

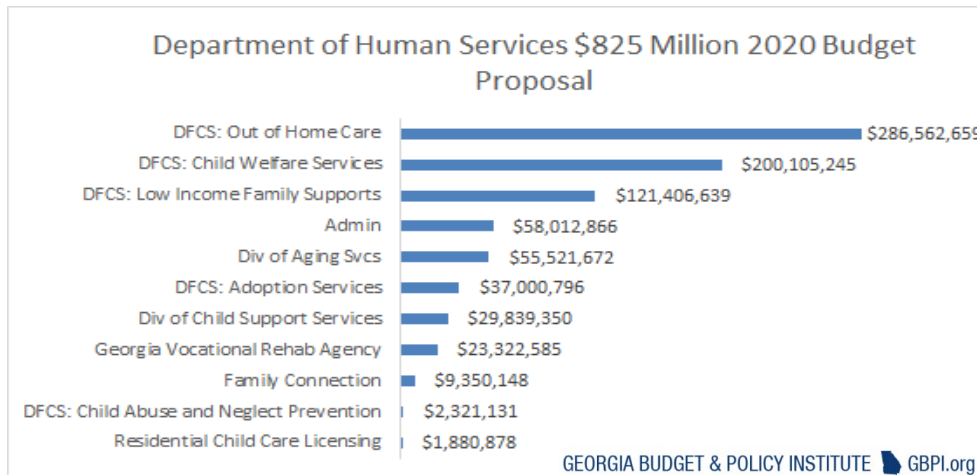
# OVERVIEW: 2020 Fiscal Year Budget for the Department of Human Services

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## More Investments for Big System Reforms

Governor Brian Kemp’s proposed \$825 million Department of Human Services budget for the 2020 fiscal year includes new support to meet the needs of Georgia’s foster care system and to help ensure the safety and protection of Georgia’s most vulnerable children. The 2020 proposal raises investment in the agency by \$28.4 million more than the budget lawmakers approved last year. The spending plan takes steps to bolster out-of-home placement services by continuing to pay a per diem for families caring for children. But this year, the agency is tasked with making significant enhancements to its system to reduce the number of youths in foster care and the number of reports of child abuse altogether.

The largest share of state funding for the agency is for child welfare and foster care related services. The Division of Family and Children Services’ (DFCS) efforts to protect vulnerable children account for about 64 percent of the agency’s overall budget. Smaller yet vital programs such as vocational training for adults and elder protection services account for the remaining funds. Following closely are state investments to increase eligibility staff for federal low-income assistance programs such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).



Source: Governor’s Budget Report Fiscal Year 2020

## By the Numbers

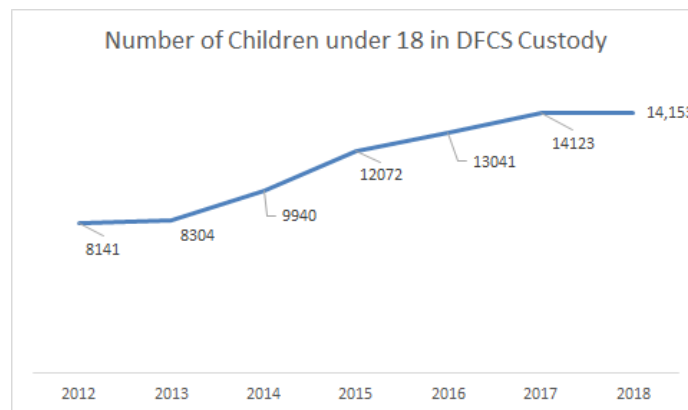
### 2020 Fiscal Year

- \$10 million to cover coordination and per diem costs for additional foster families
- \$3.5 million was added by the governor to help the agency pay for the full implementation of the federal Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)
- \$1.8 million to add 50 additional Medicaid-aged, blind and disabled eligibility caseworkers
- \$1.9 million to create 1,000 additional slots for non-Medicaid home and community-based services for the elderly

## New Funds Put Families First

Addressing the needs of Georgia’s foster care system remains a priority for the agency. In the 2018 and 2019 budgets, former Governor Deal helped ease the financial costs associated with caring for foster youth by raising the per diem rates for families. To keep that promise, Governor Kemp is adding about \$10 million to cover the costs for additional foster families in fiscal year 2020.

The agency is also adapting to major reforms brought on by the passage of the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Goals of the Act are two-fold: to prevent children from entering foster care by using federal reimbursement for support services that help the child remain with family and to decrease the placement of children in group care facilities. The governor is adding \$3.5 million to help cover the costs for implementing FFPSA, helping Georgia meet the new standards and draw down new federal funding which will in turn help the state lower the number of children in state custody. The number of children under the age of 18 in state custody has grown alarmingly from 8,141 in 2012 to 14,153 in 2018.



Source: Georgia Department of Human Services



Included in the allocation is money to update the state’s SHINES database which will enable to the agency’s frontline caseworkers to execute even more timely investigations of child abuse, document cases and refer the family to services. Improvements to the database will allow the agency to intervene and provide family support *before* a child enters the system. The families will have increased support for and access to mental health services, substance abuse and parenting training for families at risk. The agency did begin implementing some of these changes in 2018, which is why we have seen a slight decline in youth under the age of 18 in the system just in the last year. In December 2018, 31% of foster youth were placed with relatives rather than group homes according to data published by the agency.

Kemp also proposed funding that could make a difference for thousands of older Georgians on waiting lists for home and community services. The 2020 budget includes an extra \$1.9 million for the state’s Home and Community-based Services (HCBS) program. HCBS provides help for eligible elderly Georgians with tasks around the house such as maintaining the home and preparing or delivering meals. The Georgia Council on Aging reports that about 7,000 seniors are on waiting lists for these services.