



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health &  
Developmental Disabilities

Kevin Tanner, Commissioner

**D·B·H·D·D**

Office of the Commissioner

September 26, 2024

Elizabeth Holcomb, Esq.  
Director  
Office of Health Strategy Coordination

Anelia Moore  
Assistant Director  
Office of Health Strategy Coordination

RE: 2023 MindWorks Georgia Annual Report on Programs that Serve Disabled  
Infants, Children, and Youth

House Bill 1013 (2022 legislative session) mandated that DBHDD provide an annual report to the Office of Health and Strategy and Coordination outlining programs developed to serve disabled infants, children, and youth in Georgia.

In compliance with this requirement, DBHDD is submitting the annual report from **Mindworks Georgia** (formerly known as the Interagency Directors Team, IDT), included as **Attachment A**.

Established by DBHDD, Mindworks Georgia plays a central role in designing, managing, facilitating, and implementing an integrated Child and Adolescent System of Care (SOC). Mindworks Georgia consists of over 30 representatives from state agencies and non-governmental organizations dedicated to serving children with behavioral health needs in Georgia and operates under the umbrella of the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council (BHCC).

A key aspect of our work through Mindworks Georgia is recognizing that responsibility for children's behavioral health in Georgia is shared across multiple state agencies. By fostering collaboration between agency program directors, Georgia aims to develop and implement shared strategic objectives while presenting behavioral health issues to various stakeholders with a unified voice. In this report, you will find the following key information:

1. Mindworks Rebranding
2. An overview of the System of Care State Plan
3. Challenges facing the Interagency Directors Team
4. Key Accomplishments and Activities



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR  
CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
integrating research, policy, and practice



# MINDWORKS GEORGIA

## 2023 Annual Report

Presented by the Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health, on behalf of Mindworks Georgia, for submission to the Behavioral Health Coordinating Council

September 25, 2024

## INTRODUCTION

During this reporting year, coordinated efforts to develop *The Georgia System of Care* continued through the rebranded entity, Mindworks Georgia (Mindworks). As a collaborative, Mindworks exists to connect the dots of the behavioral health system to improve access and outcomes for youth (ages 0 to 26). Mindworks is well-positioned to provide a platform that aligns people, policy, and practice. This structure allows the team to design, manage, and adapt a system of care framework tailored to Georgia's realities and its children.

Mindworks envisions a thriving community that embraces prevention and long-term mental health and substance use recovery. Mindworks and its partners enact this vision by promoting evidence-based policies for prevention, intervention, and treatment that are innovative, person-centered, well-coordinated, and easy to navigate for children, young adults, and families.

The Mindworks team consists of the Executive Director, Executive Committee, General Chairperson, and general membership who work together to inform policy and practices and share resources.

## MINDWORKS LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP

**Renee Johnson, Executive Director** - Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health, Georgia Health Policy Center

Acts as the key facilitator of meetings, strategic planning, and initiative development. The Executive Director facilitates and initiates decision-making among the group.

**Laura Lucas, Chairperson**, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Director, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

In partnership with the Executive Director, develops meeting agendas and strategic planning methods for the Executive Committee.

### MINDWORKS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The role of the executive committee is to close the communication feedback loop between the BHCC and Mindworks, improve strategic decision-making, provide executive-level perspectives, and inform recommendations for children's behavioral health.

### 2023 COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities  
Adrian Johnson, Deputy Director, Division of Behavioral Health

Department of Community Health  
Brian Dowd, Deputy Executive Director, Policy, Compliance, and Operations Office

Department of Early Care and Learning  
Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner

Department of Education  
Mary Lauren Salvatore, Assistant Director, Office of Whole Child Supports  
Department of Human Services  
LaMarva Ivory, Deputy Commissioner – External Affairs

Department of Juvenile Justice  
Lisa Mantz, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Treatment and Care

Voices for Georgia's Children  
Melissa Haberlen DeWolf, Research and Policy Director

Robert W. Woodruff Foundation  
Dahlia Bell Brown, Program Officer

#### MINDWORKS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Mindworks brings together subject matter experts to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate across the system. Together, the team sets collective objectives, uncovers challenges, and shares data and practices. The workflow is streamlined, and solutions are surfaced to work and learn together to illuminate pathways to progress. The group works collaboratively to address children's behavioral health needs through monthly working meetings, policy development, workgroup activities, and resource sharing. Mindworks provides a platform for partnership development and implementation of shared strategic objectives for Georgia's SOC.

