

IMPACT

EVALUATING HOW GEORGIA FAMILY CONNECTION AFFECTS INDICATORS OF CHILD, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Resilient by Design: How Georgia Family Connection Collaboratives Adapted to Crisis—and Are Refocusing on Strategic Priorities

Each year, Georgia Family Connection Collaboratives in all 159 counties are required to complete a Self-Assessment—the only standardized report across the statewide network—offering a data-driven view of how local partnerships strengthen communities and respond to challenges.

Analysis of this data reveals clear patterns over time, including how Collaboratives pivoted during the COVID-19 pandemic and how

they have since rebounded—demonstrating both the reach and resilience of Georgia Family Connection’s collaborative approach.

Developed by Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), the Self-Assessment gives members an opportunity to reflect on Collaborative functioning, strategy implementation, partner engagement, and financial investments.

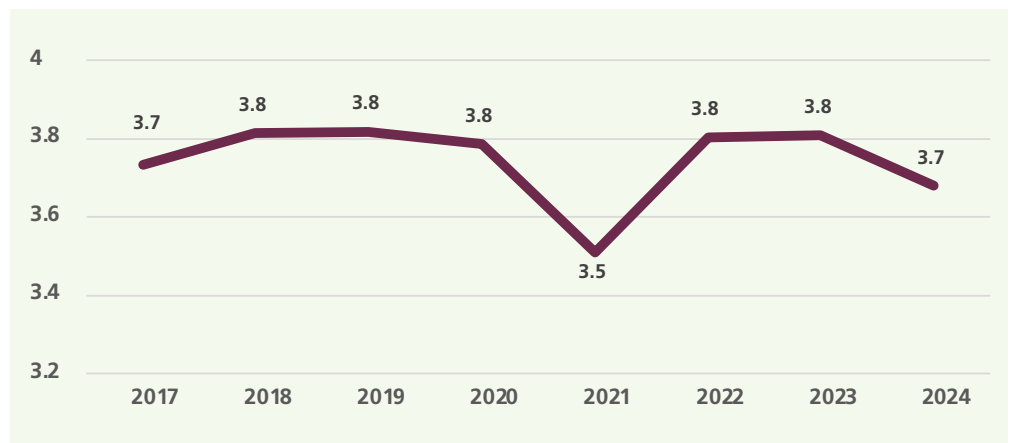
GaFCP analyzes the results to produce two individualized reports for each

Collaborative every year—*Strategy Implementation* and *Partner Engagement*—and to inform investors and other stakeholders about the strength of local decision-making and reach of the Georgia Family Connection statewide network. These insights help GaFCP tell Georgia’s story of collaboration, guide strategic decisions, and elevate local strategies that advance shared priorities for children, families, and communities.

COVID-19 Pandemic Creates Patterns in Collaborative Activities

Findings of Self-Assessment data from FY17 – 24 reveal distinct patterns in Collaborative activities—particularly during the pandemic. There was a noticeable drop in the number of activities Collaboratives carried out as originally planned as focus shifted to distributing food, providing utility support, improving access to internet and digital devices, and meeting other urgent community needs. They also faced more challenges in engaging partners, updating policies, and maintaining sustainability efforts.

Average Extent Implemented for Collaborative Activities



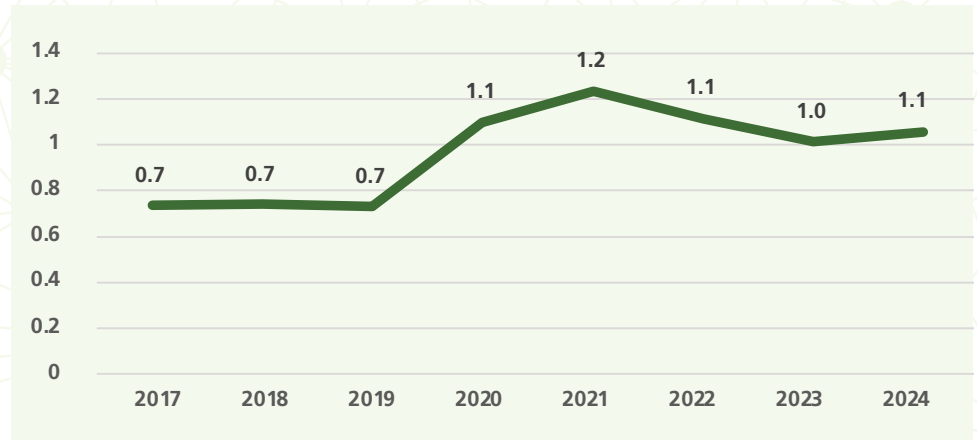
Extent implemented is rated on a Likert scale from 1 = “not implemented” to 5 = “fully implemented.”

