

DHR/DFCS Stakeholder Survey Report

December 2006



Let's Talk!



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Executive Summary/Highlights of the Findings

This report presents the results of an online survey of internal and external stakeholders for the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) conducted in November and December 2006.

The new leadership of DFCS, in place for about a year preceding the survey, was interested in stakeholder perceptions of its values, agency strategies and agency effectiveness as well as what stakeholders thought the agency should do to improve outcomes for children. This survey, along with mail surveys of foster, relative and adoptive caregivers and biological parents as well as regional forums conducted during the same time period, will be included in the state's report for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) being conducted by the federal Administration for Children and Families.

The response to this online opportunity to provide feedback and input was overwhelming, with 2,995 stakeholders participating – 1,753 internal DFCS stakeholders (59%) and 1,242 external, non-DFCS stakeholders (41%). The initial expectation had been for 1,500 to 2,000 respondents.

These stakeholders represented all 12 DHR service regions and 155 of the state's 159 counties. External stakeholders included representatives of agencies/organizations serving children in child welfare, other community organizations, the legal system, child advocacy, and law enforcement as well as caregivers, youth and family members.

Primary Issues Affecting Family and Child Well-Being

Stakeholders – DFCS and non-DFCS alike – most often cited substance abuse, poverty/economics, resources/services, family structure/functioning and education (of community, parents and children) as the primary issues affecting family and child well-being in Georgia.

In addition to the desire to provide feedback and input, the over-arching finding of this survey was confirmation of what management already knew – that there are significant gaps in the perceptions of DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders in terms of values, strategies and agency effectiveness.

Values

Stakeholders rated their emphasis on continuums with specific values on each end of the continuum. Although there were some differences between the two groups of stakeholders, the average emphasis for both groups on each value continuum was in the same general direction.

- Both groups leaned toward the state taking responsibility for children when their parents cannot rather than relatives taking responsibility, especially

DFCS stakeholders. Representatives of both groups expressed reservations about using relatives as caregivers in open-end questions at the end of the survey because they feel relatives may have similar issues as the parents, they may be motivated by the money, or they may not follow case plan requirements regarding parent contact.

- Despite input from the regional forums and open-end responses in the stakeholder survey indicating the need for more collaboration, both groups leaned toward agencies working independently vs. agencies working together.
- Both groups tended to place equal emphasis on being family-focused and child-focused, although leaning slightly toward being child-focused (DFCS stakeholders more than non-DFCS stakeholders).
- Both groups supported serving in their homes and communities and serving children with emotional/mental health issues in the least restrictive setting.
- Both groups emphasized that family members don't necessarily have to take part in developing their case plan.

DFCS Effectiveness

Stakeholders were asked to rate DFCS performance in the past 12 months on several items related to the agency's goals of safety, permanency and well-being for children. In general, DFCS stakeholders were more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to rate DFCS as "very effective" in any of these areas, although both groups tended to rate DFCS as "somewhat effective." Non-DFCS stakeholders were more critical, being more likely than DFCS stakeholders to rate DFCS as "not very" effective in these areas.

The items receiving the most ratings of "very effective" were:

- Investigating reports of child abuse and neglect (51% DFCS; 28% non-DFCS)
- Ensuring the basic physical health needs of children in care are met (46% DFCS; 25% non-DFCS)

The items receiving the most ratings of "not very effective" were:

- Transitioning youths to independent, adult living (38% DFCS; 58% non-DFCS)
- Securing permanent homes in a timely manner for children who cannot return to their homes (26% DFCS; 50% non-DFCS)

In addition, both groups of stakeholders were more critical of the agency's communication regarding changes in policies and practices, with 38 percent of DFCS and 64 percent of non-DFCS stakeholders rating the agency "not very effective."

The following chart shows the stakeholder ratings of DFCS effectiveness statewide. (See List of Tables on page 2 for additional tables included in the report.)

Overall Effectiveness of DFCS Statewide

Category	Item	Stakeholder	Effectiveness Rating		
			Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective
Safety	Investigating reports of child abuse and neglect in a timely manner	DFCS	51.3%	42.2%	6.5%
		Non-DFCS	28.4%	47.8%	23.8%
	Ensuring children are in safe placements	DFCS	35.9%	57.9%	6.2%
		Non-DFCS	13.2%	66.4%	20.5%
	Preventing the reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect	DFCS	15.8%	64.7%	19.5%
		Non-DFCS	5.4%	56.0%	38.6%
Well-being	Providing a range of support services needed by families	DFCS	21.8%	54.6%	23.7%
		Non-DFCS	12.3%	48.7%	39.0%
	Providing services and supports that are accessible to families	DFCS	22.5%	56.9%	20.6%
		Non-DFCS	10.1%	53.2%	36.7%
	Ensuring the basic physical health needs of children in care are met	DFCS	46.1%	48.4%	5.5%
		Non-DFCS	24.9%	57.8%	17.3%
	Ensuring the emotional/mental health needs of children in care are met	DFCS	25.9%	58.3%	15.9%
		Non-DFCS	8.5%	45.4%	46.1%
	Ensuring the educational/developmental needs of children in care are met	DFCS	29.8%	58.3%	11.9%
		Non-DFCS	11.3%	56.2%	32.5%
Permanency	Supporting families in crisis to prevent removing children from the home	DFCS	22.8%	62.0%	15.2%
		Non-DFCS	8.8%	51.3%	39.9%
	Maintaining family/sibling relationships when children are removed from the home	DFCS	22.1%	61.1%	16.8%
		Non-DFCS	10.7%	57.5%	31.8%
	Ensuring children are in stable placements	DFCS	19.4%	66.6%	14.0%
		Non-DFCS	8.2%	51.8%	40.0%
	Securing permanent homes in a timely manner for children who cannot return to their homes	DFCS	18.6%	55.9%	25.5%
		Non-DFCS	8.0%	42.5%	49.5%
	Transitioning youths into independent, adult living	DFCS	15.1%	46.9%	38.1%
		Non-DFCS	6.1%	35.9%	58.0%
All	Communicating changes in policies and practices	DFCS	16.7%	45.0%	38.4%
		Non-DFCS	7.1%	29.1%	63.8%

Stakeholders were also provided an opportunity to rate their local county offices on such items as keeping them informed about the children, helping resolve problems, working together, responding to concerns and referring families to resources and services. While both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders tended to rate their county as “somewhat effective” on most of the items, again DFCS stakeholders were more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to rate the county as “very effective.”

Non-DFCS stakeholders were most critical of the agency on keeping them informed about the children in their care, with 41 percent of these stakeholders saying the county office was “not very effective” (compared to 14% of DFCS stakeholders).

Case Planning & Management

Also based on the past 12 months, stakeholders were asked to indicate how often specific activities occurred related to case planning and management, knowledge and skills, and family involvement/treatment.

Again, gaps between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders were pronounced, with the DFCS stakeholders being more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to indicate items such as families having input on case plans, case plans being responsive to family needs, caseworkers having the skills and knowledge they need and family members being involved in decisions about their children occur “often”; non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to say these occur “sometimes.”

DFCS Strategies

DFCS was interested in stakeholder perceptions about the effectiveness of specific strategies or practices being implemented. These results were a little more positive than the ratings of DFCS effectiveness, with smaller gaps in perception between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders on most practices.

- Both groups tend to see family team meetings as a “very effective” practice, DFCS stakeholders somewhat more so (54%) than non-DFCS stakeholders (50%)
- Both groups tend to see building parent capacity through services and supports as very or somewhat effective, with 46 percent of DFCS and 42 percent of non-DFCS stakeholders rating this as “very effective”
- Relative placements are seen as very or somewhat effective, but DFCS stakeholders were significantly more likely to rate this as “very effective” compared to non-DFCS stakeholders (56% vs. 41%)

The groups also differed significantly on the state’s diversion strategy, with DFCS stakeholders much more likely to say this is “very effective” (53%) compared to non-DFCS stakeholders (28%).

The least-supported strategy is the strategy to bring children with mental/emotional health issues back from residential treatment settings to their home communities, with only about one-fourth of each group saying this is a “very effective” strategy. Non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to say this strategy is “not very effective” (31%) compared to DFCS stakeholders (22%).

Improving Child Outcomes

Stakeholders had the opportunity to say what they felt DFCS needed to do to improve child outcomes in open-end questions at the end of the survey, and more than 1,600 stakeholders took the opportunity to do so (many at length). Stakeholders in both groups talked about staffing and caseload issues, recommending that DFCS:

- Increase staff; increase/improve staff qualifications, training, supervision, compensation and retention
- Decrease caseloads and workloads, including paperwork and the new risk assessment tool

They also talked about improving case management, from investigating reports (especially non-DFCS stakeholders) to assessing family and child needs, increasing family team meetings and family visitation, and monitoring service providers and the educational progress of children in care.

Additional funding (for staff and resources) and developing additional resources and supports for families were also key themes, particularly parenting skills development, child care, substance abuse treatment, mental health services and wraparound services.

Other key themes included

- Communication, especially listening to families and front-line staff; sharing information, particularly with caregivers and agencies serving children; improving perceptions and educating communities about child abuse, DFCS and its role/policies
- Parental responsibility, making parents accountable (especially DFCS stakeholders)
- Customer service, from respectful treatment to answering the phones
- Placements, especially concerns regarding relative caregivers
- Collaboration, especially with schools and agencies serving children and families

Conclusion/Recommendations

Together these findings have significant implications for DFCS in terms of policy and operations, especially in terms of internal and external communication to address the significant gaps in the perceptions of DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders.

Recommendations for the state include:

1. Develop/expand/increase family and youth access to effective substance abuse prevention, intervention and treatment resources
2. Address poverty/economic issues of families, including employment, resources for parents so they can work and become self-sufficient (e.g., job/work skills training, child care, transportation)
3. Develop/expand/increase family and youth access to resources and support that will enable them to prevent unwanted pregnancy, parent appropriately, obtain physical and mental health care, etc.

Recommendations for DFCS include:

1. Review current policies and strategies in light of the findings
2. Develop a formal, proactive two-way plan for internal and external communication that goes well beyond the existing media communications function and provides for stakeholder feedback and input at all levels
3. Develop a formal, proactive plan for community involvement and collaboration at the local, regional and state levels

This report presents the detailed results of the online stakeholder survey.

Introduction

The Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) contracted with a local consulting firm, Care Solutions, Inc., to conduct an online survey of key stakeholders in Georgia's child welfare system such as legislators, judges, attorneys, service providers, child advocates, school officials, ministers and others concerned with child welfare across the state.

The impetus for the surveys was four-fold:

1. A new leadership team in the agency committed to continuous quality improvement;
2. An upcoming federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR);
3. Court-ordered mandates resulting from a child death; and
4. State mandates to seek stakeholder input.

DFCS Mission:

To strengthen Georgia's families – supporting their self-sufficiency and helping them protect their vulnerable children and adults by being a resource to their families, not a substitute.

In addition to the stakeholder survey reported here, DFCS is obtaining additional input through:

- Reports on regional and statewide forums conducted with key stakeholders
- Mail surveys of caregivers (foster, adoptive and relative) and biological parents

Together, the information from the three surveys, the regional forums and the statewide forum will be used by DFCS to address quality improvement and satisfy federal CFSR requirements. It is expected that the current surveys and forums will become part of an ongoing effort to address service quality in the future.

