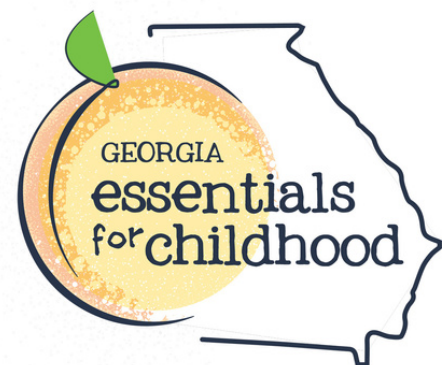




Societal Factors that Contribute to CAN

Georgia Child Abuse and Neglect
Prevention Plan

2020-2029



Highlights

Issues

- Adverse Community Environments, such as lack of affordable and safe housing, community violence, systemic discrimination, and limited access to social and economic mobility, create additional conditions for vulnerability to child abuse or neglect.
- Adverse Collective Historical Experiences, such as mass incarceration, genocide, forced displacement, and pandemics are “baked into the soil” and provide the context in which families live and grow. The disproportionality of the impact of these historical experiences on families of color or certain religions must be accounted for when discussing child and family well-being.

Solutions

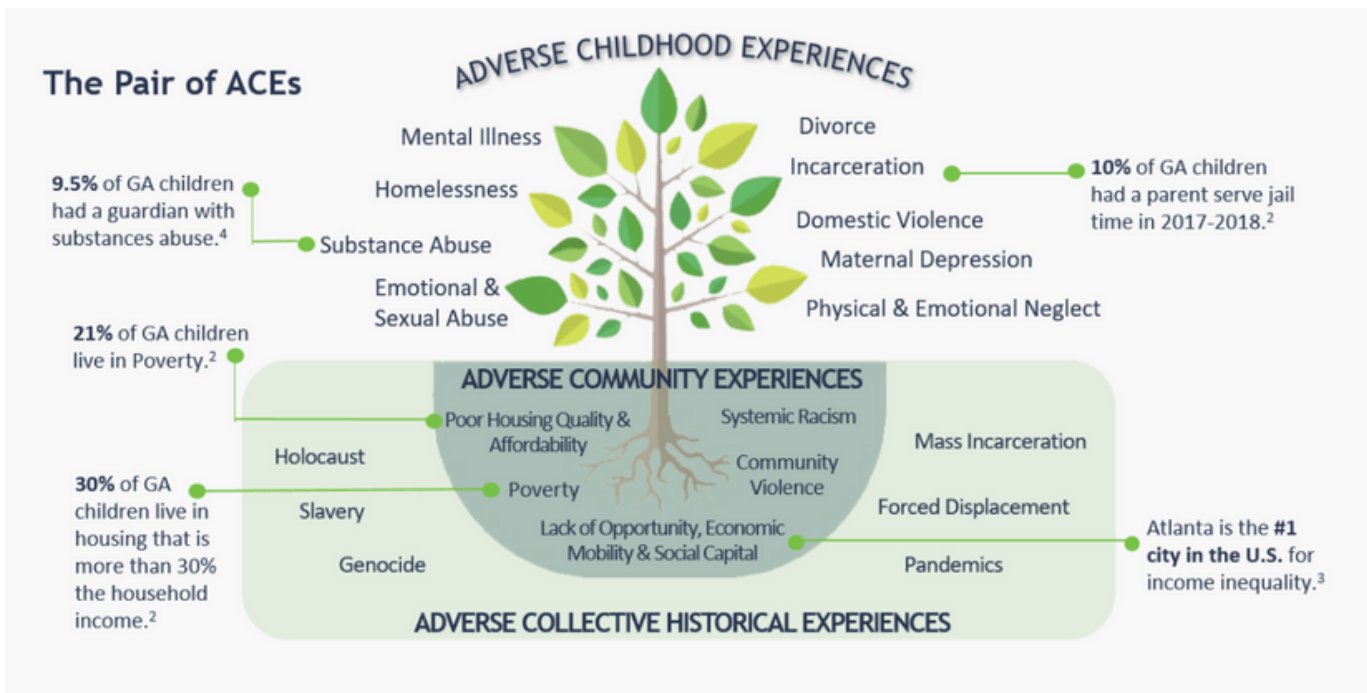
- Address economic disparities
- Support access to early care and education (ECE) for children
- Support families mental health
- Increase family physical health

