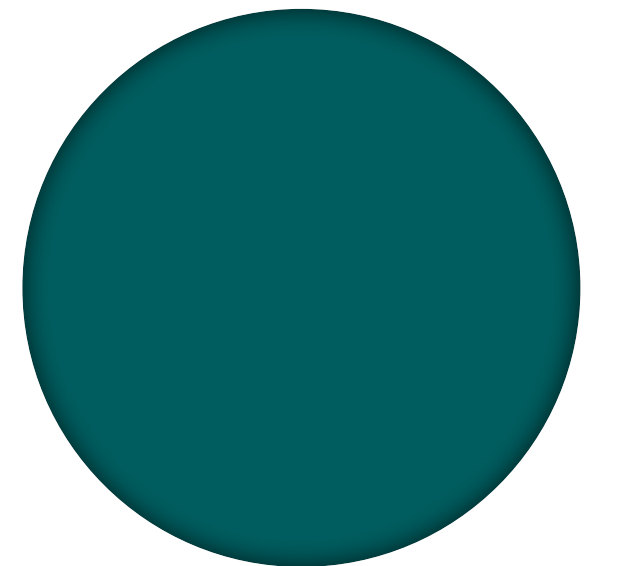


# Annual Report | **State Fiscal Year 2024**





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## Letter from **Commissioner Candice L. Broce**



Another year has passed, and the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) continues to fulfill its mission to strengthen Georgia by providing individuals and families access to services that promote self-sufficiency, independence, and protect Georgia's vulnerable children and adults. We accomplished many things in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024, and I'm proud to share them with you in this year's annual report.

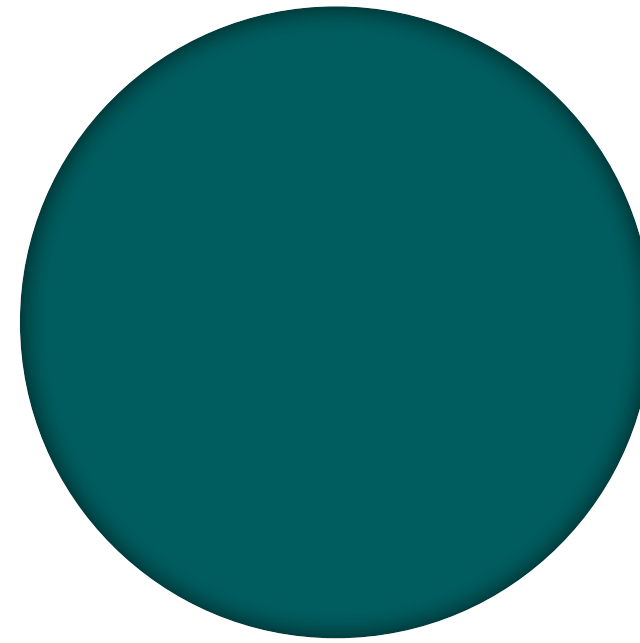
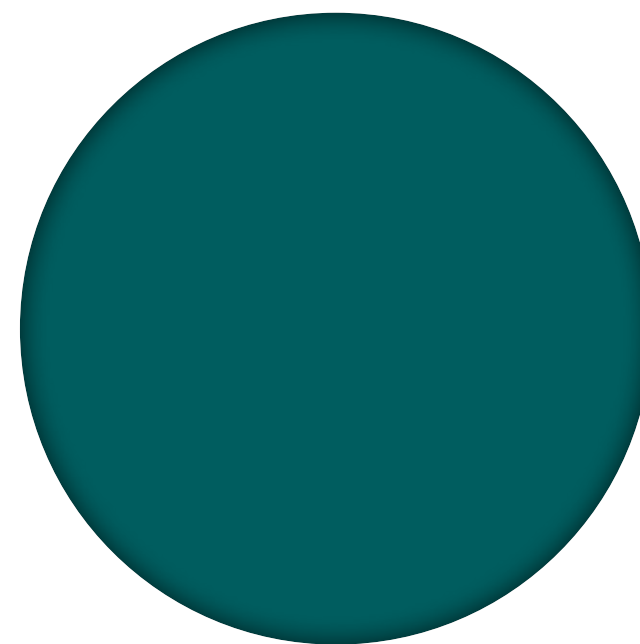
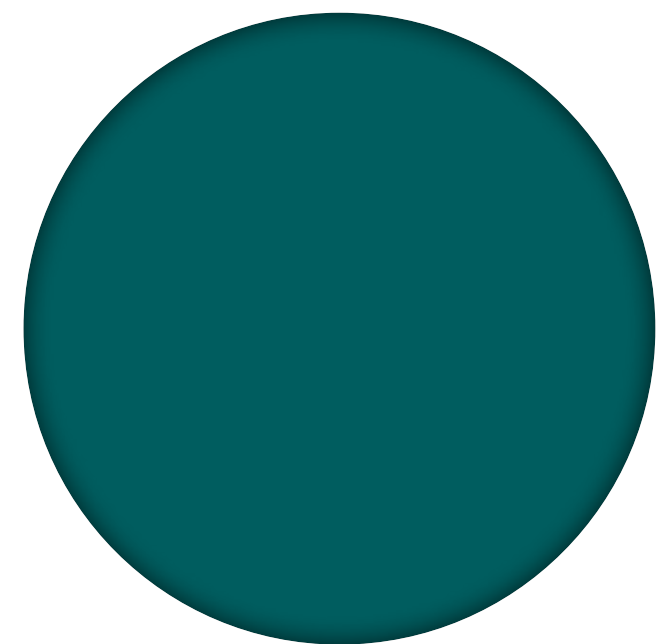
In this report, you will find valuable information, including a breakdown of DHS's annual budget allocation and funding; overviews of our three divisions; performance highlights; and major events that occurred during the SFY, which falls between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024.

The success of this agency is dependent on the dedication and service of DHS's over 9,300 employees and our support of the priorities and initiatives of Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp.

At our core, DHS works to provide access to resources that offer support and empower Georgians; deliver services professionally and treat all clients with dignity and respect; manage business operations effectively and efficiently by aligning agency resources; promote accountability, transparency, and quality in all services and programs; and develop our employees at all levels of the agency. From the launch of the Georgia Communicare mobile application and the increased success of the Fatherhood Program, to the addition of three new Memory Assessment Clinics in Gainesville, Savannah, and Vidalia, you will see these core values reflected in the highlights throughout this annual report.

Our accomplishments in SFY 2024 are a direct result of the hard work and achievements of the employees at all levels of DHS. Our teams went above and beyond to provide services to their fellow Georgians, finding innovative solutions to challenges and working collaboratively to ensure we can assist all who need us. I am proud of what we, and our partners, stakeholders, and champions under the Gold Dome, have accomplished. We will continue working together to build stronger families for a stronger Georgia.

*Candice Broce*





# Major Events | State Fiscal Year 2024

JULY 2023



DCSS was awarded \$210,000 in supplemental funding for the SAVES grant.

OCTOBER 2023



DFCS launched Argo Placements statewide, allowing DFCS staff to more efficiently create paperwork and match children to foster or group homes electronically using data available within SHINES.

NOVEMBER 2023



DAS's Light Up the Holidays gift drive fulfilled 446 wish lists for older adults and people with disabilities in Georgia.

DECEMBER 2023



The Clark's Christmas Kids program provided more than 24,000 gifts for over 8,000 children and youth in foster care.

JANUARY 2024



Commissioner Broce, members of the Board of Human Services, and DHS staff joined the Governor and First Lady to celebrate the opening of Grace's Place, a first-of-its-kind facility to serve adolescent survivors of human trafficking. This facility provides housing and transitional living, mental health counseling, medical services, and treatment planning for individuals needing security and wraparound support.

FEBRUARY 2024

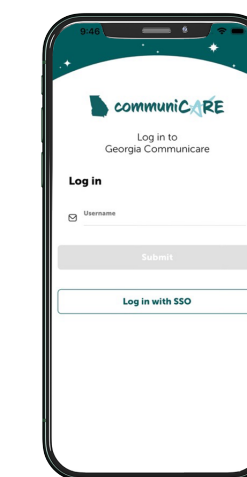


DFCS launched Georgia Communicare, a new technology designed to support data management and communication by connecting child welfare caseworkers, Court Appointed Special Advocate staff and volunteers, foster parents, and biological parents.

MAY 2024



DCSS announced a new PAC circuit in Savannah area.



The Georgia Communicare mobile app launched statewide during National Foster Care Awareness Month.

JUNE 2024



DAS hosted the Healthy Aging Conference in Stone Mountain, Georgia, bringing aging experts and advocates together from across the state.

JULY 2024



DFCS honored over 200 youth in Georgia's foster care system who recently graduated from high school, vocational school, or college at the annual Celebration of Excellence.



DFCS partnered with the Atlanta Braves organization to celebrate Georgia's caregivers and families, and promote foster parent recruitment at a Braves game.



# Georgia Department of Human Services

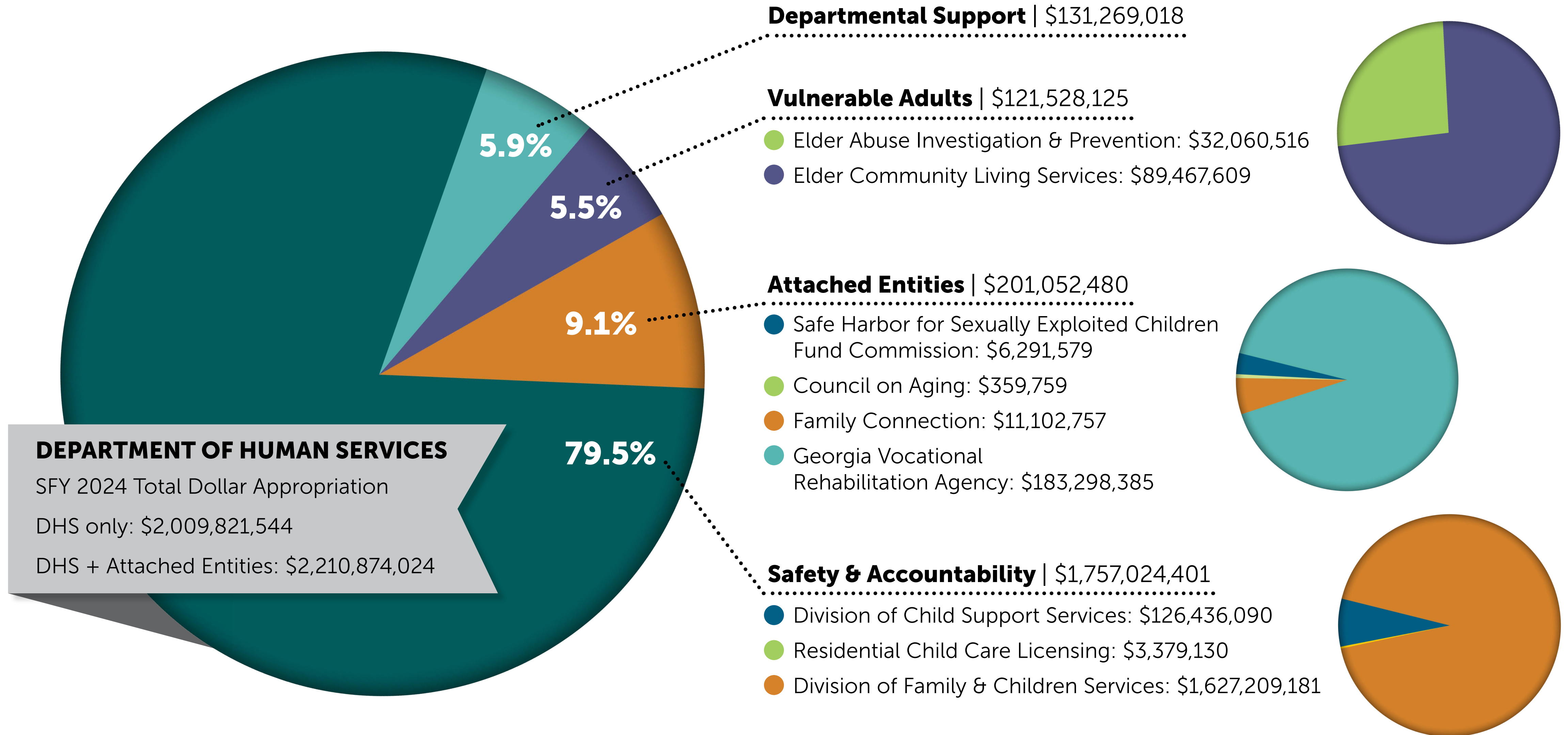
The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) serves more than 2 million Georgians and employs over 9,300 people. With an annual budget of \$2.2 billion, DHS delivers a wide range of services that protect and enhance the lives of Georgia's most vulnerable residents.

DHS comprises three divisions — the Division of Aging Services (DAS), the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS), and the Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS).





