



Division of Family and Children Services

The primary goal of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is to serve as a resource for children and families and enable those families to become more self-sufficient. DFCS was restructured in 2004 to meet those goals more effectively.

- At the state level, the division now has an Office of Child Protection to oversee activities related to child safety and protection. The Office of Adoptions, formerly a stand-alone office within DHR, has been added to the Child Protection Office to consolidate services to children.
- The Office of Family Independence oversees TANF and other self-sufficiency and family support activities.
- The division has some 8,000 staff members. Of these, more than 7,700 work in the county offices.
- The division budget for FY 2005 was over \$1 billion, including \$420 million in state funds.

Child protection

The Office of Child Protection is state-administered and county-supervised. County directors supervise child protection supervisors and casework staff.

Caseworkers, located in 159 county DFCS offices, provide a wide variety of social services including protective services to abused and neglected children and their families. They provide assessment, placement and treatment services for children in foster care. Caseworkers work to find permanent homes for children through adoption. A Rapid Response Team, created in April 2004, is available to assist those counties that have fast-growing caseloads.

In FY 2005

- Child Protective Services workers investigated 72,006 reports of child maltreatment.
- Approximately 15,200 children were in the legal custody of DFCS each month. Slightly more than one-half of them (8,423) were placed in family foster care homes. Children with medical conditions or special needs were placed in therapeutic institutions to specifically designed to meet those needs.
- DFCS implemented a level of care system for foster care children on March 1, 2004. This system provides six levels of therapeutic residential treatment based on a thorough assessment of the needs of the child. They range from specialized foster care to intensive residential treatment.
- 1,192 adoptions were finalized during this period

The DFCS strategic reorganization plan also creates a career path for child protection caseworkers and child protection supervisors. This is needed to reduce turnover and to develop a stable, experienced workforce.

Since December 31, 2004 all caseworkers and supervisors are required to be certified. New staff must undergo an initial assessment, complete an eight-week Child Protection Training Academy program and complete two months of work under the direction of a mentor. To

retain certification, staff must take 20 hours of continuing education annually.

Family Independence

This office manages the activities of caseworkers in county departments. Twelve regional managers and regional program staff supervise case managers and eligibility staff. Family Independence case managers take applications and certify families for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, Medicaid and childcare.

In FY 2005

- TANF benefits totaled more than \$117 million. A monthly average of 99,730 Georgians received TANF, totaling over 37,000 cases. Of these, 66 percent were children; the others were their adult caregivers.
- An average of 32,226 TANF recipients received employment services every month.
- There were approximately 602,278 receiving Medicaid.
- Food stamp benefits worth over \$1 billion were issued. About 908,073 low-income people received food stamps monthly.
- 70,466 children were in subsidized childcare each month, at a cost of over \$19 million per month. Subsidized childcare allows low-income families to pay for day care on a sliding fee scale so they can work or train for employment.
- Twenty community action agencies and four local governments received about \$17 million in federal funds to provide job skills training, transportation, housing and food.
- The Energy Assistance Program distributed \$19 million to 103,883 low-income households to help pay their home heating costs.