



B.J. Walker, Commissioner

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Dear DHR Staff,

Over the past five years, Georgia has made great strides in improving services and conditions for our children. As a member of the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, I want you to know that we have this past year embraced an exciting new initiative: *KidsNet*, Georgia's System of Care. *KidsNet* is an interagency approach to behavioral health services charged with improving results for all children and their families. Intended to improve services for children and youth with significant emotional and behavioral problems and/or co-occurring MH/AD disorders, *KidsNet* is an integrated service delivery model at the local level where families and their children, child-serving agencies, and other community stakeholders work together to better serve youth and families.

In a "System of Care" family and youth work together with service providers to develop individualized care management plans. Those providers may be staff of the Department of Human Resources, Department of Juvenile Justice, local school systems, or local child care providers, community stakeholders, Family Connection Collaboratives, or community advocates. Initial outcomes for the original pilot sites of this initiative have been impressive, and we hope eventually to see these Systems of Care implemented statewide.

Another critical component of Systems of Care are the local planning committees for children throughout the state. Mandated by state law during the 1980s, these committees have undergone several transitions over the years; most recently they were part of the Level of Care System which focused on the residential placement of high needs youth. They have now been transformed into Local Interagency Planning Teams (LIPTs) with the much broader function of individual case planning to enable youth to remain in the community. State law mandates participation by DHR, DJJ, and local school systems; family-driven approaches are crucial.

These groups currently exist in many counties but are not fully operational in others. They are now charged with developing comprehensive case plans for individual youth and initiating systemic improvements in local service delivery systems. As we revitalize and expand these local planning committees for children throughout the state, I ask all of you for your active and consistent participation in LIPTs in your communities. I invite you to join us as we strive to provide the best services possible for Georgia's children and families. You will soon be receiving more detailed information about this initiative from your respective state leadership.

Sincerely,



B.J. Walker