# State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 Budget Allocation & Funding | DHS Overview



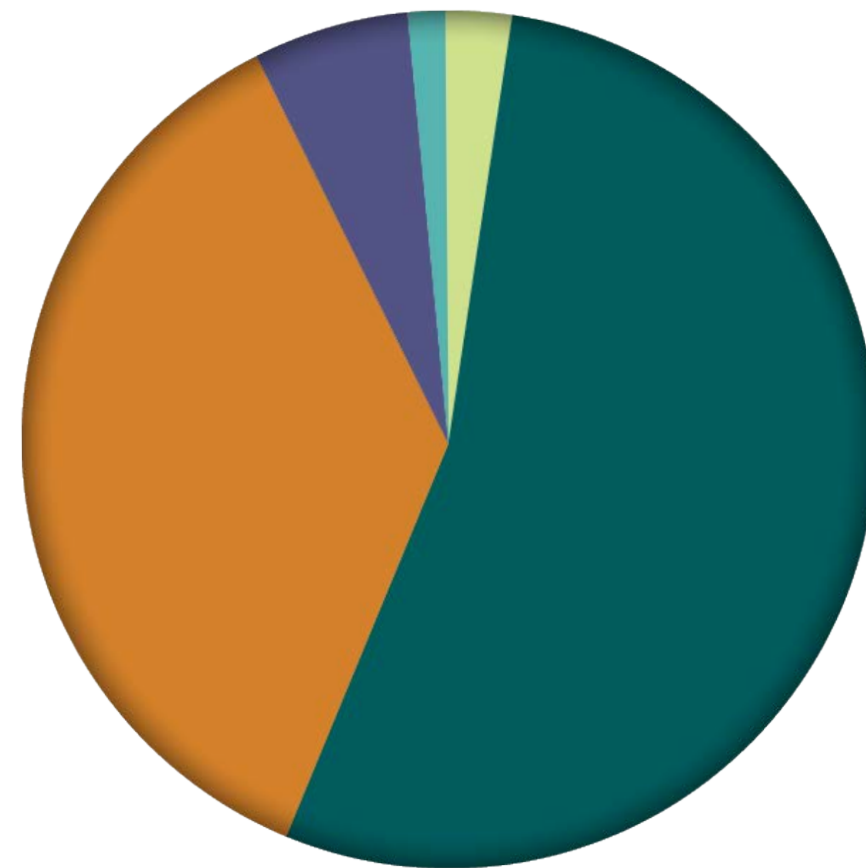


# SFY 2024 Budget Allocation & Funding | GVRA & DFCS

## Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency | \$183,298,385

(under "Attached Entities" on previous page)

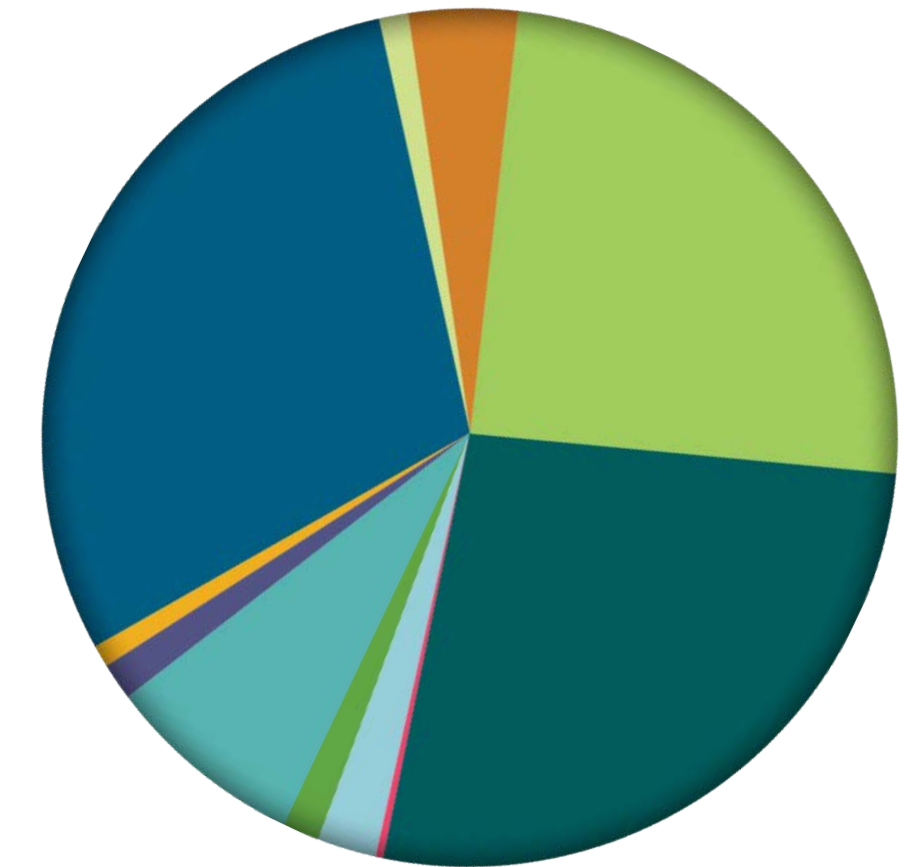
- Business Enterprise Program: \$2,780,175
- Department Administration: \$10,635,252
- Division of Aging Services: \$66,908,724
- Georgia Industries for the Blind: \$4,447,933
- Vocational Rehabilitation: \$98,526,301



## Division of Family & Children Services | \$1,627,209,181

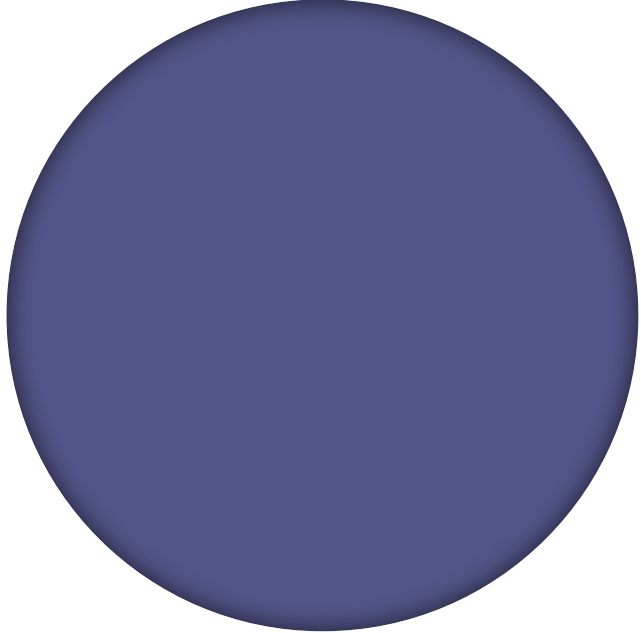
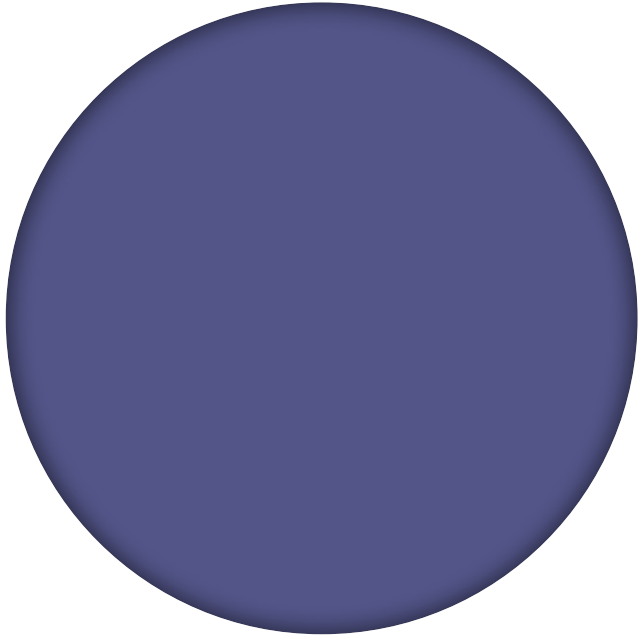
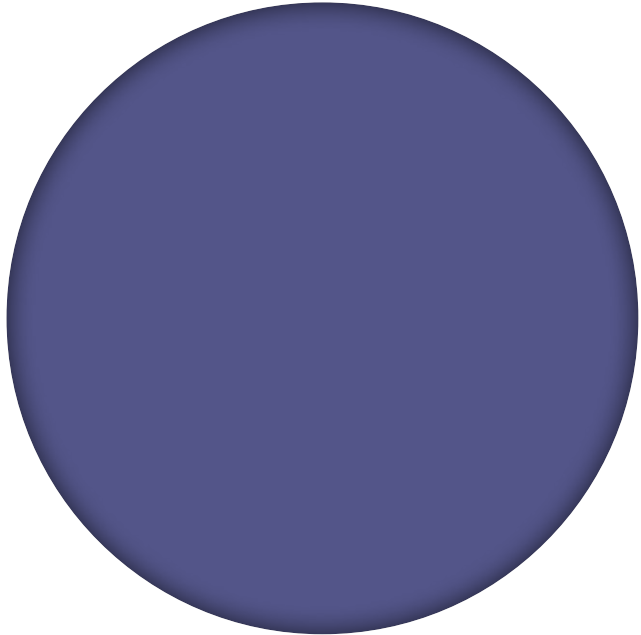
(under "Safety & Accountability" on previous page)

- Adoptions: \$124,370,273
- Child Abuse & Neglect: \$14,235,036
- Child Welfare Services: \$482,723,555
- Community Services: \$18,161,659
- Energy: \$71,610,157
- Federal Eligibility Benefit Services: \$398,733,178
- Out of Home Care: \$434,305,766
- Out of School Care: \$20,910,000
- Refugee Assistance: \$5,038,984
- Support for Needy Families - Basic Assistance: \$36,523,008
- Support for Needy Families - Work Assistance: \$20,597,565





# Division of **Aging Services**



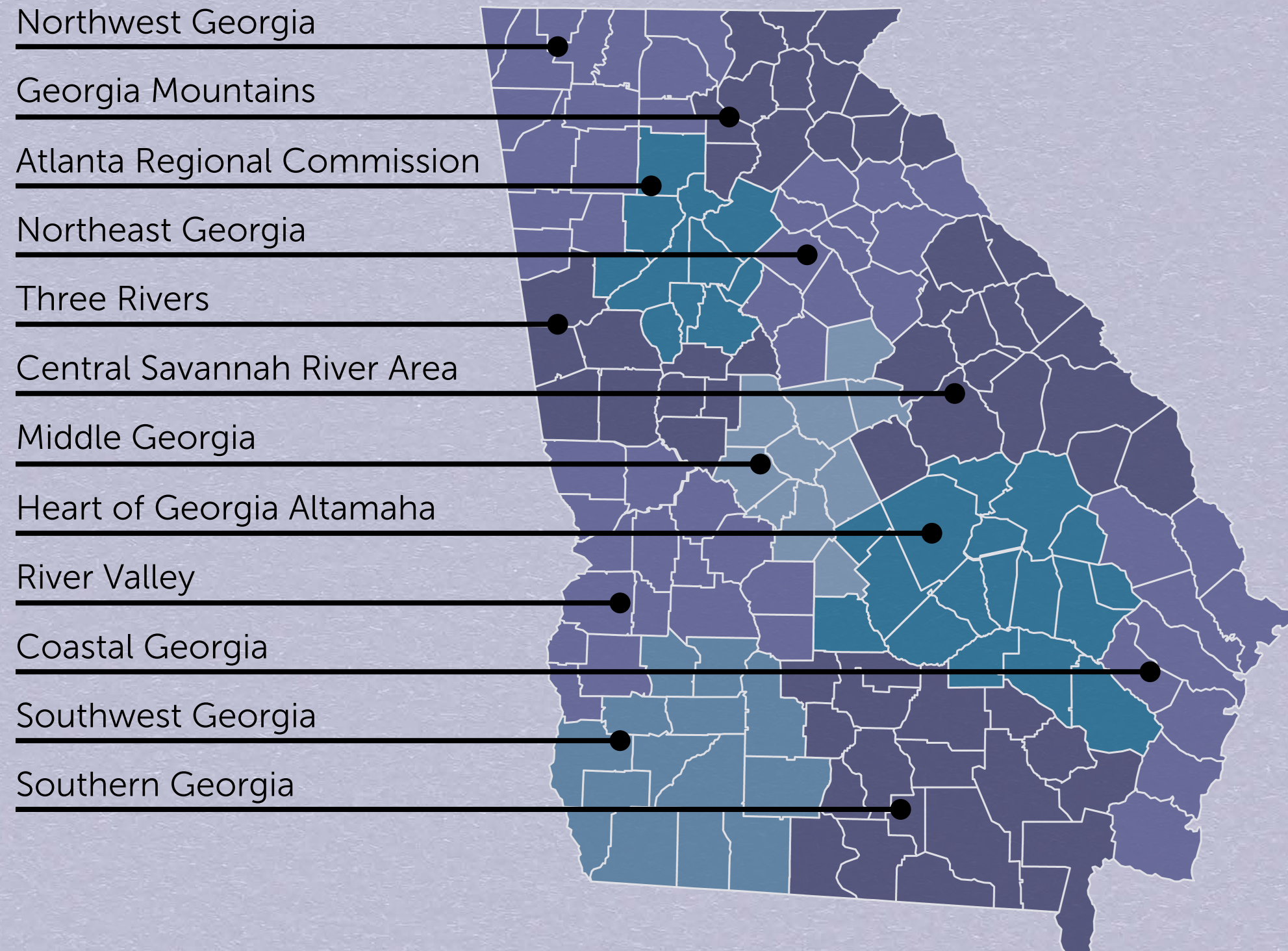
The Division of Aging Services (DAS) assists older individuals, at-risk adults, persons with disabilities, their families, and caregivers to achieve safe, healthy, independent, and self-reliant lives. The Division works with its partners around the state to keep people in their homes and communities for as long as they desire, enabling them to function independently and avoid or delay placement in a long-term care facility.

DAS is also responsible for safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The division investigates claims of abuse in the community setting (the Department of Community Health investigates claims of abuse in care facilities). DAS also provides services to advocate for adults under DHS guardianship.



## Aging and Disability Resource Connection

The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) is a one-stop shop or “no wrong door” entry point staffed with counselors who help older adults and adults with disabilities navigate life changes and find resources to assist them with living a more self-reliant life. The majority of these services are provided through the statewide network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).



## Area Agencies on Aging

Through contracts with the 12 AAAs, DAS supports older adults, adults living with a disability, and their caregivers through a variety of home and community-based services, as well as other supportive services. AAAs are located across the state and support individuals and caregivers in every county. While specific services vary by region, the core programs in each AAA region are:

### Personal Care Assistance

Hands-on assistance with bathing, dressing, and similar daily living activities.

### Transportation Services

Provides rides to and from senior centers, medical appointments, and quality of life trips such as shopping and other activities to remain engaged in the community.

### Assistive Technology

Tools that can help individuals perform everyday tasks, allowing them to remain in their own home or the community setting of their choosing and/or avoid long-term residential care.

### Home-Delivered Meals

Nutritious meals provided to qualified individuals in their homes.

### Congregate Meals

Nutritious weekday lunches provided to older adults in a group setting.

### Chronic Disease Self-Management

Services that teach individuals with recurring conditions and illnesses how to monitor and care for themselves in a way that maximizes their quality of life.

### Respite Care

Services that offer a brief period of rest for family caregivers, either in the home or in a community-based day program, or a short-term basis in a long-term care facility.

### Elderly Legal Assistance Program

Legal representation, information, and assistance for all civil matters including elder law, housing, elder abuse and neglect, and Supplemental Security Income.

### Money Follows the Person and Nursing Home Transitions Programs

Programs that assist individuals who reside in long term in-patient facilities with relocating back into a community setting of their choosing, when desired. Money Follows the Person is a federally funded program, and Nursing Home Transitions is funded by the state.



## SFY 2024 AAA Clients Served by Planning and Service Area

AAA Region	ADRC	Adult Protective Services *	Georgia SHIP	Home & Community Based Services	Money Follows the Person	Nursing Home Transitions
Atlanta Regional Commission	8,633	9,029	7,335	10,426	25	23
Central Savannah River Area	2,877	1,504	892	2,569	0	0
Coastal Georgia	1,358	1,840	959	2,900	4	10
Georgia Mountains	3,078	1,899	1,805	4,595	2	13
Heart of Georgia Altamaha	2,139	721	575	1,649	7	9
Middle Georgia	2,077	1,378	802	1,378	8	6
Northeast Georgia	2,853	1,721	1,585	2,804	4	15
Northwest Georgia	4,212	2,587	1,763	4,362	8	11
River Valley Georgia	2,990	1,109	571	1,433	7	8
Southern Georgia	3,478	1,281	894	2,009	9	13
Southwest Georgia	4,888	989	586	1,817	7	6
Three Rivers	2,798	1,361	1,998	2,885	11	20
Other Entities	0	0	0	0	29	54
Unavailable **	0	3,204	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,381</b>	<b>28,643</b>	<b>19,765</b>	<b>38,827</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>188</b>

\*Adult Protective Services clients served is defined as the number of intakes that met criteria during the fiscal year by Planning and Service Area region.