Please see Appendix IV for a two-page summary of statewide data on population, demographics, child abuse and neglect, foster care and health, mental health and early care and education.

Survey Method

Survey Instrument Design

Care Solutions, Inc., an independent consulting firm, met with DFCS staff, including state and regional representatives as well as DFCS Evaluation and Reporting representatives, to discuss survey method and administration. It was decided that Care Solutions would design and implement an online survey to reach as many stakeholders across the state as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Based on a stakeholder draft adapted from another state, discussion at the meeting, and CFSR reporting requirements, a survey instrument was developed and distributed for comment. The survey instrument was then revised and finalized based on feedback received.

The survey instrument included questions about the stakeholder's involvement with the child welfare system, values, DFCS effectiveness statewide and at the county level, case planning and management, community forum participation, current DFCS strategies, and selected demographic characteristics. Multiple-item questions were randomly rotated in the online survey to eliminate the potential for order effects in the ratings.

The survey was designed and tested for online administration and went live on Friday, November 10, the day after the first community forum and ran through December 29, 2006.

Stakeholder Outreach/Response

The stakeholder survey was intended for stakeholders statewide such as those invited to the forums. The initial invitation to participate in the online stakeholder survey was an invitation card included in the participant packets at each of the 13 regional community forums held in November 2006. At each forum the facilitator pointed out the card and encouraged forum participants to take the online survey.

The initial response was very poor, with less than 40 stakeholders responding in the first two weeks the survey was available. It may have been that forum participants felt they had an opportunity for input via the forums and did not feel they needed to take the online survey.

In the best interest of children . . .

Safety

- *Protection from abuse and neglect*
- *Safely remain in own home whenever possible and appropriate*

Permanency

- *Permanent and stable living arrangements*
- *Continuous family relationships and connections*

Well-Being

- *Enhanced capacity of the family to provide for child's needs*
- *Child's educational needs are met*
- *Child's physical and mental health needs are met*

To increase outreach for the survey, Care Solutions, Inc. worked with DFCS, drafting correspondence and sending emails to various stakeholder groups. Following is a chronology of communications about the online survey.

Stakeholder Group	Communication Piece	Approximate Number	Approximate Date(s)
List of stakeholders identified by DFCS regional and county offices, including attorneys, legislators, judges, service providers, child advocates, other community agencies, etc.	Mailed invitation flyer	More than 2,000	12/8/06
DFCS staff	Email from DFCS Director	More than 8,000	12/8/06
Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grantees	Email and flyer from PSSF Program Manager	150	12/7/06
Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) grantees	Follow-up email with survey link	150	12/21/06
PSSF Advisory Committee	Personal invitation at meeting	20	12/12/06
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	Email forwarded through Georgia CASA	47 chapters; 1,600 volunteers	12/12/06
Family Connection (FC) Partnerships	Email forwarded from FC to all partnerships	159 (counties)	12/18/06
Communities in Schools Network	Email	54	12/19/06
Children's Trust Commission (Healthy Families, First Steps)	Email forwarded to all agencies	28 prevention agencies	12/15/06
Group foster care providers (group homes, hospitals, child caring institutions, juvenile justice centers)	Mailed invitation flyer	More than 350	12/12/06 - 12/15/06

See appendices for sample invitation card and flyer.

The additional outreach to encourage participation in the stakeholder survey resulted in an excellent response, much greater than anticipated. A total of 2,995 stakeholders

responded, of which a significant percentage – 59% – were DFCS staff. Both internal and external stakeholders clearly wanted to express their views and took advantage of this opportunity to do so.

Survey Limitations

The results of this survey, particularly in light of the excellent response, provide DFCS with valuable information and insight for the purposes of responding to the CFSR and strategic planning for quality improvement.

Not only did respondents complete the survey, more than a thousand stakeholders completed open-end questions at the end of the survey to tell DFCS what they believe the agency should be doing at both the state and the local level.

An online survey is relatively quick and inexpensive to administer, but there are some inherent limitations:

1. Survey participation is limited to those with Internet access and some level of website navigation skills.
2. Survey participants are self-selected; those who choose to participate may or may not reflect the total population under consideration.

For this stakeholder survey, there are additional considerations:

1. Survey outreach was based on the availability of mail and email lists for specific stakeholder groups. (See discussion of stakeholder outreach, above.)
2. Stakeholders with more demands on their time may have been less likely to respond.
3. Those with strong negative (or positive) experiences may have been more motivated to respond.
4. Those who are dissatisfied may have been more motivated to respond.
5. The length of the survey affected the number completing the entire survey. (See response analysis, below.)

Response Analysis

The survey included 62 closed-end and three open-end questions/items. An analysis of 2,995 responses (those submitting a response to the first question) showed that most (69%) completed the entire survey. The following chart shows the percentage of the initial 2,995 respondents at specific question points throughout the survey. Note that 10 percent dropped out before the third question. The response dropped gradually across the survey, not necessarily in response to multi-item questions. Although that may have been a factor in the response drop after Question 4, which consisted of 14 items, it did not drop again after Question 9, which also had 14 items.

Response Analysis (n=2,995)		
Question Number *	Percent Responding	Number of Items in the Question
Q1	100%	1-3 items
Q3	90%	6 items
Q4	85%	14 items
Q5	77%	1 item
Q7	78%	7 items
Q9	71%	14 items
Q10	70%	5 items
Q14	69%	1 item
Q21	69%	1 item

* Questions not listed were open-end or had only one item.

Clearly, while most respondents (69%) were motivated to complete the entire survey instrument and some even to rate additional counties, a not-insignificant 31 percent failed to complete the entire survey, suggesting the survey instrument could have been shorter. The DFCS respondents were somewhat more likely to drop out (34%) compared to the non-DFCS respondents (27%).

Question 7 provided respondents with an opportunity to rate a local county DFCS office on seven items; respondents were allowed to rate up to four counties. By the end of the survey period 84 percent of the stakeholders had rated at least one county. Of those rating at least one county, 16 percent rated more than one county.

Number of Counties Rated	Number Rating Counties	Percent Rating Counties
Four	2	0.1%
Three	118	5.0%
Two	252	10.8%
One	1966	84.1%
Total responses	2338	100.0%

Survey Results

Stakeholder Profile

As noted above, nearly 3,000 stakeholders responded to the online survey. The largest groups of respondents were DFCS staff (59%) and agencies/organizations serving families in the child welfare system (19%). Other stakeholders included other government agencies, child advocates, legislative/judicial representatives, attorneys, law enforcement, and other community organizations as well as family members, caregivers and youth. (See chart below.)

Clearly, DFCS staff and service providers took advantage of the online survey as an opportunity to express their views, particularly those in Family Services (formerly Social Services) and the Office of Family Independence, the two areas most involved in child welfare.

The following stakeholder characteristics were obtained in the first question of the survey, based on the 2,995 stakeholders responding.

Stakeholder Survey Respondents

Primary Involvement in the Child Welfare System	Number	Percent
DFCS	1,753	58.5%
Non-DFCS	1,242	41.5%
Agency/organization serving families in the child welfare system (shelter, health, education, welfare, etc.)	568	19.0%
CASA/child advocacy organization	190	6.3%
Other state or local government body/agency	93	3.1%
Parent or caregiver (biological, relative, foster or adoptive)	73	2.4%
Other division/office of DHR	67	2.2%
Legislative or judicial branch of government	46	1.5%
Faith-based institution/organization	31	1.0%
Law enforcement	28	0.9%
Youth in foster care/transition/independent living program/aftercare	25	0.8%
None of the above*	121	4.0%
Total	2,995	100.0%

* Includes attorneys, other community organizations, relatives, community members, students.

DFCS Stakeholder Survey Respondents

DFCS Affiliation	Number	Percent
Social/Family Services	821	46.8 %
Office of Family Independence	595	33.9 %
Other	337	19.2 %
Total	1,753	100.0%
DFCS Location		
State	277	15.8%
Regional	172	9.8%
Local	1,290	73.6%
No answer	14	0.8%
Total	1,753	100.0%

Educational institutions/programs, family/community service agencies and shelters/group homes comprised nearly two-thirds (62.3%) of the agencies/organizations participating in the stakeholder survey.

Agencies/Organizations Serving Families in the Child Welfare System

Type of Agency/Organization	Number	Percent
Educational institution/program	134	23.6%
Family/community service agency	101	17.8%
Children's shelter/group home	67	11.8%
Domestic violence shelter	53	9.3%
Mental health services	51	9.0%
Health/medical services	44	7.7%
Family Connection	23	4.0%
Child care center	13	2.3%
Community service board	6	1.1%
Other	70	12.3%
No answer	6	1.1%
Total	568	100.0%

Stakeholder survey respondents represent all regions and nearly every county (155 of 159 counties) in the state. DFCS stakeholders live in 153 and work in 150 counties; non-DFCS stakeholders live in 112 and work in 109 counties in the state. Following is the regional breakdown of stakeholder participants based on their responses.

**Stakeholder Survey Respondents by Region
(Based on County of Residence)**

SDR	DFCS	Non-DFCS	Total
1	10.7%	10.0%	10.4%
2	6.7%	8.2%	7.3%
3	24.3%	33.7%	28.4%
4	5.3%	4.9%	5.1%
5	8.0%	10.5%	9.1%
6	5.3%	3.8%	4.6%
7	6.5%	2.0%	4.5%
8	4.6%	2.0%	3.5%
9	5.7%	3.6%	4.8%
10	9.5%	6.7%	8.3%
11	7.0%	8.5%	7.7%
12	6.6%	6.2%	6.4%
Total responses	1,142	894	2,036

Near the end of the survey, stakeholders were asked for additional information about (1) their roles in the child welfare system, (2) the frequency of their contact with families in the child welfare system as well as DFCS, and (3) their demographic characteristics.

Position/Role in Child Welfare

Current Primary Position/Role in the Child Welfare System (n=2,013)	DFCS	Non-DFCS	Total
Caseworker/staff	60.7%	6.5%	37.5%
Supervisor	15.3%	5.5%	11.1%
Director	4.6%	15.1%	9.1%
Child advocate	0.1%	16.7%	7.2%
Other clinical staff	0.5%	7.9%	3.7%
Other school official	0.1%	7.2%	3.1%
Teacher or guidance counselor	0.2%	6.0%	2.7%
Biological parent	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%
Foster parent	0.3%	2.6%	1.3%
Other judicial/court staff	0.0%	2.8%	1.2%
Other caregiver	0.3%	1.7%	0.9%
Adoptive parent	0.3%	1.4%	0.8%
Law enforcement officer	0.0%	1.9%	0.8%
Relative caregiver	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%
Judge	0.0%	1.0%	0.4%
Probation officer	0.0%	0.7%	0.3%
Medical doctor/psychiatrist	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Legislative staff	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Other law enforcement staff	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Other*	14.7%	19.8%	16.9%
Total responding	1,151	862	2,013

*Includes attorneys, administrative/support staff, volunteers, mentors, social workers, relatives, community members, students

Of the 2,013 stakeholders responding to the question, two thirds (67%) have held other positions/roles in the child welfare system – many more than one. Non-DFCS stakeholders were somewhat more likely to have held other positions (70%) than were DFCS stakeholders (64%).

More than a third of the stakeholders (37%) have worked in the child welfare arena for more than five years, with non-DFCS stakeholders more likely to have worked in the field for more than five years compared to DFCS staff (41% vs. 34%).

