

THE ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA

Annual Education Conference

BUILDING CONNECTIONS



February 20-23, 2025

JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA

AFPAG President's Welcome Message:

We are pleased to welcome you to The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's (AFPAG) 52nd Annual Education Conference. This year's conference will be hosted at the Convention Center in Jekyll Island, Georgia. We will celebrate 52 years of providing services and meeting the needs of our members, foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship parents, relative parents, and the Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) staff.



Thank you for joining us to help celebrate this milestone in one of the most beautiful places in Georgia. Our theme this year is, "Building Connections." During the past 52 years, we have had some successes and made a few mistakes. However, we have learned from our mistakes, overcome many challenges, and have continued to make improvements. AFPAG and DFCS have a long-standing partnership, and as president I plan to continue building upon this foundation developed by our past presidents.

AFPAG has a Board of Directors that includes 27 volunteers from across the state. On behalf of myself and my fellow board members, we are looking forward to seeing all of you at this year's conference. We hope you enjoy your time.

Sincerely,
Casandra Favors, AFPAG President

Annual Education Conference Chairperson's Welcome:

We are excited to invite you to the 52nd Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference.

Once again, we have assembled dedicated adoptive, foster, and kinship caregivers from across the state to empower them with the necessary tools to provide care for Georgia's children and youth.

AFPAG is anticipating a large number of attendees for this year's conference. This is the time to network with other caregivers, share new ideas, and learn new information to help you grow.

We look forward to seeing you all Feb. 20-23, 2025.

Best,
Eunice E. Daniels, Conference Chairperson



The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference 2025 General Conference Information

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's (AFPAG) 52nd Annual Education Conference will be held in Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Feb. 20-23, 2025.

The Annual Education Conference provides adoptive families, foster and kinship caregivers, child welfare professionals, and other attendees the opportunity to network with each other and learn valuable skills to assist in caring for Georgia's children and youth.

Registration Deadline: Feb. 1, 2025

Registration Fee: \$150 per participant

- Your registration fee includes workshop materials, a conference bag, one AFPAG Award Luncheon ticket, and a one-year membership to AFPAG.

On-Site Registration Fee: \$200 per participant

Extra Awards Luncheon Tickets: \$40

Note: Checks and money orders are the only accepted forms of payment. If a check is returned, you will be charged \$45. No refunds will be given after Feb. 1, 2025.

Please make checks payable to: AFPAG Conference

Please mail checks and registration forms to:

AFPAG Conference
101 Windsor Road
Savannah, GA 31419

Elections:

An election for AFPAG President and Regional Vice Presidents, in even number regions, will be held at this year's conference. If you are interested in joining the AFPAG Board of Directors, please contact Naomi Brown for a nomination form by Jan. 1, 2025. Nominations will close on Feb.1, 2025. All requirements for AFPAG President and Regional Vice President are listed on the Nomination Form. You can contact Naomi Brown by email at iamnaomibrown@gmail.com, or by phone at 404-349-9631. Even number regions included in this year's election include: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14.

Children Attending the Conference:

AFPAG will not supply any kind of child care for the conference. No children will be allowed in any conference general sessions, opening sessions, closing sessions, or workshops. There will be no exception to this rule. Please ask your DFCS case manager for respite care or take advantage of prudent parenting.

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference 2025 Conference Agenda

Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025

12-1:30 p.m.	AFPAG Board of Directors Meeting
2-5 p.m.	Early Registration
2-5 p.m.	Exhibit Set Up

Friday, Feb. 21, 2025

7 a.m.-5 p.m.	Registration Open
7 a.m.-5 p.m.	Exhibits Open
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Opening Session
10:30-10:45 a.m.	BREAK
10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Breakout Workshop Session A
12:15-1:30 p.m.	Lunch (On your own)
1:30-3 p.m.	General Session One
3-3:15 p.m.	BREAK
3:15-4:45 p.m.	Breakout Workshop Session B
4:45-5:30 p.m.	AFPAG Annual Business Meeting

Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025

7 a.m.-12 p.m.	Registration Open
7 a.m.-5 p.m.	Exhibits Open
8-9:30 a.m.	General Session Two
9:30-9:45 a.m.	BREAK
9:45-11:15 a.m.	Breakout Workshop Session C
11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.	AFPAG's Awards Luncheon
1:15-1:30 p.m.	BREAK
1:30-3 p.m.	Breakout workshop Session D
3-3:15 p.m.	BREAK
3-4:45 p.m.	General Session Three

Sunday, Feb. 23, 2024

8-8:45 a.m.	Non-Denominational Worship Service
9 a.m.-12 p.m.	Closing Session

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference 2025 Workshop Information

