

# **Child Protective Services Advisory Panel**

## **Annual Report**

### **FY 2003**

Georgia has created and maintained the Child Protective Services Advisory Panel (hereafter known as the 'Panel') as a condition of receiving CAPTA funds. The Panel is a twelve member committee, composed of private citizens from around the state who have an interest in child welfare, but who are otherwise not engaged in business practices with the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). A complete roster of the Panel is attached in Attachment A (as of this writing, there are 3 vacancies). The Panel meets quarterly, with its next meeting scheduled for June 1-2, 2003 in Savannah, Georgia. Minutes from each meeting are attached as Attachments B, C, and D.

State level DFCS staff members are assigned to facilitate Panel activities and to provide programmatic and policy oversight. These staff members assist the Panel primarily by preparing meeting agendas, minutes, and coordinating Panel activities.

#### **Panel Findings**

In May 2001, the Panel issued written observations and recommendations (Attachment E) that remain relevant and important to its work. These observations and recommendations were developed based on the initial work of the Panel to familiarize themselves with the CPS system in Georgia and their local DFCS offices. These observations and recommendations continue to drive the work of the Panel.

#### **Panel Activities**

The Panel has met three times to date in FY 2003, with the fourth meeting scheduled for June 1-2 in Savannah. The format for each of the meetings has been consistent since the Panel was established. Since the membership of the Panel is comprised of citizens with varying degrees of involvement with CPS activities, an effort is made each meeting to offer some educational component directly related to CPS. This educational component allows each member of the Panel to further develop their knowledge of the CPS system, how it impacts families, and where improvements might be made.

During FY 2003, the following educational opportunities were presented at Panel meetings:

- Staff from a supervised visitation program that is offered through a church in Douglas County presented information regarding the operation of the program, highlighting the partnership between DFCS and a church
- Volunteer Coordinators from 2 metro Atlanta counties presented information regarding the operation of their programs that operate within DFCS
- A tour of Our House, a single point of entry system for children entering care which includes a Child Advocacy Center, an emergency shelter, counseling and many

other services for children. Our House is a model program for collaboration and streamlining services for children entering care to ensure that those children and their families are assessed well and receive appropriate services as soon as possible.

Many state level DFCS administrators have addressed the Panel regarding changes and important events that impact service delivery.

During FY 2003, the following administrators addressed the Panel:

- At each meeting, a state level DFCS consultant addresses the Panel to provide an update of state office activities. Angie Taylor provided these updates at all meetings during FY 2003.
- Wilfred Hamm, Director, Social Service Section, State DFCS
- Kerry Bass, Director, Office of Change Management, State DFCS addresses the Panel twice
- David Hellwig, Director, Child Protective Services Unit, State DFCS

The Panel spent considerable effort in FY 2003 developing and enhancing the structure in which it conducts business. In the first meeting of FY 2003, the Panel voted to adopt a set of Operating Guidelines similar to by-laws that govern the activities of the Panel. The Panel also adopted a Rotation Schedule to determine terms for members. Committees were developed that correlate to the needs that were identified at the onset of the Panel, which include a Public Relations Committee, a Special Projects Committee, a Policy Review and a Nominating Committee. The Committees have worked on identifying areas for improvement within their committee focus. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of potential members to the Panel by the August 2003 meeting to replace those members who rotate off the Panel.

### **Future Activities**

In FY 2004, the Panel will actively seek to fulfill its mission: to support DFCS by identifying issues, researching practices that provide successful resolution to problems and providing DFCS with recommendations to coordinate services and implement the solutions. The Panel will work towards this mission collectively as a large group and by operationalizing its findings through the work of its committees. The focus of the Panel, to identify solutions to the two main problem areas identified in Attachment E, remains unchanged at this time since those conditions continue to exist. In addition, the Panel will continue to learn more about the CPS System in an ongoing commitment to enhancing the membership's collective knowledge about the CPS system's impact on children and families. It is the sincere hope of the citizens who devote their time and energy to the activities of the Panel that they can aid in impacting change for children.