Most have at least monthly contact with families in the child welfare system as well as DFCS.

Stakeholder Involvement in Child Welfare

Length of Time in Current Position/Role	DFCS	Non-DFCS	Total
Less than a year	16.6%	12.7%	15.0%
1-2 years	26.6%	19.1%	23.4%
3-5 years	22.4%	27.6%	24.6%
6-9 years	14.1%	17.3%	15.5%
10 or more years	20.2%	23.3%	21.5%
Total Responding	1,205	902	2,107
Length of Time Working with Children in Child Welfare System			
Less than a year	10.8%	5.9%	8.6%
1-2 years	11.7%	8.3%	10.2%
3-5 years	18.7%	20.6%	19.5%
6-9 years	16.0%	15.7%	15.9%
10 or more years	42.8%	49.5%	45.8%
Total Responding	1,144	880	2,024
Frequency of Contact with Families in the Child Welfare System in Past Year			
Daily	47.6%	24.1%	37.4%
2-4 times a week	21.0%	28.3%	24.1%
1-3 times a month	13.0%	30.1%	20.4%
1-2 times a quarter	2.9%	6.9%	4.6%
1-3 times a year	4.8%	4.7%	4.8%
None	10.7%	6.0%	8.7%
Total Responding	1,177	898	2,075
Frequency of Contact with DFCS in Past Year			
Daily		15.8%	
2-4 times a week		27.3%	
1-3 times a month		35.0%	
1-2 times a quarter		12.1%	
1-3 times a year		7.1%	
None		2.7%	
Total Responding		917	

Stakeholder Demographics

Also at the end of the survey were some questions about individual stakeholder demographics.

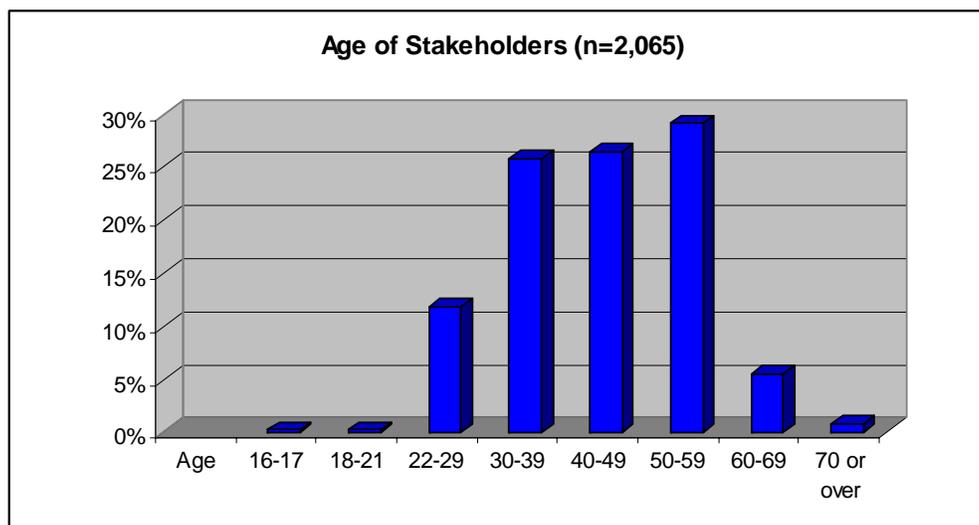
The majority of the stakeholders responding were female (84%) and white (69%). DFCS respondents were slightly more likely to be female (86%) than were non-DFCS

stakeholders (82%). For race, DFCS respondents were more likely than non-DFCS respondents to be Black/African-American (35% vs. 20%). Less than two percent of stakeholders – DFCS and non-DFCS were Hispanic.

Stakeholder Demographics

	DFCS	Non-DFCS	Total
Gender			
Female	85.9%	82.2%	84.3%
Male	14.1%	17.8%	15.7%
Total responding	1,167	909	2,076
Race			
White/Caucasian	62.6%	77.4%	69.1%
Black/African-American	35.1%	20.0%	28.5%
Two or more races	1.6%	1.9%	1.7%
Asian	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Total responding	1,143	899	2,042
Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic	98.8%	98.7%	98.8%
Hispanic	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%
Total responding	1,113	843	1,956

Most stakeholders were between the ages of 30 and 59 (see following graph). Age distributions were similar for both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholder respondents.



Regional Forum Participation

The stakeholder survey occurred concurrently with 13 regional community forums held throughout the state in November 2006 and a statewide forum held in December 2006. The PowerPoint presentation used at each of the regional forums was also posted on the DFCS website. The majority of the stakeholders participating in the online survey (60%) had not attended a community forum or viewed the DHR/DFCS forum presentation online; 12 percent had attended at least one forum, and an additional five percent viewed the presentation online. (One-fourth (24%) did not respond to the question.)

Primary Issues Affecting Family and Child Well-Being

Stakeholders – DFCS and non-DFCS – clearly indicated the primary issues affecting family and child well-being are substance abuse, poverty/economics, the need for local resources and services/supports for families, and family structure/issues and education.

- Substance abuse primarily referenced drugs in general, with some mentions of alcohol. Four percent of the stakeholders (12 percent of those mentioning substance abuse) included a specific reference to methamphetamine.
- Poverty/economics included references to income, housing, employment, and jobs.
- Resources and services for families included references to prevention services, support services, parenting education, child care and transportation as well as health and mental health services.
- Family structure and issues included references to single/unwed parents, absent fathers, breakdown of the family, family functioning/stability and family values.

DFCS stakeholders were more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to mention substance abuse and poverty/economics as well as staff issues such as the number of staff, compensation, turnover/retention and training/experience.

Non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely than DFCS stakeholders to say family structure/issues, abuse and neglect and placement/permanency issues, including relative care and foster homes were the primary issues affecting child and family well-being.

The following chart provides the results of a text scan of stakeholder responses; text responses were searched for the presence of specific terms and then grouped into the major categories listed.¹

¹ Search terms were identified based on a reading of all of the responses but may not have captured all mentions due to typos/misspellings. (Respondents entered their responses directly online.)

The Number One Issue Affecting Family and Child Well-Being in Georgia

Category	Percent of responses mentioning each item at least once		
	Total	DFCS	Non-DFCS
Substance abuse	29.0%	33.0%	23.5%
Poverty/economics	27.8%	30.6%	23.8%
Resources/services	21.7%	20.2%	23.9%
Family structure/issues	11.8%	9.1%	15.6%
Education	9.4%	9.6%	9.0%
Morality	7.3%	7.0%	7.8%
Staff issues	6.0%	7.9%	3.5%
Abuse & neglect	5.4%	4.0%	7.3%
Communication	3.6%	3.1%	4.1%
Bureaucracy	3.5%	3.7%	3.2%
Responsibility (primarily parental)	3.4%	4.5%	2.0%
Funding	3.2%	2.4%	4.3%
Placement/permanency	3.0%	1.1%	5.7%
Caseload	2.9%	3.9%	1.7%
Insurance/Medicaid	2.4%	2.1%	2.9%
Legal system	2.3%	2.3%	2.4%
Crime/violence	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%
Safety	1.6%	1.6%	1.7%
Population characteristics	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Total number of responses	2,614	1,527	1,087

Values Emphases

Stakeholders were asked to indicate where they felt the emphasis should be on specific continuums that reflect some of the current strategies within DFCS. The new leadership team was interested in determining the extent to which stakeholders shared their values and the extent to which there are differences in values.

Respondents were presented with two statements and a line with seven evenly-spaced boxes on which to indicate their emphasis; the middle box was labeled “equal emphasis.” Numbers were assigned after the fact so that the left end-point received a value of one and the right end-point a value of seven; the mid-point received a value of four. (See Appendix I for question format.)

Although there are some differences between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders on the values continuums, the average emphases for both groups on each item are in the same general direction.

The most significant differences between stakeholder groups were on the responsibility of relatives vs. the state for children and the need for agency collaboration.

Both groups leaned toward children being the state’s responsibility when the parents cannot take responsibility – DFCS stakeholders more strongly than non-DFCS stakeholders. This runs counter to the state’s current emphasis on relative foster homes and caregivers. The reasons, however, are apparent from the stakeholder comments at the end of the survey. Stakeholders expressed reservations about relative placements because they feel relatives may have similar issues as the parents, they may be motivated by the money, or they may not follow the state’s rules regarding parent contact.

Interestingly, despite strong input from the community forums – and later questions on this survey – indicating the need for more and better collaboration and partnerships among agencies, stakeholders participating in the online survey placed much more emphasis on agencies working independently rather than working together. This may be in part an artifact of the question wording; perhaps “working together to help families and children” would have elicited more of an emphasis on agencies working together. It may also be that while collaboration and partnerships are touted publicly, stakeholders personally feel that agencies should operate independently.

Stakeholders tended to place equal emphasis on family-focused and child-focused services, although both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders leaned toward child-focused services (DFCS stakeholders more strongly). Both groups leaned toward serving children in their homes and communities and serving children with emotion/behavioral issues in the least restrictive setting.

Both groups of stakeholders generally felt that parents and family members need not take part in developing their case plan. It may be that while the state considers parent/family participation in case planning as desirable, stakeholders do not consider it necessary.

It is clear that DFCS stakeholders, in their responses to these values questions and in their comments about parents needing to be responsible/accountable, do not have much faith in (are more critical of) the parents or families of children in the child welfare system.

The following chart shows the average rating on each of the values rates.

Average Ratings on Values Continuums

Left end-point statement (1)	Average Rating*		Right end-point statement (7)
	DFCS	Non-DFCS	
Services should be family-focused.	4.79	4.39	Services should be child-focused.
Serve children with the resources in their homes and communities.	3.82	3.78	Serve children wherever the most appropriate resources are available.
Relatives should take responsibility for children when the parents cannot.	5.21	4.80	The state should take responsibility for children when the parents cannot.
Agencies in the child welfare system should work together.	6.17	6.38	Agencies in the child welfare system should work independently.
Children with emotional/behavioral disorders should be served in the least-restrictive setting.	2.73	2.88	Children with emotional/behavioral disorders should be served in whatever setting can meet their needs.
All parents and family members should take part in developing their case plan.	5.97	5.86	Parents and family members need not take part in developing their case plan.

* A "1" indicates all emphasis is on the statement in the left-hand column; a "7" indicates all emphasis is on the statement in the right-hand column; a rating of "4" indicates equal emphasis on both statements. Ratings below four are in the direction of the left column statement; ratings above four are in the direction of the right column statement.

Overall Effectiveness of DFCS Statewide

Stakeholders were asked to rate the effectiveness of DFCS statewide in the previous 12 months on a number of items related to the DFCS goals of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families as well as communication.

All stakeholders – DFCS and non-DFCS – typically rated DFCS as “somewhat effective” on most of the items, but there is a significant across-the-board gap between the perceptions of DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders.

DFCS stakeholders were much more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to rate DFCS as “very effective” on every item; non-DFCS stakeholders were much more critical, being more likely than DFCS stakeholders to rate DFCS as “not very effective” on every item.