Breakout Session Workshop Options:

Workshop A:

- A-1. Parenting Children Diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)
- A-2. Navigating Confidentiality and Access to Information
- A-3. Taking Care of You – Self-care for Foster and Adoptive Parents
- A-4. The Long Journey from Foster Care to Adoption
- A-5. Helping Adoptive Families Understand the Importance of Birth Family Connections

Workshop B:

- B-1. Financial Aid for Foster Students (Georgia ETV)
- B-2. GMO Health and Amerigroup
- B-3. CPS Intake Communication Center and You
- B-4. Bikers Against Child Abuse
- B-5. Parenting the Parentified Child

Workshop C:

- C-1. Amerigroup Georgia Families 360 Overview
- C-2. Domestic Violence and its Effect on Children
- C-3. What to Expect when DFCS has a Report of Abuse or Neglect on your Foster Home
- C-4. Celebrating the Holidays with Youth in Care: The Dos and Don'ts
- C-5. The Importance of Educational Advocacy for Georgia's Most Vulnerable Youth

Workshop D:

- D-1. Why Doesn't my Child Act their Age? - The Impact of Trauma on Kids Critical Thinking
- D-2. Navigating Confidentiality and Access to Information
- D-3. Inclusive Approach to Skincare and Haircare for all Ages
- D-4. Helping Adoptive Families Understand the Importance of Birth Family Connections
- D-5. Domestic Violence and its Effect on Children

Note: When filling out your Conference Registration Form, you will be asked to choose two selections for each workshop session (A-D). Remember to register early for the best selections of workshops as classes are limited in size. You can find a detailed workshop description and presenter information on pages 15-22 of this booklet.

**The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's
Annual Educational Conference 2025
Conference Registration Form**

Please fill out a separate form for each person registering.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ County: _____ Region: _____

Please Select One:

Adoptive Parent Foster Parent Kinship Caregiver DFCS Staff Private Agency
Other

Friday: Workshop Session A

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Friday: Workshop Session B

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Saturday: Workshop Session C

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Saturday: Workshop Session D

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Is this your first time attending the AFPAG Education Conference? Yes _____ No _____

**The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's
Annual Education Conference 2025
Hotel Information**

You are responsible for making your own hotel reservations. Please tell the hotel you are with the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG) Conference that takes place Feb. 21-23, 2025. All hotel reservations must be made by the deadline provided. All hotels will **require** a one-night deposit upon booking.

Villas by the Sea

Address: 1175 North Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527

Phone: 1-912-635-2521

Deadline: Jan. 20, 2025

Mini-Villa Studio: \$155.00

One Bedroom Villa: \$159.00 (Island Side); \$179.00 (Ocean Side); \$165.00 (Ocean View)

Two Bedroom Villa: \$195.00 (Island Side); \$105.00 (Ocean Side); \$225.00 (Ocean View)

Three Bedroom Villa: \$229.00 (Island Side); \$249.00 (Ocean Side); \$259.00 (Ocean View)

Holiday Inn & Suites

Address: 701 North Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527

Phone: 1-912-635-2211

Deadline: Jan. 22, 2025

Island View: \$169.00

Oversize Ocean Front: \$179.00

Ocean Front Suites: \$209.00

Home 2 Suites

Address: 101 Ocean Way Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527

Phone: 1-912-319-6019

Deadline: Jan. 12, 2025

King Studio: \$159.00

2 Queen Beds Studio: \$159.00

Westin Hotel

Address: 110 Ocean Way Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527

Phone: 1-888-627-8316/912-635-4545

Deadline: Jan. 22, 2025

Island View: \$189.00

Partial Ocean View: \$205.00

Ocean View: \$225.00

Premium Ocean Front Rooms: \$245.00

Residence Inn Hotel

Address: 178 South Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527

Phone: 912-635-2764

Deadline: Jan. 19, 2025

Island View Studio: \$209.00

Ocean View Studio: \$219.00

Hampton Inn & Suites**Address: 260 South Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527****Phone: 1-912-635-3733****Deadline: Jan. 23, 2025**

Standard Room - Two Queen Beds: \$165.00

Standard King Room - One King Bed: \$165.00

Double Queen Suite: \$185.00

King Suite: \$175.00

Courtyard**Address: 178 South Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527****Phone: 1-912-635-2416****Deadline: Jan. 19, 2025**

Island View: \$179.00

Ocean View: \$189.00

Ocean Front: \$209.00

Days Inn & Suites**Address: 60 South Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527****Phone: 1-912-635-9800****Deadline: Jan 1, 2025**

