



RESET

To Our Partners and Friends



Collaboration by its nature is complex and chaotic. But we're convinced that our unique system of community collaboration—especially in tough economic times—is the best approach available to us in moving Georgia's families toward stability and self-sufficiency. In fact, it's essential.

After toiling through this challenging economy for nearly three years, we sense we're all suffering from what some of us are calling fiscal crisis fatigue. But as worn out as we may feel, we need to be mindful that the increasing number of families in Georgia struggling to survive, much less thrive, may not slow down any time soon.

We're convinced that when the economy recovers, things will not return to the old way of doing business. Those who simply hunker down and operate under that misconception will become obsolete.

We must keep what is core to our mission and let go of obsolete practices. We must foster adaptive leadership, run numerous experiments until we get it right and encourage courageous conversations about what really needs to be done. We have chosen to seize the opportunity that moments like this sluggish economy present to develop new approaches based on the best practices that have enabled us to succeed in the past.

This year—with input from our statewide collaborative network—we reconstructed our system of support to local collaborative and state partners. We did this because Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) absorbed a 25-percent budget cut to protect the local collaborative infrastructure and to strengthen the network to ensure its sustainability. We believe we have designed a more efficient, streamlined system as a result.

We will continue to assist local collaborative organizations improve results for children by providing relevant and quality technical assistance, maximizing limited resources, and building on our knowledge and experience.

As the economy recovers, the tenacity and successful experiments of our collaborative groups and GaFCP will inform the new and better way of doing business.

Thank you for what you do every day for the children and families in your communities. We are obligated to continue this work of community collaboration, create public-private partnerships, and maximize and leverage our collective resources for the benefit of our state for years to come.

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

Vision and Purpose

Our Vision

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 Purpose

The consensus among state government, the private sector and communities is that Georgia can only thrive when its children are healthy and succeed in school, and when their families are stable and self-sufficient. Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), a nonprofit public-private intermediary, exists to:

- unify their commitment to Georgia's children and families,
- make sure their efforts to improve the lives of children and families work, and
- protect every dime of their investment in Georgia's future.

**Smooth seas
do not make skillful sailors.**

Solid Foundation

GaFCP Unveils New Technical Assistance System

Facing another year of budget cuts brought on by a slumping economy, Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) Executive Director Gaye Smith seized what she described as an opportunity to reset the organization and introduce a new, improved Technical Assistance (TA) system.

We began by cultivating a cross-team approach across the organization to accomplish our work and to support the new TA system. Because this cross-team work stands on a solid foundation, when we decided to absorb a higher percentage of state funding cuts to protect the community collaborative organizations in FY10—while pained—we were prepared to make difficult staff reductions for a second consecutive year.

“Collaboration maximizes resources,” said Smith. “It’s a sustainability model for organizations, communities, and initiatives. Cross-team work allows for cross-pollinating expertise among staff, and to maximize time, flexibility, creativity, and solutions.”

We immediately re-assigned the TA team so



every collaborative organization across the state had a point of contact, and we assigned teams to work with counties preparing to submit strategic plans. The TA team worked with the Community Planning Team to assemble a TA model that would meet coordinators’ needs, be efficient and responsive, preserve the values of GaFCP and the Georgia Family Connection statewide network, and would truly be a cross-discipline and collaborative system.

Under the new structure, four community facilitators each serve three regions while GaFCP continues to provide support to all 12 regions and the Peer-to-Peer Network, which means less travel and more reliance on Web technology and phone.

“These changes make us more efficient with resources, more responsive to communities, and more flexible,” said Smith. “They also eliminate duplication so we can remove undue burden from local coordinators.”

Georgia Family Connection is recognized nationally because it is a voluntary, community-driven initiative that supports local decision-making

and community engagement. It is for that reason that we sent out a TA survey to collaborative organizations before streamlining reporting changes to determine what coordinators, chairs, and partners needed.

“I greatly appreciate the streamlining in reporting changes—from CIMS to evaluation reporting changes,” wrote a coordinator on the survey. “However, I strongly would suggest returning to a five-year plan with a mid-term progress report. With the three-year plan, we shift gears from working the plan to planning the next plan. To better reach our goal and objectives, we need another year devoted to working this three-year plan—not our third year spent planning our next three-year plan. Please consider this change.”

Another coordinator wrote, “If we could go to a five-year planning process it would help us more in our local work. In our small rural community, the issues remain about the same and it takes a long time to change a benchmark. We could complete a mid-cycle update, but otherwise, go to a five-year plan.”