The items receiving the most “very effective” ratings by both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders included:

- Investigating reports of child abuse and neglect in a timely manner (51% DFCS; 28% non-DFCS)
- Ensuring the basic physical health needs of children in care are met (46% DFCS; 25% non-DFCS)
- Ensuring children are in safe placements (36% DFCS; 13% non-DFCS)

As might be expected, based on information in the regional forum presentation and the relatively new agency leadership, the items receiving the most “not very effective” ratings by both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders included:

- Communicating changes in policies and practices (38% DFCS; 64% non-DFCS)
- Transitioning youths into independent, adult living (38% DFCS; 58% non-DFCS)
- Securing permanent homes in a timely manner for children who cannot return to their homes (26% DFCS; 50% non-DFCS)

In addition, at least 40 percent of non-DFCS stakeholders said DFCS was “not very effective” in:

- Ensuring the emotional/mental health needs of children in care are met
- Ensuring children are in stable placements
- Supporting families in crisis to prevent removing children from the home

The following table presents the effectiveness ratings for each of the items for both groups of stakeholders who rated the items. A range of ten to 21 percent of stakeholders indicated they did not know how effective DFCS was on a specific item, except for the item on “transitioning youth to independent, adult living,” nearly a third (32%) said they did not know.

Overall Effectiveness of DFCS Statewide

Category	Item	Stakeholder	Effectiveness Rating		
			Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective
Safety	Investigating reports of child abuse and neglect in a timely manner	DFCS	51.3%	42.2%	6.5%
		Non-DFCS	28.4%	47.8%	23.8%
	Ensuring children are in safe placements	DFCS	35.9%	57.9%	6.2%
		Non-DFCS	13.2%	66.4%	20.5%
	Preventing the reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect	DFCS	15.8%	64.7%	19.5%
		Non-DFCS	5.4%	56.0%	38.6%
Well-being	Providing a range of support services needed by families	DFCS	21.8%	54.6%	23.7%
		Non-DFCS	12.3%	48.7%	39.0%
	Providing services and supports that are accessible to families	DFCS	22.5%	56.9%	20.6%
		Non-DFCS	10.1%	53.2%	36.7%
	Ensuring the basic physical health needs of children in care are met	DFCS	46.1%	48.4%	5.5%
		Non-DFCS	24.9%	57.8%	17.3%
	Ensuring the emotional/mental health needs of children in care are met	DFCS	25.9%	58.3%	15.9%
		Non-DFCS	8.5%	45.4%	46.1%
	Ensuring the educational/developmental needs of children in care are met	DFCS	29.8%	58.3%	11.9%
		Non-DFCS	11.3%	56.2%	32.5%
Permanency	Supporting families in crisis to prevent removing children from the home	DFCS	22.8%	62.0%	15.2%
		Non-DFCS	8.8%	51.3%	39.9%
	Maintaining family/sibling relationships when children are removed from the home	DFCS	22.1%	61.1%	16.8%
		Non-DFCS	10.7%	57.5%	31.8%
	Ensuring children are in stable placements	DFCS	19.4%	66.6%	14.0%
		Non-DFCS	8.2%	51.8%	40.0%
	Securing permanent homes in a timely manner for children who cannot return to their homes	DFCS	18.6%	55.9%	25.5%
		Non-DFCS	8.0%	42.5%	49.5%
Transitioning youths into independent, adult living	DFCS	15.1%	46.9%	38.1%	
	Non-DFCS	6.1%	35.9%	58.0%	
All	Communicating changes in policies and practices	DFCS	16.7%	45.0%	38.4%
		Non-DFCS	7.1%	29.1%	63.8%

Rating the Effectiveness of Regional and County Offices

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to rate the local county or regional DFCS office with which they worked most often in the previous year, and they were given the opportunity to rate up to four offices.

Most of the stakeholders rated only one office (84%); eleven percent rated two offices and five percent rated three; two stakeholders rated four offices. More than 2,700 ratings were submitted. Nine to 15 percent of respondents indicated they “don’t know” for a specific item.

Again, there is quite a gap between the perceptions of DFCS stakeholders and non-DFCS stakeholders, with DFCS staff tending to rate their county’s performance as “very effective” and non-DFCS stakeholders tending to rate their county’s performance as “not very effective” on most of the measures.

Overall Effectiveness of a Specific Local County DFCS Office*

Item	Stakeholder	Effectiveness Rating		
		Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective
Keeping you/your organization/agency informed about the children with whom you are involved	DFCS	46.5%	39.8%	13.7%
	Non-DFCS	23.3%	35.5%	41.2%
Assisting you/your organization/agency in resolving problems	DFCS	43.4%	40.6%	16.0%
	Non-DFCS	28.7%	40.7%	30.6%
Working with you/your organization to improve outcomes for children	DFCS	46.2%	43.0%	10.8%
	Non-DFCS	28.2%	42.5%	29.3%
Responding to you/your organization’s concerns	DFCS	40.0%	40.1%	19.9%
	Non-DFCS	28.3%	40.1%	31.5%
Providing staff who are well-trained and knowledgeable about community services and resources.	DFCS	40.1%	42.4%	17.5%
	Non-DFCS	26.5%	43.9%	29.6%
Referring families to resources and services	DFCS	45.6%	44.1%	10.3%
	Non-DFCS	26.6%	45.5%	27.9%
Coordinating services with other agencies/community organizations	DFCS	41.0%	45.8%	13.2%
	Non-DFCS	23.2%	42.6%	34.2%

*Respondents could have rated a regional office but all rated county offices.

Case Planning & Management

As for effectiveness ratings, there was a significant gap between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders on the frequency or extent to which specific activities related to case planning and management occur, with DFCS stakeholders perceiving most items to occur more frequently than non-DFCS stakeholders.

Most DFCS stakeholders said that “often” families have input on case plans, case plans are completed in a timely manner and are responsive to the needs of the family. Non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to say these occur “sometimes.”

While the majority of both groups said they themselves have the knowledge and skills they need to help children and families, they differed in their assessment of caseworkers, with DFCS stakeholders more likely than non-DFCS stakeholders to say that caseworkers often have the skills and knowledge they need (54% vs. 34% percent).

DFCS stakeholders were more likely to say that foster parents and service providers “often” have the information they need on the children in their care, while non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to say this occurs “sometimes.”

The following table shows the ratings for each item.

The Frequency of Specific Activities Related to Case Management & Planning

Category	Item	Stakeholder	How Often Each Occurs Based on Experience in the Past 12 Months			
			Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Case Planning & Management	Families have input on case plans.	DFCS	63.8%	27.0%	6.6%	2.6%
		Non-DFCS	32.4%	44.8%	18.3%	4.4%
	Foster parents have input on case plans.	DFCS	33.2%	37.6%	20.4%	8.7%
		Non-DFCS	24.3%	37.5%	24.7%	13.6%
	Case plans are completed in a timely manner.	DFCS	62.6%	28.7%	6.2%	2.5%
		Non-DFCS	27.2%	47.4%	20.2%	5.1%
	Case plans are updated regularly.	DFCS	65.0%	27.8%	5.5%	1.7%
		Non-DFCS	28.2%	42.6%	23.7%	5.4%
	Case plans are responsive to the needs of the family.	DFCS	63.8%	30.7%	3.7%	1.8%
		Non-DFCS	31.3%	50.3%	16.6%	1.9%
	The child's status is reviewed at least once every six months.	DFCS	84.3%	12.9%	1.4%	1.4%
		Non-DFCS	63.9%	26.6%	7.2%	2.2%
Skills & Knowledge	I have the skills and knowledge I need to help children and families.	DFCS	67.9%	27.8%	3.1%	1.2%
		Non-DFCS	65.7%	31.5%	2.3%	0.5%
	Caseworkers have the skills and knowledge they need to help children and families.	DFCS	53.6%	42.6%	3.3%	0.5%
		Non-DFCS	33.5%	54.0%	11.5%	1.0%
	Foster parents/caregivers have the information they need on the children in their care.	DFCS	55.7%	38.2%	5.1%	1.0%
		Non-DFCS	24.8%	53.6%	19.3%	2.3%
	Service providers have the information they need on the children in their care.	DFCS	59.3%	35.3%	4.1%	1.2%
		Non-DFCS	24.4%	56.6%	16.7%	2.3%

How Families are Handled in Case Management

Again, there are significant gaps in the perceptions of DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders, with DFCS stakeholders more likely to indicate items occur “often” while non-DFCS stakeholders are more likely to indicate items occur “sometimes.”

Frequency of Specific Activities Related to Families

Category	Item	Stakeholder	How Often Each Occurs Based on Experience in the Past 12 Months			
			Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Family Involvement	Families are involved in decisions regarding their children.	DFCS	59.5%	32.6%	6.2%	1.7%
		Non-DFCS	25.5%	53.6%	16.5%	4.5%
	Siblings are placed together.	DFCS	50.3%	42.8%	5.7%	1.2%
		Non-DFCS	26.6%	58.0%	14.0%	1.5%
	Children in foster care visit with parents and siblings regularly.	DFCS	65.4%	29.2%	3.9%	1.6%
		Non-DFCS	34.0%	50.6%	14.4%	0.9%
Respect	Family members and caregivers are treated with respect.	DFCS	76.5%	20.3%	2.3%	0.9%
		Non-DFCS	46.1%	42.0%	10.1%	1.8%

Youth Perceptions of Case Management

A total of 25 youth responded to the stakeholder survey; of those, about a third did not respond to the question about case planning and management, about a third said the item did not apply to them and about a third responded to the questions. The following chart shows the number of youth responses on these items.

Youth Perceptions of the Frequency of Specific Activities

Category	Item	The Extent to Which Each Occurred for Youth Respondents				Total Responding
		A great deal	Some	A little	Not at all	
Case Planning & Management	My family has had input in my case plan.	4	0	1	3	8
	I have had input in my case plan.	2	3	2	1	8
	My caseworker keeps me informed.	3	3	2	1	9
	My caseworker has helped me plan for the future.	2	2	4	1	9
	I am prepared to live on my own either working or going to college.	4	0	2	2	8
Preserving Family Relationships	I am able to visit with my family and my siblings.	3	3	1	1	8
	I have been able to maintain my relationships with my parents.	2	3	1	1	7
	I have been able to maintain my relationships with my siblings.	2	4	2	0	8
	I have been able to maintain my relationships with my other relatives.	2	3	1	1	7
Services	I have received health care services when I needed them.	4	3	1	0	8
	I have received educational services when I needed them.	3	3	2	0	8
	I have received counseling or mental health services when I needed them.	5	1	1	0	7
Respect	My caseworker treats me with respect.	7	2	0	0	9

DFCS Strategies

DFCS was interested in determining stakeholder views of the effectiveness of specific strategies being undertaken in order to improve child outcomes. These results were a little more positive, and most of the gaps between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders were somewhat smaller.

DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders alike tend to see family team meetings as “very effective” strategies for improving child outcomes, with at least half of the stakeholders indicating this is a very effective strategy and less than ten percent saying this strategy is “not very effective.”

Both groups of stakeholders tend to see relative placements as somewhat or very effective, although DFCS stakeholders are more likely to say the strategy is “very effective” than non-DFCS stakeholders (56% vs. 41%). They were similar in their view of the strategy of building parent capacity as well, with most saying this is a very or somewhat effective strategy.

DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders differed significantly in their views of the effectiveness of the diversion strategy, with 53% of the DFCS stakeholders saying this is a “very effective” strategy compared to 28% of the non-DFCS stakeholders. Non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to label this strategy “not very effective” than DFCS stakeholders (23% vs. 6%).

