

2021



We're Here Because Georgia's Children Deserve More



# Overview

- Legislative Advocacy 101
  - Legislative Process
  - Budget Cycle
  - Communications with Legislators
- Under the Gold Dome
  - Current Session
  - GA CASA Advocacy Strategy & Messaging
- CASA Day at the Capitol Details



# Legislative Advocacy 101

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## General Assembly



2021

**CASA DAY**  
AT THE CAPITOL

Georgia Casa | Changing Lives for Georgia's Children in Foster Care

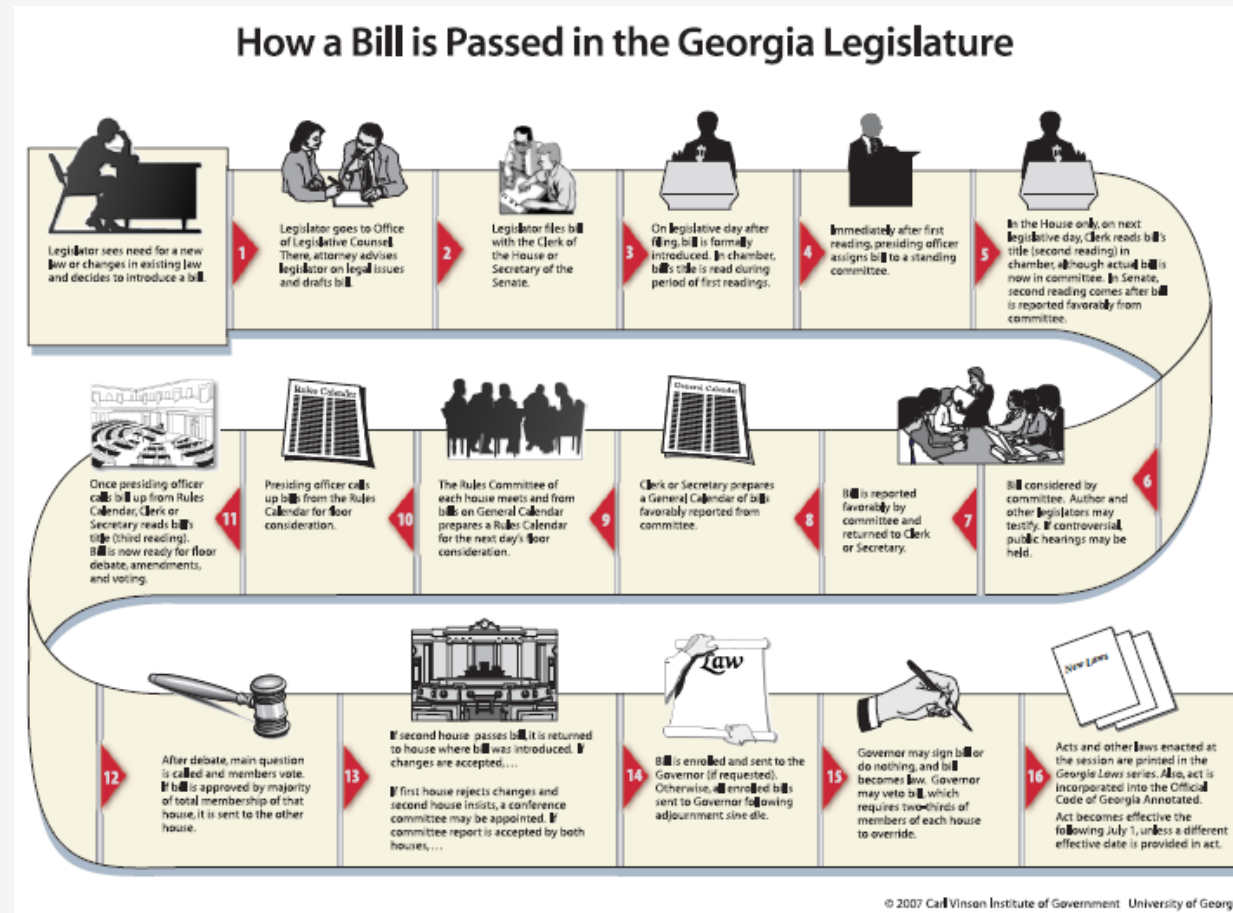


# General Assembly

- Bicameral
  - 56 Senators and 180 Representatives
  - Lt. Gov. presides over Senate
  - Speaker presides over House
- Citizen Legislators
- Biennial Session
- Meets for 40 Days, beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in January
  - Day 28 is Crossover Day
- Only legislation required to pass each year is the state budget
  - Governor-strong state



