



**GEORGIA
JUVENILE JUSTICE
STATE ADVISORY GROUP**
OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

3 Year Plan 2024 - 2027



STATE OF GEORGIA – BRIAN P. KEMP
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Introduction

The Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (Council) is the designated state agency for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Title II Formula Grants Program. The Georgia Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group (SAG) serves in an advisory capacity to CJCC. Georgia's SAG members are appointed by the Governor. The Council serves in a supervisory role but relies on the SAG to supervise the preparation and implementation of the state's Juvenile Justice 3-Year Plan and compliance to the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP), as required by Title II Formula Grant funding.

The structure of Georgia's juvenile justice system varies widely across the State, however, the overarching goals of protecting and appropriately serving youth who come into contact with the system are constant. Georgia's juvenile justice system consists of two primary elements: local juvenile courts who serve either single counties or multi-county jurisdictions, and the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Together, the two are responsible for serving all youth under the age of 17 who have violated criminal statutes (i.e., delinquents).¹ For the purposes of this application, 'child' and 'youth' are used interchangeably. When a youth aged 17 years or older commits a crime, his/her case will come under the jurisdiction of the State's adult criminal justice system, unless the youth has already been under juvenile court supervision before reaching the age of 17. In those instances, the juvenile justice system can retain jurisdiction over a youth until age

¹ State law (O.C.G.A § 15-2-10) defines a "child" as any individual who is under 18 years of age, under 17 years of age when alleged to have committed a delinquent act, under 22 years of age and in the care of DFCS; under 23 years of age and eligible for and receiving independent living services through DFCS; or under 21 years of age who has committed an act of delinquency before reaching the age of 17; and been placed under the supervision of the court or on probation to the court for the purpose of enforcing orders of the court.

21 or until he/she is charged with a new criminal offense. Usually, however, youth exit the juvenile justice system by the time they are 18.

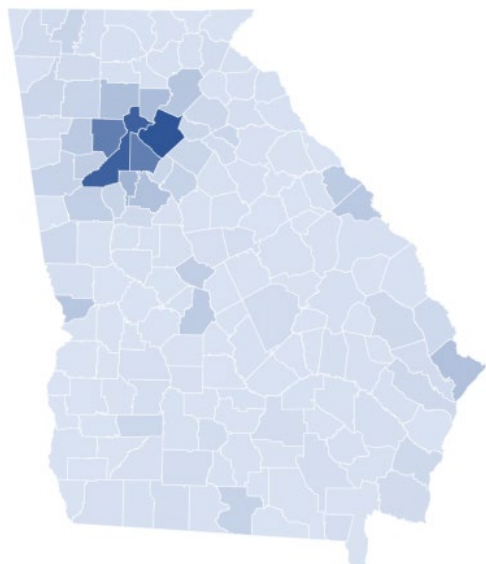
Georgia has continued the momentum for juvenile justice reform from 2013 to present. This has allowed Georgia to undertake significant reforms in both legislation and practice. Some of those advancements include: improving procedural safeguards for court-involved children, clarifying timelines applicable to court proceedings to ensure timeliness of decision making, mandating the use of objective assessment tools, requiring enhanced data collection and reporting, and imposing a statutory presumption against detention of youth under the age of 14. Notably, Georgia's prior approach to intervening with status offenders was replaced with a new Children in Need of Services (CHINS) paradigm, which encourages the use of a diversionary approach centered around services recommended and provided by judicially-led community collaboratives. In addition, schools are mandated to use educational approaches to address a student's problematic behavior before turning to the juvenile court. Finally, following the direction of adult criminal justice system reforms, the state has broadened the availability of accountability courts as alternatives, and juvenile courts across the state are increasingly adopting family treatment court divisions.

Additional details on Georgia's juvenile justice system can be found in Appendix A. System Description Continued

Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency Problems (Youth Crime) and Needs

To understand the following analysis for youth crime in Georgia, it is important to carefully consider the population, gender makeup, and racial breakdown of Georgia's at-risk youth (0 – 16 years of age).^{2,3} Per OJJDP "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations," Georgia's at-risk juvenile

Georgia's youth population increased by 46% since 1990



population has steadily increased, estimating to be 2,354,779 million in 2020.⁴ This is a 46% increase in the number of youth since 1990. Some counties, such as Stewart, Hancock, Taliaferro and Twiggs, saw decreases between 50% to 55%.⁵ Whereas Long, Henry, Paulding and Forsyth saw the largest increase in youth aged 0 – 16 ranging from 180% to 468%.⁶

Of the 2.3 million at-risk youth, females accounted for roughly half of the population, which has remained consistent with past years. Unlike the gender composition, the racial makeup of Georgia's at-risk population has changed over the years. Of the youth, 44% were White, 36% were Black, 15% were Hispanic or Latino, 5% were Asian, and 0.2% were Native American. Hispanic or Latino youth experienced the largest increase of all juvenile populations, but the largest *growing* youth population has been Asian (35% increase), followed by

² Please note, due to the use of multiple data sources, the most current data available differs for each analysis ranging from 2013 to 2022. Data used from the Juvenile Data Clearinghouse only includes data submitted by DJJ, local courts, and OJJDP "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations." Data used from the Summary Report Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program for Georgia only includes data submitted to Georgia Crime Intelligence Center by Georgia's law enforcement agencies statewide. GBI GCIC data is arrests for finger printable offense.

³ Additional information regarding the RED Assessment findings can be found in the 2021 DMC Plan.

⁴ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2021). "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2020." Online. Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>.

⁵ Puzzanchera, C., Sladky, A. and Kang, W. (2021). "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2020." Online. Available: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>. Stewart County decreased from 1,469 to 654 youth. Hancock County decreased from 2,655 to 1,189 youth. Taliaferro County decreased from 505 to 250 youth. Twiggs County decreased from 2,882 to 1,449 youth.

⁶ *Ibid.* Long County increased from 1,829 to 5,128 youth. Henry County increased from 15,790 to 55,993 youth. Paulding County increased from 11,666 to 41,700 youth. Forsyth County increased from 10,982 to 62,330 youth.

Hispanic or Latino (17% increase), and then by Black or African American (2% increase).⁷ Georgia continues to diligently monitor the racial makeup of the at-risk youth population as it changes to ensure that we appropriately address the needs of youth in our state. Understanding the general population of at-risk juveniles in Georgia allows for a better understanding of data at various points of contact within the juvenile justice system.

Due to a lack of one centralized system, various data sources were used, including but not limited to, Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts' (AOC), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), court management systems, and more, to provide the most accurate analysis.

Similar to national rates, juvenile arrests in Georgia have **decreased** overall despite the slight increase in the youth population.⁸ Additionally, the percent of arrests in which juveniles account for has **decreased** between 2014 and 2022. In 2014, juveniles aged 0 – 16 accounted for 12% of index crime arrests in Georgia; by 2022, the same age group accounted for only 8 percent.⁹

The Unified Crime Report (UCR) reports juvenile arrest data from reporting agencies. The most common *Part 1 Index Arrests* in 2022 were other assaults, larceny, and aggravated assaults, however, the largest increase in arrests were for rape and weapons (carrying, possessing, etc.) when comparing data from 2018. Additionally, murder, motor vehicle theft, and embezzlement slightly decreased in 2020 and now mirror 2018 data. Rape saw a 38% increase in arrests and

⁷ This data is available on the Georgia Juvenile Data Clearinghouse (<http://juveniledata.georgia.gov/>).

⁸ 2022 Summary Report Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program Georgia Crime Information Center available at <https://gbi.georgia.gov/services/crime-statistics>

⁹ *Ibid.*

weapons saw a 11% increase. However, the most common arrests reported were other assaults (3,421), larceny (1,445), aggravated assault (684).

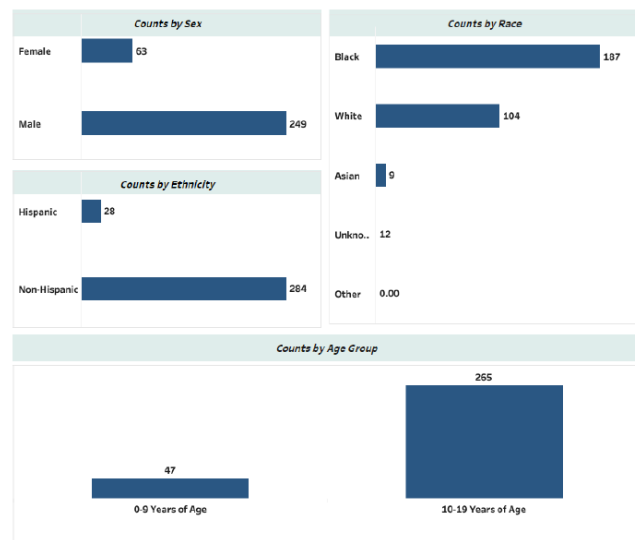
Part 1 Index Crimes	2018	2020	2022	Trend
Murder/Non Negligent Manslaughter	52	31	41	
Rape	56	63	76	
Robbery	314	171	239	
Aggravated Assault	747	413	684	
Burglary	837	271	283	
Larceny	3,376	973	1,445	
Motor Vehicle Theft	365	173	335	
Other Assaults	3,947	1,538	3,421	
Arson	43	8	43	
Forgery & Counterfeiting	50	18	32	
Fraud	120	60	98	
Embezzlement	1	1	0	
Stolen Property; Building, Receiving, Possessing	348	160	290	
Vandalism	657	398	488	
Weapons; Carrying, Possessing, etc.	546	205	615	
Prostitutions & Commercialized Vice	4	3	3	
Sex Offenses (except Rape & Prostitution)	393	88	127	

Other key takeaways from UCR data include:

- Part II Index arrests (i.e. marijuana, juvenile arrests for run away, disorderly conduct, drunkenness, DUI, liquor laws, curfew and loitering law violations) **decreased** from 2018 – 2022.

- Alcohol-related charges (DUI, liquor laws, drunkenness) decreased overall by 67%, runaway charges decreased by 100%, disorderly conduct decreased by 51% and curfew and loitering charges decreased by 13%.
- Arrests for sales manufacturing of opium or cocaine and their derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine) and synthetic narcotics - manufactured narcotics which can cause true drug addiction (demerol, methadones) increased by 55% and 218% respectfully.

As supported by UCR data, violent and gang related offenses have increased across Georgia. The state is actively working across partners to develop a way to monitor gang activity. The most comprehensive report was by the Georgia Gang Investigators Association (GGIA) which reported that in 2018, 157 of the 159 counties in Georgia reported gang activity. Additionally, this survey revealed that 155 of Georgia's 159 counties reported gang activity in local schools. The Georgia Gang Investigators Association's 2018 Street Gang Survey reported that over 71,000 gang members, representing more than 1,600 gangs or gang subsets, including transnational gangs such as MS-13 or M-18, reside in Georgia. The additional following data shares aspects of violent crime in Georgia:



- There were 1,695 deaths by gun with 163 including children and teens. Although the majority (56%) are suicides, nearly 41% are homicide¹⁰. Georgia ranked 15th for highest gun death rate in the country and 12th highest for firearm homicide.
- The Department of Public Health reported 222 deaths by firearms for 0-19 years of age in 2021. In 2016, the total was 136.¹¹
- Black youth (187) accounted for the highest reported violent deaths in 2021.
- In 2023, the most common violent school discipline incidents were harm to a person. were disorderly conduct, fighting, battery, and threat/intimidation. With more than 82,000 instances in 2019 across the state of Georgia.¹² Sex offenses, weapon with a knife, and weapon incidents saw significant increases from 2017 – 2019. There were 841 gang related incidents.

