



**Tom Rawlings**

Director

## DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES



Tacia Estem is the Kinship Director for Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services. During her tenure in Georgia she served as a CPS case manager in Fulton and Cobb County prior to leading statewide safety related projects aimed at improving safety interventions and supports.

Ms. Estem spearheaded the development of Georgia's Child Abuse Registry, Kinship Navigator Program, and the statewide implementation of Georgia's Kinship Continuum. The vision of a Kinship Continuum will enable the Division to improve outcomes for children and provides full supports to kin caregivers. More importantly it will keep children connected to their families and communities.

Tacia embeds partnership development and community engagement in every aspect of her career, and she also facilitates family team meeting trainings, parent cafés, and prevention efforts in her personal community.

## DIVISION OF FAMILY & CHILDREN SERVICES



As a Native Georgian, Tripp began his career strengthening Georgia's families over 20 years ago. Mr. Jones is a proud graduate of the University of West Georgia as well as the DHS Leadership Academy and continues to serve children and families with his practical knowledge and experience in child welfare.

Mr. Jones is the co-developer of several successful regional and statewide initiatives in child welfare including, Georgia S.M.A.R.T, SBAR, and "Journey" a 16-week academy for New Supervisors.

Mr. Jones is the recipient of the "2015 Child Welfare Employee of the Year Award". From 2015 to 2018 Mr. Jones proudly served in the Education and Training Section as the Unit Manager of Georgia's newly adopted Child Welfare Practice Model and Coaches, which covered the North and Metro state districts. Currently Mr. Jones serves as the State Safety Services Manager.

Tripp is the youngest of two he's the proud brother of Crystal Carter Esq., and the son of Julia Mae and the late Edward Pledge Jones. During his spare time, Mr. Jones enjoys playing golf, refereeing basketball, whale watching, listening to jazz, researching, reading anything pertaining to child welfare, and spending time with his mother, family and friends. Mr. Jones likes to think of himself as an innovative "servant leader" and a "student of the work".

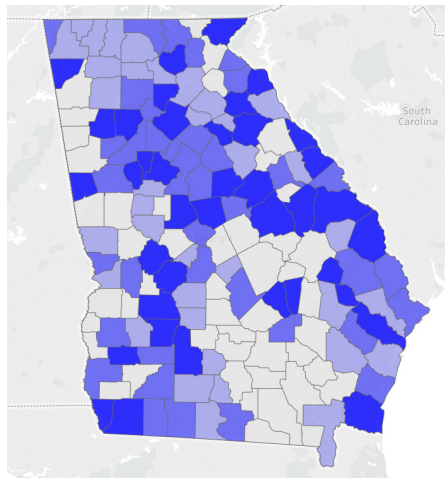
## Georgia's Partnership with Annie E. Casey

### Agency Readiness

- **Identified Practice Barriers and Needed Culture Shifts:**
  - *Lack of transparency with kin* – kin are not provided permanency/legal options as well differences in subsidy/support depending on the options. Safety resource is not fully explained to kin.
  - *No one owns kin* - both at the state and field levels, there are no identified champions who have the responsibility to promote and support kinship care
- **Building a kin first culture has to occur both within the agency and with stakeholders- Kin First State:**
  - Collaborative effort. We are all in this together, Worker, SAAGS, Court, and Providers.

# Too many children are living away from their families and communities

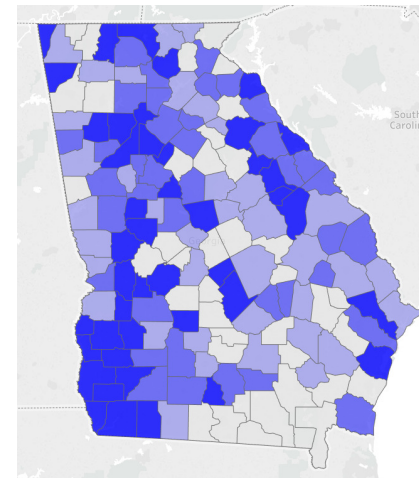
Number of Foster Home Beds per child 9/30/2016



