



Georgia

State of the State Presentation

Act Early Regional Summit
October 29-30, 2009

Overview of Georgia



- In 2008, Georgia's population was 9,685,744
- 9th largest state by population
- 4th fastest growing state
- In geography, Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi River
- Georgia has a diverse geography and population

A Tale of Two Georgias

- Rural
 - Agrarian – peaches, peanuts, turf, chickens, and pecans
 - High poverty rate that is increasing
 - Few or no formal support services in many areas
- Urban
 - Atlanta – economic engine of Georgia
 - Half of Georgia's population lives in the Atlanta Metro area
 - Fastest growing metropolitan area in US
 - Other major cities include Columbus, Savannah, Augusta, and Macon

Early Intervention in Georgia



- Babies Can't Wait (BCW), Georgia's Part C program, is located in Public Health, Dept. of Community Health (restructured 7/1/09). There are 18 districts covering the state.
- BCW is moving to an evidence-based/primary service provider (PSP) model of early intervention.
- BCW previously had an Autism Initiative and “Service Guidelines for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders” (2002); these guidelines are being reviewed for compatibility with the PSP service delivery model (ARRA funds are earmarked for this project).

Early Intervention in Georgia



- Since 2003, approximately 100 children each year have been eligible for Part C early intervention services based on a diagnosis on the autism spectrum.
- This constitutes between 1.8% and 2.3% of the infants and toddlers entering early intervention.
- 80% are boys; their racial/ethnic distribution closely parallels that of Georgia.
- The average age of entry into EI for children with an ASD diagnosis is 22 months.

Special Education in Georgia



- According to Georgia's 2008-2009 Special Education Annual Report, the number of enrolled children ages 3-21 with autism were:

Pre-K	Grades 1-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Total
898	4139	2248	2236	9521

- In 2000, 1032 or 1.09% of children ages 3-21 who received special education services had autism.
- In 2007-2008, 8557 or 4.52% of children who received special education services had autism (U.S. Dept. of Ed, Office of Special Education Programs, report prepared by Easter Seals).

Georgia Has Many Resources



- Strong collaboration among ADD federal partners:
 - GA Council on Developmental Disabilities
 - Georgia Advocacy Office
 - CLD UCEDD at GSU
 - IHDD UCEDD at UGA
 - New collaboration between CLD and Morehouse School of Medicine
- Babies Can't Wait (Part C)
- Dept. of Education (Part B)
 - Parent mentors
- DECAL (Pre-K, childcare)
 - Lottery-funded Pre-K
- Public Health (CYSN, C1st, CMS)
- Head Start / EHS
- Project SCEIs / Parent Educators
- Emory Autism Center
- Marcus Autism Center
- Autism Society of America- GA
- Autism Speaks
- Parent to Parent – Family Support 360
 - Navigator teams
- Parent Leadership Coalition
- Family Connection
- Easter Seals
- GA Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant (ECCS)
- GA Quest for Quality Inclusion
- Children's Freedom Initiative
- Real Community Initiative
- Disability Day at the Capitol
- Unlock the Waiting List Coalition
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- GA Assoc. of Family Physicians
- State Interagency Coordinating Council
- Georgia Assoc. on Young Children
- Div. of Fam. & Children Services
- Numerous Local Support Groups
- DEC of CEC

Policy Initiatives



- New DOE proposed rule banning almost all Restraint and Seclusion in public schools
- Children's Freedom Initiative working toward a Georgia in which no children live in congregate residential settings
- EPSDT advocacy
- 2007 law established the Special Needs Scholarship Program which allows parents of children with disabilities to use state funds to access private schools

Appropriations/Pending Legislation



- **Unlock the Waiting List focusing on:**
 - increased funding for waiver services
 - funding for family support
 - stabilizing provider reimbursement rates
 - minimizing budget reductions
- **Legislation related to ASD:**
 - HB 426 & SB 161 – insurance coverage for ASD
 - HB 774 – defining autism and developing incidence and treatment guidelines

Areas of Challenge/ **BUDGET!!**



- Georgia's projected shortfall for FY10 is **\$4,100,000,000!!**
- The projected shortfall is the 9th highest in the nation - 23.8% of Georgia's FY10 budget
- To date, \$3.2 billion has been cut from state agencies, schools, and universities. Additional large budget cuts are anticipated
- Georgia's economy is recovering more slowly than the nation as a whole
- Georgia is a low tax state – there is great resistance to increasing revenue
- Even before budget cuts, the capacity and quality of services across the state was already inadequate

Areas of Challenge/Opportunities for Change



- Lack of Family Support funding
- Unequal access to quality education and health services depending on where a family lives
- Lack of collaboration among agencies and organizations
- History of investment in segregated services (including segregated early childhood programs)
- Need for professional training and public awareness related to ASD

Looking Forward



- In Georgia, we would like to see improved outcomes for children with ASD so that all children are identified early and are able to meet their full potential.
- We strive for a coordinated, comprehensive, quality system of supports and services for children with ASD and their families.
- We are excited to come together at this Summit to identify and explore resources, activities, and outcomes and to devise a plan to meet this goal in our state.