

Families First Programs

Child & Youth Permanency

Georgia Center for Adoption and Foster Care Resources

The Center is a state wide project funded by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, and presented by Families First in collaboration with Bethany Christian Services. The purpose of the Center is to increase resources and supportive services for adoptive and foster families. Services include referrals and supportive services through the statewide advisors, numerous training and education events, support groups, comprehensive website of adoption resources, adoption and foster care family events and activities, lending library, and dedicated chat rooms.

Adoption Services

Adoption Work-Life Program: Through phone consultations and related educational strategies, this program educates individuals nationally about how to adopt a child from other states. In Georgia, adoption seminars are requested by organizations and held in places of employment.

Domestic Home Study and Post Placement Program: This program provides services to individuals, couples and families seeking to adopt a child within the United States. The services provided include parent training and preparation, home studies, placement approval, as well as post-adoption services including post placement reports and supervision. This program does not place children for adoption, but works in collaboration with the client's domestic placement resource.

Foster to Adopt Program: In our continued effort to ensure all children have a "forever family" our foster to adopt program provides services and support to foster parents who are seeking to adopt their foster child(ren). Services include foster parents support and supervision as well as adoptive services including parent training and preparation, home studies, placement approval and post adoption services including post placement reports and supervision.

International Home Study and Post Placement Program: Services including parent training and preparation, home studies, placement approval, and post adoption services such as post placement reports and supervision are available to individuals, couples and families seeking to adopt a child outside of the United States. . This program does not place children for adoption, but works closely with the client's international placement resource.

Special Needs Adoption Program: In collaboration with state child welfare agencies, Families First provides services to individuals, couples, and families seeking to adopt a child from the state foster care system including recruitment, parent training and preparation, home studies, placement approval, and post adoption services including post placement reports and supervision.

Foster Care

Families First's foster care program provides safe and temporary homes for children in Georgia's foster care system. Our staff provides foster families with the additional resources they need to be successful including: free training, support services, and 24 hour access to our Case Specialists.

Placement to Permanency

The Placement to Permanency Initiative seeks to empower youth in foster care to take an active role in developing lifelong familial connections that will provide them with an emotional and/or legal commitment. To accomplish this goal, Families First, in partnership with DFCS, utilizes two specific program components: *Family Finding and Kinship Navigator*. *Family-Finding* and *Kinship Navigator* services assists youth in locating and connecting with family members and/or kinship relations who are able to give long-term emotional, economic and housing support. These intensive services also help permanency caregivers secure the benefits, services and supports they need to care for the youth.

Permanency Cooperatives

We've traded the concept of "group homes" -- laden with negative imagery, for the more positive philosophy of a *cooperative* -- where agency, community, family and state come together to ensure that community involvement is an integral part of the cooperative experience for our youth, and that those supports will continue after they leave our care. Families First has four Permanency Cooperatives located in Metro Atlanta that offer supportive care for male and female youth between the ages of 13-20. Each cooperative can serve between six to seven teens.

Reunion Registry

This is a state-wide program that employs education strategies to provide service to birth parents, adopted persons, adoptive parents, and siblings. Services include non-identifying information to adult adopted persons and parents of minors, search services to adult adopted persons, birth parents, and adult siblings, registration services to birth parents, and counseling and intermediary services. This program also provides phone or in-person consultations at no charge to anyone in the United States who is dealing with search and reunion issues.

Whatley-Showell Center – A Second Chance Home

A Second Chance Home offers housing and support services for teen mothers between the ages of 13 to 19 with one child between infancy to pre-school age. The program assists young mothers between the ages of 13 to 19 in developing parenting skills, completing their education and becoming self-sufficient.

Youth Independent Living Program & Transitional Living Services

The Independent Living Program provides supportive services to clients transitioning out of the foster care system. Youth ages 18 to 21 years of age live in supervised apartments while learning a variety of life skills to assist in their transition to adulthood.