\*\*Unavailable means that the county of the client is unknown.

### Other Entities for MFP and NHT

Entity	Money Follows the Person	Nursing Home Transitions
Access to Independence	3	4
Disability Connections	5	6
Disability Resource Center	0	6
disABILITY Link	4	5
Northwest Georgia Centers for Independent Living (CIL)	1	0
LIFE	2	5
Multiple Choices	0	5
Walton Options (Parent)	14	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>



## By the Numbers | Aging and Disability Resource Connection

---



**60,168**

customers and family members received free, unbiased counseling on resources and services specific to their needs



**309**

vulnerable adults transitioned from nursing homes and in-patient facilities back into their homes and communities through the Money Follows the Person and Nursing Home Transitions programs



**\$1,269,476.50**

in out-of-pocket expenses was saved by SHIP Medicare beneficiaries



**4,608,138**

meals were provided to older or disabled adults through home delivery and congregate settings



**9**

AAAs established 9 Assistive Technology Labs to cover the entire state. All 12 AAAs have Assistive Technology toolkits for public demonstrations



**38,827**

individuals received Home and Community-Based Services



**\$75,352**

is the average annual cost to provide residential care in a nursing home



**\$26,087,657**

was the value of legal services provided to older Georgians through the Elderly Legal Assistance Program



**1,210**

clients received assistive technology services



**\$2,748**

is the average individual annual cost to provide Home and Community-Based Services



**3,106**

individuals contacted the ADRC to receive information on assistive technology



### Need assistance?

---

Anyone seeking resources to support an older adult or individual living with a disability can call the ADRC's toll-free number at **866-552-4464** to speak with a counselor or visit the website **here**.

Based on the individual's needs, counselors provide unbiased information on resources and services that will support the individual and allow him/her to live in the setting of their choosing.

The toll-free number can also connect callers to the SHIP program, which provides free and unbiased counseling on Medicare, Medicaid, and other related health insurance. For more information on the SHIP program, please visit **ship.georgia.gov**.



## Healthy Aging Conference Celebrates 25 Years



The Division of Aging Services hosted the Healthy Aging Conference from June 2-5, 2024, at the Atlanta Evergreen Lakeside Resort in Stone Mountain, Georgia. This marked the 25th anniversary and the first in-person conference since 2019. The conference brings together providers and partners in our statewide aging network. Tracks included Technology and Innovation, Professional Development, Service Access and Delivery, and Evaluation and Impact. Over 300 people attended the conference, 15 vendors exhibited, and 40 sessions were offered. To learn more and find out how you might participate in 2025, visit the conference website [here](#).



## Georgia Memory Net

Georgia Memory Net (GMN) is a statewide program developed in partnership with Emory University to expand access to early and accurate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD) and to support those living with dementia, including caregivers.

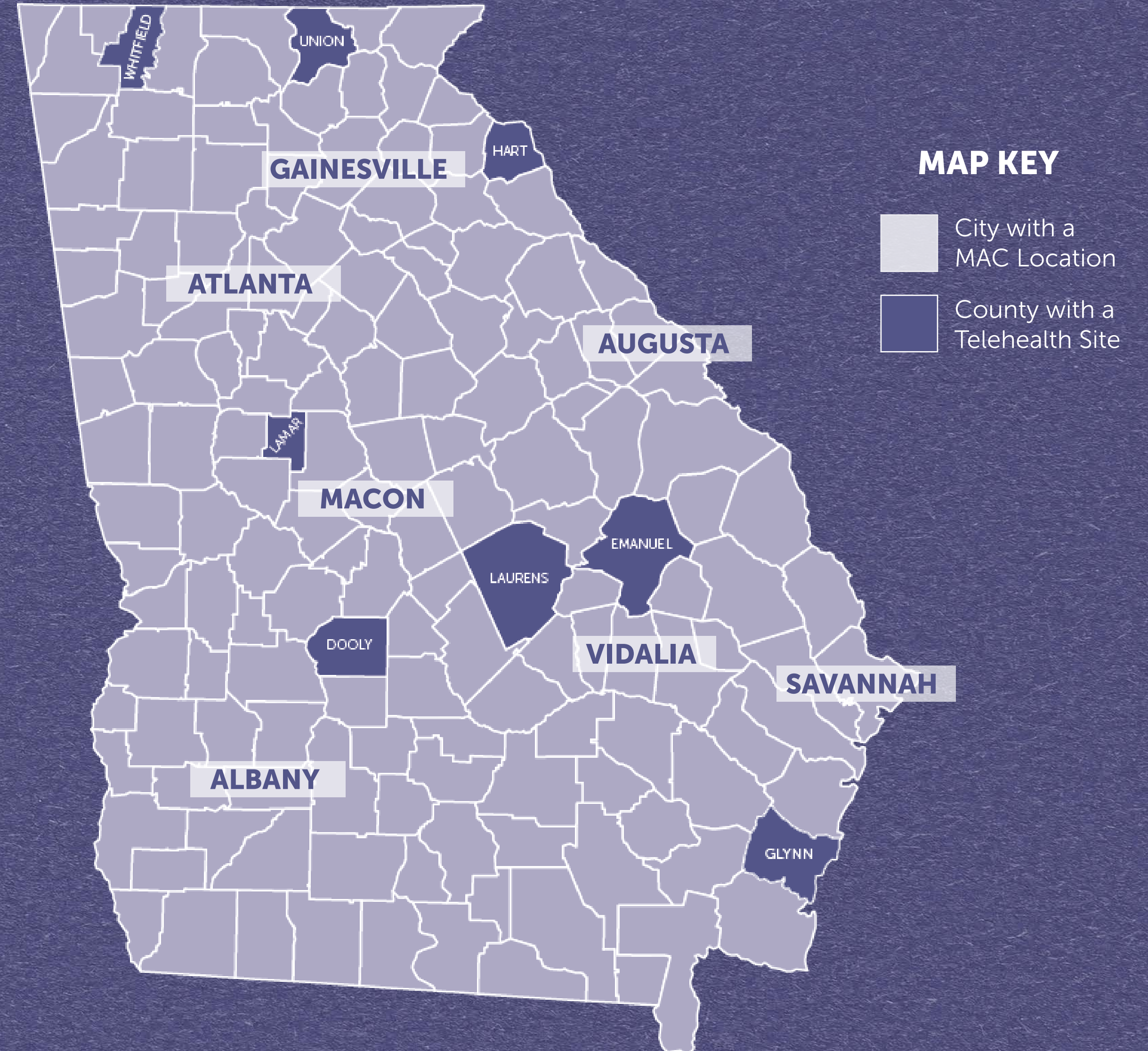
GMN trains physicians to properly screen for the disease and collect data in a manner that will allow the state to better support those living with dementia. Cognitive neurology and neuropsychology leads based in Emory’s Cognitive Neurology Program train and continuously work with Memory Assessment Clinics (MAC) to ensure the MAC providers have the tools and training they need to effectively and accurately diagnose ADRD using evidence-based, clinically-proven tools.

GMN recently added three more brick-and-mortar MAC locations to their footprint across the state. This brings the number of MAC locations delivering early and accurate diagnosis of ADRD to seven, with existing locations in Atlanta, Albany, Augusta, and Macon, as well as new MAC locations in

Gainesville, Savannah, and Vidalia. Through administrative support from Northeast Georgia Health System, and a dedicated team within the MAC, the new Gainesville MAC location is already live and seeing patients following three months of extensive training and implementation.

Additionally, through a collaborative partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), GMN has expanded to eight telehealth locations at DPH clinics throughout the state, which provide resources for a virtual assisted diagnostic visit with a GMN provider. These sites overcome significant barriers for patients and families in rural Georgia, including significantly shortening travel distances and providing a strong, reliable broadband connection for patients and families who lack the technology or access to internet in their residence. These GMN-DPH telehealth sites are located in Dooly, Emanuel, Glynn, Hart, Lamar, Laurens, Union, and Whitfield counties.

## Georgia MAC Locations & Telehealth Sites





## Dementia Care Specialist Program

Funded in SFY 2023, the Dementia Care Specialist (DCS) Program provides funding for a DCS at each of the 12 Area Agencies on Aging across the state. The DCS Program’s mission is to increase dementia education and awareness, build stronger community partnerships, and support care partners to expand skills and resources to support those living with dementia.

To achieve this mission, the DCS Program has three pillars:

- Creating a dementia-capable aging network through training, education, awareness, and collaboration
- Creating dementia-capable communities with community outreach and partnerships
- Supporting people living with dementia and their families

The DCS Program builds on Georgia’s efforts to become dementia-capable and improve access and resources to better support people living with dementia, their caregivers, and their families.

In SFY 2024, the DCS Program reached over 8,000 Georgians by building dementia coalitions, participating in community programming, and educating the aging network. The DCSs have created dementia coalitions within their regions. Each coalition is made up of individuals living with dementia, care partners, first responders, business owners, and health care professionals, and focuses on meeting the needs of their communities which include memory cafes, virtual dementia tours, dementia friendly education sessions, Rosalynn Carter Institute (RCI) classes, and Alzheimer’s Association community education classes. Many DCSs have presented their work at local, regional, and national conferences and trainings.

## By the Numbers | Georgia Memory Net



**\$28,501**

the amount of money Medicare spends per person diagnosed with Dementia



**239,141**

residents are estimated to be living with Alzheimer’s in Georgia by 2025

## Did you know? MEDICARE

Medicare recipients can receive a free cognitive impairment assessment that measures memory loss and cognitive decline as part of their Annual Wellness Visit. For more information, visit [georgiamemorynet.org](http://georgiamemorynet.org).

## State Health Insurance Assistance Program

The Georgia State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) offers one-on-one assistance, counseling, and education to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers to help them make informed decisions about their care and benefits. Georgia SHIP provides services to support people with limited incomes, Medicare beneficiaries under the age of 65 with disabilities, and individuals who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. Certified counselors are available to help answer Medicare questions at **1-866-552-4464 (option 4)**.

**In SFY 2024, Georgia SHIP provided Medicare counseling to 15,021 clients.**



## Senior Community Service Employment Program

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act. SCSEP has three purposes: to foster and promote useful part-time opportunities in community service activities for unemployed low-income persons who are 55 years of age or older and who have poor employment prospects; to foster individual economic self-sufficiency; and to increase the number of older persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors.

The program serves people whose yearly income meet the federal poverty guidelines (FPG), updated and published annually within the Federal Register. The 2024 FPG for a family of one would equate to an annual income of no more than \$18,825, or \$25,550 for a family of two. Social Security Income is only calculated at 75%, and Social Security Disability (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits are excluded from the annual income.

Services are available in 157 of Georgia's 159 counties, 46 of which are primarily rural and served by DAS.







To streamline operations of this collaborative program, DAS contracts with Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA) to administer SCSEP to those 46 counties statewide.

**Did you know?**  
SCSEP

Adults who are at least 55, unemployed, and have a family income of no more than 125% of the federal poverty level may qualify for subsidized employment opportunities. For a family of two, that would equate to an annual income of no more than \$25,550.



## By the Numbers | SCSEP

-  **275** people participated in SCSEP in SFY 2024
-  **153,266** hours of community service were provided by participants
-  **32%** of SCSEP participants were homeless or at risk of homelessness
-  **18** participants entered unsubsidized employment
-  **33%** of participants were individuals with disabilities
-  **234** participants provided community service in 46 counties



## Kinship Care

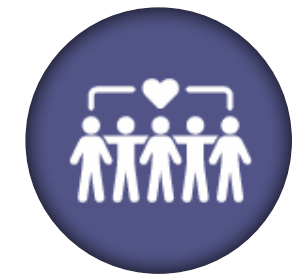
Through kinship support groups, DAS provides education and peer support for grandparents and relative caregivers raising children by focusing on positive parenting, effective discipline, and healthy relationships. Other kinship care services include provision of material aid such as school supplies, respite through summer camps, and case management for grandfamilies of children with disabilities.

## By the Numbers Kinship Care



**\$372,621**

was provided to AAAs for kinship care services using state and federal funds



**2,673**

people attended AAA-sponsored kinship support groups



**23**

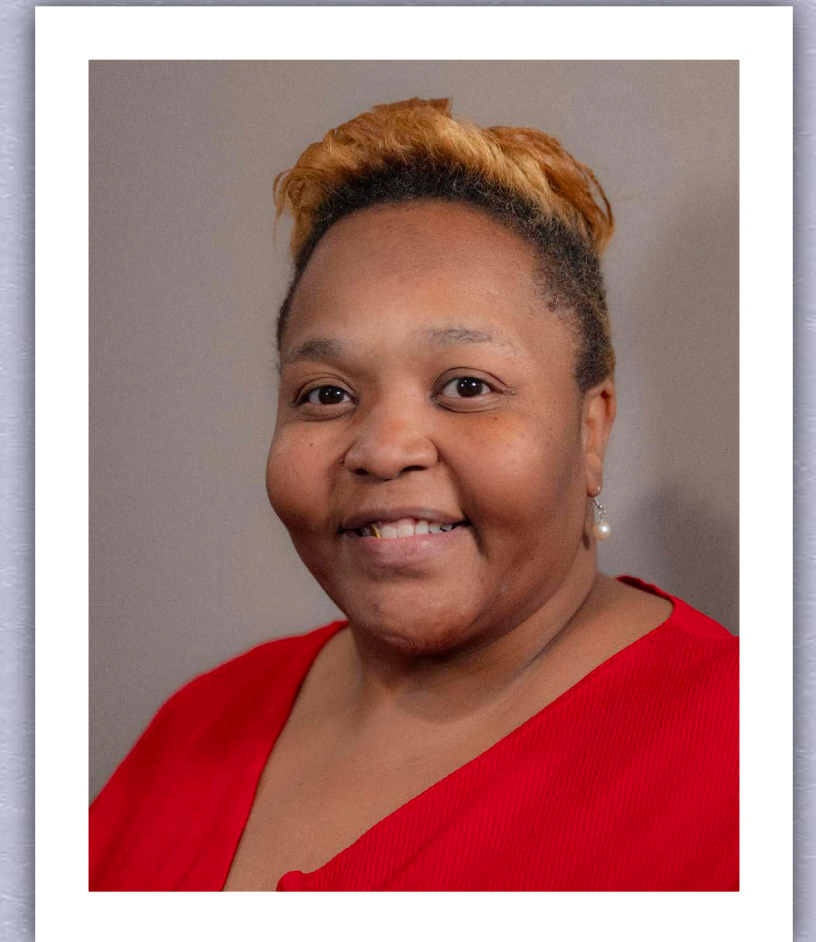
ongoing kinship care support groups were held



## Georgia Fund for Children & Elderly

DAS co-administers the Georgia Fund for Children and Elderly with the Georgia Department of Public Health's (DPH) Maternal and Child Health Program Division. DAS receives 50% of the fund's donations each year, and those donations are distributed to AAAs for home-delivered meals and senior transportation. The remaining 50% is allotted to DPH to provide grants for programs that serve children and youth with special needs. **In SFY 2024, the Georgia Fund for Children and Elderly funded \$106,491.12 for programs for the elderly.**

## DAS Staff Spotlight



DAS Adult Protective Services Investigator Cynthia Toby received the division's Innovation Award for her forward-thinking idea to implement a safe word for staff to use when they are facing a threatening or unsafe situation. The safe word allows caseworkers to discretely notify others that they need help. This innovative solution will help promote safety and well-being for all DAS staff.



## Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older persons or adults with disabilities who do not reside in long-term care facilities. Abuse involves physically harming or distressing an at-risk adult or depriving an individual of his/her basic needs, such as not providing necessary medications or withholding food.

APS case managers work with victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to employ the least restrictive intervention for adults who are in need of support and have the capacity to engage in decisions about their well-being.



## By the Numbers | APS



**13,375**

cases were substantiated, meaning alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation was confirmed



**44,522**

reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation



**185**

budgeted APS case manager positions



## SFY 2024 Top 5 Reasons for APS Reports



### FINANCIAL ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION

Improperly or illegally using a person's resources for the benefit of another person. **14,550 reports**



### SELF-NEGLECT

Depriving oneself of necessities such as food, water, or medication. Consciously putting oneself in harm's way or being unable to handle the needs of day-to-day living, because of medical problems, mental health, or other disabilities. **8,058 reports**



### NEGLECT

Refusing or failing to provide essential services (food, water, shelter, medical care, etc.) to a person to the degree that it harms or threatens to harm them. **7,170 reports**



### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Using physical force to coerce or to inflict bodily harm. It often, but not always, causes physical discomfort, pain, or injury. It may include the willful deprivation of essential services, such as medical care, food, or water. **2,539 reports**



### EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Using physical force to coerce or to inflict bodily harm. It often, but not always, causes physical discomfort, pain, or injury. It may include the willful deprivation of essential services, such as medical care, food, or water. **2,428 reports**



## Forensic Special Initiatives Unit

The Forensic Special Initiatives Unit (FSIU) aids DAS and other local, state and federal partners in their efforts to protect Georgia's at-risk adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The unit provides technical assistance and case consultations and offers a two-day Certified Adult Crime Tactics Specialist (CACTS) certification course. The course trains professionals to identify and investigate cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The CACTS training is open to primary and secondary responders including:

- Law enforcement
- Judges and prosecutors
- Health care providers and medical services personnel
- Employees of financial institutions
- Regulatory, social, and victim service workers
- Other professionals who respond to the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of at-risk adults

The quote below is from an employee at Briggs & Associates. They help find employment for persons with disabilities. The employee attended a recent ReACT training, which covers the basic types of elder and disabled adult abuse, Georgia laws on mandated reporting, and resources.

"Thank you so much for the presentation, I learned a lot today. I think it is amazing that you created an app that will help educate the general public as well as mandated reporters on resources to protect vulnerable adults. I can't wait to check it out and share with others."

The unit also provides training for healthcare workers known as Facility At-Risk Crimes Training (FACT). This class is reserved for hospital social workers, case managers, discharge planners, care coordinators, home health, and hospice providers that respond to the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of at-risk adults. The mission of FACT is to help primary and secondary medical and home health providers understand Adult Protective Services and Public Guardianship's role in responding to at-risk adult crime victims in

Georgia. Since FACT training began in October 2021, 32 classes have been hosted and 428 people have attended a class.

For SFY 2024, FSIU increased the number of law enforcement officers who completed the 2-day CACTS training by 83% from last year. There are now 108 law enforcement officers trained on how to recognize, respond to, and investigate at-risk adult abuse. Total CACTS attendees reached a new record high of 467 for SFY 2024 and included multi-disciplinary participants from the medical field, Adult Protective Services (APS), the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division (HFRD), financial institutions, prosecutors, and other state agencies.

During SFY 2024, FSIU answered 389 technical assistance requests. Examples of technical assistance are staffing a case, reviewing evidence, advising on the next steps for an investigation, and connecting at-risk adult advocates to resources at the local and state levels.



FSIU training class

## By the Numbers | FSIU



**421**

law enforcement officers, medical staff, prosecutors, and other mandated reporters were trained by FSIU on issues pertaining to the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults in SFY 2024



**4,593**

people have become CACT Specialists since training began in SFY 2011



## Public Guardianship Office

When DHS is appointed as guardian of last resort for Georgians who have been deemed by a probate court to be incapable of making or communicating decisions about their health or safety, the DAS Public Guardianship Office (PGO) fills that role.

PGO case managers advocate for persons under DHS guardianship, assist with making decisions on health and welfare, and coordinate and monitor all services needed for the support, care, and education of guardianship clients.

## By the Numbers | PGO



**1,604**

vulnerable adults in SFY 2024 have been advocated for by the PGO



**42**

budgeted PGO case managers

## DAS Partners with the University of North Georgia for Nexus Degree



DAS partnered with the University of North Georgia to create a nexus degree in applied gerontology. The nexus degree in applied gerontology produces career ready graduates to meet the diverse, multifaceted workforce needs to support Georgia's growing older adult population.

Three baccalaureate level courses provide a deep knowledge of the context of aging, communication with older adults, and offer a gerontology elective of your choice. Three robust practicums in a broad array of organizations and businesses (anywhere in the state of Georgia) will prepare you for employment upon graduation.

Learn more about the nexus degree in applied gerontology [here](#).

## Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program Celebrates 45th Anniversary



*Celebrating 45 years of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in Georgia at the statewide Ombudsman Representative training conference in Macon*

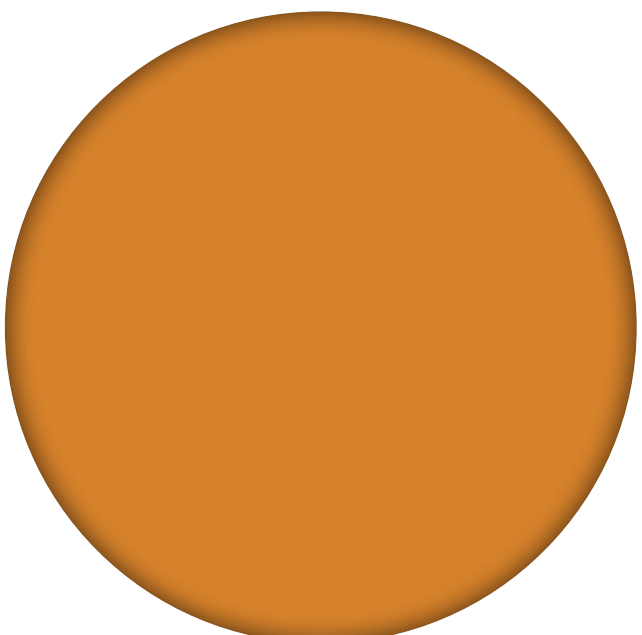
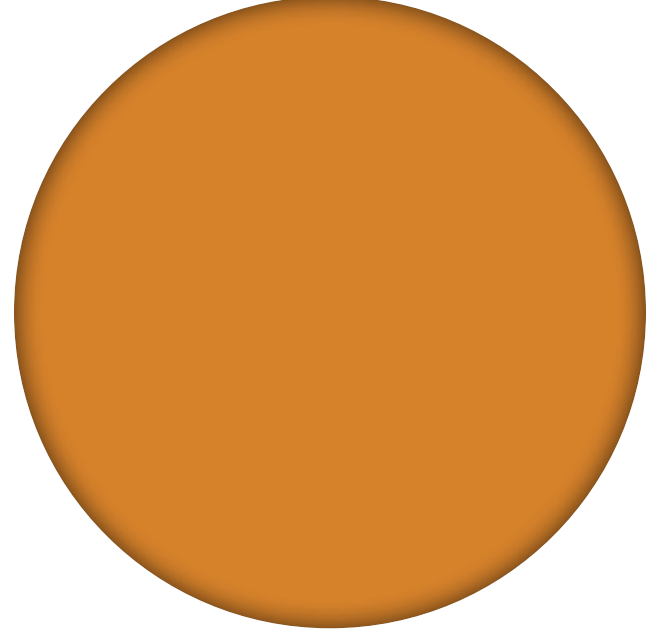
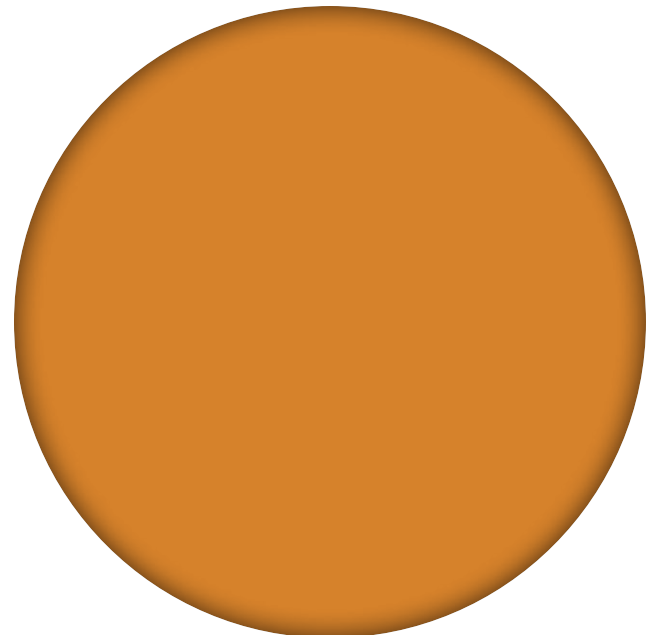
In June, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program celebrated its 45th anniversary. Over the last 45 years, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program has seen the long-term care industry change from just providing services in nursing homes with wards of many people and very little person-centered care, to many more long-term care options in more homelike settings. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program at DHS currently serves more than 88,000 nursing home, personal care home, assisted living, and other long-term care facility residents across the state addressing complaints that range from involuntary discharge to the quality and quantity of food, lack of activities, abuse, and neglect. As aging Georgians put a strain on the long-term care industry, DHS is proud to continue to provide Long-Term Care Ombudsman services to facility residents.



# Division of **Child Support Services**

The Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) works to increase the consistency of financial support children receive from parents who do not have primary custody.

DCSS's services include locating parents; establishing paternity; establishing, monitoring, and enforcing fair support orders; increasing health care coverage for children; and removing barriers to payment. In an effort to build stronger families, DCSS helps noncustodial parents find jobs that pay above minimum wage by connecting them with resources that help them meet their court-ordered obligation and be positively involved in their children's lives.





## The SAVES Program Website Launches: Enhancing Safety for Domestic Violence



The Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES) program, in collaboration with the federal Office of Child Support Services,

launched its website to serve as a resource for parents in need. Through the SAVES program, Georgia will implement policies, procedures, and program services to help increase safety for domestic violence survivors receiving child support

and those who want to apply. DCSS SAVES staff are actively working to remove barriers faced by survivors when applying for child support services. During SFY 2024, SAVES staff held six training classes for DCSS employees to learn about domestic violence and safe services for clients enrolled in child support services. The team attended seven events to inform our partners and the community on the safe services being provided by DCSS, including the Georgia Commission on Family Violence's 29th Annual Family Violence Conference in September 2023.

## By the Numbers | Child Support Services



**\$660,012,583**

was distributed to Georgia's children and families by DCSS



**220,504**

parents were under a court order for child support in Georgia



**406,590**

children were financially supported as a result of these orders



**Sarah Hurst** assumed the role of Assistant Deputy Commissioner of DCSS in January 2024.

## DCSS Staff Spotlight



DCSS Agent **Melody Johnson** received the Distinguished Staff Award for the 2024 DHS Commissioner's Staff Excellence & Rookie Awards.



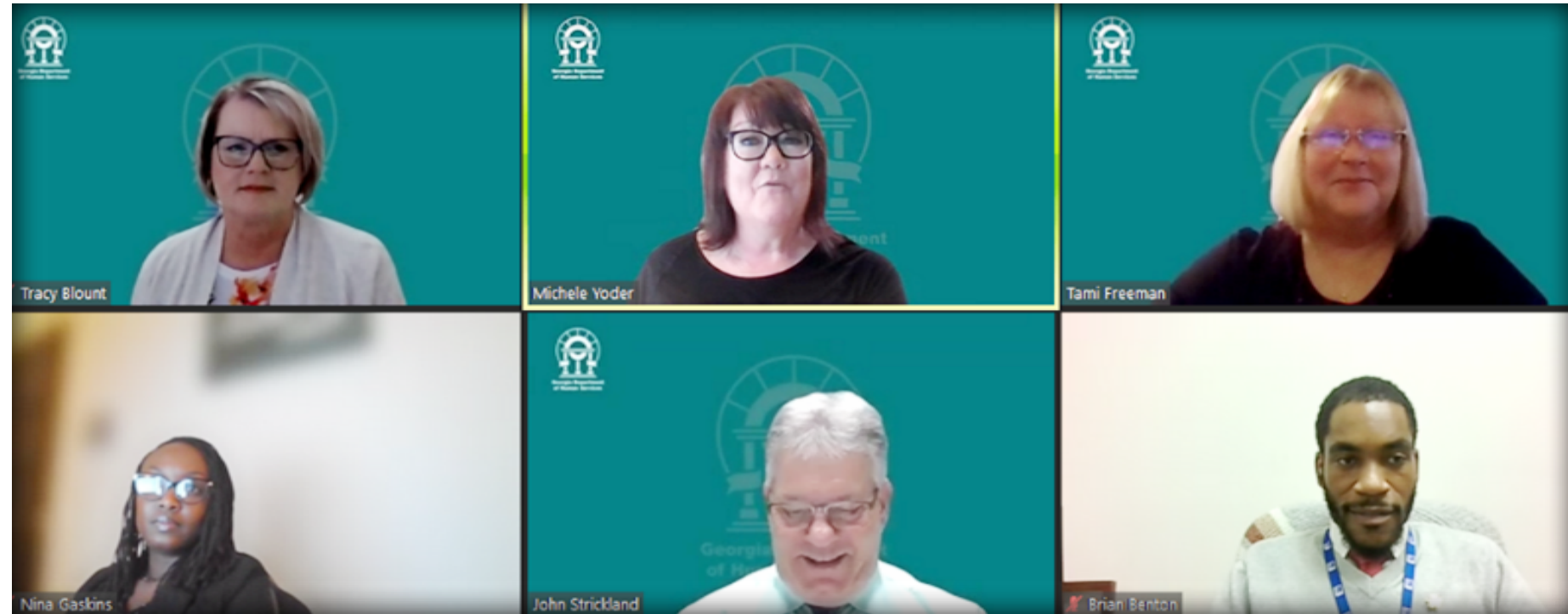
DCSS Region Manager **Terri Jones** received the Positive Impact Award for the 2024 DHS Commissioner's Staff Excellence & Rookie Awards.



