





Our mission is to champion the needs of sexually and severely physically abused children through prevention, intervention, therapy and collaboration.

Dear Friends,

In 2023, the **Georgia Center for Child Advocacy** continued our commitment to protecting children and families in our community. Our year was guided by *empathy*, empowering our teams to effectively address the immense traumas our families were facing. What began as a vision for serving children became a forward-focused effort to bringing stability and healing within the entire household.

Every child case we experience is unique, one where we continue to learn from our resilient staff, caregivers, and youth themselves. Despite exposure to extreme violence, sexual abuse and trauma, children are demonstrating emotional intelligence that extends beyond just coping with the "bad thing" that happened to them. Witnessing healing and transformations every day, we believe *empathy* empowers the next generation.

GCCA hosted an array of caregiver events throughout the year, providing the opportunity for them to connect and build a community of support. By recognizing the caregivers' emotional needs, they are better equipped to face the gravity of their child's suffering and create a more conducive journey towards healing and recovery together.

As a supporter of the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy, you too are helping us to build stronger families. Your heartfelt investments, hours of volunteering, and loyal partnerships made this work and all of the accomplishments in this report possible. We will continue to walk alongside our clients to advocate for and with them in *empathy*.

Thank you for your trust as we collectively strive toward our vision of building a better world, one child at a time.

Warm Regards,

Sheila Ryan CEO

## Intervention

We conduct forensic interviews for children primarily living in DeKalb and Fulton counties. Following an allegation, the forensic interview is a developmentally and culturally appropriate conversation that gives a child the opportunity to share their account with a trained professional in a confidential, safe and supportive environment. This model works to reduce the trauma a child experiences both from the incident itself and the response they receive upon disclosure. We serve as critical conveners of state agencies and partners during the case management process through bi-weekly multidisciplinary team meetings. Our interviewers are also summoned to provide expert testimony in court proceedings. Because of our highly skilled staff, we can conduct advanced interviews involving instances of trafficking, complex traumas, and cases involving runaways and children under five.

- Received 17 specialized referrals including ones from the FBI, GBI, Homeland Security, and several out of state
- Two interviewers completed training on interviewing non-verbal children and adults - increasing our skillset and access to quality forensic interviews for this vulnerable population
- 67% of our forensic interviews involved allegations of child sexual abuse or assault
- Cases involving physical abuse, witness to homicide, and other violent crimes continue to rise - increasing 12% since 2020

"The Georgia center for child Advocacy secures a safe place for victims to be able to disclose abuse. The Georgia center for child Advocacy continues to be a reliable crime fighting tool that assists the Atlanta Police Department investigators with their investigations. With the assistance of the center staff, we are able to bring criminals to justice for their crimes against our precious victims."

Anthony Blair APD/Special Victims Unit Investigator





# Child & Family Advocacy

As a CAC, we address the intersection of trauma response and meeting families' basic needs. Because instances of abuse are often a catalyst that disrupts a family's current state, we provide family advocacy services. In 2022, we launched our Child and Family Advocacy program to meet the growing, complex needs among our families. Now expanded out from intervention services, this enhanced program is building our capacity to give more at-risk families the specialized care they deserve. In 2023, our Family Advocate meetings had more than doubled since the program's inception. Advocates first assess basic needs for families in crisis so that healing from trauma can begin.

- 47% cases involved the alleged offender sharing the home - resulting in greater stressors and higher level of needs
- 40% of our service provision for our trafficking cases involve collaborating with the Department of Juvenile Justice
- Team presented at the **NCAC's annual International Symposium on Child** Abuse Conference, and conducted several CSEC Awareness presentations throughout the year

"The first time I walked into the building I was nervous. Your explanation of the entire process and what GCCA does widened my knowledge on child abuse and how to better protect my children. I moved to the U.S few years ago with my family from Africa and I had never heard of the word cAc until this incident. I do not know how you people keep up with what you do daily but the world needs people like you."

