

FULTON COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



ONE COURT | ONE FAMILY | ONE COMMUNITY

About The Juvenile Court

Fulton County Juvenile Court (FCJC) is the largest juvenile court in Georgia and amongst the largest in the Southeastern United States. FCJC is home to a judiciary of eight judges and five departments, each delivering essential services to the families we serve. The judiciary is led by Chief Judge Renata D. Turner with administrative and operational functions led by Chief Administrative Officer Cicely Barber. The judges and departmental staff of FCJC collaborate to achieve optimal outcomes for Fulton County families.

Types of Cases

Dependency Cases

Dependency allegations for youth under the age of 18.

Delinquency Cases

Delinquent matters for youth under the age of 17.

C.H.I.N.S. Cases

Children in Need of Services for youth under the age of 18.

Traffic Cases

Traffic Violations for youth under the age of 17.

Behavioral Health Services

Provides prevention, intervention, and treatment for youth and families through direct services, court-ordered evaluations, case management, diversion programming, and support for Accountability Courts, while also offering training and psychoeducation to court staff and community stakeholders.

Clerk's Office

Manages and preserves official court records in compliance with state and local statutes and serves as the official recordkeeper of the court.

Court & Family Services

Provides Education Advocates and Guardians ad Litem for families and facilitates mediations and the Citizen Review Panel.

Probation Services

Provides community-based supervision to youth who have been adjudicated delinquent while providing treatment and programming with the goal of rehabilitation.

Programming & Grants

Develops, implements, and supports court-based programs, special programming and initiatives, as well as management of grants.

**“The strength of the team is each individual member.
The strength of each member is the team.”**

Phil Jackson
Retired NBA Player & Coach

Vision

FCJC's vision is to empower children and families by providing a fair, effective, and timely system of justice.

Dependency

A dependent child is neglected, abused, or abandoned. This can happen when the child does not receive proper parental care or control and/or education as required by the law, or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental or emotional health.

Delinquency

When a child violates a law that would be a crime if committed by an adult. A delinquent child is one who has committed a delinquent act and needs treatment and rehabilitation or supervision by the court.

Children in Need of Services (C.H.I.N.S.)

CHINS proactively works with pre-adjudicated youth to eliminate and reduce formal court involvement by offering resources and services on the front end.

Mission

The mission of FCJC is first to protect children and the community in matters brought before the court, to rehabilitate children, and to restore families; and second, to create opportunities for the community, partners, and stakeholders to actively engage in this mission.

Chief Judge

Renata D. Turner



As we reflect on the past year, I am both humbled and proud of the resilience, dedication, and commitment of the Fulton County Juvenile Court (FCJC) team, stakeholders, and partners in continuing to fulfill our mission: protecting children and the community; rehabilitating youth and restoring families; and actively engaging with our community partners and stakeholders.

We began the year with an unexpected challenge, a significant computer breach that tested our adaptability and resolve. Despite this, we remained steadfast, ensuring uninterrupted service to the families and youth of Fulton County. Together, we learned to pivot, collaborate, and renew our focus on accountability and support.

One of our most uplifting initiatives this year was "Feel Good Fridays," a celebration of youth successfully completing probation. This program not only acknowledges their progress but also inspires others to envision brighter futures. We also expanded our efforts with the launch of the Youth Opportunity Unit ("Y.O.U.") program, adding to our holistic accountability court offerings and providing new pathways for young people to thrive. We welcomed our new Presiding Judge Caren Cloud and Associate Judge Elizabeth Higgins-Brooks, along with several new members to our staff. As always, we ended the year with our annual Adoption Day, a celebration of the forever families formed after reaching the happy ending on the legal road to finalizing adoption.

Partnerships remain at the heart of our success. We deepened our collaboration with local school systems, law enforcement, and nonprofit organizations, ensuring a network of support for the children and families we serve. We also initiated promising and life-changing partnerships that will equip more justice-involved youth with supportive mentors, life skills, and employment opportunities.

These accomplishments underscore our collective commitment to transforming lives and strengthening our community. I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff, community partners, stakeholders, and Fulton County leadership for your tireless efforts and unwavering support. Together, we are building a safer, stronger, and more compassionate Fulton County.