DCSS Agent **Janet Jones** was the recipient of the national 2024 Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association (ERICSA) Award of Professional Excellence for Frontline Child Support Professional.



## Fatherhood Program Achieves Remarkable Success



*Brunswick Fatherhood Conversation*

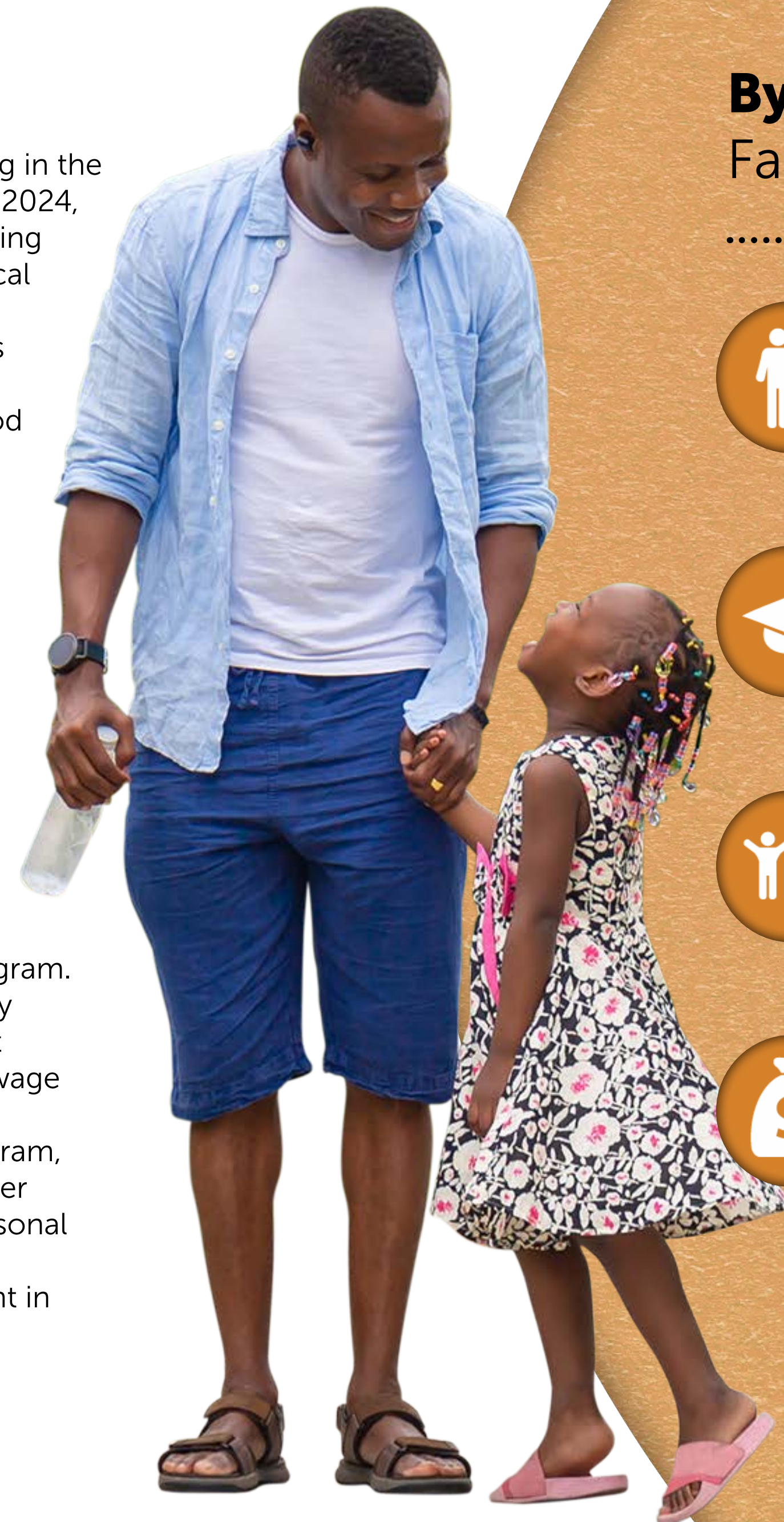
In SFY 2024, the Fatherhood program participated in a rapid process improvement event (RPI) to streamline and update processes. Through program modifications, a continued focus on outreach events, and strengthened partnerships with the Technical College System of Georgia, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and Father's Incorporated, the program has experienced tremendous success. Specifically, program enrollment has increased by 20%, thus increasing the number of children served by over 1,000.

Another outreach event spearheaded by the program are Fatherhood Conversations, which provide attendees a chance to address

questions and concerns directly with local DCSS staff members, businesses, and community support resources. These events reached countless individuals, averaging over 100 live viewers and 200-300 shares on Facebook, YouTube, and Zoom. The Fatherhood program secured educational support opportunities for participants resulting in a 63% increase in GED and short-term job training referrals. Over 50 participants were referred to emotional wellness training to further contribute to strengthening Georgia families.

The success of the Fatherhood program shines through the journey of Davis, a non-custodial parent

(NCP). After enrolling in the program in January 2024, he started CDL training at Wiregrass Technical College, developing a service plan for his participation. After experiencing a period of incarceration (unrelated to DCSS), Davis reconnected with his Fatherhood agent to continue receiving services. He then secured employment with one of the world's largest plastic and PVC pipe manufacturers, applying the skills he gained through the Fatherhood program. Now, he consistently makes child support payments through wage deductions and has completed the program, equipped with greater self-sufficiency, personal accountability, and financial involvement in his children's lives.



## By the Numbers Fatherhood program



**5,279**

parents enrolled in the Fatherhood program in SFY 2024



**1,510**

noncustodial parents were referred to GED and short-term job training assignments



**10,112**

children received increased support from parents who enrolled in the Fatherhood program



**\$4,970,282**

was collected from Fatherhood program participants in SFY 2024





Above: PAC Eastern Judicial Circuit kickoff event. Right: PAC Graduation.



## Parental Accountability Court program

The Parental Accountability Court (PAC) program is a joint effort of the Division and superior court judges to offer an alternative to incarceration and to help chronic nonpayers of child support make regular payments. The program uses community resources and judicial oversight to address barriers that keep parents from meeting their support obligations. Each program, including services provided to participants, is tailored to the needs of the local community. Superior court judges provide judicial oversight and collaborate with PAC coordinators to implement the program. PAC coordinators connect participants to existing community resources.

Services offered through the PAC program include:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Job assistance and placement
- Educational services
- Substance abuse treatment
- Short-term training
- Employment training





## PAC Graduate Reaches Back to Help Others



Mr. Ballard at his PAC graduation ceremony

In June 2023, the Macon Judicial Circuit Parental Accountability Court (PAC), led by Judge Mark B. Beberman, PAC Coordinator Zaccino Holmes, and SAAG Kevin P. Bradley, honored four participants who successfully completed the PAC program at a graduation ceremony.

One standout graduate, C. Ballard, enrolled in May 2022. He began with a history of non-payment, an inactive driver's license, pending charges, and substance abuse. Committed to turning his life around, Mr. Ballard joined an in-patient men's recovery program. During his recovery, he referred another participant facing similar barriers, including an active bench warrant for child support payments, to PAC. Through Mr. Ballard's guidance and the PAC's support, the bench warrant was cleared. He continued to assist other participants by providing support and taking them to recovery meetings, and he remains actively involved in peer support at recovery programs.

Mr. Ballard's dedication has not only helped him create a safe and stable environment for his children but also inspired others to help build stronger families. At his graduation, he stood as a testament to personal growth and community support, embodying Georgia's vision for success.

## By the Numbers Parental Accountability Court



**1,501**

children received increased support from parents who participated in the PAC program



**\$907,699**

in financial support was collected from parents who participated in the PAC program



**7,716**

participants received services through PACs across the state since the beginning of the program in 2009, avoiding incarceration and saving taxpayers the cost of incarceration



**702**

noncustodial parents received help on their journey to lead more self-sufficient lives as part of their enrollment in the PAC program in SFY 2024



**181**

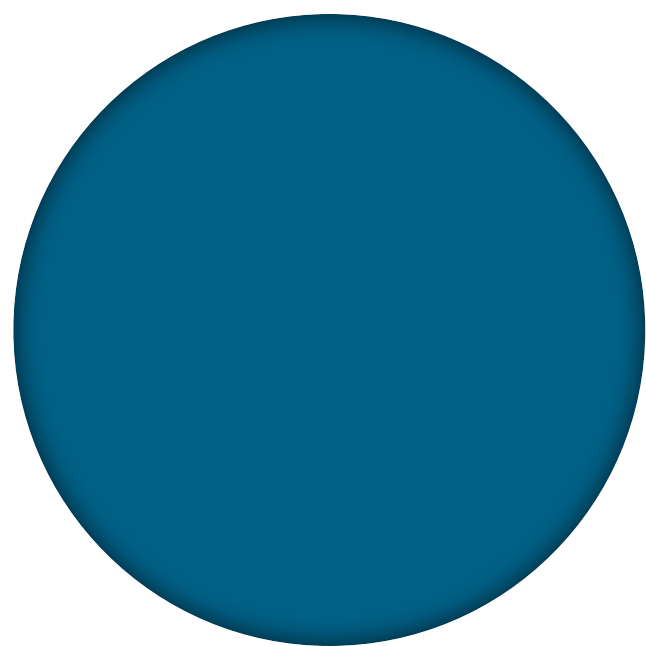
parents graduated from the PAC program, providing support to children who previously received partial or no support



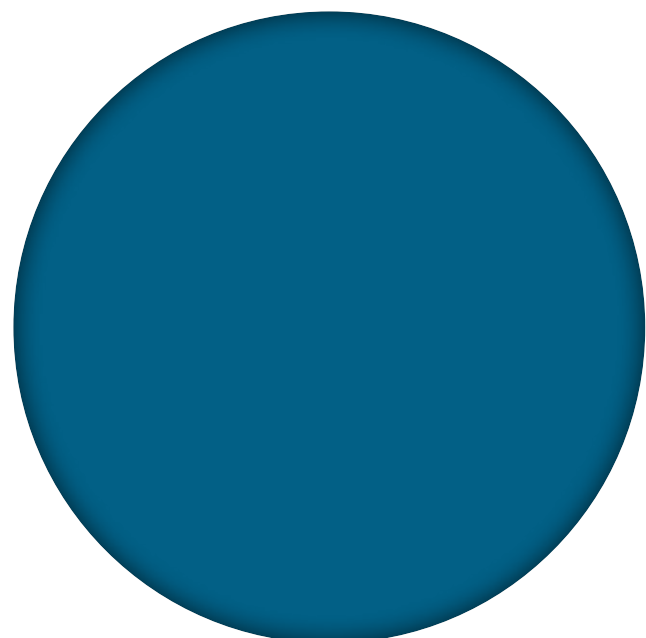
**\$33,404,558**

was collected in child support payments because of the success of noncustodial parents in the PAC program, an **increase of \$4,604,769** from the previous year

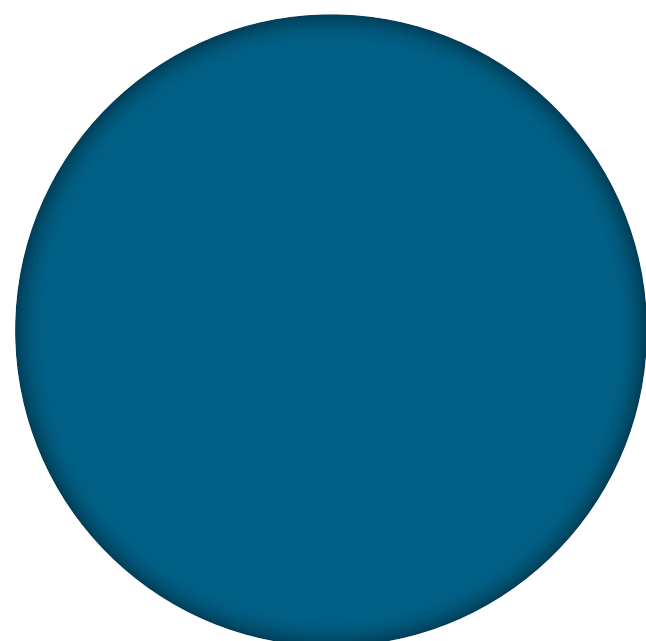




# Division of **Family & Children Services**



The Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) investigates reports of child abuse and neglect; finds foster and adoptive homes for abused and neglected children; determines eligibility for and administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs; helps out-of-work parents get back on their feet; and provides numerous support services and innovative programs to help families in need.





## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally funded program that helps low-income families pay for the cost of food. SNAP also provides recipients the opportunity to improve their economic standing with job skills training and other support.

## SNAP Works

The SNAP Employment and Training Program, also known as SNAP Works, is a voluntary workforce development program designed to help SNAP recipients who are unemployed or underemployed with job placement assistance, thereby reducing and/or eliminating their dependency on SNAP. SNAP Works provides SNAP recipients with opportunities to gain skills, training and experience that will improve their ability to attain employment. The program offers supervised job search, job skills training, GED, and vocational training for specific jobs and work experience through partnerships with community-based organizations and educational institutions. SNAP Works participants include able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), single parents, families, refugees, senior citizens, and some individuals with disabilities.



