



# Changing Systems for Children and Families



Georgia  
FamilyConnection  
Partnership  
2009 Year-End Report

# To Our Partners and Friends



At Georgia Family Connection Partnership we envision a Georgia where all children are healthy, ready to start school and do well when they get there, and where every family is stable and self-sufficient. Our vision defines who we are and drives our unswerving work. Each day we bring together more than 3,000 local and state-level partners to initiate systems change for Georgia's children and families.

We follow a nebulous path in making systems change, and nearly two decades of funding from our public and private investors verify that they are resolute in their commitment to our common mission.

Systems change occurs through relationships and follow-through. We move the conversation between the private and public sectors, and we connect effective strategies with resources.

Progress toward our vision begins by honing in on one result area, in one neighborhood at a time, until we build momentum. In this report we show how one local collaborative organization addressing family literacy can cause ripples of success across counties, regions and the state when we come together toward a common goal.

We've also learned that when we turn our attention away from a goal—even for a moment—we lose momentum.

We were highly concerned about the number of low birthweight babies in Georgia, which has steadily increased since 2000, because this had been an indicator in which this state has performed fairly strong. Read about how we're collaborating with our partners to raise awareness and bring best practices research to Georgia.

Our experience tells us that with focus comes dialogue, followed by awareness, intent, resources and sustainability. That's what it takes to improve outcomes.

Georgia is at a tipping point. We must be strategic in investing in our children, especially during this fiscal crisis. We must stay connected, continue to advocate for systems change and data-driven decision-making, and we must remain true to our core values that ground our work in the challenging years ahead.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gaye Smith".

Gaye Smith, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Reid".

Doug Reid, Board Chair

Systems Change through Local Collaboration

# It All Adds Up

**5** to 1 local collaborative dollars leveraged

**8** state and national invitations/recognitions:

- Grant Makers for Children and Youth-Advocate's Perspective on Stimulus Monies
- KIDS COUNT Evaluation Pilot Project
- GA Education Policy Fellowship Program
- Brookings Institute-2nd Place-Community Indicator Award
- National System of Care Training for Leaders
- Technical Assistance Partner with Fanning Leadership Institute
- Research Partner with Emory University on Evidence-based Practice
- Presenters at International Evaluation Association Conference

**16** new initiatives and partnerships established

**64** reports provided to partners

**70** three-year strategic plan reviews

**17,712** training and technical assistance events

# Ripples of Success

Facing debilitating budget cuts and the possibility of losing federal funding for the Even Start Program, Georgia Family Connection collaborative organizations across the state were nearly forced to pull the plug.

The Even Start program provides integrated family literacy services to a disadvantaged population through four inter-related components:

1. Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children,
2. Training for parents on how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in their children's education,
3. Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and
4. Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life.

The local collaborative organizations needed a plan to keep these services available. That's when Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) stepped in to develop a resource-mapping initiative that helped them understand and apply a collaborative strategic approach to funding and sustainability.

Leila Anderson, executive director of the Houston County Commission on Children and Youth Kids' Journey—A Partnership for Our Future, and director of the Houston County Even Start Program, feared that closing her doors would have devastated the families in her community. So she and her staff participated in the pilot resource mapping and sustainability planning sessions. Resource mapping immediately helped the Even Start sites identify their resource gaps to specifically determine the areas of their programs that needed funding.

"Partners began to understand that leveraging resources didn't mean giving them up," said Anderson. "The resource mapping strategy eliminated competition by demonstrating that agencies could jointly apply for grants and sign contracts that support their specialized work, making the application well rounded and more competitive. They began to understand the role each partner played and discovered ways they could support the targeted population with existing services. They also began to understand that they could attend partner-sponsored trainings and share materials."

The Even Start program was able to keep its doors open because the resource mapping strategy helped Houston County collaborate with partners to cover a broad range of services to its community. As a result, undereducated parents who participated in the Even Start program earned GEDs or high-school diplomas and went on to technical college and other post-secondary education programs. Parents also received training to equip them to be better parents.

**"Partners began to understand that leveraging resources didn't mean giving them up."**

*~Leila Anderson  
Executive Director  
Houston County Commission  
on Children and Youth Kids'  
Journey—A Partnership for  
Our Future*





The Even Start program provides integrated family literacy services to a disadvantaged population.

Most of the young children who participated in the program were developmentally on target or ahead of the curve, which meant they acquired the tools they needed to begin kindergarten. The program also established a partnership to provide developmentally challenged children with a support system to facilitate continued learning and progress. The goal was to help local collaborative organizations identify ways to take advantage of local resources rather than relying on federal funds.