#### Georgia State Agencies:

- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)
- Department of Community Health (DCH)
- Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
- Department of Education (GaDOE)
- Department of Human Services Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA)

#### Federal Partner

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

## Partner Organizations

- Amerigroup Community Care
- Anthem
- CareSource
- Centene
- Center for Leadership in Disability, Georgia State University (GSU/CLD)
- Center of Excellence for Children’s Behavioral Health, Georgia State University (GSU/COE)
- Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA)
- Council of Juvenile Court Judges of Georgia
- Georgia Alliance of Therapeutic Services for Children and Families (GATS)
- Georgia Appleseed
- Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (GA-AAP)
- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS)
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership
- Georgia Parent Support Network (GPSN)
- Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority
- Jesse Parker Williams Foundation
- Lookout Mountain Community Services
- Mental Health America, Georgia (MHA-GA)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Georgia
- Peach State Health Plan
- Resilient Georgia
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Silence the Shame
- Strategic Healthcare Partners: Healthcare Consulting Services
- The Carter Center
- Together Georgia
- United Way of Greater Atlanta (UWGA)
- View Point Health Care Management Entity (View Point)
- Voices for Georgia’s Children (Voices)
- WellCare
- WinGeorgia Care Management Entity (WinGeorgia)

## **MINDWORKS GEORGIA: YEAR IN REVIEW**

At the beginning of the program year, Mindworks members were surveyed to gauge interest in meeting engagement and the preferred way to meet. Fifty-six percent of attendees were interested in a rotation of in-person and virtual meetings, while 44% wanted the meetings to remain virtual. Membership feedback indicated that attendance would be impacted if there was a shift to in-person meetings. The tone continued to be set during the meetings by opening with impactful sharing from lived experience speakers throughout the year. The monthly meeting agendas included workgroup reports, featured agency and partner presentations, and opportunities for deeper discussion and strategizing via breakout rooms, as needed. During the

second half of the year, the team’s focus shifted to strategic planning for the next iteration of the SOC state plan, which began in Summer 2023. To further support the implementation of statewide efforts, the COE team increased its capacity by hiring additional staff to support Evaluation and Policy work.

## REBRANDING TO MINDWORKS GEORGIA

Beginning in the Fall of 2022 and under the leadership of the Mindworks Executive Director, the rebranding work of the Interagency Directors Team was implemented and launched statewide. The work of the rebranding committee was first presented to the general Mindworks leadership during its April 2023 meeting. The rebrand was not only a name change, but also a shifting of the team’s focus to be intentional about who the primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders in the policy, funding, and service realms of The Georgia SOC.