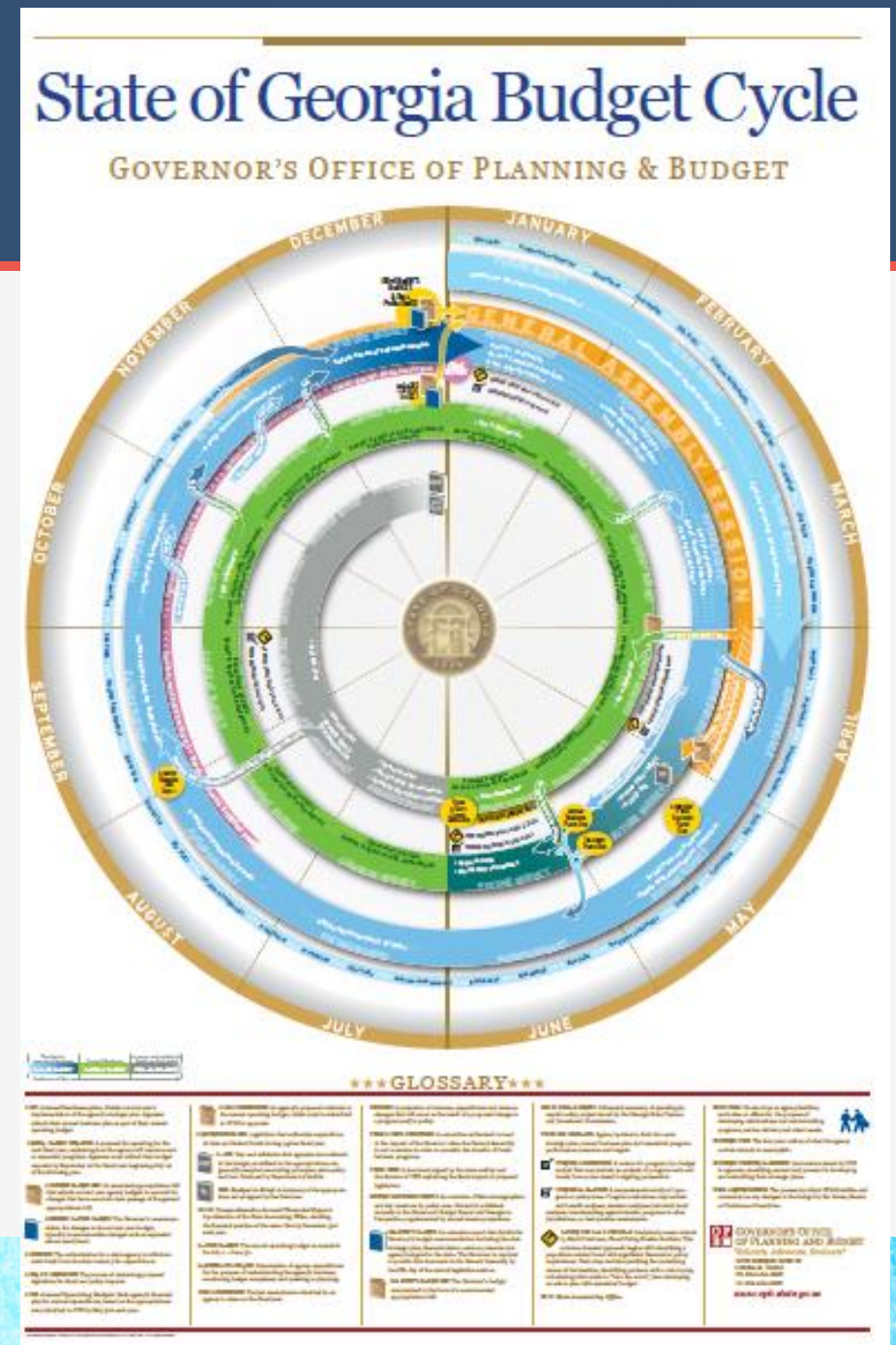
# How a Bill Becomes a Law





# Budget Cycle

[https://opb.georgia.gov/sites/opb.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit\\_1210/44/31/162982494ga\\_budget\\_cycle.pdf](https://opb.georgia.gov/sites/opb.georgia.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/44/31/162982494ga_budget_cycle.pdf)



# Steps in Georgia's Budget Process

1



**Budget Request Instructions Sent to Agencies:**  
In early summer, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) sends guidelines to agencies for budget requests.

2



**Agencies Prepare Budget Request:**  
Agencies prepare requests and get board approval (if applicable).

3



**Budget Request Submitted:**  
Agencies submit all requests for current and upcoming fiscal year to OPB by September 1.

4



**Budget Request Analyzed:**  
The governor, OPB staff, and agency leaders review and assess current and new budget requests.