Caregiver

# Therapy

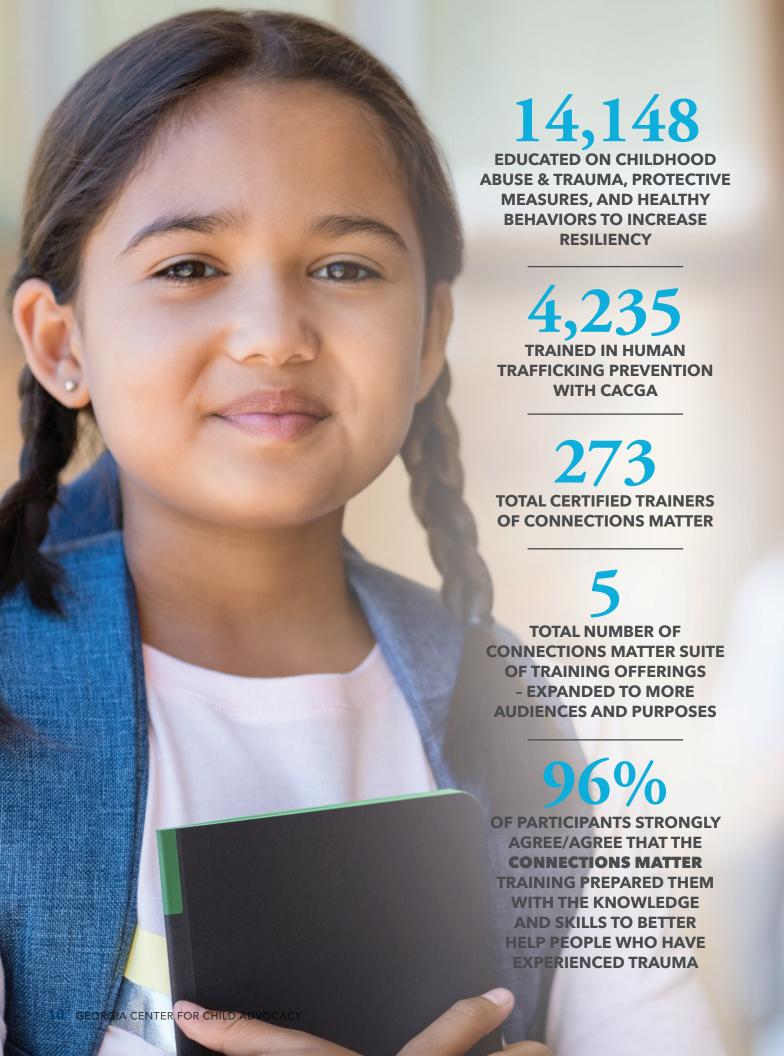
Beyond crisis response, we are committed to the child's long-term healing and provide them with the tools they need for a healthy, successful future. When therapy is offered on-site at a child advocacy center, the child is more likely to attend the first session, and subsequent sessions for a longer duration. Because our therapy services are free and accessible on-site and on-line, we are reaching those most at-risk for suffering negative impacts who would not otherwise be able to afford evidence-based, trauma-informed mental health treatment. We are further increasing accessibility through our Accessible Pathways initiative that will work to reach additional child victims through events, therapy groups, and enhanced hours. Our Ph.D. and Masters' level licensed therapists are trained in modalities that address childhood trauma, physical abuse, sexual abuse and problematic sexual behaviors (PSB).

- 1.5% recidivism rate demonstrates the effectiveness of our Leaps & Bounds outpatient treatment option for youth displaying problematic sexual behaviors
- Mental Health Screening Intervention service officially launched in 2023. Therapists assess trauma and suicide risk, offer coping strategies, and engage in safety planning the same day the child is interviewed
- 94% of youth who completed treatment meaningful signs of recovery from PTSD
- Team members contributed of a Racial Adaption to TF-CBT which applies cultural considerations into the therapy practice

"we never could have made it this far without my GCCA therapist. We believe our kid will rise above this horrific event that she had to deal with and will go on to be a beautiful, mentally healthy young woman that can face and change the world."

Caregiver





## Prevention & Education

Our statewide Prevention & Education Program aims to prevent child sexual abuse, reduce childhood trauma, and promote healthy outcomes in Georgia through a collaborative effort that equips adults with awareness, education, and resources to take action. This initiative raises awareness by conducting trainings and engaging communities at the local level. Since 2006, this program has transitioned from a single-focused program to now a comprehensive, multi-dimensional program that performs a variety of services - recognizing how layering our efforts results in enriched protections for children.

