

WORKSHOP BLOCK I: 10:30-11:45

A Pathway to Success: Improving Outcomes for Older Youth in Foster Care

David Myers, Public Service Faculty, JW Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia

Candis Jones, GARYSE Chafee Program Director, GA Division of Family and Children Services

Ebony Harris, CEO, Youth Empowerment Success Services

Juanita Stedman, Executive Director, Together Georgia

Sharon Porter, Workforce Development Administrator, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC)

Sarah Bess Hudson, Youth Engagement Administrator, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC)

As advocates, our best successes often occur when we identify and leverage accessible resources, remove existing barriers, and lift our collective voices to fill gaps on behalf of the youth we serve. Come ready to engage in this panel-style dialogue about older youth-related supports for those experiencing foster care, as panelists share available services and ways to navigate the core programs and financial supports available for youth to successfully transitioning into adulthood.

Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences

Jennifer Stein, Executive Director

Jyll Walsh, DrPH, Assistant Director

PCA Georgia

The Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE) framework encourages all providers who interface with children and families to use a strength-based approach that promotes equitable access to key positive childhood experiences (PCEs). Research has shown that all children need these PCEs to thrive and that PCEs can mitigate the long-term health outcomes associated with trauma. Join us as we review the framework and discuss what HOPE looks like in action in child welfare.

Exploring Reunification from a Cultural Humility Perspective

LaFayette Young, Jr., Training & Inclusion Specialist, Georgia CASA

The topic of this presentation centers around the concept of Cultural Humility, which underscores the importance of being open to diverse perspectives, reflective, and willing to learn about different cultures and experiences. Sadly, the foster care system has not always been equitable in its treatment of BIPOC and other marginalized groups. Nonetheless, CASA advocates and other key stakeholders are steadfast in their commitment to identifying collaborative solutions that address the unique needs and aspirations of BIPOC children, with the ultimate goal of achieving positive and effective outcomes for reunification.

Advocating on Long-Haul Cases: When Progress Stalls

Jerry Bruce, Director, Georgia Office of the Child Advocate

While we hope for swift safe and stable reunifications, for a variety of reasons, some cases are invariably more complex and require more time for resolution. Without progress, parties feel constrained by complacency and limited options. Proactive advocacy can be a game changer. This session will provide instructive and motivational strategies around effective advocacy skills and opportunities for resolution.

DFCS Overview & Updates

Mary Havick, Deputy Commissioner, Child Welfare, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Holly Campolong, Region 13 Director, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

This workshop will feature agency leaders providing an overview of data, current priorities for the Division and practice highlights for children in foster care.

WORKSHOP BLOCK I: 10:30-11:45 (cont.)

When Trauma Meets Brain Science: Changing the Way We See Families

Debra Ross, Trainer, Georgia State University Child Welfare Training Collaborative

Information will be shared on the impact of complex trauma on children and caregiver's behavior, development, changes in brain chemistry, and the long-term effects on neural connections and physiological responses in children and caregivers who have experienced trauma. Participants will be energized with new ideas and actionable steps to more effectively engage the family.

Understanding Mental Health Evaluations, Diagnoses & Treatment

Priscilla Faulkner, PsyD, Director, Southeastern Psychological Associates

This workshop will offer participants a better understanding for the components of mental health and psychological evaluations, the assessments most administered by clinicians, and an overview of common diagnoses with possible treatment options for families we serve. With information gathered from mental health evaluations, advocates can identify an individual's strengths, potential difficulties with behaviors and cognition, emotional reactivity, and review recommendations made for any treatment needed to achieve permanency.

WORKSHOP BLOCK II: 2:00-3:15

Ask the Judges

Hon. Michael Key, Troup County

Hon. Neal Brunt, Bartow County

Hon. Carolyn Altman, Paulding County

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.

Engaging and Working with Fathers to Support Positive Child and Family Outcomes

Dr. Latrice Rollins, Assistant Professor, Morehouse School of Medicine/Fathers Matter ATL

During this interactive workshop, presenters will share research that demonstrates how fathers play an essential role in the lives of their children and in strengthening families. We will also share father-friendly principles and promising practices that can be adopted and implemented. Participants will be provided an opportunity to work together on an action plan to apply what is learned in the session to their own individual practice, organization, and policies. Overall, this session will help CASAs gain knowledge to facilitate positive father engagement and improve child and family outcomes.

WORKSHOP BLOCK II: 2:00-3:15 (cont.)

Secondary Traumatic Stress & Self-Care

Tori Massey Young, MS, LPC, NCC, Twin Cedars

Recognizing the significance and impact of exposure to secondary traumatic stress on the advocacy team, this session is designed to help participants assess their individual experiences, learn personal self-care practices, and develop an organizational culture of taking care of each of our roles in this difficult work.

Supporting Parent Partnerships

Lindsey Dale, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program Specialist, Georgia Division of Family & Children Services, Prevention and Community Support Section

Georgia Parent Advisory Council members will discuss the importance of parent partnerships between birth and foster parents/kinship caregivers and how stakeholders can support partnerships with the families they serve in their communities. Participants will leave with tools and resources to better support and navigate parent partnerships and better understand the role of the Georgia Parent Advisory Council.