0 – 0.44  
0.45 – 0.79  
0.80 – 1.28  
11.29 – 12.00

Aggregate data provided by DFCS analysts

% Children Placed 50+ miles from Removal ZIP 9/30/2016



0% – 9%  
10% – 17%  
18% – 26%  
27% – 88%



- Nearly **2200 children** are placed **50+ miles** from their home community
- Georgia has **less than 1 foster home per child** in non-kinship foster care
- Counties with the **fewest foster homes** tend to have the highest rates of **long-distance** placements

*“There were six of us--me and my two sisters went to one family, another sister went to another and we were all spread apart and could only see each other one day a week and couldn't even talk on the phone.”*

*“I can't see my brothers and sisters so they are going to put a date on when I can see all of them but it hasn't happened yet—so even when I say this is something I want, they don't always do it.”*

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A great deal can be achieved through a Kinship Continuum; however, it will require prioritizing this work and dedicating the necessary resources



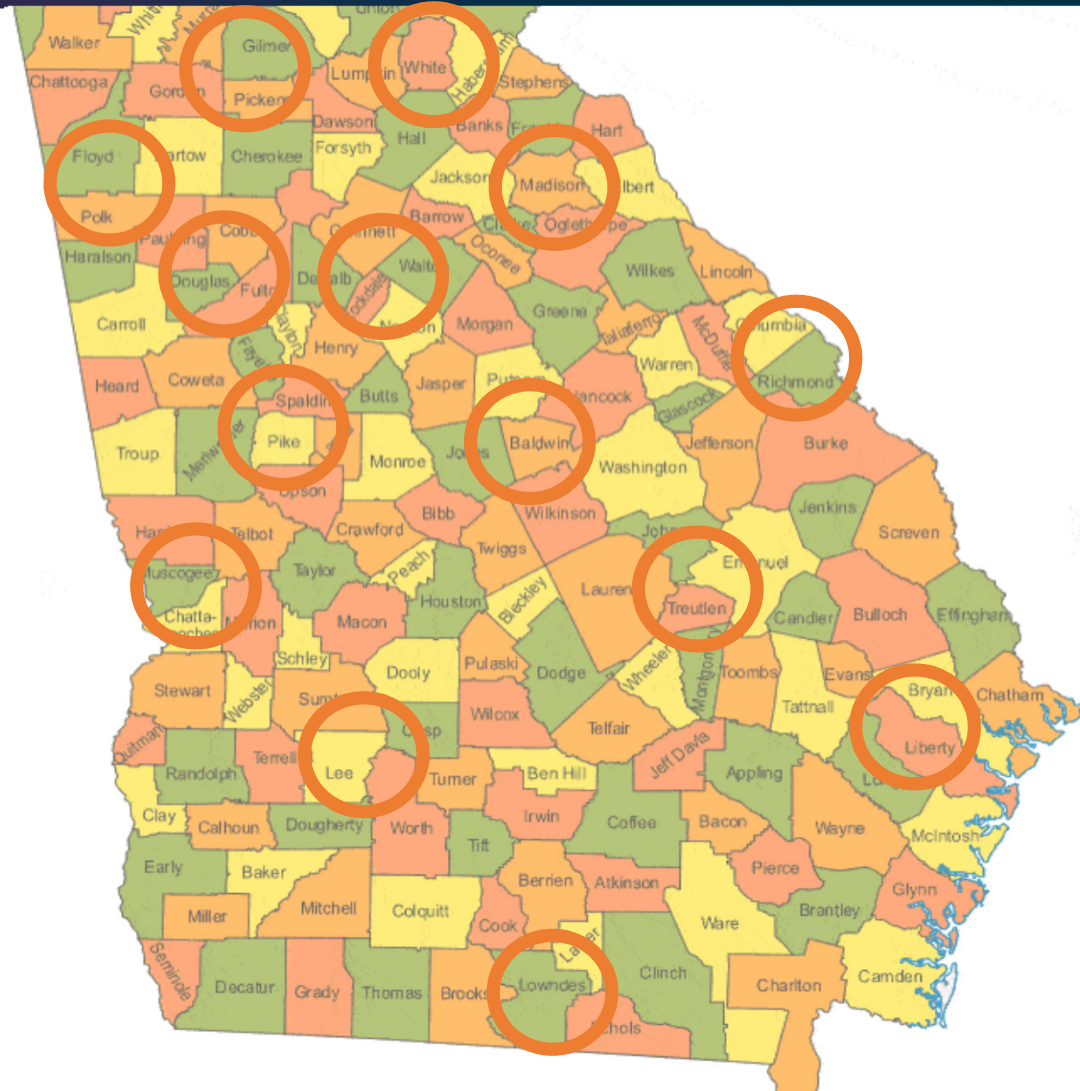
## Why is the Continuum Important?

