



2020-2029

# Our Region's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan

Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee,  
Oglethorpe, Rockdale, and Walton Counties

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# Georgia's Vision for Prevention



Despite the complex factors that can lead to child abuse, child abuse can be prevented — in fact, most people are already participating in prevention activities without realizing it!

Common actions like mentoring children and youth, participating in community activities and campaigns, donating to service providers, supporting another parent in a challenging situation, and engaging in advocacy count towards prevention.

Essentially, any action, program, or policy that strengthens families and communities should be considered child-abuse prevention. Prevention comes in three forms: primary (support of the general well-being of families and children), secondary (support of families and children at higher risk for incidents of child abuse and neglect), and tertiary (support of families and children after abuse or neglect has taken place, to reduce the chance of future abuse or neglect). Moreover, if anything with a positive impact on families or communities is considered “prevention,” then by achieving the goals of this plan, we will also benefit the goals of agencies and local organizations across Georgia, and vice-versa.

Georgia’s vision and goals promote a collective, strength-based approach that can help increase family assets, enhance child development, and

reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. This approach, known as Strengthening Families™, is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key protective factors, which are characteristics that make a parent or caregiver, child, or family more likely to thrive despite whatever risk factors (characteristics that make a parent or caregiver, child, or family more likely to experience a negative outcome) they might face. All families benefit from having strong protective factors:

- **Parental resilience:** Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
- **Social connections:** Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental, and spiritual support.
- **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.
- **Concrete support in times of need:** Access to concrete support and services that address a family’s needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

Social and emotional competence of children: Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.





GEORGIA'S VISION FOR PREVENTION

All Georgia's children and families have equitable opportunities and necessary support to thrive in safe, stable, connected, and nurturing communities where they live, learn, work, and play.



# Georgia's Prevention Goals



When we come together with a common cause, we can make important conditions a reality.

The following overarching goals reflect the results of our collective action regarding Georgia's families, systems/governments, and society must achieve in the next ten years (2020-2029).



## Goals for Families

- All parents and caregivers have the skills and tools to meet the physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of their children.
- All children have the tools, skills, and support needed to meet their potential.
- All families have equitable access to culturally responsive services and resources in their communities to meet their needs.



## Goals for Systems/ Governments

- Families are engaged in planning and evaluating child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.
- All community, commerce, and state systems have integrated policies, training, programs, practices, and budgets that promote family and child well-being.
- Systems collaborate and cooperate in planning and implementing a comprehensive continuum of prevention services including but not limited to: strengthening economic supports to families, implementing family-friendly policies, and providing quality care and education.
- Permanent and adequate financial resources are equitably allocated to develop and maintain prevention strategies.
- All services and supports to children and families use trauma-informed, strength-based practices to reduce harms and prevent future risk.



## Goals for Society

- All Georgia citizens are accountable for the protection and well-being of our children.
- Prevention is valued as essential and achievable with collective action.
- Society invests in children early and throughout their lives.
- Georgia has increased equitable opportunities and access to services and resources that foster child well-being.
- Social norms reflect a culture that supports and sustains safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments.



# Georgia's Objectives for Prevention



For collective action to work, we must hold ourselves accountable for making a difference in changing existing community conditions.

This focus must be inclusive of all Georgia's families and children. Georgia's plan must change the following conditions:

- Increase family economic stability
- Increase family resiliency
- Increase access to early childhood care and education
- Increase family mental well-being
- Increase family physical health
- Increase community knowledge and awareness of the societal factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect and the capacity to prevent it



Currently, Georgia ranks 38<sup>th</sup> in child/family well-being according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2019 KIDS COUNT Profile. KIDS COUNT is a premier source of data on children and families. Each year, the Foundation produces a comprehensive report — the KIDS COUNT Data Book — that assesses child well-being in the United States. In 2019, the ranking was based on a review of economic well-being (e.g., children living in poverty), education (e.g., young children ages 3-4 not in school), health (e.g., children without health insurance) and family/community metrics (e.g., teen births). These indicators closely reflect the key objectives identified by Georgia families and subject matter experts in the production of this plan and are shown to lead to greater child well-being.

By 2030, Georgia will rank at least 33<sup>rd</sup> or higher according to the KIDS COUNT profile. This represents a 10% improvement in the state rankings over the next decade.