We look forward to continuing this vital work in the years ahead.

Renata D. Turner

Chief Judge, Fulton County Juvenile Court

**"Together, we are building a safer,
stronger, and more compassionate
Fulton County."**

Renata D. Turner



Juvenile Court Judges



Renata D. Turner
Chief Judge



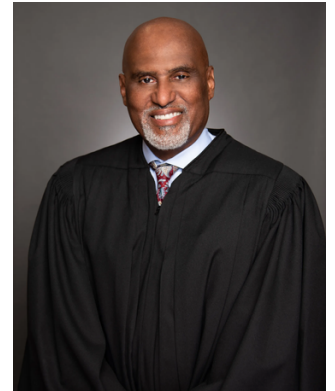
Christopher W. Yokom
Deputy Chief Judge



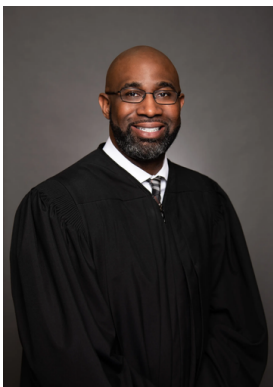
Juliette W. Scales
Judge



T. Natasha Crawford
Judge



Phillip Jackson
Judge



Coy J. Johnson, Jr.
Judge



Caren E. Cloud
Judge



Elizabeth A. Higgins-Brooks
Associate Judge

FCJC Gets A New Chief Judge

In February 2024, Judge Renata D. Turner was appointed Chief Judge, marking a pivotal moment for the court's leadership. Judge Turner, a dedicated public servant and advocate for juvenile justice, brings her steadfast commitment and vision to this role, exemplifying the values in her guiding motto: **Professional. Unified. Genuine.**

Professional

Judge Turner's distinguished career reflects her dedication to upholding the highest standards of professionalism. She is deeply committed to fostering a court environment where fairness, accountability, and respect are the foundation of every decision and interaction. Her leadership ensures that the court operates with efficiency and effectiveness, delivering justice in a timely and equitable manner.



Unified

Believing in the power of collaboration, Judge Turner emphasizes the importance of working as "One Court, One Family, One Community." Her leadership seeks to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, community organizations, and families, creating a unified approach to addressing the complex challenges faced by the youth and families served by the court.

Genuine

Known for her empathy and authenticity, Judge Turner's leadership is rooted in compassion and a genuine commitment to the well-being of every individual who comes before the court. Her ability to connect with youth, families, and staff underscores her dedication to creating a court environment where people feel valued and supported.



New Judges at FCJC

FCJC welcomed two exceptional leaders to its judicial team: Presiding Judge Caren E. Cloud and Associate Judge Elizabeth Higgins-Brooks. Their appointments reflect the court's commitment to strengthening its capacity to serve the children, families, and communities of Fulton County with fairness, innovation, and compassion. FCJC is honored to have Judges Cloud and Higgins-Brooks as part of its leadership team and looks forward to their positive impact on the court and community.

Judge Caren E. Cloud

Judge Cloud brings a wealth of experience and leadership to the bench. With a distinguished career in juvenile justice, Judge Cloud has dedicated herself to improving outcomes for young people through thoughtful judicial practices and community collaboration. Her vision and expertise align seamlessly with the court's mission to provide a supportive and rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice. Judge Cloud's leadership will play a pivotal role in guiding the court toward continued innovation and excellence.



Associate Judge Elizabeth A. Higgins-Brooks

Judge Higgins-Brooks joined the court with a deep commitment to advocating for children and families. Her extensive experience in family law and her passion for addressing the root causes of juvenile delinquency and dependency make her an invaluable addition to the bench. Judge Higgins-Brooks is dedicated to ensuring that every child and family who enters the court feels heard, respected, and supported on their path to resolution and healing.



Beyond the Bench

Judges in the Community



Chief Judge Renata D. Turner received the Judge Willie Lovett Award for Advancing the Field of Juvenile Law from the Child Protection & Advocacy Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia.



Deputy Chief Judge Christopher W. Yokom was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Stonewall Bar Association.



Judge Juliette W. Scales received the Spirit of Justice Award from the Judicial Section of the State Bar of Georgia.