## By the Numbers | SNAP



**1,371,414**

was the average number of individuals who received SNAP benefits each month



**215,695**

individuals received Senior SNAP\* benefits in SFY 2024



**\$20,166,529**

was the average amount of Senior SNAP\* benefits issued per month in SFY 2024



**191,701**

was the monthly average number of individuals who received Senior SNAP benefits



**317,475**

seniors and disabled adults received SNAP benefits



**\$383**

was the average monthly SNAP benefit per household in FFY 2024



**251,736**

SNAP recipients participated in SNAP Works to improve their economic well-being and were not subject to ABAWD work requirements



**908,890**

children benefited from the SNAP program in SFY 2024



**176,876**

was the number of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) who could volunteer to participate in the program to meet federal work requirements



**428,612**

SNAP recipients were served by the SNAP Works Program in FFY 2024

*\*The Georgia Senior SNAP program is an elderly simplified application project designed to make it easier for seniors to receive SNAP benefits.*



## Benefit Integrity Recovery Unit

The Benefit Integrity and Recovery Unit (BIRU) is charged with investigating recipient fraud in the agency’s public assistance programs. Examples of suspected fraud include withholding or falsifying information in order to receive public assistance to which one is not entitled, and trading or selling Electronic Benefits Transfer cards in violation of program regulations. BIRU has five operating units throughout the state:

- Benefit Trafficking
- Claims and Recoveries
- Fraud Detection and Investigations
- Investigative Analytics and Knowledge Management
- Staff Development

## Stolen SNAP Replacement

In October 2023, DFCS received federal approval to replace electronically stolen Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for recipients who are victims of fraud. SNAP recipients were allowed to receive replacement of stolen benefits twice in each federal fiscal year, until December 20, 2024.

In SFY 2024, the department received 7,787 claims of stolen benefits from a total of 8,100 households. Of those submitted claims, 6,315 were approved to have benefits replaced, which represented 14,577 fraudulent transactions with a replacement value of \$3.3 million.



## By the Numbers

### Benefit Integrity Recovery Unit



**\$9,828,810.36**

was the value of fraud claims investigated by BIRU in SFY 2024



**3,935**

investigations were completed in SFY 2024



**2,634**

claims were established from the investigations in SFY 2024



**\$3,731.51**

was the average fraud claim in SFY 2024

## Did you know? Waste, fraud, or abuse

You can report waste, fraud, or abuse by calling **1-844-694-2347** or visiting **[dhs.georgia.gov/dhs-oig-fraud-and-abuse-reporting-form](https://dhs.georgia.gov/dhs-oig-fraud-and-abuse-reporting-form)**.



## Hiring and Retention Programs

In SFY 2024, the DFCS Office of Family Independence (OFI) hired 1,085 new caseworkers and launched three new programs geared toward employee retention. The Nesting Program was created to support new hires, and provide them with an organized, welcoming and efficient start to their careers. It also expands the mentoring process, providing a firm foundation that encourages staff retention.

OFI Career Path is another new program for caseworkers with 0-5 years’ experience. The program addresses pay concerns, provides achievable milestones and pay increases over a five-year period, and trains caseworkers in multiple programs.

Supervisor Summits are geared towards veteran OFI frontline leaders with the goal of growing skills they need to lead and support their staff. It focuses on a combination of hard and soft skills that directly affect retention and provides well-trained, equipped supervisors and administrators to support and encourage well-trained staff.



## Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Adults who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are required to participate in approved work activities a minimum of 30 hours each week. If the household has a child under age six, the weekly minimum requirement is 20 hours. Children and families exhibiting the greatest need can benefit from the TANF cash assistance program if their parents participate in qualified work activities.

This program is also available to children in the care of relatives. Adults who receive benefits on behalf of a relative child (called a "child-only case") are not subject to work requirements. Activities that meet TANF work requirements include:

### Unsubsidized Employment

Full or part-time employment

### Work Experience

Work activity performed in return for public assistance that provides an individual with the opportunity to acquire the general skills, knowledge, and work habits necessary to obtain and retain employment

### On-the-Job Training

Training given to a paid employee that provides knowledge and skills essential to the performance of the job

### Community Service

Structured programs and activities for the direct benefit of the community. These programs are limited to projects that serve a useful community purpose in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, recreation, public facilities, public safety and/or child care.

### Job Search and Job Preparedness Assistance

Act of seeking or obtaining employment, or preparation to seek employment, by undergoing life skills training, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, or other rehabilitation activities. Treatment or therapy must be deemed necessary by a qualified medical, substance abuse, or mental health professional.

### Vocational Training

Organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations. This activity is countable for up to 12 months.

### Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment

Training or education required for employment to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace



## Pandemic Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Pandemic Temporary Assistance for Needy Families for Relatives Raising Relatives (PTANF-RRR) is a program that provided a one-time payment for individuals in a relative raising relative assistance unit who were eligible for and approved for TANF cash assistance by August 31, 2023. **During SFY 2024, DHS distributed \$2.53 million in PTANF-RRR to eligible recipients.**

### Did you know?

You can call DHS's Customer Contact Center for assistance with Family Independence programs at **1-877-423-4746**.



## By the Numbers | TANF

.....



**6,180**

was the total number of TANF cases in SFY 2024



**181**

caregivers, on average, receive TANF support each month and are subject to a work requirement



**\$265**

was the average benefit amount per month



**7,092**

children, on average, were supported by TANF each month



**4,130**

was the average number of child-only cases receiving TANF support each month, meaning the caregivers receive assistance on behalf of a child and are not required to participate in work activities

## Medical Assistance

The Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids® programs provide a safety net for people who may not otherwise have access to health care.

### Family Medicaid

Low-income families with children under age 19 may qualify for Family Medicaid. These families may qualify at various income levels depending on family size and income. Families who qualify are entitled to the full range of Medicaid covered services including doctors visits, health checkups, immunizations, dental, and vision care.

### Aged, Blind, and Disabled Medicaid Program

The Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD) Medicaid program in Georgia serves individuals ages 65 and older, individuals who are legally blind, and individuals who are disabled, as defined by the Social Security Act. There are 19 different coverage categories known as classes of assistance (COA) for the ABD population. An individual's living arrangement, income, marital status, and prior Medicaid eligibility, among other factors, determine the most appropriate COA.

### Georgia Pathways to Coverage

Georgia Pathways to Coverage is an innovative program that creates a new pathway to Medicaid coverage and healthier communities. To learn more, visit [pathways.georgia.gov](https://pathways.georgia.gov).

## By the Numbers Medical Assistance

.....



**1,213,145**

children received Medicaid (excluding PeachCare for Kids®) each month, on average



**753,574**

received medical coverage through Medicaid each month, on average



**1,009,045**

families received medical coverage through Medicaid each month, on average



**201,138**

children, on average, received medical coverage through PeachCare for Kids® each month



**662,649**

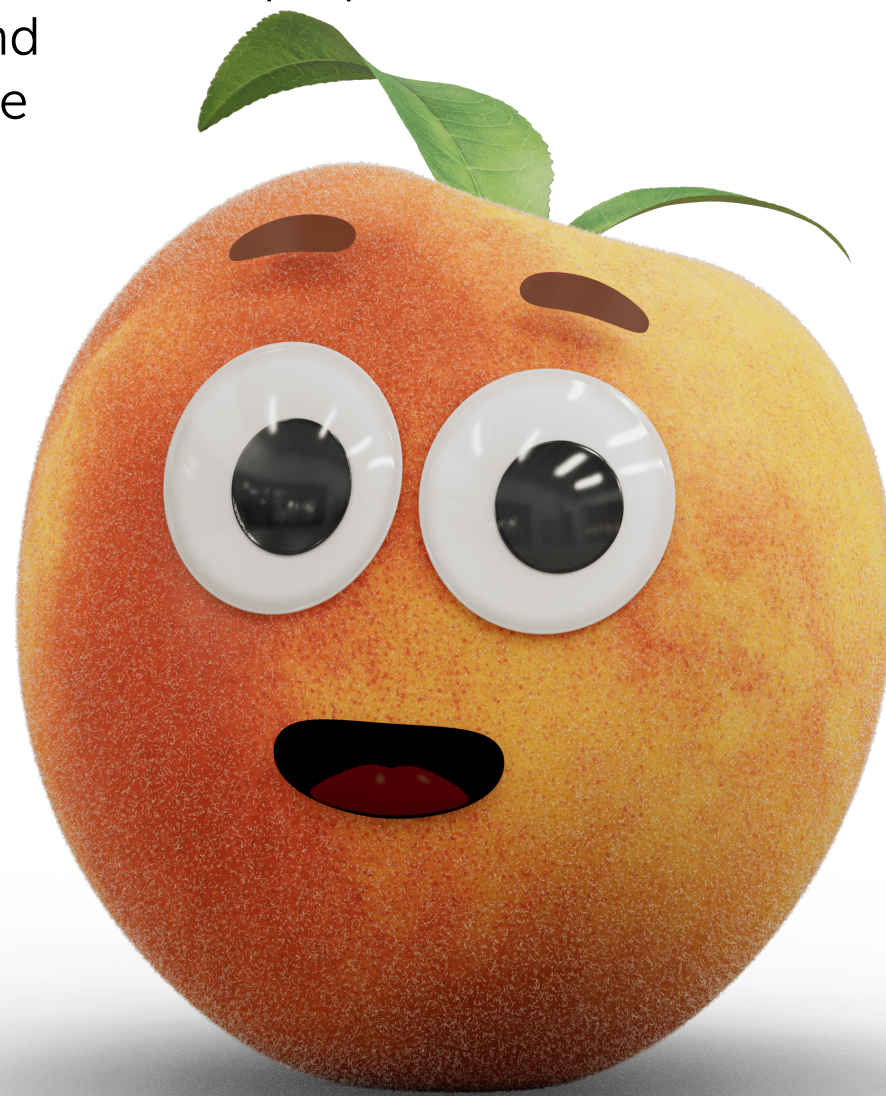
medical assistance applications were processed in SFY 2024



## Medicaid Unwinding

After a 14-month process, DHS and Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) concluded the federally mandated process to review eligibility (“redetermination”) for all 2.8 million Medicaid/PeachCare for Kids® members in May 2024. As a crucial part of this process, Georgia implemented a statewide, multi-platform campaign – “Stay Informed. Stay Covered.” – to promote awareness and public education about redetermination for Medicaid/PeachCare for Kids® members.

The extensive, nationally recognized public information campaign launched ahead of redetermination in August 2022 and included advertising, community partner engagement, community grants, and events, among many other activities. The campaign’s objective was to educate Georgians on how to best prepare for the redetermination process and explore alternative coverage options to help them retain their current Medicaid coverage or find new coverage.



## Library Kiosks

DHS and the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) partnered to provide free self-service benefits kiosks at Georgia public libraries. The kiosks provide a convenient way for the public to access Georgia Gateway, the state’s integrated eligibility system, to review, change, or renew their benefits. There are currently 340 kiosks in 297 GPLS libraries around the state. The kiosks reduce wait times and provide access at the point of need, helping benefits-eligible Georgians to maintain their own and their family’s coverage. Supported by a Google Chrome environment and lightweight enough to be wheeled anywhere, the kiosks capitalize on familiar technology to help connect Georgians to the services they rely on. To view a map of kiosk locations, click [here](#).

## Community Services Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program is a federally-funded program that is administered through a contractual agreement with a statewide network of 20 nonprofit Community Action Agencies and three county governments designated as eligible entities. Services and programs are provided to all 159 counties. CSBG funding supports projects that lessen poverty in communities and addresses the needs of low-income individuals including the homeless and elderly. It also provides services and activities focused on employment, education, housing, nutrition, emergency services, and health.



## Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program that helps low-income Georgians with home energy bills to reduce the risk of health and safety issues that occur as a result of disconnection.

Qualified individuals may be able to receive energy bill payment assistance, energy crisis assistance, weatherization, and energy-related minor home repairs. Applications are offered first to homebound individuals, individuals ages 65 and older, and those with life-threatening circumstances. For more information, call **1-877-423-4746** or visit the LIHEAP website [here](#).

## By the Numbers | LIHEAP



**168,525**

households received assistance from LIHEAP



## Child Protective Services

Child Protective Services (CPS) staff investigate reports of child abuse and neglect and work with caregivers, law enforcement, and judicial partners to ensure the safety of Georgia's most vulnerable children. When an allegation of child abuse or neglect is confirmed, caseworkers partner with families and community organizations to address issues that affect child safety in the home. In most cases, DFCS can work with families to address the safety concern and stabilize the home environment.

### By the Numbers | Child Protective Services

.....



**33,746**

reports of abuse or neglect of children were investigated by CPS staff in SFY 2024



**14,096**

Children received services without entry into foster care



**9**

is the median number of cases a CPS worker manages at a time



**Did you know?**  
Report child abuse or neglect

Call **1-855-422-4453** 24/7 to report child abuse or neglect. In emergencies, or when a child is in imminent danger, you should always call **911**.



## Foster Care and Adoption Services

When children are victims of abuse or neglect, and DFCS caseworkers determine they cannot remain safely in their homes, DFCS petitions the juvenile court to bring children into foster care to ensure their safety. Foster care is intended to be a temporary solution for children as the agency works with their families to eliminate the safety issues that required DFCS intervention. The division's

goal is to return children safely to their families as soon as possible, but only after the safety issues have been resolved. When parents consistently demonstrate that they are unable or unwilling to care for their children, DFCS works with the courts to find loving adoptive homes for them.



## By the Numbers Foster Care and Adoption Services



**15,650**

children were in foster care at any point during SFY 2024



**1,728**

is the total number of children eligible for adoption in SFY 2024



**17**

is the median\* caseload for a foster care caseworker



**1,239**

children were adopted by new families and given permanent homes



**36%**

of children in foster care were placed with a relative in SFY 2024

\*Previously, this was reported as an average. Currently, the median figure is used, as it is less likely to be affected by extreme outlying values.



