

**GAHSC Advocacy Packet**  
**November 12, 2008**



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- **House Appropriations Health Subcommittee 2007-08**
- **House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee 2007-08**
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**Sonny Perdue -Governor**

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## **Sample Letters:**

- **GAHSC Letter to the Governor**
- **The Methodist Home Letter to the Governor**
- **The Methodist Home Letter to Board Members**
- **Project Adventure Letter to the Governor**

**Stakeholder Advocacy Needed**

Dear Governor,

Do we want to go backward in child welfare? Do we really want to see the number of children who are abused and neglected go up? Do we really want to leave our children less protected? Do we really want to fill our shelters with children who should not be there? Do we really want to go back to the days when our foster homes had six or more children? Do we really want our children put in jail when they are emotionally ill because they have nowhere else to go?

We think not. The proposed budget cuts by the Department of Human Resources will be detrimental to the progress that you have made to our child welfare and children mental health systems in the last several years. Only you can make decisions that will not adversely effect these children.

Sincerely,  
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This is the letter you need to write to the Governor, your Legislator and to other policy makers. Use your own words.

In child welfare, Georgia has made remarkable progress in serving its most vulnerable children and families in recent years. Because of family centered practice, the number of children entering the child protective service system is down by more than 70% and the number of children in foster care has been reduced by more than 30%. Half as many children are reentering the system again once they are provided family centered practice. Length of stays in foster care have been reduced by more than 30%. This means that more children are safer and in more permanent environments than ever before and more children are reunited with their families and adopted. As a result of this, caseloads are down. Turnover is down. Those entrusted to protect, care and supervise their safety are beginning to have the resources needed to be effective. The combination of family centered practice, good casework, tenuously resourced agencies, and a viable and supportive private sector has made this happen.

In the area of children's mental health, the progress has been just as remarkable. For the first time in Georgia, we have a development of state wide access to basic behavioral and mental health services. Georgia has doubled the number of mental health service providers to children and their families. New utilization review processes assures that children with mental health needs are getting the services that they actually need. As a result, more children are getting what they need and more children are able to safely stay in the homes and communities. Fewer children are ending up in the juvenile justice system.

These successes have come as a result of the beginning investment in a system that truly works for children. The savings promised with proper practice and investment are being realized.

These successes and savings are being now being threatened by proposed cuts in the Department of Human Resources budget. (A copy of the budget can be found on DHR's website or on GAHSC's website.)

These cost cutting proposals would put on the table the following reductions of services to this year's budget and next year's budget. Cuts to services and providers have consequences to children that must be realized.

- Foster Care Agencies rates\* would be cut by 15% to 18% (closing of agencies, poorer outcomes and fewer appropriate resources for children)
- Group Home Provider Rates reduced by 15% to 18% (poorer outcomes, closed facilities and fewer appropriate resources for children)
- 702 caseworker positions cut permanently (less protection for children at risk)
- Elimination of the Mental Health Provider Medicaid rate increase (closed agencies, less access to services, children more at risk)
- 21% reduction in Core Mental Health Services to children (less access to services)
- Reduction by 33% of residential programs that serve children who are severely emotionally disturbed

(children with severe emotional disturbance will end up in jail and lack access to appropriate care)

- Eliminate the crisis and help line for mental health services (children and families will not be able to get what they need)

Any of these cuts would be detrimental to the constituencies that we serve.

We need to let the Governor, the Commissioner and the DHR Board know its impact to these children and families. The progress that Georgia has made, the savings thus realized, the lives saved and long-term benefit to Georgia would be lost. These cuts are short sighted, inhumane to the most vulnerable and costly in the long run.

Write the Governor and Legislature, now, a letter or email or fax stating your concerns and the impact that you see if these cuts are actualized. There addresses are:

**Governor Sonny Perdue**

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Governor's Website Constituency Form

Legislative Leadership on Appropriations

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**Provider Watch**, an email newsletter of GAHSC  
as a public service



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**membership application**  
Normer Adams, Editor

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Dear Governor Perdue:

I cannot imagine the burden you feel with the projected deficit Georgia faces. You are left with few if any positive choices.

At the Methodist Home in Macon, we are feeling the pressure from two sides. On the one hand, further cuts together with new financial penalties from DFCS leads us to believe that DFCS does not want nor need private providers in foster care and it's time to give up on an extremely successful program. A 25% cut is drastic. The possibility of a \$5,000 fine for foster parents missing training or their five-year TB shots is mind boggling, yet this is possible when an agency has four or more out-of-compliance foster homes in a year.