Deputy Chief Judge Christopher W. Yokom and Judge Coy J. Johnson, Jr. attended the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) 87th Annual Conference in Phoenix, AZ.

Judicial Programs

A.S.C.E.N.D. Alternative Solutions Creating Excellence Not Detention



Above, A.S.C.E.N.D. participants were honored with the Community Hero Award at Glacier's Italian Ice 2024 Youth Leadership Awards Banquet.

Deputy Chief Judge Christopher W. Yokom presides over A.S.C.E.N.D., along with Judge Coy J. Johnson, Jr.. A.S.C.E.N.D. provides evidence-based programming over a 10 -12 month period to youth who have been adjudicated with a Class A or B Felony or are at risk for commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice. A.S.C.E.N.D. partnered with Glacier's Italian Ice to offer youth participants life skills, entrepreneurial training, and the opportunity to operate their own Italian Ice cart.

C.H.O.I.C.E.S.

Choosing Healthy Options Increases Confidence, Excellence and Success

Chief Judge Renata D. Turner presides over the Drug Court C.H.O.I.C.E.S, a 12 -15 month voluntary intervention program for moderate to high-risk youth assessed to have a substance use disorder or be dependent on alcohol and drugs with the goal of reducing substance use and recidivism.



Judicial Programs

H.O.P.E. Helping Our Parents Excel

H.O.P.E. integrates substance use treatment services with dependency/child welfare/child abuse and neglect case processing for parents/legal guardians who have been assessed to have a substance use disorder over an 18 - 24 month period. FCJC honored H.O.P.E. graduates at our first Annual Alumni Day celebration during National Recovery Month.



Judge T. Natasha Crawford in partnership with the Atlanta Police Department and @Promise Center launched the inaugural class of the Y.O.U. Program in 2024 with nine participants. Y.O.U. serves at-risk teens ages 15 - 17 with firearm-related public safety offenses or repeat offenders. The program focuses on four Pillars of Success: Education, Employment, Community Engagement/Mentorship, and Skills, along with positive, hands-on feedback on progress through consistent case management.

Y.O.U. Youth Opportunity Unit



New & Noteworthy

Programs. Partnerships. Achievements.

Café Momentum

FCJC has partnered with Cafe Momentum whose mission is to transform young lives by equipping justice-involved youth with life skills, education, and employment opportunities to help them achieve their full potential. Judge Juiliette W. Scales serves as a board member. Cafe Momentum is scheduled to open its Atlanta location in March 2025.



Traffic Diversion

FCJC launched its Traffic Diversion Program to offer teens a pathway to preserve their driving record by promoting safe driving habits and fostering personal growth and rehabilitation. Enrollment requires paying a supervision fee, completing an accredited Defensive Driving course, engaging in 10 hours of court-approved community service, and submitting an essay reflecting on their journey through the court process. Upon successful completion, participants will have no points assessed and their fine will be reduced.

495 Traffic Diversion Cases

UGA's Certified Public Manager Program

Pamela Walters-Bryant, Lydia Popoola, and Meikoe Williams successfully graduated from the Certified Public Manager Program, a collaboration between Fulton County and the University of Georgia to enhance the training of staff regarding management and leadership roles.



FCJC Court Collaborations

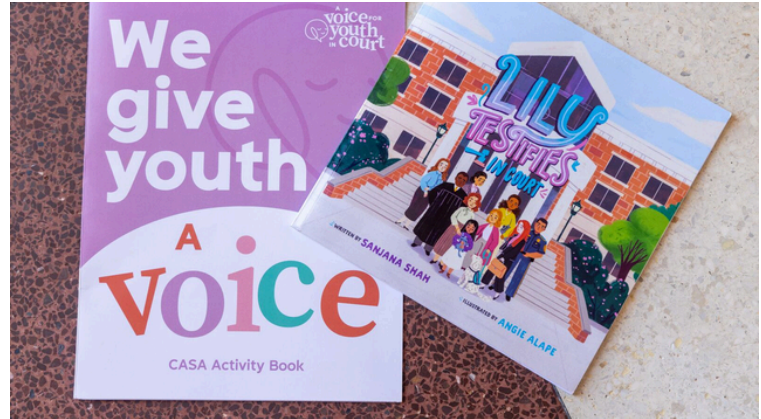
In 2024, one of the most inspiring examples of nonprofit collaboration was the remarkable project led by Sanjana Shah, a junior at Johns Creek High School. Sanjana founded "A Voice for Youth in Court," a nonprofit initiative dedicated to reducing the anxiety and stress that children often experience when navigating the court system.

