

**Georgia Children’s Cabinet**  
**Thursday, September 15, 2011 - Minutes**  
**8:00 AM - 10:00 AM**  
**The Governor’s Mansion, 391 W. Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta, GA**

**Members Attending:** First Lady Sandra Deal, Katie Jo Ballard (GOCF), Eric John (CJCJ), Debbie Hall (DCH), Brenda Fitzgerald (DCH), Rachele Carnesale (DFCS), Clyde Reese (DHS), Amy Howell (DJJ), Garry McGiboney (DOE), Tonya Boga (OCA)

**Members Not Attending:** Judge James Whitfield (CJCJ), Dr. Frank Shelp (DBHDD), David Cook (DCH), Brian Castrucci (DCH), Bobby Cagle (DECAL), Corinna Magelund (Disability Services), Diana Aspinwall (DJJ), Carl Brown (DJJ), Dr. John Barge (DOE), Erin Hames (Office of the Governor)

**Others Attending:** Ember Bishop (First Lady’s Office), H. Ray Higgins, Jr. (DECAL), Sharon King (DHS), Katie Rogers (Office of the Governor)

Agenda Issue	Discussion	Conclusion/ Action to Take/Follow up
<b>Opening Remarks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Deal. Introductions and welcomes were made.</li> </ul>	
<b>Open Discussion: Car Seats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commissioner Reese told the Cabinet that they (DHS) are actively pursuing private donations of car seats so they can provide foster parents with them. They are reaching out to faith based groups as well as private groups. Their goal is to provide as many foster parents with car seats as possible. This will provide a savings for the agency since their policy is to reimburse foster care parents when they purchase car seats.</li> <li>➤ The car seats must be new and comply with the current safety standards.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal asked the Commissioner if he was in touch with the Child Safety Program. This program is being funded through federal grant money. Commissioner Reese said they are trying to open up a dialogue with them.</li> <li>➤ This program has two objectives: distributing car seats as well as teaching how to properly install the car seats. Mrs. Deal noted they have warehouses of car seats with varying sizes.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard said she would speak with someone on GOCF’s Advisory Board to see if they would be a potential resource to help provide additional car seats.</li> </ul>	
<b>CSEC Discussion &amp; Georgia Care Connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard provided the Cabinet with the most current CSEC Fact Sheet dated May 2011. These fact sheets provide statistical data of adolescent girls in Georgia’s sex trade and are issued quarterly for GOCF by the Shapiro Group.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard noted that the number of child sex trafficking victims has increased. She told the Cabinet that since the Craig’s List bust, Back Page has provided a new source to advertise girls for sale.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard discussed the Georgia Care Connection – Georgia’s statewide response to commercially sexually exploited children. She stressed that we don’t want to</li> </ul>	