“Counties needed to see that meeting the requirements of the Even Start model would require a constellation of services,” said Sue Hitchcock of the GaFCP State Partnership Strategies team. “We took the Even Start family literacy model and translated it into a Family Connection strategy to integrate collaborative thinking.”

## Looking Forward

GaFCP is leveraging its resources to help local collaboratives take advantage of the home visitation privileges that will be included in the new Title V Maternal and Child Health grant. The grant will provide \$1.5 billion over five years for maternal, infant and early childhood home visitation programs. Grantees will be required to use evidence-based program models and establish quantifiable, measurable three- and five-year benchmarks that demonstrate improvements in maternal and child health, childhood injury prevention, school readiness and achievement, crime and domestic violence, family economic self-sufficiency, and coordination with community resources and supports.

# Restoring Hope

**T**he excitement of Halloween filled the air in 2007 as Kyle and Jessica Kirk were trick-or-treating with their 5-year-old daughter, Maddie Grace, until Jessica, five months pregnant, began to feel pain and pressure in her abdomen. When her water broke later that evening, Kyle rushed his wife to the hospital. After an emergency c-section, the Kirks greeted their one-pound, six-ounce son.

From the moment he entered the world, William Zachary Kirk (Zach) faced multiple health challenges because he was born too small and too soon.

On the morning of April 19, Jessica held Zach while Kyle knelt next to them in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, laid his hand on his son, and bowed his head in prayer as doctors and nurses removed the machines keeping Zach alive. Not long after, Zach's short life came to an end.

Unfortunately, Zach's story is all too common in Georgia. In an average week, 372 babies are born preterm (prior to the 37th week of pregnancy). A majority of these babies weigh less than five and a half pounds at birth. The rate of low-birthweight (LBW) infants born in the United States has reached its highest level in 30 years, and the rate in Georgia is among the highest in the nation.

"So many babies born at unhealthy weights reveals something about lack of access and education in Georgia," said Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) Executive Director Gaye Smith. "We at GaFCP, the Promising Practices Network (PPN), and RAND Corporation were highly concerned about the increasing number of babies born at LBW in this state, which up to three years ago, had been an indicator in which Georgia performed fairly strong."

Children born LBW are more likely to have health problems, some of which can be serious and life-long. The human and monetary costs can also be extensive. Despite these facts, there is a lack of guidance available for practitioners and policymakers in Georgia that provides evidence-based information about actions they can take to prevent LBW.

Thanks to a grant from Healthcare Georgia Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, GaFCP conducted a Low Birthweight Promising Practices Forum with PPN and RAND at The Arthur M. Blank Family Office in Atlanta. A panel of national and state experts on child and maternal health reported on recent trends, the serious effects of LBW on our children, and promising practices for prevention in the hope that this event would be a first step in making significant improvements for Georgia's children and families.

Through this collaborative initiative we compiled *Improving Infant Health: Addressing Low Birthweight in Georgia*, a compendium of research and promising prac-



**The estimated charges in Georgia for all singleton LBW infants weighing less than 2,500 grams exceeded \$300 million.**

Jessica Kirk reads to Zach in his hospital room. Zach faced multiple health challenges in his all too short life because he was born too small and too soon.



tices, which summarizes key Georgia data, dispels some of the myths surrounding LBW, and sets a direction for prevention.

These activities caught the interest of, and generated support from, the Department of Community Health (DCH), which has adopted LBW as a priority. DCH is developing a collaborative project on LBW and has set a goal of reducing Georgia's LBW rate from 9.5 to 8.6 percent by 2015. Members of this collaborative effort include Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Medicaid, Public Health, State Health Benefit Plan, Office of Health Improvement, Georgia Health Policy Center, Voices for Georgia's Children, Georgia OB BYN Society, and the Hispanic Health Coalition.

The DCH draft work plan includes some best practices highlighted at our forum:

- increasing access to preventive health services for all females
- assuring all females have a culturally appropriate primary care home, and
- increasing the number of babies that are planned, spaced and wanted.

Tremendous potential and promise emerge from the existence of promising practices by a variety of partners across the state. This is the time to expand use of these promising practices and to leverage existing health insurance and program financing that can improve women's access to, and use of, quality evidence-based programs that work to improve infant health.

We hope that by shining light on this issue and introducing new ideas on how to address LBW, more communities will focus on improving this significant predictor of childhood health and well-being.

Acting now can save millions of dollars in caring for these vulnerable children, but more importantly, we can improve the health outcomes of Georgia's children and their mothers, and the vitality and future of our state.



