



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislators Move on Key Recommendations to Improve Child Well-being in Georgia

Atlanta, GA – Voices for Georgia’s Children (Voices) today released the 2023 edition of the Whole Child Primer. The 3rd edition of this publication identifies and analyzes key issues related to

is pleased to release the new edition of the Whole Child Primer.

The Whole Child Primer serves as a foundation. Voices for Georgia’s Children (Voices) is pleased that key recommendations in the new edition of the [Whole Child Primer](#) are under consideration at the State Capitol this Legislative Session, including **streamlining Medicaid enrollment, increasing postsecondary education opportunities for children in the foster care system, and raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction.**

On Tuesday, the Georgia House of Representatives unanimously passed a [bill](#) that would allow the state to use SNAP data to identify and enroll children in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (known in Georgia as PeachCare for Kids). The Senate Higher Education Committee is considering [legislation](#) that would waive tuition and fees for qualifying students in the foster care system. Additionally, there seems to be momentum in raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to encompass youth up to age 18 for certain offenses.

Those actions are among dozens of recommendations Voices presents in the 2021 Whole Child Primer, a collaboration with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network, that presents the latest and greatest facts, figures and ideas to improve child well-being in the state of Georgia.

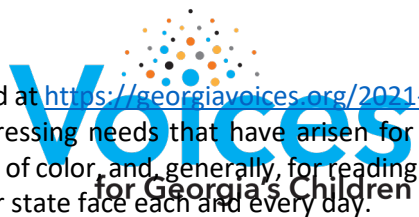
“For years, child advocates have worked to chip away at the barriers impeding Georgia’s kids,” said Dr. Erica Fener Sitkoff, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children. “But the data show we aren’t making enough progress. Until we intentionally and holistically address inequities stemming from income levels, racial bias and racism, educational status, geography, disability, and gender and sexual orientation bias, efforts to help the children and youth in our state will fall short.”

The Whole Child Primer examines five areas of child well-being, highlighting both bright spots and common challenges our kids face in the areas of physical and mental health; protection and safety; effective discipline and justice; and care, enrichment, and youth engagement.

“We know that with the right data, the right information, and the right recommendations, we can make a difference in the lives of Georgia’s children and youth,” said Sitkoff.

DID YOU KNOW?

- An estimated 60,000-70,000 children could obtain health insurance coverage if Georgia used data from other federal or state programs to identify and enroll eligible children in Medicaid/CHIP.
- As of January 2020, there were approximately 725 youth aged 18-22 in foster care. Many don’t have the financial means necessary to pay for postsecondary education.
- Georgia is one of just three states to treat 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system.



The *Whole Child Primer* can be downloaded at <https://georgiavoices.org/2021-whole-child-primer/>. We hope you find the *Whole Child Primer* a useful tool for addressing needs that have arisen for children during the pandemic, for making Georgia a more equitable state for children of color, and, generally, for leading up on solutions to some of the most serious difficulties that children and families in our state face each and every day.