



**DHR/DFCS
Caregiver and Parent
Surveys Report**

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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary/Highlights of the Findings	3
Introduction	6
Survey Method	
Universe/Sampling	7
Questionnaire Design	8
Mail Survey Logistics	9
Survey Response/Non-Response	11
Results	
Caregiver Profile	13
Caregiver Relationship to Children Placed in the Home	15
Parent Profile	15
Parent Case Status	18
Caregiver Experience with Case Management	19
Number of Case Managers	21
Case Manager Support	21
Parent Experience with Case Management	23
Parent Experience with Placement	27
Caregiver Service Gaps	28
Parent Service Gaps	29
Overall Rating of DFCS Experience	30
Caregiver and Parent Comments	31
Summary/Conclusions	33

Appendices

- I. Response Summary Reports
- II. Caregiver Questionnaire
- III. Parent Questionnaire
- IV. State Data Summary
- V. Map of Individual Caregivers by Type and Region
- VI. Map of Individual Caregivers by Type and County
- VII. Map of DFCS Foster/Adoptive Caregivers by County
- VIII. Map of Non-DFCS (Private Placement Agency) Foster/Adoptive Caregivers by County
- IX. Map of Relative Caregivers by County
- X. Map of Parent Survey Sample by Case Type by County
- XI. Caregiver Ratings of Survey Items by Region
- XII. Selected Caregiver and Parent Comments



Prepared by:
Care Solutions, Inc.
500 Sugar Mill Road, Suite 170-A
Atlanta, GA 30350
800-227-3410 / 770-642-6722
www.caresolutions.com

Executive Summary/Highlights of the Findings

The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services, contracted with Care Solutions, Inc., a Georgia-based consulting firm, to survey home-based caregivers (foster, adoptive and relative) as well as families who have had some child welfare involvement in the state.

The purposes of the surveys included preparation for an upcoming federal review, state mandates to seek stakeholder input and the agency's commitment to continuous quality improvement. The caregiver and parent surveys were part of a multi-pronged approach to seeking stakeholder input which included 13 regional community forums, a statewide forum and an online stakeholder survey.

Both the caregiver and the parent surveys primarily focused on the individual's experience with DFCS, particularly with DFCS case managers. Questions addressed such topics as explaining rights and responsibilities, providing information, finding resources/services, and responsiveness. Respondents were also asked to rate DFCS overall and provide some demographic information. Parents were also asked about their placement experience, if any.

Response

Surveys were mailed to 9,831 caregivers and 7,917 parents; the caregiver response was much better than the expected 15 percent, while the parent response was disappointing, but not unexpected. The survey report is based on usable responses from a total of 4,518 (46% response) caregivers and 639 parents (8% response). Both caregiver and parent respondents represented every region and nearly all counties in the state, with caregivers representing 158 and parents representing 137 of Georgia's 159 counties.

The typical caregiver or parent respondent was female, white or black, with a high school or less education. Caregivers were more likely to be married or living with a partner (59%) compared to parents (43%).

Most of the caregiver respondents were foster/adoptive caregivers. Nearly half (45%) were DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers, 21 percent were non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers and 34 percent were relative caregivers. Among parent respondents, 39 percent had an open or closed CPS case, 34 percent had children in placement and 27 percent were diversion families.

Results

Perhaps the most important finding of these surveys was the overwhelming response of the caregivers, who not only completed the survey but also added comments and even letters about their experiences. They clearly wanted to be heard.

While the parent response was light, it was clear that many parents wanted to be heard as well, adding comments and/or letters requesting they be contacted or helped with their individual situations.

Overall findings for caregivers and parents were similar in many ways, although parents tended to be less positive than caregivers, and parents with children in placement were the most negative in their perceptions. The average overall rating of the caregivers' experience with DFCS in the past 12 months was positive. On a 7-point scale with "poor" equal to one and "excellent" equal to seven, the average caregiver rating was 4.8. Parents overall were in the middle, with an average rating of four; however, diversion and CPS parents rated DFCS higher (4.7 and 4.4) than did parents with children in placement (3.1).

Perceptions of Case Management

The case manager, and sometimes the case supervisor, is critical to the experience of both caregivers and parents. The knowledge, support, responsiveness and stability of the caseworker color the caregiver and parent experience with DFCS – either positively or negatively.

While caregivers on average agreed that their most recent case manager explained why a child was removed from the home, explained the caregiver's responsibilities and rights and was knowledgeable, many of the caregiver comments had to do with the presence or lack of case manager (and in some cases, supervisor) support and responsiveness.

Caregivers also agreed that their most recent case manager treated them with respect, listened to them and called them back in a timely manner; however, many caregivers reported problems with responsiveness, particularly case managers not returning telephone calls, providing information or paperwork.

Caregivers also tended to agree – but not strongly – that they were helped to find community resources and services and received enough financial support to meet the child's needs. But again, many caregivers commented on the lack of resources, services and financial support, especially for children with disabilities or special needs.

Parents differed in their perceptions depending on their relationship to DFCS, with those in diversion tending to be more positive and those with children in placement tending to be more negative.

Resources and Supports

More than a third of caregivers (39%) and parents (40%) responding indicated they did not receive services or supports they felt they needed; 59 percent of the parents with children in placement said they did not receive services or supports they felt they needed.

When these caregivers and parents were asked what services or supports were not received, the number one area in which they said they needed services or supports was for children

with disabilities, mentioned by 88 percent of these caregivers and 84 percent of these parents. The other top mentions were mental health services, case manager support (e.g., communication, information, responsiveness and paperwork) and financial issues (e.g., pay, per diems, late payments/reimbursements).

These findings, together with caregiver and parent comments, indicate there is a need to increase access to these services and supports, through increased availability of resources and more awareness/information about existing resources.

This report presents the detailed results of the caregiver and parent surveys.

Introduction

The Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) contracted with Care Solutions, Inc. to conduct statewide mail surveys of home-based caregivers – including foster, adoptive and relative caregivers – and parents in families who have had some child welfare involvement, including parents with children in foster care placements.

The impetus for the surveys was four-fold:

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

DFCS Mission:

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

In addition to the caregiver and parent surveys, DFCS is obtaining additional input through:

- Reports on regional and statewide forums conducted with key stakeholders such as legislators, judges, attorneys, service providers, child advocacy groups, and foster parents;
- An online survey of stakeholders targeting the same groups represented at the community forums.

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

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

Survey Method

The Universe/Sampling

Foster care provides temporary homes or residential care for children who have been abused or neglected by their families. Foster care providers include foster homes, relative homes, group homes, child care institutions and hospitals; placements are determined based on provider availability and child needs. In September 2006 there were more than 10,000 foster care providers serving more than 15,000 Georgia children.¹

The caregiver survey data in this report are based on surveys of individual foster, adoptive and relative caregivers. Group homes and institutions were invited to participate in the separate online stakeholder survey.

Foster/adoptive parents

Foster/adoptive parents are recruited primarily by county DFCS staff or private placement agencies. Foster parents provide temporary care for children, but if a foster child becomes available for adoption, foster parents often adopt the child. Foster parents account for more than 80 percent of DFCS adoptions.²

The foster/adoptive caregiver homes may be recruited, trained and receive placements from DFCS or from a private placement agency. In September 2006 there were more than 6,000 foster and adoptive homes in Georgia serving more than 8,000 children.³

All foster parents must complete physical exams, drug screens, and criminal record checks, and homes must meet safety requirements. In addition, foster parents must complete training requirements and a re-evaluation each year.

The number of children in foster care ranges from one to six (including the parents' own children). Some homes may be approved for more than six children, e.g., those caring for siblings or those providing for emergency placements. Foster parents are reimbursed according to the age of the child placed; payments range from \$14.18 to \$18.25 per day;

In the best interest of children . . .

Safety

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

Permanency

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

Well-Being

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

¹ Based on data provided by DHR Evaluation and Reporting November 2006.

² Adoption percentage based on DFCS online Fact Sheet on Foster Care dated December 2003 and accessed December 2006.

³ Based on data provided by DHR Evaluation and Reporting November 2006.

rates are higher for children needing medical care or a higher level of supervision, and the agency covers medical treatment and clothing costs.

Relative Caregivers

A relative may serve as a foster placement for a child in state custody. Relative foster parents are reimbursed at 80% of the foster care per diem rate (or \$10 per day if they choose not to provide income information). A relative may also agree to keep a child so that the child is not taken into state custody.

As of September 2006 there were more than 3,500 relative caregiver homes (foster and non-foster) in addition to the 6,000-plus foster/adoptive caregivers (both DFCS and non-DFCS/private placement agency).

A total of 9,831 foster, adoptive and relative caregivers as of September 2006 were included in the survey mailing.⁴

Parents

The parent survey included a sample of families with an open or closed Child Protective Services (CPS) case, families that were screened out (diversion), and families with children in foster care placements (placement). These parents are typically biological parents, but they also include custodial grandparents and foster parents in cases initiated while the child was living with that custodial parent/grandparent/foster parent.

From the roughly 30,000 families in the DFCS data system in September 2006, a sample of parents was pulled by DFCS Reporting & Evaluation for the parent survey.

(See Appendix I for a summary of responses/returns by region and statewide for the caregivers and the parent sample.)

Questionnaire Design

In preparation for the CFSR process, DFCS had pre-tested foster parent and adoptive parent survey instruments adapted from another state in two focus groups.

Care Solutions, Inc., an independent consulting firm, met with DFCS staff, including state and regional representatives as well as DFCS Evaluation and Reporting representatives, to review the feedback from the two focus groups and discuss survey method and administration. At that meeting it was decided that for this initial survey effort, a mail survey would be developed and administered by Care Solutions due to cost, time frame, and Care Solutions' experience in managing large statewide mail surveys.

⁴ The original list provided by DFCS Evaluation and Reporting included 9,916 records; 85 were eliminated and 731 addresses were updated when the mailing list was cleaned using postal service software.

Based on the results of those two focus groups and input from the DFCS committee, two new survey instruments were developed and distributed for comment. In addition, the instruments were reviewed informally by DFCS staff (state and county; supervisory and front-line) and a parent as well as Care Solutions staff with expertise in child welfare. The survey instruments were then revised and finalized based on feedback received.

Both survey instruments included questions about children in the home, case management, case managers, overall rating of DFCS and selected demographic characteristics. The parent survey also included questions about CPS case status.

The survey forms were printed with a cover letter on DFCS letterhead signed by Mary Dean Harvey, DFCS Director. See appendices for copies of the questionnaires.

A toll-free telephone number was included to assist providers with any questions, and a pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope was included for return of surveys.

Mail Survey Logistics

Care Solutions' mail survey process included initial survey mailings, post card reminders, and for the caregivers, a second survey mailing to non-respondents. (The biological parent list was not received in time to allow for a second survey mailing to non-respondents.)

Before mailing, records with missing addresses were eliminated (and additional sample pulled and substituted), and the mailing list was run through the postal service software to update addresses and eliminate records with all or part of the address missing. A total of 731 addresses were updated by the postal service software.

The survey instrument with cover letter was mailed presorted first class in a window envelope bearing the DHR logo with a postage-paid business reply envelope. In addition to getting the questionnaires to their destinations more rapidly, first class allowed undeliverable mail to be returned. When undeliverable envelopes were returned and included a forwarding address, the database was updated and forms were sent to the forwarding address; otherwise the records were marked as "*bad address.*" Data on providers with bad addresses are included in the response analysis. (See Appendix I.)

After the first questionnaire was mailed, a follow-up postcard was mailed first class to all members of the sample. This postcard thanked respondents who had completed and returned the survey and encouraged those who had not to do so. It also included a toll-free number to call with questions about the survey or to request another form if they had lost or misplaced it.

Survey Mailings and Dates

Mailing	Number Sent	Date Sent
Initial caregiver survey mailing to all foster, adoptive and relative caregivers	9,831	11/22/06
Caregiver post card reminder	9,831	11/30/06
Second caregiver survey mailing	7,321	12/12/06
Initial parent survey mailing to diverted and CPS families	4,841	12/8/06
Parent post card reminder to diverted and CPS families	4,841	12/14/06
Initial parent survey mailing to families with children in placements	3,076	12/14/06
Parent post card reminder mailing to families with children in placements	3,076	12/27/06

Throughout the process, Care Solutions staff fielded numerous telephone queries about the survey, sent replacement copies to providers who misplaced their questionnaire or did not receive one at all.

See appendices for copies of the parent and caregiver questionnaires with cover letters.

Survey Response/Non-Response

DFCS anticipated a response of about 15% for the caregiver and parent surveys; however, the caregiver response far exceeded expectations, with a response rate of 46 percent and a total return rate (including bad addresses) of 53 percent.

The parent survey response, on the other hand, was a disappointing eight percent, with a total return rate of one-third (33%) including bad addresses. Despite the fact that DFCS sought updated addresses from local county DFCS offices for each of the parents included in the sample, the rate of bad addresses (25%) is indicative of the problems in maintaining contact with families with some DFCS involvement, especially once a case is closed. Based on this mail survey response, alternative means of seeking feedback and input from biological families should be explored.

Responses and Returns by Type of Caregiver

	Relative Caregiver	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total
		DFCS	Non-DFCS	
Received	43.4%	51.2%	41.6%	46.2%
Bad address	11.3%	3.6%	7.1%	7.2%
Duplicate listing *	1.0%	1.0%	3.5%	1.6%
Unusable	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.3%
Total list	3,587	4,012	2,318	9,917**

* Some duplicates were eliminated prior to mailing; this reflects duplicates identified through returned envelopes and the post-survey data cleansing process.

** List sent to mail house; some listings were purged in the postal software process, so actual mailing was 9,831.

Responses and Returns by Parent Category

	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total
Received	11.5%	8.2%	5.6%	8.0%
Bad address	15.8%	19.8%	35.6%	24.9%
Duplicate listing *	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Unusable	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Total sample list	1,934	3,065	3,079	8,078**

* Some duplicates were eliminated prior to mailing; this reflects duplicates identified through returned envelopes; there were a number of duplicate listings in the database where a family has two records in different categories; these are not included in the duplicates count above.

** List sent to mail house; some listings were purged in the postal software process, so actual mailing was 7,917.

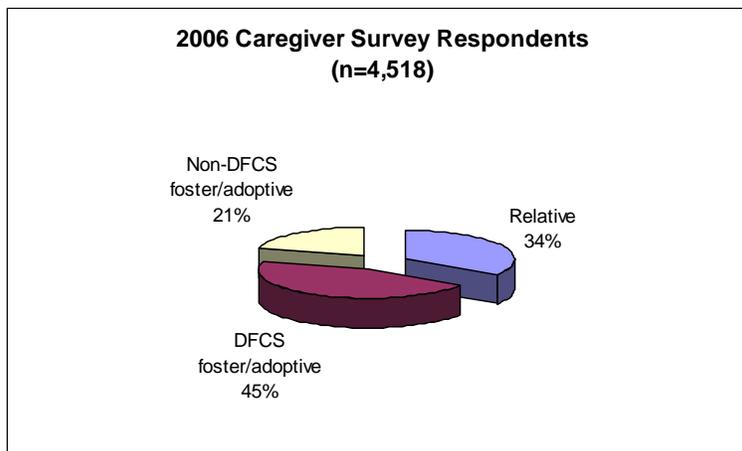
See Appendix I for response/return summary reports by region; also see appendices for maps of the caregivers and the parent survey sample.

In addition to completing the survey form, a number of both caregivers and parents responded with detailed letters about their individual experiences. Although the survey was set up to be confidential, in many cases individuals included their contact information (name, telephone, and/or address) and requested they be contacted. These letters were copied and provided to DFCS Constituent Services, the department charged with handling specific case concerns.

Results

Caregiver Profile

The list of DFCS placement providers included caregivers in three categories – relative caregivers, DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers and non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers. The following graph shows the percentage of caregiver respondents in each category.



These caregiver respondents represented every region and 158 of 159 counties in the state; in addition, almost four percent, primarily relatives, resided out-of-state. Nearly a third of the respondents were from Region 3, which is the metro Atlanta region, but more than half of the non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers (54%) were from that region.

Caregiver Respondents by DFCS Region

Region	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total	
		DFCS	Non-DFCS	Number	Percent
1	215	258	59	532	11.8%
2	48	104	12	164	3.6%
3	386	505	502	1393	30.8%
4	89	155	25	269	6.0%
5	79	132	48	259	5.7%
6	100	143	66	309	6.8%
7	109	122	58	289	6.4%
8	77	86	63	226	5.0%
9	67	112	4	183	4.1%
10	73	119	31	223	4.9%
11	98	154	6	258	5.7%
12	79	134	37	250	5.5%
Out-of-State	124	17	22	163	3.6%
Total	1,544	2,041	933	4,518	100.0%

The last page of the survey requested demographic information. Of those completing the items, most were female (78%), primarily white/Caucasian (46%) or black/African-American (52%). The typical caregiver was married or living with a partner (59%), although non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers were more likely than relative or DFCS caregivers to be single, separated, divorced or widowed.