Background

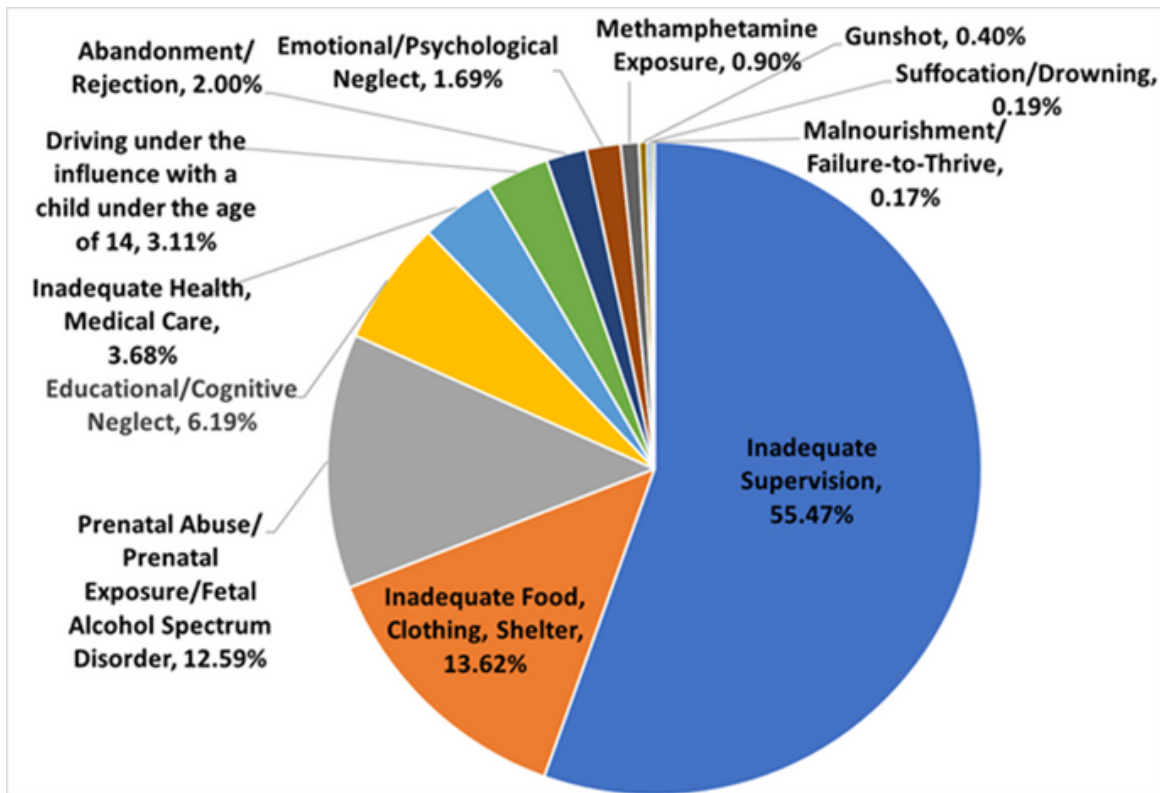
Currently, Georgia ranks 38th in child/family well-being according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2019 KIDS COUNT Profile. KIDS COUNT is a premier source of data on children and families. Each year, the Foundation produces a comprehensive report — the KIDS COUNT Data Book — that assesses child well-being in the United States. In 2019, the ranking was based on a review of economic well-being (e.g., children living in poverty), education (e.g., young children ages 3-4 not in school), health (e.g., children without health insurance) and family/community metrics (e.g., teen births). These indicators closely reflect the key objectives identified by Georgia families and subject matter experts in the production of the state's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan and are shown to lead to greater child well-being.

Child abuse and neglect are not caused by a single factor but by multiple factors related to the individual, family, community, and society at large. Environments that are violent, lack accessible and effective community resources, and are disproportionately affected by poverty or unemployment are stressors that may lead to child abuse and neglect.

The individual, family, and environmental factors listed below can increase the risk of child abuse. For these reasons, we cannot focus our attention and efforts on “bad parenting.” Child abuse is a complex social issue that can impact a child over the course of his or her life. The groundbreaking Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study has illustrated a clear link between early traumatic experiences, such as child abuse and poorer health outcomes in adulthood. Children exposed to abuse and other forms of trauma are at an increased risk of experiencing chronic diseases, mental health challenges, and other adversities during adulthood. Child abuse impacts graduation rates, incarceration rates, job productivity, and more. Additionally, a newer term of Adverse Community Environments, such as lack of affordable and safe housing, community violence, systemic discrimination, and limited access to social and economic mobility, create additional conditions for vulnerability to child abuse or neglect. Further, Adverse Collective Historical Experiences, such as mass incarceration, genocide, forced displacement, and pandemics are “baked into the soil” and provide the context in which families live and grow. The disproportionality of the impact of these historical experiences on families of color or certain religions must be accounted for when discussing child and family well-being.



