

# GEORGIA CASA CONFERENCE

## 2021 WORKSHOP LINEUP

### WORKSHOP BLOCK I: 11:00-12:05

#### **A1. Evidence for CASA Volunteers: How Judges Learn Facts (Room M103-105)**

Jerry Bruce, Director, Office of the Child Advocate

Understanding the basics of evidence is often a challenge for non-lawyers (and even some lawyers) but is essential to successful advocacy. Essentially, “evidence” is just rules about how judges can learn facts. Judges need facts to make judicial decisions, which result in court orders. Advocates have facts that they want judges to consider. How can those facts be presented so that a judge can use them? Why are there rules of evidence anyway? Why can’t judges just use any information they want? Will your advocacy result in facts a judge can use, or will your facts be objected to? What are all those objections about? We’ll cover all these issues, so that your advocacy can be made stronger.

#### **A2. Biological/Putative Fathers and Legitimation: An Overview of Georgia Law and Procedure (Room M106-107)**

The Hon. Christopher Willis, Forsyth County Juvenile Court

This workshop will discuss how biological and legal fathers are addressed under Georgia law, including how biological fathers can establish themselves as legal fathers with the process known as legitimation. We will cover the distinctions between putative, biological, and legal fathers, as well as how the status of a father affects his legal standing in dependency cases. Additionally, we will discuss developments in Georgia law surrounding the issue of legitimation and the competing interests of the biological father and the child(ren) in the case.

#### **A3. Shifting the Culture: A Family-Centered Approach (Room M108)**

Jennifer Stein, Director, Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

When the entire system focuses on the unique needs of every family and child, we allow parents to become the experts on their specific challenges and to adopt new ways for them to overcome and develop solutions for themselves. This workshop will review simple strategies for professionals to gain a mindset and approach to family-centered services. This practice increases the likelihood of successful reunification, while preserving a child’s relationship and identity with his or her family unit and has been proven to decrease recidivism rates.

#### **A4. Recognizing and Managing Secondary Traumatic Stress (Room M301)**

Debra Ross, MSW, Instructional Coordinator, Child Welfare Training Collaborative

In this CWTC workshop, participants will increase their understanding of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) and its impact. Learn how to access STS symptoms in yourself and others, explore factors that help protect us from the negative effects of STS, and discover strategies to use these protective factors to manage STS. This session, as with all CWTC workshops, creates a shared understanding of issues facing children and families and promotion of better outcomes for Georgia’s children.

### **A5. State of the Child Welfare System (Room M304)**

Melissa D. Carter, Director, Barton Child Law & Policy Center, Emory University School of Law

Chris Hempfling, Deputy Director, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

This workshop will provide an update on the current state of Georgia's child welfare system, examining system trends and outcomes in the context of applicable law, policy, and data. Updated each year, this year's focus will be on the impact of the child welfare system's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Removal and foster care trends will be presented and discussed in the context of changes to law, policy, and practice. Specific topics will include an update on DFCS's budget, strategic priorities and initiatives, and recent changes in state and federal law and policy.

## **WORKSHOP BLOCK II: 2:20-3:25**

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### **B1. Ask the Judges (Room M103-105)**

The Hon. Carolyn Altman, Paulding County Juvenile Court

The Hon. Amanda Heath, Richmond County Juvenile Court

The Hon. Michael Key, Troup County Juvenile Court

The Hon. Christopher Willis, Forsyth County Juvenile Court

Moderator: Jerry Bruce, Director, Office of the Child Advocate

This interactive workshop will give CASA volunteers the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with a panel of judges on issues of the law, process, procedure, and the philosophy of child welfare. Come prepared to ask questions about how decisions are made, the importance of volunteer advocacy, how CASA volunteers' reports and recommendations are used, how the law is interpreted, trending issues in child welfare, and how we can work together to ensure children and youth have safe, permanent homes. Please note that no specific cases can be discussed.

### **B2. Collaboration is Key: How CASA Collaboration Can Improve Case Outcomes**

**(Room M106-107)**

Audrey Brannen, LCSW, Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Regional Administrator, DFCS

Emily Monda, LMSW, Case Manager, Assessment and Recruitment Team, Region 5, Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Unit, DFCS

Presenters will discuss how establishing good partnerships create better outcomes for children and families. Collaboration between DFCS and CASA results in increased placement stability and timely permanency. Presenters will use the rich history of collaboration in DFCS Region 5 (Athens and surrounding area) to outline ways DFCS and CASA can partner to improve case outcomes and achieve case goals.

### **B3. The Effects of Trauma and Maladaptive Care on Childhood Mental Health Disorders**

**(Room M108)**

Priscilla Faulkner, PsyD, Director, Southeastern Psychological Associates

This session will provide an overview on the effects of trauma, prenatal factors, genetic factors, and maladaptive care on children and how these factors can lead to the development of some of the more common childhood disorders seen in children experiencing foster care.