Most caregivers (60%) were between the ages of 30 and 59; 38 percent had a high school education or less.

Caregiver Respondent Characteristics

		Relative Caregiver	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total	
			DFCS	Non-DFCS	Percent	Number
Gender	Female	79.7%	75.0%	80.6%	77.8%	3,414
	Male	20.3%	25.0%	19.4%	22.2%	974
Race	White/Caucasian	53.9%	50.2%	23.4%	46.0%	2,004
	Black/African-American	44.5%	48.0%	73.3%	52.0%	2,264
	Other	0.4%	0.4%	1.0%	0.5%	22
	Two or more races	1.2%	1.5%	2.4%	1.6%	68
Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	2.2%	2.3%	3.4%	2.5%	63
Marital Status	Single/separated/divorced/widowed	39.4%	36.7%	51.5%	40.6%	1,770
	Married/living together	60.6%	63.3%	48.6%	59.4%	2,585
Age	21 or under	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	3
	22-29	4.6%	4.4%	4.0%	4.4%	105
	30-39	17.9%	24.9%	16.4%	21.1%	503
	40-49	27.8%	35.2%	37.5%	33.1%	789
	50-59	31.2%	23.6%	29.0%	27.0%	644
	60-69	15.0%	9.0%	11.1%	11.4%	271
	70 or over	3.3%	2.8%	2.0%	2.8%	67
Education	GED	10.8%	4.7%	4.9%	6.8%	295
	High school diploma	24.3%	20.9%	17.4%	21.3%	925
	Some college	18.7%	23.2%	26.3%	22.3%	970
	College degree	14.3%	29.0%	30.8%	24.4%	1,061
	Vocational school	13.6%	15.1%	17.4%	15.1%	654
	None of the above	18.3%	7.2%	3.2%	10.1%	440

Caregiver Relationship to Children Placed in the Home

Nearly 4,000 caregivers reported on more than 8,000 children placed in their homes by DFCS and currently living with them.

Relationship to Children Placed by DFCS Currently Living with Caregivers

Relationship	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total
		DFCS	Non-DFCS	
Adoptive parent	5.2%	34.3%	22.6%	22.0%
Foster parent	4.0%	69.7%	72.1%	47.7%
Relative foster home	25.4%	3.8%	1.4%	10.7%
Relative caregiver	61.9%	1.5%	2.7%	22.4%
Total respondents	1,544	2,041	933	4,518

Note: Caregivers may have different relationships to different children placed in their homes. Also, some relative caregivers were not certain whether they were foster or non-foster caregivers.

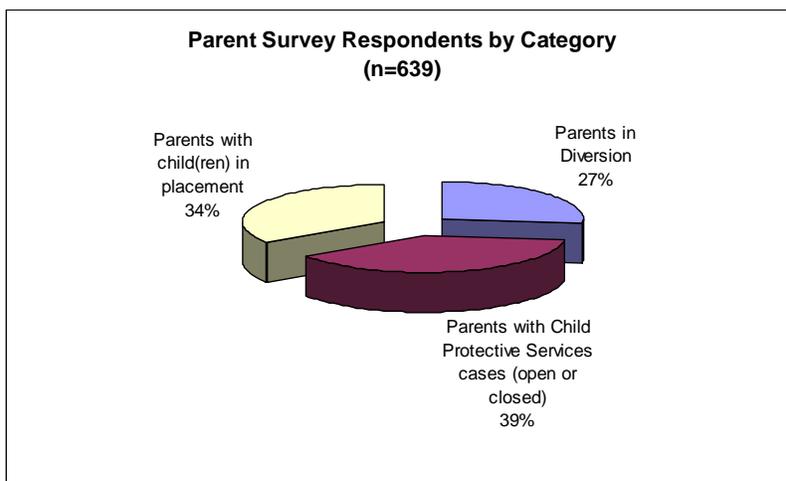
The average length of time a placed child – foster, adopted or relative – had been living with them was 24.6 months (for all children in home at least one month). For foster children only, the average was 14.1 months in the home, with the average for relative caregivers the lowest, at 12.7 months.

Number of Months Living in the Home if Caregiver is Foster Parent to Child

	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total
		DFCS	Non-DFCS	
Number of caregivers reporting foster child(ren)	62	1,422	673	2,157
Number of foster children reported	103	2,673	1,167	3,943
Average number of months in the caregiver's home	12.7	13.8	14.9	14.1

Parent Profile

The list from which the survey sample was drawn included parents in three categories – families in diversion (DIV: no child protective services case but identified as needing services/support), families with child protective services (CPS) cases and families with children in placement (PLC). The following graph shows the percentage of parent respondents in each category.



Parent respondents represented all 12 regions and 137 of Georgia's 159 counties; four out-of-state parents responded. The typical parent respondent was a white female between the ages of 22 and 49 with an education of high school or less, although 39 percent of the respondents were Black/African-American and 31 percent had some college education.

The respondents were split between single and dual parent households, with 57 percent being single, separated, divorced or widowed and 43 percent being married or living together. The following charts show parent respondents by region and parent respondent characteristics.

Parent Respondents by DFCS Region

SDR	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total	
				Number	Percent
1	5.9%	16.1%	15.9%	85	13.3%
2	7.6%	7.6%	8.6%	51	8.0%
3	25.9%	24.5%	16.4%	141	22.1%
4	7.6%	7.2%	11.8%	57	8.9%
5	12.4%	3.6%	3.6%	38	5.9%
6	2.4%	8.0%	6.4%	38	5.9%
7	9.4%	4.0%	3.2%	33	5.2%
8	2.4%	4.0%	3.6%	22	3.4%
9	5.9%	4.8%	4.5%	32	5.0%
10	7.6%	8.8%	5.9%	48	7.5%
11	3.5%	8.0%	12.3%	53	8.3%
12	8.2%	3.2%	6.8%	37	5.8%
Out-of-state	1.2%	0.0%	0.9%	4	0.6%
Total	170	249	220	639	100.0%

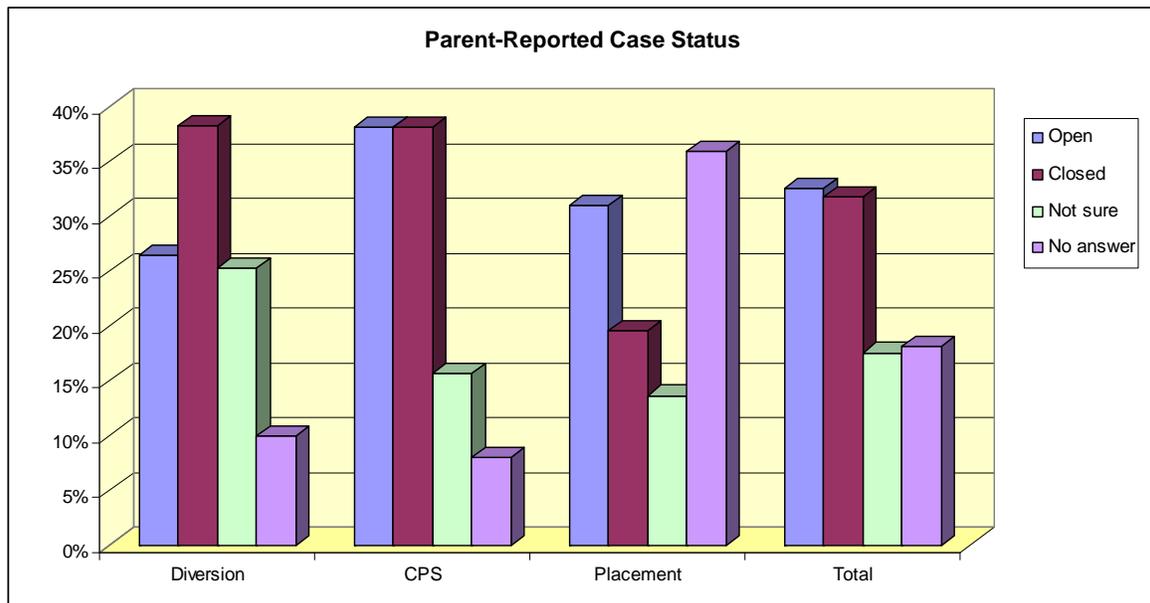
Parent Respondent Characteristics

		CPS	Diversion	Placement	Total Parents	
					Percent	Number
Gender	Female	89.1%	87.8%	87.7%	88.3%	551
	Male	10.9%	12.2%	12.3	11.7%	73
Race	White/Caucasian	58.5%	52.3%	60.0%	57.4%	348
	Black/African-American	37.3%	45.8%	34.8%	38.6%	234
	Other	1.7%	0.0%	1.4%	1.2%	7
	Two or more races	2.5%	1.9%	3.8%	2.8%	17
Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	8.5%	13.5%	6.6%	9.2%	33
Marital Status	Single/separated/divorced/widowed	55.8%	54.3%	60.6%	57.0%	349
	Married/living together	44.2%	45.7%	39.4%	43.0%	263
Age	Under 18	0.4%	0.6%	2.4%	1.1%	7
	18-21	6.2%	3.1%	4.3%	4.7%	29
	22-29	24.7%	21.5%	24.0%	23.6%	145
	30-39	39.1%	33.7%	32.7%	35.5%	218
	40-49	20.2%	26.4%	22.6%	22.6%	139
	50-59	7.4%	7.4%	8.7%	7.8%	48
	60-69	1.6%	6.7%	3.8%	3.7%	23
	70 or over	0.4%	0.6%	1.4%	0.8%	5
Education	GED	11.1%	13.4%	12.7%	12.2%	75
	High school diploma	21.3%	22.6%	19.0%	20.9%	128
	Some college	22.1%	16.5%	16.6%	18.8%	115
	College degree	10.7%	19.5%	7.3%	11.9%	73
	Vocational school	9.4%	6.7%	8.8%	8.5%	52
	None of the above	25.4%	21.3%	35.6%	27.7%	170

Parent Case Status

The following graph shows the percent of parents in each category and total by case status. Note that a number of parents in each category were not sure of their case status, and many of the placement parents did not answer the question.

CPS parents were more likely to know their case status, and those aware of their case status were evenly divided between open and closed cases.



Caregiver Experience with DFCS Case Management

Caregivers were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements, nearly all of which related to case management. The results were relatively positive, with caregivers generally agreeing that their most recent case manager:

1. Explained why a child was removed from the home;
2. Explained the caregiver's responsibilities;
3. Was knowledgeable; and/or
4. Explained the caregiver's rights.

Note that despite the ratings many caregivers reported deficiencies on some of these items when asked about services or supports they did not receive. (See section entitled "Service Gaps.")

The items receiving the least agreement include:

1. The case manager helped find community resources;
2. The caregiver received enough financial support meet the child's needs; and/or
3. The case manager offered services after an adoption was completed.

There were some differences by type of caregiver, with relative and non-DFCS caregiver ratings tending to be more positive than those of DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers on some items. Note that non-DFCS caregivers may well have rated a placement agency case manager rather than a DFCS case manager because they may or may not see a DFCS case manager. This became apparent after the survey was mailed, so when asked or apparent from the caregiver's responses, these caregivers were marked as "placement agency" in the database, but this number is very small.

There were also some differences by region, with regions eight and nine (central Georgia) and eleven (southeast Georgia) tending to be rated higher and region two (northeast Georgia) tending to be rated lower than other regions. (See Appendix XI.) It is clear from caregiver comments, however, that their experience with DFCS is heavily dependent on the individual case manager, and in some cases, the individual supervisor. Some caregivers noted that their most recent case manager was "great" but the previous one had been "terrible" (or vice-versa). Even the same county office would have widely differing comments, again based on their experience with the individual case manager(s).

The following chart presents the average ratings by type of caregiver (with an additional column for those specifically identified as placement agency caregivers) for each of the items related to the caregiver's most recent experience with DFCS.

Average Caregiver Ratings of Most Recent Experience with DFCS (5-point agreement scale) *

Item	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total Caregivers	Number Rating Item
		DFCS	Non-DFCS**		
The case manager explained why the child was removed from his or her home.	4.28	3.98	4.07	4.10	4,064
The case manager clearly explained my responsibilities.	4.14	4.05	4.11	4.09	4,289
The case manager gave me enough information about the child to take care of him/her when I took him/her into my home.	4.10	3.75	3.83	3.88	4,067
The case manager was knowledgeable.	3.98	3.84	4.00	3.92	4,300
The case manager clearly explained my rights as a foster parent, adoptive parent or relative caregiver.	3.97	3.91	4.01	3.95	4,310
The case manager contacted me on a regular basis.	3.84	3.82	4.00	3.86	4,278
I was asked for input on the child's case plan.	3.71	3.30	3.74	3.53	4,116
The case manager told me how to get help in a crisis or emergency situation.	3.69	3.74	3.96	3.77	4,220
The case manager helped me find community resources for the child(ren).	3.23	3.39	3.42	3.34	3,947
The financial support I received was enough to meet the child's needs.	3.19	3.17	3.19	3.18	4,259
The case manager offered me training to help me take care of the child(ren).	3.13	3.58	3.75	3.48	3,777
<i>Adoptive parent rating of most recent adoption case manager:</i>					
The case manager offered services to help my family after the adoption was completed.	3.28	3.40	3.36	3.36	1,363
I received the services I needed after the adoption was completed.	3.34	3.47	3.33	3.42	1,304
Number of survey respondents	1,544	2,041	933	4,518	

* Strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree (5).

** May have rated DFCS case manager or may have rated placement agency case manager.

Number of Case Managers

Caregivers reported an average of 2.8 case managers per caregiver in the past 12 months with a range of one to 30 case managers. Some of the caregivers provide only respite or emergency foster care, so they have more children placed for shorter lengths of time. The average for DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers (3.2) was slightly higher than the averages for non-DFCS foster/adoptive and relative caregivers (2.6 and 2.3)

On average, DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers also received more placements in the previous 12 months than did non-DFCS caregivers; relatives received the fewest. The average was 3.1 children placed per caregiver in the previous 12 months, with a range of one to 35 children. Again, the higher numbers probably reflect respite and emergency foster care providers.

Average Number of Case Managers and Number of Children Placed with Caregivers by DFCS in Past 12 Months

	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total Caregivers	Number of Responses
		DFCS	Non-DFCS		
Number of case managers in past 12 months	2.31	3.17	2.57	2.76	4,033
Number of children in past 12 months	1.69	4.19	2.75	3.06	3,536

Case Manager Support

Caregivers were asked about the frequency of specific aspects of their experience with their most recent case manager, rating the items on a five-point frequency scale from never (1) to always (5).

The items rated highest on frequency overall included treating the caregiver with respect, listening to the caregiver, and following through on what they said they would do. The lowest-rated items included:

- Talking with the caregiver about what would do in court ahead of time
- Including the caregiver in family team meetings
- Helping the caregiver get information from the people involved in a child’s case

Again, these items are dependent on the individual case manager, and caregiver comments later in the survey also noted deficiencies in each of the areas rated more positively.

There were some differences by type of caregiver, with DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers tending to say activities occur less often compared to non-DFCS caregivers. (See following chart.) Relative caregivers tended to receive help in resolving problems with the

child less often than did foster/adoptive caregivers. DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers were included in family team meetings less often than other caregivers.

Again, there were also some differences by region, with regions eight and nine (central Georgia and twelve (coastal southeast Georgia) tending to be rated higher and region two (northeast Georgia) tending to be rated lower than other regions. (See Appendix XI.)

Average Caregiver Ratings of Most Recent Case Manager (5-point frequency scale) *

Item	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total Caregivers	Number Rating Item
		DFCS	Non-DFCS **		
<i>The case manager:</i>					
Treated me with respect	4.65	4.62	4.70	4.65	4,365
Listened to me	4.48	4.40	4.56	4.46	4,341
Gave me information about meetings or court dates in time for me to make plans to attend	4.16	3.97	4.14	4.07	4,088
Did what he/she said he/she would do	4.07	4.06	4.21	4.09	4,310
Called me back in a timely manner when I needed information or help	3.96	3.93	4.17	3.99	4,351
Included me in family team meetings	3.88	3.45	3.88	3.68	3,466
Talked with me about what he/she would do in court ahead of time	3.86	3.46	3.68	3.64	3,952
Helped me resolve problems with the child	3.79	3.92	4.07	3.91	3,630
Helped me talk with or get information from the people involved in the child's case	3.79	3.68	3.93	3.77	3,882
Total number of survey respondents	1,544	2,041	933	4,518	

* Never (1), seldom, sometimes, usually, always (5).

** May have rated DFCS case manager or may have rated placement agency case manager.

Parent Experience with DFCS Case Management

As might be expected, the perceptions of parents differed depending on the nature of their relationship to DFCS, with those in diversion tending to be more positive and those with children in placement tending to be less positive.