Based on the county coordinators’ responses to the TA survey, GaFCP moved in FY10 from a three-year to five-year plan to provide collaborative organizations with more time for implementing and for more efficient use of resources at the Partnership.

“This re-structuring of our TA system is really a call for us as an organization to continue to reframe the work we do,” said Smith. “These changes reflect our commitment to be a truly diverse, forward-thinking organization while keeping the focus on children and families. Our commitment, which began nearly 20 years ago, empowers the Georgia Family Connection statewide network to not merely survive—but thrive—whether the economy is vibrant or sliding as it is now.”

12,408 Technical Assistance transactions

I can’t imagine where we would be without training and technical assistance. Training is the foundation for any collaborative work. There’s just so many different aspects of what we do and if you’re not adequately trained in all those aspects, you’re just out there floundering.”
—Cook County

gafcp.org

New Web Site Integral to Our Work

After rigorous research, planning and development, we were pleased this year to announce that we re-launched our Web site, gafcp.org. More than a change in appearance, the new design plays a vital role in our purpose to improve conditions for Georgia's children and families.

Our primary users—the Georgia Family Connection county coordinators—directed the gafcp.org overhaul. They called for a centralized easy-to-use platform to search, download, and analyze a range of creative content. At the top of their list was the ability to use the Web site to stay connected to the statewide network of 159 Georgia Family Connection collaborative organizations.

“Our Web site is our window to the world and the first place people begin to understand our statewide

network, Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), and our work,” said Executive Director Gaye Smith. “We wanted to rebuild a more robust Web site that would improve accessibility to data and increase collaboration across the statewide network.”

The new gafcp.org is designed to support the county collaborative organizations by promoting their successes; sharing best practices, tools and resources; and providing a social network where existing and prospective partners can learn about our work.

“The value of gafcp.org is multifaceted,” said Smith. “It provides answers for people seeking data about what works, and it connects people to their local collaborative organization. It's also a powerful vehicle that keeps communities connected to each other, and to the resources they need to meet the requirements

gafcp.org is built on three portals to make the site intuitive and easy to navigate.

Connect

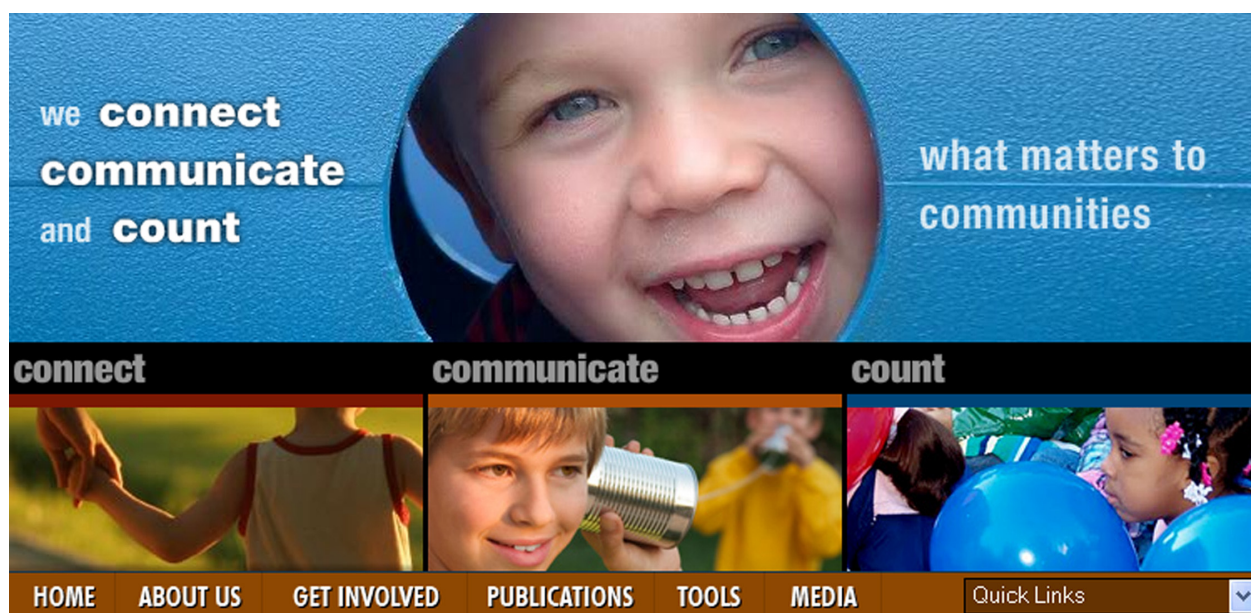
Locate Family Connection county collaborative organizations and explore the tools they use in their local efforts to improve conditions for Georgia's children and families.