The least-supported strategy for both groups was bringing the children home for mental health treatment in their home communities. DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders were similar in their view of the effectiveness of this strategy, with about one-fourth of each group saying this is a “very effective” strategy and about half saying this is “somewhat effective.” Non-DFCS respondents were somewhat more likely to label this strategy “not very effective” compared to DFCS respondents (31% vs. 22%).

The percents are based on those who rated the strategies; the percent indicating “don’t know” ranged from two to ten percent of respondents. The following table presents the ratings for each strategy.

Perceived Effectiveness of Specific Strategies/Practices in Improving Outcomes for Children

Practice	Stakeholder	Effectiveness Rating		
		Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not very effective
<u>Family Team Meetings</u> – where appropriate, involve families in child and family assessments and case plans	DFCS	53.9%	37.9%	8.2%
	Non-DFCS	49.5%	41.7%	8.8%
<u>Relative Placements</u> – when it is not possible for children to remain with their parents, and where appropriate, place children with relatives	DFCS	56.1%	39.6%	4.3%
	Non-DFCS	40.7%	50.3%	9.0%
<u>Diversion</u> – where appropriate, refer families to community resources for services and supports rather than opening or re-opening a DFCS Child Protective Services (CPS) case for investigation	DFCS	52.8%	41.2%	6.0%
	Non-DFCS	27.9%	49.3%	22.8%
<u>Building Parent Capacity</u> – where appropriate, provide services and supports to families that enable them to provide appropriate care for their children so the children are not removed from the home	DFCS	45.5%	46.8%	7.7%
	Non-DFCS	42.0%	44.1%	13.9%
<u>Bring the Children Home</u> – where appropriate, return children in residential mental health treatment programs to their home communities with community-based services and supports	DFCS	25.3%	52.3%	22.4%
	Non-DFCS	22.4%	46.7%	31.0%

What DFCS Should Do to Improve Child Outcomes

At the end of the survey, stakeholders were provided the opportunity to answer open-end questions about what DFCS should be doing differently statewide and what DFCS should be doing at the county level to improve child outcomes. More than 1,600 stakeholders seized the opportunity to respond to these questions, many at some length.

Topics addressed by these stakeholders included staff, caseloads, case management, placements, funding, resources, communication, collaboration, agency leadership and policy. This section includes summaries – one for DFCS stakeholders and one for non-

DFCS stakeholders – of key themes/recommendations contained in the stakeholder responses by topic area, along with some illustrative quotes.

Topic Categories for DFCS Stakeholders:

- Staffing/caseload/workload
- Case management
- Parental responsibility
- Placements
- Funding
- Resources
- Foster parents
- Customer service
- Communication/education
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Policy

Topic Categories for Non-DFCS Stakeholders:

- Staff/caseloads
- Foster parents
- Case management
- Placements
- Communication
- Customer service
- Collaboration
- Funding
- Resources/services
- Policy/leadership
- Technology

DFCS Stakeholder Views

Several stakeholders, in addition to making suggestions, provided positive feedback on the agency's work. A number of DFCS stakeholders generally feel that county offices are doing the best they can with the resources they have and in spite of caseloads and turnover.

"[Our county] has a great staff and we all work together. I think that communication is the key to success in our county." (Office of Family Independence (OFI))

"Most counties are using all available resources and are working hard to improve outcomes for children." (OFI)

"Most of GA DFCS is doing an exceptional job at keeping our children/families together whenever possible." (Social/Family Services)

"I think DFCS is doing as much as they can. Often they are limited with what they can do due to lack of quality resources in the community." (Social/Family Services)

"[Our county] is blessed with a wonderful director that honestly cares about the welfare of the children – not Atlanta numbers. The staff here feel very supported." (Social/Family Services)

"I think we are moving in the right direction. We need to correct some problems in specific counties." (Other DFCS)

Some DFCS stakeholders expressed support for the agency's new leadership and initiatives.

"We seem to be on track. [Family Team Meetings] and Diversion seem to be making a difference." (OFI)

"Our administrators are doing an excellent job and handling our continuous turnover and staffing issues." (Social/Family Services)

"DFCS has made some recent changes which will dramatically improve the outcomes for children, such as diversion and relative placement." (Other DFCS)

"I enjoy [the DFCS director's] emails to the workers." (OFI)

Staffing/caseload/workload

As might be expected, many of the DFCS stakeholder comments or recommendations had to do with staff and workload issues.

1. Increase staff, more qualified staff (managers, supervisors and case workers), more experienced staff; reduce turnover
 - Floaters to manage caseload when someone quits
 - Local hiring decisions
 - Staff integrity
 - Increase compensation, provide incentives
2. Better training, mentoring, supervision of staff
 - County director for each county
 - Have new staff shadow experienced staff
 - Evaluate managers and supervisors
 - Career ladder for casework staff; promote from within
 - Accountable directors and supervisors; available to talk with staff about cases

- Random case reviews
- 3. Listen to, respect and be more supportive of local/front-line staff
 - Show appreciation/recognize staff work
- 4. Revise or eliminate risk assessment tool; unwieldy, time-consuming, not useful
- 5. Reduce paperwork
 - Have clerical staff handle some of paperwork to allow for more social work

“Take care of the employees hired to take care of the children.” (OFI)

“[Our] County has replaced all of its CPS unit in less than a year. We’re talking people who have 15+ years of service to DFCS.” (OFI)

“Salaries have not kept up with inflation and it is difficult to retain good people in these very stressful jobs.” (Social/Family Services)

“I think we do a pretty good job. Our caseloads have significantly lowered. Wish I could spend less time on paperwork and more time on the families.” (Social/Family Services)

“Caseloads have decreased but workloads have increased, especially with risk assessment.” (Social/Family Services)

“We have wonderful caseworkers in [our county.] I feel the state does not recognize this in any way.” (Other DFCS)

Case Management

1. Better case supervision, investigation, follow-up; more frequent visits to children and families
 - More psychological assessments to assess “root” of problem
2. Require parenting classes for new parents, for any families seeking assistance
3. More family team meetings throughout agency
4. More/more frequent visitation
5. Have protocols for different family issues, such as lack of supervision, substance use, etc.

“I think this county should implement Family Team Meetings immediately.” (OFI)

“Give workers adequate time to provide service to family, assess fully situations, and to complete necessary documentation reflecting this work.” (Social/Family Services)

“We need to develop generalized questions to ask the families that will focus on the critical areas of concern such as questions concerning previous or current drug use . . .” (Social/Family Services)

“We have focused too much on keeping children and parents together, or children and relatives together, without properly assessing risks.” (OFI)

Parental Responsibility

1. Make families/parents responsible, accountable – have consequences, more child support recovery
 - Emphasize personal responsibility
 - Require community service

“Make parents be more responsible for their actions.” (OFI)

“Parents with children in DFCS custody should not be allowed to have any more children.” (Other DFCS)

“Emphasize prevention and personal responsibility.” (Other)

Placements

1. Be cautious about keeping children in the home
2. Be cautious about placing children with relatives
 - Research relative placements thoroughly
3. Be cautious about removing children from LOC placements
4. Provide permanency/terminate parental rights sooner

“Don’t place children with the grandparent, who failed with their own children. Seems to me, you are perpetuating the problem.” (OFI)

Funding

1. Increase for smaller/rural counties with fewer resources
2. Increase for larger/urban counties with more families in crisis
3. Base funding on population trends (e.g., more resources to keep families intact in county with lots of young families)

Resources

1. Provide/develop/strengthen community resources, especially mental health/counseling, parenting education, child care, prevention/early intervention and wraparound; especially in rural areas
 - Make service providers accountable
 - Provide more in-home resources
2. Provide/require counseling for all families entering welfare system, all children removed from home and case managers dealing with cases of abuse and neglect
3. Provide more resources for families with teens
 - Teens involved with DJJ not appropriate for foster care
 - Help families parent/discipline unruly teens
4. Revamp independent living program

“Do away with most of the TANF benefit program and use that money to provide child care. Most people want to work; they just need child care to do so.” (OFI)

“All children who come into care should receive counseling of some sort to help them and their families deal with the trauma of removal.” (Social/Family Services)

“Recognizing the reality of drugs as a cause of child neglect/abuse and providing the prevention/treatment resources needed to decrease addiction.” (Social/Family Services)

“We need more mental health and drug rehab facilities to assist families in areas where it is more accessible to our families.” (Social/Family Services)

“We have seen an increase with children with severe to moderate mental health issues and parents not trained or equipped to handle these children.” (Social/Family Services)

Foster Parents

1. More support, including financial, for foster parents, including relative caregivers
2. Recruit more qualified/appropriate foster and adoptive homes
 - Allow state workers to be foster parents (they have knowledge/skills)

Customer Service

1. Listen to and respect families
 - Answer the phone, return phone calls

Communication/education

1. Increase communication/information-sharing (internal and external; vertical and horizontal)
 - Improve PR, image
 - More timely communication
 - No mixed messages
2. Provide the same training for judges, advocates and DFCS staff

“Case managers are told many different things by supervisors and managers. DFCS leadership must make an attempt to speak with one voice and not many,” (Social/Family Services)

“Providing timely information from the state level to the county level. Often the information comes after the policy has already been made effective.” (Social/Family Services)

“CPS needs to communicate with eligibility.” (OFI)

Collaboration

1. Counties need to work better with each other
2. Collaborate/partner/work with other state agencies – especially juvenile justice, mental health, education
3. Collaborate/partner/work with other community agencies/organizations, including faith-based

“Work with community organizations in solving county issues i.e. high dropout rates, drug use and homelessness.” (OFI)

“Eliminate the barriers that exist between divisions—we should be able to share.” (Other DFCS)

Leadership

1. Visit county offices, get experience on front lines
2. Include front line staff in policy development and decision-making
3. Less micro-managing
4. Less focus on numbers and more focus on children and families
5. Stop assigning blame, finger-pointing
6. Help bridge the gap between policy and practice

“Be less political and more involved.” (Other DFCS)

“Be more supportive rather than punitive” (Social/Family Services)

“Those persons in positions that do not work in the field need to periodically work a case or two to see how policies and . . .” (Social/Family Services) county

The leadership has “no clue what is really going on in Georgia because they have been imported from other states and have not worked their way up in our organization.” (OFI)

“DFCS needs to come from out of Atlanta and come and sit down with the other counties to discuss, hear and learn what we believe our customers need.” (OFI)

“The people at the state level need to take the time to visit the county offices and go out with CM to see how the new Risk Assessment is implemented and the time it takes to multi-task . . .” (Social/Family Services)

Policy

1. Recognize differences between metro Atlanta and rural counties in terms of population and needs; what works in metro will not necessarily be appropriate for rural counties
2. Don’t react to specific incidents with changes in policy or “knee-jerk” reactions; concerned about constant change

“It is time to ‘fit the programs and policy’ to the area being served.” (Social/Family Services)

“There have been many improvements in the last two years, but we continue to see the same customers over and over in our local office.” (OFI)

Non-DFCS Stakeholder Views

While non-DFCS stakeholders covered many of the same themes covered by DFCS stakeholders, there were some differences in terms of topics, suggestions and emphasis.

As with DFCS stakeholders, non-DFCS stakeholders talked about increasing staff, reducing turnover and reducing caseloads. There was a greater emphasis on improving communication and working collaboratively with community agencies, including schools; there was less emphasis on parental responsibility. The non-DFCS stakeholders also provided more feedback on case management issues, particularly response time and thoroughness of investigations.

