



Who We Are

JUSTGeorgia is a statewide leadership-driven network of community organizations and individuals committed to bettering the lives of Georgia's children. Founded in 2006, JUSTGeorgia champions juvenile laws and services based on best practices to better serve Georgia's children and promote safer communities. We do that primarily through state-level legislative advocacy and policy development focusing on the state's child-serving agencies and institutions.

What We've Accomplished

Our sustained commitment, robust network, and strategic advocacy led, most notably, to the passage of House Bill 242 (Act 127), the first comprehensive revision to the state's Juvenile Code in more than 40 years. The new laws took effect on January 1, 2014. As a direct result of JUSTGeorgia's efforts in combination with political leadership, Georgia's juvenile justice system is operating according to research-based best practices, utilizing data and evidence-based programs to ensure justice is administered to children in a more developmentally appropriate and ultimately, more effective, way. Outcomes for individual children are improving, communities are safer, and tax payer dollars are being invested more appropriately.

Subsequent to the passage of House Bill 242, JUSTGeorgia spearheaded legislative efforts to enact technical revisions to address drafting errors or omissions in the new Juvenile Code based on input from system stakeholders. In collaboration with the Criminal Justice Reform Council, and key legislators, those amendments were passed as Senate Bill 364 (2014) and House Bill 365 (2015).

Most recently, JUSTGeorgia worked with the leadership of the Criminal Justice Reform Council, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and others to confront the role of schools as a primary source of referrals to the juvenile courts. Those reforms, which emphasize the inclusion of children in classroom learning rather than promoting exclusionary discipline practices that predictably lead to encounters with the juvenile and criminal justice systems, were passed as Senate Bill 367 (2016).

JUSTGeorgia continues to engage in efforts to influence the direction of continuing reforms and to monitor implementation of recently-enacted policies. Specifically, we provide continual education to professionals from all child-serving systems, actively engage with legislators and other key state and local policymakers, conduct ongoing research, confer with state and national experts on juvenile justice and child welfare reform, and seek out the experiences and ideas of interested community members.

Where We are Headed

JUSTGeorgia is led by Voices for Georgia's Children, Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, the Barton Child Law and Policy Center at Emory University, the Interfaith Children's Movement, the Latin American Association, Next Level Community Development Center, and the Truancy Intervention Project. Since inception, however, its primary goal has been to support a long-term coalition that will advocate, monitor and report on the conditions, laws, and policies that affect the justice and safety of Georgia's young people. Accordingly, the lead partners have recently been reexamining JUSTGeorgia's governance structure and agenda-setting procedures.