Ocean Side Ground Floor: \$175.00

Island Side Ground Floor: \$165.00

Island Side Second Floor: \$165.00

Jekyll Island Club & Resort**Address: 371 Riverview Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527****Phone: 1-800-535-9547/912-635-2600****Deadline: Jan. 21, 2025**

Island Side Traditional: \$159.00

Island Side Premium/Deluxe: \$189.00

Seafarer Inn & Suites**Address: 700 North Beach View Drive Jekyll Island, Georgia 31527****Phone: 912-635-2202****Deadline: Jan. 24, 2025**

One King Bed: \$159.00

2 Queen Beds: \$159.00

2 Double Beds Suite: \$195.00

2 Bedroom Suite with Full Kitchen: \$225.00

2025 Adoptive Parent of the Year Application

Note: The nominee must be a member of AFPAG and in good standing with both AFPAG and DFCS. All applications must be received by **Feb. 1, 2025**. Please mail the nomination form and accompanying documents to 101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419. The winner must attend the AFPAG Awards Luncheon on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, from 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

Name of Nominator: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

References for Verification

Note: Please attach the following references to this nomination form upon submission. These references are required for the nomination to be considered.

- DFCS staff member reference
- DFCS county director letter

Nomination Form Questions

Note: Please answer the following questions about the nominee and attach your responses to this nomination form upon submission. These questions are required for completion of the nomination form.

- What makes this adoptive family and/or parent the best in Georgia?
- Is the nominee a member of any community organizations or civic clubs?

2025 Foster Parent of the Year Application

Note: The nominee must be a member of AFPAG and in good standing with both AFPAG and DFCS. All applications must be received by **Feb. 1, 2025**. Please mail the nomination form and accompanying documents to 101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419. The winner must attend the AFPAG Awards Luncheon on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, from 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

Name of Nominator: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

References for Verification

Note: Please attach the following references to this nomination form upon submission. These references are required for the nomination to be considered.

- Case Manager
- Resource Development Worker

Nomination Form Questions

Note: Please answer the following questions about the nominee and attach your responses to this nomination form upon submission. These questions are required for completion of the nomination form.

- What makes this caregiver the best foster parent in Georgia?
- Is the nominee a member of any community organizations or civic clubs?

2025 Caseworker of the Year Application

Note: The nominee must be in good standing with both AFPAG and DFCS. All applications must be received by **Feb. 1, 2025**. Please mail the nomination form and accompanying documents to 101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419. The winner must attend the AFPAG Awards Luncheon on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, from 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

Name of Nominator: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

References for Verification

Note: Please attach the following references to this nomination form upon submission. These references are required for the nomination to be considered.

- Nominator (You)
- Local Adoptive and Foster Parent Association
- DFCS County Director

Nomination Form Questions

Note: Please answer the following questions about the nominee and attach your responses to this nomination form upon submission. These questions are required for completion of the nomination form.

- What makes this individual the best caseworker in Georgia?
- Is the nominee a member of any community organizations or civic clubs?

2025 Association of Excellence Award Application

Note: All applications must be received by **Feb. 1, 2025**. Please mail the nomination form and accompanying documents to 101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419. The winner must attend the AFPAG Awards Luncheon on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025, from 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Name of Association: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

Name of Nominator: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

County: _____ Phone: _____ Region: _____

References for Verification

Note: Please attach the following references to this nomination form upon submission. These references are required for the nomination to be considered.

- Nominator (You)
- Local Adoptive and Foster Parent Association President
- County DFCS staff member

Nomination Form Questions

Note: Please answer the following questions about the nominee and attach your responses to this nomination form upon submission. These questions are required for completion of the nomination form.

- What makes this local association the best in Georgia?

Adoptive and Foster Parent of Georgia's Winnie Levinson Scholarship Application

The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is awarded to deserving students who are Georgia residents and are in foster care. Their caregiver must be a member of the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia (AFPAG). The Winnie Levinson Scholarship is sent directly to the student to use for any educational purpose the student may need. It is payable in two payments, one at the start of the fall semester and one at the start of the spring semester. Proof of enrollment is needed before payment can be issued.

The applicant does not need to attend a traditional school. Enrollment at a technical school, business school, or a post-secondary school would also qualify for the scholarship. We encourage all those qualified to apply.

This year, AFPAG will award two \$1,000 scholarships.

All information included below is needed to process the scholarship application. All applications must be received by **Feb. 1, 2025**. Please mail the nomination form and accompanying documents to 101 Windsor Road, Savannah, GA 31419.