Each year, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) data indicates the primary allegation for substantiated cases of abuse or neglect are due to inadequate supervision. Accounting for the impact of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, lack of access to affordable child care, gaps in behavioral health, substance abuse, and healthcare services in certain rural and urban communities and the parental stressors discussed previously, we can see that the impact of these societal factors likely contributes to families coming to the attention of GA DFCS.



Relation to Child Well-Being

Georgia's policies can help to create the safe, stable environments that children need to thrive. The objectives and strategies included in the Georgia Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan (CANPP), in addition to many more not listed, can move us forward in promoting child and family well-being for all of Georgia. However, frequently the best of intentions have often fallen short and have even led to disproportionate amounts stress in certain communities. For example, decades of housing discrimination, red-lining, unfair lending practices, mean that Black families are less likely to live near good jobs and more likely to experience pressure from low wages or long commutes. Georgia's limited mass transit systems also add to this adverse experience for many families. Chronic stress can spark a toxic stress response, increasing the risk for depression, anxiety, or other causes of child neglect. The cascade of consequences from policy to parenting means that when we work on racial equity and poverty, we also help to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Many of our current practices and policies address the top of the tree shown above, which are the more visible results of trauma and adversity such as domestic violence, abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and maternal depression. We can't ignore the immediate and dire needs of those facing issues listed in leaves of the diagram, but we must also expand our views of child abuse and neglect prevention to the roots and soil such as lack of affordable and safe housing, community violence, systemic discrimination, and limited access to social and economic mobility create additional conditions for vulnerability to child abuse or neglect. Improving community environments within the larger society are areas of opportunity in upstream prevention.

Evidence-Informed Practices

Changing social norms that accept or allow indifference to violence is very important to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Social norms are group-level beliefs and expectations about how members of the group behave or should behave. The group can be large or small, ranging from the cultural norms of an entire country to those of a small sub-population. One social norm that is particularly relevant to preventing child abuse and neglect relates to how parents discipline their children. Another has to do with whether it is appropriate for parents to seek help in parenting. In addition to changing social norms related to behaviors, changing the way we think and talk about why child abuse and neglect occurs and who is responsible for preventing it (our narrative) are important in informing policy choice and change. For example, a dominant narrative in the United States is the idea that anyone can get ahead on their own if they work hard enough. This focus on individual responsibility ignores contextual causes and societal solutions to complex problems such as child abuse and neglect. (1)

Once we acknowledge the societal factors which contribute to child abuse and neglect, as introduced above, we can see that a shift in social norms around parenting and the causes of child maltreatment is required in order to advocate for systems and policy changes to ultimately prevent these incidents. Some efforts in Georgia to this end are the development of the www.belongingforhope.org website and universal, primary prevention campaigns contained therein related to normalizing parent help-seeking behavior, promoting the adoption of community responsibility for the well-being of families and children, and providing links to relevant resources for all parents and caregivers. Additionally, the development and promotion of the Connections Matter (www.cmgeorgia.org) ACE awareness trainings provides opportunities for communities to learn more about the impact of ACEs and how they can come together to prevent ACEs and promote child and family well-being. There are many more examples throughout Georgia of upstream prevention initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of the societal factors which contribute to child abuse and neglect and how to prevent them. **For additional information, contact _____.**

Recommendations

Address economic disparities through:

- **Individual Asset Building--** Assets are sources of wealth besides an individual's paycheck, they include things like savings, ownership of real estate, retirement savings accounts, investments, education etc. Individual asset building is the process in which a person can increase their personal assets in order to grow their wealth. (2)
- **Workforce Development--** Workforce Development can have several meanings, but essentially it is the process by which individuals receive the training, skills, and resources they need in order to obtain and keep employment and/or improve their work performance. You can read more about this definition here (<https://youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/2864/what-workforce-development>)
- **Economic Development--** There are several definitions for economic development, generally it is a process that effects an economy's growth and structure to improve the overall wellbeing of a community. There are many different strategies and philosophies for increasing economic development, but most center around government programs and policies that directly or indirectly effect a community's economy. (3)

Support families mental health by:

- Taking action towards negating the stigma that surrounds behavioral health services. This can be accomplished through a number of different ways which may include 1) attending behavioral health awareness events (e.g. Children's Mental Health Day at the Capitol, Mental Health Awareness Month, The System of Care Academy, etc.)