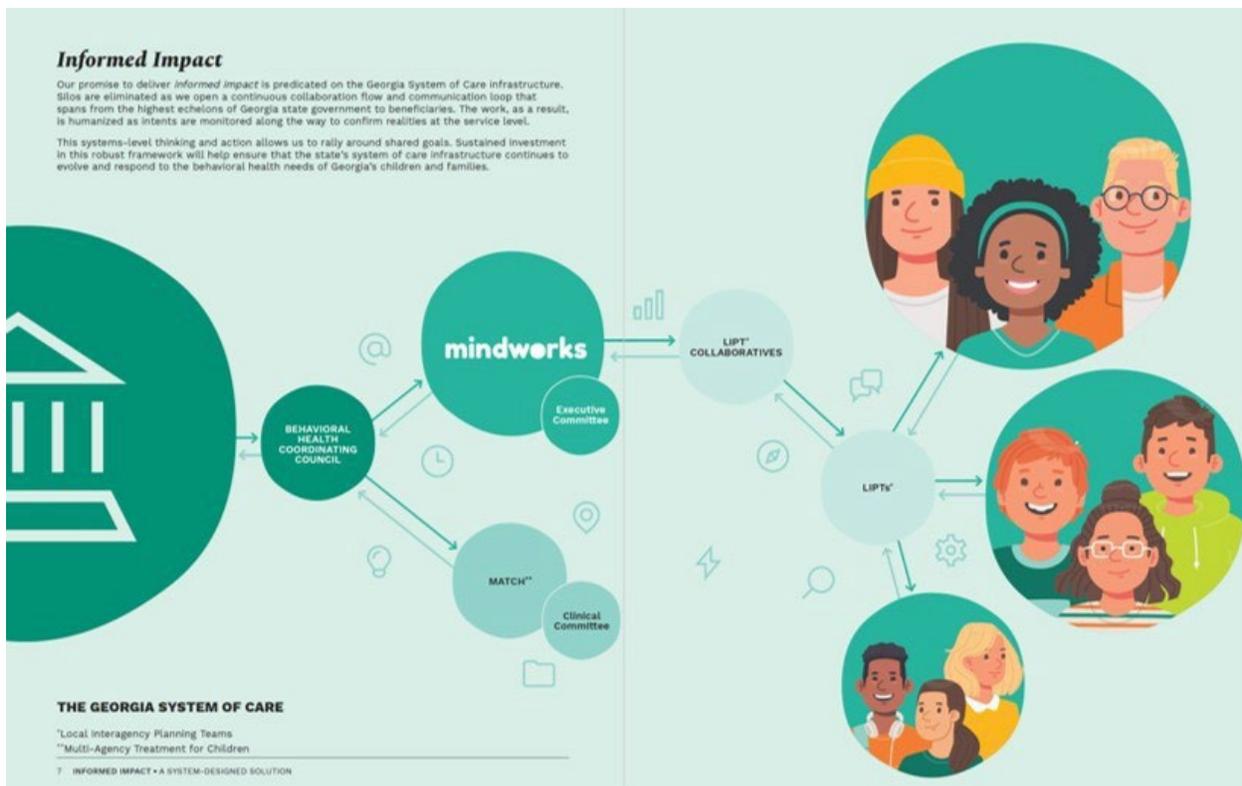


Figure 1. Mindworks Georgia Informed Impact

## SOC STATE PLAN

Mindworks team members continued engaging primarily through virtual communication, however, meeting coordinators determined the need to conduct strategic planning sessions in person. The Mindworks team was heavily focused on development and planning for its next 3-year state plan. The Georgia SOC State Plan is a dynamic, living document outlining the

direction Georgia is taking to improve the state's child and adolescent behavioral health system.

## CHALLENGES

The Mindworks team, like many agencies and organizations, experienced changes in stakeholder leadership and restructuring within organizations. While the team continued to meet virtually, with consistent participation from members, it became apparent that some in-person communication was needed to be more effective and intentional for strategic planning. Through continued use of virtual platforms and the members' willingness to move the work forward, strides were made to meet the demands of the State Plan and strengthen the system. In December 2023, to regain normalcy, Mindworks held its first in-person meeting post-Covid. Members on all levels of the Mindworks team continued membership monitoring, including active participation and attendance, to ensure appropriate representation was maintained.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Mindworks is proud of its recent accomplishments, including work to address infant and early childhood mental health, expand school-based behavioral health services, unravel complicated funding streams, and develop a culturally responsive system of care. During this reporting period, Mindworks focused on funding and developing strategies to support blending and braiding funding. The aim included conserving resources, increasing capacity, and reducing duplication of services. Mindworks successfully managed federal investments, applied for and received additional funding. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) invested federal funds to support initiatives and drive work to strengthen The Georgia System of Care:

### Georgia Mental Health Access in Pediatrics (GMAP)

HRSA funding was awarded in 2021 and continues through 2026, facilitated by a partnership among the Office of Children, Young Adults and Families at DBHDD, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (in collaboration with Augusta University, Medical College of Georgia, and Children's Hospital of Georgia), and the COE. GMAP aims to enhance the workforce capacity of pediatric clinicians in Georgia serving children and youth aged 0 to 21.

GMAP expanded access to behavioral health education through Project ECHO, an interactive telementoring approach that connects behavioral health experts with pediatric providers. Topics include autism, anxiety and depression, substance use disorders, and suicidality. GMAP also offers teleconsultation services, allowing pediatric providers to consult with child and adolescent psychiatrists or advanced practice mental health specialists about cases. Additionally, GMAP partners manage a resource directory that lists behavioral health specialists by county. Providers using the consultation line receive guidance on screening, diagnosis, and medication management, as well as resources to share with families. Mindworks serves as the advisory board for the GMAP program, providing strategic advice and technical expertise to ensure successful implementation and sustainability.

Georgia also received HRSA supplemental funding for \$300,000.00 that supported the partnership between Mindworks' *Cultural and Linguistic Competency Workgroup* and DBHDD to provide Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards training to partners around the state. This award started in September 2022, to be used through September 2023, with a no-cost extension granted through September 2024. Part of the supplement funded a cultural competency training series titled "Integrating Culturally Responsive Care into the Georgia Behavioral Health System," aimed at equipping child-serving agency participants with the knowledge and skills to promote health equity and improve care quality. The training was based on National CLAS standards and included three sessions:

- Session 1: An Introduction to the Standards
- Session 2: Actionable Steps for Culturally Responsive Care
- Session 3: A Train-the-Trainer Session to teach participants how to redeliver the curriculum, thereby enhancing capacity within Georgia's System of Care.