As with DFCS stakeholders, some non-DFCS stakeholders generally feel most counties are doing a good job with the resources they have.

"I have been very pleased with the responsiveness of [our county] to urgent CPS situations from the ER." (Agency/organization serving families)

"The folks in [our county] are doing their best in a system that seems most flawed at the state level." (Agency/organization serving families)

"DFCS is doing the best they can with the current budget cuts and placement restraints that have been placed on them by the state." (Agency/organization serving families)

"[Our county] is doing a great job and has wonderful leadership and experienced staff." (Agency/organization serving families)

"Locally they are providing every avenue of support and respect for the families and including them in the case planning to make a true difference." (Other)

"I happen to work in a wonderful county and I do medically fragile foster care. I have seen the county work diligently with the bio families to provide services." (Parent or caregiver)

"Much is being done as reflected in regional forums; the message should continue to come from the state level to continue to encourage a change of mindset." (Other)

Staff/caseloads

1. Increase staff and improve staff qualifications
 - More qualified, competent staff, especially those with MSWs/social work backgrounds and experience rather than new college grads
 - Less condescending, brow-beating; more empathetic, responsive, respectful, kind
 - More knowledgeable about services, resources for families
2. Improve staff compensation and retention
3. Better, more intensive training; shadowing, mentoring, consultation; interviewing skills; sensitivity/ethics/best practices; cross-training within DHR
4. Better, closer supervision of staff; managers/supervisors be more available for staff; better relationships
5. Reduce caseloads so staff have more time to work with families

“Provide close supervision for novice employees; provide immediate consultation on case issues for all case managers; offer continuing in-service training” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Quit hiring temps who don’t care and don’t know what is going on.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“DFCS caseworkers need training in understanding issues such as mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence from a family systems perspective.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Get recruiters out to the colleges so that more graduates can be recruited and trained to help cover the case loads and get the children the help they need.” (CASA/child advocate)

“Morale at [county] DFCS is so low that the children are suffering as a consequence. The good case managers should be supported and treated with respect.” (CASA/child advocate)

“The care for the children will not improve until the caseworkers are taken care of.” (Legislative/judicial)

“All promotions should be reviewed by the state office so that friendships and favoritism do not affect the hiring process.” (Other DHR)

“Work with state colleges to provide a realistic picture of the DFCS program so that there will not be ‘culture shock’ when they start work.” (Other)

“My county needs training on what is and what isn’t child abuse. They will investigate normal caring parents for basic discipline and let children crawl around among crack . . .” (CASA/child advocate)

“More caseworkers, more experience, education, coordination among all agencies.” (Legislative/judicial)

“[Our county] has changed personnel so often nobody knows their job before they get moved or quit & kids lose every time this happens.” (Parent or caregiver)

Foster Parents

1. Better compensation for foster parents
2. Better foster parent recruitment and training
 - Improve/standardize IMPACT training; more child, therapeutic-focused
 - Train in older-child development/behavior

“Make it more difficult to become a foster parent, but make incentives more attractive once a person becomes a foster parent (i.e., increase per diem rates, etc.)” (Agency/organization serving families)

“[Our county] DFCS will not cooperate with the foster parents. We have no input on the case and are not informed.” (Parent or caregiver)

Case Management

1. Faster, more appropriate, more aggressive response to reports; investigate all reports; more thorough investigations; address emotional abuse; look at older children with the same urgency as younger children
2. Better up-front assessment for families and placements; attend to mental as well as physical health
3. Individualized, better and earlier case planning; family/foster parent input on case plans
4. More visits, involvement, monitoring and follow-up with parents, families, and children in the home, including after children are returned to the home; unannounced visits and drug screens (monitored)
5. More family team meetings; use as intended
6. Monitor school performance; school visits; increase expectations for educational achievement
7. Require/encourage parental responsibility
8. Accountability for service providers; monitoring for quality and outcomes; performance-based contracting; visit programs

“Case plans are made and there are no services to help or there is no money to send the child or family for service.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Kids are in care too long. Court is taking too long. The SAAG has too many counties and cases and can’t get things done in a timely manner. Kids are not getting counseling.” (Agency/organization serving families)

[The county] automatically screens out child-on-child sexual abuse and frequently leaves children in the home together, even when one child is clearly abusing another.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“They accept too many things as ok during follow-ups, such as failed drug tests (giving too many opportunities to try to pass).” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Continue to investigate cases which are reported, when initially it may seem innocent. Parents will clean up their act for a period of time.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Tailor the case plans for each specific family and not use the same cookie cutter case plan for every family.” (CASA/child advocate)

“All cases reported by school officials should be treated seriously.” (Other)

“Emphasize helping families and not making things so difficult for them. Identify the problems and provide solutions, not just taking a child for a period of time and returning them.” (Other DHR)

“I reported suspected abuse . . . and it took almost three weeks for an investigator to come out.” (Other)

“I am very concerned that bruises/marks on children’s buttocks are not treated as seriously as marks on other parts of their bodies. Abuse is abuse.” (Other government)

Placements

1. Be cautious about relative placements
2. Ensure placement quality

“Don’t rely so heavily on relative placements. Upbringings in these families are often the reason that the parents are unable to properly parent their children.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Be more careful about placing children with relatives.” (CASA/child advocate)

“I have never known a relative placement to follow the rules. Never – they always allow parents to see or visit children.” (CASA/child advocate)

“Raise the standard for group homes and private agencies before placing kids through them.” (CASA/child advocate)

“Be more attentive when returning children to their parents when there is a history of continued drug abuse, especially methamphetamine use.” (Law enforcement)

“Criminal history should be completed on all individuals who will be caregivers.” (Law enforcement)

Communication

1. Information-sharing (earlier, truthful/accurate), especially with foster parents, schools and other agencies working with the family
2. Listen – to children, to families, to front-line staff, abuse reporters, service providers, all stakeholders; visit counties; involve case staff in developing policies and practices (ownership)
 - Conduct focus groups in community, with front-line staff

“Much more communication and follow-up with the schools. Not closing cases so quickly. Returning calls!” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Respond in a more timely manner to reports, send letters to reporters letting them know what action was taken after a report (ex: 24-hour response, 5 day, etc.)” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Be sure that each DFCS department communicates when a child moves from one county to the next, especially if they are on a case plan – not enough follow-up.” (Legislative/judicial)

Customer Service

1. Improve customer service
 - Answer the phone and return phone calls in a timely manner
 - Reduce in-office waiting time
2. Be more accessible
 - 24-hour reporting hotline
 - Non-traditional hours; hire staff willing to work after-hours
3. Provide for translators/interpreters/bi-lingual staff (specifically Spanish)
 - Provide partial tuition for Spanish language education for those serving Spanish-speaking families

“Staff should not be allowed to all take comp time on Friday. It is difficult to find a caseworker on Friday.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“In [our county] you can leave message after message, or their box is full, or you go and sit to see them and may not see them then.” (CASA/child advocate)

Collaboration

1. Collaboration/partnerships/working together, especially with schools, faith-based; multi-disciplinary meetings; joint staffings; participate in local collaboratives; respond to out-of-county officers/agencies
2. Community involvement, relationships
3. Help providers anticipate referrals/placements so they can staff/operate

“All the county agencies involved in the DFCS system should have monthly stakeholder meetings that include caseworkers as well as management.” (CASA/child advocate)

“DFCS needs to transition to a less confrontational system where parents and caseworkers can work more collaboratively.” (CASA/child advocate)

“Open the doors and let the community and its resources in! Share problems and ask for help. Prioritize working with the community & developing partnerships.” (Other government)

“As a school counselor, I would like to be more a part of the team helping students who are in DFCS care. We are never aware of the outcome of reported cases.” (Other government)

Funding

1. Provide incentives – for staff, for families and for youth in care
2. Stop saying don't have funding

Resources/Services

1. Community mobilization, resource development; services families can access, afford
2. More prevention/early intervention services to avoid removing children from home and before children develop long-term emotional/mental health issues
3. More wraparound, in-home and community-based services/resources; intensive/effective/mandated parenting education; also child care, transportation
4. More therapeutic services and foster homes; therapeutic after-school programs
5. More support for emancipated youth

*“Parents and families desperately need more assessment, counseling and parenting skill work.”
(Agency/organization serving families)*

“The last thing families need is a punitive system that requires them to pay for services they cannot afford.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Parenting classes at \$50/week are not affordable to families in crisis; substance abuse evaluations are \$300 or more, psychological evaluations are \$300 or more.” (Other government)

“Stop making kids fail their way up the system to get the help they need. Provide more support for children with mental health issues.” (Youth in foster care/transition/ILP/aftercare)

“Make sure that referral programs and services are outcome-based and proven!” (Other)

“Don’t send kids home to families or foster care believing that wrap-around services will be there when they are not.” (Agency/organization serving families)

Providing services and “ [do not claim] that there are no funds for necessary items that DFCS would want parents to do on their own (if the parents had sufficient funds).” (Legislative/judicial)

Policy/Leadership

1. More consistency county-to-county
2. Allow local discretion/decision-making; more autonomy for counties
3. Less micro-managing
4. Less concern for numbers and more concern for individual child safety
5. Mandatory drug screens for newborns
6. Law to require father’s name on birth certificate
7. Less concern for cost and more concern for serving children, families

“Create realistic policies and practices that are not guided by politics.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Develop policy from the ground up instead of from top down. Develop policies with people who have to implement them.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“Stop taking the children along with the mother out of a home with domestic violence and make the abuser leave.” (Agency/organization serving families)

There is a “growing trend over the last year to move children to the most cost-effective placement regardless of the best interest of that particular child.” (Agency/organization serving families)

“We always use the phrase ‘least restrictive setting’ when we really mean ‘least expensive setting.’” (Faith-based institution/organization)

Technology

1. Statewide database(s) for tracking investigations, children, families, resources
2. Digital fingerprint machines available statewide for background checks
3. Put contact information on the website (county)

Summary

There are two over-arching findings in this stakeholder survey, above and beyond any elicited by specific topic areas or questions. First, the response to communications about the opportunity to participate in the survey was tremendous, internally and externally. Stakeholders wanted very much to express their views and previously have not had a formal opportunity to do so anonymously. Second, the perceptions of DFCS stakeholders significantly differed from the perceptions of external, non-DFCS stakeholders on the vast majority of the survey items, including agency values, agency effectiveness and agency practices.

The main area of agreement was about the primary issues affecting family and child well-being in Georgia. Both stakeholder groups most often cited substance abuse, poverty/economics, the lack of resources and specific services for families, family structure and functioning issues, and education as primary issues. In addition, both stakeholder groups clearly feel that staffing issues and caseloads as well as resources for children and families need to be addressed in order to improve child outcomes. Both groups tended to see family team meetings as a “very effective” practice and bringing the children home (from residential treatment) as only “somewhat effective.” Both DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders were divided about building parent capacity through services and supports, with 42 to 46 percent in each group seeing this as “very effective” and 44 to 47 percent in each group seeing this as “somewhat effective.”

While DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders tended to emphasize the same values, the degree to which they did so differed significantly on some values. The most significant difference was about relatives or the state taking responsibility for children when their parents cannot do so. Both groups leaned toward the state being responsible despite the state’s current emphasis on relative caregivers. In responses to open-end questions about what DFCS should do to improve child outcomes, many stakeholders expressed reservations about relative caregivers, feeling they may have similar issues as the parents, they may be motivated by the money or they may not follow the case plan requirements regarding parent contact.