All three groups generally agreed that their case manager explained why DFCS was involved and why an investigation was being conducted as well as why a case was being opened and what would happen next. They also tended to agree that the case manager explained what was needed to meet case plan goals and that their family was given enough time to meet case plan goals.

Parents with children in placement were more likely than the other two groups to agree that they were offered training to help them be a better parent; they tended to *disagree* that the case manager explained their rights and what to do if they have a complaint, was knowledgeable, met with them at least once a month, kept them informed, responded to concerns about their child(ren) or helped them find resources and services for their family.

Families in diversion were more likely than those with cases or placements to agree their situation is better now than it was a year ago; families with children in placement were least likely to agree.

Average Parent Ratings of Most Recent Experience with DFCS (5-point agreement scale) *

Item	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total Parents	Number Rating Item
My case manager explained why DFCS was involved with my family and why an investigation was being conducted.	4.07	3.82	3.42	3.73	545
My case manager explained why a DFCS case was being opened and what would happen next.	3.81	3.68	3.34	3.59	549
My case manager explained my rights and what I should do if I have a complaint.	3.52	3.29	2.76	3.16	569
My case manager explained what we needed to do to meet our case plan goals.	3.63	3.91	3.49	3.69	537
My family was offered services and supports to help us meet our case plan goals.	3.30	3.36	2.97	3.20	531
My family was given enough time to complete all of the requirements of our case plan.	3.65	3.79	3.21	3.54	508
I was comfortable talking to my case manager.	3.75	3.60	2.87	3.38	590
My case manager was knowledgeable.	3.88	3.61	2.79	3.39	584
My case manager met with me at least once a month.	3.08	3.47	2.75	3.11	502
My case manager kept me informed of progress on our case plan.	3.04	3.23	2.63	2.97	536
My case manager responded to my concerns about my child/children.	3.40	3.42	2.54	3.09	550
I was offered training to help me be a better parent.	2.92	3.08	3.36	3.16	458
My case manager helped me find community resources and services for my family.	2.95	2.86	2.55	2.76	502
My family's situation is better now than it was one year ago.	3.63	3.43	3.10	3.35	536
Total number of survey respondents	170	249	220	639	

* Strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree (5).

As with caregivers, parents were asked about the frequency of specific activities based on their most recent case manager. Compared to caregivers, parents tended to indicate these activities occurred less often.

Diversion and CPS parents' ratings indicated on average that the case manager "usually" treated them with respect, listened to them, and did as promised; placement parents' ratings indicated on average that these occur "sometimes."

On average, all three groups indicated that case managers gave them information about meetings or court dates in time to make plans to attend "sometimes."

Placement parents on average indicated that all of the activities occurred less often compared to either CPS or Diversion parents. Activities that occurred least often for placement parents included:

- Helping solve problems with the child
- Helping the parent talk with or get information from the people involved in the child's case
- Talking with the parent about what the case manager would do in court ahead of time

Talking about what the case manager would do in court ahead of time was also the activity that occurred least often for CPS parents. The following chart shows the average ratings for each group.

Average Parent Ratings of Most Recent Case Manager (5-point frequency scale) *

Item	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total Parents	Number Rating Item
<i>The case manager:</i>					
Treated me with respect.	4.42	4.26	3.43	4.02	591
Listened to me.	4.35	4.20	3.19	3.89	597
Called me back in a timely manner when I needed information or help.	3.74	3.63	2.87	3.38	550
Did what he or she said he or she would do.	4.02	3.84	2.97	3.58	569
Included me in family team meetings.	3.14	3.26	2.84	3.05	406
Helped me solve problems with my child.	3.26	3.40	2.49	2.97	417
Helped me talk with or get information from the people involved in my child's case.	3.08	3.24	2.50	2.88	437
Gave me information about meetings or court dates in time for me to make plans to attend.	3.42	3.34	3.39	3.38	393
Talked with me about what he or she would do in court ahead of time.	3.20	2.82	2.57	2.74	354
Total number of survey respondents	170	249	220	639	

* Never (1), seldom, sometimes, usually, always (5).

Parent Experience with Placement

Forty-three percent of the parents indicated they had had a child in foster care. Note that this included parents in each of the three categories, although most were in the placement parent category. As might be expected based on the frequency ratings by placement parents reported above, these ratings tended to be somewhat lower, with activities on average occurring “sometimes” or “seldom.” The item reported to occur most frequently was being told why their child was placed in foster care; least frequently was receiving information regularly about their child’s health and education.

Average Parent Ratings of Most Recent Foster Care Placement Experience with DFCS (5-point agreement scale) *

Item	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total Parents	Number Rating Item
I was told why my child was placed in foster care.	3.14	3.12	3.46	3.36	265
I received information about my child’s health and education regularly.	3.03	2.49	2.16	2.32	273
My case manager helped me talk to my children as often as the courts or DFCS would allow.	2.70	2.79	2.64	2.68	268
My case manager helped set up visits for me and my child.	2.79	2.85	3.24	3.11	269
My child visited with grandparents or other relatives while in foster care.	2.97	2.91	2.59	2.69	264
Number in category rating individual items	50-55	29-30	182-188	265-273	
Total number of survey respondents	170	249	220	639	

* Strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree (5).

Caregiver Service Gaps

Nearly two-fifths (39%) of the caregivers responding said there were services or supports they felt they needed but did not receive. Relatives were somewhat more likely to indicate they did not receive needed services/supports (44%) compared to DFCS and non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers (36% and 39%, respectively).

The following chart provides the results of a text scan of caregiver responses; text responses were searched for the presence of specific terms and then grouped into the major categories listed.⁵

Caregiver Services/Supports Not Received

Type of Service or Support Not Received	Percent
Services for disabilities (respite, medical, therapy, e.g., physical or occupational)	88.4%
Mental health (behavior problems, counseling/therapy, level of care)	16.7%
Case manager support (communication, response/follow-up, information, meetings, paperwork/documents, input, honesty, respect, discipline)	15.5%
Financial (pay/per diem, reimbursement, damage restitution, especially delayed payments/reimbursements)	13.2%
Basic needs (food, clothing, formula, diapers, car seat)	12.2%
School/out-of-school (such as tutoring, after-school programs, mentors, summer camps)	11.6%
Child care	10.7%
Resource information	10.4%
Health care (medical, doctor, dental/braces, eye/glasses, medication)	8.4%
Legal (attorney, guardian-ad-litem, judge)	3.6%
Teen-related (independent living program, jobs, drug testing)	2.3%
Training	1.7%
Emergency/crisis services	1.0%
Adoption support	0.9%
Transportation	0.2%
Visitation	0.2%
Total who indicated they did not receive needed services/supports	1,566

⁵ Search terms were identified based on a reading of all of the responses but may not have captured all mentions due to different phrasing/use of words and/or typos/misspellings.

Parent Service Gaps

Forty percent of the parents responding said there were services or supports they needed but did not receive. Parents with children in placements were more likely to say they did not receive services (59%) compared to families with CPS cases (30%) or families that were diverted (33%).

As for caregivers, parents most often cite services for disabilities, case manager support, financial issues and mental health services as not received.

The following chart provides the results of a text scan of parent responses; text responses were searched for the presence of specific terms and then grouped into the major categories listed.⁶

Parent Services/Supports Not Received

Type of Service or Support Not Received	Percent
Services for disabilities	84.1%
Case manager support	16.7%
Financial	12.0%
Mental health	9.9%
Legal	9.4%
Basic needs	9.0%
Resource information	7.7%
School/out-of-school	6.9%
Health care	6.0%
Child care	5.2%
Teen-related	2.6%
Visitation	1.3%
Total who indicated they did not receive needed services/supports	233

In their comments at the end of the survey, parents also indicated a need for resources to support children’s involvement in extracurricular and recreational activities, including sports, art, drama, music, local attractions, etc., beyond such out-of-school time activities as after-school programs and summer camps.

⁶ The same terms were used for the parent responses that were used for the caregiver responses.

Overall Rating of DFCS Experience

Overall caregivers rated DFCS as five on a seven-point scale, with one being poor and seven being excellent, with relative caregivers slightly lower than foster/adoptive caregivers.

Overall Caregiver Rating of Experience with DFCS in Past 12 Months *

	Relative	Foster/Adoptive Caregiver		Total Caregivers
		DFCS	Non-DFCS*	
Overall rating	4.83	5.00	5.06	4.96
Number of responses	1,441	1,934	833	4,208

* Rating on 7-point scale, with poor = 1 and excellent = 7.

Average parent ratings (4.03) were lower than average caregiver ratings (4.96). For parents, average ratings differed among the groups, with diversion parents most positive (4.68) followed by CPS parents (4.42). The average rating of parents with children in placement was lowest (3.07)

Overall Parent Rating of Experience with DFCS in Past 12 Months *

	Diversion	CPS	Placement	Total Parents
Overall rating	4.68	4.42	3.07	4.03
Number of responses	154	241	202	597

* Rating on 7-point scale, with poor = 1 and excellent = 7.

Caregiver and Parent Comments

Caregivers and parents were provided a space for comments at the end of the survey, and many added a brief remark. Several attached pages/letters to the questionnaire to further discuss their experiences (mostly negative) with DFCS (more than 60 caregivers and 30 parents). Appendix XII includes a summary of the key themes with illustrative quotes for each of the three types of individual caregivers – DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers, non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers and relative caregivers.

Caregivers in each of the three categories expressed their appreciation for the children and how much they enjoy caring for them, regardless of their experience with DFCS or their experience with a private placement agency. Some caregivers felt caseworkers needed support and were doing the best they could. Some of the relative caregivers indicated they would like to become foster parents.

Following are some of the themes from the caregiver and parent comments.

Foster/Adoptive Caregiver Comments

Foster/adoptive caregivers commented on their caseworkers, local county offices or private placement agencies – both positively and negatively. Some DFCS caregivers recognized improvement over the previous year. Others expressed overall frustrations with DFCS and its case staff, including supervisory staff.

Some caregivers indicated concern with caseworker turnover and its effect on the children. Caregivers also raised concerns about case manager support, including responsiveness to calls and questions; some said caseworkers do not return phone calls in a timely manner, if at all; others indicated that communication/information is lacking, whether related to appointments, court, resources or services. Some indicated case staff (including caseworkers and supervisors) do not treat them with respect; others suggested caseworkers need additional training and/or experience.

Caregivers wanted more information about the children they take into their homes and information about community and other resources available to help them and their families. Several comments related to the need for resources and recreation for children.

Some caregivers expressed frustration with the legal process, feeling that parents are given too much time before their rights are terminated, causing the child(ren) to remain in foster care too long.

Compensation, reimbursement and benefits, especially child care and respite are also concerns for caregivers.

Relative Caregiver Comments

Many relative caregivers expressed concerns related to the financial aspects of providing care. They felt they should receive the same financial supports or reimbursements that foster parents receive. Several noted that payments or reimbursements may be late or unpaid, and a number said they were told they would receive support but did not. Paperwork and other requirements for relative caregivers were seen as burdensome.

Several relative caregivers cited problems with case manager support and turnover among case managers. Some of the relative caregivers said caseworkers need additional training. Many relative caregivers felt they did not receive the resources and supports they needed to care for the children.

A number of relative caregivers felt DFCS staff were not honest with them, with some feeling they were not given pertinent information about a child so that the caregiver would take the child.

Relative caregivers also expressed frustrations with the legal system and some felt that policy seems to take precedence over child welfare.

Parent Comments

As with caregivers, parents frequently commented on case workers, both positively and negatively. Parents wanted case managers to be responsive, call them back and follow through with information, supports or services. Some parents commented that turnover and/or caseloads affect cases and can prolong a child's stay in foster care. A number of parents complained that they did what was asked or completed their case plans and their case remained open or their children were still in foster care.

Several parents added pleas for help or an investigation of their county DFCS office or their specific case and complained about unfair and/or dishonest treatment. In addition, parents raised concerns about caseworkers not maintaining confidentiality regarding their families and their cases and not having enough visitation with their children.

Parents indicated their need for services/support, especially food stamps, housing, education, employment, treatment/counseling and help with challenging or special needs children. Some said if they had these supports they would not have had their child(ren) in placement.

Some parents reported they were falsely accused and that accusations were made for revenge or retaliation by an ex-spouse or in-law. These parents felt there should be consequences for false reports.

A few parents felt they were treated unfairly because of their own race/ethnicity or because they were a biracial couple.

Summary/Conclusions

Method

The excellent response (46 percent) of caregivers – relative, DFCS foster/adoptive and non-DFCS foster adoptive – supports the use of mail surveys for seeking feedback and input from this population. The numerous comments and even letters suggest caregivers want to share their experiences to improve the situations of and outcomes for children.

The relatively poor response (eight percent) of parents – diversion, CPS and especially parents with children in placement – suggests the exploration of alternate means to seek feedback and input from parents. These groups – again, especially placement – had a higher rate of surveys returned due to bad addresses (25%; 36% for placement parents) compared to caregivers (7%), despite contacting local county offices for the most current parent addresses.

Overall Rating of DFCS

The average overall ratings of the caregiver or parent experience with DFCS in the past 12 months were more positive than negative except for parents with children in placement. On a 7-point scale with “poor” equal to one and “excellent” equal to seven, the average caregiver rating was five and the average parent rating was four; however, the average rating for parents with children in placement was three.

Case Management and Support

The case manager, and sometimes the case supervisor, is critical to the experience of both caregivers and parents. The knowledge, support, responsiveness and stability of the caseworker colors that experience and thus perceptions of the county office and DFCS as a whole.

While caregivers on average agreed that their most recent case manager explained why a child was removed from the home, explained the caregiver’s responsibilities and rights and was knowledgeable, many of the caregiver comments had to do with the presence or lack of case manager support and responsiveness.

Caregivers also agreed that their most recent case manager treated them with respect, listened to them and called them back in a timely manner; however, many caregivers reported problems with responsiveness, particularly case managers not returning telephone calls, providing information or paperwork.

Caregivers also tended to agree – but not strongly – that they were helped to find community resources and services and received enough financial support to meet the child’s needs. But again, many caregivers commented on the lack of resources, services and financial support, especially for children with disabilities or special needs.

Parents differed in their perceptions depending on their relationship to DFCS, with those in diversion tending to be more positive and those with children in placement tending to be more negative.

The more positive results and comments clearly indicate that there are good case managers in the field that are an asset to the agency; the more negative results and comments suggest that there is a significant need to address staff training, experience and turnover to improve caseworker communication, responsiveness and support.

Resource Gaps

More than a third of caregivers (39%) and parents (40%) responding indicated they did not receive services or supports they felt they needed; 59 percent of the parents with children in placement said they did not receive services or supports they felt they needed.

When these caregivers and parents were asked what services or supports were not received, the number one area in which they said they needed services or supports was for children with disabilities, mentioned by 88 percent of these caregivers and 84 percent of these parents. The other top mentions were mental health services, case manager support (e.g., communication, information, responsiveness and paperwork) and financial issues (e.g., pay, per diems, late payments/reimbursements).

These findings, together with caregiver and parent comments, indicate there is a need to increase access to these services and supports, through increased availability of resources and more awareness/information about existing resources.

In conclusion, DFCS has a significant strength and weakness in its case managers and supervisors. Many are working well with both caregivers and parents, but many need additional training, better supervision and minimum performance standards to facilitate communication, customer service and resources for families.