- Celebrated milestone of facilitating the training of over **200,000** adults across Georgia since 2006
- Hosted 2023's National Conference Coalition to Prevention Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation
- Launched **Prevent Child Abuse** Atlanta, a local council of Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
- In partnership with CACGA and Georgia's CSEC Response Team, our team led the development of an updated statewide **Human Trafficking Prevention Training for general** audiences in English & Spanish
- Pike and Upson County Schools committed to training 100% of their staff in Connections Matter - educating more communities in West Georgia

"As a small nonprofit, we hugely benefit from the free and excellent trainings offered by the GCCA. The LOVE146 training was a great way for our high school students to learn about the different types of human trafficking, ways to protect themselves, and how to report a concern. Overall the course was a great way to get our students talking about the reality of human trafficking and how to stay safe."

> Tina Pinkston LIFT Youth Center, Inc.

# Response Training Program

This statewide program's purpose is to enhance local community's response to childhood trauma through trainings, supervision, peer review, and consultation. Research shows that following an initial forensic interview training, ongoing supervision yields dramatic improvements on the quality of interviews and court testimony. Director Mary Beth Nelson, LCSW supports other CACs, District Attorney's Offices, lawyers, DFCS, Law Enforcement, and other frontline professionals working with at-risk children across Georgia.

- Developed and launched **Back-to-Basics Training**, a refresher course for seasoned forensic interviewers
- Partnered with the Prosecuting Attorney's Council of GA to pilot Legal **Training: Forensic Interviews What** You Need to Know for attorneys working with children in maltreatment
- Formalized **Skill-Building Learning Collaborative** with group beginning cohort shortly after Child First training in May
- Presented internationally at the 2-day inaugural Interviewer Conference in Santiago, Chile

"This training was phenomenal. Very good information for those who have little to no experience but also a great refresher and information to those who've been practicing for a while."

> Participant of Legal Training: FI's What You Need to Know





# Improving the Lives of Trafficked Youth

Project Intersect provides trauma-focused trainings for mental health providers and caregivers of trafficked youth across Georgia. This project educates adults on the impact of trauma on youth development and behaviors, how to respond to the challenges of traumatized youth, and offers a support system to address their shared experiences. This project is supported by U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, SAMHSA.

The Envision Project provides individualized care management, employment readiness, educational readiness, educational support, independent living skills, and personal growth programming to support the well-being of trafficked you. Youth who experience sex trafficking and other forms of exploitation experience high degrees of trauma and are at a very high risk for a range of adverse outcomes. We provide these specialized services and education to combat the trafficking and exploitation of minors, also known as CSEC. This project is supported under the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime.

- More than 90% of children who are commercially sexually exploited have been sexually abused in the past.
- 25% of child pornography content is produced by a neighbor or family friend with 18% produced by the parent or guardian.
- Nearly 50% of runaway and homeless youth report being physically abused
- Project Intersect welcomed 31 new mental health providers to a 12-month long intensive learning community and training on Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Envision's Bridge to My Future
  Advanced 2.0 level program
  provided 1,098 units of intensive and
  individualized services for 33 survivors

"This workshop taught me that I'm not alone and that hearing someone else's story can be so helpful and validating."

Foster Parent Training Participant

# Making a Worldwide Impact

- Hosted representatives from Mongolia and the country of the Republic of Georgia in 2023 to educate them about the CAC model and child welfare in the United States
- The Prevention & Education team hosted the 2023 National Conference Coalition to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation for its annual 2-day meeting held in October in Atlanta
- Staff represented GCCA and presented at numerous conferences across the nation including: National **Dallas** Crimes Against Children Conference; Protect Our Children Strategic Planning Bi-Annual Conference in Oregon; Prevent Child Abuse America Conference in **Baltimore**; Bloomberg American Health Summit in **Baltimore**; **San Diego** International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment; North Carolina Children's Advocacy Center Symposium; National Human Trafficking Prevention Summit; International Symposium on Child Abuse at NCAC; and the Shared Hope International JuST Conference in Washington, D.C.
- GCCA Director of Response Training, Mary Beth Nelson, was invited to present at the first Interviewer Congress in Santiago, Chile, on the topics of interviewing victims who are reluctant and interviewing victims who are recanting.