# What can we do?

Everyone has a role to play in prevention.

Leadership, resources, policies, efforts, and time must be committed to the process of prevention planning, implementation, and accountability. Collaboration is essential. Child abuse prevention cannot be done by any one profession, agency, or community alone.

## Planning

Community prevention planning teams should include representatives from all community systems and sectors and involve families as well. Developing a plan takes time, creativity, and patience. Commitment over time is essential.

## Programs

No single program, strategy, or approach will be enough to prevent child abuse in your community. Many different services, programs, practices, and strategies need to be put in place at once. Programs need to do the following:

- Be available and accessible to all populations.
- Be initiated early.
- Cut across related problems.
- Recognize cultural differences and inequities.
- Build on family strengths.
- Provide intensive services to those most at risk.
- Be appropriate to address different types of abuse and neglect.
- Be evidence-based, or at a minimum, have promising results.
- Be evaluated regularly.



## Accountability

Management of prevention planning requires ongoing monitoring of progress toward achieving the comprehensive integration of prevention strategies in the community. Evaluation of prevention programs and activities is essential and should be an integral component of every prevention activity. It will be necessary to determine what group will be responsible for oversight of your community prevention plan.

At a state level, Champion agencies and organizations will meet each year to review the plan for alignment with current strategic priorities and initiatives, and to report on successes toward the plan's objectives and strategies.



# How did we develop the regional plan?



A plan for the region by the region.

**Over the course of two months, leaders, and advocates from Region 5's 12-county area worked together to create a regional action plan to prevent child abuse.** Using strategies and objectives developed for the state plan, participants voted on which of these objectives would be most relevant for the goals of the region. Using the top results from the survey, these experts then worked together to create major steps for each of the four priorities chosen. After this pivotal first session, major steps were created for the priorities.

## From Major Steps to an Actionable Details

After the major steps were compiled from the first regional planning session meeting, the region's focus for the next session was to identify how to measure success at each major step. This meant creating progress indicators of measures that would reflect progress in implementing the strategy toward the ultimate goal of reducing child abuse and neglect, as well as listing any technical assistance needs for the successful completion of each step. Additionally, breakout rooms were tasked with identifying project leads for each major step in each strategy for implementation.

These details were then compiled into a "Regional Action Register" that organized each actionable strategy by major steps, progress indicators, and project leads and partners. This new document was then sent to the Georgia Essentials for Childhood initiative's Working Groups for comments and revision, before the ultimate third meeting to finalize the region's action plan.

(For more information on Georgia Essentials for Childhood, visit <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/essentials/>.)

## Creation of a Final Plan

For the final session, groups worked on confirming any further partners and leads for major steps, identifying major financial or non-financial resources needed to implement the major step (resources required), and finalizing a timeline for each major step.

With the conclusion of these three planning sessions, the output was compiled into this Regional Action Plan document.



# What strategies will we adopt?

In order to make measurable progress on the plan's objectives, we will adopt the following strategies as part of a holistic approach to child abuse and neglect prevention.

**Objective:** Increase community knowledge and awareness of the societal factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect and the capacity to prevent it.

**Strategy 1:** Expand trauma-informed practices and resources across the state as well as increase understanding about the and impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adverse community environments (jointly referred to as the Pair of ACEs).

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## Example Actions

- Research where and who is already providing trauma-informed services and care to children, to what extent, and what areas need support in the region.
- Educate and train community, parents, and stakeholders to identify situations, trauma behaviors, and other indicators of ACEs.
- Evaluate training success through outcome data.
- Organize community leaders in underrepresented and marginalized groups to connect families to resources that are trauma-informed, equity-minded, anti-racist, and anti-classist, and who represent voices from those marginalized communities.

## Key Indicators

- Increased knowledge of trauma and informed services and care sources.
- Increased number of consumers accessing trauma and ACEs related resources.
- Increased number of community members and professionals linking consumers to trauma and ACEs related resources.
- Increased number of quality/best practices trainings, participants trained, and sectors engaged.

