

The Symposium Series

Child Safety

So what's this all about?

Our pledge for this communication is to outline the highlights of the monthly child welfare and OFI symposiums in a communication that is filled with useful and easy to reference information, and make it available to you in a format that's easy to download when you need it, and that's just as easy to share with

other child welfare professionals.

We'll cover topics that will inform you on everything from reducing risk for the children in our care, to highlighting you, the champions of this agency with shout-outs for a job well done.

We'll have an opportunity to hear straight from Rachelle Carnesale on

various topics and of course we want to hear from you and your counterparts from across all 159 counties.

In this first communication we're focusing on Child Safety.

Enjoy!

A message from the Director Rachelle Carnesale

Thanks to everyone who was able to attend this limited space training. I hope you will carry the information and messages back to your colleagues. We plan to provide you with additional resources to help you effectively recognize safety risks and red flags.

As we move forward with an eye toward safety and prevention, there are a few key concepts to remember.

Most importantly, the majority of unexpected child fatalities are entirely preventable and are related to neglect or inadequate supervision. In working with families, it is critical to multi-task beyond the subject matter of the referral. If obvious risk factors are apparent, it's important to address them. For instance, the number one cause of preventable deaths in Georgia for children under 12 months is unsafe sleep practice. In homes where

an infant resides, discussing providing a safe sleep environment for that child is important, regardless of the initial reason for your visit. It's a great idea to carry brochures about this subject matter on your home visits. Contact our training department for information and resources.

As always, I thank you for your commitment to children and families. Be careful out there.

Volume 1

Issue 1

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Federal Regulations and Data

Sharon Hill

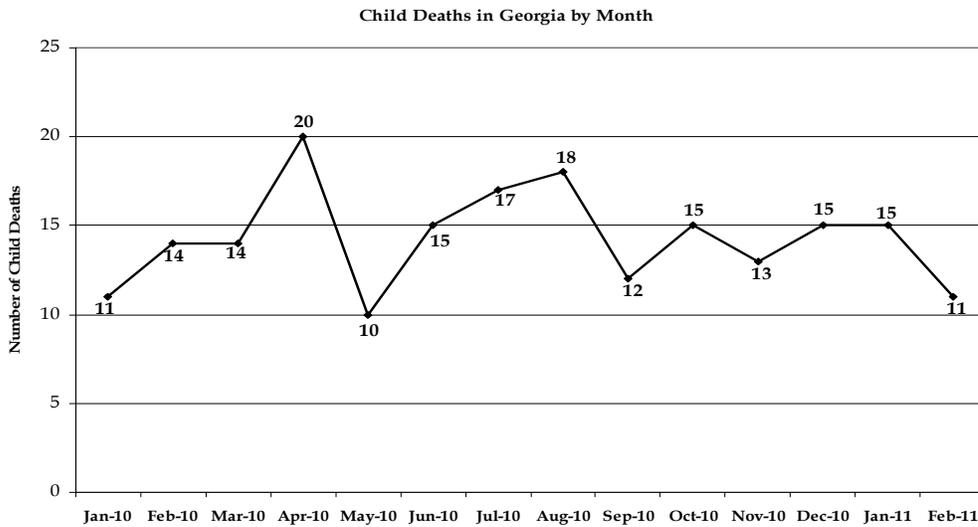
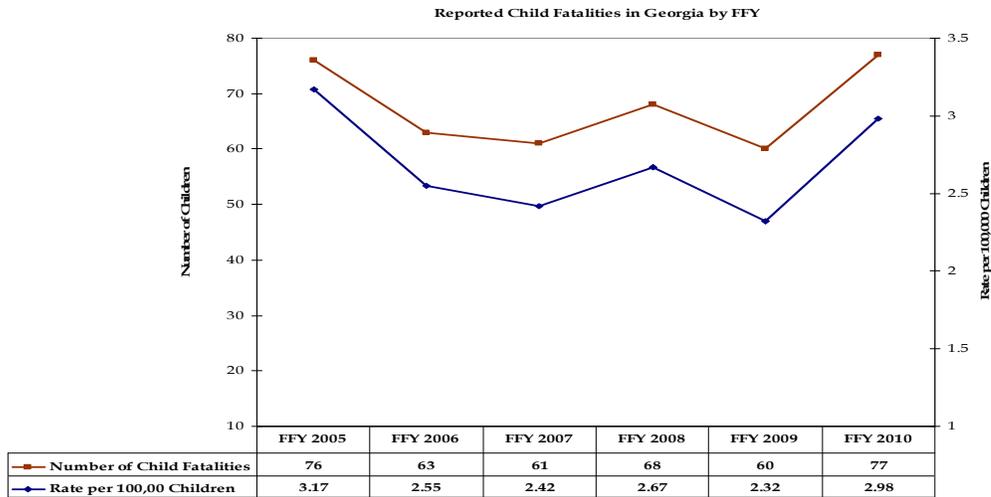
In compliance with the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), states provide data regarding estimated child fatalities each year. NCANDS defines "child fatality" as the death of a child caused by an injury resulting from abuse or neglect, or where abuse or neglect was a contributing factor. For FFY 2010, Georgia reported 77 fatalities, an increase from the 60 reported in FFY 2009. This equates to about 2.98 chil-

dren per 100,000 in the population, slightly higher than the national average of 2.33.

