
Sasquatch-Sized Safety

1:30 – 3:00 PM | 90 minutes

Curator: Sharon Redmond (WA)

Presenters: Sarah Hurst (GA), Joel Rogers (TX), Ted Mermigos, Jr. (DE), Kristen Erickson-Donadee (CA)

Employee Safety in the Workplace

Georgia Division of Child Support Services (DCSS)

National Council of Child Support Directors
2026 Conference

Growing Our Impact



Georgia DCSS

- State-run, state-administered
- 282,528 cases
- 1,092 full-time employees
- 55 local offices, 10 regions across the state

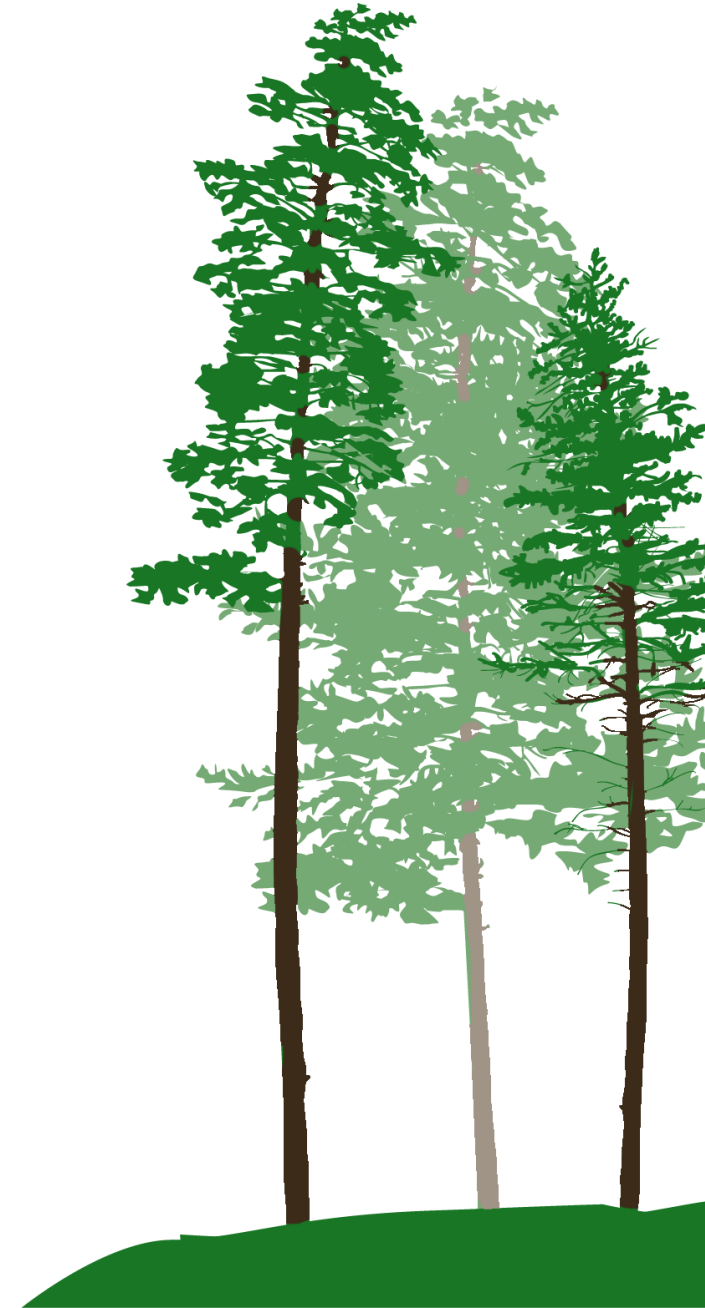


**Georgia Department
of Human Services**

Division of Child Support Services

Employee Safety in the Workplace

- Security in the office
- Communication
- Training



Security in the Office

- Security guards
- Metal detector wands/metal detectors
 - Weapons prohibited beyond the lobby
- Customer interview rooms