- Implementation of Voluntary Kinship which focuses on both safety and treatment and phases out the use of safety resources.
- Applying Georgia's practice model which engages a family's extended supports to resolve safety and permanency concerns.
- Early identification of kin caregivers to mitigate trauma to the child and to provide continuity of relationships and if long-term caregiving is required.



# Georgia's Kinship Continuum

- **2019**-Rollout- Introduction of Practice Change and Values
  - **January-October 2019 14 Regions**
- **2020**- Practice Support, Targeted Partnerships, Quality Assurance, and Monitoring.
  - **Visit the Kinship SharePoint for all training materials, tools, and Coordinator Tracking Logs**
  - **Participate in Monthly Webinars**
  - **Attend/View Kinship SHINES Enhancements Webinars**





## Voluntary Kinship

### The Benefits:

- Strengthens Family and Community Engagement
- Provides Reasonable Efforts
- Serves as a form of family preservation and support.
- Maximizes Natural Helpers supporting children within their family systems.
- Reduces the trauma children experience

## What's New

- Formal Role of the Kinship Coordinator
- Intensive Treatment and Services for the Family
- Time Frame (90 days) to assess and evaluate behavior change
- Revised CPS Guardianship Waiver Process
- Documented Exit/Closure Options



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## Voluntary Kinship Practice Guidance

- Key Steps are **Required:**
  - Parents are not forced to enter Voluntary Kinship Arrangements, and they must recommend and agree with the person identified to serve as kin caregiver.
  - Situations involving chronic and /or severe patterns of abuse and neglect should be addressed with court intervention. In addition, a voluntary kinship caregiver should not be used when the safety threats cannot be mitigated via an out of home safety plan within 90 days.
  - Concerns that cannot be mitigated in less than 90days require a high level of intervention. Apply the appropriate exit options to close the VK arrangement

# Kinship Standards and Quality Outcomes

## Voluntary Kinship Arrangements

- Initial Safety Assessment- Completed and Approved by the SSS to reflect the Out of home Voluntary Kinship Arrangement- **Increased ability to track the volume of arrangements**
- Completed Kinship Assessment and Safety Checks within 3 days of the arrangement- **Ensuring caregivers are safe and appropriate**
- Kinship Pathway (Full Disclosure) Uploaded to External Documents- **Full transparency with caregivers**
- Kinship Caregiver Needs Assessment Uploaded to External **Documents-Providing supports and services**

# Kinship Standards and Quality Outcomes

## Voluntary Kinship Arrangements

- Documented 45th Day Staffing of the Voluntary Kinship Arrangement- **Assessment and decision point**
- Guardianship and Custody to a Third Party require regional waivers. **Ensuring full disclosure with caregivers, and the appropriate use of these practice options**
- **Improved ability to know the outcome for the child/family**
- **Legal Actions Initiated** for Voluntary Kinship Arrangements prior to the 75th day for Voluntary Arrangements Exceeding the 90th day

# Kinship Foster Care

## The Benefits

- Extends the full range of services offered by social services, child welfare, and other agencies to kinship caregivers and the child (ren) in their care.
- A system which approves the majority of kin as foster parents. Timely training and financial support to kin caregivers.
- Decrease the length of time a child remains in foster care.
- Greater flexibility for kinship guardianship as the permanency plan for foster children.