For the 2009-2010 budget, a 13% cut in Room, Board, and Watchful Oversight will result in another \$325,000 decrease and we must decide how we provide quality services safely or what programs we terminate. These cuts on top of the \$1.2 million loss we had in 2007-08 make it overwhelming in scope.

On the other hand, another problem is becoming overwhelming. Last year, we had 11 oversight bodies looking at our work. This year, we have 18. We must dedicate countless staff hours to some matters that are significant, but others that are very insignificant. It is literally "the many, watching the few, serve the many."

What is even more alarming is that many oversight functions are at cross purposes. It is impossible to satisfy all, so we end up satisfying no one... **and we are one of the best child caring agencies in the entire Southeast.**

Governor ... we need some relief, any relief... We pray God's strength as you work through these tumultuous times.

September 3, 2008

Dear Board Members:

Now is the time for all good Board members to come to the aid of their Methodist Home.

I have enclosed several information sheets from GASHC and the article that was published in the Wesley Christian Advocate.

Georgia is facing \$1.5 to \$2 billion in deficits this year. The Governor has horrible "no win" decisions to make, yet, our major financial crisis came in a good economic 2007.

For us to have more and extreme cuts will:

1. Put our foster care program in jeopardy.
2. May result in closing residential units and/or regions with another cut of \$325,000 in the Room, Board and Watchful Oversight rates.
3. Place a growing stress between program safety and even greater oversight by the state.
4. Continue the dismantling of the faith-based private sector which has provided Georgia with invaluable service and support for over 100 years.

In short, we need relief. Thank you for your support and my letter is attached.

Sincerely,

Steve L. Rumford

SLR/tm  
Enclosure

Dear Governor Perdue:

Child welfare in Georgia has made remarkable progress in serving its most vulnerable children and families in recent years. Because of family centered practice the number of children entering the child protective service system is down by more than 70% and the number of children in foster care has been reduced by more than 30%. Half as many children are reentering the system again once they are provided family centered practice. Length of stays in foster care has been reduced by more than 30%. This means that more children are safer and in more permanent environments than ever before and more children are reunited with their families and adopted. As a result of this, caseloads are down. Turnover is down. Those entrusted to protect, care and supervise their safety are beginning to have the resources needed to be effective. The combination of family centered practice, good case management, collaborative resource agencies and a viable and supportive private sector has made this happen.

In the area of children's mental health, the progress has been just as remarkable. For the first time in Georgia, we have a development of state wide access to basic behavioral and mental health services. Georgia has doubled the number of mental health service providers to children and their families. New utilization review processes assures that children with mental health needs are getting the services that they actually need. As a result, more children are getting what they need and more children are able to safely stay in the homes and communities. Fewer children are ending up in the juvenile justice system.

These successes have come as a result of your beginning investment in a system that truly works for children. The savings promised with proper practice and investment is being realized.

Your legacy, these successes and savings are now being threatened by proposed budget cuts in the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

These cost cutting proposals would put on the table the following reductions of services to this year's budget and next year's budget. Cuts to services and private providers have consequences to children that must be realized.

- Foster Care Agencies rates would be cut by 15% to 18%. This means closing of agencies, poorer outcomes and fewer appropriate resources for children.
- Group Home Provider Rates reduced by 15% to 18%. This means poorer outcomes, closed facilities and fewer appropriate resources for children.
- 702 caseworker positions cut permanently equals less protection for children at risk.
- Elimination of the Mental Health Provider Medicaid rate increase would close agencies, decrease services and put children more at risk.
- 21% reduction in Core Mental Health Services to children is a reduction to services for children that are ill.
- Reduction by 33% of residential programs that serve children who are severely emotionally disturbed and children with no other option. These children will end up in jail and put a strain on our justice and education system.

I realize when times are difficult we need to tighten our belts, but we also have to be fair and responsible. The state budget cuts should not be on the backs of children who can not speak for themselves and do not vote.

I recommend keeping the course and leave the successful legacy you started.

Sincerely;

## **Key Legislators:**

- **House Appropriations Committee 2007-08**
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- **Senate Appropriations Committee 2007-08**
- **Senate Appropriations Community Health Subcommittee 2007-08**
- **Senate Appropriations Community Health Subcommittee 2007-08**

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## House Appropriations Health Subcommittee 2007-08

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