**SECURITY
NOTICE**

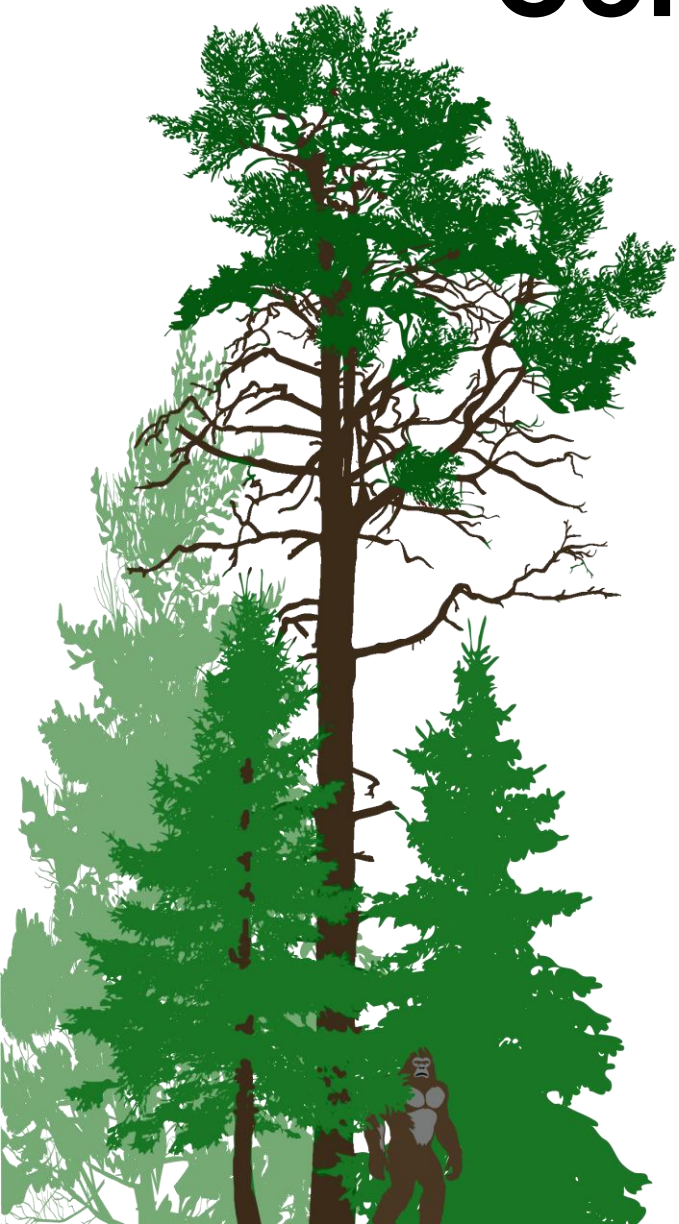


**NO GUNS OR
WEAPONS
ALLOWED IN
RESTRICTED
AREAS**

O.C.G.A. § 16-11-125.1 et seq

Communication

- Emergency Action Response (EAR) Mailbox - ear@dhs.ga.gov
 - Email sent to recipients in key administrative offices, including the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the Office of Communications, and the Office of Facilities and Support Services, in addition to other key leaders
- Reporting - law enforcement, division leadership, EAR mailbox, OIG incident report
- Communication Center calls
- Customer restrictions due to threats



Training

- Mental Health First Aid Certification Program
- Annual mandatory training
 - Customer service interactions
 - Workplace behaviors and expectations
 - Workplace safety
- Domestic violence training (SAVES grant)