Another important aspect to consider is the climate of our schools where youth spend the majority of their time. Each year, the state and federal government issue various surveys to measure student's wellbeing and health within their schools. The surveys allow for the monitoring of risk factors that can lead to school violence. Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) administers an anonymous school climate survey, Georgia Wellness Survey, to parents, youth, as well as teachers and school administrators. In 2024, the Georgia Wellness Survey found that 46% of 6th - 12th graders 'felt unsafe at school or on my way to or from school'. Of those same students, 35% 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' to be 'worried about other students hurting them'.¹³ Additionally, 60% of students reported 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' to the statement that

¹⁰ Education Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2019. <https://efsgv.org/state/georgia/>

¹¹ Georgia Violent Death Reporting System, Department of Public Health.

https://public.tableau.com/views/GVDRS/TrendsDash?%3Aembed=y&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowVizHome=no

¹² Georgia Department of Education, 2019-2017. “School discipline counts.” <https://www.gadoe.org/wholechild/Pages/Student-Discipline.aspx>

¹³ Georgia Wellness Survey, Department of Education.

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJoiMzZiMTAzZWMtZmIzNC00Y2UwLTk4ZDctYzEwMzQ5NDRlInhlIiwidCI6IjFhYTU1YzgzLTAzNDMtNGVjYiIiZDM5LWJkN2Y0Mzg3NmJkNjVsImMiOiN9>

“students at my school fight a lot.” Regarding mental health, 49% of students ‘felt depressed, sad or withdrawn’ and 13%, or about 100,000 students, have ‘experienced severely out of control behavior that could hurt themselves or others’ in the past 30 days. These staggering numbers are deeply concerning for the wellbeing and safety of our children who should be able to learn in the most conducive environment.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) administers the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to monitor students across the nation to measure health behaviors and student experiences. Although the data for the survey is collected differently and with a smaller sample population, it allows for the comparison of students in Georgia to those across the nation. The 2021 YRBS found that males were more likely than female to have: carried a weapon on school property; were in a physical fight; or see someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood. Whereas females were more likely than males to have: electronically bullied, experience sexual data violence, seriously considered attempt suicide. The State Report on the Implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act reported of the 66 reported firearm incidents in 2020-2021 – over 75% were in grades 9-12.

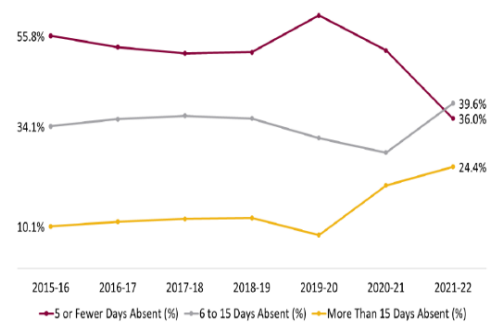
Data relating to CHINS offenses is limited in Georgia at this time. The Council of Juvenile Court Judges has a designated statewide CHINS Coordinator who is responsible for monitoring and providing statewide support. A CHINS Coordinators on the local level depends on the locality. Georgia has 52 coordinators which represent 67 counties. This has increased since 2019, when there were 26 designated CHINS coordinators. Reported issues are:

Georgia has seen a **steep increase** of truancy since 2015.

- Inconsistent approach to runaway cases are still a major issue in most counties.
- Truancy has been very inconsistent with how it has been handled. For instance, some jurisdictions reported not being able to respond due to lack of virtual participation; counting each day of no participation as an absence and filing complaints with the court as usual; rate participation on a percentage scale and if the student is not meeting the required participation rate, they must return to in-person learning.
- 26.9% of Black students and 23% of White students were absent for more than 15 days in 2021-22.
- Between 2015-2021, the number of students who dropped out increased by 11%.

As previously mentioned, Georgia is divided into “independent” and “dependent” court systems, each with different data tracking systems. Consequently, statewide data is currently incomplete and cannot be compared by gender, race, and age. In order to provide the most accurate data, the following data used to describe the characteristics of referrals has been pulled from the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts’ (AOC) Annual Caseload Report for Juvenile Courts.¹⁴

The AOC conducts an Annual Caseload Report for Juvenile Court.¹⁵ The total number of juvenile court cases filed **decreased** by 14% between 2019 and 2022.

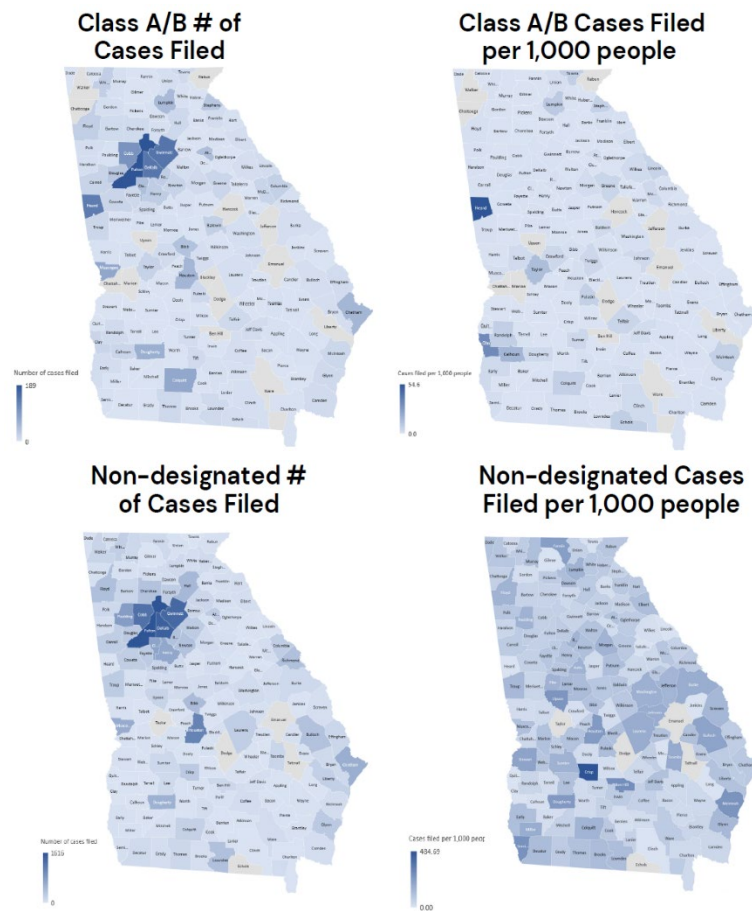


However, the number of class B designated felony cases filed increased by 9% and CHINS

¹⁴ The caseload data of the AOC is self-reported data by Georgia Courts and only consists of counts of cases.

¹⁵ Please note, these numbers only include the data reported to the AOC. <http://www.georgiacourts.org/content/caseload-reports> .

increased by 25%. It's important to also know where cases are filed in the state. Georgia has 159 counties and covers 57,701 square miles. Both Class A/B cases and non-designated cases are filed



predominantly in the metropolitan areas. When data is normalized, the landscape of cases files varies dramatically. Location data was not available for CHINS filings.

DJJ is responsible for all juvenile detention and confinement in the state of Georgia.¹⁶ Georgia's juvenile justice system consists of two main types of secure OHP: Secure Residential Youth Detention Center (RYDC) and Secure Youth

Development Campus (YDC). RYDCs provide temporary OHP with secure care, and supervision to youth who have been charged with offenses, adjudicated delinquent, and/or are awaiting placement.¹⁷ YDCs provide long term OHP with secure care, supervision, and treatment services to youth who have been committed to DJJ.¹⁸ The total number of juveniles admitted to secure detention at all points have **decreased**. The following trends have been identified:

- Secure confinement has steadily decreased in Georgia.

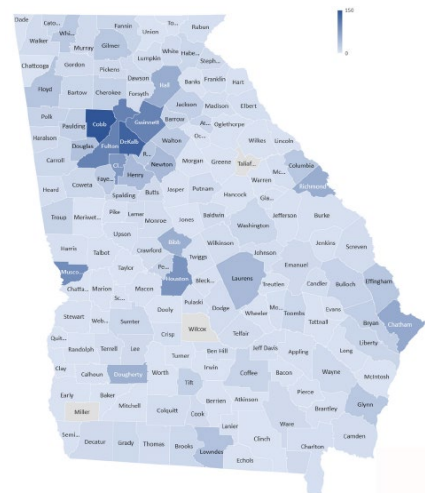
¹⁶ DJJ Annual Report can be accessed at <https://djj.georgia.gov/departments-juvenile-justice-publications>

¹⁷ <http://www.djj.state.ga.us/FacilitiesPrograms/fpRYDCAndYDC.shtml>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

- The number of admissions to the youth development campuses has significantly decreased since 2019. In 2019, the total admissions was 689, by 2022, this number decreased to 284.
- Female juveniles are underrepresented in secure detention. Approximately 49% of Georgia's juvenile population are female. However, in CY2022 female youth represented 22% of the YDC detention population.
- Although the overall number of youth detained has decreased, the proportion that minority makeup has not significantly changed. Black or African American youth represent the largest population within the detention centers.

Youth who receive MH services come from **across the state.**



As youth enter secure detention various screenings take place, including mental health (MH), substance abuse, and suicide risk screenings.¹⁹ In 2023:

- There was a total of 6,419 admitted to RYDC. The average daily population was 850. Of these 850, on average the MH caseload was 47%.
- There was a total of 225 admitted to YDC. The average daily population was 223. Of these 223, on average the MH caseload was 64%.
- 55% of the white population served in an RYDC is on the MH caseload, however only 29% of the MH caseload in an RYDC is white.
- 46% of youth assessed in an RYDC or YDC had used 3 or more times per month

¹⁹ This data was provided by Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice for 2019.

- Of the MH caseload, 40% of youth were diagnosed with trauma-and stressor-related disorders, 50% were diagnosed with substance-related and addictive disorders, and 63% were diagnosed with disruptive, impulse-control, and conduct disorders.

As the data shows, many youth coming into secure detention have high needs in addition to being high risk. This is also reflected in the community. The Georgia Apex Program (Apex) is a school-based mental health program designed, funded, and evaluated by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). This program can be found in 735 schools across Georgia.²⁰ Nearly half of Apex schools are in rural Georgia. Nearly 22,022 referrals were made for school-based mental health services in 2023. Between 2021 – 2022, the number one referral through Apex providers was for trauma services, followed by classroom conduct, depression, and behavior outside the classroom.

In very limited circumstances, a juvenile may enter an adult facility. Georgia’s Juvenile Detention Compliance Monitor and DJJ monitor these facilities, in addition to juvenile detention centers, to ensure Georgia’s compliance with the first three of the Four Core Protections, as outlined by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The Core Protections set forth by the JJDP are: deinstitutionalization of status offenders; separation of juveniles from incarcerated adults; removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups; and RED. Each year, Georgia submits this data as part of the Title II Formula Grant program. For the past five years, Georgia has

²⁰ “Georgia APEX Program Year 8 Evaluation Results.” Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. [https://ghpc.gsu.edu/download/georgia-apex-program-y8-annual-evaluation-results/?ind=1713907414541&filename=Apex%20Y8%20Annual%20Evaluation%20Slide%20Deck%20Full%20Final%2004_23_2024_compressed%20\(1\)_compressed_compressed.pdf&wpdmdl=4758482&refresh=66a2b05d442f81721938013](https://ghpc.gsu.edu/download/georgia-apex-program-y8-annual-evaluation-results/?ind=1713907414541&filename=Apex%20Y8%20Annual%20Evaluation%20Slide%20Deck%20Full%20Final%2004_23_2024_compressed%20(1)_compressed_compressed.pdf&wpdmdl=4758482&refresh=66a2b05d442f81721938013)

continued to **decrease** the number of youth held in adult facilities. As noted, additional information is provided in Georgia's Compliance Plan.

In addition to general juvenile justice data, it is important to understand other trends when addressing juvenile delinquency in Georgia. In order to provide accurate information for the state, the following data was pulled from KIDS COUNT.²¹ KIDS COUNT provides citizens and policymakers with current, reliable data, both online and in print, to inform planning, budget, and policy decisions that impact Georgia's children, families, and communities. KIDS COUNT is a state and national effort funded by Annie E. Casey Foundation to track the status of children.