Also interesting in terms of values is that both groups placed more emphasis on agencies working independently than on agencies working together, despite other feedback – from the community forums and even in the open-end questions on the stakeholder survey – that there needs to be more collaboration among agencies, public and private.

When it came to rating agency effectiveness, DFCS stakeholders were much more likely than were non-DFCS stakeholders to give the state and the county offices ratings of “very effective,” while non-DFCS stakeholders were more likely to rate the agency and its offices as “somewhat effective” or “not very effective.” This was true for items related to child safety/abuse prevention, investigation, providing services/supports, meeting the physical, mental/emotional and educational/developmental needs of children in care, permanency and communication, and the work of the county offices in terms of

communication, responsiveness, problem resolution, staff qualifications, referrals for families and coordination of services.

The perception gaps were the greatest for several items related to case management and planning, the qualifications of those working with children, and family involvement, with DFCS stakeholders much more likely to say specific activities, such as families having input on case plans, occur “often,” compared to non-DFCS stakeholders, who tended to say specific activities occur “sometimes” or “seldom.”

In terms of specific practices, the two stakeholder groups differed most on relative placements, with non-DFCS stakeholders much more likely to see this as “somewhat” rather than “very effective” compared to DFCS stakeholders, who were more likely to see this as “very effective.” Non-DFCS stakeholders were even less supportive of “diversion,” with only 28 percent saying this is “very effective” compared to 53 percent of DFCS stakeholders.

Conclusions/Recommendations

The state of Georgia and the new leadership in DHR/DFCS have significant work ahead, some of which is already under way, in order to address the issues facing families, close the gaps in perceptions between DFCS and non-DFCS stakeholders, improve relationships internally and externally and improve outcomes for children.

The findings of this online stakeholder survey suggest DHR and DFCS need to work with the state to:

1. Develop/expand/increase family and youth access to effective substance abuse prevention, intervention and treatment resources
2. Address poverty/economic issues of families, including employment, resources for parents so they can work and become self-sufficient (e.g., job/work skills training, child care, transportation)
3. Develop/expand/increase family and youth access to resources and support that will enable them to prevent unwanted pregnancy, parent appropriately, obtain physical and mental health care, etc.

In addition, DFCS needs to consider all of the inputs for the CFSR process, including the results of the community forums, this stakeholder survey (including the full-text stakeholder responses regarding what DFCS can do to improve child outcomes at the state and local levels), and the caregiver and parent surveys and:

1. Review current policies and strategies in light of the findings
2. Develop a formal, proactive two-way plan for internal and external communication that goes well beyond the existing media communications function and provides for stakeholder feedback and input at all levels
3. Develop a formal, proactive plan for community involvement and collaboration at the local, regional and state levels

The response to this online survey clearly indicated stakeholder desire for input on DFCS policies and practices. This stakeholder survey report is one of many inputs – including the regional and statewide stakeholder forums and the caregiver and parent surveys – that DFCS will be able to use not only for its federal Child and Family Services Review report but also for ongoing strategic planning.

Appendices



Stakeholder Survey

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is in the process of assessing and improving its services for families and children in the child welfare system, including children in foster care. Because of your involvement with children and families in the child welfare system, your perspectives, input and support are critical to this process. We appreciate your completion of this survey, which should take about 10-15 minutes.

We are committed to using the input from these surveys, along with input from community forums and additional surveys of parents and caregivers, to improve the quality and effectiveness of our services.

Please be assured that your responses will remain completely anonymous - results will be compiled and reported by an independent consulting firm.

[Start Survey](#)

The Stakeholder Survey was developed by Care Solutions, Inc. with funding from the Department of Human Resources, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



Stakeholder Survey

1. First, so that we may understand the nature of your primary involvement in the child welfare system, please indicate in which of the following areas you currently serve, if any:

(choose the one that best describes your role)

- Agency/organization serving families in the child welfare system (shelter, health, education, welfare, etc.)
- CASA/child advocacy organization
- DFCS
- Faith-based institution/organization
- Law enforcement
- Legislative or judicial branch of government
- Other division/office of DHR
- Other state or local government body/agency
- Parent or caregiver (biological, relative, foster or adoptive)
- Youth in foster care/transition/ILP/aftercare
- None of the above

[Continue](#)

Completed: 1% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

2. What do you feel is the number one issue affecting family and child well-being in Georgia?

[Continue](#)

Completed: 12% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

3. For each of the following items, please check the box on each continuum that best indicates where you feel the emphasis should be to improve outcomes for children in the child welfare system:

Relatives should take responsibility for children when parents cannot

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

The state should take responsibility for children when parents cannot

Agencies in the child welfare system should work together

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

Agencies in the child welfare system should work independently

Children with emotional/behavioral disorders should be served in the least-restrictive setting

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

Children with emotional/behavioral disorders should be served in whatever setting can meet their needs

All parents and family members should take part in developing their case plan

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

Parents and family members need not take part in developing their case plan

Services should be family-focused

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

Services should be child-focused

Serve children with the resources available in their homes and communities

< - ----- ----- ----- Equal Emphasis ----- ----- ----- ->

Serve children wherever the most appropriate resources are available

[Continue](#)

Completed: 20% of 100%



Stakeholder Survey

4. Please rate the overall effectiveness of DFCS statewide in the past 12 months in each of the following areas.

- Supporting families in crisis to prevent removing children from the home
- Transitioning youths into independent, adult living
- Providing services and supports that are accessible to families
- Investigating reports of child abuse and neglect in a timely manner
- Ensuring the basic physical health needs of children in care are met
- Ensuring the emotional/mental health needs of children in care are met
- Ensuring the educational/developmental needs of children in care are met
- Preventing the recurrence of child abuse and neglect
- Communicating changes in policies and practices
- Ensuring children are in stable placements
- Maintaining family/sibling relationships when children are removed from the home
- Securing permanent homes in a timely manner for children who cannot return to their homes
- Providing a range of support services needed by families
- Ensuring children are in safe placements

[Continue](#)

Completed: 27% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

Now, we'd like to ask you about your experiences with DFCS at the **county or region level**. If you have contact or work with more than one county or region, you will have the opportunity to address up to three additional counties and/or regions.

5. **First, with which county or regional DFCS office(s) have you had contact in the past 12 months?**

Enter counties and regions separated by commas. Example: Fulton,Region 3,Dekalb

6. **With which county or regional DFCS office have you had the *most* contact in the past 12 months?**

 or

[Continue](#)

Completed: 33% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

BALDWIN COUNTY

7. Please rate the overall effectiveness of the above county or regional DFCS office with which you have had the most contact in the past 12 months in each of the following areas:

- Keeping you/your organization/agency informed about the children with whom you are involved
- Assisting you/your organization/agency in resolving problems
- Working with you/your organization to improve outcomes for children
- Responding to you/your organization's concerns
- Providing staff who are well-trained and knowledgeable about community services and resources
- Referring families to resources and services
- Coordinating services with other agencies/community organizations

[Continue](#)

Completed: 43% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

Which county or regional office would you like to rate next?

or

Select County/Region

Done Selecting Counties

Completed: 43% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

DHR/DFCS is in the process of conducting regional community forums around the state that include a slide (PowerPoint) presentation as well as roundtable topic discussions. In addition, the slide presentation is posted online.

8. Please indicate whether you have: *(check all that apply)*

- Attended one regional community forum
- Attended more than one regional community forum
- Viewed the forum slide presentation online
- None of the above

[Continue](#)

Completed: 53% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

Stakeholder Survey

9. Please indicate how often each of the following occurs based on your experience in the past 12 months:

- Family members and caregivers are treated with respect.
- Foster parents/caregivers have the information they need on the children in their care.
- Service providers have the information they need on the children in their care.
- Families have input on case plans.
- Foster parents have input on case plans.
- Case plans are completed in a timely manner.
- Case plans are updated regularly.
- Case plans are responsive to the needs of the family.
- The child's status is reviewed at least once every six months.
- Families are involved in decisions regarding their children.
- Siblings are placed together.
- Children in foster care visit with parents and siblings regularly.
- I have the skills and knowledge I need to help children and families.
- Caseworkers have the skills and knowledge they need to help children and families.

[Continue](#)

Completed: 60% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

10. DFCS is pursuing specific statewide initiatives designed to improve outcomes for children and the quality of services it provides for families and other caregivers. For each of the following practices, please indicate how effective you believe that practice to be in improving outcomes for children.

Building Parent Capacity - where appropriate, provide services and supports to families to enable them to provide appropriate care for their children so the children are not removed from the home

Relative Placements - when it is not possible for children to remain with their parents, and where appropriate, place children with relatives

Diversion - where appropriate, refer families to community resources for services and supports rather than opening or re-opening a DFCS Child Protective Services (CPS) case for investigation

Bring the Children Home - where appropriate, return children in residential mental health treatment programs to their home communities with community-based services and supports

Family Team Meetings - where appropriate, involve families in child and family assessments and case plans

[Continue](#)

Completed: 67% of 100%

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Stakeholder Survey

11. Please indicate your current primary position/role in the child welfare system and any positions/roles you have ever held:

	Current position/role (check only <u>one</u>)	Positions/roles have ever held (check all that apply)
Legislator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislative staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child advocate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Probation officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other judicial/court staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Law enforcement officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other law enforcement staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Director	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caseworker/staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical doctor/psychiatrist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other clinical staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher or guidance counselor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other school official	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biological parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foster parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adoptive parent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relative caregiver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other caregiver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input style="width: 100px; height: 15px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100px; height: 15px;" type="text"/>

Continue

Completed: 73% of 100%



Stakeholder Survey

- 11a. Length of time in your current position/role:
- 11b. Length of time you have worked with children in the child welfare system in any position/role:
- 11c. In the past year, about how often have you had contact with families in the child welfare system?

[Continue](#)

Completed: 80% of 100%

The Stakeholder Survey was developed by Care Solutions, Inc. with funding from the Department of Human Resources, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



Stakeholder Survey

12. In the past year, how often have you had contact with the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)?

13. Your county of employment:

14. Your county of residence:

15. Your gender:

16. Your race:

17. Your ethnicity (regardless of race):

18. Your age group:

[Continue](#)

Completed: 87% of 100%

The Stakeholder Survey was developed by Care Solutions, Inc. with funding from the Department of Human Resources, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



Stakeholder Survey

19. What should DFCS be doing differently statewide to improve outcomes for children?

20. What should DFCS be doing at the county office level to improve outcomes for children? (Please specify which county if you are referring to an issue in a specific county.)

Finish

Completed: 93% of 100%

The Stakeholder Survey was developed by Care Solutions, Inc. with funding from the Department of Human Resources, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



Stakeholder Survey

Your survey has been submitted. Thank You for you time and input!

Completed: 100% of 100%

The Stakeholder Survey was developed by Care Solutions, Inc. with funding from the Department of Human Resources, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) invites you to participate in a Stakeholder Survey. The survey results will help DFCS assess and improve its services for children and families in the child welfare system. Your opinion and perspectives are important!

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Please go to: <http://dfcs.caresolutions.com>

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time to complete. Your responses will remain completely anonymous; an independent consulting firm will be handling all of the survey data and providing the necessary summary reports to the Department. Please access the survey as soon as possible; the final deadline for input is December 22, 2006.