	<p>reinvent the wheel –we want to make sure that the agencies work with the Georgia Care Connection for these issues. They are a single point of contact for anyone seeking help for a sex trafficked child. They use a system of care approach with a multi-disciplinary team which includes the family, the child, partner agencies and providers to develop a comprehensive care plan to address the child’s needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal attended a conference where she learned GBI has original jurisdiction over CSEC cases. GBI has the authority to cross county lines.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal talked to three 8<sup>th</sup> grade groups yesterday about the dangers of sex trafficking, stressing the importance of healthy relationship formation and decision-making. She reinforced to these students that if they have any concerns they should talk to their teachers. She told the Cabinet that she would promote this message whenever she can.</li> <li>➤ Mr. McGiboney told the Cabinet that DOE was planning to sponsor a statewide conference on sex trafficking. Dr. Joel Thornton, Chief of Staff, at DOE will be involved in planning this conference and will include international speakers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE is also planning on having a series of three conferences for educators as well as other agencies. Mr. McGiboney promised to send out detailed information once their plans have been updated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard asked if they would discuss the Georgia Care Connection at the Conference. Mr. McGiboney confirmed they would.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Deal said it was important to educate and train our police force and medical professionals so they are aware of this problem.</li> <li>➤ Cabinet members discussed possible resources in the school system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. McGiboney noted that school resource officers could be a valuable resource. Often students confide in them. He also noted students can be a great resource of information.</li> <li>• Mrs. Deal stated that school nurses could be a good resource.</li> <li>• Medical records were another valuable source of information.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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<p><b>Runaway and Homeless Youth</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard provided the Cabinet with a handout on Runaway and Homeless Youth. This was a collaborative effort funded by GOCF and led by Covenant House Georgia. Over 1300 surveys were completed by homeless youth – this data was analyzed by Kennesaw State University. This study has been an initiative of the Cabinet. She noted they will be sending the raw data to DECAL before the report will be finalized.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Carnesale was surprised at the statistical data that reflected 12% involvement with DFCS. (5% had aged out of DFCS.)</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet was shocked that 90% of the group were between the ages of 19 to 24 years of age. They had assumed that this population would have a large group of younger homeless youth.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard asked the Cabinet to contact her if they have questions that they might want answered from the data. She would have the research group see if they could further analyze the data to provide answers for these questions.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal mentioned that she had visited a program called Year Up. This group works with students that have graduated from high school. Youth who qualify for services from Year Up have experienced the stressors associated with poverty.</li> <li>➤ Their mission is to provide urban young adults with job skill training including technical and professional skills. The students serve as interns, and are paid a small weekly stipend. They are taught the seven habits of highly effective people including effective speaking and good communication skills.</li> <li>➤ This program has served 90 people this year; they hope to serve 120 people next year.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal asked if we have any homes that take in pregnant girls. She was told that DHS has 7 homes serving that population – they take in girls up to 19 years of age. The Second Chance Homes also take in pregnant girls - they serve girls up to 18 years of age.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Runaway and Homeless Youth sub-committee of the Georgia Children’s Cabinet will be releasing the final report with corresponding recommendations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Home Visitation Grant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard discussed the Home Visitation Grant as well as some of the deliverables. This is a home visiting program where nurses are trained to go to the homes of at risk mothers and work with them to provide the necessary training to care for their children. This is an Early Childhood System of Care program.</li> <li>➤ The nurses work with the entire family in order to teach all aspects of family supportive measures including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• childcare</li> <li>• breast-feeding</li> <li>• hygiene</li> <li>• nutrition</li> <li>• sleeping safety measures</li> <li>• shaken baby syndrome</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard stated we need to focus on families as a whole, so they provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety for children</li> <li>• Proper education</li> <li>• Proper nutrition</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard stated we are trying to provide as much information as possible for training and deliverables, and she would welcome the Cabinet's suggestions.</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet stressed the importance of teaching the family key safety measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate bedding</li> <li>• Ensuring that the infant sleeps alone (not in the same bed as another family member)</li> <li>• Teaching proper placement : infants should be placed flat on their back</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Commissioner Reese noted that we need to teach mothers that co-sleeping is not safe for infants as it may lead to senseless and preventable deaths that can be easily avoided with proper education.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Fitzgerald commented that Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is one of the highest causes of infant death. She told the Cabinet that Valdosta, Georgia has one of the highest rates of infant deaths. Ms. Fitzgerald stated that the Home Visitation Program should have a major impact in helping to decrease the mortality rate in that area.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Fitzgerald told the Cabinet about Public Health's poster that encourages mothers to breast-feed by comparing the nutritional value of breast milk to that of formula.</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet members discussed providing simple hand-outs to help train new mothers – some of their ideas were to use pictures versus a great deal of printed out instructions to incorporate their message. It was also suggested that they insert a copy of the breast-feeding poster.</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet had an open discussion on providing cribs to families in need, deciding to look at possible funding for this.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal stated that we need to be careful that the cribs meet the new standards. The possibility of retrofitting the cribs was also brought up so that they would meet the new regulations.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Governor's Office Initiative to Fight Childhood Obesity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Katie Rogers gave a presentation to the Cabinet on the Governor's statewide initiative to fight childhood obesity. Currently this is in the organizational phase. Ms. Rogers stressed the importance of pooling our resources and knowledge and raising awareness of this very important issue.</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet openly discussed the issues of obesity, and noted there is a growing number of bullying issues directly relating to obesity. There was much discussion concerning the importance of proper nutrition and a balanced diet.</li> <li>➤ Garry McGiboney told the Cabinet that the Fat Boy Chronicles</li> </ul>	