In the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book, states are ranked 1 – 50 on overall being (i.e., economic, education, health, family, and community). Georgia was ranked 49th in 1990, 42nd in 2014, 40th in 2015, and have currently ranked 38th since 2017. Trend data from 2022 includes:

- In 2022, Georgia reported an **unemployment rate of 3.0%**, and in 2019 the unemployment rate was 3.6%. Georgia also reported 7.7% of children have parents who lack secure employment in 2019.
- 1,332,536 individuals received food stamps in 2013. In 2022, only 1,608,203 individuals reported receiving food stamps. Of the entire population of children (under the age of 18), 28% were in families who received public assistance in 2022.
- 28% of children (under the age of 18) were living in families with income less than 150% of the federal poverty line in 2022.²² For 2021, the annual threshold for a four-person household was \$ 48,705.

²¹ <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

²² The 2016 federal poverty line for a family/household of two adults and two children was \$23,339.

- 42% of children live in a household where the **highest education attainment** was a high school diploma or GED and 11% live in a household without a high school diploma or GED in 2022.
- Georgia's **teen pregnancy rate has decreased** significantly. In 2012, there were 21.3 births per 1,000, and in 2022, this number decreased to 17 per 1,000 births. Hispanic teens have the highest rate of teen births (28 per 1,000) followed by Black teens (19 per 1,000).

After careful review of the State of Georgia's juvenile crime trends, one can conclude that the level of juvenile crime has remained stable or declined. This is a tremendous accomplishment given the population increase that Georgia has experienced. After careful review of the data presented, the Georgia Juvenile Justice SAG, identified three needs/problem statements that the state should focus on over the next three years (FY2024-2026):

1. *Georgia must continue to educate and promote the use of evidence-based Juvenile Justice Programs and Practices that are in the best interest of the youth, as well as continue to educate stakeholders on the use of universal detention assessment instruments.*
2. *In addition to evidence-based programs targeted at medium to high risk youth, Georgia needs to provide trauma-informed mental health services and violence prevention programs for communities with increased level of youth in need. Children, including parents need more targeted support. Justice impacted experiences should be at the forefront of how the state addresses parents and children's need.*
3. *While communities are gaining an understanding of juvenile reform and best practice, Georgia needs to better educate the public on how to appropriately address juvenile justice issues such*

as Racial and Ethnic Disparities, gender-related disparities, and out of date, non-evidence-based programming.

Each of these statements, and the SAG’s continued efforts to address them, represents the commitment of the SAG to continue to support and improve the well-being of Georgia’s children. Georgia looks forward to continuing its work to promote the safety and well-being of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Project Goals and Objectives

The state of Georgia’s goals and objectives are derived from and respond to the needs and problems identified by the SAG. The following goals are listed in priority order. Details on how the state proposes to accomplish each goal can be found in the ‘Implementation (activities and services)’.

Problem Statement: *We need to continue to educate and promote the use of evidence based Juvenile Justice Programs and Practices that are in the best interest of the youth, as well as continue to educate stakeholders on the use of universal detention assessment instruments.*

Goal	Objective	Formula Grant Program Area
Improve cooperation and coordination among the partners in Georgia’s juvenile justice system (DJJ, DFCS, mental health, school systems,	Support training or development activities for judges, court staff, defense attorneys, law enforcement, and other juvenile justice personnel on trauma	Alternatives to Detention Delinquency Prevention

juvenile courts & law enforcement) and increase support for programming.	informed responses to delinquent behavior, evidence based programming and assessment tools, adolescent development, mental and behavioral health needs, race and equity, and gender-responsivity, across the state.	Juvenile Justice System Improvement
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Problem Statement: *In addition to evidence-based programs targeted at medium to high risk youth, we need to provide trauma-informed mental health services and violence prevention programs for communities with increased level of youth in need. Children, including parents need more targeted support. Lived experience should be at the forefront of how the state addresses parents and children's need.*

Goal	Objective	Formula Grant Program Area
Increase the number and percent of youth completing program requirements, use of evidence-based practices, and reduce recidivism rate of youth	To support local juvenile justice prevention initiatives in Georgia that target the needs of our community – addressing the increasing need for mental health and violence prevention services.	Delinquency Prevention Alternatives to Detention Positive Youth Development

involved with Georgia's juvenile justice system.	<p>Collaborate with other stakeholders and partners who have expertise in youth engagement and youth-adult partnerships to ensure that youth voices are elevated.</p> <p>Create and execute a strategy to boost the involvement of young members in the activities of the SAG.</p>	
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Problem Statement: *While communities are gaining an understanding of juvenile reform and best practice, we need to better educate the public on how to appropriately address juvenile justice issues such as R/ED, gender-related disparities, and out of date, non-evidence-based programming.*

Goal	Objective	Formula	Grant
		Program Area	

<p>To improve Georgia's juvenile justice system.</p>	<p>To support juvenile justice system improvement in Georgia and state and local prevention and intervention efforts by providing effective activities associated with planning and administration of Georgia's Formula Grant Program.</p> <p>To support juvenile justice system improvement in Georgia and state and local prevention and intervention efforts by providing effective SAG in Georgia.</p>	<p>Planning and Administration</p> <p>State Advisory Group Activities</p>
<p>Improve the state's ability to accurately and adequately monitor compliance with the JJDP.</p>	<p>To support the first three core protections of the JJDP in Georgia.</p> <p>To support the R/ED core protection of the JJDP in Georgia.</p>	<p>Compliance Monitoring</p> <p>R/ED</p>

The state of Georgia has supported and/or implemented various activities, services, and projects to achieve the goals listed above. The Georgia state plan is supported by or takes account of scientific knowledge regarding adolescent development and behavior and regarding the effects of delinquency prevention programs and juvenile justice interventions on adolescents. This has been incorporated into our system in every facet – including the assistance of local government to help influence the 3 Year Plan. The SAG held a strategic plan meeting in December 2023 with support from the Center for Coordinated Assistance to States (CCAS). Prior to the meeting, the SAG conducted a qualitative community feedback survey. The SAG received 610 respondents from across 106 of the 159 counties in Georgia. Nearly 36% of the respondents were in rural areas and nearly 102 of the respondents identified as youth or parent. The survey responses, SAG expertise, alongside the juvenile crime analysis, played a crucial role in shaping the SAG’s direction for the upcoming three-year plan. Over the past decade, Georgia has implemented evidence-based programming and validated risk and need assessments. This approach was adopted through research, data, and technical assistance of experts and can be found throughout the state plan. The state plans to continue to grow these efforts through the activities and services are listed in the following section. Georgia utilizes both state and federal funds to achieve these goals, thus not all activities listed below are strictly federally funded.

Goal: Improve cooperation and coordination among the partners in Georgia’s juvenile justice system (DJJ, DFCS, mental health, school systems, juvenile courts & law enforcement) and increase support for diversion programming.

- CJCC will provide training and technical assistance, hold meetings among partner agencies, and provide grant funding to support the development of juvenile diversion

programs throughout Georgia. Representatives from other child serving agencies will be invited to attend SAG quarterly meetings.

- The Juvenile Justice Unit currently sits on the following committees: DJJ Juvenile Reentry, DJJ Detention Assessment Instrument Committee, Pre-Disposition Risk Assessment Stakeholders Group, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Steering Committee, the Juvenile Data Exchange (JDEX) Committee, and Georgia Alliance of School Resource Officer and Educators (GASRO). Additionally, the SAG is attached to the CJCC. These committees play important roles in juvenile efforts across the state.
- The SAG and CJCC will work collaboratively with the Council of Juvenile Court Judges (CJCC) CHINS Coordinator. The CHINS Coordinator was hired in Spring of 2024. The SAG plans to assist and collaborate to fund programming and the development of assessment tools as identified in the needs of local community partners.
- The JDEX Committee will continue to conduct state-wide JDEX and best practice / evidence-based risk assessment tool trainings. The Juvenile Data Clearinghouse website is set to enhance its public facing dashboards to facilitate the sharing of information on juvenile justice. Further details can be found in the R/ED Plan.
- The SAG will continue to provide support and expertise to local initiatives across the state.

Goal: Increase the number and percent of youth completing program requirements, use of evidence-based practices, and reduce recidivism rate of youth involved with Georgia's juvenile justice system.

- CJCC will provide training and technical assistance, hold meetings among partner agencies, and provide grant funding to support the development of evidence-based juvenile

programs. CJCC will continue to apply for and allocate funds as appropriate to meet the needs of communities in need.

- CJCC will provide grant administration oversight to ensure that programs are reaching their identified goals and activities. This includes supporting evidence based programming and internally or externally utilizing program evaluators. For instance, internally the Juvenile Justice Unit programmatically monitors programs using the model fidelity coordinators. This provides assistance to the programs funded to ensure that each are being conducted with fidelity to the model. Staff will provide consistent programmatic updates to SAG and DSA.
- Funding will support the statewide alternative to detention program – Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant (JJIG). The JJIG funds local juvenile justice projects that demonstrate potential cost-savings to taxpayers by reducing the number of youth served out-of-home and creating community-based alternative to detention. Towards this end, CJCC is working to help communities build capacity to enable sustainability of activities and services.
- Funding will go to support violence reduction models in areas of high need.
- Funding will go to mental health services for youth at risk with juvenile justice system involvement.
- Funding will go to support CHINS programming with the collaboration of the CHINS Coordinator and relative stakeholders.
- All funded programs will take into consideration high need areas and ensure equitable distribution of the assistance received under section 222 [34 U.S.C. § 11132] within the State, including in rural areas. This is done through using data to determine high priority areas and using the data to make informed decisions. Additionally, any release of funds is

shared through multiple outlets to ensure the largest number of individuals will receive notification of the funding opportunity.

- The SAG will create and execute a strategy to boost the involvement of young members in SAG activities as well as provide compensation.

Goal: Improve Georgia's juvenile justice system.

- The state's juvenile justice system was dramatically changed with sweeping reform. In 1971 Georgia created a separate juvenile section from the adult criminal code to address the critical developmental differences between children and adults. In 2013 legislative session the 'Children's Code' came to passage, garnering unanimous support on the House and Senate floors. HB 242 was signed into law by Governor Deal in May 2013 creating a new Children's Code; this first substantial overhaul of our juvenile code in over 40 years became effective as of January 1, 2014. Georgia will continue to strengthen and support current and future juvenile justice mechanisms.
- Increase awareness and information sharing on the SAG.
- Support efforts to create an assessment tool for CHINS
- Georgia will hold quarterly SAG and R/ED Subcommittee meetings. The SAG will support and strengthen the Juvenile Jurisdiction and Youth Subcommittee.
- CJCC will provide designated staff for the implementation of the SAG and 3 Year Plan activities.

Goal: Improve the state's ability to accurately and adequately monitor compliance with the JJDP.

- CJCC will maintain a full-time compliance monitor. The compliance monitor will attend all related OJJDP hosted trainings. The compliance monitor will conduct trainings across

the state for DJJ, jail, and sheriff staff. Additionally, this individual will be HIPPA certified.

The additional activities are included in the Plan for Compliance.

- CJCC will maintain a part-time R/ED coordinator. The additional activities are included in Plan for Compliance with R/ED Core Requirement.

The state of Georgia is continuously looking for ways to improve the current juvenile justice system. As noted above, in the past few years the state has committed to dramatic changes to improve Georgia's juvenile justice system. This includes reforming juvenile law to reflect data-driven, best practices and providing resources to local communities to implement community evidence-based programming. CJCC continues to promote youth development and well-being through the website (<http://cjcc.georgia.gov/juvenile-justice-incentive-grant>), the juvenile data clearinghouse (<http://www.juveniledata.georgia.gov/>), and on social media sites, such as Twitter (<https://twitter.com/gacjcc>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/gacjcc/>). CJCC's website provides information surrounding Georgia's juvenile justice systems, the JJIG Program, R/ED, Core Requirements compliance monitoring, and model fidelity.