# Leading with Empathy

As a child advocacy center, we naturally build our programs through the equity lens. Equity-focused programming recognizes that all children deserve the same opportunity to recover from trauma, but that some children face greater barriers and require specialized responses so that healing can begin. Empathy encourages us to listen to and work alongside our families. Learning from families elevates their voices and recognizes how the best solutions often lie with the caregivers and youth themselves. Staff-driven, cross-department committees spearhead special efforts to promote and elevate trauma-informed practices across our organization.



• Special Events: GCCA held our 28th Annual Cheer for **Children Ball:** 007 and raised over \$210k to support our mission in 2023. The 17th Annual Change Maker's Breakfast featured a long-time partner of GCCA for over 20 years and Douglas County District Attorney, Dalia Racine. The 2nd Annual Bingo & Bubbly replanted the seeds of hope with over \$58k raised.



• Sunshine Committee: As the first committee established at GCCA, Sunshine continues to further its goal to strengthen connection & community culture here at GCCA! In 2023, we continued beloved traditions with our annual Holiday Party, Maker's Market, and Valentine's "Woo-Week."



• **DEI:** Last year The Center for Civil and Human Rights provided four training modules to staff; Inclusive Conversations, Applying Lessons of History to the Workplace, Cultivating Psychological Safety, and Navigating Difficult Conversations. Our DEI Committee also held eight Community Circles conversations with staff and enhanced GCCA's onboarding and annual employee review program; ensuring all are now accessible via the human resources platform Bamboo.



• A-Team: In 2023, members of the A-Team were invited speak at the North Carolina Children's Advocacy Center Symposium, highlighting the use of a Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment and the changes happening within GCCA as a result of conducting the assessment. The A-Team hosted GCCA's first caregiver lunch & learn in October, providing a family friendly event geared towards enhancing resilience and protective factors for caregivers, and providing fun activities for their children.

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# 2023 Supporters

Thanks to the generous contributions of our supporters, we are able to provide our specialized services at no cost to the children and families we serve. We also appreciate the numerous agencies that choose to partner with us and entrust us to provide professional services – helping reduce program costs. Because of you, hope and healing for these children and families is possible.

Individuals Tyler Akins Ashley Alderman Tess Aldridge Alan J Anderson\* Michael Dennis and Melanie Archer\* Kasey Asarch Missy Babcock Raymond Bachman Tiffany Baehman Chelsea Bagley Christina Baker Brent Bandy Robyn Barkin Bre Barlow Marshall B. Barton\*

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members

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Amerigroup Community Care Appalachian Children's

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Criminal Justice Coordinating Council - DMST TANF Program (U23-8-005; U24-8-005)\* Criminal Justice Coordinating Council - Victims of Crime Act (C22-8-028; C23-8-063)\* DeKalb County Human Services Department\* DeKalb County Youth Safety & Violence Prevention Program\* **Douglas County District** Attorney's Office\* Fayette Factor Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta\* Frances Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.\* Fulton County Community Services Program\* Fundacion Amparo Y Justicia\* Georgia Attorney General's Office\* Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power and Potential\* Georgia Department of Human Services - Children's Justice Act Georgia Department of Human Services (OPFS)\* Georgia State Charitable Contributions Program\* Georgia State University\* Gray\* Greg Murrey Giving Fund\* Greystone Power Foundation\* HD Supply\* Help for Children\* Henry County Police Department Henry County Schools\* Intown Stars Gymnastics Jesse Parker Williams Foundation\*

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\*Change Maker Society members

### **Financials**

#### Income

Grant Revenue	\$2,147,527	66%	
Contributions (restricted)	\$363,500	11%	
Contributions (unrestricted)	\$328,989	10%	
Special Events (net)	\$217,762	7%	
Program Income / Materials	\$170,271	5%	
Miscellaneous	\$34,922	1%	
-	Total \$3,262,971		

### Expenses\*

Program Services	. \$3,234,469	<b>90%</b>	
Total	\$3,601,534		
Fundraising			





"Partnering with GCCA has been an eye-opening and inspiring experience. Until this partnership, I had no idea our office was just minutes away from the Dekalb location, where GCCA is making such a positive impact on children's lives. I am so pleased that our grant has allowed them to not only better serve children, but to also serve their caregivers. Willett Engineering is proud to be a partner and so thankful for the important work they are doing."