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Let's Talk!



The Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services would like to invite you to participate in a statewide stakeholder survey to assess and help improve services for children and families involved with Georgia's child welfare system.

Your feedback is important!

The online survey can be completed at:
<http://dfcs.caresolutions.com>

*The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please encourage individuals in your organization and in your community who work in child welfare to participate. Survey results will help to shape the future of child welfare in Georgia.
Thank you.*

**Deadline for participation
December 29, 2006**

*All responses remain anonymous.
An independent consulting firm will compile and analyze the survey data and provide summary results to DHR/DFCS.*

Contact 1-800-227-3410 if you have any questions.

Statewide Data Snapshot

Population

Population (2005)	9,072,576
Children (Ages 0-19) (2005)	2,616,182
Population in Poverty (2002)	13.0%
Children (Ages 0-17) in Poverty (2002)	18.0%

Community

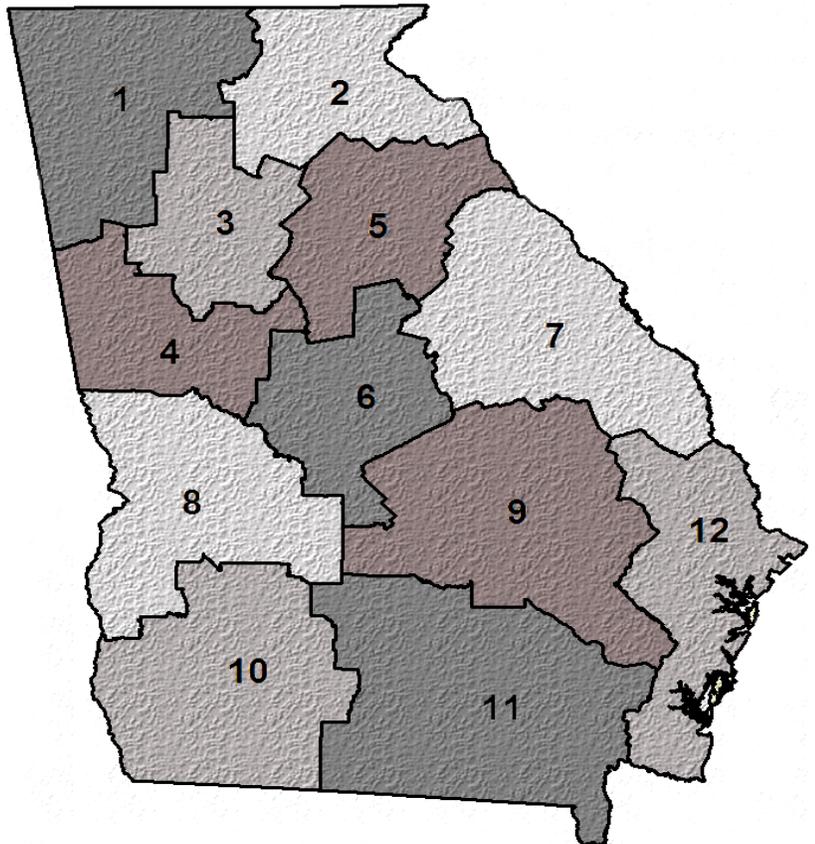
**Population Density (2000)	141.4
Total Housing Units (2000)	3,281,737
Housing - Urban (2000)	70.7%
Housing - Rural (2000)	29.3%

**Population per land square mile.

Demographics

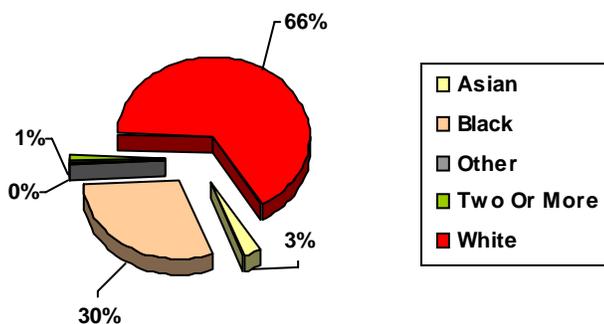
Ethnicity (2005)	
Hispanic Population	7.1%
Hispanic Children (Ages 0-19)	9.0%

Department of Human Resources Service Delivery Regions

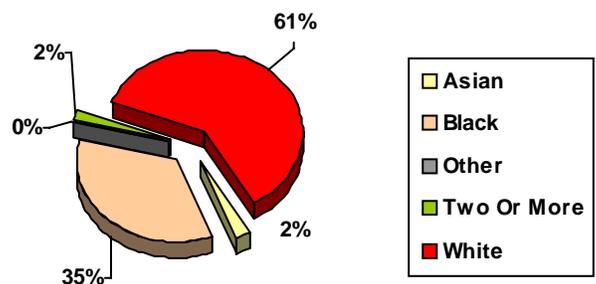


Sources:
US Census 2000
US Census Population Estimates July 2005

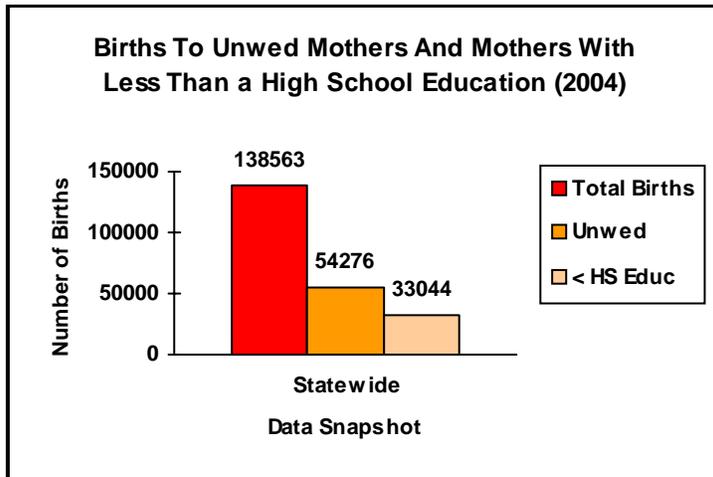
Population By Race (2005)



Children By Race (2005)



Infant Risk Factors



Child Abuse and Neglect

(2004)	Number
Total Child Abuse Reports	87,958
Total Reports Investigated	72,006
Total Reports Substantiated	26,922

Foster Care

	Number
Children in State Custody (2005)	14,926

Child Health

(2004)	Number	Percent
Peachcare For Kids	276,184	11.8%
Uninsured under age 18	317,322	14.2%

Statewide (continued)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Georgia's Level Of Care (LOC) System for severe emotional disorders (SED) treatment (2006)	Number
Number of children in LOC	65,280
Mental Health Gap Analysis (2005)	
Estimated number of children and adolescents with SED	161,207
Number of children and adolescents with SED needing public mental health services	72,543
Number of children and adolescents with SED served in the public mental health system	41,720

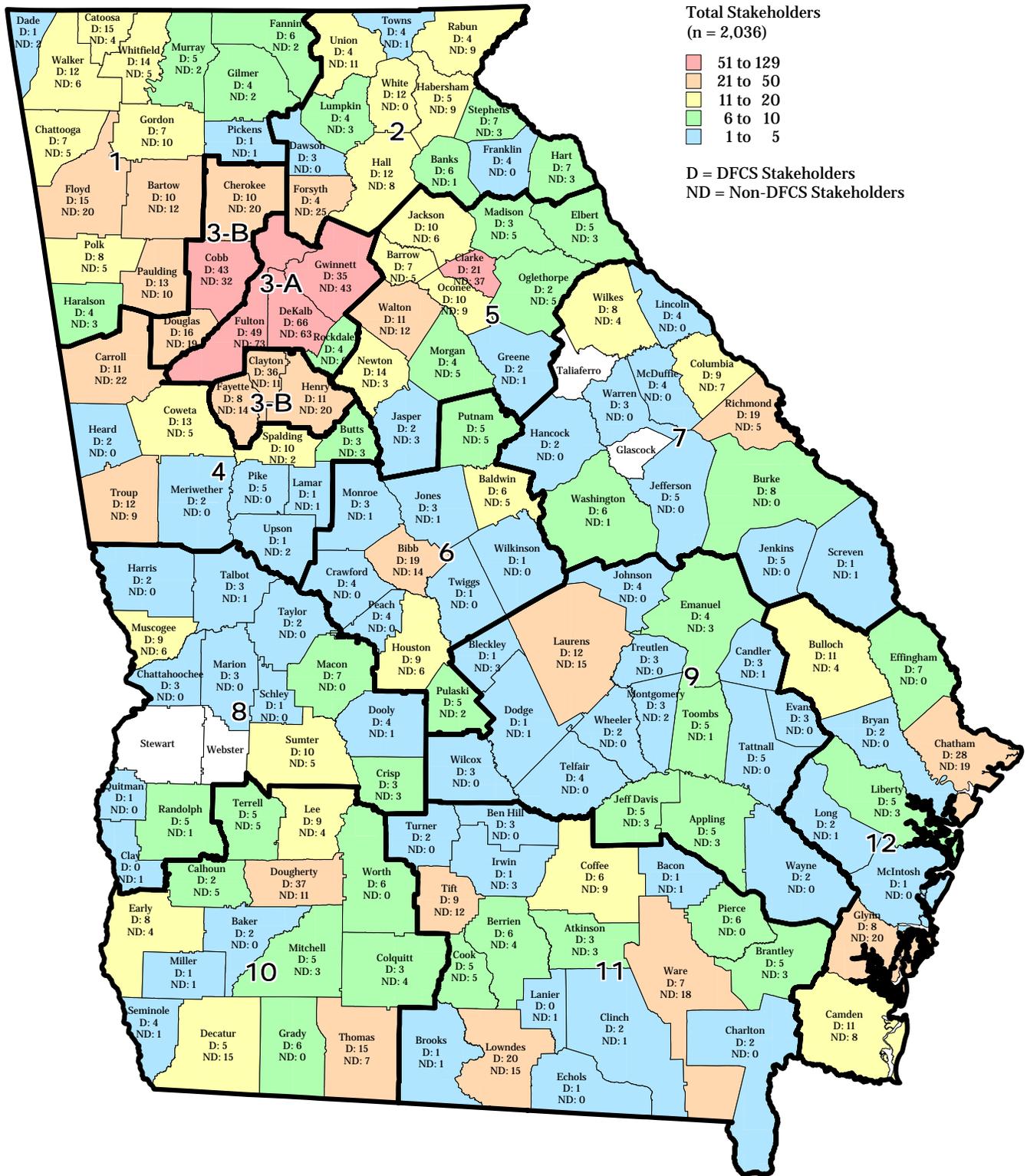
Early Childhood Care & Education

Subsidized Child Care (2005)	
Number of families served	34,084
Number of children served	62,451
Georgia's Pre-K Program (2004)	
Total number of 4-year-olds	132,956
Number of 4-year-olds enrolled	73,138
Percent of total 4-year olds	55.0%
Number of 4-year-olds at risk served	38,453
Percent of 4-year-olds enrolled at risk served	28.9%

Sources:

DHR Divisions of Public Health; Family and Children Services; Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases
Georgia Office of Student Achievement

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) 2006 Stakeholder Online Survey Respondents by Reported County of Residence



Note: There are 958 survey respondents not shown on this map who did not report county of residence.