Whether you are looking for help for a child with disabilities, with behavioral health needs, in foster care, or in trouble at school, getting help from the state can be a long and difficult process. The goal of this guide is to give you some tips for getting your family the help you need.
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

SPEAK UP FOR YOUR CHILD.

You don’t have to know everything to speak up for your child. You don’t have to be an expert to make decisions about your child’s care.

- Ask questions about your child’s care.
- If you don’t understand something, ask for someone to explain it.
- Don’t ever be afraid to speak up.

Try to learn as much as you can about Georgia’s behavioral health system. Find more information about available services on page 8.

Hundreds of thousands of families in Georgia are getting state services or applying to receive state services for their children. Others are facing the same situation, too.

- Try to connect with parent-support organizations. These organizations can help you and others like you learn how to deal with the challenges of getting state services for your child.
- Parent and family support organizations can also provide emotional support, advice, and other supplemental services. A list of parent and family support organizations can be found on page 11.
START WITH YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL.

Your child’s public school is probably the first place where you will begin learning about state services. If your child has special needs or requires additional support, it is important to know your options.

- Read the school’s student handbook or code of conduct book to find the rules that affect your child’s rights, especially about discipline and special needs. (Schools are required to give code of conduct books out to students and parents at the beginning of every school year.)

- Don’t wait until your child is in trouble. Meet with teachers about behavior concerns before they call you. Look into support options for your child at school. A Student Support Team can help address your child’s needs without creating an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Some schools have other behavioral support options.

- Speak up if your child is having difficulty keeping up with school work, is being bullied, or needs additional help. Most schools have a lot of available resources to help. Use them.

- If an issue is not being handled properly, do not be afraid to move the issue up to somebody with more authority.
• If you think your child needs special education or a student-support plan, do not wait. Talk to your school social worker about what options are available.

• If the current IEP or 504 plan is not helping your child, you have the right to change it or end it.

• Take advantage of all the resources the schools should offer. Many schools have graduation coaches, social workers, and tutoring services. If your child has an IEP or a 504 plan then the school should be helping with your child’s behavioral health needs, as well.
Consider how trauma and the environment can affect your child’s behavior. Studies have shown that when dangerous or traumatic events happen to or around kids (such as violence, death of a loved one, or sexual or physical abuse), it can greatly affect their behavior.

**SUPPORT YOUR CHILD.**

- Discipline, routine, medication, and behavioral health support can help meet your child’s needs. Be open to trying various methods of support.

- Work with your service providers to create an individualized plan that is best for your child.

- You know your child best and have final say. If providers present a plan that you know won’t work, ask for a new plan.

- Having a child with disabilities or behavioral health needs is stressful. Parent and family support groups can help. See page 11.

- If you child is in a state of crisis, call 911 if your child is a threat to you, someone else, or themselves. If you do need the police, ask for an officer with Crisis Intervention Training and inform the dispatcher that your child has behavioral health needs.

- If your child is in a state of crisis, but not posing a threat, call the Georgia Crisis Access Line at 1-800-715-4225.
Parent and family support organizations: No matter what challenge you or your child may be facing, it is very important to connect with people who have been through what you are going through, or are currently dealing with the system themselves. After connecting to the appropriate agency for your need, reach out to an organization that specializes in peer-to-peer, or informal advocacy for people dealing with the system.

(for a list of these organizations, see p. 11.)
I have a behavioral health concern with my child.

Is your child in a state of crisis?

Yes

Is your child in danger or a threat to themselves or others?

No

Call Georgia Crisis Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 for immediate consultation and referral to services.

Call 911. See p. 5 for advice when dealing with the police.

No

Which area of need best describes your behavioral health concern?

My child is involved with the Georgia Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS).

Are you the custodial parent or foster parent of this child?

Foster

Children in the foster system are served through Georgia Families 360 through Amerigroup. Call them at 1-800-600-4441 or talk to your case manager to access behavioral health services.

Custodial

Your case manager can set up behavioral health services through your insurance or through DFCS.

My child is in legal trouble.

Detained

If your child is in a secure Department of Juvenile Justice facility, he/she will have a counselor who can inform you about available services. Mental health counselors can address your child's treatment needs while they are detained.

In custody

If your child is in custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice or on probation, talk to his/her probation officer to request behavioral health services. These resources can be paid for through insurance or your child’s probation officer can identify subsidized or free resources.