- Personal Data: Name, Physical Address, Email Address, and Phone Number.
- Recommendation letters from three people who do not live with the applicant and have known the applicant for a minimum of one year.
- One recommendation from the applicant's local DFCS office. This recommendation must be on agency letterhead.
- A 500-word essay on why the applicant should receive this scholarship.
- A copy of the applicant's high school transcript.
- A letter from one of the applicant's caregivers sharing why the applicant should receive this scholarship.

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference 2025 Additional Workshop Information

**Workshop A
Friday, Feb. 21, 2025
10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

A-1. Parenting Children Diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

Presenter: Mark Andrews, Founder/Director of Adoptive Family Resources

Description: This workshop will explore the background issues involved in this ever-lasting diagnosis, including how the child's thinking and behavior patterns are adversely affected by alcohol exposure in-utero. Practical suggestions and approaches for parents will be presented and discussed, including case studies.

A-2. Navigating Confidentiality and Access to Information

Presenters: Jerry Bruce, Director of the Office of the Child Advocate, and Angela Tyner, Advocacy Director at Georgia CASA

Description: Foster Parents and other participants in the juvenile court and foster care system often struggle with gaining access to information. Despite statutory provisions designed to ensure that foster parents and other caregivers have information to help them understand the "big picture" of the case, as well as what to expect day-to-day, this information is not always provided. This situation leaves foster parents and other caregivers struggling to provide care and assurance to the children in their home. This workshop will provide in-depth information on confidentiality and access to information and will answer frequently asked questions.

A-3. Taking Care of You – Self-care for Foster and Adoptive Parents

Presenter: Kathryn R. Ricks, Amerigroup Representative

Description: After this training caregivers will know more about stress and its causes, the symptoms of stress, and the importance of self-care. There will be discussion around barriers to self-care, particularly as a caregiver. The presentation will also provide tips for caregivers and links to resources for self-care.

A-4. The Long Journey from Foster Care to Adoption

Presenter: Juli Wilkes Wisotsky, President of the Georgia Council of Adoption Lawyers

Description: Explore the juvenile court process from the time a child is taken into care through the adoption stage and learn about superior court and how that differs from juvenile court. This session will answer common questions caregivers have about court and the judicial process. This workshop will provide attendees with an overview of both juvenile and superior court (foster and adoption) and introduce helpful post-adoption resources.

A-5. Helping Adoptive Families Understand the Importance of Birth Family Connections

Presenters: Challah Ford and Alissa Kautz, Regional Adoption Coordinators with Georgia DFCS

Description: This presentation is about supporting and keeping birth family connections. We will focus on the "how to" of best practices and policy around connections. We will also take a dive into the research around outcomes when connections are kept and supported. We will collaborate with attendees to strategize when things get tough. While this training will be geared toward adoption, we will also explore connections while in care in foster homes.

Workshop B
Friday, Feb. 21, 2025
3:15-4:45 p.m.

B-1. Financial Aid for Foster Students (Georgia ETV)

Presenters: Jason Bedgood and Arden Bakarich, Education and Training Voucher Program Staff

Description: Join us for an insightful session on "Financial Aid for Foster Students: Georgia ETV." Learn how foster youth can access up to \$12,500 annually through the Georgia Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program and explore strategies to boost financial literacy. We will also highlight Embark Georgia, a statewide initiative expanding college access for foster and homeless youth. This session is ideal for educators, social workers, and advocates looking to support foster youth in achieving higher education and financial success.

B-2. GoMo Health and Amerigroup

Presenter: Bob Gold, CEO of GoMo Health

Description: The Amerigroup Virtual Assistant works by meeting parents and youth where they are, via their cell phone, through simple SMS and text messages (no APP to download) to provide support through information sharing, enhancing decision-making skills, and personalized guidance towards your own achievable goals and outcomes. The program offers numerous benefits for parents, youth, and families by providing consistent engagement, real-time connections, and proactive interventions. It educates and supports various needs including mental health, physical health, social services, and life skills, beginning with enrollment, and continuing with personalized support based on your individual needs, situation, and feedback.

B-3. CPS Intake Communication Center and You

Presenters: Nicole McDougald, Program Director of the DFCS CPS Intake Communication Center and Marva Reed, Director of the DFCS CPS Intake Communication Center

Description: Making a DFCS report can be a scary proposition. This workshop will cover who should make a DFCS report, how the report should be made, what information to include, and what happens after the report is made.