Ms. Shah is a mentee of Fulton County Superior Court Judge Rachelle Carnesale and was referred to Staff Attorney Margaret Schweizer to guide her through the processes at FCJC.

Her project includes a beautifully written book entitled *Lily Testifies in Court*, an interactive activity booklet, a targeted social media campaign, and a dedicated website—all thoughtfully designed to reflect the unique environment of FCJC. These resources aim to simplify and clarify the court process for children, empowering them to feel informed, supported, and more at ease during a challenging time.

Sanjana's initiative has garnered widespread recognition, with court partner Atlanta CASA and other CASA organizations across the country adopting her materials to enhance their own programs.

We are proud to highlight Sanjana's exceptional contribution to improving the court experience for children and families. Her initiative exemplifies the power of community partnership and innovation, values that FCJC holds at the core of its mission.



The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



Youth and the Law Summit

The Annual Youth and the Law Summit, hosted by Chief Judge Renata Turner, is co-chaired by Darrick McDuffie, Senior Counsel at Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP, and Dr. J.L. Wyatt-Keyton, Executive Director of Career Services at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. The 2024 Summit, themed "Reframing Our Future," featured a youth panel discussion with Julius George Khalid of Young Generation Movement and presentations from esteemed professionals.

Held annually in April, the Summit connects youth and their families with legal education, community resources, and motivational discussions, reinforcing the Court's commitment to empowering young people for brighter futures.



81
Youth Attendees

37
Parent Attendees



Annual
**YOUTH AND
THE LAW
SUMMIT**

Welcome to the Annual
**Youth and the Law
Summit**



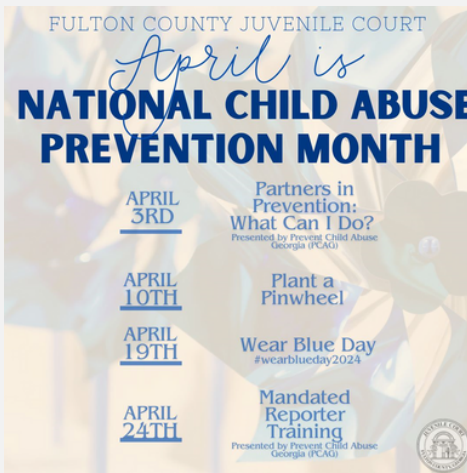
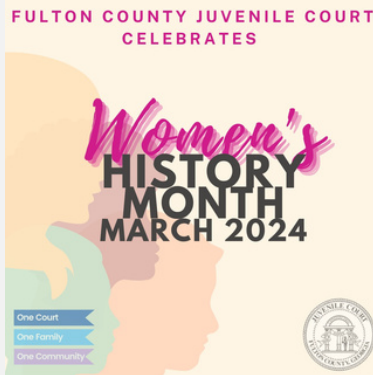
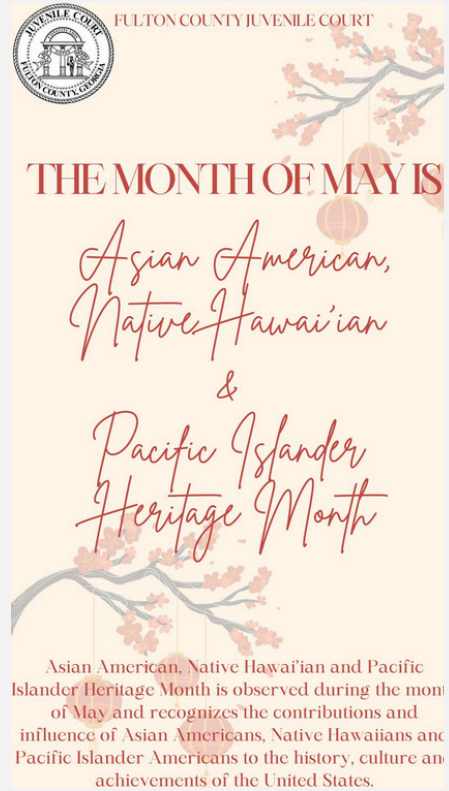
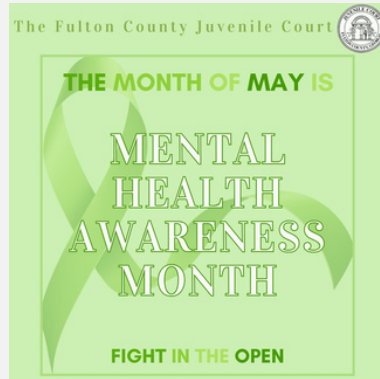
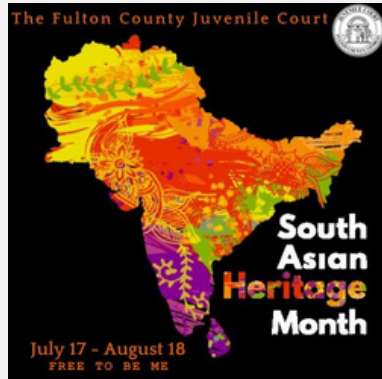
United Arab Emirates visit FCJC