## Attachment A

# Statewide Child Protective Services Advisory Panel

## Member List

### CHAIRPERSON

Beverly Schwartzman  
PO Box 267  
E. Ellijay, GA 30539  
Gilmer

Dec. 2005

Barbara Blue  
PO Box 147  
Ellaville, GA 31806  
Schley

Dec. 2003

Elisa Dunn  
120 Colonade Ave.  
Atlanta, GA 30331  
Fulton

Dec. 2004

### VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Jennifer Horne  
5173 Kendal Court  
Columbus, GA 31907  
Muscogee

Dec. 2005

Kimberly German  
1915 Ridge Gate Dr.  
Cumming, GA 30041  
Forsyth

Dec. 2004

Vivian Moore  
2847 Joyce Avenue  
Decatur, GA 30032  
DeKalb

Dec. 2004

### SECRETARY

James Shumard  
21 Mary Musgrove Drive  
Savannah, GA 31410  
Chatham

Dec. 2005

Amy Parrish  
569 W. Cloverhurst Ave.  
Athens, GA 30606  
Clarke

Dec. 2004

George Scruggs  
PO Box 888  
Talbotton, GA 31827  
Talbot

Dec. 2003

### Staff:

David Meyers  
305 Parkway Drive  
Athens, GA 30606

## **Attachment B**

### **Statewide CPS Advisory Panel**

#### **Minutes**

**August 25 and 26 meeting**

**Atlanta – Embassy Suites Hotel, Perimeter Mall**

#### **CPS Panel Members in attendance:**

Roxann Gray Daniel  
Kimberly German  
Jamie Head  
Jennifer Horne  
Vivian Moore (Day 2 only)  
Amy Parrish  
Beverly Schwartzmann (Day 1 only)  
Jim Shumard  
Andrew Williams

#### **CPS Panel Members not in attendance:**

Barbara Blue  
Elisa Dunn  
George Scruggs

#### **Others in attendance:**

David Hellwig  
David Meyers  
Brooke Shaddix (Day 1 only)  
Angie Taylor

### **SUNDAY**

- The Panel meeting began at 4:15 pm.
- Introductions were renewed. David Meyers presented the resignations of Panel Members Yolie Bodie and Jay Brinson. Both resigned with regret and wished the Panel well.
- Angie Taylor presented the agenda that she had prepared. It was accepted as prepared.
- Angie Taylor presented an update regarding CPS activities in the State Office for the last quarter. Further details are listed in the information packet provided by the Angie Taylor under the special projects heading of the page “Working Committees within the Child Protective Services Program.” Topics include:

## Attachment B

- United Way/211 outreach for screenouts and closed cases in the metro area
- Support for medically fragile children at Atlanta (Grady Hospital) and in Catoosa County

Other topics included were:

- Community Partnership for Protecting Children
  - Policy Revision to Strengthen the Family Assessment
- David Hellwig provided an update on the recent high profile child deaths of Rhiannon Gilmore in Cherokee County and Alexis Headspeth in Fulton County. Both children were known to DFCS at the time of their deaths and multiple policy violations were committed by caseworkers involved. In both cases, disciplinary action was taken against DFCS staff involved with the cases.
    - In Fulton County, the caseworker was suspended for five days without pay. He had no supervisor for the three months leading up to Alexis' death.
    - In Cherokee County, 2 staff were demoted and 2 staff were fired.
  - In direct response to these two deaths, at least two things occurred:
    - DHR Commissioner Jim Martin directed a letter to all DFCS staff that is included in the meeting packet. The letter essentially instructs all foster care caseworkers to see every child on their caseload during the month of August. Each county director must sign off on the visits and assure that each child has been visited.
    - The State Office is developing a training plan for all caseworkers. The training schedule will occur over the next several months and will cover CPS policy as a booster course for caseworkers. Members of the Panel are invited and encouraged to attend the training sessions.
  - Angie Taylor and David Hellwig next presented the proposed changes for the Panel. The proposed changes included having the CPSAP focus primarily on policy review through involvement with a number of standing committees. Panel members would become members of these standing committees and meet quarterly for a lunch meeting. During the lunch meeting, members of the Panel would report back regarding the work accomplished during the quarter.

Due to the time of day, it was agreed that the meeting would adjourn for the evening and reconvene at 9 am on Monday. The first order of business would be for the Panel members to respond to the proposed changes.

- At 7:15 pm, the CPSAP meeting adjourned until 9 am Monday morning.

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### MONDAY

At 9:00 am, the Panel reconvened.