## What's New



- Formal Role of the Kinship Coordinator
- Not waiting to place with Kin/Timely Initial Assessment
- Streamlined initial payment process for relatives
- Approving Kinship Foster Homes at a 120 Days
- Contracting out when appropriate for impact and home study evaluations

## Foster Care Kinship Practice Guidance

- Key Steps are **REQUIRED**
  - Complete all the requirements for an **initial placement** via Kinship Assessment in SHINES
  - Review the CPS and Criminal History results
  - Determine if waivers are required
  - Confirm the caregiver's willingness to complete the foster home approval process in 120 days, **AND** their permanent commitment to the child.
  - When necessary notify the foster parent and court of intention to change placements.

# Kinship Standards and Quality Outcomes

## Kinship Foster Care

- Children Entering Foster Care from Voluntary Arrangements Remain with the Existing Caregiver- **Seamless process and faster approvals**
- Increase of Initial Placements with Kinship Placements- **Initial placement with kin follows a similar process to CPS placements**
- Screening CPS and Criminal History at the onset of the placement- **Requesting regional waivers or State Office Waivers timely**
- Relatives may receive a payment per diem from the date of placement. **Payment disbursement of within 30 to 45 days of the initial placement.**
- Kinship placements are supported through the foster home approval process by a Kinship Coordinator- **Full transparency with caregivers regarding the 120day approval process**

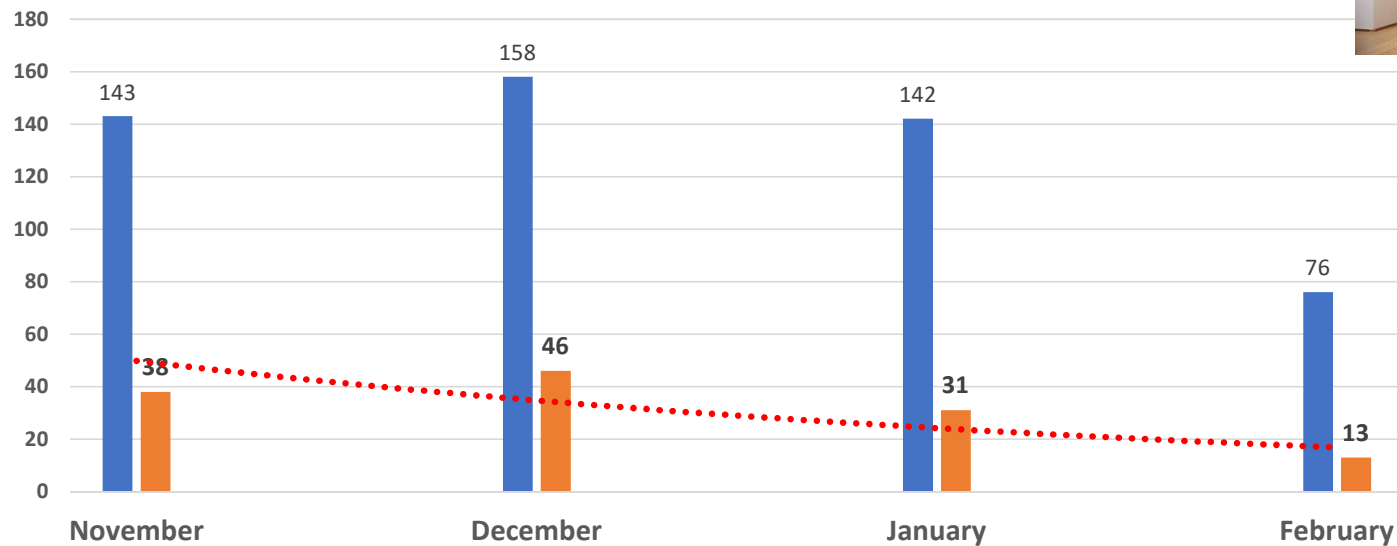
## How Are the Families?



*“The definition of family is constantly evolving, and every person can define family in a different way to encompass the relationships he/she shares with people in his/her life. Over time one's family will change as one's life changes and the [importance of family values](#) and rituals deepen. Every member who is truly family will help make it richer....” -Lifestyle*

# Returned Home

Exiting From Voluntary Kinship to Return Home.