5



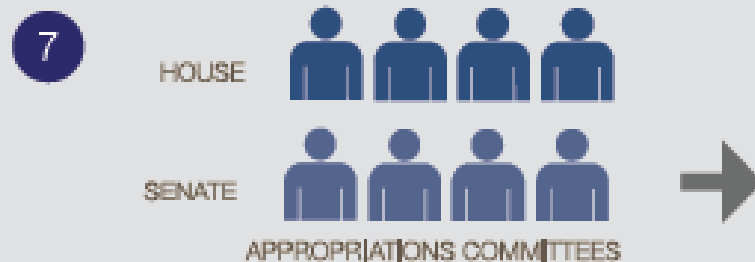
**Governor Finishes Budget:**  
By the end of the calendar year, the governor finalizes the budget proposals.

6



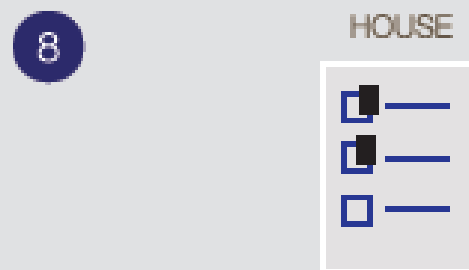
**Budget Documents Sent to the General Assembly:**  
In January, within the first five days of the General Assembly session, the governor presents budget proposals.





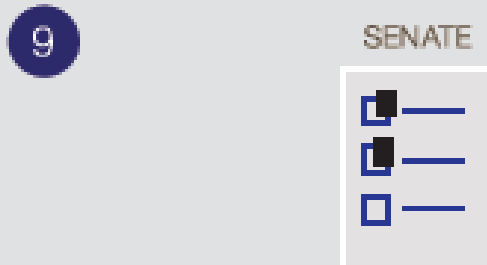
**Legislative Appropriations Process:**

The Appropriations committees in the Georgia House of Representatives and Senate hold budget hearings for the current and upcoming fiscal year.



**House Approves Its Budget**

The House votes on changes to governor's budget proposals, Passes its version to the Senate.



**Senate Approves Its Budget:**

The Senate reviews the House-passed budget for the current and upcoming fiscal years, can make changes, then votes on latest versions.