There are multiple agencies and moving parts that allow for a safe, need based response to be available for juvenile offenders or victims in Georgia. The plan is to continue to support these services and relationships. Other key parts of our system include:

Secure Detention

Georgia is committed to reducing the number of children housed in secure detention and correction facilities who are awaiting placement in residential treatment program. DJJ Community staff are

required to submit extension requests on each youth that is in a secure placement pending residential placement to ensure that they are placed as soon as possible. DJJ Policy 20.22 outlines these policies. This is monitored through several levels of leadership to ensure that youth are placed as efficiently as possible. Alternatives to youth awaiting in detention are evaluated on a case by case basis according to DJJ Policies 20.2, 20.11, and 20.12.

In the state of Georgia, the use of restraints on any youth in secure detention is only in very limited reasonable instances. A youth's safety is always a priority of the staff and use of force is never a means of punishment. Force is only used if a youth is an immediate and serious threat of hurting themselves or others.

Georgia does not promote the use restraints of known pregnant youth in secure detention during labor, delivery, and postpartum recovery. Additionally, abdominal restraints, leg and ankle restraints, wrists behind the back, and four-point restraints are not utilized on known pregnant youth. In limited instances where reasonable grounds exist to temporarily restrain a pregnant youth, staff may use, depending on the situation, a youth who is in the immediate postpartum period may only be restrained using wrist handcuffs with her wrists held in front of her body. DJJ Policy 8.30, 8.31, 11.28, 20.9, and 20.51 outlines the policies and procedures for the limited usage of restraints. All DJJ policies have been updated to be in compliance with the HB398 (O.C.G.A. 42-1-11.3).

DJJ does not use dangerous practices, such as unreasonable restraints or isolation. All staff receive a competency-based training from the DJJ Office of Training on all policies and procedures, including use of restraints or isolation. As it relates to isolation, DJJ 'does not isolate youth as a

disciplinary sanction' or as effective behavior management in juvenile secure facilities. Under limited reasonable circumstances, such as for the safety or security of the facility, staff may for a time-limited period, and only for as long as necessary, utilize isolation. DJJ has in place detailed policies and procedures to ensure that isolation is not used unreasonably. DJJ staff must exhaust every opportunity, such as positive, corrective interventions, before resorting to isolation. In instances of seriously dangerous behavior, staff first must verbalize to the youth the behavior leading to the potential consequence, and if the behavior does not change, may place a youth in temporary isolation. Staff must notify the Approving Authority (Facility Director, Assistant Director, or Administrative Duty Officer) to authorize placement within 15 minutes. If authorized, the approval continuum process begins. If the Approving Authority believes for the safety of the youth or facility, the youth must be held for more than 4 hours, he or she must consult with mental health prior to the extension. If time should increase again, the Regional Administrator and eventually the Assistant Deputy Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner must be contacted. Throughout the period, the youth is monitored by both the Approving authority and mental health staff. DJJ Policy 8.8 and 16.3 outlines the policies and procedures for the usage of isolation in secure detention.

As it previously noted, DJJ uses the 'least amount of force necessary to ensure the safety of youth in their care. DJJ staff will use only reasonable force to bring an incident or event under control. All uses of force must be objectively reasonable and utilized in the most humane and safe manner. A youth's safety is always a priority of the staff and use of force is never a means of punishment. The least restrictive and least severe response is utilized. DJJ Policy 8.30, 8.31, and 20.9 outlines the policies and procedures for the usage of restraints.

Georgia has implemented a reasonable approach to the very limited use of restraints and isolation. At no time, is either utilized as means of punishment for behavior management.

Additionally, Georgia utilized an evidence-based approach when providing services to youth who require a mental health and substance abuse screening. For youth who are admitted into a secure facility, a behavioral health screening, which includes mental health and substance use, is conducted within two hours of admission. This includes youth who are transferred between secure facilities, or youth who have been discharged and readmitted. Prior to their screening, all youth are maintained on constant line of site observation.

If a youth answers 'yes' to any caution items on the screening, they are placed on level 2/special observation. If a youth answers 'yes' to any warning items on the screening, they are placed on level 3/close observation. Youth who are placed on level 2 or 3 as a result of the mental health screening, remain on their assigned level of observation until they receive a psychosocial assessment from a master's level clinician. The youth must be assessed within 72 hours of completion of the screening.

Youth who are determined by the master's level clinician to require ongoing mental health services, are placed on the mental health caseload and referred to a doctor for a diagnostic assessment, which must occur within 10 days of referral. Youth who have received psychotropic medication within the past three months are referred to the psychiatrist. All other youth are referred to the psychologist.

Additionally, any youth, regardless of mental health caseload status, may request to be seen by a master's level clinician at any time during their stay. Youth who make routine requests must be seen within 72 hours of the triage of the request. Youth who make an urgent request must be seen as soon as practicable but no less than within 24 hours of the request.

For youth in the community, DJJ uses the MAYSI-2 as a screening tool for youth in the community with immediate mental health needs. This is completed on all youth at first contact. However, it should be noted that youth and families may refuse this assessment. If a screening shows that services are needed, staff is empowered to seek services. DJJ staff can make referrals to local providers as needed and are available in order to provide and arrange for treatment services for youth identified in need. To ensure that referrals are made to best serve the youth and family, referrals are made locally and on a case by case basis to the best provider available at each location.

DJJ and GaDOE partner to ensure that student records are available as needed. Additionally, DJJ is the 181st School District in the state of Georgia and is accredited by Cognia. Georgia Preparatory Academy (GPA) is the middle school and high school within the DJJ School System. There are 29 GPA campuses across Georgia located in Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDCs), Youth Development Campuses (YDCs), and Education Transition Centers. Additionally, it should be noted that all child serving agencies are diligent to protect the rights of recipients of services and for ensuring appropriate privacy with regard to records relating to such services provided to any individual.

Reentry

Juvenile reentry in the state of Georgia is managed by the DJJ. DJJ leads and provides services to youth across the state through a comprehensive planning process called the Youth Centered Reentry Team (YCRT). YCRT is a “youth-centered and family-focused” approach to planning and is designed to improve family engagement and ensure youth are more successful upon release.

In Georgia, all youth served both in the community or in secure detention receive an individualized Service Plan. The Service Plan identifies the needs of youth, such as family and residential circumstances, interpersonal adjustment, behavioral health, substance use, education/vocational goals and needs, and physical health, and creates a plan to address them while under supervision. Each youth has a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) that is responsible for the treatment, programming, case management and release decisions. This team will meet with YCRT prior to release. Within 60 days of a youth’s admission into the facility, pre-release case planning begins. At a minimum, every 90 days a youth is housed, a YCRT meeting is held. Within 120 days prior to a youth’s release date, pre-release meetings begin. These meetings include facility staff, youth, and parent/guardian to verify the needs and services necessary for successful reentry into the community. Staff and family work together to ensure a plan for post-release is created. These plans include but are limited to – living arrangement, support services, and family engagement.

When a youth is released, secure staff works collaboratively with local Reentry Specialists and community case managers up to 120 days post release. During these 120 days, assessments are completed at the beginning (120 day), 90-day, 60 day, and 30-day marks to discuss the youth’s

transition plan and assess the youth's needs. Reviews and updates of the assessment are completed throughout this time. At the end of the 120 days, if necessary, community case managers can submit requests for additional resources. DJJ Policy 18.3, 25.1, and 25.2 outlines the policies and procedures for the reentry planning. Additional information regarding DJJ's reentry and support services can be on their website on <https://djj.georgia.gov/office-reentry-services>.

At the direction of Georgia state code and keeping with clinical best practices, DJJ maintains a regular review of the programs and services offered by the DJJ Office of Behavioral Health Services to youth in secure facilities. Programs/services are selected on the basis of their evidentiary basis with the identified population and their appropriateness to the secure facility setting. DJJ recently worked with Dr. Mark Lipsey of the Peabody Institute at Vanderbilt University to review program offering and made adjustments based on Dr. Lipsey's recommendations.

The state of Georgia takes a community-based approach to serving youth. The approach means that services should be provided in the least restrictive setting possible and as close to home as possible with family members as full partners in deciding what services are needed. Throughout all points of contact with the juvenile justice system, staff engage family members. Family engagement is done through monthly MDT meetings, community service boards, and other methods. Both court and probation staff continuously stay in contact with family members. Additionally, DJJ engages with family members of youth who are in returning to their community. Detailed information regarding DJJ's plan and support services can be found later in this

addendum under reentry planning or at their website on <https://djj.georgia.gov/office-reentry-services>.

Community Services

For instance, survivors of commercial sexual exploitation are supported through a facet of entities including Georgia Cares, Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)²³, Georgia Center of Child Advocacy, and other partners. Georgia Cares is the responsible entity for coordinating services and recommending placement of youth who are confirmed victims of child exploitation. Details related to care coordination can be found <https://www.gacares.org/care-coordination.html>. The process starts by Georgia Cares receiving a referral. Referrals can come from DJJ, DFACS, court personnel, parents, community, medical or mental health professionals, school officials, and law enforcement officers. Details on DJJ procedures for referrals can be found in Policy 14.2. Upon receiving a referral, Georgia Cares will then send an assessor to screen the youth to determine if he or she is at-risk or is a confirmed case of commercial sexual exploitation. A screening tool was created with state partners to streamline existing processes in Georgia as it applies to providing services. If confirmed, Georgia Cares will make a recommendation on placement for the youth in addition to coordinating services appropriately. CJCC receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds from Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) that are used to support the assessment and care coordination functions of Georgia Cares. Georgia Cares is required on a monthly basis to track the number of youth screened, the outcome of the screenings, and the services provided. These numbers are then compiled in a comprehensive report that is

²³ Please note, if a juvenile offender is placed juvenile offenders whose placement is funded through section 672 of Title 42 receive the protections specified in section 671 of Title 42, including a case plan and case plan review as defined in section 675 of Title 42.

submitted to DHS quarterly. In 2018, Georgia signed into law Senate Bill 158. This required certification for all victim of trafficking serving organizations to ensure a comprehensive trauma informed approach.

Another great example of services for offenders includes Georgia's 163 accountability courts. The accountability courts are managed at the Council of Accountability Court Judges. These courts provide alternative to detention for youth who are need of mental health, substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders services.

Georgia is examining data for the best way to target state-wide resources for gender-specific services. Similar to other states, Georgia has seen an increase in the number of girls who have a behavioral health diagnosis.²⁴ DJJ works to address this with more robust interventions as well as more specialized training and interventions by staff. Additionally, youth served by the JJIG follow model fidelity best practices for gender specific group-based services. Mixed gender groups are not held unless there is an appropriate number of youth of both genders referred. The gender breakdown of youth served by the JJIG is reflective of the gender breakdown for all youth receiving OHP in Georgia. Moving forward, as funding becomes available, the SAG plans to research the need for female targeted interventions as more females become involved with the juvenile justice system.

Youth who reside in areas that do not participate in the JJIG, are eligible for evidence-based services (same programs through the JJIG), through funding appropriated to DJJ. DJJ implemented

²⁴ This data was provided by the DJJ

the Community Services Grant (CSG) program to provide evidence-based programming to counties where JJIG programs are not available. The CSG allows state partners to work strategically to enhance community and evidence-based programming as alternatives to OHPs, and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that informed detention, commitment, and placement decisions are being made. Since the initial rollout, all of Georgia's 159 counties and their respective juvenile courts have the option of placing youth into evidence-based community programming as an alternative to OHP.