Kailee Garrett Willett Engineering Company

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"The mission of the Georgia center is to provide the children of our community with a safe and supportive environment in which to tell their story, heal, and overcome the shame and pain imposed on them as victims of sexual abuse. By supporting GCCA's staff and services, you can help us to transform childhood victims into survivors and to seek accountability for their abusers."

> Vicki Kipreos GCCA Board Chair



## Staff

Sheila Rvan Chief Executive Officer

Yolanda Gaskin Executive Assistant/Office Manager

Tisa Barnave Client Service Coordinator Edrica Ferguson Client Service Coordinator

Zobida Dat Director of Development

Marci Healy **Grants Manager**  Nicole Wheeler **Annual Giving Coordinator** 

#### Prevention & Education

Tiffany Sawyer

Director of Prevention & Education

Nikki Berger

Prevention Program Manager

Sandy Chavarria

Hispanic Outreach Coordinator

Alex Cory

Trauma-Informed Education Coordinator

Lea Fantom

Regional Prevention Coordinator

Krista Gonce

**Regional Prevention Coordinator** 

Sarah Ren

**Prevention Program Support Coordinator** 

#### Forensic Services

Rebecca Trotta

Director of Forensic Services

Mindy Paylor

Assistant Director of Forensic Services

Iillian Oates

Lead Forensic Interviewer/ MDT Coordinator

Nzinga Hurey Lead Forensic Interviewer/

MDT Coordinator

Tammy Bowers Intake Coordinator

Andritta Lewis Forensic Interviewer Jorge <u>Mendoza</u> Forensic Interviewer

Iordyn Parks Intake Coordinator

Mary Beth Nelson Director of Response Training

## Clinical Services

Le'Keldric Thomas Director of Clinical Services

Iennifer Hossler

JaKarynn Convers Project Envision Director

Cortney Davis **Envision Specialist Case Manager**  Kelsey Lindsey Project Intersect Manager

Katherine Garcia

Maggie Huddle Psychotherapist

Sydnee Keys Psychotherapist

Ionie Lewis

PSB Program Coordinator/

Pamela Roberts

PSB Family Advocate/ Psychotherapist

### Child & Family Advocacy Services

Latoya Mitchell Director of Advocacy Services

Nicole Ardiles Family Advocate

Fatima Ceesay Family Advocate

Sophia Thomas

Family Advocate/Trafficking Specialist

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#### The Georgia Center for Child Advocacy presents the following trainings:

Human Trafficking: Preventing the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

Educates youth-serving adults how to identify vulnerabilities, red flags and warning signs that trafficking victims might display as well as how to keep children safe. (2 hours, Free)

#### Connections Matter Georgia

Focuses on effectively educating communities about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma and resiliency to develop a healthier, stronger community. (4 hours, \$20 per person, group rate available)

#### Circles of Safety Understanding the Role of Healthy Sexual Development

Highlights child sexual abuse facts, opportunities to practice safety planning strategies and what steps they can take to promote healthy sexual development. (2.5 hours, \$15 per person)

#### **Specialized Training Topics**

- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention
- Online Safety
- Child Protection Policy Development
- Mandated Reporter Training
- Georgia's Technical Assistance Resource Guide for Schools
- Becoming a More Resilient Parent
- Healthy Outcomes of Positive Experiences
- The Triple P Positive Parenting Program

Link to register bit.ly/GCCAPreventionTrainings

Email or call for more information Prevention@gacfca.org / 770-830-4016

To volunteer on our Special Events Committee, email SpecialEvents@gacfca.org



FOR CHILD ADVOCACY

678-904-2880 P.O. Box 11270, Atlanta, GA 30310

GeorgiaCenterForChildAdvocacy.org