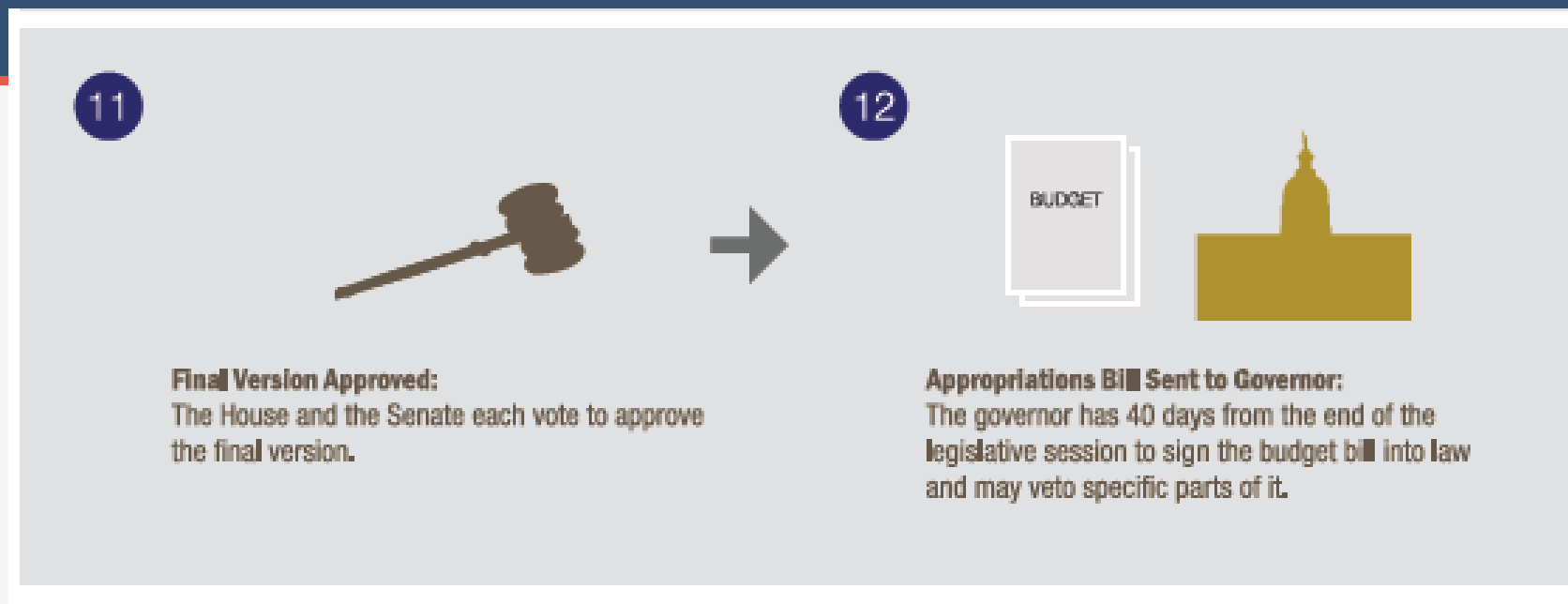


**Conference Committee Meets:**

The lieutenant governor and Speaker of the House appoint a conference committee to negotiate a single version of the budget.







Source: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute Budget Primer

<https://gbpi.org/georgiabudgetprimer/>



# Effective Advocacy Strategies

- Plan ahead
- Be honest and direct, concise
- Be passionate, persistent, polite, positive
- Personalize issues
- Show appreciation
- Seize opportunity
- Work both sides of the aisle





# Communicating with Legislators

- Phone Calls
  - Likely will speak with an assistant, intern, or staffer who will relay your message
  - Identify yourself, organizational affiliation, and mention if you live in the legislator's home district
  - Explain why you're calling and make your ask, have 1-2 concise points to support your position
  - Provide any local or personal examples of why it matters
  - Thank the person for their time
- Email
  - Convenient, but may be less effective because less personal, may be preferred method for some
  - Put your position in the subject line (e.g., Please support HB\_\_)
  - Form letters won't have same weight as personalized ones
  - One issue per letter
  - State purpose in first paragraph
  - Include personal stories, highlight specific examples that support your position, including local impact
  - May request a response asking whether legislator will support your position



