

Georgia Children's Cabinet
Thursday, January 19, 2012 - 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), Judge James Whitfield (CJCJ), Eric John (CJCJ), Dr. Frank Shelp (DBHDD), Debbie Hall (DCH), Bobby Cagle (DECAL), Katherine Herren, Acting Deputy Director (DHS), Diana Aspinwall (DJJ), Garry McGiboney (DOE), Tonya Boga (OCA)

Members Not Attending: David Cook (DCH), Clyde Reese (DHS), Brenda Fitzgerald (DPH), Brian Castrucci (DPH), L. Gale Buckner (DJJ), Corinna Magelund (Disability Services), Carl Brown (DJJ), Dr. John Barge (DOE), Erin Hames (Office of the Governor)

Others Attending: Ember Bishop (First Lady's Office), Lisa Lariscy (DFCS), Arianne Weldon, (DPH), Tanner Holmes (GOCF), Helena Schneider (GOCF), W. Thomas Worthy (Office of the Governor)

Agenda Issue	Discussion	Conclusion/ Action to Take/Follow up
Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Deal. Introductions and welcomes were made. Mrs. Deal informed the Cabinet that several cabinet members were unable to attend today's meeting due to Budget Hearings for their agency. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mrs. Deal noted the importance of our agency's working together to identify and find solutions so that we can best serve our children and families. 	
Autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Ballard provided the Cabinet with a detailed report on Autism. This led to an open discussion. ➤ Mrs. Deal shared her concern with the Cabinet regarding the significant rise of autism, and how this will affect Georgia's resources. Current data states that one out of ninety nine children has been identified as autistic. Ms. Bishop noted that Georgia is one of the leading states in Autism. The Cabinet is seriously considering Autism as one of their next projects. This issue has the potential of over taxing our state agencies as well as creating an enormous financial burden. ➤ Ms. Ballard visited Sheltering Arms pre-school. Their program helps to identify potential learning issues as early as 6 months of age. Early identification is one of the most effective strategies available to help these children develop. ➤ Mrs. Deal stated her concern that as autistic children age in to teenagers and young adults their parents might not be able to take care of them. The state would need to provide alternative resources at a considerable expense. Mrs. Deal further commented that there is a greater risk potential for serious communication issues with the police. She is very concerned that this will become a societal problem of great magnitude. ➤ The Cabinet noted the importance of bringing awareness to the public and had the following suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Awareness Campaign. • Training our educators, medical professionals, 	