Supportive Housing

Project GROW (Goals, Responsibilities, Opportunities and Well-Being) at DeLowe Village

The program operates in partnership with the DeLowe Village apartment complex in East Point, and serves homeless people suffering from mental illness, substance abuse and/or HIV/AIDS and their families. The goal of Project GROW is to reduce and eliminate substance dependency and use, achieve mental and emotional stability and move toward long term stable housing. Support services include individual and family counseling, substance abuse treatment services and intensive case management. In addition, families are assisted with critical services including: transportation, parenting classes, life skills development, accessing resources in the community, childcare arrangement assistance, and after-school academic enrichment and tutoring for children. The program provides a healthy environment as parents transition from rehabilitation to self-sufficiency and promotes child safety, development and well-being.

Residential Support Services

Through a series of life skills seminars and program activities, this community-based program is designed to improve economic self-sufficiency, tenant-landlord relations and overall quality of life among residents in partnership with owners/managers of mixed income communities and affordable housing. The program equips parents and children with critical skills for building assets to achieve their life goals and maintaining strong, healthy relationships.

Shelter-A-Family (SAF)

SAF pairs housing with support services for chronically homeless persons who are suffering from mental illness, substance abuse and/or HIV/AIDS and their families. The goals of SAF are to help individuals reduce and eliminate substance dependency and use, achieve mental and emotional stability, and move toward long term stable housing. In addition, the program seeks to promote child safety and development, and prevent future homelessness among children. SAF provides clients with accessible and intensive individual, family and group mental health counseling; substance abuse treatment services; case management; linkages to community services and resources; support in reconnecting with families; and developing networks of supports that will assist them in becoming economically independent and self-sufficient.

Weaver Gardens

Weaver Gardens is a transitional living home that provides efficiency apartments and supportive services for mothers aged 17 to 26 who were previously homeless and have one child less than a year old. The program provides young mothers and their babies a safe place to live; training and support in critical areas such as parenting skills, relationship building, child development, health and nutrition, and life skills; an opportunity to return to school or receive job training; and access to community resources. The goal of Weaver Gardens is to enhance the mothers parenting and life skills, and to develop long-term economic independence.

Parenting & Family Life Education

Healthy Babies and Moms

Doula: Doulas provide emotional and physical support to pregnant young mothers residing in Fulton and DeKalb Counties before, during and after the birth of her baby. Our bi-lingual Doulas educate young mothers on prenatal and infant care, breast-feeding and mother-baby bonding. The goal of the Doula program is to ensure mothers continue their education during and after pregnancy, and make informed choices about labor, delivery, nutrition, and parenting.

TeenAge Pregnancy and Parenting (TAPP): TAPP offers comprehensive case management and counseling services to pregnant teens through home and school visitation, service coordination, and parenting education until the first year of the babies' birth. Through TAPP, pregnant and parenting teens remain and progress in school, and learn essential parenting skills in order to become successful parents and adults.

School Success

Families First in Schools (FFIS): FFIS improves parent-child-school communication through a series of structured activities that encourage fun and supportive family interaction, parent networking and community-building, and relationships with school staff. The program is designed to increase academic performance, improve student behavior, and increase parental involvement in the school. FFIS is based on Families And Schools Together (FAST), an internationally-replicated, model program and curriculum for parents and family members serving birth through adolescence and high school.

Making It Safe to Learn (MISL): MISL teaches essential skills for healthy social and emotional development, including empathy, impulse control and anger management. The program is designed to promote social skills that support academics and form the foundation for happy, healthy kids who succeed. This universal prevention program is taught to every student in the classroom. The program is offered at four levels: Preschool/Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5 and Middle School/Junior High.

Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK): SPARK is designed to prepare children for success in school and increase parent involvement and leadership. The program assures school readiness and achievement among pre-school age children by engaging parents in home visitation, parent leadership, and pre-K and school transition planning. Families First's SPARK program also serves as a Learning Laboratory for communities that are planning or beginning to implement the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta's Early Learning Community-Based Partnerships (ELCBP) and the Smart Start School Readiness Initiative for Children.