Appendices

DHR Caregiver Survey

November - December 2006

Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region	ProviderType	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
1							
	Relative	538	216	40.1%	76	292	54.3%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	515	259	50.3%	19	278	54.0%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	136	65	47.8%	5	70	51.5%
Total for Region 1:		1,189	540	45.4%	100	640	53.8%
2							
	Relative	135	48	35.6%	24	72	53.3%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	230	103	44.8%	18	121	52.6%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	24	12	50.0%	2	14	58.3%
Total for Region 2:		389	163	41.9%	44	207	53.2%
3							
	Relative	947	391	41.3%	119	510	53.9%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	1,031	510	49.5%	24	534	51.8%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	1,282	519	40.5%	99	618	48.2%
Total for Region 3:		3,260	1,420	43.6%	242	1,662	51.0%
4							
	Relative	208	90	43.3%	18	108	51.9%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	328	155	47.3%	8	163	49.7%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	60	25	41.7%	5	30	50.0%
Total for Region 4:		596	270	45.3%	31	301	50.5%
5							
	Relative	203	79	38.9%	20	99	48.8%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	278	132	47.5%	7	139	50.0%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	134	52	38.8%	5	57	42.5%
Total for Region 5:		615	263	42.8%	32	295	48.0%

DHR Caregiver Survey

November - December 2006

Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region	ProviderType	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
6							
	Relative	219	100	45.7%	20	120	54.8%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	266	146	54.9%	8	154	57.9%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	175	67	38.3%	16	83	47.4%
Total for Region 6:		660	313	47.4%	44	357	54.1%
7							
	Relative	240	111	46.3%	20	131	54.6%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	218	123	56.4%	7	130	59.6%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	140	59	42.1%	8	67	47.9%
Total for Region 7:		598	293	49.0%	35	328	54.8%
8							
	Relative	169	78	46.2%	20	98	58.0%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	161	87	54.0%	7	94	58.4%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	120	63	52.5%	6	69	57.5%
Total for Region 8:		450	228	50.7%	33	261	58.0%
9							
	Relative	148	68	45.9%	20	88	59.5%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	180	112	62.2%	11	123	68.3%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	19	4	21.1%	2	6	31.6%
Total for Region 9:		347	184	53.0%	33	217	62.5%
10							
	Relative	143	73	51.0%	12	85	59.4%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	206	121	58.7%	12	133	64.6%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	64	31	48.4%	5	36	56.3%
Total for Region 10:		413	225	54.5%	29	254	61.5%

DHR Caregiver Survey
November - December 2006
Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region	ProviderType	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
11							
	Relative	212	98	46.2%	20	118	55.7%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	284	155	54.6%	11	166	58.5%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	13	6	46.2%	1	7	53.8%
Total for Region 11:		509	259	50.9%	32	291	57.2%
12							
	Relative	158	80	50.6%	12	92	58.2%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	271	134	49.4%	13	147	54.2%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	101	38	37.6%	9	47	46.5%
Total for Region 12:		530	252	47.5%	34	286	54.0%
StateWide							
	Relative	3,320	1,432	43.1%	381	1,813	54.6%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	3,968	2,037	51.3%	145	2,182	55.0%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	2,268	941	41.5%	163	1,104	48.7%
Total for Statewide:		9,556	4,410	46.1%	689	5,099	53.4%
Out-of-State							
	Relative	267	125	46.8%	26	151	56.6%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	44	19	43.2%	1	20	45.5%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	50	24	48.0%	2	26	52.0%
Total for Out of State:		361	168	46.5%	29	197	54.6%
Total Sample							
	Relative	3,587	1,557	43.4%	407	1,964	54.8%
	DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	4,012	2,056	51.2%	146	2,202	54.9%
	Non-DFCS Foster/Adoptive Home	2,318	965	41.6%	165	1,130	48.7%
Total for Sample:		9,917	4,578	46.2%	718	5,296	53.4%

DHR Parent Survey

November - December 2006

Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region	Parent Type	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
1							
	Child Protective Services	485	40	8.2%	96	136	28.0%
	Diversions	157	11	7.0%	33	44	28.0%
	Placements	364	35	9.6%	131	166	45.6%
Total for Region 1:		1,006	86	8.5%	260	346	34.4%
2							
	Child Protective Services	177	19	10.7%	36	55	31.1%
	Diversions	148	13	8.8%	18	31	20.9%
	Placements	170	19	11.2%	56	75	44.1%
Total for Region 2:		495	51	10.3%	110	161	32.5%
3							
	Child Protective Services	701	61	8.7%	141	202	28.8%
	Diversions	667	45	6.7%	94	139	20.8%
	Placements	977	37	3.8%	441	478	48.9%
Total for Region 3:		2,345	143	6.1%	676	819	34.9%
4							
	Child Protective Services	224	20	8.9%	34	54	24.1%
	Diversions	94	13	13.8%	10	23	24.5%
	Placements	236	25	10.6%	80	105	44.5%
Total for Region 4:		554	58	10.5%	124	182	32.9%
5							
	Child Protective Services	189	9	4.8%	33	42	22.2%
	Diversions	272	21	7.7%	49	70	25.7%
	Placements	141	8	5.7%	38	46	32.6%
Total for Region 5:		602	38	6.3%	120	158	26.2%

DHR Parent Survey

November - December 2006

Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region	Parent Type	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
6							
	Child Protective Services	247	20	8.1%	38	58	23.5%
	Diversions	43	4	9.3%	6	10	23.3%
	Placements	225	15	6.7%	81	96	42.7%
Total for Region 6:		515	39	7.6%	125	164	31.8%
7							
	Child Protective Services	126	10	7.9%	22	32	25.4%
	Diversions	109	16	14.7%	10	26	23.9%
	Placements	104	7	6.7%	37	44	42.3%
Total for Region 7:		339	33	9.7%	69	102	30.1%
8							
	Child Protective Services	113	10	8.8%	25	35	31.0%
	Diversions	34	4	11.8%	12	16	47.1%
	Placements	118	8	6.8%	37	45	38.1%
Total for Region 8:		265	22	8.3%	74	96	36.2%
9							
	Child Protective Services	162	12	7.4%	33	45	27.8%
	Diversions	118	10	8.5%	25	35	29.7%
	Placements	119	10	8.4%	31	41	34.5%
Total for Region 9:		399	32	8.0%	89	121	30.3%
10							
	Child Protective Services	215	22	10.2%	44	66	30.7%
	Diversions	66	13	19.7%	10	23	34.8%
	Placements	141	13	9.2%	44	57	40.4%
Total for Region 10:		422	48	11.4%	98	146	34.6%

DHR Parent Survey
November - December 2006
Summary of Responses By Region and Type

Region Parent Type	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Received	Number Bad Addresses	Total Returns	Percent Returned
11						
Child Protective Services	266	20	7.5%	62	82	30.8%
Diversions	67	6	9.0%	11	17	25.4%
Placements	254	27	10.6%	60	87	34.3%
Total for Region 11:	587	53	9.0%	133	186	31.7%
12						
Child Protective Services	142	8	5.6%	40	48	33.8%
Diversions	148	14	9.5%	28	42	28.4%
Placements	158	15	9.5%	44	59	37.3%
Total for Region 12:	448	37	8.3%	112	149	33.3%
StateWide						
Child Protective Services	3,047	251	8.2%	604	855	28.1%
Diversions	1,923	170	8.8%	306	476	24.8%
Placements	3,007	219	7.3%	1,080	1,299	43.2%
Total for Statewide:	7,977	640	8.0%	1,990	2,630	33.0%
Out-of-State						
Child Protective Services	18	1	5.6%	3	4	22.2%
Diversions	11	2	18.2%	1	3	27.3%
Placements	72	3	4.2%	17	20	27.8%
Total for Out of State:	101	6	5.9%	21	27	26.7%
Total Sample						
Child Protective Services	3,065	252	8.2%	607	859	28.0%
Diversions	1,934	172	8.9%	307	479	24.8%
Placements	3,079	222	7.2%	1,097	1,319	42.8%
Total for Sample:	8,078	646	8.0%	2,011	2,657	32.9%



B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Family and Children Services • Mary Dean Harvey, Director
Two Peachtree Street, NW • Suite 19-490 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142 • Phone: 404-651-8409 • Fax: 404-657-5105

November 22, 2006

Dear Foster Parent, Adoptive Parent or Relative Caregiver:

We appreciate your commitment to the children you are caring for in your home – you greatly increase our ability to ensure the safety and security of children in Georgia.

We are interested in learning about your experiences as a foster parent, adoptive parent or relative caregiver because we are committed to improving the quality of our services for children and families.

Your feedback is very important to us. This survey is your opportunity to let us know how we are doing and how we can do better. Please be assured that your responses will remain confidential. Survey forms will be compiled by an independent consulting firm.

Please take a few minutes to complete all sides of this form and return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope no later than December 29, 2006 to:

Care Solutions, Inc.
500 Sugar Mill Road, Suite 170-A
Atlanta, GA 30350

If you have any questions or need help with this form, please contact Care Solutions at 1-800-227-3410.

Thank you for your help in improving the lives of children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Dean Harvey".

Mary Dean Harvey, Director
Division of Family and Children Services



Please mark all responses carefully and write clearly!

1. For each child under age 18 living with you and <u>placed in your home by DFCS</u> , please write in the age of the child. Mark your <u>current</u> relationship to that child:						
<u>START WITH YOUNGEST CHILD</u>	1st child	2nd child	3rd child	4th child	5th child	6th child
Child's age: (write in)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
You are this child's: <i>(check the <u>one</u> box in each column that <u>best</u> describes your relationship to each child)</i>						
Adoptive parent	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Foster parent	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Relative foster home	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Relative caregiver	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Other (please specify:)						
How many months has this child been living with you?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Including your own, what is the total number of children under age 18 living with you? _____

3. Based only on your <u>most recent experience</u> with DFCS, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements:						
<u>MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW</u>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Does not apply to me
The case manager clearly explained my responsibilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager clearly explained my rights as a foster parent, adoptive parent or relative caregiver.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager explained why the child was removed from his or her home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager gave me enough information about the child to take care of him/her when I took him/her into my home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager was knowledgeable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager asked for my input for the child's case plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager told me how to get help in a crisis or emergency situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager contacted me on a regular basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager offered me training to help me take care of the child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The case manager helped me find community resources for the child(ren).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The financial support I received was enough to meet the child's needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please complete all pages of this survey. For help in completing this survey call 1-800-227-3410.

Please mark all responses carefully and write clearly!

4. Thinking about your most recent case manager, please indicate how often your case manager did each of the following:						
MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Does not apply to me
Treated me with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Listened to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Called me back in a timely manner when I needed information or help.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Did what he/she said he/she would do.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Included me in family team meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Helped me resolve problems with the child.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Helped me talk with or get information from the people involved in the child's case.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Gave me information about meetings or court dates in time for me to make plans to attend.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Talked with me about what he/she would do in court.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

<i>Adoptive Parents Only:</i>						
5. For your most recent adoption case manager, please indicate your agreement or disagreement:						
MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	
The case manager offered services to help my family after the adoption was completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I received the services I needed after the adoption was completed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

All Parent/Caregivers:

6. Were there any services or supports you felt you needed but did not receive?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
What services or supports did you not receive?		

7. How many case managers have you worked with in the past 12 months? _____

8. How many children were placed in your home by DFCS in the past 12 months? _____

9. Overall, how would you rate your experiences with DFCS in the past 12 months?

Excellent ← — — — — — — — → Poor

Please mark all responses carefully and write clearly!

All parents/caregivers:

10. In what county do you live?			
		You	Your spouse/partner
11. Gender:			
	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Race:			
CHECK THE <u>ONE</u> BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RACE	White/Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Black/African-American	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	American Indian/Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Two or more races	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Ethnicity (regardless of race):			
	Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Non-Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Marital status:			
CHECK THE <u>ONE</u> BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR MARITAL STATUS	Single, separated, divorced, widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Living with partner but not married	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. Age group:			
	15 or under	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	18 - 21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	22 - 29	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	30 - 39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	40 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	50 - 59	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	60 - 69	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	70 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Education:			
	GED	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	High school diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Some college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	College degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vocational school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	None of the above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments/Suggestions:			



B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Family and Children Services • Mary Dean Harvey, Director
Two Peachtree Street, NW • Suite 19-490 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142 • Phone: 404-651-8409 • Fax: 404-657-5105

November 30, 2006

Dear Parent:

We want to learn about your recent experiences with Georgia's child welfare system because we want to improve the quality of the services we provide to you and your family.

What you think is very important to us. This survey is your chance to tell us how we are doing and how we can do better. Please be assured that what you say will be kept confidential. Survey forms will be sent to an independent consulting firm.

Please take a few minutes to complete all sides of this form and return it in the enclosed postage-paid envelope no later than December 29, 2006 to:

Care Solutions, Inc.
500 Sugar Mill Road, Suite 170-A
Atlanta, GA 30350

If you have any questions or need help with this form, please contact Care Solutions at 1-800-227-3410.

Thank you for sharing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Dean Harvey".

Mary Dean Harvey, Director
Division of Family and Children Services



Please mark all responses carefully and write clearly!

1. For your children <u>under age 18</u> , please write in the age of the child and mark whether or not the child has ever been in foster care and where the child is living today.						
	Child's age:	Has this child ever been in foster care? (circle yes or no)		At this time, is this child living with you or with a relative, or is this child in foster care? (circle one for each child)		
First child (oldest)		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Second child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Third child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Fourth child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Fifth child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Sixth child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Seventh child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care
Eighth child		Yes	No	With you	With a relative	In foster care

2. If your children are living with you at this time, is your DFCS case open or closed?	Open <input type="checkbox"/>	Closed <input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
---	----------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

3. Based only on your <u>most recent</u> experience with DFCS, please check your agreement or disagreement with each of these statements:						
<u>MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW</u>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Does not apply to me
My case manager explained why DFCS was involved with my family and why an investigation was being conducted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager explained why a DFCS case was being opened and what would happen next.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager explained my rights and what I should do if I have a complaint.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager explained what we needed to do to meet our case plan goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family was offered services and supports to help us meet our case plan goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family was given enough time to complete all of the requirements of our case plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was comfortable talking to my case manager.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager was knowledgeable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager met with me at least once a month.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager kept me informed of progress on our case plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager responded to my concerns about my child/children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I was offered training to help me be a better parent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager helped me find community resources and services for my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My family's situation is better now than it was one year ago.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please complete all pages of this survey. For help in completing this survey call 1-800-227-3410.

Complete this section only if your child was removed from your home in the past 12 months:

4. Based only on your most recent foster care experience, please check your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following:

<u>MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW</u>	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I was told why my child was placed in foster care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I received information about my child's health and education regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager helped me talk to my children as often as the courts or DFCS would allow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My case manager helped set up visits for me and my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child visited with grandparents or other relatives while in foster care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. If you had more than one child in foster care:

Were your children placed together in foster care?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If no: Were your children able to visit each other at least once a month?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

All parents:

6. Thinking about your most recent case manager, please indicate how often your case manager did each of the following:

<u>MARK ONLY ONE BOX IN EACH ROW</u>	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Does not apply to me
Treated me with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Listened to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Called me back in a timely manner when I needed information or help.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Did what he or she said he or she would do.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Included me in family team meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Helped me solve problems with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Helped me talk with or get information from the people involved in my child's case.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Gave me information about meetings or court dates in time for me to make plans to attend.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Talked with me about what he or she would do in court ahead of time.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

7. Were there any services or supports you felt you needed but did not receive?

Yes
 No

If yes: What services or supports did you not receive?

8. How many case managers have you worked with in the past 12 months? _____

Please mark all responses carefully and write clearly!

9. Overall, how would you rate your experiences with DFCS in the past 12 months? (Mark one box)

Excellent ← — — — — — — → Poor

Now we'd like to know a little about you.

10. In what county do you live?

11. Gender:		You	Your spouse/partner
	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Race:		You	Your spouse/partner
MARK THE <u>ONE</u> BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RACE	White/Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Black/African-American	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	American Indian/Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Two or more races	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Ethnicity (regardless of race):		You	Your spouse/partner
	Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Non-Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. Marital status:		You	Your spouse/partner
MARK THE <u>ONE</u> BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR MARITAL STATUS	Single, separated, divorced, widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Living with partner but not married	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Age:		You	Your spouse/partner
	15 or under	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	18 - 21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	22 - 29	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	30 - 39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	40 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	50 - 59	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	60 - 69	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	70 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Education:		You	Your spouse/partner
	GED	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	High school diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Some college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	College degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Vocational school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	None of the above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments/Suggestions:

Statewide Data Snapshot

Population

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

Community

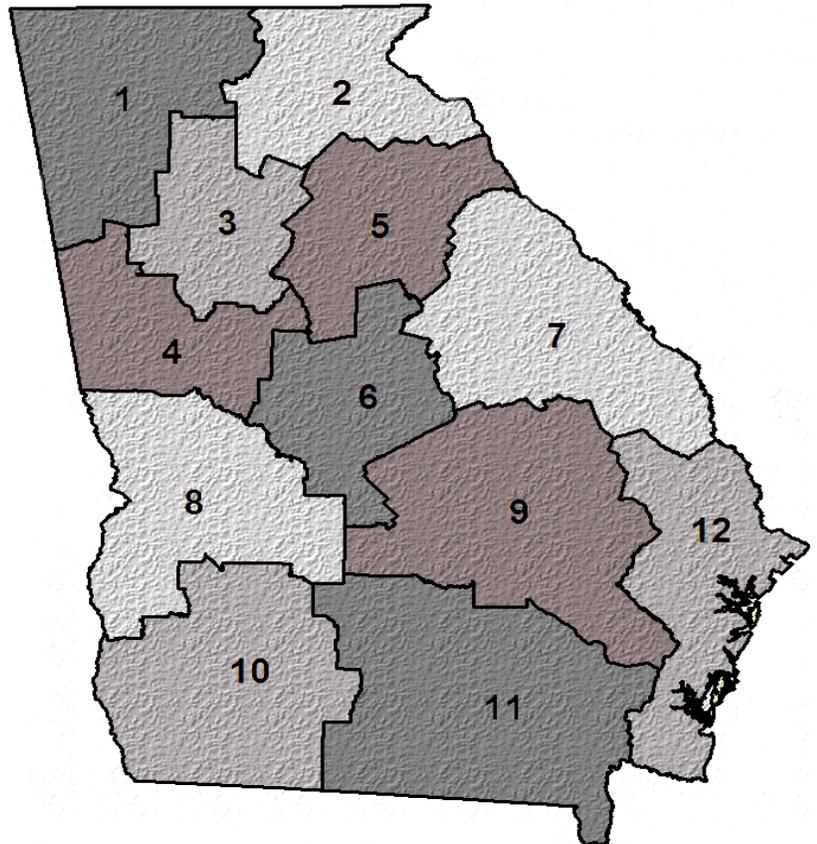
**Population Density (2000)	141.4
Total Housing Units (2000)	3,281,737
Housing - Urban (2000)	70.7%
Housing - Rural (2000)	29.3%