B-4. Bikers Against Child Abuse

Presenters: Brad Hayes, Stephen Tiller, and Betty Herring, Bikers Against Child Abuse Representatives

Description: Bikers Against Child Abuse (B.A.C.A.) exists with the intent to create a safer environment for children. B.A.C.A. is an organization of bikers who help empower children to not feel afraid of the world in which they live in. Two B.A.C.A. members are assigned as the child's primary contacts. They will remain in close contact with the child. They support each child based upon the child's needs. B.A.C.A. is available to go with your child to court and parole hearings. They also work in conjunction with local and state officials who are already in place to protect children.

B-5. Parenting the Parentified Child

Presenter: Mark Andrews, Founder/Director of Adoptive Family Resources

Description: Parentified children and kids who have, through mere survival in their original homes, been forced to "take charge" of their and (their young siblings') lives. This workshop will illustrate the challenges presented by parentified children in care. We will also discuss practical approaches and strategies for foster and adoptive parents to help these children in learning to trust a new, safe, authority figure and in turn just learn how to be a kid.

Workshop C
Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025
9:45-11:15 a.m.

C-1. Amerigroup Georgia Families 360 Overview

Presenters: April Mayo and Ron Dunham, Amerigroup Representatives

Description: In this training, you will learn about the Amerigroup health care benefits and the value-added benefits. We will introduce the Care Coordination team and describe their role. We will also educate you about the Amerigroup pharmacy and formulary process and discuss prior authorization steps and other health insurance.

C-2. Domestic Violence and its Effect on Children

Presenters: Hailey Thorpe and Daisy Hernandez, Child Advocates at SAFE Shelter

Description: Experiencing domestic violence can be harmful to a child's growth and development, posing risk for behavioral issues and their physical and mental health. The information provided includes topics such as: development issues, emotional reactions and behaviors, and parenting methods to help communicate with children about their feelings. Through this workshop, our aim is to inform parents, caregivers, child care center staff, school personnel, social service providers, and any other professionals looking to understand their behavior, through a trauma-informed approach.

C-3. What to Expect When DFCS has a Report of Abuse or Neglect on your Foster Home

Presenters: Nicole McDougald, Program Director of the DFCS CPS Intake Communication Center and Marva Reed, Director of the DFCS CPS Intake Communication Center

Description: Foster parents step up and take in vulnerable children who have suffered abuse and or neglect. Often, the trauma the children bring with them to the foster home can escalate into a report of abuse or neglect at the foster home. This session will cover the investigation process from the receipt of the intake on the foster home, through the expectations during the CPS investigation process, and will conclude with the outcome option for the investigation.

C-4. Celebrating the Holidays with Youth in Care: The Do's and Don'ts

Presenters: Regina Hayes and Bethany Jackson with Elks Aidmore Inc.

Description: We will explore how to make various holidays and events successful with your children in care and family and friends. We will talk about incorporating the children's traditions with your families, including them in your family's traditions, as well as being sensitive to the family-centric things that holidays can bring up for our children in care.

C-5. The Importance of Educational Advocacy for Georgia's Most Vulnerable Youth

Presenter: Robin Brooks, Director of DFCS' Education Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) Unit

Description: The Educational Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) is an academic support team within the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) that focuses on improving the academic outcomes and achievements of children and youth in foster care. EPAC services works collaboratively with other DFCS state and county offices to ensure the educational well-being of children and youth in foster carer is being met. During this workshop we will provide an overview of EPAC services, discuss the importance of educational stability, review the importance of educational advocacy for our youth in care while exploring educational challenges, and provide tips for advocating for youth in care.

Workshop D
Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025
1:45-3:15 p.m.

D-1. Why Doesn't My Child Act Their Age? - The Impact of Trauma on Kids Critical Thinking

Presenter: Mark Andrews, Founder/Director of Adoptive Family Resources

Description: You've likely experienced this scenario: You have a 10-year-old child in your home who has the "street smarts" of a 25-year-old, but only the emotional intelligence and/or maturity of a 5-year-old. This workshop illustrates how past trauma experienced by children in care affects their brain development; and in turn adversely affects their decision making and impulse-control abilities. A practical tool for the parenting toolbox will be shared on how foster and adoptive parents can address this challenge.

D-2. Navigating Confidentiality and Access to Information

Presenters: Jerry Bruce, Director of the Office of the Child Advocate, and Angela Tyner, Advocacy Director at Georgia CASA

Description: Foster Parents and other participants in the juvenile court and foster care system often struggle with gaining access to information. Despite statutory provisions designed to ensure that foster parents and other caregivers have information to help them understand the "big picture" of the case, as well as what to expect day-to-day, this information is not always provided. This situation leaves foster parents and other caregivers struggling to provide care and assurance to the children in their home. This workshop will provide in-depth information on confidentiality and access to information and will answer frequently asked questions.