- 2) participating in pertinent social marketing campaigns (e.g. Free Your Feels), 3) advocating for those in need through Federation Chapters and/or Youth MOVE chapters, among other ways. Misconceptions, misunderstandings, and mistruths play a large role in strengthening the stigma that comes with behavioral health services. Public education, awareness, and normalization are key when it comes to defeating this stigma.
- Support local Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health Chapter. There are currently 31 Federation Chapters in Georgia and each chapter is an extension of the National Federation. All chapters are “family run” (i.e. leadership and members have lived experience and/or is a mental health stakeholder/champion). While each local chapter may focus on a specific topic or sub population (e.g. single dads, coordinating food/resource drives, parent centered workshops, awareness campaigns, etc.), the vision of all chapters can be universally explained as the following: Through a family-driven and youth-guided approach, children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs and substance use challenges and their families obtain needed supports and services so that children grow up health and able to maximize their potential.

Support access to early care and education (ECE) for children:

- Community organizations and family serving professionals (pediatrician offices, WIC clinics, libraries, business’ HR department, etc) should promote the 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS (1-877-255-4254) Helpline to connect parents with available ECE resources and programs. <https://www.qualitycareforchildren.org/find-child-care>
- Promote the benefits of ECE to businesses to foster family friendly policies in the workplace. For example, businesses who support ECE programs can receive a 10% federal tax credit for contracting with Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, like Quality Care for Children, to help families find childcare within their budget. GEEARS’ Business Toolkit, GEEARS’ ECE One-Pager for Businesses
- Support elementary schools in accessing Pre-K slots in communities with limited infrastructure for early-childhood education, especially within the K-12 infrastructure and physical building. Help families successfully take advantage of Pre-k slots in schools, transport, and community based.
- Support the infant-toddler workforce by maintaining and expanding existing support systems, such as DECAL Scholars and classroom supports (e.g., inclusion, infant-toddler, and behavioral services).

- Creating and Supporting Family-Friendly Work Environments. Parents with children enrolled in early care and education are less likely to miss time at work, more likely to earn a higher income to support the family, and to remain employed at higher rates. The availability of childcare in Georgia supports annual parent earnings of at least \$24 billion, which strengthens family economic security. Furthermore, the ECE industry generates \$4.7 billion of economic activity in the state each year. (4)
- Expand Eligibility for Childcare Scholarships and ECE Centers in Underserved Communities. Additional state and federal funds should be allocated to serving a larger proportion of income-eligible families through Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services Program (CAPS- provides low income families with childcare subsidies), while also ensuring that reimbursement rates support quality care.

Improve family physical health:

- Expand access to affordable health insurance coverage for all Georgians
- Expand telemedicine services
- Promote policies/approaches to ensure medical co-payments and authorization of physical health services by insurance companies (decrease barriers to healthcare access)
- Expanding Funding and Access to Georgia's Charity Clinics: Georgia charity clinics are essential providers of health services to the state's low-income and uninsured population. The clinics have shown to improve health outcomes for patients with verified reduced hypertension and increased medication compliance among those that utilize the clinics. Additionally, the clinics help reduce non-urgent emergency room visits.
<http://charitablecarenetwork.com/>
- Increase awareness of prenatal support resources
- Improve access to maternal and infant health services (especially among minority populations) in order to reduce infant and maternal mortality
- Promote and expand the participation of families in the Planning for Healthy Babies (P4HB) waiver program
- Promote evidence-based models of sexual-health education and adolescent pregnancy prevention for school-aged children and youth
- Increase efforts to ensure school buses are safe (e.g., bus monitors)
- Increase focus on school-safety planning and practices (e.g., increased security technology) to focus on positive school climate and the development of Safe School Plan
- Promote gun-safety practices and policies
- Promote strategies and programs aimed at increasing food sufficiency
- Promote strategies to enhance transportation safety

Quick Links

- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can-prevention-technical-package.pdf>
- <https://vetoviolenecdc.gov/apps/child-abuse-neglect-biz/>
- <https://vetoviolenecdc.gov/apps/aces-training/#/#top>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/riskprotectivefactors.html>
- <https://cjcc.georgia.gov/human-trafficking-task-force>
- <https://firstfocus.org/blog/increasing-the-minimum-wage-is-good-for-child-well-being#:~:text=A%20new%20study%20from%20researchers,child%20development%20and%20well%2Dbeing>
- https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/connecting_the_dots-a.pdf
- <https://preventchildabuse.org/resource/research-review-social-norms-101-part-1-of-2/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/efc-promoting-positive-community-norms.pdf.pdf>

References

- [1]** Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities; <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/can-prevention-technical-package.pdf>
- [2]** Economic Stability and Opportunities Resource Center . Asset Building and Financial Literacy.
- [3]** The International Economic Development Council,' Economic Development Reference Guide, <https://edpbestpractices.com/wp-content/uploads/GL-Uploads/General-ED-Resources/IEDC-ED-Reference-Guide.pdf>.
- [4]** Economic Impact of the Early Child Care and Education Industry in Georgia", Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies and the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government (2016),