To ensure accessibility, training was held across the state, including Savannah, Tifton, Augusta, Macon, and Atlanta. A total of 214 individuals participated, with up to 8 hours of Continuing Education Units offered. Upon completion, participants completed evaluation surveys. When asked how they would address barriers to integrating culturally responsive care into their practice, many highlighted the importance of understanding personal biases and ongoing education. In response to recommendations for agencies interested in integrating CLAS, participants suggested implementing cultural competency training to enhance awareness and skills throughout Georgia.

#### INFANT AND TODDLER COURT PROGRAM (ITCP) GRANT

ITCP completed its second programming year with first-year implementation launched in Athens, Georgia. The ITCP funding continued to support young children (ages 0-3) and their families at risk for involvement with the child welfare system. This program utilizes the Safe Babies Approach, which has been shown to reduce time spent in foster care and the likelihood of re-entering foster care. Over the next two years, the COE will support the implementation of two additional sites with one site providing prevention support to families. Mindworks is listed as the official advisory board and has consistently provided advice to ensure the growth of ITCP.

#### HEALTHY START INITIATIVE

Mindworks supported the development of the Healthy Start proposal that was submitted to HRSA in December 2023. This funding will address disparities in infant mortality, improve perinatal outcomes, and promote the behavioral and mental well-being of the whole family by improving the system of care. This million-dollar annual investment will support services to Crisp, Clay, Dooly, Muscogee, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, and Taylor counties through a partnership with the West Central Health District 7 for five years.

#### **ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:**

The *Mindworks Behavioral Health Mapping Workgroup* completed the *Funding Framework 1.0*

as a first look at the first steps to understanding Georgia’s system of care. This document provided a clearer snapshot of the spending across Georgia’s Behavioral Health systems of care. During this reporting period, the BH Mapping Workgroup chair and the Mindworks Executive Director presented the Funding Framework report to the Philanthropic Funders Collaborative and the Adoption & Foster Care subcommittee. Both presentations were received very well and garnered interest and support for expanding this work.

The *Blending and Braiding Brief* was developed by the *Funding and Finance Workgroup* to assist state and local communities in braiding, blending, or layering multiple funding streams to increase access to well-coordinated, comprehensive services for children and families. This brief describes the blending, braiding, and layering of funding models along with their uses, state examples, recommendations, processes for implementation, and resources.

Individuals representing Mindworks presented on the topic, “Get Ready: The Evolution of System of Care” at the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual System of Care Academy. The SOC Academy is an annual conference hosted by DBHDD and allows providers, clinicians, partners, and families to connect, participate in peer learning opportunities, and share information about children’s behavioral health services and coordination. This was the first year the 3-day conference was held in person since the Covid-19 pandemic. This year’s theme was “Ready, Set, Connect,” and several plenary speakers gave presentations on various topics, the newly appointed DBHDD Commissioner Kevin Tanner spoke, and awards were presented to partners.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

The Mindworks team has made great strides for children’s behavioral health in Georgia through partnering with state agencies and organizations and actively including and following the lead of families in planning and development. In the next year, Mindworks will focus efforts on the development of a new 3-year strategic roadmap.

Developing streamlined solutions to make the dynamic behavioral health system of care more efficient, accessible, and effective, requires systems thinking. By untangling the complex web of agencies, programs and services, and funding that makes up the system of care, Mindworks can then identify common challenges; set collective goals; and share data, resources, and practices.

Systems thinking supports new conversations, collaborations, and insights. It helps to illuminate the interconnected elements of the system so that decision-makers can overcome compartmentalized thinking to gain a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the challenges, identify and avoid historic pitfalls and unintended consequences, and find high-leverage opportunities for significant, lasting change.

Mindworks recognizes the value of systems thinking to engage and align all interested parties — from leadership to beneficiaries — to create continuous collaboration and informed impact.

As we move forward, the team will continue to have a close eye on state and national policy efforts, funding opportunities, and the continuation of workgroup efforts.



**CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR  
CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**  
integrating research, policy, and practice

Georgia Health Policy Center  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies  
Georgia State University  
[ghpc.gsu.edu](http://ghpc.gsu.edu)

Georgia Health Policy Center  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies  
Georgia State University  
[www.ghpc.gsu.edu](http://www.ghpc.gsu.edu)