D-3. Inclusive Approaches to Skincare and Haircare for all Ages

Presenter: Kimberly Cutter-Williams, Facilitator/Educator with The Kimberly Group

Description: This course is designed to equip foster parents with the knowledge and skills needed to provide inclusive and personalized skincare and haircare for children of all ages and diverse backgrounds. With a focus on cultural sensitivity, age-appropriate routines, and unique needs of children in foster care, participants will explore best practice for keeping healthy skin and hair, while fostering self-esteem and positive identity development. Topics covered include common skincare concerns, textured and curly hair care techniques, and how to choose products suitable for various skin types and hair textures. By the end of the course, foster parents will have practical strategies to ensure every child in their care feels nurtured, confident, and seen.

D-4. Helping Adoptive Families Understand the Importance of Birth Family Connections

Presenters: Challah Ford and Alissa Kautz, Regional Adoption Coordinators with Georgia DFCS

Description: This presentation is about supporting and keeping birth family connections. We will focus on the "how to" of best practices and policy around connections. We will also take a dive into the research around outcomes when connections are kept and supported. We will collaborate with attendees to strategize when things get tough. While this training will be geared towards adoption, we will also explore connections while in care in foster homes.

D-5. Domestic Violence and its Effects on Children

Presenters: Hailey Thorpe and Daisy Hernandez, Child Advocates at SAFE Shelter

Description: Experiencing domestic violence can be harmful to a child's growth and development, posing risk for behavioral issues and their physical and mental health. The information provided includes topics such as: development issues, emotional reactions and behaviors, and parenting methods to help communicate with children about their feelings. Through this workshop, our aim is to inform parents, caregivers, childcare center staff, school personnel, social service providers, and any other professionals looking to understand their behavior, through a trauma-informed approach.

The Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Annual Education Conference 2025 Speakers' Biographies

Andrews, Mark: Dr. Mark Andrews is the Founder/Director of Adoptive Family Resources (AFR) in Newnan, Georgia. He, and his wife Lisa, have two children (now adults) whom they adopted from India. Prior to starting AFR in 2018, Dr. Andrews worked as a therapist for 30 years in the mental health field in a variety of settings. He has worked with many foster and adoptive families. A trained TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) Practitioner, Dr. Andrews provides staff and parent training, support groups, and parent-to-parent coaching for foster and adoption agencies and on an independent referral basis.

Bakarich, Ardan: Arden Bakarich works in youth leadership with a focus on supporting youth in foster care through the Education and Training Voucher Program. Her role involves the management of hundreds of eligible student accounts, coordination with state specialists and post-secondary institutions to verify student aid needs, and documentation management to support financial aid. She also serves as a support for the Embark program. Before joining the Fanning Institutions, Arden worked in community outreach and child advocacy at Athens-Oconee CASA. After five years of services to the local child welfare community, she is excited to transition into Fanning and learn new ways to support vulnerable young adults.

Bedgood, Jason: Jason Bedgood works in youth leadership with a focus on supporting youth through the Education and Training Voucher Program. He also supports youth leadership programs that serve the State of Georgia and surrounding areas. This includes working with the planning team and providing accounting support, logistical management, problematic assessment, and reporting. In addition, he assists in community development, professional development, and other projects designed to enhance leadership awareness and skills development throughout Georgia. Outside of his time at Fanning, Jason supports area youth programs by serving as a community coach for local high schools and recreation departments, and he leads the ninth-grade group at a local church.

Brooks, Robin: Robin Brooks is currently the Director of the Education Programming, Assessment and Consultation (EPAC) unit within the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS). She has been with DFCS for over 10 years. She was an Education Support Monitor for five years before being promoted to District Education Manager for the North District. Robin and her team advocate for the educational well-being of the youth in foster care. Robin currently holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in mathematics. Robin has a passion for education and believes every child should have the opportunity to gain experience and be the best that he or she can be.

Bruce, Jerry: Jerry Bruce has been a parent attorney, guardian attorney, prosecuting attorney, delinquency and adult defender, Special Assistant Attorney General representing Georgia's child welfare agency, and juvenile court judge. He is an adjunct professor at Emory Law School, a regular guest lecturer for the Barton Child Law and Policy Center, and regularly speaks, writes, and teaches on child welfare issues. Most recently, he served as the director of the Georgia Supreme Court Committee on Justice for Children (CJP) before continuing his child welfare practice, law, and policy work as the Director of the Office of the Child Advocate.