## Celebrating Georgia's Caregivers with the Atlanta Braves

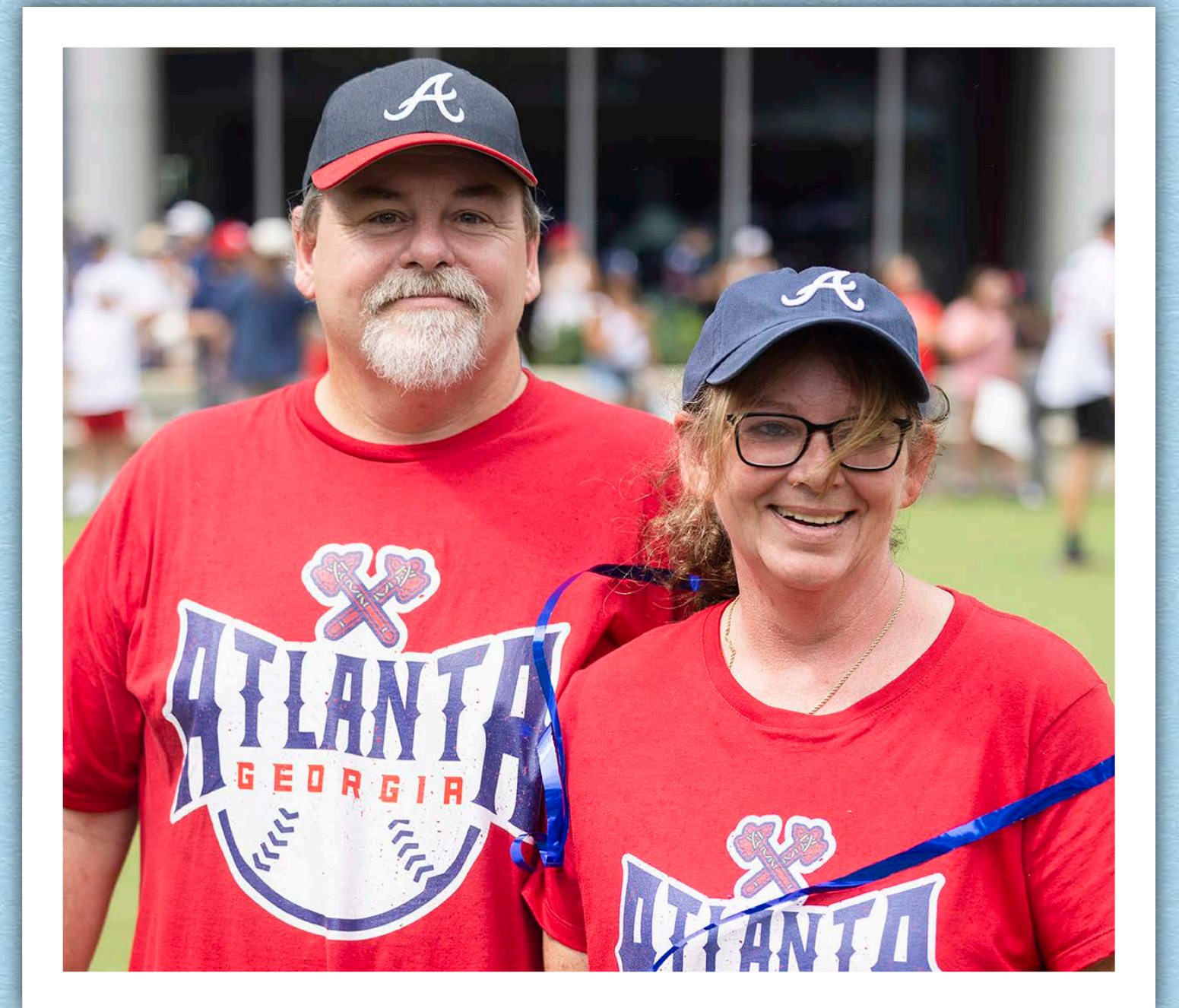


DFCS partnered with the Atlanta Braves organization to host a family day at the park to celebrate current foster caregivers and families and increase foster parent recruitment efforts in July 2024. This year's event was originally planned for June 2024. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Atlanta Braves celebration was moved to July 2024.

For the event, DFCS was able to provide over 30 foster caregivers and their families with free tickets to the game. Ten of these families were Foster Caregivers of the Year for 2024. We were honored to have additional foster families, agency staff, and providers attend as well to help support and celebrate Georgia's caregivers.

Foster and adoptive youth were able to participate in pre-game activities including standing with players during the national anthem, announcing the start of the game, attending a player Q&A, and participating in a pre-game parade.

Throughout the game, the agency promoted foster parent recruitment through a number of photo and video advertisements broadcasted on TVs and digital signage around the park.





## Kinship Care

When a child is not able to safely remain in the care of their biological parents, relatives can step in to provide the stability they need during a difficult time. These arrangements are often called kinship care. Children who remain connected to their family, friends, school, extracurricular activities, and community through these kinship care arrangements fare much better and experience less trauma than children placed in traditional foster care arrangements.

## Georgia Resilient, Youth-Centered, Stable, and Empowered John H. Chafee Independent Living Program

DFCS bolsters children on their path to adulthood through a variety of programs that support their education, their readiness for the job market and their social well-being. The Georgia Resilient, Youth-Centered, Stable and Empowered (GA RYSE) John H. Chafee Independent Living Program seeks to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood and provide youth who are aging out of foster care with the social, educational, medical, and financial foundation they need to live independently as adults.



## The Family First Prevention Services Act

DHS launched the first phase of its implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act on Nov. 1, 2023. This included selecting Grace Harbor as the multisystemic therapy (MST) provider in Chatham and Richmond counties and Family Ties as the Functional Family Therapy (FFT) provider in Cherokee and DeKalb counties. The implementation team, consisting of subject matter experts in the areas of child welfare practice, child welfare policy, workforce development and training, SHINES, CQI, and fiscal, has continued to provide support to these counties and providers by incorporating monthly implementation meetings and ongoing training. Family First CQI efforts were initiated as well to collect data that informs methods to improve operations for phase one and subsequent phases. DFCS is currently working to expand services statewide with planning for phase two currently underway.

## Out of School Services Program

The Out of School Services Program provides federal funding to non-profit organizations and public agencies who serve youth and families during traditional non-school day hours including before and after school, during school breaks, and summer break. It is designed to support DFCS's goal of providing resources and services that promote self-sufficiency among children and families.

During SFY 2024, agencies funded through Out of School Services provided Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math-based opportunities which allowed children to learn about 21st century career and educational pathways.

## By the Numbers Out of School Services Program

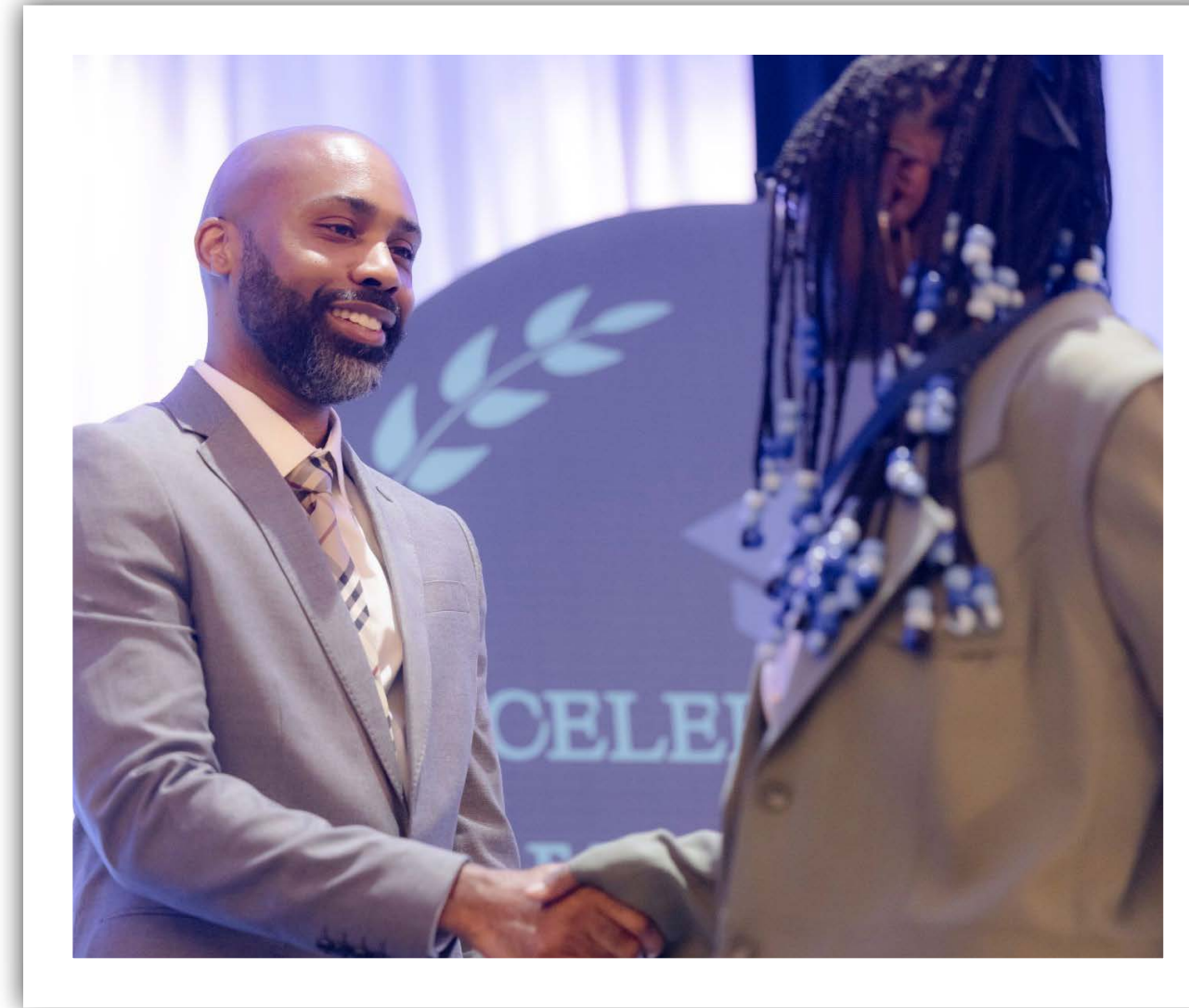


**25,715**

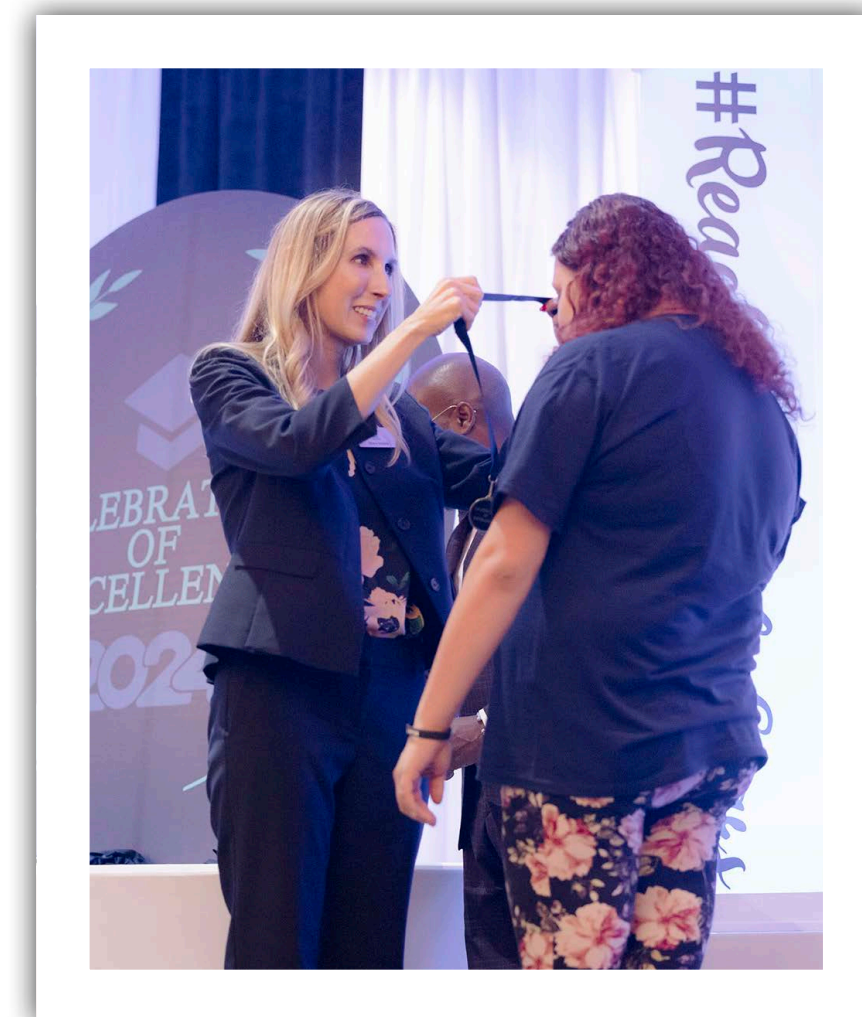
youth were served through the Out of School Services, an increase of 4,627 children from the previous year



## Celebration of Excellence Honors Over 200 Graduates



Celebration of Excellence is an annual event that highlights the secondary and post-secondary success of youth in care. During the event, DFCS celebrated over 200 youth who graduated from high school, vocational school, and college. Our agency was honored to have DHS and DFCS board members and additional special guests attend this year's ceremony. DFCS also welcomed Rick Jackson, chairman and CEO of Jackson Healthcare, to provide the keynote address for the graduates. Our agency was thrilled that these individuals could join us to celebrate Georgia's youth and their academic achievements.





## Technology Modernization

### DFCS Launches Georgia Communicare



The Georgia Communicare project team and DHS Leadership present Communicare at the Georgia Child Welfare Summit in December 2023.

This year, DFCS launched Georgia Communicare, technology designed to support and enhance child welfare programs.

Georgia Communicare is a set of interconnected web portals that connect child welfare caseworkers, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) staff and volunteers, foster parents, and biological parents. These portals are integrated with Georgia SHINES, the statewide system of record for all child welfare

information, to ensure efficient and secure data management and communication. System features include chat capabilities, multi-channel notifications, calendar sharing, appointment scheduling, contact information logs, and document upload and sharing.

The initial project launch began in northeast Georgia in the fall of 2023, and the statewide launch began in January 2024. As of February 2024, Georgia Communicare is available in all 159 counties. During National Foster Care Month in May 2024, DFCS further expanded the accessibility of Georgia

Communicare to approved user

groups with the launch of a mobile application available for download on the App Store and Google Play.

Georgia Communicare is just one example of our agency's continued efforts to improve the experiences of all individuals involved in child welfare.



### DFCS Launches Argo Community Portal and Argo Placements



In October 2023, DFCS launched Argo Placements statewide. Argo Placements is integrated with Georgia SHINES, the statewide system of record for all child welfare information, to support the placements process. This system allows DFCS staff to search for a foster home

or group home for a child, by matching the child's needs to the home's attributes. This system also assists staff in the application paperwork process, by leveraging all data available in SHINES. With Argo Placements, case managers have access to detailed search results for a child's placement options, contact information for placement locations, and a shareable application to initiate placements for the child in a home.

The launch of Argo placements follows the October 2022 launch of Argo Community Portal, technology designed to improve the management of the service authorization process and interactions with delivered service providers. The system provides case managers with a platform to engage providers directly, gives providers a common platform to access and manage their workload, and increases providers' access to Service Authorizations.

Our agency strives to increase the efficiency of our case managers while also equipping them with the tools to help manage their workload. Through the Argo Community Portal and Argo Placements, the previous research and response times for case managers has been reduced. Our agency plans to continue to prioritize technology modernization efforts that will aid individuals involved in child welfare.