# Under the Gold Dome

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## Legislative Session



2021

**CASA DAY**  
AT THE CAPITOL

Georgia Casa | Changing Lives for Georgia's Children in Foster Care



# How to Stay Informed:

- Barton Child Law and Policy Center at Emory Law School's Newsletter and weekly Legislative Updates
- Voices for Georgia's Children
  - Georgia CALL "closed door" weekly meetings - virtual
  - Legislative Updates
  - Two-minute Take videos
  - Fact-Sheet Fridays
- Legislator newsletters
- Georgia General Assembly page--[www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov)
- Budget—Georgia Budget & Policy Institute—[www.gbpi.org](http://www.gbpi.org)
- Lawmakers – [www.gpb.org](http://www.gpb.org)



# 2021

- Today is Day 9, first year of session
- Substantive Legislation, Governor's package
  - [SB 28](#) (Hatchett-50th) Expands resources available to juvenile courts to respond to safety needs of children and ensures all reliable information is made available to the court in order to make decisions in a child's best interests, including
    - requiring an annual minimum 2 hours of training for juvenile court intake officers;
    - to provide for the consideration of evidence, including hearsay evidence, in certain juvenile proceedings;
    - to revising provisions pertaining to the reporting of child abuse.
  - [HB 114](#) (Reeves-34th) Changes the adoption tax credit from \$2,000.00 to \$6,000.00 per qualified foster child per taxable year (commencing with the year in which the adoption becomes final) for five taxable years and \$2,000.00 per taxable year thereafter until the child turns 18.
  - [HB 154](#) (Reeves-34th) Lowers the age at which an individual may petition the court to adopt a child from age 25 to 21 (making it easier for close relatives to adopt children out of foster care). The bill also streamlines procedures to improve efficiency with changes to venue, authorization for virtual appearances in uncontested hearings, clarification of service and notice requirements, and imposition of timelines on court-appointed investigators and increases protections for prospective adoptive parents and biological parents by prohibiting conduct that intentionally misrepresents or exploits parties to an adoption.





# Legislation, continued

- [SB 20](#) (Payne-54th) Adds one current or former foster parent (appointed by the Governor), one former foster child who turned 18 or graduated from high school while still in the Georgia foster care system (appointed by the Lieutenant Governor), and one individual who has served for at least three years as a court appointed special advocate (CASA) (appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives) to the Child Advocate Advisory Committee in the Office of the Child Advocate.
- [HB 7](#) (Scott-76th) Provides for in-state tuition at units of the University System of Georgia and branches of the Technical College System of Georgia for youth who are from foster care or homeless situations and excludes foster care assistance from consideration as income for purposes of calculating financial aid.
- [HB 120](#) (Carpenter-4th) Allows students who are considered DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) to qualify for in-state tuition for the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia.
- [HB 155](#) (Thomas-39th) Raises the age of mandatory education for children from 16 to 17.



# House Version of Amended FY 2021 Budget

- **Dept. of Human Services (includes the Division of Family and Children Services)**
  - **\$412,900 Transferred to cover a projected deficit in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) contract** due to an increase in SNAP cases related to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (from Out-of-Home Care to Departmental Administration)
  - **\$300,000 Added to the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission**
  - **\$3.48 Million Repurposed for adoptions caseload growth (Adoptions Services)**
    - **\$208,350 Subtracted** to reflect savings from vacant child support services agent positions (Child Support Services)
    - **\$226,670 Subtracted** to reflect the delayed start dates of 12 supervisor-mentor and foster care support services positions. (Child Welfare Services)
    - **\$176,500 Added** for contracts for educational services with the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (Child Welfare Services)



# FY 22 Budget

- Dept. of Human Services (includes the Division of Family and Children Services)
  - \$4.5 Million Added for caseload growth in adoptions
  - Budget Direction: Recognize \$1.1 Million in marriage and divorce fee collections for the Children's Trust Fund for child abuse and neglect prevention
  - \$8.2 Million to provide funds to begin the implementation of the Patients First Act (passed in the 2019 Session)
  - \$14.3 Million Subtraction to reflect savings from a reduction in Out-of-Home Care utilization due to a decline in average monthly placements
  - \$6.6 Million Added to reflect the loss of Title IV-E funds associated with the October 1, 2021 implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and the statewide transition to increased family-based placement settings
  - \$350,000 Added to reflect collections (Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission)