- Jim Shumard responded to the proposed changes of the CPSAP. He related that the Panel would prefer to maintain its current structure and mission, but would be pleased to examine issues that are brought to the Panel, such as policy analysis. The following points arose in the discussion and were agreed upon by those in attendance:
  - Meeting structure and length will remain the same for the time being. Many of the meetings of the Panel will be held in Atlanta, although there is some value to meeting in other locations around the state to see how things are done in different locations.
  - Attending the policy training that is upcoming could be valuable for Panel Members. Jim Shumard expressed a willingness to write an email to all Panel Members expressing that opinion.
  - The Panel regards itself as an oversight Panel, but is interested in helping with some concrete ‘special projects’, such as the license plate issue.
  - Panel members are invited to attend other committees that are already in existence, although this will not become the main format in which the Panel does business.
- Upcoming meetings were discussed.
  - The next meeting will be November 3-4 in Atlanta at a hotel near the State Office. Angie Taylor agreed to reserve a meeting room at the State Office for the Monday portion of the meeting.
  - The second next meeting will be March 9-10 in Columbus.
- Jim Shumard presented ideas on a ‘Volunteer Auxiliary’ that he, Andrew Williams, and Kim German had developed. In general, the volunteer auxiliary is designed to offset the responsibilities of caseworkers by utilizing volunteers, which would help caseworkers more effectively manage their caseloads; to shed some positive public relations light on the agency, thus improving the image of DFCS; and to help children go home after maintaining an effective visitation schedule. See handouts from the meeting for full details. The following points were agreed upon by those in attendance:
  - David Hellwig stated that there could be some funding for a pilot site
  - More development of the concept is necessary, and some time at the next meeting should be devoted to further development
  - If possible, some potential invitees to the next meeting to help develop the concept are volunteer coordinators from DeKalb and/or Fulton Counties, a Douglasville volunteer coordinator who has developed a church based visitation program supervised by volunteers, and a state agency Consultant named Anthony McLaren whose sole function is to link faith based groups with CPS (if he is still employed by the agency).
  - Angie Taylor volunteered to send a survey out to all DFCS Directors designed to gather information regarding how and if local offices currently use volunteers.
  - The consensus among those in attendance is that partnerships with churches are likely the most effective avenue to implement this type of program

## Attachment B

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- A slate of potential officers was presented next. The slate was presented as follows:

Chairperson	Beverly Schwartzmann
Vice Chairperson	Jennifer Horne
Secretary	Jim Shumard

The slate of officers was approved unanimously; officers assume office immediately.

- A discussion ensued regarding the operating guidelines that were proposed at the previous meeting. Most of the discussion focused on the rotation schedule and how to establish that rotation schedule. A consensus was found that provides for a drop in the total membership of the Panel to 12 members with a three-year rotation schedule. The schedule will begin January 2003, and current members will be assigned a 'slot' based on total attendance at all of the meetings to date. A revised version based on discussion during this meeting is attached to these minutes.
- The budget developed by Angie Taylor was approved unanimously. The fiscal year for the Panel follows the federal fiscal year, October 1 through September 30.
- The minutes of the May meeting were approved unanimously.
- With no other business, the Panel meeting was adjourned at 12 pm.

# Attachment C

## Statewide CPS Advisory Panel

### Minutes

#### November 3 and 4 meeting

#### Atlanta – Embassy Suites Hotel, Centennial Olympic Park

#### **CPS Panel Members in attendance:**

Barbara Blue  
Elisa Dunn  
Kimberly German  
Jennifer Horne  
Vivian Moore  
Amy Parrish  
Beverly Schwartzmann  
George Scruggs  
Jim Shumard

#### **CPS Panel Members not in attendance:**

Roxann Gray Daniel  
Jamie Head

#### **Others in attendance:**

David Meyers  
Mary Migliaro (guest of Kim German)  
Brooke Shaddix  
Angie Taylor

### SUNDAY

- The Panel meeting began at 4:30 p.m. with Barbara Schwartzmann presiding.
- The minutes from the August meeting were approved.
- The agenda for this meeting was approved without revisions.
- The Operating Guidelines were approved.
- The Rotation Schedule was approved.
- At 5 p.m., Diane Campbell and Father Dann Brown of Saint Julian's Episcopal Church attended the meeting at the request of Jim Shumard to present information regarding their church's volunteer-run supervised visitation program, called Starting Over. The program seeks to allow parents a safe and warm location to have supervised visitation while under mandate from the court to have visits. Many of the program concepts are useful to the

## Attachment C

volunteer auxiliary concept brought forward by Jim Shumard. Handouts were given and are attached to the minutes.