**Population per land square mile.

Demographics

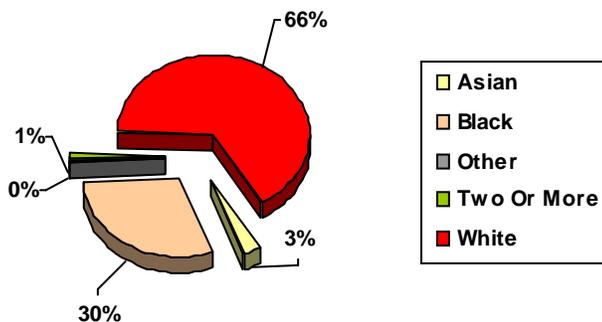
Ethnicity (2005)	
Hispanic Population	7.1%
Hispanic Children (Ages 0-19)	9.0%

Department of Human Resources Service Delivery Regions

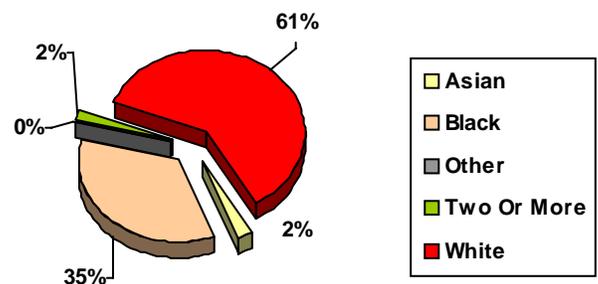


Sources:
US Census 2000
US Census Population Estimates July 2005

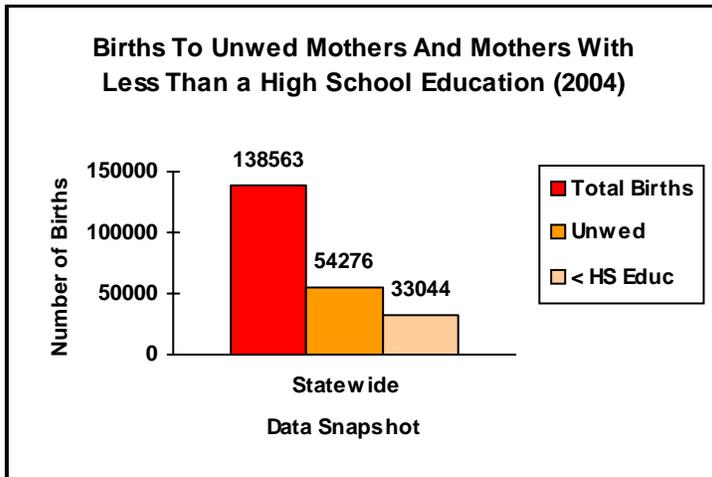
Population By Race (2005)



Children By Race (2005)



Infant Risk Factors



Child Abuse and Neglect

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

Foster Care

	Number
Children in State Custody (2005)	14,926

Child Health

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

Statewide (continued)

Child and Adolescent Mental Health

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

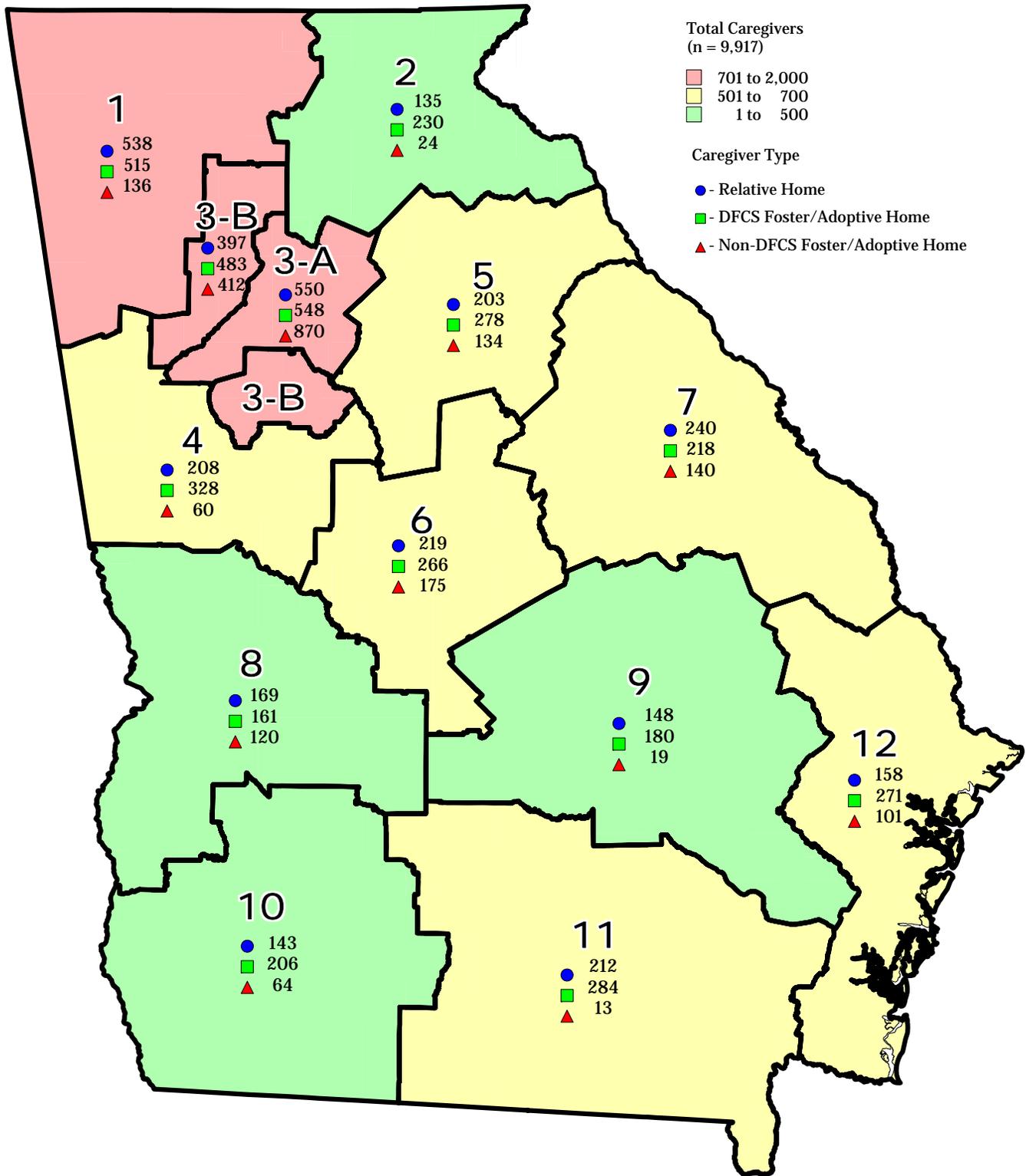
Early Childhood Care & Education

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

Sources:

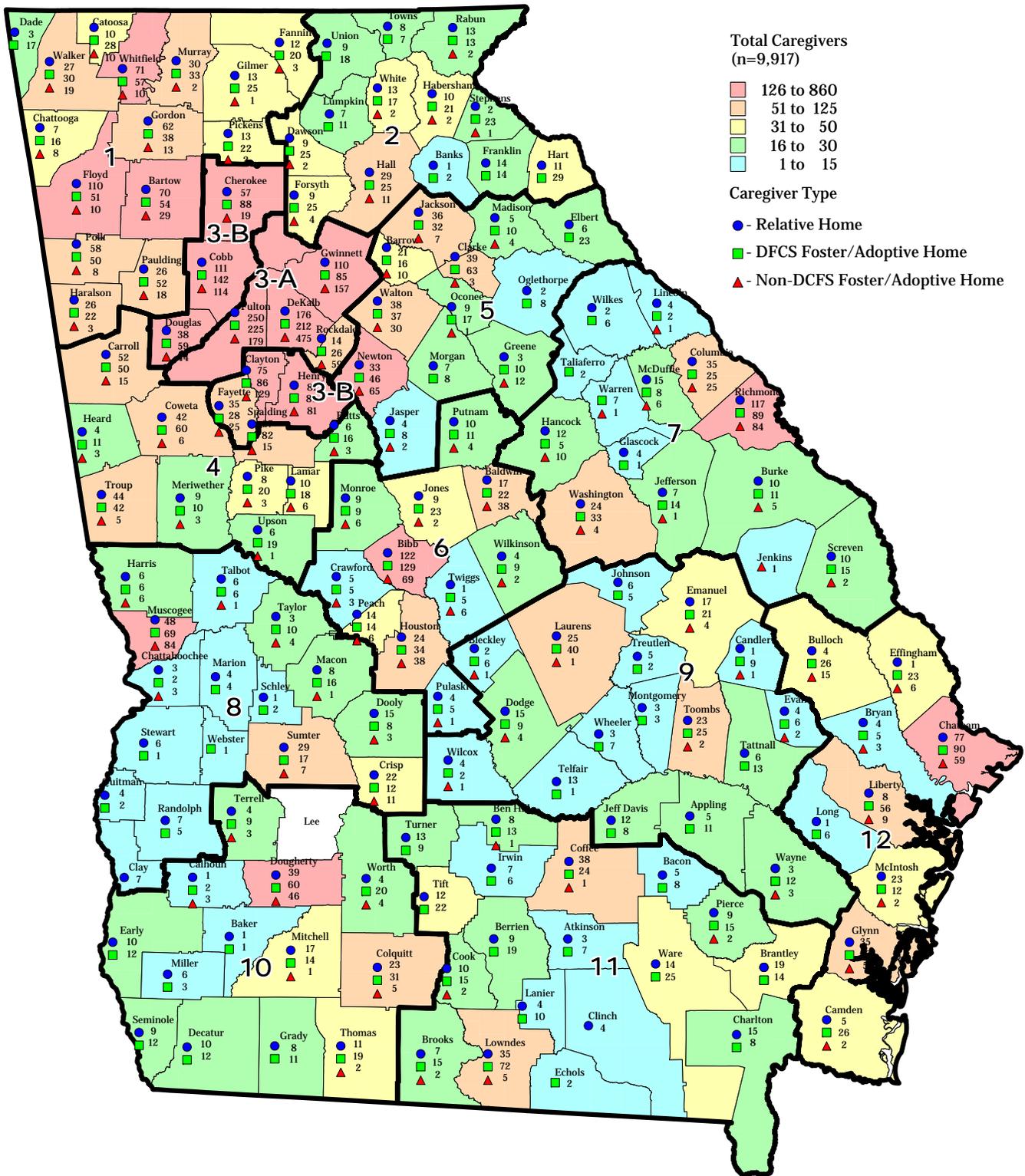
DHR Divisions of Public Health; Family and Children Services; Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases
Georgia Office of Student Achievement

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Individual Caregivers (Foster, Adoptive, and Relative) September 2006



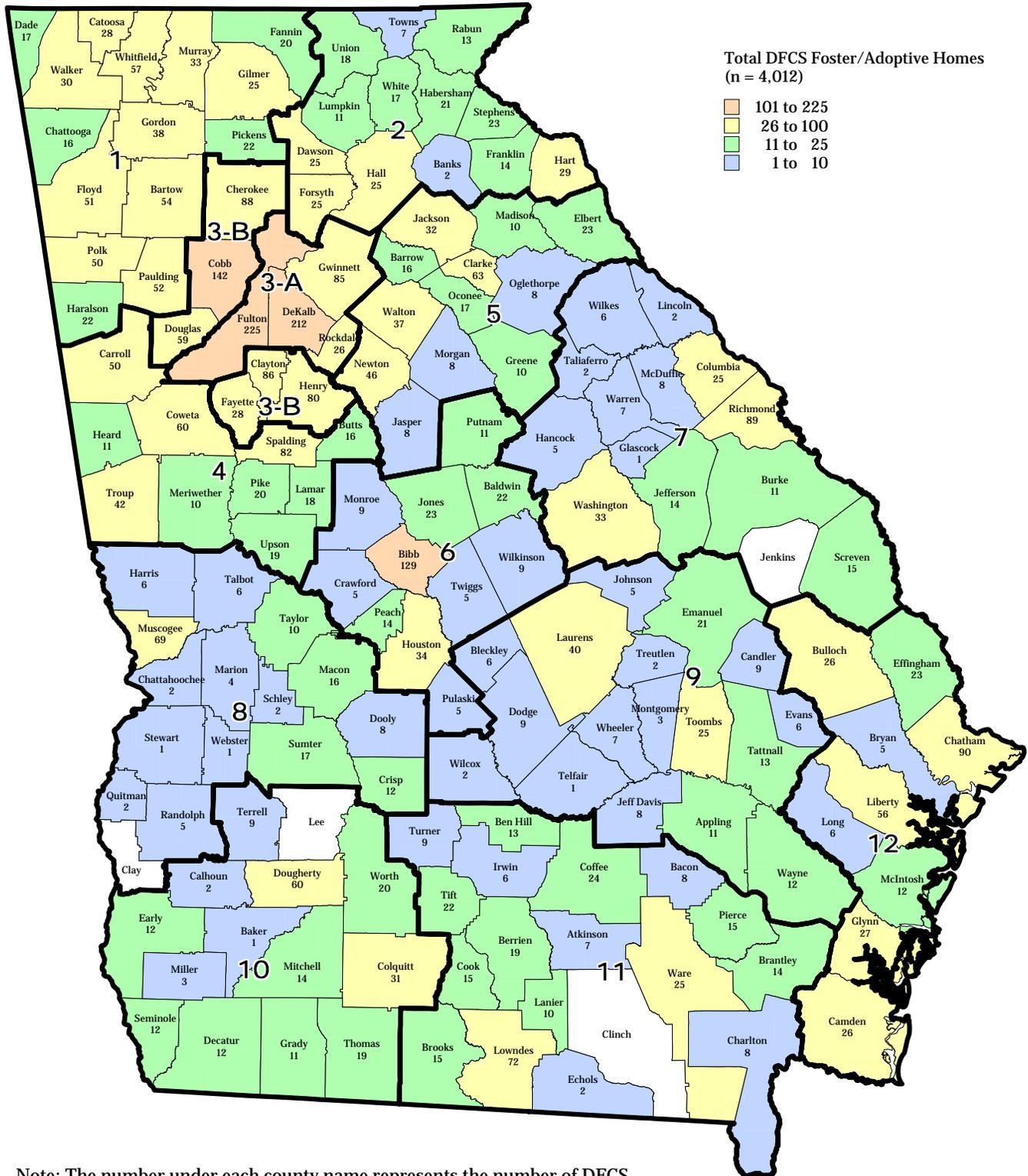
Note: The numbers for each region represent the numbers of caregivers during September 2006. There are 361 out-of-state caregivers not represented on this map.