# Georgia CASA Legislative Strategy

- Not seeking large increase for FY 22
- Substantive legislation
- Share your CASA story
- Bring attention to needs of children in foster care in your community
- Engage legislators in the CASA movement



# Messaging

- Ongoing commitment to continue to build relationships with legislators both in the district and in Atlanta throughout the session:
  - Thanking legislators for their continuous support of CASA and sharing progress and growth
  - Engaging legislators in discussions around key issues in child welfare
  - Serving as a sounding board and resource on welfare issues as the session progresses
  - Providing joint opportunities to recruit and engage constituents in supporting youth in care
  - Asking legislators to become CASA ambassadors in the community by sharing local CASA information with constituents and attending local CASA events
  - Inviting legislators to participate in a listening session or to observe CASA in action in court



# Messaging, cont'd.

- CASA advocacy is essential to children who have experienced abuse or neglect in GA
  - Every child in state's custody needs the individualized attention and sense of urgency that a CASA volunteer brings in improving their experience in foster care
  - Studies have consistently shown that a child with a CASA is more likely to find a safe, permanent home; half as likely to re-enter foster care; and less likely to languish in long-term foster care
  - CASA volunteers provide consistency and continuity for a child involved in the child welfare system and help to connect information among DFCS staff, foster placements, providers, schools and many other stakeholders
  - CASA program helps to maximize community resources and support by involving community volunteers in supporting juvenile courts and children/families in foster care, resulting in additional resources, expertise and connections for children, families and services
- CASAs advocate for approximately 55% of children in foster care





# CASA Day at the Capitol

## *Virtual Edition*

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February 11



2021



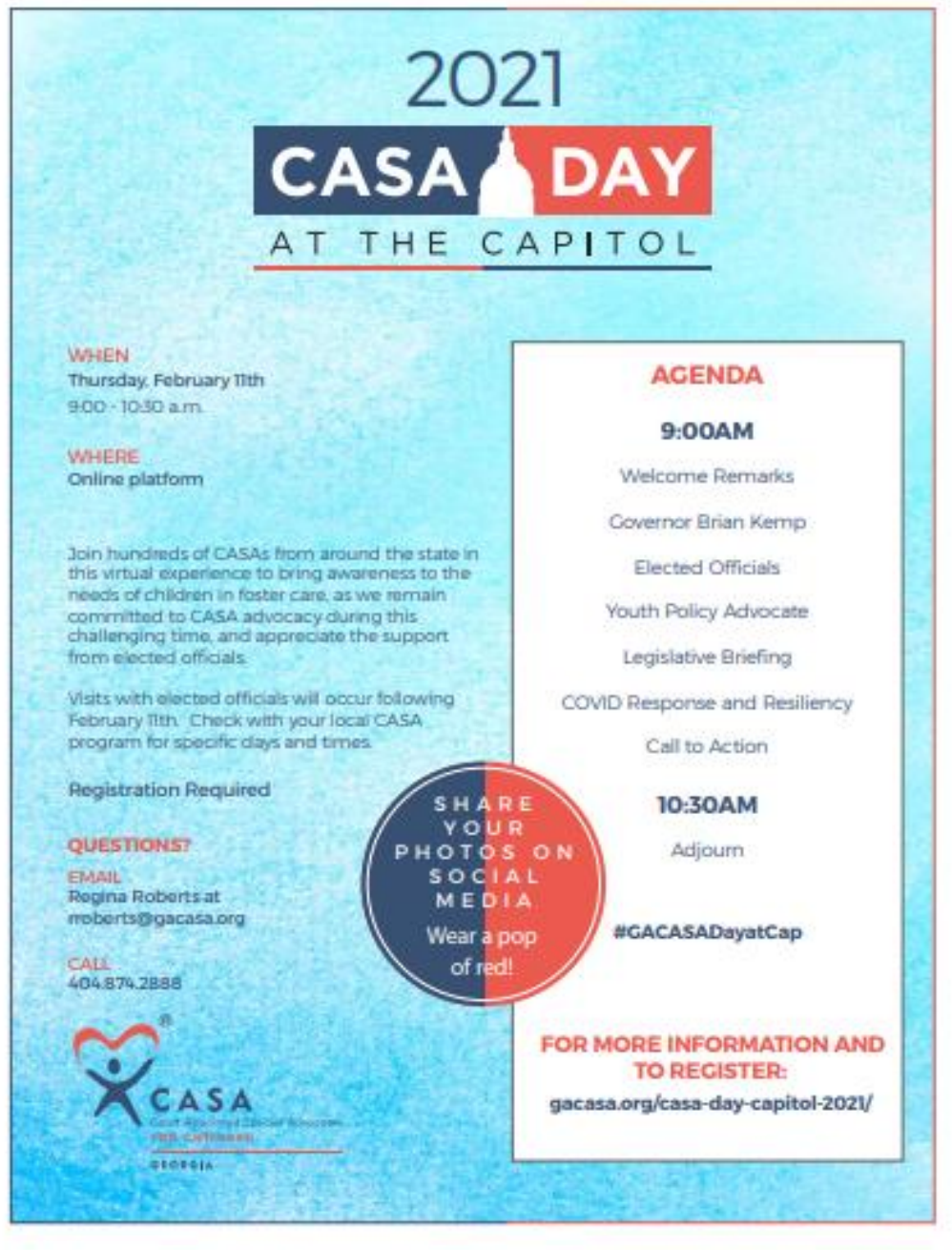
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# Website