I can’t reach my DFCS case manager, probation officer, or school social worker and I am not sure what to do next.

Attempt to reach out to supervisors or principals if your case manager is not responding.

Very important to connect with people who have been through what you are going through, or are currently to an organization that specializes in peer-to-peer, or informal advocacy for people dealing with the system. Organizations, see p. 11.)
**RESOURCES**

**CHILD WELFARE**

Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services
Services: In charge of child safety and welfare, as well as support for foster children and adoptive families.
Constituent services: 404-657-3433
Adoptions: 404-657-3550
Abuse hotline: 1-855-422-4453
Foster care info: 1-877-210-5437
List of department services: dfcs.georgia.gov/node/695
County offices and locations: dfcs.georgia.gov/locations

**EDUCATION/EARLY LEARNING**

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
Services: Administers Georgia’s Bright From the Start pre-kindergarten program and other early learning programs.
Phone: 1-888-442-7735
Website: families.decal.ga.gov

Georgia Department of Education
Services: Center for all pre-kindergarten to grade 12 education-related services and information.
Phone: 404-656-2800
Website: gadoe.org
Special education: gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services
Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
Services: A state system of courts and legal agencies for youth offenders.
Office of Behavioral Health Services:
djj.georgia.gov/office-behavioral-health-services
List of locations: djj.georgia.gov/find-location
Office of the Ombudsman: djj.georgia.gov/office-ombudsman

MEDICAID/SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

If you don’t have health insurance and need coverage, first check to see if you are eligible for Medicaid. Go to gateway.ga.gov to check your eligibility.
• If you qualify for Medicaid, you will need to sign up with one of the four care management organizations. Your options depend on the conditions of your eligibility. See page 10 for more details.
• If you don’t qualify for Medicaid, you can try to obtain affordable health insurance in the Marketplace at Healthcare.gov, or call 1-866-988-8246.
  • If you can’t afford coverage see the orange section of the Behavioral Health Access Map for more service options.

Georgia Department of Community Health
Services: Provides oversight for Medicaid and Peach Care services.
Medicaid services: 1-866-211-0950
Website: dch.georgia.gov

Georgia Gateway
Services: Site to apply for and check eligibility for Medicaid and start application process.
Phone: 1-877-423-4746; 7:00 am – 2:00 pm for a phone application
Website: gateway.ga.gov/access
Georgia Social Security Offices
Services: Provides information on seeking benefits for disabilities and employment services.
Phone: 1-800-772-1213; 7:00 am – 7:00 pm
List of locations: secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp
Atlanta region site: ssa.gov/atlanta/southeast/ga/georgia.htm

MEDICAID CARE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Amerigroup
Services: Medicaid Care Management Organization.
Phone: 1-800-249-0442
Website: amerigroup.com

CareSource
Services: Medicaid Care Management Organization.
Phone: 1-855-202-0729
Website: caresource.com

Georgia Families 360°SM (Amerigroup)
Services: Special Medicaid program for families of foster children.
Phone: 1-800-600-4441
Website: myamerigroup.com/ga/your-plan/georgia-families-360.html

Peach State
Services: Medicaid Care Management Organization.
Phone: 1-866-874-0633
Website: pshpgeorgia.com

Wellcare
Services: Medicaid Care Management Organization.
Phone: 1-866-231-1821
Website: wellcare.com/georgia
Families Advocating for Voices of Resilience (FAVOR)
Services: Family and youth support.
Phone: 404-499-0078
Website: favorfamilies.com

Families First
Services: Provides health care, education, employment, and life skills enhancement for youth in the foster care system.
Phone: 404-853-2800
Website: familiesfirst.org

Georgia Parent Support Network
Services: Provides services and support to parents of children with severe emotional disturbances and behavioral health needs.
Phone: 1-844-278-6945
Website: gpsn.org

Integrated Concepts for Families
Service: Family support, individual, and family counseling.
Phone: 770-463-0202
Website: integratedconceptsforfamilies.com

National Alliance on Mental Illness’ Peer to Peer
Services: Free educational program for people living with mental illness.
Phone: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
Website: nami.org/find-support/nami-programs/nami-peer-to-peer