Services vary across the state both to meet criminogenic and mental health needs. Georgia is committed to identifying areas of high need and ensuring equitable distribution of funds. In order to do this, the SAG will utilize their expertise to ensure funds and services are strengthened regardless of where a child resides.

The state will continue to coordinate and work to improve mental health and substance abuse services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Georgia appropriated state funding last fiscal year to the DBHDD for juvenile competency/forensic evaluations. DBHDD also received a federal grant totaling \$11.8 million to support prevention, treatment, and recovery activities for opioid addiction. Many of the cognitive behavioral therapies provided through the JJIG are considered mental health therapies by Medicaid and other third-party insurance providers. However, with the growing need for mental health services, CJCC intends to continue discussing available options with the SAG.

Other

CJCC will continue to facilitate meetings between local juvenile justice offices and local child protection offices to increase participation of units of local governments and the collection and sharing of juvenile justice information.

The SAG is comprised of various juvenile related stakeholders including a local sheriff, local probation officer, court staff, youth who were involved at the local level with the juvenile justice system, and three Representatives from the Georgia House of Representatives. These members allow for local needs to be brought forth and incorporated on a constant basis. Additionally, as noted in the implementation section, the SAG and CJCC continuously work to increase collaboration statewide and locally. The CJCC provides program assistance as requested from local jurisdictions, including meetings with commissioners, judges, sheriffs, and other juvenile justice stakeholders. These meetings allow for CJCC staff to assist juvenile justice staff at local juvenile courts build support, but also build partnerships with local stakeholders and identify gaps for improvement.

State partners are diligently working to improve the quality and consistency of data collection and facilitate information-sharing. As mentioned, the state of Georgia is served through either dependent or independent juvenile courts. Dependent courts use the Juvenile Tracking System (JTS). JTS is an online, interactive, menu driven system that permits the user to add, update or view juvenile records or to gather juvenile data. Juvenile information entered via JTS immediately creates or updates a record. JTS facilitates the generation, organization and availability of juvenile records throughout the DJJ field of operations. Independent courts use their own management system known as Juvenile Court Activity Tracking System (JCATS), and only use JTS if the youth

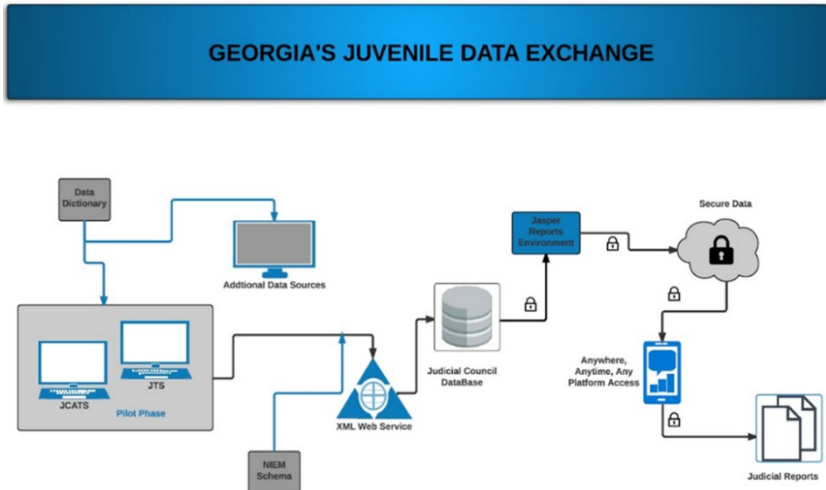
is committed to DJJ. As a result, juvenile judges were sometimes unable to make informed decisions about youth who may have encountered the justice system in other jurisdictions. In order to address the issue of disparate case management systems, the state has contracted with the Judicial Council of Georgia

AOC for the Juvenile Data

Exchange (JDEX) project.

JDEX is a statewide data repository of juvenile data for the entire state and will vastly improve the sharing of data and

making informed judicial decisions. This is an interagency effort that allows for easier communications between agencies on any case found in the JDEX system when a child is court-involved. JDEX has been rolled out across the state and is funded using state funds. Information on JDEX can be found at <http://jdex.georgiacourts.gov/>.



Additionally, DJJ and DFCS are included, when possible, to routinely communicate about any case or information that may be found in the JDEX system (when complete, and the current JTS system) when a child is court-involved. SB401 passed in the 2024 legislative session. This requires each juvenile court to collect data on all cases in which a child is alleged or adjudicated to be a dependent child placed in foster care. This data will be incorporated into the Georgia Juvenile Data Exchange, and the form of entry will be specified by the Administrative Office of the Courts. This data will include various dates related to the disposition of cases and deadlines imposed by statute. The bill requires each juvenile court to maintain a "ready-accessible docket" that is accessible by

the parties and to utilize its local case management system to collect required data. By April 15, 2025, the Administrative Office of the Courts must put together a report for the General Assembly. Further, a petition to terminate parental rights must be immediately filed and docketed when presented to the clerk of a juvenile court.

Currently, CJCC hosts the most comprehensive juvenile data system available for public use. Georgia's Juvenile Justice Data Clearinghouse (<http://juveniledata.georgia.gov/>) provides the most current and accurate juvenile crime data available and also provides the most complete data available for juvenile justice decision points (statewide and for all 159 Counties) from calendar years 2006-2022. In SFY 2024, the DSA updated the website with data dashboards and plans to continue to support and strengthen publicly shared data.

Fellow child welfare agencies also collect and provide public data. The Department of Education's public data is available at <https://gosa.georgia.gov/> or <http://www.gadoe.org/Pages/Home.aspx>. The Department of Family and Children Services public data is available at <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/data>. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities public data is available at <https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/presentations-reports>. The Georgia Statistical Analysis Center (SAC) hosts a wide-range of data and is currently creating a repository for all internal data collections and will facilitate data sharing with partner agencies.²⁵ This warehouse will store all data collected related to Victims Services Statistical Reports,

²⁵ Development and implementation of a data warehouse and business intelligence platform for CJCC-collected data is funded through Bureau of Justice Statistics' State Justice Statistics funding. Additional information can be found <https://cjcc.georgia.gov/current-and-recently-concluded-research>.

Criminal Justice Services Statistical Reports, Drug Task Force Reports, Accountability Court Reports, and Victims Compensation.

There are no state statutes or departmental regulations that prohibit the sharing of information in Georgia. While many states and localities seem to have the universal experience of friction between child welfare and juvenile justice agencies, Georgia has been able to overcome much of this reluctance to share information required by OJJDP and, over the past 10 years, greatly improve the accuracy and completeness of our data. Data were available on child abuse or neglect are included for judges overseeing cases where a juvenile is involved. This is utilized by the local partners to develop the appropriate services.

Effective January 1, 2019, the Judicial Council of Georgia published and made rules requiring each clerk of the juvenile court to “collect data on each child alleged or adjudicated to be a delinquent child and transmit such data” and “develop and enact policies and procedures necessary to carry out.” This legislation demonstrates the continued support for and improvement of data collection and sharing in Georgia.

Plans for Compliance and Monitoring

Georgia’s compliance monitoring plans, manual (including any updates), data report, and supporting documentation for period October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023 for the four core requirements will be submitted separately from this application through the OJJDP’s compliance monitoring tool. Georgia expects to be in compliance with Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders; Separation of Juvenile and Adult offenders; Jail Removal core requirements; and RED.

Status of Compliance with the four required, core protections of the JJDPa per the submitted data and plan:

- 1) The state of Georgia's rate of non-compliance with Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) in 2023 was 1.85. Georgia is in compliance. Pursuant to Section 233(a)(11) of JJDPa, Georgia does not place status offenders and non-offenders in secure detention or secure correctional facilities except as allowed under exceptions. Related statute can be found in Georgia Code at O.C.G.A. 15-11-135 and 15-11-412.
- 2) The state of Georgia's rate of non-compliance with Jail Removal in 2023 was 7.01. Georgia is in compliance. Pursuant to Section 223(a)(13) and 11(b) of the JJDPa, the state of Georgia shall not detain status offenders, non-offenders, and delinquent juveniles in an adult jail, adult lockup, or detention center except as allowed under exceptions. There are no exceptions allowing status offenders or non-offenders to be detained in an adult jail, adult lock up, or adult detention center. Related statute can be found in Georgia Code at O.C.G.A. 15-11-135 and 15-11-412.
- 3) The state of Georgia's rate of juvenile Separation non-compliance in 2023 was 0.17. Georgia is in compliance. Pursuant to Section 233(a)(12) of JJDPa, the state of Georgia shall not detain youth alleged or found to be delinquent, status offenders, and non-offenders in which they have contact with an adult inmate. Related statute can be found in Georgia Code at O.C.G.A. 15-11-135 and 15-11-412.
- 4) Georgia assesses and addresses the disproportionate contact of youth of color at key decisions points in the juvenile justice system. Through data collection, educational forums and curriculum, and community-based programs, Georgia has shown its commitment to addressing reducing racial and ethnic disparities (RED).

Additional information on status of compliance with the four core protections can be found in the submitted Compliance Monitoring Plan, and RED Plan for Compliance.

Plan for Collecting the Data Required for Performance Measures

All programs receiving funds are required to provide a monthly or quarterly report on established outputs and outcomes. Additionally, all are required to provide an annual progress report that gives a complete overview of the impact and effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the project. CJCC staff review reports on a quarterly and annual basis for program effectiveness. Projects not meeting a majority of their program outcomes are provided technical assistance. If program outcomes are continually unmet, despite technical assistance and support provided by staff, the program will be at risk of losing funding. On at least an annual basis, OJJDP requires output and outcome data to be pulled from federally funded individual grantee reports and uploaded into the Justgrants system. Progress for all these projects can be found in those previously submitted reports.

Objective	Performance Measure - Output Measures	Performance Measure – Outcome Measures
To support local juvenile justice prevention initiatives in Georgia that target the needs of our community – addressing the increasing need for mental health and violence prevention services.	Formula grant funds awarded for services Number of program youth served	Number and percent of program youth completing program requirements Number and percent of program youth who

<p>Collaborate with other stakeholders and partners who have expertise in youth engagement and youth-adult partnerships to ensure that youth voices are elevated.</p> <p>Create and execute a strategy to boost the involvement of young members in the activities of the SAG.</p>	<p>Percentage of training participants who reported they applied training knowledge or skills within 3 months of attending a training</p>	<p>offend/re-offend during the reporting period</p> <p>Number of participants that used the skills or knowledge learned at a training within 3 months of attending the training</p>
<p>To support juvenile justice system improvement in Georgia and state and local prevention and intervention efforts by providing effective activities associated with planning and administration of Georgia's Formula Grant Program.</p> <p>To support juvenile justice system improvement in Georgia and state and local prevention and intervention efforts by providing</p>	<p>Formula grant funds awarded for services</p> <p>Number grant applications reviewed</p> <p>Number and percentage of programs monitored</p> <p>Number of planning activities conducted</p>	<p>Number and percentage of programs in line with 3-Year plan</p> <p>Number and percentage of programs evaluated</p> <p>Average time from receipt of sub grant application to date of award</p>

effective State Advisory Group Activities in Georgia.	Number of sub grants awarded Number of SAG meetings held	Number and percentage of plan recommendations implemented
To support the first three core protections of the JJDPa in Georgia. To support the RED core protection of the JJDPa in Georgia.	Funds allocated to adhere to Section 223 (A) (14) of the JJDPa of 2002 Number of compliance monitor site visits and technical assistance provided Number of SAG and RED Subcommittee meetings held	Submission of Complete Annual Monitoring Report to OJJDP Submission of complete Annual RED Report to OJJDP

Juvenile Justice State Advisory Group

Georgia's SAG members are appointed by the Governor and serve in an advisory capacity to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), the designated state agency (DSA). CJCC is legislatively charged with eleven areas of criminal justice coordination. Among those

responsibilities is to serve as the statewide clearinghouse for criminal justice information and research; develop criminal justice legislative and executive policy proposals; and serve in an advisory capacity to the Governor on issues impacting the criminal justice system. Additionally, the CJCC houses the Statistical Analysis Center and works with various research universities / institutes across Georgia for special projects concerning the development of research, training, or evaluation. The authority of the CJCC can be found O.C.G.A 35-6A. The SAG actively communicates with stakeholders to understand the needs of local jurisdictions. The Council serves as the supervisory role but relies on the SAG to supervise the preparation and implementation of the state's Juvenile Justice 3-Year Plan and compliance to the JJDPA, as required by Title II Formula Grant funding. The SAG develops, reviews, and adjusts the plan accordingly throughout the implementation period. The SAG advises the DSA on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention grant applications received by the DSA.²⁶ The authority of the SAG can be found O.C.G.A 35-6A-11 and 35-6A-12. Per the JJDPA, the SAG submits the Three Year Plan and agency report to the Chief Executive Officer and legislature every two years.