Flyer  
Schedule of Events  
Legislator contact info  
Sample letter to invite legislator  
Registration links  
Talking Points

For more details and to register, visit:

<https://www.gacasa.org/casa-day-capitol-2021/>



**2021**  
**CASA DAY**  
**AT THE CAPITOL**

**WHEN**  
Thursday, February 11th  
9:00 - 10:30 a.m.

**WHERE**  
Online platform

Join hundreds of CASAs from around the state in this virtual experience to bring awareness to the needs of children in foster care, as we remain committed to CASA advocacy during this challenging time, and appreciate the support from elected officials.

Visits with elected officials will occur following February 11th. Check with your local CASA program for specific days and times.


Registration Required

**QUESTIONS?**  
**EMAIL**  
Regina Roberts at  
roberts@gacasa.org  
**CALL**  
404.874.2888

**SHARE YOUR PHOTOS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Wear a pop of red!

**AGENDA**  
**9:00AM**  
Welcome Remarks  
Governor Brian Kemp  
Elected Officials  
Youth Policy Advocate  
Legislative Briefing  
COVID Response and Resiliency  
Call to Action  
**10:30AM**  
Adjourn  
#GACASADayatCap

**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER:**  
[gacasa.org/casa-day-capitol-2021/](https://www.gacasa.org/casa-day-capitol-2021/)

  
CASA  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
for Children  
GEORGIA



# Schedule

- 9:00 – Program Begins
- Welcome
- Remarks from the Governor
- Remarks from Chairman Katie Dempsey
- Remarks from Youth Policy Advocate – Gabrielle Willis
- Video Presentation
- Legislative Briefing
- Call to Action
- Adjourn by 10:30





# 2019 Day at the Capitol



# Legislative Appointments:

- Who is my legislator?
  - Find your district number and use the charts.
  - Or, enter your street address online at <http://votesmart.org/>
- Make an appointment with your legislators.
  - Sample language on website.
  - If you haven't heard back, send a reminder.
- Prepare your volunteers.
  - Have a call in advance for those attending
  - Provide info about all legislators in your program's service area
    - Photo, biographical info, committees, relevant sponsored legislation





# See you on the 11<sup>th</sup>!

- Don't forget:
  - Wear a **pop of red!**
  - Use #GACASADayatCap
  - Make appointments after Capitol Day





# Questions?

[atyner@gacasa.org](mailto:atyner@gacasa.org)

404-874-2888



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**CASA DAY**  
AT THE CAPITOL