#### **B4. Messages Matter: Implicit Bias, Personal Mindset and the Child Welfare System In Georgia (Room M301)**

LaFayette E. Young, Jr. MSW, Training & Inclusion Specialist, Georgia CASA  
Radical Optimist Collective

Child and family engagement, case planning, service delivery and partnerships are all informed by implicit and systemic biases. This session will share information on how disproportionate outcomes show up in our child welfare structure, and engage participants in unpacking personal biases. This session is open to any and all stakeholders in the state CASA network.

#### **B5. Older Youth 101! (Room M304)**

Anthony Stover, Youth EngageMEnt Coordinator, Georgia EmpowerMEnt, MAAC  
Shimaine Holley, Regional Impact Liaison, Georgia EmpowerMEnt, MAAC  
Sarah Bess Hudson, Director - Initiatives, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children, Inc. (MAAC)

A dynamic and direct experience, this session addresses what matters most with young people transitioning from foster care, but not so much that we will lose you in the details. We will engage your head (data/research), heart (human connections), and feet, to “walk away” with key resources critical to teens facing foster care.

### **WORKSHOP BLOCK III: 3:45-4:50**

#### **C1. Pump Up the Volume: Increasing CASA’s Influence in Case Strategy Development (Room M103-105)**

Lori Davis, Trainer/MDCANI Faculty, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services  
The Hon. Michael Key, Troup County Juvenile Court

CASA advocates sometimes face challenges with doing more than merely being present at DFCS meetings. This session offers strategies for being a productive, respected, and valued voice at the table for moving children’s cases forward and promoting the best interest of the child, including participating in the development and implementation of the case plan and ensuring reasonable efforts.

#### **C2. Strengthening Your Advocacy Muscles: Making Effective Recommendations to Achieve Successful Outcomes for Children (Room M106-107)**

Angela Tyner, Advocacy Director, Georgia CASA  
Lori Pupp, Senior Advocacy Manager, Georgia CASA

For CASA volunteers, the charge is clear to provide quality best-interest advocacy to the children we serve. As outlined in both federal and Georgia law, this critical role includes the completion of a comprehensive, independent assessment to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding a child’s case and as equally important, to make best-interest recommendations through fact-based, written reports provided to the court and parties. This workshop will offer practical strategies for developing effective recommendations that the court can incorporate in its order to ensure a child’s needs are being met and to drive the case forward in achieving permanency. Join us in this important conversation about how to offer recommendations that will yield positive outcomes for children and families!

### **C3. Using Outcomes and Engaging Communications to Tell Your Story for Greater Impact (Room M108)**

Maria Azuri, Senior Director of Impact and Sustainability, Network for Good

In this strategies-to-actions workshop, we'll examine how using a logic model and creating on-going communications to varied stakeholders lead to stronger fundraising and systemic impact. We'll also look at the role and responsibilities that board members have in staying updated on the organization's outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs) and use this data and benchmarks to better understand the organization's strengths and opportunities for greater support. How can an organization's outcomes and impact data help shape strategies for stronger advocacy 'beyond the numbers?' In this workshop, CASA directors and board members will take a combined look at how logic models, outcomes data, and communications work in tandem for a connected approach that looks at both the individual and the systems CASA aims to impact. Specific objectives include understanding the components of a logic model; identifying how key outcomes, impact data, and KPIs can be used to become stronger systems advocates; and learning how to use ongoing impact data and communications for stronger fundraising and greater community reach and awareness.

### **C4. Navigating Medicaid and Waiver Programs for Youth with Disabilities (Room M301)**

Joe Sarra, Advocate, Georgia Advocacy Office, Inc.

Children under age 21 who are Medicaid eligible have a federal right to receive medically necessary services as prescribed by their treating physician(s). Medicaid is the most robust healthcare program for children and youth under 21 who experience disabilities, as Medicaid services cannot be capped or limited unlike services funded through private health insurance. The Medicaid and Waiver workshop will review the ways to access Georgia Medicaid, how to appeal a Medicaid denial for a service, and how to advocate for your child to access the services and supports necessary to correct and/or ameliorate the child's condition all the while ensuring children and youth have the tools necessary to lead a great life and support their transition into adulthood and Georgia's waiver programs.

### **C5. Appointed to Advocate: Strengthening Your Courtroom Presence (Room M304)**

The Hon. Carolyn Altman, Paulding County Juvenile Court

You are an officer of the court. Therefore, know what the court is listening and looking for. Learn to strengthen your in-court advocacy and presence through improving your written reports and in-court testimony. This workshop will include practical tips on how to testify; answer questions from judges and lawyers; introduce new information; make recommendations for services, placement, and permanency; and increase your credibility as a witness and advocate.