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Individual Caregivers (Foster, Adoptive, and Relative) September 2006



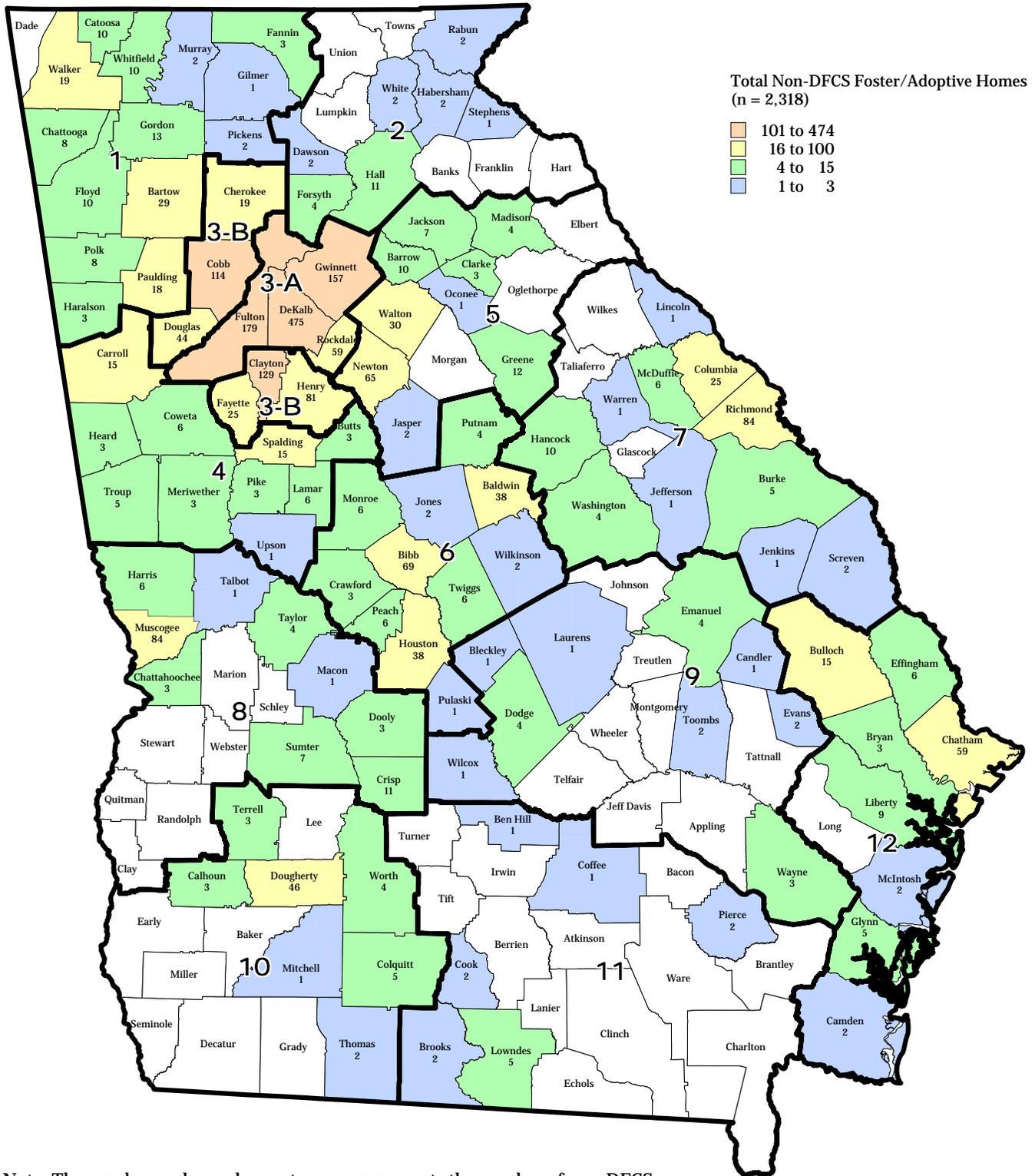
Note: The numbers under each county name represent the numbers of caregivers during September 2006. There are 361 out-of-state caregivers not represented on this map.

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Foster/Adoptive Caregivers September 2006



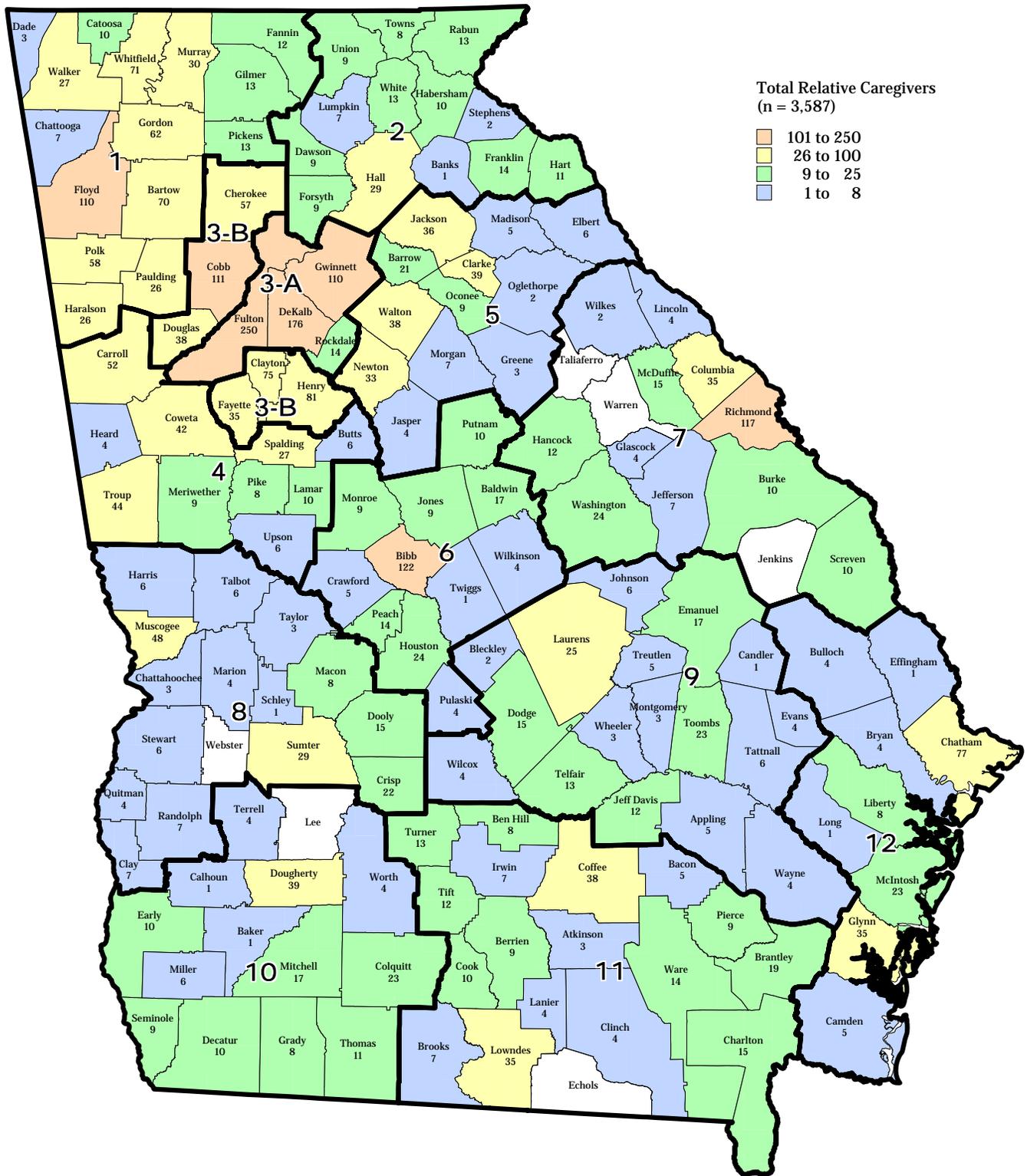
Note: The number under each county name represents the number of DFCS foster/adoptive home caregivers during September 2006. There are 44 out-of-state DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers not represented on this map.

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Non-DFCS (Private Placement Agency) Foster/Adoptive Caregivers September 2006

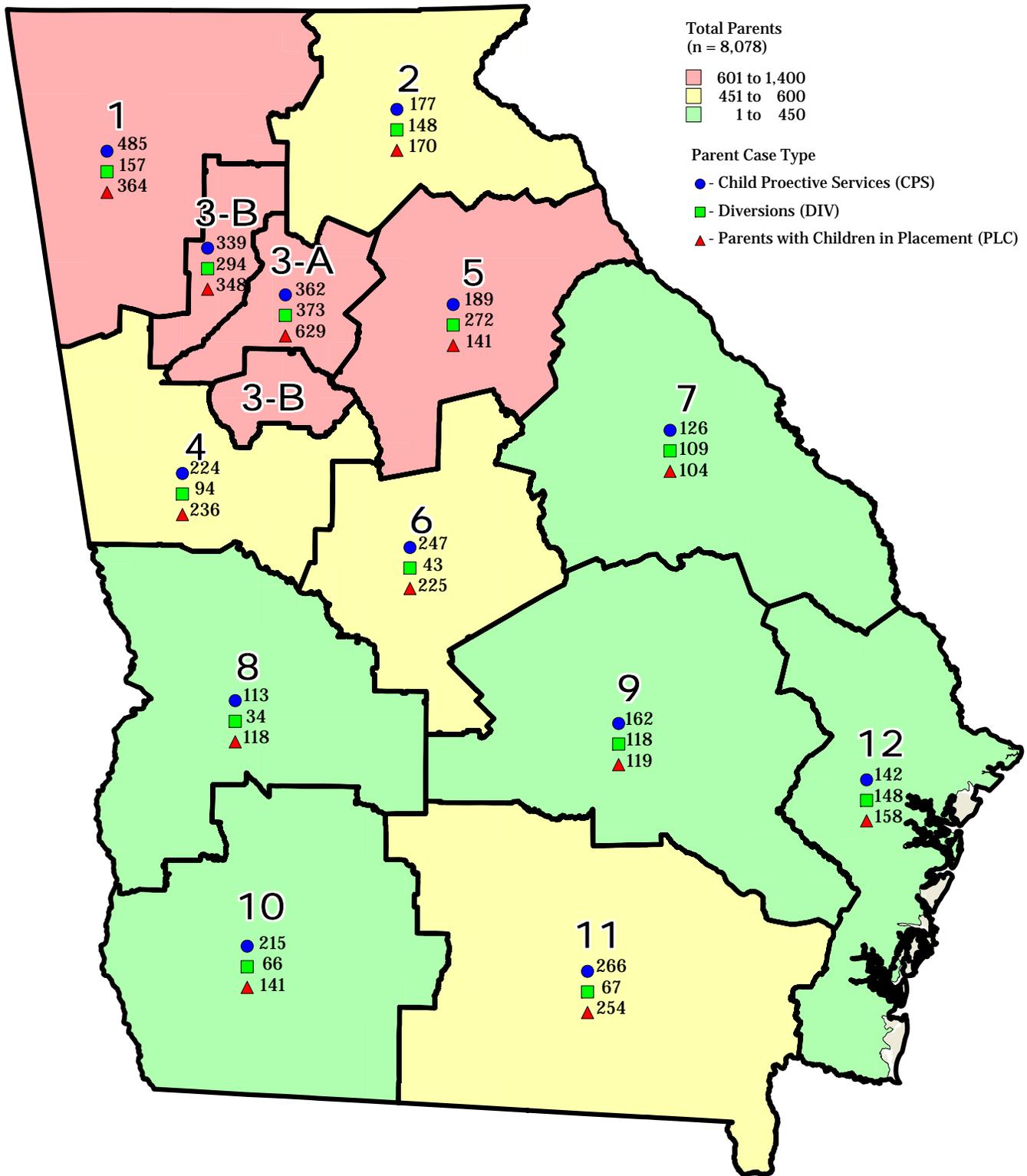


Note: The number under each county name represents the number of non-DFCS foster/adoptive home caregivers during September 2006. There are 50 out-of-state non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers not represented on this map.

DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Relative Caregivers September 2006



DHR, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) 2006 Parent Survey Sample by Parent Case Type



Note: The numbers for each region represent the numbers of parents included in the sample, which was pulled by DFCS region. There are 110 out-of-state parents not represented on this map.

Average Caregiver (foster, adoptive and relative) Ratings on Specific Survey Items by Region

	Out-of-State	Service Delivery Region (SDR)										All Respondents						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12				
5-point agreement scale: strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree (5)																		
The case manager clearly explained my responsibilities.	4.16	4.07	3.81	3.97	4.11	4.18	4.11	4.33	4.38	4.12	4.30	4.17	4.09					
The case manager clearly explained my rights as a foster parent, adoptive parent or relative caregiver.	3.90	3.81	3.68	3.83	3.94	4.03	3.96	4.22	4.31	4.01	4.22	4.08	3.95					
The case manager explained why the child was removed from his or her home.	4.28	4.01	3.81	4.03	4.13	4.15	4.32	4.30	4.11	4.27	4.24	4.10						
The case manager gave me enough information about the child to take care of him/her when I took him/her into my home.	3.86	3.80	3.73	3.75	3.86	3.92	3.79	4.17	4.11	3.98	4.13	4.11	3.87					
The case manager was knowledgeable.	3.91	3.79	3.71	3.84	3.89	4.01	3.89	4.30	4.11	3.99	4.02	4.14	3.92					
I was asked for input on the child's case plan.	3.60	3.26	3.31	3.48	3.35	3.38	3.67	3.86	3.74	3.66	3.78	3.63	3.53					
The case manager told me how to get help in a crisis or emergency situation.	3.42	3.62	3.59	3.62	3.76	3.84	3.87	4.18	4.17	3.84	4.03	3.87	3.77					
The case manager contacted me on a regular basis.	3.43	3.62	3.60	3.82	3.77	3.88	4.02	4.15	4.09	3.98	4.08	4.07	3.86					
The case manager offered me training to help me take care of the child(ren).	3.00	3.29	3.19	3.32	3.58	3.44	3.68	3.91	3.72	3.69	3.67	3.81	3.48					
The case manager helped me find community resources for the child(ren).	2.89	3.19	3.10	3.19	3.39	3.41	3.36	3.72	3.61	3.53	3.58	3.66	3.34					
The financial support I received was enough to meet the child's needs.	3.07	3.23	3.07	2.99	3.21	3.16	3.13	3.50	3.43	3.25	3.42	3.30	3.18					
If have adopted child(ren):																		
The case manager offered services to help my family after the adoption was completed.	3.32	3.16	3.47	3.22	3.60	3.42	3.24	3.75	3.43	3.46	3.53	3.52	3.36					
I received the services I needed after the adoption was completed.	3.12	3.28	3.44	3.26	3.48	3.54	3.39	3.66	3.60	3.57	3.49	3.59	3.41					

Average Caregiver (foster, adoptive and relative) Ratings on Specific Survey Items by Region

	Out-of-State	Service Delivery Region (SDR)										All Respondents								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12						
5-point frequency scale: never (1), seldom, sometimes, usually, always (5)																				
Treated me with respect	4.69	4.55	4.50	4.61	4.58	4.66	4.76	4.64	4.76	4.70	4.65	4.76	4.81	4.76	4.65	4.70	4.65	4.76	4.81	4.65
Listened to me	4.52	4.30	4.22	4.45	4.38	4.43	4.57	4.47	4.59	4.54	4.50	4.56	4.63	4.56	4.50	4.54	4.50	4.56	4.63	4.46
Called me back in a timely manner when I needed information or help	3.80	3.73	3.68	3.99	3.80	3.90	4.07	4.07	4.23	4.20	4.10	4.09	4.35	4.09	4.10	4.20	4.10	4.09	4.35	3.99
Did what he/she said he/she would do	4.02	3.91	3.90	4.08	4.00	4.02	4.17	4.14	4.18	4.29	4.20	4.18	4.37	4.18	4.20	4.29	4.20	4.18	4.37	4.09
Included me in family team meetings	3.60	3.38	3.31	3.67	3.54	3.51	3.81	3.86	3.81	3.87	3.75	3.89	3.95	3.89	3.75	3.87	3.75	3.89	3.95	3.67
Helped me resolve problems with the child	3.68	3.74	3.72	3.82	3.91	3.83	4.07	4.03	4.10	4.09	3.89	4.08	4.29	4.08	3.89	4.09	3.89	4.08	4.29	3.91
Helped me talk with or get information from the people involved in the child's case	3.68	3.58	3.46	3.67	3.66	3.67	3.88	3.94	4.07	4.06	3.85	3.93	4.11	3.93	3.85	4.06	3.85	3.93	4.11	3.77
Gave me information about meetings or court dates in time for me to make plans to attend	4.02	3.98	3.53	3.90	4.04	4.07	4.24	4.28	4.37	4.26	4.23	4.22	4.44	4.22	4.23	4.26	4.23	4.22	4.44	4.07
Talked with me about what he/she would do in court ahead of time	3.79	3.47	3.20	3.54	3.54	3.66	3.71	3.78	3.97	3.84	3.78	3.80	3.93	3.80	3.78	3.84	3.78	3.80	3.93	3.64
Average number of case managers in past 12 months	2.28	2.77	2.94	3.05	2.81	2.62	2.99	2.53	2.25	2.47	2.28	2.74	2.46	2.74	2.28	2.47	2.28	2.74	2.46	2.76
Average number of children placed in home by DFCS in past 12 months	1.77	3.36	3.48	3.23	3.14	2.82	3.33	2.89	2.54	2.77	2.70	2.89	3.04	2.89	2.70	2.77	2.70	2.89	3.04	3.06
Overall rating of experience with DFCS in past 12 months on a 7-point scale, with 1 being "poor" and 7 being "excellent"	4.73	4.67	4.50	4.75	5.01	4.89	5.25	5.22	5.27	5.39	5.18	5.19	5.48	5.19	5.18	5.39	5.18	5.19	5.48	4.96

Caregiver and Parent Comments

Caregivers and parents were provided a space for comments at the end of the survey, and many added some remarks. Several respondents (more than 60 caregivers and 30 parents) attached pages/letters to the questionnaire to further discuss their experiences (mostly negative) with DFCS. This summary includes the key themes with illustrative quotes for each of the three types of individual caregivers – DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers, non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers and relative caregivers.¹

DFCS Caregiver Comments

Some DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers expressed their appreciation for the children and how much they enjoy caring for them. Others commented on their caseworkers/local county offices – both positively and negatively.