Parent to Parent of Georgia
Services: Provides peer support to families of youth with disabilities.
Phone: 1-800-229-2038
Website: p2pga.org
HOUSING/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Georgia Public Housing Authority
Services: Provides list of public housing authority sites in Georgia.
List of locations:
hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts/ga

Needhelppayingbills
Services: Website lists organizations that may offer financial assistance.
Website: needhelppayingbills.com/html/atlanta_rent_assistance.html

Nicholas House of Atlanta
Services: Provides services for homeless families in DeKalb and Fulton counties.
Phone: 404-622-0793
Website: nicholashouse.org

Salvation Army of Georgia
Services: Provides support and housing services for Georgia families.
Phone: 770-441-6200
List of locations: salvationarmygeorgia.org/locations

SOCIAL SECURITY/DISABILITY

Georgia Social Security Offices
Services: Provides information on benefits for disabilities and employment services.
Phone: 1-800-772-1213; 7:00 am – 7:00 pm
Office locator: secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp
Atlanta region site: ssa.gov/atlanta/southeast/ga/georgia.htm
Babies Can’t Wait
Services: Provides screening for early identification of developmental issues with infants ages 0 to 36 months.
Phone: 1-888-651-8224
Website: dph.georgia.gov/Babies-Cant-Wait

Early Head Start
Services: Provides child development support services up to age 3 years.
Phone: 1-877-255-4254
Website: georgiaheadstart.org

Georgia Department of Public Health
Services: Behavioral health supports for mothers and families; maternal and infant health; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); autism support.
Phone: 1-800-228-9173
WIC services website: dph.georgia.gov/WIC
Phone: 404-657-2850
Georgia Autism Initiative website:
dph.georgia.gov/georgia-autism-initiative

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies
Services: Mother and child health helpline, refers callers to services and education resources.
Phone: 1-800-300-9003
Website: hmhbga.org
Source: Adapted from information provided by the Georgia Association of Community Service Boards and the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) provides services for those with mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as disabilities. DBHDD also trains certified peer support workers. For services call the Georgia Crisis & Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 or visit dbhdd.georgia.gov/dbhdd-services.

Youth services and support clubhouses: dbhdd.georgia.gov/office-cyf-services#clubs
Substance abuse and recovery clubhouses: dbhdd.georgia.gov/adolescent-services

Community Service Boards across Georgia

1 - Lookout Mountain Community Services: lmcs.org 706-638-5580 x4151
2 - Avita Community Partners avitapartners.org/about/locations.php 1-800-525-8751
3 - Cobb Community Service Board cobbcsb.com 770-429-5000
4 - Douglas Community Service Board cobbcsb.com 770-429-5000
5 - DeKalb Community Service Board dekcsb.org 404-294-3836
6 - View Point Health myviewpointhealth.org 678-209-2411
7 - Clayton Community Service Board claytoncenter.org 1-844-438-2778
8 - Advantage Behavioral Health Systems advantagebhs.org 706-369-6363 x3100
9 - Pathways Center pathwayscsb.org 1-888-247-9048
10 - McIntosh Trail Community Service Board mctrail.org 770-358-5252
11 - River Edge Behavioral Health Center river-edge.org 478-803-7600
12 - Phoenix Center Behavioral Health Services phoenixhealthcenter.com 478-988-1222
13 - Oconee Community Service Board oconeecenter.org 478-445-5322
14 - Serenity Behavioral Health Systems serenitybhs.com 706-432-4800
15 - Ogeechee Behavioral Health Services obhs-ga.org 478-289-2522
16 - New Horizons Community Service Board nhbh.org 706-596-5500
17 - Middle Flint Behavioral Healthcare dbhdd.georgia.gov/location/middle-flint-behavioral-healthcare 229-931-2504
18 - Community Service Board of Middle Georgia csbmg.com 478-272-1190
19 - Aspire Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Services aspirebhdd.org 229-430-4140
20 - Georgia Pines georgiapines.net 228-227-5426
21 - Behavioral Health Services of South Georgia bhsga.com 229-671-6170
22 - Pineland Area Community Service Board pinelandcsb.org 1-800-746-3526
23 - Unison Behavioral Health unisonbehavioralhealth.com 1-800-342-8168
24 - Gateway Behavioral Health Services gatewaybhs.org 1-866-557-9955
25 - Highland Rivers Community Service Board highlandrivershealth.com 1-800-729-5700