Additionally, members of the SAG work for local units of government and are actively engaged with their community stakeholders, including juveniles, and share grassroots information with the SAG. The SAG roster can be found attached FY 24 State Advisory Membership Roster.” The SAG meets all of these requirements.

²⁶ CJCC includes any recommendations from the SAG and update on compliance status as part of the annual report to the Governor.

Formula Grant Staff

Position	Employee	Funding Source(s)	% of Time	Job Duties
Program Director / Juvenile Justice Specialist 1.0 FTE	Stephanie Mikkelsen	Title II Formula State Funding	50% 50%	Serves as Juvenile Justice Specialist; monitors Title II Formula and Title V sub grant recipients; serves as Juvenile Justice Unit Supervisor; manages the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant Program, sits on several stakeholder groups; supervises special projects; supervises Grants Specialist, Compliance Monitor, and Model Fidelity Coordinators.
Juvenile Justice Planning and Policy Development	Haley Dunn- McKinney	Title II Formula State Funding	55%	Monitors Title II subgrant recipients and state-funded grant initiatives/data collection; writes federal

Specialist / RED Coordinator 1.0 FTE		Other Competitive Funding	40% 20%	grant applications, and serves as RED coordinator.
Juvenile Justice Detention Monitor 1.0 FTE	Joseph Lynn	Title II Formula	100%	Monitors state's compliance with jail separation, jail removal, and deinstitutionalization of status offenders; and serves as resource to promote detention alternatives.
Juvenile Justice Model Fidelity Coordinators	Chelsea Benson	State	100%	Monitors the fidelity of evidence-based programs in Georgia, including those funded by the Title II
	Jennifer Reyes	State	92%	Formula program.
		Other Competitive Grants	8%	Additionally, one staff member provides support to our Opioid Affective Youth Initiative.

Juvenile Justice Grant Specialist 1.0 FTE	Laura Oropeza (33% Title II) (57% State) (10% Other)	Title II Formula State Other Competitive Grants	33% 57% 10%	Monitors Title II subgrant recipients and state-funded grant initiatives/data collection;
Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Coordinator	Whitney Temple	State	100%	Monitors and implements JDAI across the state of Georgia.

Appendix A. System Description Continued

Juvenile Justice Reform

In 2012, the legislatively-created Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform (Council) expanded its focus to the *juvenile justice system* at the direction of former Governor Nathan Deal. The Council conducted a detailed analysis of Georgia's juvenile justice system, solicited input from a wide variety of stakeholders, and developed policy recommendations with a focus on increasing public safety, holding offenders accountable, and reducing costs. Throughout this process, the Council received intensive technical assistance from the Pew Charitable Trusts' Public Safety Performance Project and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Justice Strategy Group.

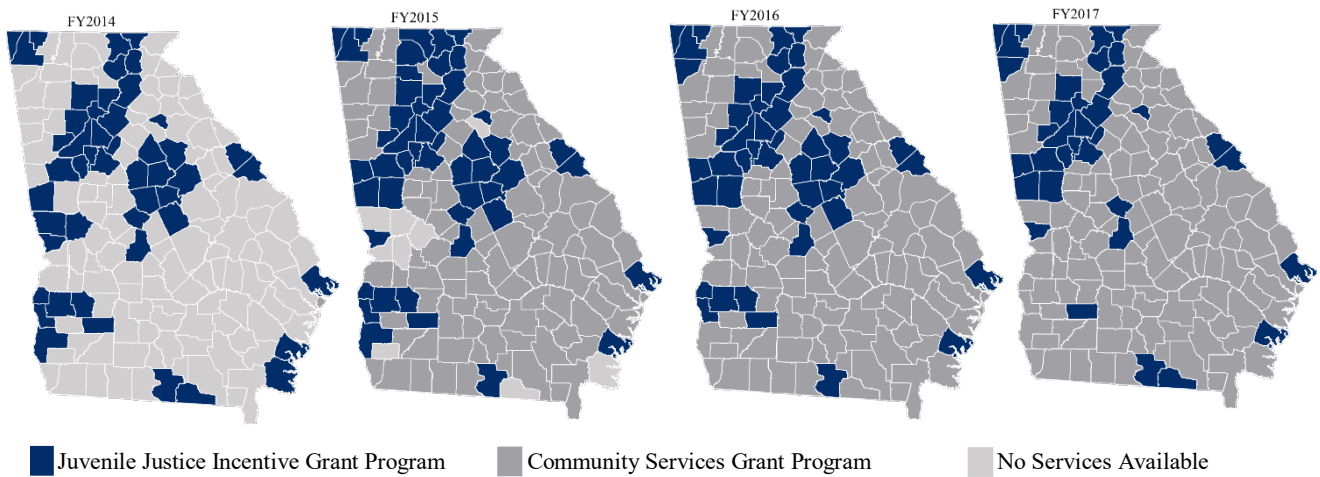
The Council found that Georgia taxpayers have not received a sufficient public safety return on their juvenile justice investment. Nearly two-thirds of DJJ's \$300 million FY 2013 budget was used to operate out-of-home facilities, and the state's secure residential facilities were calculated to cost an average of \$90,000 per bed per year. Despite these significant expenditures, more than 50% of the adjudicated youth in the juvenile justice system were re-adjudicated delinquent or convicted of a criminal offense within three years of release. This rate had held steady since 2003. Additionally, the Council found: misdemeanor and status offenders, many of whom are low risk to reoffend, remain a significant portion of out-of-home placements (OHPs); risks and needs assessment tools were not being used effectively to inform decision making; many areas of the state had limited community-based programs which leaves judges with few alternative options, and the state struggled to collect uniform data on juvenile offenders. From these findings, the

Council made evidence-informed recommendations in order to improve Georgia's juvenile justice system.

The Council's recommendations were unanimously passed as HB 242 in 2013 and the new Children's Code took effect January 2014. In concert with the legislative reforms, a fiscal incentive grant program was established to promote the adoption of evidence-based community programs and practices as alternatives to detention. Over \$32 million dollars has been awarded through this program, known as the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant (JJIG) program, which is administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), under the direction of the JJIG Funding Committee. For the purposes of this application, 'CJCC' and 'DSA' are interchangeable

Building on the success of the JJIG, DJJ implemented the Community Services Grant (CSG) program to provide evidence-based programming to counties where JJIG programs are not available, typically more rural areas. The CSG further allows the state to work strategically to enhance community and evidence-based programming as alternatives to out-of-home placements, and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that informed detention, commitment, and placement decisions are being made. Since the initial rollout, all 159 counties and their respective juvenile courts have the option of placing youth into evidence-based community programming as an alternative to out-of-home placement.

Georgia's 159 counties now all have access to evidence-based community programs as alternatives to out-of-home placement.



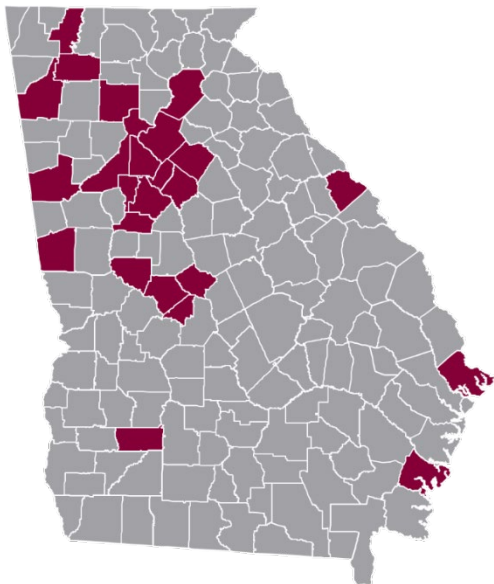
As momentum for juvenile justice reform continued to build from 2013 to present, it has allowed Georgia to undertake significant reforms in both legislation and practice. Some of those advancements include: improving procedural safeguards for court-involved children, clarifying timelines applicable to court proceedings to ensure timeliness of decision making, mandating the use of objective assessment tools, requiring enhanced data collection and reporting, and imposing a statutory presumption against detention of youth under the age of 14. Notably, Georgia's prior approach to intervening with status offenders has been replaced with a new Children in Need of Services (CHINS) paradigm, which encourages the use of a diversionary approach centered around services recommended and provided by judicially-led community collaboratives. In addition, schools are mandated to use educational approaches to address a student's problematic behavior before turning to the juvenile court. Finally, following the direction of adult criminal justice system reforms, the state has broadened the availability of accountability courts as dispositional alternatives, and juvenile courts across the state are increasingly adopting family treatment court divisions.

Roughly half of Georgia’s at-risk juvenile population are under the jurisdiction of “independent**” courts.**

Georgia’s Juvenile Court System

Since 2000, the salaries of juvenile court judges have been supported in whole or in part by state funding. This allowed for appointments of juvenile court judges in jurisdictions which otherwise would have superior court judges presiding over juvenile matters. Except for a single judicial circuit, Georgia's 159 counties are now primarily served by two different types of juvenile courts: **“independent”** and **“dependent.”**

Independent courts are located in the state's most populous counties. Altogether, these courts have



jurisdiction over approximately half of the state’s youth population.²⁷ Independent courts are funded entirely by county commissions and provide intake, probation, and program services through locally controlled and directed probation departments. The individual structure of independent courts allows for a variety of philosophy and practice based on the local jurisdiction.

Dependent courts have jurisdictional responsibility of 142 Georgia counties. In most of these jurisdictions, intake, and probation services are provided exclusively through DJJ employees. DJJ continues to pursue a progressive, treatment-oriented approach with a focus on public safety. Highlights of this approach include non-secure alternatives to incarceration, improved educational programming, evidence-based behavioral programs, and

²⁷ Georgia Juvenile Court Association of Georgia: Georgia Independent Juvenile Courts Directory can be accessed at http://www.jcag.net/2017-18_JCAG_Directory_January_10_2018_Linked.pdf.

continued utilization of comprehensive risk assessment instruments. DJJ's strategy is designed to reduce populations in secure detention facilities and ensure the most appropriate placement of committed youth. Because probation services in most counties are managed by DJJ, procedures and practices in these jurisdictions are more consistent and often differ from those of independent courts.

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

As Georgia's juvenile correctional agency, DJJ is responsible for detention services, youth committed to state custody, and parole and aftercare services in all of the state's 159 counties. DJJ operates a variety of community-based alternatives for committed youth. There are 26 secure detention facilities and 97 community services offices throughout the state. There are two forms of secure detention in Georgia, Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC) and Youth Development Campuses (YDC). RYDC provide short-term secure care, whereas YDCs long-term care. The mission for DJJ is to "is to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia by holding young offenders accountable for their actions through the delivery of services and sanctions in appropriate settings and by supporting youth in their communities to become productive and law-abiding citizens."²⁸

Georgia Juvenile Justice Process

There are six primary decision points for youth entering Georgia's juvenile justice system: (1) *Arrest*; (2) *Intake*; (3) *Adjudication*; (4) *Detention*; (5) *Disposition*; and (6) *Placement* (for committed youth). At any point in the process, offenders may be, and often are, diverted from

²⁸ Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice - <https://djj.georgia.gov/about-us>

further penetration of the system. In addition, chronic or very serious offenders may be transferred to the adult criminal justice system for serious violent felonies or repeated delinquent offenses.