Example positive comments:

“[Our county] DFCS is the best group to ever work with.”

“Our adoption case manager at DFCS . . . is the best worker for adoption that I have ever seen.”

“Our case manager . . . is excellent and goes above and beyond expectations.”

“I have seen lots of positive changes at DFCS. My social workers are awesome!”

“We enjoy being foster parents and have always had wonderful case managers who are very good for our (foster) children.”

Example negative comments:

“Communication is a big problem with case managers. Morale is low with the foster parents due to mismanagement of cases.”

“Some of the case managers are not honest and open with the foster parents about the kids.”

“Our experience with the child was wonderful but our experience with DFCS and the courts was a nightmare.”

“Stop threatening foster parents.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Some caregivers recognized improvement over the previous year.

“[Our county] DFCS seems much improved over the past year.”

“DFCS has really come a long way for the [betterment] of the children since I was fostering about 15 years ago. Keep up the good work.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Many of the DFCS caregiver comments indicated concern with caseworker turnover and its effect on the children. Some noted that the supervisor and other aspects of DFCS should be evaluated/may be a problem.

¹ Quotes were edited for punctuation and spelling to improve readability.

“Do something to help prevent the large turnover of DFCS staff.”
“There’s too much turnover. We know more about the system than the new caseworkers do.”
“Our county workers and supervisor . . . in the six years we worked with DFCS were never at any time helpful.”
“We feel there needs to be an investigation into our local DFCS.”
“Accountability for case managers and supervisors. There should be a 24/48-hour response to foster parents.”
“These questions gain information about caseworkers but not supervisors. Supervisors should not treat foster parents rudely or try to make them feel stupid. Foster parents do not work for supervisors, and should be treated with respect for the job they do.”
“[Case workers] have been quitting left and right and we can’t keep up with who we need to talk to. Right now we have just been sitting and wanting to know if we are still foster-to-adopt parents. No one calls us and tells us anything. We really want to adopt a child. Please help.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Many felt case manager support was lacking.

“We feel as though we foster parents are kind of out here on our own – we don’t get a lot of support.”
“[Our county DFCS] has been a mess! No one knows what is going on. Caseworkers will not return calls.”
“We are all on the same side! We shouldn’t have to battle with case workers to get things done for these kids in a timely manner.”
“We are currently waiting for reimbursements over nine months with no [resolution] in sight. This has been a continuous problem.”
“Recent case manager does not ever answer phone, message, emails, etc.”
“Communication is the biggest area we need to improve – returning calls, answering questions and notice of court dates.”
“We feel that foster parents in general are not appreciated enough. We make so many sacrifices on a daily basis, and self-satisfaction for being great foster parents is all we get. Basically, foster parent morale could use some help.”
“As foster parents, we were treated as though we were the parents the children had been taken from.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Caregivers wanted more information about the children and resources to help them.

“If I had been given more information about kids, my home would not be closed after 16 years of services doing what I love the most.”
“The problem is that we have to identify the need, identify the resolution, and do all of the follow up.”
“I feel a liaison to help with services would be helpful, and in general more prompt services, especially when a case manager is out.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Others expressed overall frustrations with DFCS and its case staff:

“The system is almost as sick and damaged as the children it claims to help. I’ve seen case workers do as much hurt as the biological parents to the child. They are stunningly untrained.”

“This will probably be the last child we will agree to foster. Not because of difficulties with the children, but because of frustrations with working with DFCS (i.e. phone calls not returned; caseworkers poorly informed, resulting in foster parents being poorly informed; not being provided adequate support to care for children that frequently have significant social, behavioral and educational needs.”

“This form does not begin to cover the problems a foster parent [has] with DFCS.”

“DFCS is broken and needs to be fixed. You should never have to wait 2 ½ months for a caseworker to respond to a request to release for adoption from one county to another county.”

“There are so many people involved in a case. No one knows what the other one is doing. And we get a lot of different answers.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

And some expressed frustration with the legal process:

“My caseworkers have been great. It’s the legal system (i.e., the attorneys and ‘guardians’) that seem to have little regard for the welfare of the children.”

“. . . Courts do not make timely decisions or pull rights after many, many contract breaks.”

“When DFCS takes a parent to court, they need to let the foster parent have a time to talk with the judge also, because the foster parent knows what is going on.”

DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Non-DFCS Caregiver Comments

Non-DFCS foster and adoptive caregivers also expressed their enjoyment of the children in their homes, regardless of their experience with their private placement agency and/or DFCS. Several indicated they did not currently have children in care.

Non-DFCS caregivers also commented positively or negatively on the placement agency, DFCS and their specific case managers – including those with DFCS and those with the placement agency.

Example positive comments:

"I have been pleased with DFCS case workers, managers, panel review, etc. [Our county] DFCS has provided professional and exceptional service."

"Everyone that I came in contact with was very nice and supportive in helping me with court appointments. Also helped me with getting into the classes I needed."

"I have enjoyed working with Mentor and DFCS; hopefully one day I can help more kids and maybe adopt one."

"I retired from foster care in June, but enjoyed caring for 'my' children so much, and miss it so much I am going to apply again."

"[Our case worker] is the best, most attentive case worker that we have ever had in the three years that we have been in foster care/adoption. I could not ask for a better worker!"

"I work through a placement agency; they have been great."

"My DFCS caseworker has been excellent. She is very knowledgeable and shows genuine concern for the children."

"I would recommend [our agency] to anyone; they are doing an excellent job with the foster parents."

"My caseworker was awesome! She was very sensitive and cared a great deal for our son."

"I am very proud of the changes DFCS has made. Our experience has been great even with the changes in our case managers. I feel that we have been well taken care of with everyone we have met."

"We enjoy the support and professionalism of [our placement agency]."

"We are the clients of [placement agency]. They work with DFCS. Both have been great to work with."

Example negative comments:

"Our ordeal with [county] DFCS was a complete nightmare. Communication only existed when they needed something from us. We went through four different caseworkers and were forced to seek outside support in order to establish some type of communication."

"I am very disappointed in DFCS services because I wasn't treated with respect. I was lied to and I know foster parents have rights and I am going to fight! fight! until the foster parents are heard."

"I really enjoy being a foster parent; however I've had bad experiences with my workers both with DFCS and the agency that I contract with. I would like more consistent workers, more thorough communication and informative meetings with real updates and support (realistic)."

"I had two girls in my home in foster care and they were moved out of my home due to a case worker not doing her job."

"The agency lies more than the children. Overall a bad experience. I'm trying to hang in there. My experiences are more with my agency. I need to go straight to DFCS. I'm giving up for now."

"I will not work for [this agency] again. . . . I find them to be very unfair. This agency is not supportive. I cannot get help from the case manager."

"I worked for [placement agency] and they were not good at all with children or the foster parents. They never listen to you."

"Our experience was with [county] DFCS and it was very bad. Upper income, well educated, loving foster parents like us are tough to recruit, and this bridge was badly burned."

Example mixed comments:

"I have 2 case managers. . . [One] is so good and so far I love her so much. She is a great asset to your team. . . Now for the other one I can't comment!!"

"I thank God for my private agency case manager, because DFCS did not help me at all.

Am very lucky to have such a resourceful case manager. However, she is so busy with all the caseload – not her fault! I would love to see more happen, and quicker!"

"We work with an agency so we have 2 different caseworkers. In the last 12 months, we have had 3 different caseworkers with DFCS. But our case plan stayed on track because of the therapeutic agency."

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Caregivers wanted improved communication.

“Mediation and communication between foster parents and biological parents [about] the life of the child prior to foster care, especially after TPR. Copies of pictures of the child would be useful.”
“Provide central contact desk for kids placed in home over weekends (emergency placements).”
“I would like to know why DFCS closed my house down and did not give me a chance to make things right.”
“Please let foster families know what is going on with cases. We have had so many different case workers that it is hard to understand what is going on with the cases. The workers tend not to tell us what is happening and resent our questions or concerns.”
“Communication between counties is poor.”
“Better communication between the case manager of the agency and DFCS.”
“Make sure that case managers give all pertinent information on children being placed.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Compensation, reimbursement and benefits, especially child care and respite are concerns.

“The procedure for me being responsible for the daycare expenses (for my 3 children) and the turn around time for my reimbursement for the bill was not so great.”
“How come everyone in DFCS working with the children receives paid time off except foster parents? We are penalized when we take a break from the pressure; our per diem is taken away. That is totally unfair.”
“I am still waiting for reimbursement for over a year and MANY people are aware. NO ONE has done a thing.”
“We need to be paid more than \$15.00 per day for each child. We never get a cost of living increase; we have to be available 24/7.”
“I am a single parent. I get half of the money and twice the work of a couple.”
“As much as we do, we do not get medical/dental - nothing - it’s unfair to us. No vacation.”
“We should be compensated from the day that the child is placed in our care until the child is taken from our care. The pay should not be deducted for days that the child visits his/her family.”
“They need to have respite care every month because your foster parents will burn out.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Non-DFCS caregivers also raised concerns about case manager support, including responsiveness to calls and questions and case manager turnover.

“Caseworkers do not return calls in a timely manner, and there are times when the matter is very important.”
“Case managers seem to be stressed out all the time. They speak a million miles per hour and normally appear to be rushing to put out the next fire . . . Home visits normally need to be scheduled “quickly” before the end of the month, and I often have to rearrange my schedule to accommodate the case manager in crisis mode.”
“I’ve been a foster parent for three years. My children . . . have had five case managers - I’ve seen each of them once.”
“We need caseworkers to stay in place longer so that they can get to know the children. They get very upset whenever a new worker comes on board.”
“Paperwork issues have been the most frustrating part of the process: e.g., not receiving Medicaid cards in time, etc.”
“Some caseworkers need to think we foster parents are helping disturbed children and to be supportive of us not to treat us as maids.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Some feel there is a need for additional caseworker training/experience.

“More training for incoming workers (let them foster a few kids as part of their internship).”

“Caseworkers need more training in coaching parents with positive parenting strategies.”

“All DFCS workers, regardless of status, should be a foster parent for at least a month.”

“Some case managers don't understand children when they don't have any. Look at some of your agents and their training.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Non-DFCS caregivers also raised a number of policy/process issues.

“DFCS supports/facilitates the lower standards held for some foster children, in particular teenage African-American males. Their standards and expectations for these males seem to be a lot lower than for other groups.”

“DFCS needs to check closer on the background of family before placing the children with them to reduce the amount of times they enter the system.”

“The process to become a foster parent is too cumbersome and it definitely discourages you from wanting to become or remain a foster parent.”

“Foster parents should be allowed to treat foster children like they treat their biological children, so it's more of a family unit (I don't have to explain why some get different consequences than others). If we can't be trusted to discipline them, we should not be parents to begin with.”

“I can't believe that DFCS would consider putting these 3 children back with their mother. They found drugs in her system; she overdosed on pills and abandoned the children.”

“I strongly suggest that all parents should sign off when home visits are made . . . a check-and-balance system makes a great difference. We went several months without regular visits for the first year.”

“I feel like I have to fight DFCS for the child's rights all the time. . . DFCS is not about what is best for the child but how can we improve the number of children we send home, at the cost of child's safety.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Several comments related to the need for resources and recreation for children.

“I would like to have Zoo Atlanta free to foster children at least twice a year / Six Flags / events should be entirely free or at least discounted for foster children.”

“Would like help and transportation for my clients to out-of-town ILP workshops. I have read on flyer sheets about wrap-around providers, but we have never been offered this service.”

“I really enjoy what I do and would love to do it for a long period of time. Helping teens get on the right track with their lives. Need more support from DFCS with the services I need.”

“It is a disgrace for anyone to live in the US and not know how to read. The state spends money on a lot of things, but I am having to beg and plead for a tutor for this child to catch up on his reading skills to be a proactive citizen one day.”

“The per diem could increase for teenagers, and the teens need to be involved with Big Brothers/Big Sisters more. Other than that the agency and DFCS are doing a good job.”

“DFCS should consider having monies available for children with other interests such as: music, acting, sports and even tutoring outside of the public school. DFCS children should have the same chances as children outside of DFCS, and they should be willing to pay for it. Foster parents can not always afford these things.”

“It is harder to get services for non-white children. Case managers will tell you that the child is at one level of care and change it when the child is placed with you.”

“There's no clothing for seasonal. No reimbursement for damage to property. No support for after-school program and/or camp.”

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Non-DFCS caregivers also expressed some frustration with the legal process.

"Pay these people more and work them less. You are losing really good people. The problems are in the courts, not with the caring DFCS workers."

"The 3-year-olds have been in care since birth and in my home since age 8 weeks, how long will the state wait for the birth family to get it together?"

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Some caregivers commented on working through a private placement agency.

"Make sure private agencies are placing children in the right home (if a child needs therapeutic care, they go to a therapeutic home). Trust, listen and support foster care parents who have a child in their home that need help, do not wait for 4 to 6 months. Better communication between DFCS, private agencies and foster parents."

"The role of DFCS and the role of the agency should be defined more clearly in regard to who is financially responsible for what."

"Please continue to place children with private agencies. DFCS case managers have too many children to serve. DFCS foster parents do not receive the support they need from case managers due to the case load."

Non-DFCS foster/adoptive caregivers

Relative Caregiver Comments

Many relative caregivers expressed their appreciation of their experience in caring for children, and some indicated they would like to become foster parents (new or again).

Example positive comments:

"Kudos to [two county caseworkers] for personal, hands-on care and attention to our concerns."

"My overall experience with my case worker was excellent. She is caring, informative, and listens when there is a problem."

"Our case manager . . . is very knowledgeable. He has made this experience easier for us. He keeps us informed."

"The case manager stayed in touch and helped me a lot with what we asked for."

"The service I've had with this organization has been really great, and I'm truly blessed with all of your concern and help."

"My case managers did an excellent job. They were professional. They responded to my questions and if they weren't sure of the answer, they found the answers and followed up with me. They were all helpful."

"Our case manager has been helpful, concerned and on time when it comes to helping us."

"All the DFCS individuals involved in the case were well-trained and had genuine interest in the child."

Example negative comments:

"[Our case manager] was the most disrespectful case manager I ever had and she really doesn't give a darn about the kids she represents."

"Once the child was placed in our home, DFCS provided little information or support. We have not been contacted by a case worker in over 12 months. I've not been updated on the legal process."

"I received little to no information from the various caseworkers on my niece's case. I was very disappointed and discouraged by my experience with DFCS."

"DFCS has made everything more frustrating and complicated. No one seems to ever have the same answers so we are usually left confused."

"Too many different departments involved, and they didn't know what the other departments were doing. With each different service we needed, it was like starting a new case all over again – very frustrating!"

"Almost everyone was more concerned about procedure than the child's best interest."

Example mixed comments:

"[Our current caseworker] has been a real help with my son but previous managers and workers have been hard to reach, did not return calls, gave misinformation and have been a disappointment to work with."

"My latest case manager . . . is great. She is the only one who has completed any work."

"Our grandchild was placed with us from out-of-state. We had a terrible time navigating the system and getting any information. It took 9 months to get her, and we couldn't even find out who our caseworker was in the beginning. We finally had to call the Director's office. Every step seemed to take an inordinately long time. Our most recent caseworker, though, has been very good."

"Our case worker in [first county] was absolutely horrible. [She] was mostly unresponsive [and] her general disposition was condescending and rude. Our contact in [the other county] was . . . not only wonderful but in our opinion took care of all our issues that should have been handled by [the first county]."

Relative caregivers

Some relative caregivers felt caseworkers needed support and were doing the best they could.

“Caseworkers do the best they can under the circumstances of constant turnover, low pay, and being overworked. They have little to no support from other agencies.”

“I have asked my name and address to be changed several times but [it] still hasn’t been done. . . I was declined/suspended Medicaid because forms were returned, because I didn’t complete my quarterly review. My caseworker is wonderful but every other aspect of the system is terrible.”

“My placement worker goes over and beyond her job. I don’t feel she has the resources available to do her job correctly.”

Relative caregivers

Financial supports and benefits may be late or lacking, and many relative caregivers felt they should receive the same supports as foster parents. A number indicated they were told they would receive support they did not receive.

“I was receiving 80% of the foster payment benefits; however, once I accepted legal custody my benefits were terminated. I have been trying to get them restored. We are in a crisis situation!”

“Lack of financial assistance was devastating to my situation. I only received food stamps for 3 of the 11 months and no other financial assistance until the 10th and 11th months. I got the run-around from the system.”

“Explain to relatives that their income affects the help that they receive for the children. I don’t feel that is fair.”

“Is there any possible way to direct deposit my check?”

“Childcare should be extended to relative caregivers also.”

“You should pay family care givers the same as regular foster care. I am lower income and children are expensive.”

“DFCS should help with childcare. We were told we make too much money because my husband and I both work. Paying daycare took a toll on our budget, and no one seems to care. We struggle just to keep him in daycare so we can work.”