In an analysis of 200 child deaths in Georgia from January 2010 through March 2011 (not necessarily due to abuse/neglect), 83% of the children were aged three or younger. The greatest number of deaths occurred in April and August of 2010.

Almost half, 42% of the deaths

were noted to be an accident and approximately 28% of them had previous contact with DFCS either through previous intakes that were screened-out, investigation, Family Support, Family Preservation or Foster Care case. The specific allegations and/or services provided to the families used for this data were not documented.



Centralized Social Services

Kathy Herren

We're building centralized social service by utilizing the existing infrastructure in the OFI call center in Albany, Ga. The department is developing an after hours support model and 1-800 number, where as CPS referrals are directed to staff in the centralized call center ready to take, screen, triage and assign the case to the on-call staff member in the county or region. The Call Center will also notify regional/county directors that a case has been

accepted and assigned to the case manager on-call, and that they may be needed for support, medical opinions or other types of assistance. Rollout is expected this fall.

The Centralized Call Center will also serve as a foster care support to case managers and field staff to ensure proper matching of children that have specialized needs, and to after hours admissions to reduce unnecessary moves and im-

proper matching of placements. This will be an on call telephone support administered by trained state level staff who are rotating on-call responsibilities. Rollout is end of this year. State staff that are experts in the Collaborative Partners section will also be notified to be available for case managers that require assistance addressing CPS concerns that resulted in unexplained injuries and child fatalities.

Collaborative Partners

Peggy Woodard

The Collaborative Partners section was created to provide support and guidance to the county DFCS offices in matters of child welfare and to build and strengthen relationships with DFCS stakeholders.

One role of the section, as it relates to improving safety and risk, is to review cases and assist in decision-making where children with injuries that were treated at a hospital and cases involving medically fragile children. The team will have access to medical experts who can identify red flags and clarify medical issues as needed.

Guidance will also be available as needed in the assessment of cases through the expertise of a criminal justice liai-

son, as well as mediation with law enforcement and district attorneys when necessary. A legal child welfare expert will also collaborate with the counties on matters of the juvenile court process to ensure best outcomes for children and families. That person also will act as an internal liaison to link with other sections where needed. Another child welfare expert will be available to assist counties on issues of domestic violence and injury prevention. Two hospital liaisons are placed at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to assist with DFCS cases there on a daily basis. Cooperatively the team seeks to identify and address systemic issues that affect safety and risk.

Finally, the Collaborative Partners Section will work to improve safety and reduce risk by implementing a multidisciplinary team philosophy and approach in child protection. The team will reach out to build relationships with law enforcement, district attorneys, the courts, schools, mental and public health, the medical community and other entities who are invested in the welfare of Georgia's children.

Georgia Reengineering Our Work (OFI GROW) Lynn Boring

Georgia Reengineering Our Work (GROW) is a new Office of Financial Services (OFI) work process that was developed to help the OFI team be as efficient as possible by streamlining the process. What can employees do to prepare for GROW? You can:

- ✦ Promote the "one and done" lean concept
- ✦ Ask yourself "Can I com-

plete this case for this customer now?"

- ✦ Prepare paper records by purging and combining multiple versions
- ✦ Move to same day service-never miss an opportunity to interact with a customer and attend to their business
- ✦ Educate your customers on our changes

- ✦ Conduct high quality engaging phone interviews to assess the family's level of risk
- ✦ Re-dedicate yourself daily to helping families

Remember...the right decision for DFCS must be right for the families we serve

'Learning Links' *Domestic Violence*

In our effort to promote the development of a true learning organization, evidenced by the ongoing pursuit of new ways of thinking and untapped sources of information, the Education and Training Section introduced 'Learning Links' at the Safety Symposium. These one-page learning tools are designed to spark in-depth

learning about important and relevant topics. Related-to-topic facts and stats, practice tips, e-links, subject matter expert contact information and current training opportunities are introduced on the Learning Link. Substance abuse, family violence and medically fragile children were the topics covered by the Learning Links handed

out at the symposium and distributed in e-form to Regional Directors afterwards, along with a Learning Link template for use within the counties.