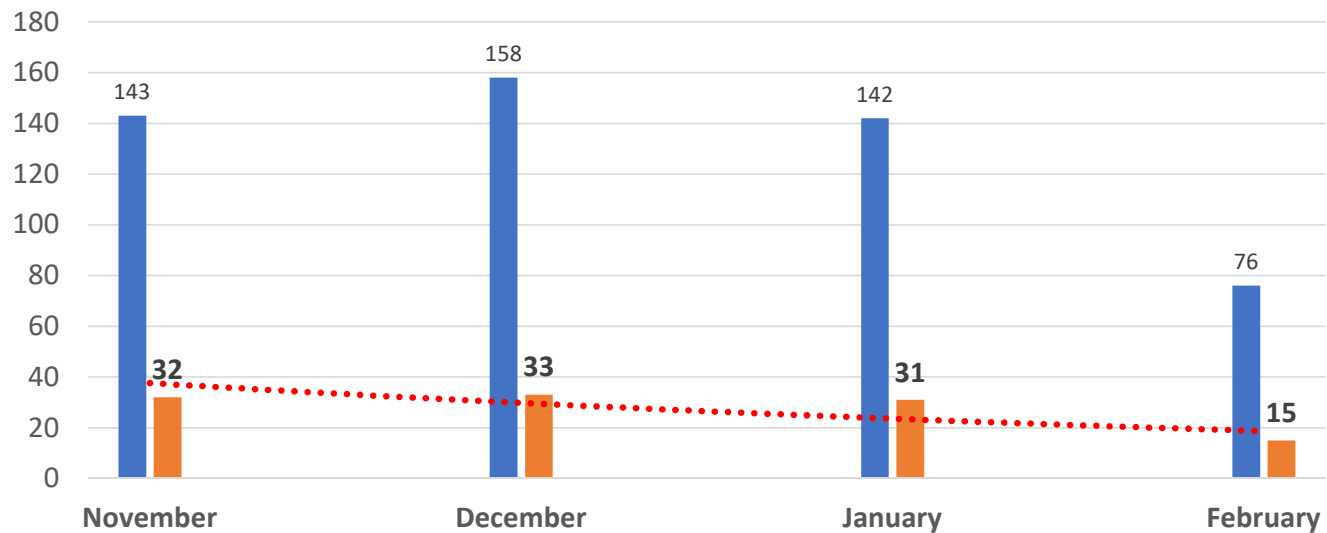


*“Conditions for **Safe Return** are what must happen for a child to return home within 90 days”....*

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## Family Preservation Services

Exits From Voluntary Kinship to Family Pres.