“DFCS stopped the child care fourteen days after we went to court. This has played a major downfall in the child’s behavior because I could no longer provide child care which offers a structured environment for the child to learn and develop in a positive manner.”

“Relative caregivers should be given the same assistance as foster parents. It’s hard to provide childcare, clothing and food with the allotted money.”

“Need to provide more income for kids, and not go by my income to support kids that aren’t even my kids.”

“I never received any assistance or reimbursement for expenses. No one said thank you or anything.”

“This child was placed in our home for four months and we by were told by the case worker that the child would receive support but that never happened.”

“When a child is taken from their parent(s), the parent should not be allowed to receive food stamps. The benefit should go to the caregiver(s).”

“I do not understand why I can not have food stamps for the child. If he was in a foster home he would get them.”

“I need to get their check earlier than the 15th, because rent is due on the 5th and I always have to pay late fees.”

“Financial assistance didn’t start until last Wed., Nov. 22. He’s been in our home since June 28, 2006.”

Relative caregivers

Some of the relative caregivers said caseworkers need additional training

“Most of your caseworkers need more training - to be more sensitive to families' problems.”
“Provide case managers with the proper training. I call and ask questions and do not get a call back within 24 hours. I then call a supervisor who I have never gotten a return call from. I have gotten a good response from childcare and adoption workers.”
“Require customer service classes for all staff, and voice mail in their offices.”
“DFCS workers need more training, also they need to understand the child's needs, not what makes DFCS workers look good.”

Relative caregivers

Several relative caregivers cited problems with case manager support and turnover among case managers

“My experience . . . was almost unbearable with the constant caseworker changes.”
“It's really difficult having so many different caseworkers, because as soon as you get to know your caseworker and give them all the information they need, a new caseworker comes along. Her monthly funds are always late and that causes problems sometimes due to appointments or things already established.”
“I'm paying back money to [our county] DFCS due to their mess up, which I feel is unfair. They should explain their rules more.”
“Would like more assistance and cooperation from my social worker, if I have one.”
“I know [our county] office is understaffed and underpaid, but it takes two or three days for a call back - if at all.”
“For my case experience, it seems like parent's rights are put before the best thing for the children.”
“Phone calls need to be returned promptly. Follow-up needs to be implemented more timely. Explanations and information needs to be given if asked of foster parent to do something. Resources and programs need to be given.”
“I have not talked with a case manager since I got the boys.”
“{The case managers} were very slow in getting paperwork and things that I needed done in a timely manner in order to get us the assistance that we needed.”
“We actually missed a panel hearing b/c no one bothered to inform us; there have been several times we had to contact supervisors to get anything done . . . I have to leave at least 3-4 messages to get anyone to call back and that is not acceptable.”
“I would like to know early about court dates.”
“We feel like we were treated as the bad people while nothing was done with [the child's] mother who almost killed him.”
“The caseworkers need to treat people with more respect. We are not all beggars trying to beat the system.”
“We always receive notice of court dates with less than 24 hours notice.”

Relative caregivers

Several relative caregivers felt DFCS staff were not honest with them.

*"The case workers would rarely give an answer to a question except to say "I'll check with my supervisor" or else "I don't know." My opinion: a bunch of bull."
"Caseworkers need to call back in a timely manner, or answer emails in a timely manner. Be honest! Don't leave out information about children or finances just to place them."
"Everything is not as easy as it seems, especially when DFCS is not honest and fair."
"Someone in the department should be held accountable for the lack of communication with the caregivers, for not returning calls, lying to the caregivers regularly."
"DFCS could treat people with more respect. They could listen more without accusing people of things before they know all the facts. They have accused me of things that are not true, but they are still in the records as true fact."*

Relative caregivers

Paperwork and requirements for relative caregivers were seen as burdensome.

*"More help, less paperwork for family placement. I was made to feel like I was doing something wrong or had to fill out extra paperwork"
"The demands and stress that were placed on me to collect data, provide info, etc was taxing. I will never do it again. They made me feel I was supposed to this and move for my nieces."
"We recently had to submit to a 5th home evaluation because the agency could not find the paperwork on an approved home evaluation. This caused a halt in the children's check."*

Relative caregivers

Many relative caregivers felt they did not receive the resources and supports they needed.

*"They told me there were tutors to help my granddaughter and that I would receive back pay - then they changed their minds."
"Children placed in new homes, even if it is with a family member, need a personal mentor. I think a good role model, confidant - someone other than family is an important part of their healing process."
"Training for case managers or RD workers on community resources to better help families; i.e., doctors that accept Medicaid, places to get free equipment (cribs...walkers), like a foster care support foundation."
"DFCS provided day care . . . until we took legal custody and then stopped. So I had to quit work which has been financially affecting the family."
"I was told that I would get some financial assistance and that I would be introduced to a grandparent support group. Neither has happened."
"We asked for an evaluation of child/problems with school work - never got it from first or second caseworker."
"Is there a place where I can go and get clothes for him?"
"Terminated counseling for children too soon. Stopped tutoring too soon. No stress management classes offered."
"They haven't given him a clothing allowance. They haven't given us the documents that we need, nor have they given us any gifts for Christmas so far."
"In-home counseling was stopped in August due to lack of state funding."
"It would be helpful if there were a separate department where people taking care of other people's children could get helpful information on caring for the children, special needs, classes and services available."
"Caseworkers should be more willing to put children into counseling."*

Relative caregivers

Sometimes policy seems to take precedence over child welfare.

"I understand that the [county] DFCS is understaffed and overworked, but worrying more about their budget instead of the needs and care of the children entrusted to the department's care is no way to operate a state agency. [County] DFCS put this child and her siblings back in the mother's care after a 2-year period, and when the kid's father died, the mother started Social Security and quit work. So she has no job to support the kids, no automobile, her boyfriend is a drug user, and she dumps the kids off with anyone she can every weekend. Is this the way DFCS is supposed to take care of abused kids?"

"My grandson was seen by a doctor who told the [case] worker that [my grandson] wanted to commit suicide, and she never reported it or sought help for him."

"DFCS was presumptuous in taking legal custody in this case. Also, drug addicts need to be allowed a lot more time to re-establish their lives."

"I found it difficult because of the interference of the biological mother who wanted to maintain control of her children's care. She has a very strong influence on their behavior and the choices and decisions that they made."

"I can make comments but nothing will be done."

"I wanted the brother to the child I have, but I did not get that choice. Really, I wanted both children, they are my niece and nephew. I feel brothers and sisters should be kept together. When the kids are separated from their family, their siblings may be all that they have as family. The child I have is able to see his mother, but not his brother. Why? I feel this is very important to the children."

"DFCS is a joke! They have spent thousands and have sent child back to an environment that is unchanged! Child is in danger!"

Relative caregivers

Relative caregivers also expressed frustrations with the legal system.

"The mother has had sufficient time to prove she can be a productive parent and hasn't. This case is still pending (30 months)."

"Get DFCS lawyer to get paperwork done. Waiting on court order since Feb. 06; still no orders of custody."

"[The child] should not have to miss school when he is not allowed in the courtroom."

"In the court proceedings, everyone signs an oath stating not to discuss this outside the hearing. The moderator of these hearings goes to church with the former guardian, and the moderator discusses the hearing with the former guardian. This should never happen. It is no concern of the former guardian."

Relative caregivers

Parent Comments

As with caregivers, parents frequently commented on case workers, both positively and negatively.

Example positive comments:

"I was always treated with respect and concern. I am thankful for the role that DFCS played in helping me."

"[Our caseworker] did a great job with my child. He is a great person and very professional. He really cares about people and especially children. I appreciate the job he did to help my son's situation."

"Thanks for taking care of my kids so I could get my life together. I'm a better mom and wife."

"[My caseworker] . . . is the only bright light I have had in my time of despair. She is honest, open and professional. She has stood by her word no matter what and has never just given me an answer. She finds out facts and only states facts. If every employee were like her, the system would be much better because she cares."

"The people at DFCS have been so helpful to me and my family. I understand that they cannot fix everything. I think that we need more resources to help parents with our teens. I am very thankful for DFCS."

Example negative comments:

"The DFCS case manager . . . was very condescending. She talked down to me and my family. She was cruel and it was a horrible experience, because she assumed guilt. We were separated from our child for 1 1/2 months."

"We are tired of the merry-go-round system. There have been too many caseworkers to count. We want all this to end."

"Nobody listens to complaints about some of these rude workers. Nothing is done about a lot of things these people do, so I say, "why even bother?"

"Our case manager . . . has been very rude and unpleasant to me and my family, making things really unnecessarily hard on us. We've done everything they've asked, but nothing satisfies them."

"[County DFCS] needs to be closed down. They are disrespectful and need to be retrained. I have worked all my life. I went in to get food stamps for my children and I was treated like common trash. If my three children didn't have special needs, I wouldn't have to ask for anything from the state of GA. [The caseworker] needs to be fired. She has a job to help others, not make people feel like they owe her something."

Example mixed comments:

"My actual case was handled great. The other services were very poor. The front desk clerk doesn't treat people very well."

"My second case manager . . . has been a very good caseworker. I really appreciate how she handled my case, she was very understanding and she did her job well. . . . But the DFCS office in [county] is a very rude place and a lot of the caseworkers act like they don't want to help. Most of the people who answer the phone are very rude."

"My case manager was excellent in all regards! . . . My children suffered from being taken out of their home and hopefully were young enough to soon forget the entire ordeal. . . . certain employees of DFCS look down on people who are in the system and need help, and take advantage of their positions . . . the picking, choosing, and lying to cover up needs to stop and stop now!"

Parents

Privacy/confidentiality regarding their cases was a concern for parents.

“Not my case manager, but another, was giving information to the person who brought accusations against us. I thought they could not discuss an open case.”

“When my husband tried to find out if his daughter was ok and if they have even checked on her, they could not disclose that information to him. But when someone makes accusations out of spite, that case can be discussed with the accuser. I just don't understand.”

“I didn't appreciate the case worker (manager) discussing my case with the neighbors and telling them almost everything that was going on with my case.”

Parents

Some parents commented that turnover and/or caseloads affect cases/placement.

“Changing workers affects whether someone's case is closed or continued, due to a new worker being placed on your case every two to three months. I had an open case for 5 years due to DFCS changing my caseworkers constantly.”

“I believe the case manager needed smaller case loads in order to better assist the parents of children. These are people's lives and not just some case; each case is different and may require more attention than others.”

Parents

Some parents said they would like to see their children or see them more often.

“Sometimes I would go to DFCS to see my kids on the day he said for me to, and the kids wouldn't even be there. He wouldn't call me to let me know they wouldn't be there. . . I would really like to know somewhat how my kids are doing. I would also like to know if I have the right to see them or talk to them.”

“More visitation opportunities would be great.”

“I only get visits once a month for an hour and a half and a phone call on weekends.”

Parents

Several parents added pleas for help or an investigation of their county DFCS office or their specific case.

“Please help get my kids home. In almost 2 years we've been in court 2 times. We are still lost about what to do - help us. It's not fair. The kids have to live in pain. One more thing: the DFCS workers have tried to pay us for the kids. Help us get them home. We want to be in their lives, but DFCS said no.”

“Please see the attached letter; this is the biggest break I've had in 7 years for someone to listen to me. Feel free to contact me at [telephone number], I have prayed for this day to come, Amen.”

“Could someone have a real investigator come down to [this county] to review my case? It has been going on for 3 years and is ongoing. And I still do not know the reason my child was taken from me every since my child was born. I have been through class after class (I have a certificate for every one) I am stable, I have food and I am a clean decent parent. Now why do I still not have my child? Can someone please help?”

An investigation should be done on the entire DFCS office in [county] . . . We know of numerous cases . . . where people have been treated unjustly. DFCS here doesn't keep families together, but tears them apart and destroys the lives of children and parents for their own financial gain.

Parents

Parents indicated their need for services/support, especially food stamps, housing, education, employment, treatment/counseling and help with challenging or special needs children.

“Instead of taking a child from the parents, they should help them with counseling them and helping them to be better parents.”

“Leave the innocent people alone and get the people that are hurting their kids. I live pay check to pay check and I do the best I can. I make sure my kids have what they need. If you want to help me, send me some food stamps.”

“We cannot afford for my husband to have domestic violence classes and are having to wait for county funds to see if DFCS can pay. DFCS is supposed to check on this . . . we miss our son very, very much and we love him with all our hearts, and want the help we need to get him back. We hope and pray our son will not be taken away forever because of one mistake by my husband.”

“I would really like help in getting SSI and Medicaid for my son who was recently diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, Asbergers, and psychotic episodes. Additionally, I'd like my husband to be forced into mandatory psychiatric evaluation for anger management (confidentially).”

“I wanted GED information. My caseworker referred me to Early Intervention, which is a big ? to me. I don't know who Early Intervention is.”

“I can't work because I have problems with my back and leg. I've been in a car wreck and it's hard for me to do anything right now. I need help because I am a single mom.”

“Need more help for mothers trying so hard to make ends meet. We hardly have money for food and I asked about food stamps - I make too much money by a few dollars. So I have to suffer, as do my children.”

Parents

A number of parents reported false accusations and accusations made for revenge or retaliation by an ex-spouse or in-law. These parents felt there should be consequences for false reports.

“My case was brought forward because of retaliation in a divorce.”

“My only complaint is that an upset 'friend' called it in and there are no safeguards or checks to stop false calls.”

“DFCS is all too commonly used for revenge, spite work, and people who like passing the buck rather than doing their jobs.” [latter referring to school system]

“I was investigated due to someone's revenge . . . cooperate due to someone's lies. Suggestion: make a rule that states charges will be filed against anyone making false claims.”

“Please find a way to make the accusers as accountable as the accused. It makes no sense whatsoever to allow DFCS to become a tool for my former spouse to harass me and to waste tax dollars with impunity.”

“This case is the result of an anonymous caller making false statements. My case worker was wonderful and only doing her job, but there should be some way to punish people who misuse the system. This was embarrassing to my family, but the caller got a good laugh.”

“My case was . . . based on complaints from my ex-wife . . . Maybe you should begin billing these exes for time that could have been spent on cases that really need DFCS intervention - and this would lower the number of these types of complaints.”

“The same person keeps calling with lies about me and I asked what could be done about it because they have called three times. Each time they have found nothing out of order.”

Parents

Parents wanted case managers to be responsive and follow through with information, supports or services.

“Investigator talked about in-home family therapy. Case manager said there was no money for therapy. I would like to talk with someone [gave contact information].”
“Case manager failed to follow the treatment plan for my daughter provided by her medical team. This resulted in a worsening of her condition.”
“4 months ago I was supposed to get overnights, now it is 2 days until court and I haven't had a single one.”
“My caseworker never told me of any outcome in my case, not by phone or in writing. This was frustrating because we were supposed to meet, and we didn't, and she didn't call like she said.”
“They need to send the DFCS workers through several training courses before letting them work. They need to update all information in system about people because they always get it wrong.”
“Have case managers empty their mailboxes so you can leave a message. Have messages delivered to case workers correctly. Have caseworkers return phone messages when left with receptionist so you know they got your messages.”
“Do what you promised to do and don't threaten parents about removing children from their homes when they're working on their relationships. Caseworkers need to offer more resources during a family's financial meltdown. Be more compassionate, that's all!”
“We were told we would be informed of what went on in the investigation and if any arrests were made.”
“We've not been contacted at all since my daughter was interviewed in September.”

Parents

A number of parents complained that they did what was asked or completed case plans and their case remained open or their children were still not returned.

“All the things that I am supposed to do, I've done, but they still don't recognize them . . . Everyone has been clean for six months and still no feedback.”
“DFCS has been good to us in our situation, however, I have passed all my drug tests and have done everything I said I would do and do not understand why the case against me should remain open.”
“When can my case be closed out? Because I'm doing everything that I need to do. Including disciplining [my children] and not beating them. I take away things that they love to play with.”
“Request my case file, please. Completed everything 2 times already. Desperate to be with children full time instead of 1 hour a week . . . 2 years is a long time to be without your kids.”
“Give my children back to me. I have been clean from drugs for two years and it's on record. They need to take the children who still need to be taken and give mine back.”
“I have no open CPS case, I've done everything on my case plan, I have over a year clean, and I want my children back. They need their mother. Instead it appears to them that I don't want them with me anymore. That's more harmful to children than you realize.”

Parents

A few parents felt they were treated unfairly because of their own race or because they were a biracial couple

“[The front desk worker] is rude, real quick to help Hispanics and blacks but look down on whites.”
“[The officer] . . . does not like me because he said I am too nice of a white girl to be going with a [racial slur]. Told [the lady who reported them] he would have her evicted if she did not testify against us.”
“We feel like we were treated unfairly because we have a biracial marriage and daughter.”
“And because of their title I have no chance anyway; they believe them over us anyway. Oh yeah and I'm black.”

Parents