- Some of the concepts presented were:
  - The program is the principle outreach of the church.
  - Commitment of the judges involved is critical to the program's success.
  - The relationship with DFCS is also very important. The coordinator of the program meets directly with DFCS staff every other month.
  - All visitation information is reported back to DFCS and the courts.
  - Each of the family visits is supervised by a volunteer who observes the visit. The interaction between the observer and the family is kept to a minimum.
  - Families get to visit in a friendlier, less sterile environment that is more conducive to meaningful visits.
  - Starting Over is separately incorporated from the church and has its own Board of Directors and bylaws.
  - DFCS caseworkers appreciate the service because it frees them to do other things on their workload rather than transport and coordinate visits.
- Following a break, Kim German informed the Panel of some of the struggles and progress that her DFCS office is working through. The primary problem seems to be a major shortage of foster homes and the problems that that presents for all areas of DFCS. Kim and another member of her community are working together to develop a community response to this issue and help to recruit foster homes. They are calling the initiative the DFCS Foster Parent Team. She hopes that this work will assist DFCS locally.
- At 7:15, following some final discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

### MONDAY

At 9:10 am, the Panel reconvened.

- Angie Taylor provided an update regarding DFCS State Office Activities:
  - The primary focus of the CPS Unit at the State Office is completion of the policy training that has been happening at many locations across the state.
    - As of now, there are 2 remaining training sites, in Savannah and Rome. 1600 caseworkers have received the training, many more still need to complete the training. A makeup training will likely be scheduled.
    - The training utilized 2 severe cases as teaching tools. The training content focused on the chronologies of the two cases and opportunities for improvement, what went well in the cases and occasions where policy was not followed.
    - There was no formal evaluation completed. The feedback from the participants was generally positive and that the content was well received.
  - The Community Partnerships for Partnerships in Parenting (CPPC) are well underway. The goal is to have family team meetings at the sites in order to complete the family assessment in order to improve case plans and enhance reunification.
- Following the update, the discussion carried over into discussion/feedback regarding the policy trainings, which had been attended by several Panel members.
  - Some of the points made during the discussion were:

## Attachment C

- The feedback that Angie received is that due to short staffing, caseworkers primary problem is meeting initial contact time frames with children. Turnover of staff has created openings in staffing that have not been filled.
  - Morale continues to be a problem with caseworkers.
  - Metro counties tended to have different problems from rural or semi-rural counties, i.e. increased drug use in metro counties, with more complex problems, but also more resources to address the problems. In all counties, however, there were not enough resources to address problems in all counties.
  - There are some counties that have managed to maintain staff and they are able to meet time frames and follow policy better than those counties who have not. The recruitment and retention unit within DFCS is trying to address this issue.
- Kerry Bass, Director of the Office of Change Management within DFCS, joined the meeting at this point to address the group and answer questions. Some of the issues he discussed were:
    - His job is to focus and accelerate the changes that need to be made within DFCS to make the system more effective. Mr. Bass noted that there are several plans that have been developed to address the problems within DFCS. He is trying to align the plans and develop an integrated action plan from all of the plans.
    - Mr. Bass' background is industry, ministry, and counseling.
    - Mr. Bass noted that technology is underutilized in CPS and could make a major impact in the way that caseworkers do their business. Several plans are in process to address this issue. Notable among the plans is the possibility of purchasing PDAs for caseworkers.
    - He also noted that positive public relations are a must to change the image of the agency. He suggested the possibility of asking the public for help and to present the problems of the agency to the public.
    - Mr. Bass also made the comment that DFCS needs to do some 'expectation management'. He notes that the agency can't, and shouldn't, be the parent to Georgia's children. DFCS needs to be clear about what it can and cannot do.
    - Mr. Bass finally noted that he is interested in the work of the Panel and would like to be apprised of the findings of the Panel, and would also be open to further interaction with the whole Panel or a smaller group.
- At 10:15, Miriam Bowens of Fulton County DFCS, and Emily Pritchett, of Cobb County DFCS, presented to the Panel regarding volunteer activities in their respective counties. Both Emily and Miriam hold the position of Volunteer Services Coordinator. Some of the issues addressed were:
    - There are several opportunities for volunteers to be involved throughout the year, but the holiday season is when most people are more willing to give resources and time.
    - They do one primary solicitation per year from a list of volunteers/donors that has informally grown over the years.
    - All volunteers must submit to a background check/criminal history. The Sheriff's department does these background checks at no charge.
    - The Volunteer Services Coordinator position is the true link between the agency and the community.