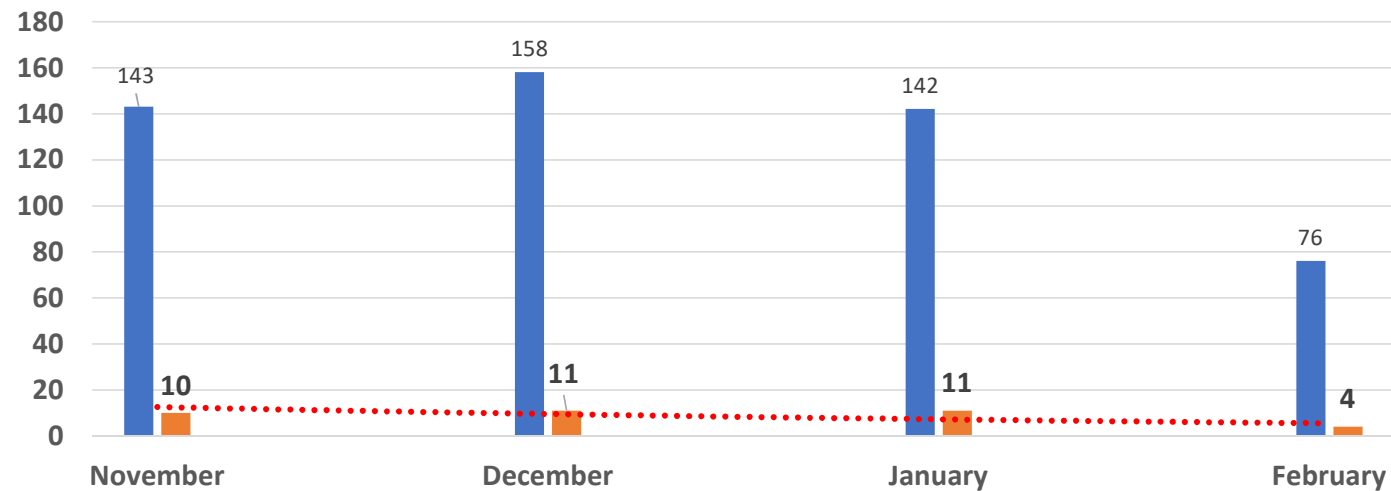


*Ongoing Safety Management and Behavioral Change*



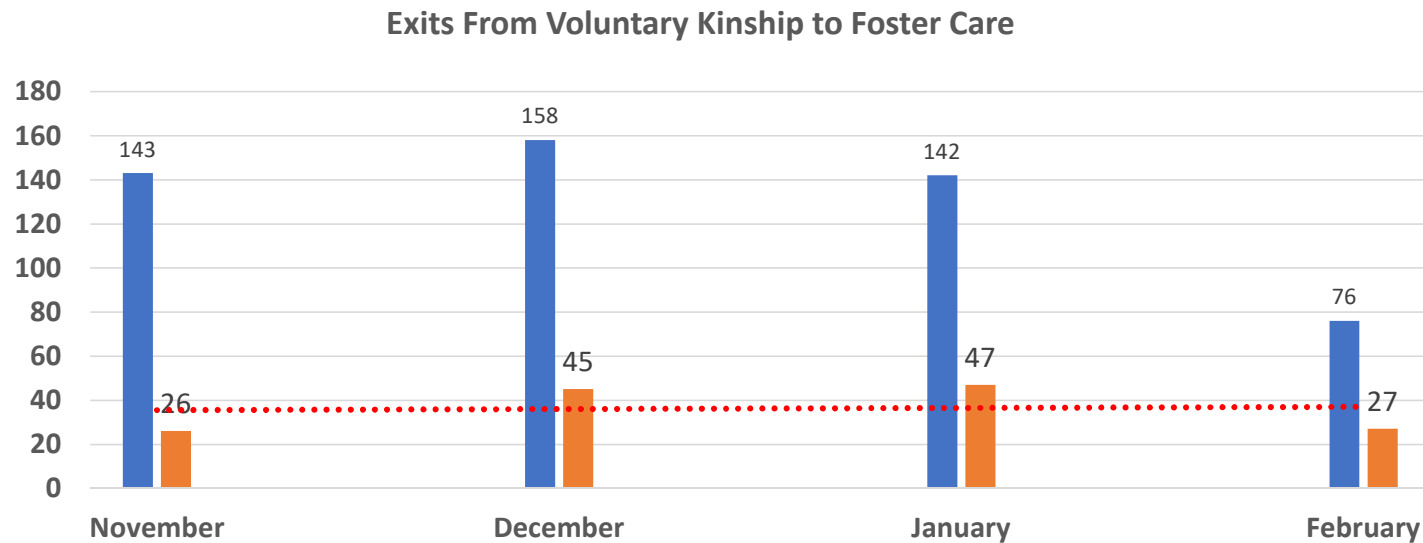
## Custody to Third Party

Exits From Voluntary Kinship to Custody Third Party



*“This option applicable to cases where parents have demonstrated chronic parental absence, chronic unrehabilitated parental concerns, and a history of caretaking for the children by the proposed guardian”...*

# Foster Care



*“The child is adjudicated dependent and custody is granted to DFCS subject to a court ordered permanency plan while the family receives Permanency (*Kinship-Foster Care*) services”....*

# The Deep Dive



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Time for  
Questions