## Proposed Project Leads

University of Georgia-Athens, Area Family Connection, Athens Area Community Foundation

## Proposed Project Participants

Family Connection (Sonya Hope, Tim Johnson, others), Neighborhood Leaders (FC-CIS of Athens), DFCS Region 5 Staff, Home in 5, UGA (SSW, FACS, Ed, Public Health, Law, and possibly others TBD), Dr. Jennifer Elkins (UGA SSW), Child Welfare Training Collaborative, Bright Paths, Athens Regional Library, ESA, Sarah McKinney-Athens Area Community Foundation, local hospitals, Public Health, faith community, DJJ, Advantage Behavioral Health, Envision Athens, Advantage Behavioral Health, Athens Wellbeing Project, Bright Paths, Early Head Start/Head Start, Foster Parent Association, Interfaith Clergy Partnership of Greater Athens, others

**Objective:** Increase family resiliency.

**Strategy 2:** Increase access to evidence-based or research-informed programs for parenting skills and support that help parents/caregivers understand all stages of their child’s development.

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### Example Actions

- Operationally define primary caregiver skills and support.
- Increase community leaders' awareness of primary caregiver skills and support models that are evidence-informed /promising practices.
- Advocate for Family First Prevention Services Act implementation and the types of programs that are funded based on the specific needs of geographical areas.
- Identify and organize evidence-based programs to ensure coverage from 0-18 and ensure effective collaboration between evidence-based programs and increase collaboration of providers across funding streams (MIECHV / FFPSA / PSSF / Head Start).
- Identify and adopt models to educate and train work force focusing on recruiting from the communities served and peer support models.
- Examine why previous state level efforts to increase parenting skills in the region have not been successful (e.g., Great Start), review the impact of local efforts that are having an impact and ensure future efforts are sustainable.

### Key Indicators

- Parenting skills and support is operationally defined
- Number of educated and informed state representatives, local legislators police makers and influential industry leaders about the importance of evidence-based parenting skills and support approaches.
- Shared sense of community where residents help one another
- Knowledge of evidence-based parenting skills and support programs

- Amount of financial support for evidence-based parenting skills and support programs
- Number participating in policy advocacy events
- Number of new relationships created with policy makers and policy influencers
- Number of regionally customized education and advocacy materials
- Knowledge of gaps occurring in service provision and how Families First funding can address them
- Number of policy makers supporting Families First implementation and use of Title 1 funding for prevention
- Knowledge of funded programs by funding stream
- Number of agencies funded by various funding streams working collaboratively to coordinate resources, address gaps and increase access
- Number of evidence-based programs that are trauma informed, dyadic in nature and impact ACEs
- Sustainability of collaborative efforts to increase parenting skills and support resources

### Proposed Project Leads

Trasie Topple, Lisa McGarrie, Mary Joyce, Tina Murphy, Laura Evans

### Proposed Project Participants

Saretha Youmans, Cari Barney, SafeCare, PAT, CIS/CFP, Nurturing Parents, Project Free, Healthy Families, BrightPaths, Georgia Family Support Network, Local and community providers, Jennifer Henderson, FF Accepted/Approved Home Visiting and Residential Tx programs, Office of Child Advocate, GA Blueprint for Families First team, Barton Child Welfare Law, Georgia Family Support Network agencies, GEARS, Voices for Children, Center for Developing Child @ Harvard, Family Connection

**Objective:** Increase family resiliency.

**Strategy 3:** Decrease family violence through the adoption and promotion of evidence-based practices and approaches.

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### Example Actions

- Develop a shared/working definition of Family Violence. Create a shared glossary of definitions.
- Research best practices to address Family Violence including age-appropriate domestic violence education for school-aged students, community members and youth serving agencies/organizations.
- Secure the resources needed to implement these practices and models.
- Identify, assess, and expand resources to heal the survivors of family violence. (Finding resources for free/low cost counseling, mindfulness/meditation/yoga practices, other programs)
- Identify, assess, and expand resources for family violence perpetrators to prevent future violence.
- Implement identified practices and approaches.
- Conduct training for first responders, emergency rooms. Create resource guides that can be shared with first responders, emergency rooms, DV agencies, courthouse staff, pediatricians, etc.

### Key Indicators

- Written collective definition that is shared to the work group and creation of glossary of definitions including but not limited to Family Violence, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Predominant Aggressor, Non-offending caregiver, abusive partner, etc.
- Written report(s) of best practices with sources.
- Have at least 14 secured resources (one for each county in Region 5) that can help implement practices and models which heal the survivors of family violence and their perpetrators.
- Increase number of people trained to recognize signs of Family Violence and knowledge of resources available. Increased number of people trained in Darkness to Light.