Staff Safety & Security: A Texas Perspective

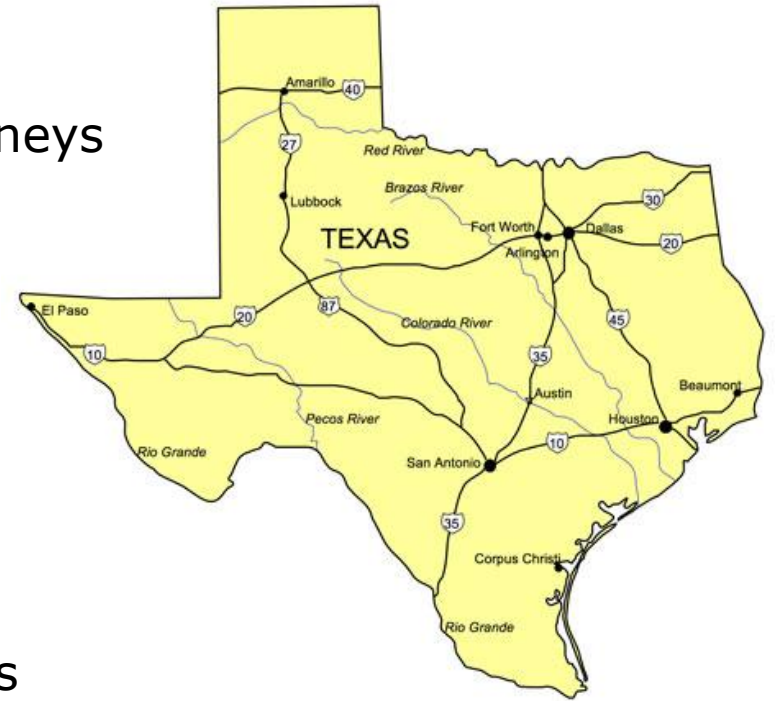
Office of the Attorney General - Child Support Division

National Council of Child Support Directors
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Growing Our Impact

Texas Title IV-D Program

- Operated by the Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Division (OAG-CSD)
- State-run IV-D program
- 1.5 million full-service cases
- 2,700 full-time IV-D staff, including 300 attorneys
- Physical Locations:
 - 1 State Office,
 - 3 Customer Service Call Centers
 - 4 Specialized Offices
 - 11 Regional Administrative Offices
 - 63 Field Offices and Storefront Locations
- Handles IV-D cases in all 254 Texas counties



Balancing Act: Customer Engagement & Safety

Staying engaged with customers

- OAG-CSD serves families who depend on us; access to services is central to our mission.
- A customer-engagement culture builds trust and reduces escalation in the first place.
- Restricting customer access to staff or services is always a last resort, never a routine measure.

Protecting staff

- Sovereign citizen cases, open records requests, and litigation threats extend well beyond in-person encounters.
- Clear, consistent policy gives staff firm ground to stand on when a case turns unreasonable.
- The goal: real safety, not just the appearance of it.

Texas Statutory & Policy Safeguards for Staff

- **Statutory authority to act:** Texas Family Code and agency policy gives the IV-D agency the authority to resolve or close complaints, or limit access to complaint processes, when they involve abusive or threatening conduct.
- **Staff identity protections:** Standard operating procedure allows frontline customer service staff to choose between providing their first name or their last name; if the customer requests it, staff must provide their full name.
- **Zero-tolerance policy:** The OAG-CSD does not tolerate workplace behavior that is violent, threatens violence, or interferes with an individual's legal rights — for staff and customers alike.
- **Why it matters:** These provisions let staff do their jobs without exposing personal information or absorbing unlimited abuse.



Managing Repeat & Egregious Actors

OAG-CSD's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (UCC) policy gives agency ombudsman staff a uniform, defensible process for the rare cases that escalate:

- 1. Identify & confirm** — office and regional ombudsmen confirm the pattern of unreasonable conduct.
- 2. Investigate & resolve** — a Special Ombudsman Investigation Team resolves the complaint within 30 days.
- 3. One final review** — the complainant may appeal once, in writing, to the Chief Ombudsman. [Tex. Family Code § 231.119(c)]
- 4. Limit access if needed** — persistent, abusive, or threatening behavior may result in documented, monitored restrictions.
- 5. Close the loop** — once final, the matter is documented and closed, and staff are instructed not to re-engage.