	<p>book had been written to bring attention to this problem. The Fat Boy Chronicles has recently been made into a movie and will be playing at the Strand Theater in Cobb County.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Brenda Fitzgerald noted that the Garden School in Savannah provides a good role model for their students by bringing together several generations: older farmers donate their time and expertise and have taught students how to prepare and maintain their garden.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Bishop told the Cabinet about a program in Savannah that works with five students. Each student is provided with \$100 and allotted a small plot of land to create their own garden. The students sell their goods and pay back their initial \$100 investment. There are many benefits from this program including pride in their finished product as well as teaching them the importance of planning from beginning to end.</li> <li>➤ Commissioner Howell talked about sustainable food and gardening to help bring awareness to healthy eating and provide nutritionally balanced meals.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal told the Cabinet that the Men’s Homeless Shelter in Atlanta has raised beds to garden. She also stressed the importance of supplementing their food and building up their confidence.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Fitzgerald noted the importance of training our school nutritionists on the importance of a healthy diet – it isn’t just about the calories. More research needs to be done to ensure that our school lunches provide a balanced and nutritional diet.</li> <li>➤ Both Commissioner Howell and Ms. Fitzgerald commented that many children have never eaten fresh fruits or vegetables, and if given the choice, will not eat them. One of our challenges is to open up and broaden their horizons to promote a healthy diet and learn the importance of eating farm fresh foods.</li> <li>➤ The Cabinet noted there is a critical need to create new guidelines and state standards for our schools as well as adding Garden Schools.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Transition gaps for children from Juvenile Justice back into schools</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commissioner Howell discussed the issue of transition gaps for children from juvenile justice back into the schools. She noted the median age is going up as well as the importance of tracking recidivism of the unemployed youth.</li> <li>➤ The median age is 17 years of age and in many instances they are up to 19 and 20 years old. They are still children and are not ready to be an adult, lacking the necessary skills to take care of themselves once they leave the facility. To further compound this issue, many of these children have become parents.</li> <li>➤ Commissioner Howell stressed the importance of</li> </ul>	

transitioning these youth to a stable environment and being able to connect them to beneficial services. Another challenge is the high level of unemployment that is directly correlating to a higher failure rate.

- We need more data to better evaluate and plan so that we are better prepared to help these children when they first walk in the door.
- Commissioner Howell suggests that juvenile offenders need apprenticeships, GED's, vocational training and instruction on proper business etiquette.
- Another suggestion was to implement an online process so they can take computer classes with the necessary firewalls.
- Commissioner Howell stated that juvenile training programs need to be revamped so they are based on current market needs. Without these skills, the youth have limited resources to earn a living.
- Ms. Ballard stated the GOFC can provide some grants to help with job training programs.
- Mr. McGiboney had a discussion with Dr. Barge regarding their concern with the high dropout rate.
- Our foster children have a 14% graduation rate.
- Mrs. Deal stated it should be one of the Cabinet's goals to increase graduation rates among foster children.
- We need to study statistics to see what is causing this problem and determine what steps we can take to stop this.
- Commissioner Reese noted that many foster children can miss days at school if they are transferred from one school to another.
- Mr. McGiboney further commented that the process of transferring foster children's records from one school to another can be problematic.
- Mrs. Deal stated that the schools' record systems should be streamlined as well as processed electronically.
- Mrs. Carnesale said we need to look at why children can't read and assess these issues.
- DOE just received a \$26 million grant not limited to State 12. This should impact students primarily in the early grades to read by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This grant was announced this week.
- Mr. Higgins, Jr. told the Cabinet that DECAL has applied for the Race to the Top Grant. Governor Deal has expressed his support to the stakeholders as well. DECAL is hoping to receive \$70 million and would use this grant to improve school readiness for children birth through five years of age. They would use the funds to help assess skills of kindergartners as well as launch a new child care rating system.
- The deadline to complete the form will be October 19, 2011.

<p><b>Cabinet Announcements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Cabinet asked for North Highland’s Strategic recap from the Strategic Planning Session in July. Ms. Ballard promised to send this to the Cabinet.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal told the Cabinet members that Jen Bennecke had a baby boy last night.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Boga told the Cabinet that OCA would be having monthly Child Fatality Review (CFR) trainings in Albany, Sandersville, Savannah and Waycross.</li> <li>➤ Mr. John stated that CJCJ was continuing to work on the Juvenile Code rewrite.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Howell discussed Children in Need of Services (CHINS) and the need to further brain storm on this policy.</li> <li>➤ Ms. Ballard noted that the Juvenile Integrity Project will be unveiled on September 27th. The First Lady will be at the ribbon cutting ceremony and there has been a press announcement issued to stakeholders.</li> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal stressed the importance of promoting open discussion. The Cabinet was asked to add topics to the agenda that they would like to discuss.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mrs. Deal thanked the Cabinet members for their attendance and participation.</li> <li>➤ The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.</li> </ul>	