## Attachment C

- Both Miriam and Emily agreed that a person in their position must have at least the following qualities: be a go-getter, work independently, recognize the importance of their position, and look for motivation/rewards from their volunteers.
- Handouts were given and are attached to the minutes.

At 11:10 am, Wilfred Hamm addressed the Panel and answered questions. Some of the issues discussed were:

- The agency is focusing much of its attention and resources to fight a lawsuit that alleges that the agency violated the constitutional rights of children placed in the DeKalb and Fulton County Shelters. This lawsuit has presented problems on a number of fronts, including public relations and resources.

At 11:35 am, the meeting was adjourned for lunch, to reconvene at 12:45.

At 12:45 p.m., the meeting resumed.

Elizabeth Wilson, the newly hired Public Relations staff person for DHR, addressed the Panel. Some of the issues discussed were:

- Ms. Wilson's job responsibilities include promoting positive public relations for all divisions within DHR. Her performance review will be based on a 10% increase in positive stories and a 10 % decrease in negative stories.
- Ms. Wilson has 30 years of experience with public relations, including most recently working as Denise Majette's press secretary during her campaign.
- Ms. Wilson was open to ideas and very receptive to the work and findings of the Panel. She has only been on staff for one month, so she is still learning the programs and activities of DHR and its various divisions.
- She intends to follow up with the Panel as shapes her strategy.

At 1:30 p.m., the Panel broke into 3 committees: nominating, public relations and special projects. Each of the Committees reported back to the full Panel and will have full reports at the March meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 9-10 in Columbus.

At 3:00, the meeting was adjourned.

# Attachment D

## Statewide CPS Advisory Panel

### Minutes

### March 9 and 10 meeting Columbus – Ronald McDonald House

#### **CPS Panel Members in attendance:**

Barbara Blue (day 1 only)  
Elisa Dunn  
Jennifer Horne  
Vivian Moore  
Amy Parrish  
Beverly Schwartzman  
Jim Shumard

#### **CPS Panel Members not in attendance:**

Roxann Gray Daniel  
Kimberly German  
Jamie Head  
George Scruggs

#### **Others in attendance:**

Dianne Aiken  
David Meyers  
Angie Taylor

### SUNDAY

- The Panel meeting began at 4:05 p.m. with Beverly Schwartzman presiding.
- The minutes from the November meeting were approved with a minor typographical revision.
- Ms. Schwartzman offered Panel members the opportunity to make announcements about events in their home county.
  - Amy Parrish noted that Clarke County DFCS has recently hired a volunteer coordinator. She is bringing the information to the Special Projects Committee.
- Angie Taylor offered a state office update.
  - Angie introduced Dianne Aiken, a new state office consultant, who will serve as the liaison to the CPSAP. Angie is focusing her efforts on the Children's Justice Act Committee.

## Attachment D

- Angie reviewed budget issues that are facing the agency. The legislature is currently in session and working on the supplemental 2003 budget as well as the 2004 budget. Governor Perdue has recommended over \$22,000,000 in the supplemental budget, including almost \$9,000,000 that the agency will lose due to a federal audit. In the 2004 budget, the governor has recommended an additional 100 caseworker positions, to double the current foster care clothing allowance, and over \$7,000,000 to replace dollars lost in the federal audit. Governor Perdue has asked every state department to look internally to find ways to cut budgets without service reduction. Within DFCS, Commissioner Jim Martin has identified several ways to achieve this, including: reduction of state level staff, reduction of state conferences and out of state travel, eliminate or reduce contracts or contractor staff, centralize DFCS payroll, consolidate some county offices, and freeze county director vacancies. Commissioner Martin sent an email to all DFCS staff detailing these proposed changes and it is a part of these minutes.
- Angie discussed the changes to CPS policy that have been made in relation to Domestic Violence. Two counties are piloting the new policy – Hall and Chatham. The changes are an effort to bring consistency to the way that DFCS addresses reports that include Domestic Violence. Each county has some latitude regarding how it will deal with the new policy. Dianne Aiken agreed that she would bring the Hall County protocol to the next meeting for the Panel to see.
- At 5 p.m., Panel members divided into Committees while waiting for Kerry Bass to arrive. Mr. Bass was scheduled to arrive at 5 p.m.
- At 5:30 p.m., Mr. Bass arrived and the Panel reconvened as a whole. Mr. Bass discussed his actions since the last Panel meeting and what the immediate future looks like for reforms in DFCS. He brought a booklet (which is included as a part of these minutes) with him that condenses all of the change plans that have been developed for DFCS and what the timeline for change is.
  - Mr. Bass discussed the changes that are occurring to the statewide Information System that DFCS uses. Currently, DFCS uses four separate information systems – IDS (Internal Data System) for case tracking, CPRS (Case Plan Reporting System), ADAM (for adoptions) and the DHR client registry. The goal is to integrate the systems to achieve a teamwork approach, centralized intake for consistency, community involvement in prevention, and shared governance. Mr. Bass hopes that they will be successful in developing a functional SACWIS system (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System) to achieve these goals. The DHR Chief Information Officer supervises all of these changes.
  - Mr. Bass also looked to the Panel for some input regarding the CPPCs that have been discussed in prior meetings. DFCS is trying to communicate the message that abuse and neglect are community issues, not solely agency issues. He asked the following questions: How can we define communities more effectively? How can we bring together agencies and people? How can we bring together communities to work more effectively?
- At 6:20 Mr. Bass had to leave to be back in Atlanta for another obligation.
- Each of the committees reported to the Panel as a whole:

## Attachment D

- The Nominations committee reported that they have gathered some information and will develop a strategy once they receive the recruitment notes from David Meyers that described the contacts that were used in the first round of recruiting. The first round of regular rotations off the Panel will occur in November 2003. There will be four positions to fill given Roxann Daniel's pending resignation, and it would make sense to have a meeting with some overlap of new members before old members left. The nominations committee would like to have a slate of potential newcomers to present to the Panel by the May meeting if possible, but if not then, at least by the August meeting to allow for attendance of new members at the November meeting
  - The special projects committee reported that they have reviewed several ideas regarding a volunteer coordinator position that would offset caseworker hours and relieve the stress felt by caseworkers. They will formalize a plan for submission to David Hellwig by the next meeting.
- At 7:05, the meeting was adjourned for the evening.

### MONDAY

At 9:00 am, the Panel reconvened at Our House.

- Jennifer Horne brought in breakfast that was donated by McDonalds.
- At 9:30 am, Barry Jenkins met with the Panel to discuss Our House, how it was developed, and its various functions. A brochure is attached to these minutes for further clarification. In short, Our House is a one-stop location for children entering foster care. Children come to Our House for evaluation and assessment and may stay for up to 60 days until the most suitable placement can be determined. Our House is administered by the Methodist Homes for Children and Youth. Considerable community support and funding has been garnered for Our House. Several community agencies that serve children, including some DFCS employees are stationed at Our House.
- At 10:15 am, Wanda Torbert, of the Children's Tree House, the local Child Advocacy Center spoke to the Panel regarding the relationship between the two agencies. The CAC is located at Our House and there is an interview room on site. They have a culposcope on site to do forensic medical evaluations in instances of child sexual abuse although they have yet to begin to do the evaluations at the center to date.
- At 10:45 am, Becky Rumer spoke to the Panel regarding her involvement in developing the community support and funding for Our House. Ms. Rumer was the driving force in gathering the community support and she was further involved in seeing the project through to its opening. Ms. Rumer is a bank employee who has been a foster parent, identified a need, and sought support to meet the need.
- At 11:15 am, Barry Jenkins took the Panel members on a tour of Our House. The tour included residential areas, the interview room, the DFCS staff area, medical areas, and administration.

## **Attachment D**

- At 12:15 p.m., the Panel left Our House to meet for lunch and final details. Roxann Daniel joined the Panel for lunch and offered her resignation from the Panel since she has recently been appointed to a Superior Court judgeship.
- Panel members agreed that Our House is a model of collaboration and dedication.
- The Panel also agreed that the next meeting should be focused on delivering some recommendations and would be primarily a work session geared toward further development of the ideas that have been cultivated to date. Panel members wished for the new DFCS public relations staff person, Rachel Young, be invited to the next meeting.
- The next meeting will be in Savannah on June 1-2. Jim Shumard will help with arrangements for hotel and meeting space.
- At 2:00, the meeting was adjourned.