Ford, Challah: Challah Ford has a master's in social work. She has been employed with DFCS for over 19 years, with two years of CPS experience in Dallas, Texas. She previously worked with DeKalb County in foster care and adoption as a case manager and supervisor for six years. She currently serves as a Regional Adoption Coordinator for Clayton, Cobb, and Fulton counties, where she oversees children legally free for adoption.

Dunham, Ronald: Ronald Dunham is a community relations representative with Amerigroup. He started in January of 2014, after working 10 years with Chatham County DFCS. Mr. Dunham is originally from Hardeeville, South Carolina. He is a 1995 graduate from Jasper County High School and a 1999 graduate from the University of South Carolina. He is married and the father of four children. He is a deacon at the Christ Memorial Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia. Ron enjoys reading, investing, and sports, but spending time with his family is what he enjoys the most.

Gold, Bob: Bob Gold is the world's leading behavior technologists with more than 20 years applied research and development in the behavioral and cognitive science of human motivation, activation and resiliency; with a specialty in the design of clinical care plans and digital therapeutic that integrate psycho-social factors and personal determination into physical and behavioral care plan for chronic and complex population health management; with a focus in diversity, equity, and inclusion for underserved vulnerable populations.

Hayes, Regina: Regina Hayes retired from DFCS in December 2023, after 20 years. She worked in all services programs, but her specialty was working with foster parents. She currently works with Elks Aidmore Inc. as a recruiter and is enjoying her new experience working in the private sector.

Hayes, Brad: Brad Hayes is a member of Bikers Against Child Abuse (B.A.C.A.). He serves as the Georgia State President, and Little River Chapter Vice President in Valdosta, Georgia.

Hernandez, Daisy: Daisy Hernandez is the Director of Domestic Violence Services at SAFE Shelter, Center for Domestic Violence in Savannah, Georgia. Daisy graduated from Savannah State University with a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in psychology. Shortly after graduating, she moved to Savannah, Georgia to pursue a career in social services. She started with the Georgia Division of Family & Children Services as a Family Preservation Case Manager. She has also worked with Recovery Place, Inc. as a case manager with a focus on therapeutic child care, the Youth Advocate Program, and SAFE Shelter as the Child Advocate. She has over 18 years of experience working with children who have either experience domestic violence, neglect, substance abuse, or other traumatic events in their lives. She strives to bring healing to those who have experience trauma and stress due to domestic violence.

Herring, Betty: Betty Herring is a member of Bikers Against Child Abuse (B.A.C.A.). She serves as the Georgia State Treasurer, and Hooch Chapter Treasurer in Braselton, Georgia.

Jackson, Bethany: Bethany Jackson has 20 years of experience in child welfare and developmental disabilities. She has worked for Elks Aidmore Inc. since 2017. She enjoys recruiting and training foster parents.

Kautz, Alissa: Alissa Kautz has been employed with DFCS for 22 years. She currently serves as a Regional Adoption Coordinator and has previous experience as a foster care case manager in Henry County and supervisor for all program areas in Crawford County. She oversees children that are legally free for adoption in region six, which is on average about 250 cases a month. She is the parent of three adopted kids from foster care with childhood trauma.

McDougald, Nicole: Nicole McDougald is a Program Director with the Child Protective Services Intake Communication Center (CICC) with Georgia DFCS. Nicole manages the Information and Technology at CICC, the Bibb Call Center, and provides oversight and staffing for intake involving serious injuries, near fatalities, and child deaths. In addition to her CICC duties, she also provides consultation on child abuse and neglect assessments as requested, partners with CACGA, and is part of the newly formed Special Victims Unit within DHS. She is a graduate of the University of Georgia where she received bachelor's degrees in psychology and sociology. She also has a master's degree in social work. Nicole has 23 years of professional experience in social services, including work in a hospital emergency department and with DFCS. Nicole's career at DFCS has spanned 22 years and includes front line case management and supervision in all child welfare program areas. She also managed the Special Investigations Unit for the State of Georgia. She is passionate about advocating for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.

Ricks, Kathryn: Kathryn Ricks has been with Amerigroup since February 2022. She has a strong passion for advocating for families and youth to help them live to their full potential. Kathryn has worked with foster and adoption services since 2011 with a child placement agency in multiple capacities. She is a graduate of Georgia Southwestern State University where she obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology in May 2007. She went on to matriculate from TOY University in December 2009 with a master's in counseling psychology. Kathryn believes that people perish from lack of knowledge. So, one way to advocate, is to educate youth and those they interact with them. Another way is to have a seat at the table and become a change agent.