Communicate

Extensive multimedia communicates the latest news about our work to improve conditions for Georgia's children and families. Visit the newsroom, post comments to our blog, check out upcoming events, and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Count

Decision-makers and child advocates can find county and state data. Georgia KIDS COUNT tracks indicators of child well-being under our five results areas: healthy children, school readiness, school success, strong communities, and self-sufficient families.



of their work, which is essential during times of financial stress such as we've experienced over the past two years."

Our objective for the new Web site was to simplify and organize resources and outcomes-based strategies, and improve navigation through a creative, clean, interface design, making the Web site more intuitive. Because the content we provide continues to expand in size and complexity, we built gafcp.org on three portals—Connect, Communicate, and Count.

The portal design incorporates bold colors, graphics, and navigational tools to help visitors manage data and applications. For instance, collaborative organizations in the midst of strategic planning often need to compare their county's ranking on a specific indicator of child well-being.

"When I show county collaborative coordinators how easy we made it to find their rankings in the Count portal, they're amazed," said Naja Williamson, Georgia KIDS COUNT coordinator. "They also can create maps and line graphs for indicators they target."

Our challenge was to help our audiences see the connections between our KIDS COUNT data, strategies, and resources we provide.

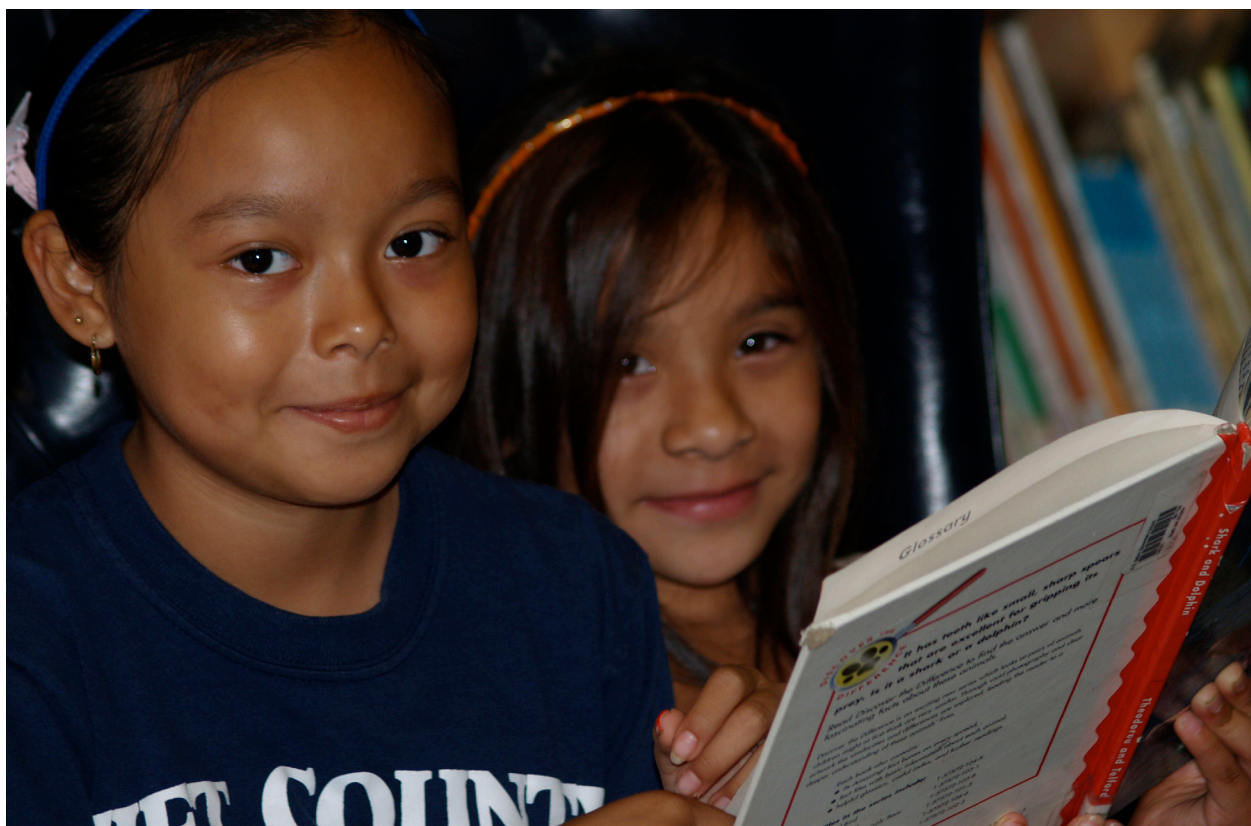
"We want users to quickly find child and family data; understand and interpret it in context; share