Arrest: Most delinquent offenders enter the system through contact with law enforcement. However, most *CHINS* and some delinquents are referred directly to the court by parents, school officials or other parties filing a petition. When a police officer apprehends a youth suspected of committing an offense the officer can either release the youth or file a juvenile court complaint. If charges are filed, the officer may recommend detention of the youth but must bring the case before a juvenile court intake officer.

Intake: State law requires that court-authorized intake officers be available to receive complaints 24 hours a day. When a complaint is received, the intake worker first decides whether to charge the youth or dismiss the case and withdraw the complaint.

In 2013, Georgia began work on developing a Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI) that would meet the statutory requirements of the new law that became effective January 1, 2014. The tool, per state statute, requires validation every five years. The validated tool, developed by the National Center for Crime and Delinquency (NCCD), in conjunction with DJJ and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is used across the State, as written in statute, and provides an objective set of detention criteria based on risk, not bias such as race. This represents a major step in Georgia's continued racial and ethnic disparities RED efforts. If the youth is charged, the worker then decides to either informally adjust the case or to file a petition for formal processing. If a petition is filed for formal

processing, the intake worker then determines whether the youth should be detained pending a detention hearing or released to his family pending adjudication.

Detention: No juvenile offender may be placed in secure detention without the authorization of a court intake officer. Detention decisions are based on numerous factors, including the availability and stability of the youth's family, the seriousness of the current offense, the youth's prior court history, and the DAI score. In addition, DJJ relies on its network of case expeditors who are charged with reviewing intake decisions and removing appropriate youth from secure detention as soon as possible. These expeditors have access to a much wider range of residential and non-residential options.

As mentioned above, the Children's Code restructured the way youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system are treated Georgia. One of the major changes was the reform of status offenders in Georgia. Traditionally, status offenders were grouped as 'unruly' and could be subject to similar sanctions as delinquent offenders. However, Georgia's new Children's Code acknowledges that unlike delinquent offenders, "certain behaviors or conditions occurring within a family or school environment indicate that a child is experiencing serious difficulties and is in need of services and corrective action in order to protect such child from the irreversibility of certain choices and to protect the integrity of such child's family," specifically status offenders (O.C.G.A. 15-11-1). In addition to recognizing the difference between causes and needs of delinquent and status offenders, the code re-categorized youth who were previously known as 'unruly' or status offenders to CHINS. This change allowed for CHINS to be treated accordingly and effectively. The code emphasizes the importance of CHINS receiving services in the least

restrictive environment, highlights community and family involvement, and prohibits the use of secure detention, except in limited circumstances. Additionally, Georgia prohibits the detainment of any youth alleged or adjudicated as CHINS or a dependent child in a jail, adult lockup, or other adult detention facility. An alleged CHINS may be held in: a licensed foster home; a home approved by the court; a home of child's noncustodial parent or relative; a licensed child welfare agency; or a licensed shelter care facility if: pursuant to a court order; or law enforcement officer has reasonable grounds to believe the child is a runaway or circumstances are such as to endanger a child's health or welfare.

A continued custody hearing for a child alleged to be a child in need of service shall be held within five days if the child is placed in foster care; or 72 hours if the child is held in a secure or non-secure residential facility. An alleged child in need of services may be held in secure or non-secure juvenile residential facility for up to 24 hours prior to a continued custody hearing being held; provided a detention assessment has been administered and if any of the following apply: the child is a runaway; the child is habitually disobedient and ungovernable; or the child has previously failed to appear at a scheduled hearing.

At the hearing, the court shall determine if there is probable cause to believe that at the youth committed a status offense or otherwise a child in need of services and if continued custody is necessary. Following a court hearing, the court may detain the youth in a secure or non-secure residential facility for an additional 72 hours only for the purpose of arranging for alternative placement. If the youth is detained following a continued custody hearing, a petition seeking an adjudication should be filed within five days. If the youth was never taken into custody or released

at the continued custody hearing, a petition seeking an adjudication should be filed within 30 days of the compliant with the juvenile court intake officer or 30 days after the youth was released from temporary custody.

Georgia prohibits the detainment of a youth alleged or adjudicated as delinquent juvenile in a jail, adult lockup, or other adult detention facilities. An alleged delinquent juvenile may be held in: a licensed foster home; a home approved by the court; a home of child's noncustodial parent or relative; a licensed child welfare agency; or a secure or non-secure juvenile residential facility.

In certain circumstances, an alleged delinquent juvenile aged 15 years or older may be held in jail, adult lockup, or other detention facility for the purposes of identification, processing procedures, or awaiting transportation only as long to complete said activity for up to six hours, or for up to 24 hours if the closest secure residential facility is more than 70 miles away. The youth must be detained for the commission of a crime that would constitute a class A designated felony act, class B designated felony act, or a serious violent felony (O.C.G.A. 17-10-6.1); the youth is awaiting a detention hearing; the detention hearing is scheduled within 24 hours after being taken into custody, excluding weekends and legal holidays; there is no existing acceptable alternative placement for the youth; and adult facility provides sight and sound separation for children (O.C.G.A. 15-11-504).

A delinquent juvenile held in the other approved non-adult facilities must have a detention hearing within two days if he or she was taken into without an arrest warrant or five days if the child is taken into custody with an arrest warrant. If the youth is detained following a detention hearing, a

petition alleging delinquency shall be filed within 72 hours of the detention hearing. If the youth is never taken into custody or released at the detention hearing, a petition alleging delinquency shall be filed within 30 days of the filing of the compliance or within 30 days after the youth was released from custody.

The state of Georgia encourages the use of the least restrictive sanctions concerning youth detainment.

Adjudication: Unless a petition is adjusted, dismissed or withdrawn, an adjudicatory hearing will be held for all youth charged with either a delinquent or CHINS. During the adjudicatory hearing, a judge can dismiss or acquit the youth, hold the charge in abeyance, or make a finding of delinquency or unruliness. Under certain circumstances, the judge may also transfer the case to adult court.

As part of the new Children's Code, DJJ, in consultation with the NCCD, began work on developing a Pre-Disposition Risk Assessment (PDRA) that would meet the statutory requirements of the new law that became effective January 1, 2014. The tool provides assessment of a youth's risk to recidivate and is completed by DJJ. The PDRA requires validation every five years, per state statute, and is used across Georgia, and provides an objective set of criteria based on risk. The PDRA is completed post-adjudication and pre-disposition.

Disposition: When a youth is adjudicated delinquent or CHINS, a dispositional hearing is held either immediately following adjudication or through a separate hearing. During disposition, a

judge may make one of the following decisions: dismissal/conditional dismissal; unofficial probation; probation; intensive probation; or commitment to DJJ. Occasionally, a juvenile court judge will also order a child into treatment through the State Division of Mental Health or place the child in the joint custody of DJJ and the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

Youth having three or more prior court appearances for felonies or charged with aggravated assault, aggravated battery, robbery, and armed robbery without a firearm, kidnapping, arson and several different weapons offenses can also be committed as designated felons. Juvenile court judges now have the authority to sentence these offenders to YDC for up to five years. Youth charged with one of seven violent felonies, including murder, rape, and armed robbery with a firearm, are automatically charged as adults, but can be committed as designated felons if their cases are transferred to juvenile court. Juvenile court judges have the authority to mandate up to 90 days incarceration for any delinquent offender. However, judges cannot mandate incarceration or any other placement for long-term committed youth.

Placements:

Probation - Once adjudicated, all juvenile offenders are subject to a disposition of probation under whatever conditions of supervision the court prescribes. Probation can be ordered for up to two years with a provision for extension. A variety of concurrent actions are also authorized in conjunction with probation for delinquents, including placement in a residential or non-residential program for delinquent children, mandatory restitution, community service work, monetary fines and the suspension of a driver's license up to age 18. Probation conditions range from minimal reporting requirements to close supervision with mandatory curfews and participation in specific

rehabilitative activities. Minor offenders are often placed on informal probation, but most delinquents are given six months to one year of official probation. A variety of specialized programs for probated youth are available in the state's more populous communities and many courts include participation in these programs as a probation condition. Before juvenile reform in Georgia, many such services were not available in many of the state's many rural jurisdictions. With state funds now made available for evidence-based community alternatives to detention programs, all 159 counties in Georgia have programs in place for these youth. The DSA, along with DJJ, monitors and reviews all of these evidence-based options across the State.

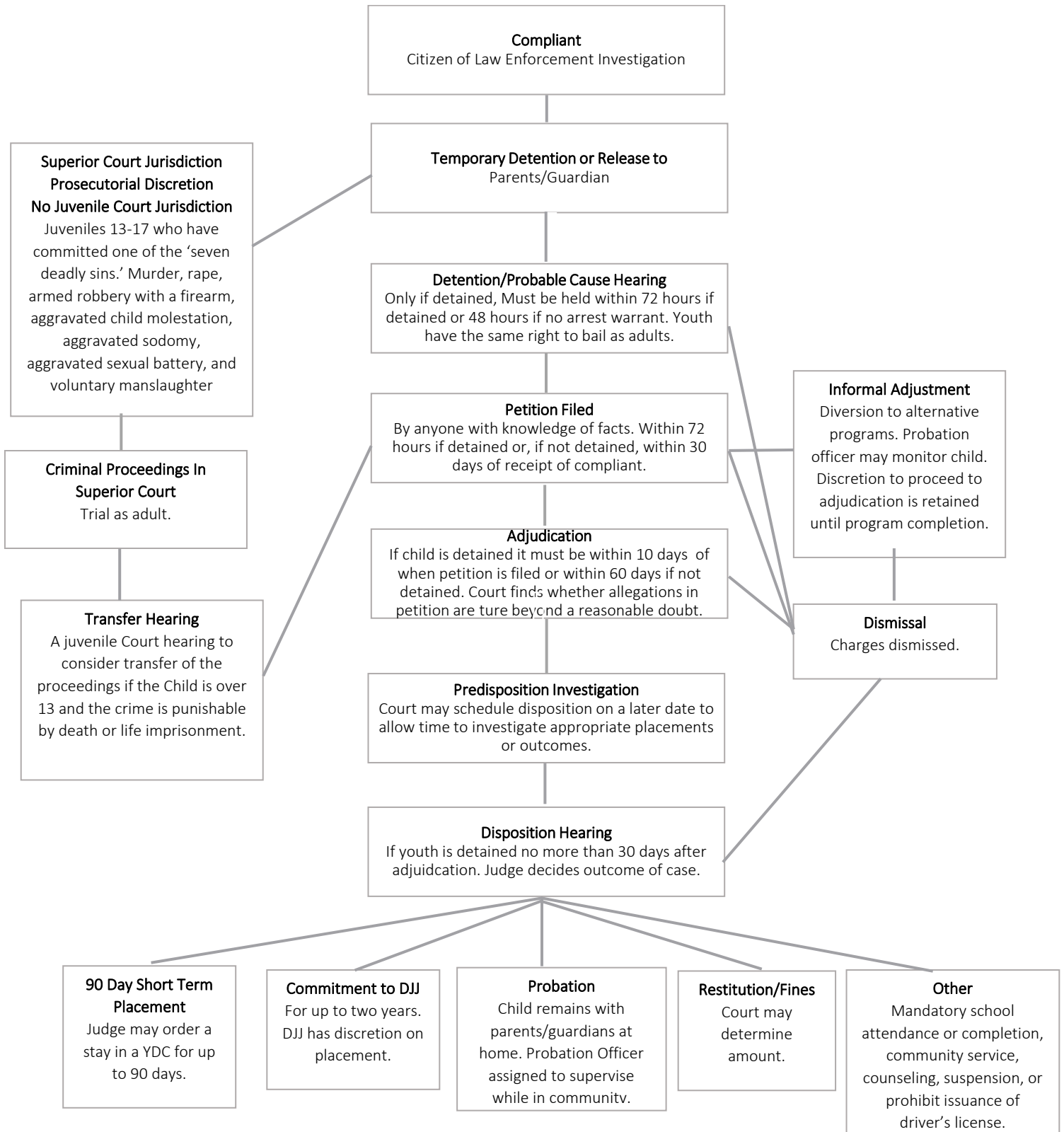
90-Day Placement/Short-Term Program - At adjudication, the juvenile judge can assign a youth to short-term placement (STP) up to 30 days. The majority of youth who receive this judgment are placed serve their sentences in the RYDC.