### Proposed Project Leads

Sonya Hope, Mary Haddon

### Proposed Project Participants

DFCS, ACC-Oconee DVTF Kids and Teens Subcommittee, Project Free, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, CRM, Linda Grabbe, Resilient Teen program, Sarah McKinney, Grace Elizabeth, GCVF Family Violence Intervention programs, Violence Prevention program CDC, Domestic Violence Task Forces

**Objective:** Increase family economic stability.

**Strategy 4:** Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families.

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### Example Actions

- Engage developers and establishing housing goals and requirements for all parties.
- Forge bipartisan collaboration and commitment to poverty-informed training; work with State departments to lay out groundwork for commitment to ongoing training.
- Convene townhall meetings to discuss public housing/housing as an issue in the community (Aim for a certain percentage of community members to show up/speak/participate).
- Promote online and in person classes and educational programs being formed and offered for free by organizations that are already involved in SDOHs (e.g., DSA).
- Increase the amount of options available for emergency and Section 8 housing by reaching out to Athens Housing Authority and Georgia Dept. Community Affairs.
- Secure moratoriums on late fees until the end of the pandemic/public health crisis (and potentially getting landlords/apartments/local banks to agree to payment plans for rent/mortgages).
- Secure the commitment of elected officials to sign on to/advocate for housing policies and resources.

### Key Indicators

- Number of developers engaged
- Number of policy makers and leaders completing poverty informed training
- Number of town hall meetings held that address housing issues
- Number of online and in person classes and educational programs offered focusing on SDOH
- Number of persons participating in SDOH training
- Number of emergency and Section 8 housing units
- Moratoriums on assessing housing related late fees during the pandemic
- Number of elected officials advocating for housing policies Number of people knowing their rights in terms of protection and steps renters must take when dealing with eviction

### Proposed Project Leads

Patrick Howard, Celia Lozada, Sophia Steinberg, National Low Income Housing Coalition

### Proposed Project Participants

Benson Group, Hotel Owners, Athens Housing Authority, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Ethan Atkinson, REIA, Commissioner Jesse Houle, State House Representatives, State Senators, Senators



# Roster of Regional Planning Participants

## Name & Institution

Edwin Adams, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services — Prevention and Community Support Section

Grace Arthur, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

Tessa Barbazon, Clarke County School District

Cari Barney, Clarke County School District

Tanesha Callahan, Clarke County School District

Erica Chastain, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

Deborah Chosewood, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services — Prevention and Community Support Section

Dawn Criss, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services — Region V

Blanca Lilis Deal, Prevent Child Abuse Athens

David Earnest, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

Laura Evans, Community Partnership of Elbert County

Targie Folds, Greene County School District

Linda Foster, Jackson County Family Connection Council

Stephanie Graves, Rockdale Juvenile Court

Rebecca Groot, Clarke County School District

Tina Grubbs Murphy, Walton County Partnership

Mary Haddon, Project Safe

Kendall Hayward, Clarke County School District

Jennifer Henderson, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

Sonya Hope, Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Patrick Howard, Family Connection—Communities In Schools of Athens

Heather Jarboe, Clarke County School District

Tim Johnson, Family Connection—Communities In Schools of Athens

Mary-Eleanor Joyce, Children First, Inc. / Girls Rock Athens

Cecilia Lozada, Family Connection—Communities In Schools of Athens

Lisa McGarrie, Georgia State University

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April Moore, Oglethorpe County School System

---

Julia Neighbors, Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

---

Robin O'Donnell, Georgia Department of Public Health — Northeast Health District

---

Tiara Smith, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

---

Sallie Starrett, Brightpaths / Prevent Child Abuse Athens

---

Sophia Steinberg, Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

---

Terris Thomas, Family Connection—Communities In Schools of Athens

---

Trasie Toppie, Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health of Georgia / University of Georgia School of Social Work

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Natalie Towns, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services — Prevention and Community Support Section

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Arianne Weldon, Georgia Family Connection Partnership

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Saretha Youmans, Georgia Bureau of Investigation — Child Fatality Review

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