their unique story with others; use proven practices and programs to improve local conditions; and engage families, community leaders, decision-makers, and the media in making positive changes," said Williamson. "Only then will we see a brighter future for children and families in Georgia."

For Judi Lawson, White County Family Connection coordinator, making those connections is vital to her work. "The Web site is user friendly," she said. "During this legislative session I found out about the issues that affect children and families through the Web site."

Genevieve Wynegar, McIntosh County Family Connection coordinator, agrees. "The tools that help us submit our county strategic plans are available on the collaborative intranet and password protected," she said. "Our collaborative and the community can stay informed through the Web site, blog, and social networking media, about the work being done across the state. We appreciate the Partnership's efforts to keep us constantly informed and supported."

We at GaFCP will continue to improve the Web site, and we invite you to come back often to check out the latest developments. We welcome your suggestions and ideas. Please contact us at communications@gafcp.org.



Great Expectations

Making Reading Proficiency a State Priority

Children in Georgia fall below, or barely meet, the basic standard in reading by the end of third grade. According to the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, only 29 percent of Georgia fourth graders read at a proficient level or better.

While these results are bleak, we at Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) believe that as a state we can resolve this very solvable crisis. By paying attention to reliable data, studying trends, then changing our behaviors and systems we expect every child in Georgia to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. This task is immense, and one we cannot accomplish in isolation.

“Unless we reverse this trend—now—by raising our expectations that every child in Georgia will experience early reading success, our legacy will be another generation steeped in educational failure and poverty,” warns GaFCP Executive Director Gaye Smith. “Resolving this crisis will involve all of us. We must proceed in the same direction—and stay together.”

The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) has joined forces with The Annie E. Casey Foundation to lead the nation in a 10-year commitment to grade-level reading. We are working with DHS and other state and local partners to close the literacy gap and raise the bar for academic success for all children in the state.

“The few strides we’ve made to improve grade-level reading proficiency in Georgia are ineffective because we’re not reaching every child and we’re not executing what we know we need to do,” said DHS Commissioner B.J. Walker. “Making sure all children are reading on grade level, particularly by the end of third grade, is as much a human service issue as an educational one.”

We kicked off the Georgia grade-level reading campaign in May by hosting an event with Imagine It! Children’s Museum of Atlanta. State leaders in education discussed innovations to improve grade-level reading proficiency; the importance of parents getting involved in their children’s education; and investing in reading as a pathway to economic prosperity.

During the event we also released *Great Expectations: Every Child in Georgia Will Read At or Above Grade Level*, a special report that identifies why reading on grade level is critical and offers recommendations to address the state’s reading crisis.

Solutions to improving the reading crisis are comprehensive and long-term. Preparing a better-educated workforce in Georgia requires us to change

attitudes, behaviors, and systems. We have reason to be excited as new opportunities in our state emerge to raise the bar in reading and education.

- Georgia Family Connection collaborative organizations in Fulton, Chatham, Laurens and Polk counties are expanding community resources and support for the grade-level reading campaign.
- As one of 12 Race-to-the-Top grant winners, Georgia received \$400 million to invest in education reforms to improve schools and help close the achievement gap.
- Two Promised Neighborhoods program grants allow Athens and Atlanta to implement a “cradle to career” education approach.

“Now we can begin to identify our challenges and honor our commitment to Georgia’s youngest citizens,” said Smith. “With these opportunities, Georgia is well-positioned to move forward in meeting our great expectations for every child to read at or above grade level.”

Community Strategies in Action

Rural Appling County in southeast Georgia—where nearly one in three children live in poverty—has had success in promoting reading.

