Office of Justice Programs