Family Life & Parenting Education

Parenting Time (English & Spanish): Parenting Time facilitates communication and planning among custodial and non-custodial parents so that children have safe and consistent access to, and visitation with, both biological parents and family members. Parenting Time works to improve parents' understanding and support of their child's biological, psychological, emotional and social needs, and decrease the negative influences on the child related to parental separation and unresolved issues.

National TransParenting Program: TransParenting® was developed by Families First in response to requests from family courts to help divorcing parents recognize and minimize the stress of divorce on the entire family. The curriculum, workbooks, training, and certification are sold to agencies throughout the United States. For more information, visit: <http://www.transparenting.com>.

Seminars for Separating & Divorcing Parents: Seminars educate parents on the emotional reactions of children to separation and divorce and provide guidance for communications with children about divorce and helping them to cope with their emotions. Participants also receive tips for co-parenting and resources for additional information and support.

Children of Separating & Divorcing Parents: Through group discussion, structured exercises and therapeutic games, children experiencing parental separation or divorce are taught and encouraged to verbalize their feelings and learn new coping skills. RollerCoasters® is an eight-week curriculum for children ages 5 to 8 and children ages 9 to 12 (visit: <http://www.transparenting.com>). Families First also offers What About Me (WAM), a one-time group session that introduces the child to other children experiencing similar situations with the goal of reducing their sense of shame and isolation.

Parenting Classes: These classes will educate parents on the developmental stages of childhood, and the effect of biological and environmental factors on their child's development. Classes also examine parenting styles and practices. Parents receive concrete strategies for establishing appropriate and realistic expectations; responding to and managing their child's needs and behaviors; and developing norms for healthy family communication and teamwork.

Counseling & Support

Individual, Family, Marriage and Group Counseling (English and/or Spanish): Families First's counseling services assist children, parents, and families to express, understand and cope with the situations and events that cause them distress and challenge their ability to be healthy and well. The goal is to create or restore child and family functioning to their fullest potential and provide hope for a brighter future. Families First provides solution-focused counseling and therapy throughout Metro Atlanta in office settings, as well as at community-based sites in partnership with schools, community-based organizations, housing service agencies, and health centers.

Psycho-educational groups: Groups address the shared experiences, concerns and needs that cause distress, isolation and depression among children, parents and families. Groups create networks of support, identify coping strategies and build skills to adjust to life's changes, challenges, and traumas including death, suicide, childhood sexual abuse, family violence, abandonment, divorce, substance use and income loss.

Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP): FVIP helps participants acknowledge the impact of their violence on their families, accept responsibility for their violent behavior, and change violent behavior. FVIP is State-Certified and emphasizes victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Participation may be voluntary or court-ordered.

Anger Management: Anger Management classes assists participants in identifying personal triggers that lead to inappropriate social behavior, and practice ways of controlling their emotions before violence, or the threat of violence, begins.

Project Turning Point: Turning Point encourages individuals to develop strategies for recognizing and controlling negative impulses that result in unhealthy and harmful behavior. Through peer group discussion, beginning shoplifters work to identify and address the thought-processes that led to their behavior, and recognize the legal and social risks and consequences of their actions.

Substance Abuse Groups: These three-session groups enhance adults' awareness about their substance use and abuse issues including the impact of use on their children and families. Participants are given tools and resources to reduce and eliminate use, mend and repair relationships, and make positive changes in their lives.

Veteran Support: Our counselors assist veterans, families and communities to better cope with the stressors of military life during all phases of deployment and re-integration, as well as anxiety and grief caused by war-related disability, torture and loss of life. Families First is a member of the Veteran's Initiative Committee of Georgia, a collaborative of helping professionals who meet monthly to address and find solutions for the unique issues/needs of this population.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Families First assists employers and employees to address home, personal and workplace-related issues that can disrupt careers and jeopardize the income of families. Our EAP provides assessment, solution-focused counseling and referral services.