

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Contact:** Brooks Halliday, 212-683-2210

**Georgia Foster Care Monitoring Shows Severe Problems Remain, Despite Progress**

*Lack of Health Services, Inadequate Oversight & Frequent Moves Continue to Harm Foster Children*

(November 3, 2006) The first court-ordered monitoring report of Georgia's foster care system, released today, reveals some progress but also serious problems that continue to harm children. The report (available at [www.childrensrights.org](http://www.childrensrights.org)), which is part of the landmark 2005 federal court settlement known as the *Kenny A.* case, shows children in Georgia's custody are not receiving required medical exams, are not being placed in stable foster homes, and case managers are not making required in-home visits with children in foster homes.

"Georgia has taken some positive steps, but this system has a long way to go to meet its obligations to these vulnerable children," said Ira Lustbader, associate director of Children's Rights, the national child advocacy organization that filed the *Kenny A.* lawsuit in 2002. "Today's report brings serious problems to public light, and we plan to work with state officials to solve them."

Today's report covers Georgia's performance from October of 2005 through June 30, 2006. Some of the report's initial data show progress, such as timely initiation of investigations into reports of abuse or neglect (91% of cases), and a low incidence of proven reports of abuse or neglect of children in their foster homes or group facilities (0.54%). However, much of the data show continued poor practices:

- > **Poor health services.** 40% of foster children whose files were reviewed have no current health screenings, as of June 30, 2006; 52% have no current dental screenings.
- > **Multiple moves in foster care.** Nearly one-third of foster children have moved three or more times between foster homes or facilities in the past twelve months.
- > **Failure to make required caseworker visits.** Among children in a new or changed foster home, only 13% have received required twice-monthly visits from their case managers. Among children who had not been moved among homes, only 3% have received the required twice-monthly visits.
- > **Poor approval and licensing of foster homes.** In 17% of active foster home files reviewed, a timely criminal record check of foster parents has not been conducted. In 20% of cases, foster parents have not been checked on the Sex Offender Registry. In 19% of cases, foster parents have not been checked for prior incidences of child abuse or neglect.
- > **Poor planning for children.** Nearly 40% of children did not receive a required assessment of their needs when they entered state custody, and almost two-thirds of foster children have not received required six-month reviews of their status.

In 2002 Children's Rights, along with the Atlanta law firm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore, filed the *Kenny A.* lawsuit against Governor Perdue and state officials responsible for the Georgia Department of Human Services and its Division of Family and Children's Services. The suit charged that the foster care system in Atlanta was underfunded, mismanaged and out of control. The 2005 settlement requires Georgia to make sweeping reforms to its foster care system in the metropolitan Atlanta area and to meet specific reform goals in 31 areas of service to children.

Children's Rights is a national watchdog organization advocating on behalf of abused and neglected children in the U.S. Since 1995, the organization has used legal action and policy initiatives to create lasting improvements in child protection, foster care and adoption.

**[www.childrensrights.org](http://www.childrensrights.org)**