# Financial Information



Sophocles said, “Success is dependent on effort.” This past year our staff demonstrated that by exerting great effort in a difficult fiscal environment. We have worked through budget cuts and additional budget cuts that led to hard choices on staffing and service delivery. We have maintained a consistent stable financial position.

Our commitment to supporting our collaborative partners and being a strong positive voice for Georgia’s children and families remains unshakable. Managing our financial position has enabled us to keep those commitments.

Next year we’ll welcome Bryan Williams of The Citizen Bank of Nashville, Ga. as assistant Board treasurer. His banking background makes him exceptionally well qualified to help us stay on a steady and safe course. Beyond that, his involvement in his local collaborative organization gives him a deeper appreciation and a comprehensive understanding of our collaborative process.

Chief Financial Officer Don Walraven continues to demonstrate his value to our organization every day through his expert and thoughtful leadership. He and his staff work hard to keep the financial functions at GaFCP strong and effective.

Once again our outside auditors gave us another above-average report, and we kept ourselves compliant by responding to the new IRS requirements for nonprofits.

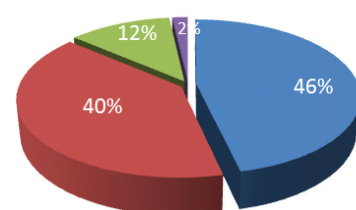
I’m happy to report our good fiscal management continued to undergird GaFCP’s mission and vision that all children in Georgia will be healthy, ready to start school and do well when they get there, and every family is stable and self-sufficient.

Yours in a Common Cause,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Patterson".

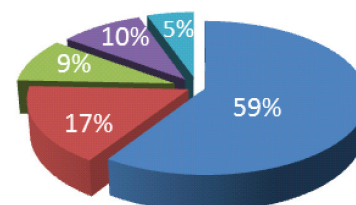
Dr. Bob Patterson, Board Treasurer

Sources of Revenue FY09



- State Partners
- Federal Gov't
- Private Sector
- Miscellaneous

Sources of Expenditures FY09



- Technical Assistance
- State Initiatives
- Evaluation
- Communications
- Support



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Community Volunteer

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University of Georgia

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Executive Director, Georgia Children's Trust Fund Commission

### **Stephen Dolinger**

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Executive Director, Voices for Georgia's Children

# GaFCP Staff

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Carlisa Beal

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Alphonso Clay  
James Hall  
Majorie Grant Hall  
James Hitchcock  
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Beverley Wright-Drakes  
Kathy Young

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Natasha White  
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Lou Caputo  
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Donna Scohier  
Paula Semple  
Kathy Wages  
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## Evaluation

Steve Erickson, Lead Evaluator

## Finance and Administration

Don Walraven, Director  
Teri Callanan

## Public Affairs and Policy

Taifa Butler, Director  
Pearlette Cid  
Sonya Hope  
William Valladares  
Naja Williamson

## Resource Development

Ellen Whitlock, Director  
Marilyn Bradbury  
Linda Long  
Linda Lunsford

## State Partnerships and Initiatives

Arianne Weldon, Director  
Jo-Anne Henry  
Lakieshia Jones

# Our Partners

Georgia Family Connection Collaborative Organizations  
Serving 159 counties in Georgia:  
[gafcp.org/index.php/connect/main/](http://gafcp.org/index.php/connect/main/)

## State Government

Department of Human Resources  
Division of Family & Children Services  
Division of Public Health  
Department of Juvenile Justice  
Department of Community Affairs  
Department of Community Health  
Department of Education  
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care  
and Learning  
Governor's Office of Planning and Budget  
The Governor's Office of Student Achievement

## State Government Councils

Georgia Children's Trust Fund Commission  
Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Children and Youth Coordinating Council  
Georgia Rural Development Council

## Universities and Colleges

University of Georgia, College of Family & Consumer Sciences  
University of Georgia, Carl Vinson Institute of Government  
and Fanning Institute  
Emory University School of Law, Barton Child Law and  
Policy Clinic  
Valdosta State University, Division of Social Work

## Other Organizations

Smart Start Georgia  
Better Brains for Babies  
Appalachian Regional Commission  
Communities In Schools of Georgia  
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education  
Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention  
Georgia Center for Nonprofits  
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia  
United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia  
Voices for Georgia's Children  
Georgia Afterschool Investment Council  
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute  
Georgia Municipal Association  
Association of County Commissioners of Georgia  
Latin American Association  
Sheltering Arms  
The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta  
Georgia Association on Young Children  
Georgia Bar Association Foundation  
Truancy Intervention Project

## New Partners

Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement  
Even Start Family Literacy Program  
Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation  
Office of Regulatory Services  
Morehouse College  
Promising Practices Network



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