Topic: Domestic Violence (Intimate Family Violence)

Sub-Topic: Importance of Engaging the Adult Victim

Info, Facts and Stats

- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women age fifteen to forty-four...more than automobile accidents, mugging and cancer deaths combined.
- Eighty five percent of adult victims of domestic violence are women.
- One in four women is physically or sexually assaulted by a man during her lifetime.
- In 43 percent of households with children where domestic violence occurs, at least one child is under the age of twelve.
- Georgia had 129 deaths resulting from domestic violence

'Learning Links' Continued:

- Domestic violence is purposeful in nature, resulting from a batterer's desire for or her partner. It involves social isolation, threats, physical and sexual assault, verbal abuse and financial dependency.
- Domestic violence often co-occurs with child abuse (by batterer)

Keys to Good Practice

- Be cautious not to assume that initial lack of cooperation or disclosure on the part of the adult victim means that she is placing her child at power and control over his risk. It may very well be the result of lack of trust and/or fear of retribution (by batterer or by our agency). Show empathy and a genuine desire to partner with the adult victim to keep her child safe.
- It is essential that we assess not only the safety of the child victim but also that of the adult victim
- Never question an adult victim of domestic violence about her current or past relationships with the batterer in the presence of the batterer as this will place her safety in jeopardy
- When safety factors exist, take immediate action in partnership with the adult victim to resolve via a safety plan. This can include our agency securing a protective order that calls for the batterer to be removed from the home and to cease contact with the victims pending further order from the court.
- Assess adult victim's protective capacity to include: desire and ability to protect child from future harm, healthy attachment to her child, willingness to adhere to a safety plan and connections to supportive extended family and friends.
- Collaborate with our local domestic violence agencies and coalitions to:
 - Provide victims with supportive services
 - Consult about complex cases (domestic violence often co-occurs with substance abuse)
 - Engage in family team meetings

e-Links for Learning More

- Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence- www.gcadv.org; provides domestic violence materials and training; provide consultation and assistance to Georgia's 46 certified domestic violence programs.
- Georgia Commission on Family Violence- www.gcfv.org; *liaison with law enforcement, the courts and with legislators; programs include the Family Violence Intervention Programs, Domestic Violence Fatality Review.*
- Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault- www.gnesa.org; provide sexual assault training and materials; provide consultation and assistance to Georgia's Sexual Assault programs.

Ask an Expert (Contact Information)

- Kim Washington, kiwashington@dhr.state.ga.us , 404-657-3413

Current Training Opportunities

- OCP 303 "Family Violence" offered by ETS for understanding of "basics". ETS is in the initial phase of developing an advanced course through the Professional Excellence Program.

Super Hero: *Mary White*



Mary White is a Family Preservation case manager in Troup County who has been with the agency for more than 5 years; she started in Troup right after graduating from college.

On March 22, 2011, Mary was attending a delinquency hearing for a youth in her case load that was struggling with problems of delinquency, as well as mental health issues. Mary was accompanied to the hearing by the parent of that youth.

After the hearing, Mary was talking to the youth and her mother when the youth excused herself to go to the bathroom. Mary noted after a period of time the youth had not returned so she went to check on her. After calling to the youth with no response, Mary climbed under the bathroom stall and found the youth attempting suicide. Mary called for help and was assisted by a deputy in saving the child.

"I always expect good solid work out of Mary White. Today she exceeded all expectations," said Judge Keys. "She literally saved a young girl's life. I am grateful to have her involved with my court."

"I heard about you literally saving a child's life yesterday and wanted to recognize you for it and thank you for it," said Lon Roberts "One of my favorite quotes is by John F. Kennedy and it goes, "God's work on earth must truly be our own. You clearly embodied that yesterday and everyday that you work to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Keep up the great work!"

"I can honestly say that any of my other co-workers would have done the same if they had been placed in the position I was in on Tuesday," said Mary. "Again I want to thank you and those mentioned above for all the support given."

Customer Service and How Relieving Stress Can Help



It's probably happened to you.

You get an email or even a phone call from someone who is upset or unhappy - for one reason or another - about the way things are going between them and your office. Here's where your customer service skills are prompted to kick in. But we all know that although good customer service is the key to success, it can sometimes be a little stressful to deal with an unhappy client. Relieving your stress can help you better respond to any situation and therefore deliver better customer service.

Here are a few tips to help you get through a potentially stressful situation, while at the same time winning over your client with great customer service.

- **Breathe Properly:** Deep breathing exercises are a great way to relax and ease off tension. To do this, slowly inhale through your nose and slowly exhale through your mouth. You can do about ten repetitions or until you feel calmer.
- **Take Mini-Breaks:** Perform stretching exercises. Take a short walk. Pray and meditate. This helps you recharge and regain your focus for work.
- **Laugh:** Having a healthy sense of humor makes you see things in perspective and more importantly, the brighter side of life. Come on, laugh all those blues and woes away.
- **Get some shut-eye:** Sleep is a necessity you should never deprive yourself of. It's the only way your mind and body gets to fuel up after a long day at work. Give your body the much-needed chance to repair itself. You deserve it.

iFoster.org: The Foster Care Community's Version of Groupon

Get discounted merchandise and services from national and local retailers, grocery stores, health-care providers, restaurants, movie theatres and more when you sign up with iFoster.org, a benefit program that caters to the foster care community. Go online today and see how you can save.