FCJC hosted leaders from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to discuss human trafficking. The Court alongside the Fulton County District Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender and court partner youthSpark discussed the many challenges regarding human trafficking and countering forced labor, including judicial processes, referral mechanisms and victim-centered approach to services. The UAE leaders were invited under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Juvenile Court was honored to be chosen to discuss our ongoing efforts regarding human trafficking.

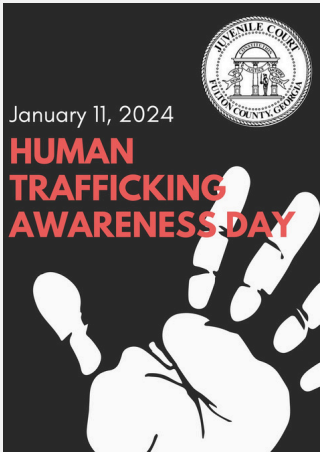


Affinity Month Observations

FCJC uplifts Affinity Months through court-wide events and sharing information to foster an inclusive environment that supports cultural awareness.



Affinity Month Observations



Human Trafficking Awareness Month

FCJC commemorated Human Trafficking Awareness month in January in partnership with court partner, youthSpark and its founder, former FCJC Chief Judge Nina Hickson. We released a smoke bomb to bring awareness to the countless victims of human trafficking.



National Child Abuse Prevention Month



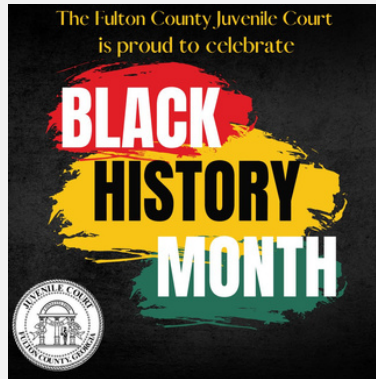
To honor National Child Abuse Prevention Month, FCJC planted a ceremonial pinwheel garden, hosted a Wear Blue Day, shared online resources, and provided mandated reporter training for employees.



AffinityMonth Observations

Black History Month

In February, FCJC honored African American contributions to the Arts by sharing information court-wide. Employees celebrated by wearing African, HBCU, and Black sorority and fraternity attire.



Law Day: Voices of Democracy



FCJC hosted a panel discussion entitled "The Attorneys of the Fulton County Juvenile Court" where FCJC lawyers and our partner agencies discussed how they uphold democracy within their respective roles. The Education Advocates hosted a book donation drive to support Everybody Wins! Atlanta.



National Adoption Day

25th Anniversary Celebration

FCJC commemorated the 25th Anniversary of National Adoption Day with keynote remarks by former FCJC Chief Judge Glenda A. Hatchett. The day celebrated the formation of nine forever families. Attendees had the privilege of meeting the children of the Honorable Romae T. Powell, former FCJC judge whom the Juvenile Justice Center is named. Generous donations from court partners honored each of the nine forever families with over \$1,000 in gifts.