## **Attachment E**

# **Statewide CPS Advisory Panel**

## **Observations and Recommendations**

**May, 2001**

Following the May meeting of the Statewide Child Protective Services Panel, held May 14 and 15 at Jekyll Island, the Panel makes the following observations:

- Separating the function of Child Protective Services from the other functions of DFCS, most notably Foster Care and Investigations, is a very difficult task. With that in mind, it is difficult to make recommendations for change in a single area such as CPS that is so closely related and linked with those other areas. Therefore, the Panel will at times make recommendations aimed solely at the CPS function of the agency. Other times, the Panel will make recommendations that are broader and may include other functions of the agency.
- The Panel agrees that some improvements are ‘given,’ in other words, the Panel will not focus energy on these points since they are commonly accepted as necessary and are generally associated with financial resources. At this time, these ‘givens’ are:
  1. DFCS Social Services staff are underpaid and the agency cannot compete with other agencies and employers for competent and qualified staff. The Panel recommends that entry-level caseworker salaries, at a minimum, be commensurate with entry-level teacher salaries.
  2. Caseloads remain too high for caseworkers to do their best work. The Panel recommends that caseloads not exceed the CWLA recommended number of 14.

## **Recommendations for Improvement of Child Protective Services**

Following the November and February meetings of the Statewide CPS Advisory Panel, several ideas were generated as possible topics for improvement. At the May meeting, the Panel divided into two groups and examined two topics, ‘fear’ and public relations, and made improvement recommendations for each. The Panel’s recommendations for fear and public relations follow on pages 2 and 3 of this document.

Additionally, the Panel requests that they have the opportunity to meet with state DFCS staff at the next Statewide CPS Advisory Panel meeting, which will be held in Athens on August 27-28. The Panel makes this request for the purpose of discussion and dialogue regarding these recommendations and to insure that the Panel is examining issues that are important and relevant to the agency.

## **Attachment E**

### **FEAR**

During the course of discussions with local agency staff and other information gathering, the Panel believes 'fear' is an element of the experience of DFCS caseworkers and the public. The purpose of addressing fear as an issue is because fear can impact decision-making, causing indecision or bad decisions. The goal is to shed light on the CPS process: describe, reveal, advertise, explain, enlighten, train, and communicate (without revealing confidential information). Fear can be described by the following elements:

- Fear of the unknown, by agency staff and the public
- Fear of losing your job if you make a mistake
- Fear of legal repercussions if you make a mistake
- Fear that if something goes wrong, those on the lower levels will be the scapegoats.
- Fear on the part of the public because they may believe CPS only tries to take children away
- Fear of health declining. (Many workers mentioned that they themselves were not in good health.)
- Fear for safety when going out to visit families.

#### **Strategies to address fear:**

1. Find out what other high stress companies do to address fear. Bring in consultant to deal with this.
2. Create a team spirit within the agency.
3. Establish in-service training programs designed to promote group dynamics. Pay them for their time and feed them.
4. Establish a 'support group' for caseworkers, so that caseworkers can share feelings, frustrations, and successes in a safe and private setting.
5. Provide employee survey and satisfaction process.
6. Initiate a peer review process.
7. Provide limited immunity.
8. Make everyone feel they are a part of the system. Start at the top and work to the bottom.
9. Address safety on job, using available technology and resources to accomplish this goal.

## Attachment E

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Panel has observed an image/public relations problem of DFCS. In order to increase the effectiveness of the agency and improve its public image, the Panel recommends the following strategies to address this public image problem:

*The ultimate goal of a public relations campaign:*

Clarify and publicize DFCS' positive role in helping families

#### **Strategies to deal with PR/Image problem:**

Establish a statewide motto

Some possible examples: 'CPS is about helping families succeed together'  
From the Michelin Ads: 'There's a lot riding on your tires'

Enhance DFCS relationship with all media, most importantly on the local level. Encourage local offices to educate local media and to defuse negative sensationalism

Potential avenues for spreading the word about DFCS

1. Newspapers – through positive articles and advertisements
2. Billboards – such as the DHR billboards targeting teen abstinence
3. Georgia Public Television
4. Through PSAs

Seek out the help of professional public relations agencies

1. Enlist the help of local ad agencies to help locally
2. Special groups established to do just PR, like anti-smoking and truth.com

Potential Spokesmen for such a campaign:

Judge Hatchett  
Cynthia McKinney  
Thurbert Baker  
Mark Taylor  
Jane Fonda

Potential funders for such a campaign:

AFLAC  
Coke