	<p style="text-align: center;">parents and police to recognize these symptoms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote early diagnosis. <p>➤ The Cabinet had a discussion of the various types of training available in Georgia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Ballard noted the importance of training law enforcement to recognize Commercially Sexually Exploitation of Children “CSEC” so they are recognized as victims not offenders. The Governor’s Office for Children and Families contracts A Future. Not A Past (AFNAP) to provide free CSEC training to law enforcement. • Mr. Worthy noted that the Georgia Public Safety Training Center “GPSTC” located in Forsyth, Georgia provides specialized training under the leadership of Director, Tim Bearden. “GPSTC” is a comprehensive training complex for all state and local public safety related units of government within the state of Georgia. Mr. Worthy stated that Director Keenan has been instrumental in spreading the word about the types of training available at “GPSTC.” <p>➤ Mr. McGiboney told the Cabinet that the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support “GNETS” program supports the local school systems’ continuum of services for students with disabilities, ages 3-21. GNETS provides comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services to students who might otherwise require residential services. The cost for one student is \$100,000 for one year. The state has limited availability to provide this type of service besides the considerable financial strain to their budget.</p> <p>➤ Mr. McGiboney commented that the Board of Education did a national search to hire experts in this field. He expressed the difficulty of finding experts and noted that their services are very expensive. Mr. McGiboney stressed the importance of training our educators so they can recognize behavioral issues early on and evaluate situations correctly.</p> <p>➤ Ms. Lariscy commented from the Public Health perspective that providing services with early baseline identification is a more viable solution with significant cost savings.</p> <p>➤ Judge Whitfield asked if parents know their children are autistic when they are young. He was told that often parents felt something was wrong; however, most children have not been diagnosed before they were two or three years old. When children are diagnosed as autistic at a very early age the parents are often resistant to the diagnosis. When children are older, their parents are usually more accepting because of the behavioral and learning issues they are experiencing.</p> <p>➤ Ms. Weldon from the Department of Public Health noted that there has been a cultural change at their centers. Parents have been helped in the ASQ screening questionnaire process</p>	
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	<p>so they can identify problems their children are having. She did note that some of the parents are very reluctant to identify and accept problems that their children are having when they are six months to one year old.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mrs. Deal spoke to the Cabinet about the Marcus Center. They are a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of children with autism and related disorders, treating approximately 4,000 children a year. Mrs. Deal had visited their Center and commented that she had seen some of the children in rooms with padded walls wearing football helmets in order to protect themselves. ➤ Mrs. Deal suggested the possibility of inviting a representative from the Marcus Center so they could speak to the Cabinet at our next meeting. ➤ The Cabinet had numerous suggestions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Lariscy suggested using interns to research states that provide good programs on autism. Their knowledge and research could help the State of Georgia develop a plan of action. 	
<p>2011 Needs Assessment Study from Metis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Ballard provided the Cabinet with a detailed report “2011 Needs Assessment Study” that Metis had done for the Governor’s Office for Children and Families The studies key findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia’s strongest area was physical health development. • Georgia’s weakest areas were mental health development and parent development. • Family/adult development and child development had the greatest availability, but they were of moderate sufficiency ➤ The Cabinet discussed the gaps in parent involvement. It was noted that some of the parents might not have the necessary skills to teach their children how to read, or tutor them in math. ➤ Mrs. Deal stated that children in metro Atlanta have better access to community based organizations that can help teach them how to read. She shared her concern with the Cabinet that children residing in the country and rural areas have limited availability to mentoring programs. ➤ The Cabinet suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having volunteers come to the schools to mentor children who needed extra help with reading or math. • Another idea was to bring in retired teachers to the schools. ➤ Mrs. Deal said that certain parameters would need to be identified before she could promote this: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Ballard suggested the Cabinet read over the report. ➤ The Cabinet will determine if they choose to create a Cabinet initiative from the study.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first step would be to confirm the necessary guidelines within the school system. • Once this was identified, we could start the process of spreading the word and recruiting volunteers in order to create a volunteer program. ➤ Mr. McGiboney suggested that the local school superintendent should be the first point of contact. He also noted that the Georgia School Superintendents Association “GSSA” would be an excellent starting point. Their mission is to be the chief advocate for Georgia’s public school children. ➤ The Cabinet noted that forty years of research has shown the importance of parent involvement as well as a strong community involvement. ➤ The Cabinet went back to discussing the study from Metis Associates. Ms. Ballard stated she wasn’t sure how the Cabinet would like to proceed. She suggested reading the report, and digesting the information first. The Cabinet could collectively brainstorm, and determine if they choose to create a Cabinet initiative from this. 	
<p>Cabinet Announcements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commissioner Cagle told the Cabinet that the Department of Early Care and Learning was launching their Quality Rating and Improvement System on January 3, 2012. Quality Rating is an innovative effort to enhance the quality of services child care programs provide to children and families in their communities as well as to provide information to help families make informed decisions about their child care needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal for year one: 700 programs statewide. • Current total number of programs: 159 • Current total number of children enrolled: 14,401. ➤ Mr. McGiboney stated they had good attendance at Department of Educations’ two Sex Trafficking Conferences. ➤ Ms. Boga told the Cabinet that the Office of the Child Advocate has been having monthly trainings around the state. ➤ Ms. Aspinwall noted that the Department of Juvenile Justice has scheduled many after hour site visits to ensure safety and security at their facilities. She stated that she is working with Mrs. Deal to schedule a visit to one of their community offices. ➤ Ms. Ballard asked how many of the Cabinet Members are working with “GPSTC.” Mr. Worthy suggested inviting GPSTC’s Director Bearden to attend our next meeting. ➤ Ms. Bishop told the Cabinet that Mrs. Deal found a book illustrated and published out of Georgia called “Who I Would Like To Be.” They anticipate on launching this event in March with free copies handed out to Georgia students. We will not have to spend state money since AT&T will be our corporate sponsor. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Lariscy noted that the Division of Family and Children Services “DFCS” Child Protective Services “CPS” established an After Hours Call Center to report abuse and neglect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hot line is available during the times that the local DFCS offices are closed. • The hotline hours are weekdays from: 5:00 pm until 8 a.m. with 24 hour coverage over the weekend. ➤ Ms. Hall told the Cabinet that the Department of Community Health results from their comprehensive state wide study assessing Medicaid would be going on their website. They would use the data to evaluate their next steps and would use this framework accordingly. ➤ Judge Whitfield noted that the State Board of Georgia is working on a new section for Children and the Law. They are moving on this rapidly and he doesn’t see any foreseeable road blocks. This is for all areas of children’s law. ➤ Judge Whitfield stated that the Juvenile Code Rewrite is at the legislature now. 	
Adjourn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mrs. Deal thanked the Cabinet members for their attendance and participation. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m. 	