“Reading is an early-morning focus for all classes at Fourth District Elementary School,” said Dr. Curtis Lynn Overstreet, school principal. “Our kindergarten students earn wristbands for learning each small group of 20 sight words, and a trophy when they learn all 120 words. All our children, including minority and economically disadvantaged students, have shown marked improvement in CRCT reading scores over the past three years.”

A strategic, comprehensive, multi-agency focus helped the Echols County school system in South Georgia reduce one of the highest rates of school absence in the state. The local Family Connection, judicial system, and social service agencies partnered to monitor attendance data, hold parents accountable for chronic absences, develop new attendance policies, and provide the academic support and incentives they needed to reinforce positive student behavior.

“We turned things around by collaborating among multiple agencies and by getting parents involved in their children’s education,” said Florence Staten, Echols County Council for Children and Families coordinator. “As truancy declined, CRCT scores and graduation rates steadily improved.”

Financial Information

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) delivers a tremendous amount of technical assistance, information, guidance, and expertise to 159 counties across the state. That unshakable delivery is what has come to define the distinct identity of this organization. A second fundamental deliverable of the Partnership is the example it sets—in bad times and good—for responsibly managing financial resources. Throughout my involvement with GaFCP, I have been impressed with the staff's efforts to ensure that each of those 159 counties receives maximum financial and professional support in every circumstance.

FY10 was a very difficult year financially for most in the United States—but especially so for those in the business of social service delivery. However, it was nowhere near as difficult for service providers as it was—and continues to be—for the growing ranks of families in need.

In order to continue its necessary work on behalf of children and families in the third year of a diminishing budget, the GaFCP staff continued to hold its purpose as paramount while reorganizing its support structure for member counties. GaFCP intentionally streamlined operations at a 41-percent reduction to protect the work of the community collaborative organizations across the state, which included a reduction in GaFCP staff.

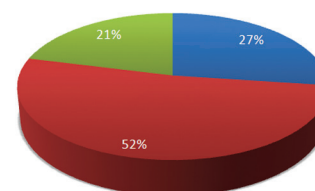
Were the positions and dollars GaFCP gave up unnecessary in the first place? No. These cuts represent a fundamental change from intensive face-to-face involvement to more phone, e-mail, and Internet time. They represent a change from a larger staff specifically responsible for a region to a smaller staff with specific skill sets who work with every region. The longevity of the organization and the county collaborative organizations' own interactions have made these changes workable.

It has been tough to see so many of the GaFCP family members adversely affected by the economic crisis, but it has been inspiring to see the mission-focused adaptation of the Board, executive director, and staff to strengthening the **Connection** to the children and families who need us.

Sincerely,

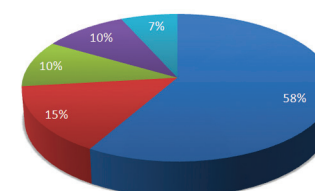
Bryan Williams
Vice Chair/Treasurer

Sources of
Revenue FY10



■ State Partners
■ Federal Gov't
■ Private Sector

Sources of
Expenditures FY10



■ Technical Assistance
■ State Initiatives
■ Evaluation
■ Communications
■ Support

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William Valladares
Naja Williamson

Resource Development

Ellen Whitlock, Director
Marilyn Bradbury
Linda Long
Linda Lunsford

State Partnerships and Initiatives

Arianne Weldon, Director

Our Partners

Public

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early
Care and Learning
Department of Community Affairs
Department of Community Health
Department of Education
Department of Human Services

- Division of Family & Children Services
- Division of Public Health

Department Juvenile Justice
Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
Georgia Municipal Association
Georgia School To Work
Governor's Office for Children and Families
Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Private

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Appalachian Regional Commission
Association County Commissioners of Georgia
Better Brains for Babies
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Georgia Campaign for Adolescent
Pregnancy Prevention
Georgia Center for Nonprofits

Georgia Meth Project
Georgia Public Broadcasting
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition
of Georgia
Interfaith Alliance
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
RAND Corporation
Truancy Intervention Project
United Way
Voices for Georgia's Children

Education

Communities In Schools Georgia
Emory University

- School of Law, Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic
- Rollins School of Public Health

Georgia Department of Technical and
Adult Education
Georgia Leadership Institute for
School Improvement
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
Georgia State University
Department of Psychology, School of Social Work
Smart Start Georgia
University of Georgia

- College of Family & Consumer Sciences
- Carl Vinson Institute of Government



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