

**CII REPORT**

Judge Wenona C. Belton

Ted Hall - Emma Brown-Bernstein - Roberta Cooper - Robbyn Ingram

At this time, the Fulton County Juvenile Court has continued to work hard to continue business as usual in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Court continues to move all dependency cases forward in order to achieve timely permanency for children. In that vein, the Court continues to hold virtual hearings and mediations, as well as in person hearings for certain cases. Accountability courts have also continued virtually. Most recently, HOPE, the Family Dependency Treatment Court, celebrated a virtual graduation for its participants.

Presently, Fulton County has a historically low number of children in foster care as well as historically low removal rates. In our opinion, these data points are directly related to the expertise of all stakeholders, including the efforts of the Department to staff potential removals with their SAAGs. Moreover, CASA has managed to recruit large classes of volunteers and has been able to identify a committed and available volunteer in every case in which CASA is appointed.

The Fulton County Court Improvement (“Improvement Project”) project has continued to meet once monthly to explore issues related to child welfare and best practices. The Improvement Project has held presentations on Fulton County child welfare 2020 data, best practices for mental health service providers, review of the child welfare practice guide, non-accidental injury medical issues, implicit biases in the child welfare system, new rules and regulations regarding over eighteen youth, collateral consequences affecting Georgia families from the Georgia Justice Project, educational considerations for children in care, legislative updates, and the perspectives of previous foster youth from Georgia EmpowerMEnt and the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (to name only a few).

The Fulton County Juvenile Court is working towards becoming a fully trauma informed court and is moving towards implementation of best practices regarding the management of trauma for children and families in both the delinquency and dependency arenas.

Related to that, the building itself has been fully outfitted with new signage and informational notices to help families navigate the building and its services. Lastly, the Court continues to utilize technology to increase access to justice and has implemented a virtual filing system that will continue indefinitely.

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