COVID-19 Pandemic Creates Patterns in Collaborative Activities (Cont.)

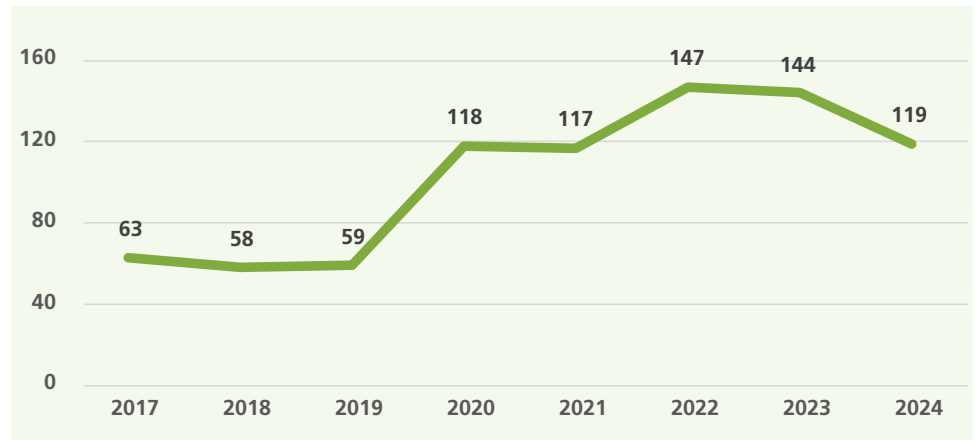
Activities mostly returned to pre-pandemic levels by 2024, demonstrating that Collaboratives are resilient—adapting to community needs during a crisis to address and overcome obstacles and get back on track with planned strategies.

While the pandemic's overall effect is negative, some positive trends also emerged. For example, Collaboratives engaged in more activities aimed at changing systems, such as improving service delivery, updating policies, adjusting program structures, and sharing resources with partners. Many of these efforts increased during and after the pandemic as Collaboratives responded to issues like isolation, delays in services, and other disruptions. These results underscore that Collaboratives are uniquely positioned to respond to urgent local issues with creative solutions that often require multiple partners working together.

Average Number of Challenges for Collaborative Activities



Number of System Change Activities



Strengthening Capacity, Partnerships, and Effectiveness

While not direct services, these activities support the infrastructure that enables Collaboratives to achieve results. They fall into six categories:

- Collaborative Development,
- Communication,
- Family Engagement,
- Results Accountability,
- Sustainability, and
- Systems Change.

Collaboratives rate how fully they implemented each activity, check off changes that resulted, and identify challenges. GaFCP examines all six types of activities to understand:

- the number of Collaboratives that carried out activities,
- the number of activities implemented,

- how fully each activity was completed,
- how effectively activities reached the intended target group,
- the changes that resulted from the activities, and
- the challenges encountered during implementation.

Pandemic Pivot Leads to Stronger Engagement in Burke County

When the COVID-19 pandemic overwhelmed communities, local Georgia Family Connection Collaboratives quickly pivoted—often setting aside planned activities to meet urgent needs.

Burke County Family Connection faced high-priority concerns related to food insecurity, access to health care, reliable information, and mental health support.

Families in Burke County experienced increased economic hardship, while service delivery was disrupted by limited in-person engagement and barriers to virtual access. The Collaborative worked with partners to distribute food, crank radios, tarps, and emergency kits.

At the same time, opportunities for deeper partner engagement in Burke became more difficult to sustain. The disruption highlighted gaps in communication and coordination, reinforcing how critical strong, aligned partnerships are—especially in times of crisis.