Reed, Marva: Marva Reed is the Director of the CPS Intake Communication Center (CICC) with Georgia DFCS. Marva is a graduate of the University of West Georgia, where she received a bachelor's degree in psychology. She is also a graduate of Troy State University, where she received a master's degree in counseling and human development. She is currently pursuing her PHD in Industrial Organization Psychology. Marva has over 30 years of professional experience in social services, child welfare, and human service delivery programs. While with DFCS she started as a case manager, gained experience in all program areas, and move into supervision in 2000. Since that time, she has served in leadership roles with the revenue maximization section and the provider relations unit, and as a consultant with the field assessment and support team. Her diverse knowledge and experience continued to be valuable while serving as the Muscogee County DFCS Director, the Region 8 DFCS Director, and as the Director of Family and Child Well-Being. Marva has constantly demonstrated the ability to lead change while maintaining the agency's vision and mission. No matter the role she is in, she is continuously working hard to ensure the safety of all children within the state and beyond.

Spooner, Tacia: Tacia Spooner is the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Director for Georgia DFCS. During her tenure with DFCS, she has served as a CPS case manager in Fulton and Cobb counties and led statewide initiatives aimed at improving child safety and family well-being. Tacia spearheaded the development of Georgia's Child Abuse Registry, Kinship Care Services, and the implementation of the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) for foster and adoptive families. Tacia embeds partnership development and community engagement in every aspect of her career and her local community.

Stafford, Bettie: Dr. Bettie Stafford received a bachelor's degree in political science from Savannah State University and a master's in education from Valdosta State University. She also received her doctorate from NOVA Southeastern University in early and middle childhood education. Currently, she works with Albany State University as an Assistant Professor in the Education Department. She is the graduate advisor, and Elementary Education Coordinator. She is the Adoptive and Foster Parent Association of Georgia's Regional Advocate for Region 10. She is an Education Specialist with EPAC and a Certified Impact Class Trainer. Dr. Stafford is also a foster parent.

Thorpe, Hailey: Hailey Thorpe is a native of Savannah, Georgia. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of Coastal Georgia and a master's in social work from Savannah State University. After college, she began her career in social work as a Child Advocate at SAFE Shelter's Center for Domestic Violence Services. Hailey has four years of social work experience. She has a sincere passion for advocating for disadvantaged youth and providing them with the tools and resources necessary to thrive in challenging environments.

Tiller, Stephen: Stephen Tiller is a member of Bikers Against Child Abuse (B.A.C.A.). He is the Georgia State Secretary, and the Two River Chapter President in Savannah, Georgia

Tyner, Angela: Angela Tyner has been the Advocacy Director for Georgia CASA since 2004. In her role, she provides technical assistance and consultation to the CASA network and participates in and contributes to policy and legislative reform efforts. She educates CASA staff and volunteers on juvenile court dependency practice and procedure and strengthening best interest advocacy. She also serves on statewide task forces, committees, and workgroups driving systemic child welfare improvement. Angela is enthusiastic about quality legal representation for all parties in dependency proceedings. She received her bachelor's degree in english from the University of Georgia, and her Juris Doctor from Mercer Law. She has been a certified Child Welfare Law Specialist since 2017.

Williams-Cutter, Kimberly: Kimberly Williams-Cutter is a dynamic facilitator and educator with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Saint Leo University and a master's degree in education from Georgia Southern University. She also holds a cosmetology diploma from Savannah Technical College and a teaching certificate. With 30 years of experience as a licensed master cosmetologist and two decades as a licensed state educator, Kimberly is passionate advocate for career, technical, and agricultural (CTAE) pathways. She is committed to empowering professionals, organizations, and institutions through tailored resources and support. The Kimberly Group, a training and consulting organization aimed at supporting organizations and institutions' personal and professional development. Kimberly's teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that education is a tool for empowerment. As she often reminds her students and clients, "The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see." – Alexander K. Trenfor.

Wilkes-Wisotsky, Juli: Juli Wilkes-Wisotsky is a native of Jefferson, Georgia. She has practiced law since 1996. A graduate of the University of Georgia School of Law, she began focusing her practice solely on adoption in 2010. Juli has helped complete hundreds of adoptions and is the current president of the Georgia Council of Adoption Lawyers. She is particularly interested in the concerns of children in care within Georgia and loves to complete foster care adoptions. Juli has been a foster parent herself and has served on the Board of Chosen for Life, an adoption ministry located in the Watkinsville/Athens, Georgia area. In summer 2023, Juli was appointed by Georgia's Lieutenant Governor to serve on a study committee on how to improve the foster care and adoption process.