Situational Threat Response: Urgent vs. Potential

Urgent / Immediate Threat	Potential Threat
• Serious injury, unwelcome contact, property damage, or an active-shooter situation • Call 911 once safe • Alert division management, who notify CSD Executive Administration and HR • File a Workplace Violence Incident Report within 1 business day	• Reasonable belief a person or situation could turn violent • Notify management to request security involvement • Stay calm and use a non-confrontational approach • Call 911 if the situation becomes threatening or dangerous for staff or customers



Individual Threats: BOLO Alerts

OAG-CSD utilizes a “Be On The Lookout” (BOLO) system to warn frontline staff of potentially dangerous individuals

Red Tier — No Entry	Yellow Tier — Monitored Access
• Customer has threatened physical harm or damage to staff or OAG property • Highest threat level — not allowed in the building • Staff must call 911 immediately upon in-person contact	• Customer is very irate, but has not crossed the line of making an actual threat • If allowed in the building, management must closely monitor every interaction • If behavior turns threatening, staff should ask them to leave, then call 911 if they refuse

New Statutes to Protect Employee Information

IV-D Agency Employees

Tex. Gov't Code §§ 552.117(a), 552.1175(a); Tex. Tax Code § 25.025(a) [Effective 9/1/2023]

- Personal information of IV-D agency employees is exempt from disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act.
- *Previously, protection only applied if an employee affirmatively elected it prior to an open records request.*
- Employees may restrict public access to their home addresses in online property tax appraisal district records.
 - *Filed directly with the appraisal district on a prescribed form.*

All OAG Employees & Family Members

Tex. Gov't Code §§ 552.117, 552.1175; Tex. Tax Code § 25.025 [Effective 9/1/2025]

- Personal information of all OAG employees and their family members is exempt from disclosure under the Public Information Act.
- *Expands the prior exemption, which covered only Child Support Division and Law Enforcement Division employees.*
- Employees and family members may restrict public access to their home addresses in online property tax appraisal district records.

Dismissal of Frivolous Suits Filed Against the IV-D Agency or its Employees

Tex. Family Code § 231.016 [effective 9/1/2023]

Gives courts new statutory authority to quickly dismiss baseless or frivolous litigation filed against the IV-D agency or its employees pertaining to the agency's powers, duties, or services.

Dismissal is available if the court determines the cause of action:

- is frivolous or malicious;
- fails to state a claim to which relief is available; or
- seeks monetary relief barred by sovereign immunity.

This statutory change has helped the OAG-CSD better protect agency employees by enabling rapid dismissal of unwarranted and harassing lawsuits filed against them.

Reimagining the Work Environment

What we changed:

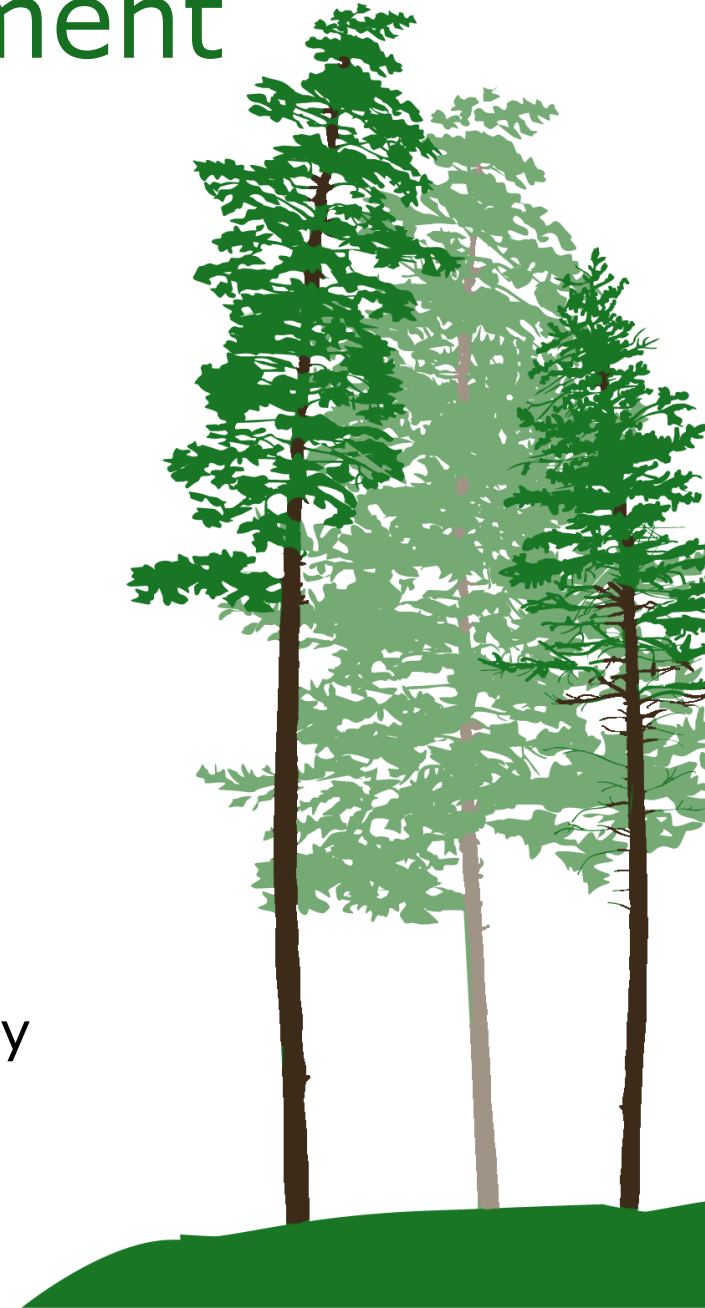
- Leveraged the pandemic to build a hybrid workforce
- Shrunk our physical office footprint
- Shifted direct customer engagement toward virtual and digital channels
 - virtual office lobbies (with QR Code signage)
 - chat feature for customer contact
- Almost all administrative support orders are now obtained utilizing virtual negotiation conferences



Reimagining the Work Environment

What were the results:

- Vastly fewer in-person interactions with customers in our offices
- Higher customer participation in administrative order obtainment
 - easier to participate
 - customers report feeling safer
- Staff feel safer and more comfortable when negotiating virtually with potentially difficult parties
- Allows us to keep our offices fully open to the public virtually while protecting staff during inclement weather or other public safety emergencies.



Safety in Court & Off-Site Locations

- Our threat-response procedures travel with staff — they apply at courthouses, in agency-marked vehicles, and at any other work location, not just OAG-CSD offices.
- Prior to court, attorneys must complete a family violence assessment worksheet for all cases marked with a family violence indicator (FVI).
- Staff must negotiate separately with parties at court on all FVI-marked cases.
- Court teams coordinate with courthouse security and local law enforcement ahead of higher-risk hearings.
- Many of our IV-D Associate Judges allow virtual dockets, enabling remote litigation when threats are elevated.



Training & Ongoing Preparedness

Mandatory Training Courses:

- Workplace Violence (HRT115)
- Active Shooter / Immediate Threat Preparedness (SFT100)
- Family Violence Fundamentals (HRT120A)
- Family Violence Refresher (HRT120R)
- Addressing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct — required for new regional ombudsmen within 90 days of hire

Additional resources:

- Outstanding Customer Service: You Make the Difference (HRT207)
- Purple Ribbon desktop icon for Family Violence resources
- “Customers in Crisis” online staff guide developed by the agency’s Customer Engagement section
- Situational Awareness Training, available on request through office management