After its Annual Data Review, Burke County Family Connection partners wanted to better understand the Partner Engagement report. The Collaborative teamed up with GaFCP's Evaluation and Results Accountability Team to survey 50 partners and deepen its understanding of engagement. The results are shaping a more intentional approach to alignment and collaboration.

"We learned from the survey how Collaborative partners view their roles and how we

can best communicate with them," said Burke County Family Connection Coordinator Teresa Carter. "This process has created new opportunities to deepen relationships and more strategically align partners through sector-based strategy teams."

One key area of focus is the development of a core violence prevention strategy team. This group brings together representatives from the Sexual Assault Response Center, Sheriff's Office, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Green Dot facilitators to create a coordinated, community-wide approach to prevention.

"By aligning advocacy, law enforcement, and education partners, we're strengthening communication, identifying trends, and ensuring prevention and response efforts are unified and effective," said Carter. "As a result, we host monthly brunches, inviting community members to learn how they can stand up to violence and help protect vulnerable victims."

The Collaborative has demonstrated how intentional connections can develop into lasting partnerships. For instance, GaFCP Associate Communications Director Krystin Dean introduced Burke County Family Connection in 2021 to the Linus Project, a volunteer organization that provides handmade blankets to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or in need.



Pandemic Pivot Leads to Stronger Engagement in Burke County (Cont.)

What began as a few blankets at a local school has grown into a sustained partnership. The Collaborative and partners delivered more than 50 blankets to schools, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs during one week in March. School counselors said the blankets provide comfort and emotional support to children.

Central to this progress is the Collaborative's use of the annual Self-Assessment process as a tool for reflection and growth.

"It provides a structured opportunity to reflect, identify gaps, and better understand partner experiences," said Carter. "Through this process, Collaborative members recognized a need to improve clarity around partner roles and increase opportunities for meaningful engagement."

Burke County Family Connection strengthened communication and created more intentional virtual spaces, resulting in stronger partner participation and shared ownership of initiatives.

The Collaborative has placed greater emphasis on consistency, flexibility, and relationship-building—ensuring partners understand how their contributions connect to the larger mission.

"These efforts have reinforced that strong partnerships are the foundation of effective community impact," said Carter. "The Self-Assessment process is a valuable tool that builds trust, improves collaboration, and helps partners put local strategies into action for children and families."

Strengthening Collaboratives with Self-Assessment Data

Take time to reflect on your Collaborative's successes and challenges and think about how you can work with your partners to overcome obstacles and fully carry out your programs and activities.

Here are some ways your Collaborative can strengthen and use Self-Assessment data:

- Use GaFCP's Partner Engagement tool to track participation more accurately and improve your Self-Assessment data.
- Involve your board and key partners in completing the Self-Assessment.
- Work with your Evaluation and Results Accountability (ERA) provider to track Collaborative activities and better describe related changes and challenges.
- Share your annual Strategy Implementation Report with Collaborative members to keep everyone informed about strengths and opportunities.

IMPACT examines how collaboration among our local- and state-level partners affects indicators of child, family, and community well-being. Each edition presents a snapshot of a finding taken from reports produced by GaFCP's Outcomes Team of researchers, including Metis Associates and Georgia State University.

GaFCP is a public-private partnership created by the State of Georgia and investors from the private sector to assist communities in addressing the serious challenges facing children and families. GaFCP also serves as a resource to state agencies across Georgia that work to improve the conditions of children and families.

Georgia KIDS COUNT® provides policymakers and citizens with current data they need to make informed decisions regarding priorities, services, and resources that impact Georgia's children, families, and communities. Reach out to Rebekah Hudgins of the GaFCP Outcomes Team at rhudgins@anthroeval.org with any questions or feedback.



GEORGIA
family connection
PARTNERSHIP

gafcp.org | [#LetsTalkGA](https://twitter.com/LetsTalkGA)

 [@gafcpNews](https://twitter.com/gafcpNews)

 [@GeorgiaFamilyConnection](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaFamilyConnection)

 [@georgiakidscount](https://www.youtube.com/georgiakidscount)