Behavioral Health Services

Behavioral Health is dedicated to the prevention, early intervention and treatment of behavioral health related issues impacting youth and their families. Our licensed and certified clinicians deliver direct services, offer clinical support, and provide psychoeducation to children, families, court staff and to community stakeholders via trainings, presentations, and by highlighting Children's Mental Health Awareness every year during the month of May.

● Multidisciplinary Team Staffing

The Behavioral Health Department launched Multidisciplinary Team Staffings to provide cross-functional recommendations for case dispositions. Staffings foster interdepartmental collaboration while aligning children and families to support services as soon as possible.

● Behavioral Health Department Collaborations

Family Treatment Court Training--Becoming a More Resilient Parent: Helping Families Thrive

This training was provided to the Accountability Courts and explored both the impact and responses to stress while offering ways for parents to promote positive childhood experience and create resilience through connection.

Grief and Court Involved Youth - Disrupting the Grief to Prison Pipeline

45
Attendees

The Behavioral Health Department partnered with Kate's Club, a non-profit community for youth and families who experience the death of someone close to them. Kate's Club provided training for court staff regarding a trauma-responsive protocol to empower staff with ways to effectively respond when our youth and families experience the death of a loved one.

Morehouse School of Medicine and the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

146
Court Ordered
Evaluations

Morehouse School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences established a partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to conduct mental health evaluations at FCJC for our youth by a full-time assigned psychologist.

Out of Darkness Community Walk



The Behavioral Health Department raised money and organized a team to participate in the Out of Darkness Community Walk hosted by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Clerk's Office

2,742

Offenses



1,623

Delinquency
Cases

FCJC handled 1,623
delinquency cases
involving a total of 2,742
offenses

583 Dependency
Cases were filed in
the Clerk's Office.

583

Dependency
Cases

The Clerk's Office built automation into their
business processes by introducing electronic
workflows into their operations. Filings can now be
electronically filed and processed.

7,500

Documents e-filed



Six new clerks were hired to improve customer
service, create operational efficiencies, and support
the bench.

6

New clerks



50,000

Files digitized

50,000 physical files, dating back to the 1970s,
were converted to digital format, addressing
storage challenges.



Court & Family Services

Education Advocates

Educational Advocates assist when a child lacks necessary services, struggles to make educational progress despite existing support, or when an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is not being properly implemented.



Court and Family Services attended the grand opening of the HUB, Atlanta Public Schools' new Student and Support Center and met with numerous APS Board members and officials to increase our collaborative support in the community and schools.

201 Cases handled by Education Advocates

EAs assisted with **20** IEPs

Mediation

Mediation offers youth and families a chance to resolve conflicts without the need for prosecution. When they understand how mediation can help settle disputes, everyone benefits. Mediation focuses on reaching a mutually agreeable solution for all parties.

62 Cases mediated

Citizen Review Panel

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is a volunteer program that helps the court assess the best permanency plan for children in foster care. The Citizen Review Panel facilitated refresher training for the Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS) on panel procedures and fostering collaborative administrative solutions. CRP hosted its first in-person training since 2020, where volunteers learned about recent legal changes and reviewed CRP documents.

11 Cases assigned to CRP

Guardians ad Litem (GALs)

GALs ensure that youth are recognized as individuals, not just statistics, with their best interests prioritized in every experience involving them. In 2024, collaboration was a key focus of the GAL team.

736 Cases handled by GALs

Collaborated with the Behavioral Health Department to enhance support for youth in competency matters.

Regularly coordinated with the CASA team to ensure the best interests of dependent youth.

GAL staff participated in Multidisciplinary Team Staffings.

Probation Services

Probation Services operates with a dual focus on youth rehabilitation and community safety. The main goals of probation supervision are to address risk factors for delinquent behavior, remove barriers to positive functioning, and build or restore skills that may have contributed to the behavior. Restoring any loss suffered by victims is also a key focus.

Gang Training

Probation Services sponsored a court-wide Gang Training, led by Christopher Sperry, Deputy District Attorney with the Fulton County Gang Unit, and James Miller, Investigator with the Fulton County District Attorney's Office. The training focused on identifying gang members, understanding local gang culture, and monitoring gang activity on social media. The trainers also demonstrated methods for tracking and analyzing social media interactions to detect gang affiliations and activities.