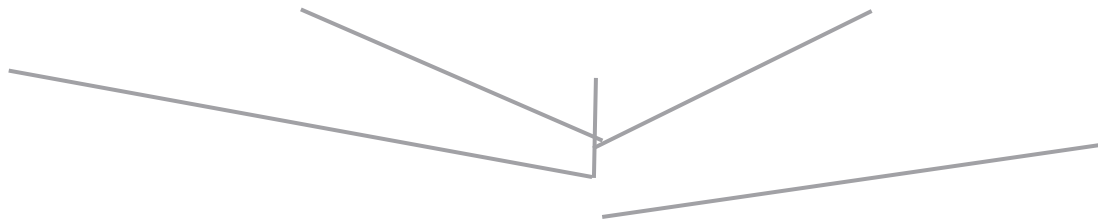
Commitment/Placement: Once a youth has been committed to DJJ, a panel of DJJ staff and other professionals is convened to determine the most appropriate placement for the youth. These screening committees consider a number of factors in making placement decisions and utilize a standardized screening instrument. Alternately placed youth are subject to revocation and placement in YDC if they commit new offenses or violate the conditions of their placement. Youth placed in YDCs are assigned minimum and maximum lengths of stay based primarily on the seriousness of the committing offense(s) and past court involvement. Once released from a YDC or an alternate placement, youth are placed on after-care supervision in their community for an indefinite length of time. After-care is normally terminated when the supervising worker feels the youth has made a satisfactory adjustment within the community or upon the expiration of the

youth's commitment order. Commitment orders are valid for two years, except in designated felony cases, when commitment can be ordered for up to five years.

The following flow chart depicts the process through Georgia's juvenile justice system.

Georgia Juvenile Justice Process





Georgia’s juvenile justice system remains structured to provide effective services to the most youth in the least restrictive and least punitive possible environment. Only a fraction of all youth coming before the juvenile court system reach the point of commitment. Furthermore, available data indicates that less than 45% of all cases filed with juvenile courts result in a formal court disposition of probation or commitment. **Thus, the vast majority of juvenile offenders are successfully diverted from further delinquency without formal court involvement through local programs and services provided by the schools, mental health therapists, local child serving agencies, and crisis workers.**

Both DOE and DJJ are committed to improving the educational experience of youth in DJJ custody. DJJ is the 181st school district in Georgia and provides educational programs at its institutional facilities, however, most juvenile offenders receive academic services through the state's county and city school systems and the Georgia Department of Education (DOE). A variety of special education, counseling and alternative educational services are offered by local school systems, but the quality and quantity of such services vary widely according to each system's tax base. Thus, the State's poorer communities are often incapable of providing specialized services for high-risk youth while such services in urban counties are increasingly insufficient to meet growing demands. In response to this need the State provided large scale funding to local systems

Post-Disposition

A child has the right to appeal case. Upon motion of DJJ and after a hearing. The Court may extend DJJ custody for up to two years

for the initiation of alternative schools for youth with chronic and/or severe disciplinary records. This greatly expanded the availability of academic services for juvenile offenders in many communities who were previously suspended or expelled. However, as the economic situation changed and local communities have had to absorb more of these costs, this has led some systems to disband their alternative school and move to an Ombudsman service approach. Ombudsman provides an alternative for students who find that large classes, hallway commotion and personal issues distract them from learning. The program offers an alternative program for students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out because of credit deficiency, personal challenges, truancy, suspension, learning disabilities or family obligations. Ombudsman's nontraditional middle and high school programs provide personalized, computer assisted instruction to students based on their needs assessment. Through the interagency partnership of the Children's Cabinet, DOE has agreed to allow DJJ electronic access to student's educational records (and vice versa) providing a seamless continuation of each child's education whether they are in a facility or in the community. This new practice eliminates the loss of valuable instruction time that accompanied the slow transfer of paper transcripts. Over the past four years this partnership has helped youth transition out of facilities in a more coordinated and less demanding way all while keeping their education progress on track.

Through sweeping juvenile reform, the State of Georgia has worked the last five years to better coordinate the previously fragmented nature of the juvenile justice system across the State. A wide disparity in the treatment of juvenile offenders across the state has become more centralized by providing grant funding for select evidence-based programs shown to be effective with juvenile offenders. However, the need for local services for all at-risk children still remain

particularly in rural areas, leading, in many instances, to the commitment of youth to DJJ primarily because of a lack of local resources.

The agency's mental health resources have expanded over the past four years and mental health programming, particularly diagnostic services, in YDCs and RYDCs have improved significantly. Thus, DJJ reduced its dependence on state and local mental health agencies (who used to furnish on-call services to institutions) and provides a mental health system for its institutions. However, DJJ's community services offices remain dependent on private providers and the state mental health system. The state Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) has over 9,000 local and state employees with an annual budget of approximately \$1,085,992,770 and is charged with providing behavioral health services to citizens of Georgia.²⁹ Until recently, however, more than 50% of their budget was allocated to the state's seven regional mental hospitals, which serve primarily adult patients with "chronic" and severe problems. During the past decade years, hospital capacity for children and adolescents has been reduced approximately 95% but community resources have not been increased accordingly. Recent reform efforts have started pushing closer to eliminating the chronic shortage of residential mental health services throughout the state.

Furthermore, most community mental health therapists serve predominantly adult caseloads. While the DBHDD is, in theory, charged with providing services to all of the state's children and youth, only a small percentage of its funding is allocated for child and adolescent therapists and

²⁹ Budget in Brief Amended Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2018 Budget. Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
https://opb.georgia.gov/sites/opb.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Budget%20in%20Brief%20AFY17%20-%20FY18%20%28Final%29.pdf

adolescent substance abuse treatment. Thus, DBHDD attempts to meet the needs of DJJ and juvenile court clients but often lacks the capacity to provide treatment for these youth in a timely and comprehensive fashion. Indeed, many community mental health centers have no therapists trained to work with children and adolescents, and less than 100 bed spaces for adolescents are available statewide through DBHDD for residential substance abuse treatment. Long-term psychiatric care for severely disturbed adolescents is even more limited. In 2010 the state hospitals closed all child and adolescent services and there are no residential slots for this purpose available statewide. Instead, the State's mental hospitals primarily provide children and adolescents long-term care on an outpatient basis. Beginning in the mid 90's, the state's mental health system entered an era of dramatic change with the creation of regional mental health boards intended to eventually assume control of most of the state's mental health services. The ultimate objective of this initiative was to dramatically reduce centralized state control of mental health services and allow communities to determine, through their regional boards, local priorities for mental health services and funding. This transformation has been accompanied by significant service disruptions in numerous locations and a variety of funding issues. It now appears that access to services for adolescents may have been restricted rather than improved by regionalization, particularly for juvenile offenders. DJJ, the courts, and DBHDD rely primarily on private hospitals and non-profit outpatient treatment programs to provide residential treatment for juvenile offenders. However, funding for such programs is often unavailable unless a youth's family possesses adequate insurance coverage. Approximately 30 intensive and intermediate care facilities are available across the state, which provide long-term treatment for adolescents, including delinquent and status offenders. Although most of these programs are non-profit, they are costly to operate. The number of these programs has grown to the point where statewide capacity may be sufficient to

meet the needs of all youth in the system. However, funding for the placement of juvenile offenders in these programs remains quite inadequate. Thus, youth often remain on waiting lists for up to a year or more awaiting placement in appropriate treatment programs. However, under the terms of DJJ's Memorandum of Agreement with the Justice Department, funding for the purchase of specialized treatment services rose significantly since 1999. This allowed increasing numbers of youth with serious mental health issues to be served in residential treatment facilities. Likewise, funding for the purchase of mental health evaluations and outpatient treatment services for DJJ clients had steadily increased since 2000.

The state's Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is charged with providing child protective services, foster care and welfare assistance. Foster care placement through DFCS is available for court-involved children who are adjudicated as dependent or, in some instances, as a CHINS. DFCS continues to recover from sustained budget cuts while contending with a dramatic increase in the state's foster care population, resulting in an extremely short supply of foster homes for adolescents.

The first attempt to address the critical developmental differences between youth and adults who encounter the justice system occurred in 1971 when Georgia created a separate juvenile section from the adult criminal code. Since then, Georgia has worked to improve the system to best address the needs of youth who come into contact with juvenile justice system. As briefly mentioned above, the state of Georgia's juvenile justice system has dramatically changed with sweeping reform since passing the 'Children's Code.' The 'Children's Code', or HB 242, was passed with unanimous support from the House and Senate floors. HB 242 was signed into law by Governor

Deal in May 2013 and came into effect January 1, 2014. The creation of a new ‘Children’s Code’ was the first substantial overhaul of Georgia’s juvenile code in over 40 years. Positive impacts of this legislation include:

- Elimination of confusing and contradictory language in previous juvenile code
- Advancement of best practices in juvenile justice & child welfare nationwide (Restorative Justice, Family Conferencing, Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders)
- Elimination of status offender designation. Children under 18 who become truants, runaways or unruly will be considered “children in need of services” and are not be detained. The focus of the court will be on addressing problems that led to behavior.
- Enhancement of alternatives to detention. Children who need to be detained will be, but wherever possible alternatives to detention will be found for those who will benefit from more focused treatment. The time detained will be limited.
- Strengthening of mediation tools. Although some juvenile courts in Georgia have mediation programs, they are not used routinely in delinquency cases. The new law encourages this practice.
- Elevation of the importance of using uniform assessments to measure a child’s risk to re-offend as part of court’s proceedings. Judges will have more information about each case and more flexibility to balance the interests of public safety and the child’s well-being.
- Improvement in outcomes (Recidivism): Currently, about 65 percent of children released from DJJ detention go on to commit more offenses. By providing funding for community-focused, evidence-based programs that are proven to reduce recidivism for young offenders, state has potential to improve child outcomes and save taxpayer dollars through consolidation and streamlining of services resulting in more efficient government

A helpful summation of all recent changes is contained in the Georgia Criminal Justice Reform Council's Report to the Governor which can be accessed via <https://dcs.georgia.gov/georgia-council-criminal-justice-reform>.

By focusing on improving outcomes for Georgia's children and youth, the result is a solid, consistent approach to helping local communities, child-serving organizations, and families find solutions to the never-ending challenge of keeping children safe and sound. Towards this end, Georgia is working to build capacity in communities to enable sustainability of activities and services. By strengthening the use of needs assessment and evaluation tools and providing funding for research informed/evidence-based practices, Georgia seeks to ensure the proper evaluation and funding of good, effective programs designed to treat juvenile delinquency.

Included as an integral part of this community-based approach is the belief that services should be provided in the least restrictive setting possible, as close to home as possible with family members as full partners in deciding what services are needed. **Georgia is committed to supporting targeted communities by funding providers, agencies and organizations that operate under these core values and principles.** CJCC will continue to serve as a link between the State's juvenile court judges and DJJ and seeks to improve the coordination of services between these and other child serving agencies through an on-going series of meetings aimed at developing more integrated services at the local level.