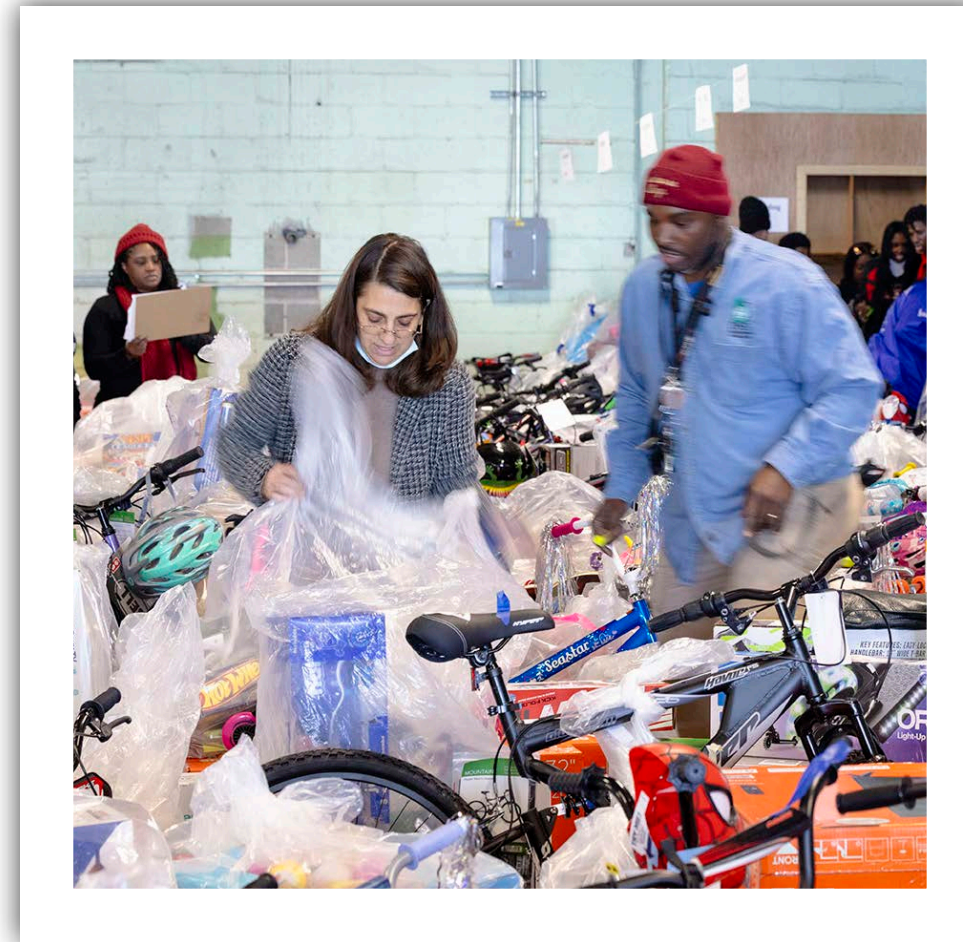


## Clark's Christmas Kids



For 34 years, DHS has partnered with Clark Howard, WSB Radio, and St. Vincent de Paul for Clark's Christmas Kids. This program provides children and youth in foster care with gifts they want on Christmas morning. This is made possible by the generous support of Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp, employees from all Georgia state agencies, and with the help of Georgians shopping for gifts, volunteering their time, and donating funds.

At the in-person shopping events, customers had the opportunity to pick a child's wish list and purchase their gifts directly at several metro Atlanta Walmart stores. Many of "Santa's helpers" – from Clark Howard's team, DHS, St. Vincent de Paul, Walmart, WSB, and more – helped organize and pack the presents before sending them to the warehouse.



At the warehouse, volunteers checked each wish list twice, making sure that every child had the gifts they asked for – from bicycles, games, art supplies, and essentials to tablets, TVs, speakers, and video games. The gifts were then packed up and prepared for distribution to county DFCS offices throughout the state.

In 2023, Clark's Christmas Kids collected \$1.4 million in donations, providing over 24,000 gifts, making Christmas morning brighter for more than 8,000 children and youth in foster care.

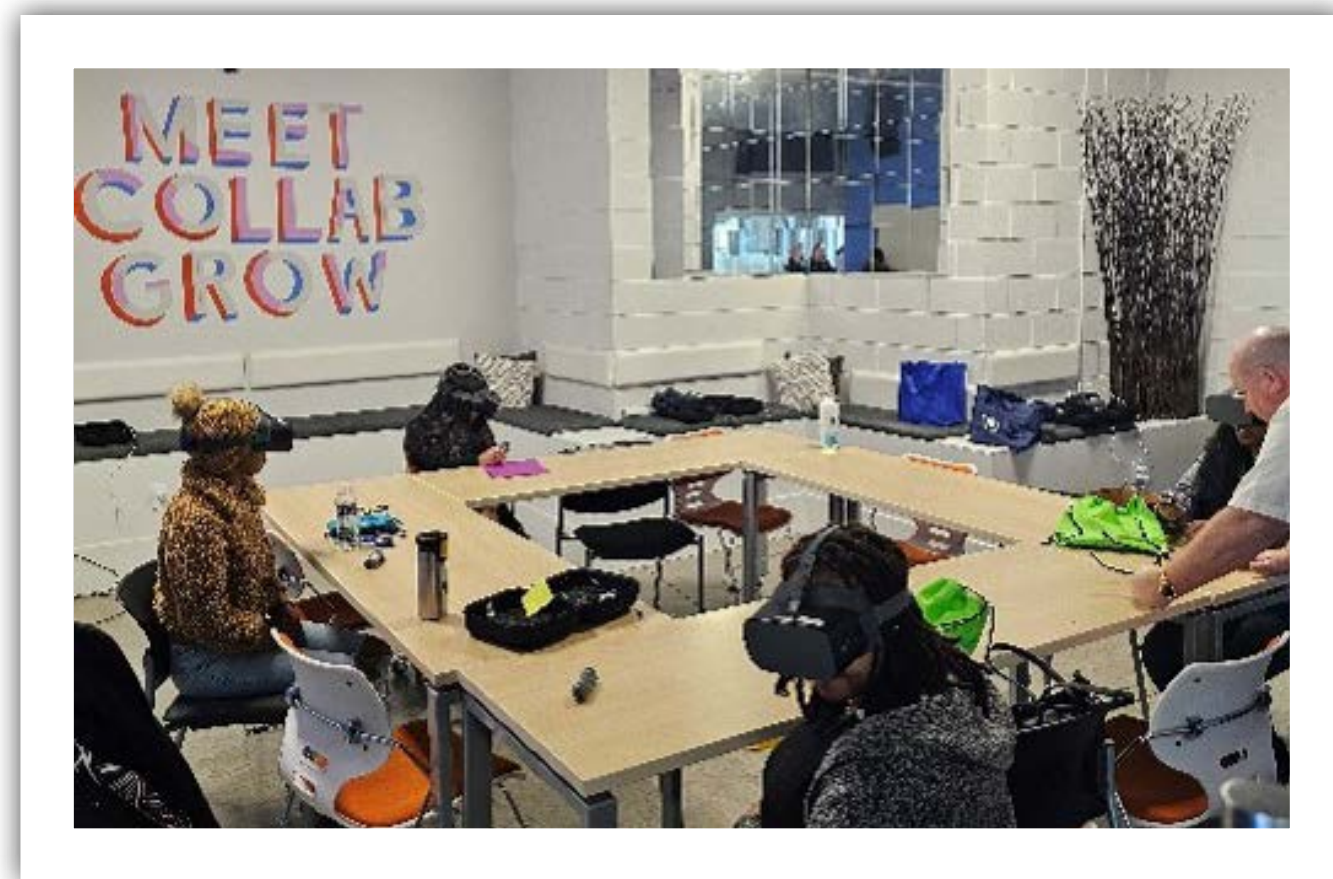




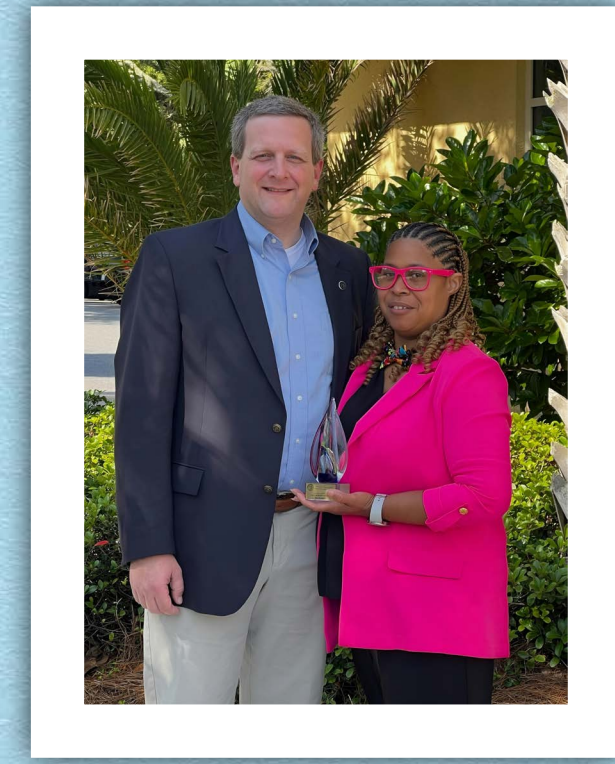
## DFCS Hosts Realistic Job Preview Days



This year, DFCS has prioritized efforts to promote careers within child welfare by hosting two in-person Realistic Job Preview Days – the first on Jan. 13, 2024, in Lawrenceville, and the second on April 27, 2024, in Atlanta. These events are designed to give attendees a preview of what a job within DFCS child welfare looks like. Those who attended the events had the opportunity to try a virtual reality headset simulation which depicted a home visit from a case manager’s point of view. Attendees also had the opportunity to network with current employees, hiring managers, and human resource representatives.



## DFCS Staff Spotlight



DFCS Case Manager Tara Brodhead (right) was presented with the Chief Justice Hines Award for her outstanding advocacy for children.



Adoption Case Manager Britney Sullivan (holding certificate) is named DFCS’s 2023 Adoption Case Manager of the Year during National Adoption Month.



## Residential Child Care Licensing

The Department’s Residential Child Care Licensing (RCCL) unit seeks to protect children in residential care by licensing and providing oversight for a variety of residential child care facilities to ensure that facilities have the resources to provide for children in their care and keep them safe.

Through its Tracking Residential Applications, Incidents, and Licenses System (TRAILS), RCCL also keeps stakeholders and the public informed of the quality of residential child care programs. Facilities that require a license from RCCL include child caring institutions (CCIs), child placing agencies (CPAs), outdoor child caring programs (OCCPs), children’s transition care centers, and maternity homes. CCIs and CPAs make up the majority of state licenses. RCCL registers Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs and maternity supportive housing residences.





CCIs are commonly referred to as group homes and include any institution, society, agency, or facility that provides full-time care for six or more children through 18 years of age outside of their own homes. CPAs are any institution, society, agency, or facility that places children in foster homes for temporary care or in prospective adoptive homes for adoption. OCCPs are CCIs that provide outdoor activities designed to improve the emotional and behavioral well-being of children in a wilderness or camp environment. Maternity homes are any place that receives, treats, or cares for – within a six-month period – more than one pregnant woman whose child is born out of wedlock.

During SFY 2024, all rules and regulations for CPAs were amended to streamline guidelines, update terms and provisions, reorganize rule provisions for clarity, and make certain regulatory requirements less burdensome for providers where safe to do so.

## SFY 2024 Top 5 Reasons Facilities Received Citations

-  1 Missing or insufficient documentation of employment references for personnel
-  2 Insufficient or untimely health screenings of personnel
-  3 Missing or untimely service plans
-  4 Missing or insufficient documentation of timely dental examinations of residents
-  5 Missing or insufficient documentation of signed admission documents

## By the Numbers Residential Child Care Licensing

-  **294** facilities were regulated by RCCL in SFY 2024
-  **6** new licenses were approved for CCIs
-  **4** new licenses were approved for CPAs
-  **6** new registrations for Maternity Supportive Housing Residencies





# DHS Leadership

## GOVERNOR

**Brian P. Kemp**

## BOARD OF HUMAN SERVICES

**Randall P. Smith**  
*Chair*

**Doug Aldridge**

**Rochard D. White**

**Scott Johnson**  
*Vice Chair*

**David Barbee**

**Jack F. Williams**

**Monica Walters**  
*Secretary*

**Lisa Hamilton**

**Wes Lewis**

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

**Candice L. Broce**  
*Commissioner*

**Regina Quick**  
*General Counsel*

**Chris Apsey**  
*Chief of Staff*

**R. Demetrius Taylor**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Finance*

**Mary Havick**  
*Deputy Chief of Staff*

**Breanna Thomas**  
*Deputy Commissioner, State Programs*

**Robin Herron**  
*Director, Executive Operations*

**Sreeji Vijayan**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Information Technology*

**Ann Burris**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Human Resources*

**Melissa Barwick**  
*Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Finance*

**John Hallman**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Family Independence*

**Brian Pettersson**  
*Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Health Law & Policy*

**LaMarva Ivory**  
*Deputy Commissioner, External Affairs*

**Julie Walters**  
*Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Operations*

**Sunny Patel**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Operations*

**Kylie Winton**  
*Assistant Deputy Commissioner, External Affairs*

**Lon Roberts**  
*Deputy Commissioner, Child Welfare*

**Ellen Brown**  
*Director, Communications*



# Contacts

## CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTER

**1-877-423-4746**

Statewide toll-free number for customers with questions or concerns regarding the Division of Aging Services, Division of Child Support Services, Division of Family & Children Services, or DHS enterprise functions.

Email: **customerservicedhs@dhs.ga.gov**

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## AGING SERVICES

**1-866-552-4464**

Statewide toll-free number serving older adults and individuals of all ages with disabilities for information and to make reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults. Callers may leave messages 24 hours per day.

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## OFFICE OF FAMILY INDEPENDENCE

**1-877-423-4746**

Statewide toll-free number for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and general inquiries.

Family Independence only: Self-service available 24 hours per day. Agents are available 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Reasonable modification: **dfcs.georgia.gov/adasection-504-and-civil-rights**

Online form submission: **dhs.georgia.gov/dfcs-reasonable-modifications-and-communication-assistance-request-form-persons-disabilities**

## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

**1-855-GACHILD** (422-4453)

Statewide toll-free number for all reports of child abuse and neglect, 24 hours per day, seven days a week

Email: **cpsintake@dhs.ga.gov**

(NOTE: This email is only for mandated reporters.)

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## ADOPTIONS & FOSTER CARE

**1-877-210-KIDS** (5437)

For information, visit **itsmyturnnow.dhs.ga.gov** or **fostergeorgia.com**

Call center hours are Monday-Thursday: 8 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday: closed

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## DFCS COUNTY OFFICES

To find a DFCS office location and hours of operation, visit **dfcs.ga.gov/locations**.

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## ON THE WEB

Department of Human Services: **dhs.ga.gov**

Division of Aging Services: **aging.ga.gov**

Division of Child Support Services: **childsupport.ga.gov**

Division of Family & Children Services: **dfcs.ga.gov**





**Georgia Department  
of Human Services**