\$10,425.29 Restitution paid in 2024

Probation Success Stories

18 y/o youth charged with aggravated assault, complied with the terms of probation resulting in significant behavior improvements that allowed them to graduate from high school and attend Morris Brown College.



Probation Success Stories

17 y/o youth charged with theft by receiving successfully completed probation and graduated from high school and attends Miles College.



Quarterly Feel Good Fridays

Probation Officers nominate youth that demonstrate substantial improvement or an outstanding accomplishment during the quarter. Parents, friends, and stakeholders are invited to celebrate the youth as they are recognized by their supervising Probation Officer, Probation Supervisor, and Judges.



632 Youth placed on probation

Probation Orientation

The Probation Department hosts orientation for youth and parents/guardians on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 5:00 pm where they are introduced to the processes, procedures, roles, and expectations of probation.

1,199 Hours of completed community service

MAYSI Assessments

MAYSI Assessments are brief behavioral screenings for youth ages 12 to 17, identifying those with potential behavioral health needs. They are conducted for all youth placed on probation.

234 MAYSI Assessments

Programming & Grants

Programming and Grants develops, implements, and supports court-based programs and manages grants awarded to the Court. This department includes Accountability Courts, the Child in Need of Services (CHINS) Informal Unit, the Preservation Unit, and coordination of the evidence-based treatment services.

FCJC Internships

FCJC offers spring, summer and fall internships to undergraduate and graduate students from across the country. Through the FCJC's internship program, students are exposed to the innerworkings of juvenile justice while simultaneously gaining real world experience.



Summer
2024
Interns

Georgia
Supreme Court
visit with Justice
Shawn Ellen
LaGrua



Fall
2024
Interns

Grants Under Management

- 🎯 **\$100,000.00** Juvenile Prevention and Intervention (JPI)
- 🎯 **\$484,313.00** Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant (JJIG)
- 🎯 **\$450,000.00** Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Continuum of Care Grant
- 🎯 **\$94,599.00** Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ)

Evidence Based Programming

FCJC receives grant funding to provide evidence-based treatment to youth on probation. Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a cognitive behavioral program that helps aggressive youth (ages 12-17) improve social skills, moral reasoning, and anger management while reducing aggression. Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a short-term, in-home counseling program that addresses juvenile delinquency and related behaviors through a family-based approach. Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive, short-term treatment for at-risk youth (ages 12-17) that targets the root causes of delinquency and antisocial behavior.

🎯 **36** Youth referred to ART

🎯 **31** Youth referred to FFT

🎯 **14** Youth referred to MST

Children in Need of Services (C.H.I.N.S.)

The Children in Need of Services Unit focused efforts in 2024 on:

- 1) Early intervention
- 2) Aligning youth and their families to services
- 3) Addressing individual needs
- 4) Delinquency prevention



🎯 **362** C.H.I.N.S. Cases

Employee Engagement

The Employee Engagement Committee is a collective of Court employees that curate specialized events to celebrate the staff and their tireless work in serving Fulton County's families.



FCJC participated in the annual Best Hand Walk/Run, sponsored by County HR in celebration of National Boss's Day. This year's team, the Genie Warriors, won Best Costume for the second consecutive year and secured 3rd place overall. Four FCJC teams competed, representing Behavioral Health, Court Administration, Court and Family Services, and Probation.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the following partners for their ongoing collaboration, expertise, and support:

Atlanta CASA

Atlanta Public Schools

Department of Juvenile Justice

Office of the Child Attorney

Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services

Fulton County District Attorney's Office

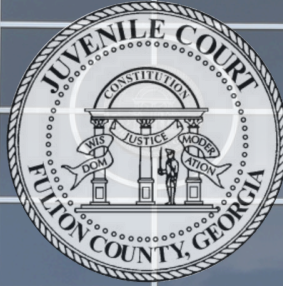
Georgia Public Defender Council, Atlanta Judicial Circuit

Fulton County Public Schools

Truancy Intervention Project

youthSpark





Judge Romae T. Powell Juvenile Justice Center

Contact Us:



404.612.4402



395 Pryor Street SW
Atlanta, GA 30312



www.fultonjuvenilecourt.org