Meeting the Needs & Providing Advocacy for Children with Complex & Specialized Needs

Audrey Brannen, Complex Care Coordinator, Georgia Division of Family & Children Services

For children in foster care, unmet mental and behavioral needs often intersect with historical, complex trauma and the direct trauma of entering the system. In this workshop, participants will learn how the Division defines complex care and how the complex care needs of youth in foster care at case and system levels are being addressed. Strategies for assisting in supporting parents, caregivers, and systems involved in the care for a youth with complex needs will be shared. Most importantly, participants will leave feeling empowered to advocate for children with complex and specialized needs, while maintaining positive relationships with the many parties involved.

A National Lens on the State of Child Welfare

Melissa Carter, Executive Director, Barton Child Law & Policy Center

Chris Hempfling, Vice President, Service Excellence and Stakeholder Relations, BrightSpring Health Services

No two child welfare systems are alike, and child welfare systems in every state seem to be in a constant state of reform. But they do face similar challenges and opportunities. So, what is the State of Child Welfare overall? Legislation and policy, advocacy in support of agreed-upon best practices, lawsuits, and public narratives shaped by media coverage often set the direction for system improvement. Jurisdictions respond to these external pressures in different ways and innovate their own solutions, which allows ongoing learning and system adaptation. This version of the annual State of Child Welfare presentation is intended as an opportunity to identify and discuss important issues facing Georgia's child welfare system and understand them in the context of efforts underway in other states to transform child protection into a proactive system that strengthens families.

WORKSHOP BLOCK II: 2:00-3:15 (cont.)

Addiction and Parenting

Bonnie O. Lockwood, LPC, Director, Cornerstones Counseling Center

Addiction is a disease. Learn how this disease affects and changes parents and their parenting style, despite their love for their children, and the impact on children and their development. Discover ways to get parents effective treatment and hear about strategies to interact with them that will help.

WORKSHOP BLOCK III: 3:35-4:50

Sharing Your Why

Rachelle Wilson Mosely, Marketing Director, Georgia CASA

Learn more about sharing your Why and the CASA mission with others. Centered on storytelling, this workshop will be a combination of exploring best practices and practical applications. Featuring activities and collaborative exercises, participants will experience a dynamic session and leave inspired to spread the word about CASA.

Appointed to Advocate: Strengthening Your Courtroom Presence

The Hon. Carolyn Altman, Paulding County Juvenile Court

Learn to strengthen your in-court advocacy and presence through improving your written reports, oral recommendations, and in-court testimony. This workshop will include practical tips on how to testify and 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.

When Home is Where the Hurt Is: An Exploration of Family Facilitated CSEC

Kathleen Cleveland-Kennedy, Statewide Care Coordinator, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia

Naeshia McDowell, CSEC Response Team Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) refers to a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial benefit of any person or in exchange for anything of value (including monetary and non-monetary benefits). One form of CSEC is Family-Facilitated CSEC/Familial Exploitation, which occurs when a family member exchanges sexual acts with a child for goods, substances, rent, services, money, or status within the community. This workshop will provide attendees with a foundational understanding of family-facilitated CSEC and will utilize case studies to help participants identify family-facilitated CSEC, which often hides under the guise of traditional child sexual abuse or neglect.

Educational Advocacy for Youth in Foster Care

Caren Cloud, Legal and Policy Director, Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice

Josette Franklin, Education Quality Specialist, EPAC, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

This presentation will include guidance for CASAs regarding education advocacy, to include school enrollment and barriers, special education, school discipline/tribunals, and the impact of trauma within the context of HB 855 and beyond.

WORKSHOP BLOCK III: 3:35-4:50 (cont.)

Identifying and Serving Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The Hon. R. Michael Key, Troup County Juvenile Court

Claire Dees, Executive Director, Autism Spectrum Support Group

As children living with autism spectrum disorder present themselves in the juvenile courts around the state more frequently and dramatically, the challenges of meeting these children and their families' needs and the inadequacy of the child welfare system generally and the court system specifically to do so become more evident. Presenters will discuss the need to identify children living with Autism Spectrum Disorder and provide community resources to meet their needs.

Take a Data Walk in Our Shoes: Power of Data to Drive Change

Sarah Bess Hudson, Youth Engagement Administrator, Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC)

Victoria Salzman, Chief Strategic Development Officer, MAAC

Young people with lived experience will lead participants through a data walk of the newly updated and released Fostering Youth Transitions national and state-based data collection from the Annie E Casey Foundation, reflecting on key outcome data for youth transitioning from foster care. Panelists will facilitate a discussion lifting up the factors that impact outcomes for young people, and participants will hear how this data translates to real life.

Effective Case Planning: Moving Beyond "...and follow all recommendations"

Lori Davis, Training & Professional Development Specialist, DFCS

Are you tired of generic and vague case plans that don't seem to be making an impact on behavior change? Join this interactive workshop and get the tools you need to advocate for case plans that are effective, efficient, and promote timely permanency for children.