

[Subscribe via RSS](#)

## GA Non-Profits: Kids Will Suffer In Aftermath of State Budget Cuts

Written by [Chandra R. Thomas](#) on Aug 31, 2010

By **Chandra R. Thomas**

Wanted: Hard working employee. Must enjoy engaging with children. Ability to work long hours as part of a skeletal staff for minimal pay is required. Morale low. Employer's future status uncertain.



Leaders at many non-profit organizations in the state that serve children say a bogus ad like this epitomizes the work environment they've been experiencing in recent years. And they say the massive budget cuts recently proposed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) are only going to exacerbate their challenges. On August 18, DHS Commissioner B.J. Walker presented her budget recommendations to the department's board in response to Governor Sonny Perdue's recent mandate that DHS and several other state agencies submit proposals for four, six and eight percent budget cuts for fiscal year 2011.

Walker told the board that only people and services are left to cut. She says the proposed cuts force her to ask workers to do exceptional work in an environment where needs have increased, but fewer resources are available. DHS workers have already taken a 10 percent cut due to required furlough days.

"I've already decreased my workforce by 50 percent in the last year and a half and have had to do salary reductions," says Tom Russell, executive director of [The Bridge](#). The Atlanta-based residential treatment facility receives funds from DHS to treat young people in the agency's care.

View Walker's [budget presentation](#) here.

Governor Perdue's orders are an effort to address a massive statewide budget shortfall estimated to be between \$413 million and \$613 million. That's on the heels of \$2.5 billion in budget cuts already implemented since the 2009 financial year.

Even worse, Russell says, the Georgia children that his and other non-profits serve will likely suffer as a result.

"I'm concerned about the impact it's going to have on the children," says Russell. "If we don't provide the right care to our kids, many of them are going to end up on the streets, in our homeless population or in prison."

Normer Adams, executive director of the [Georgia Association of Homes and Services For Children](#) agrees. The organization provides support to more than 150 organizations that assist abused and neglected children in the state. "As far as the budget goes, we're not cutting into the bone – we're cutting into the marrow of the bone at this point. Now we're cutting services for the children that we're caring for and there's nowhere else to cut."

Adams says the budget cuts are overtaxing non-profit agency workers.

"Caseloads are going up for workers, some services are being totally cut for adopted children," says Adams. "This is making a real impact on families. Four percent cuts are going to send agencies teetering

on the edge, over the edge. We've seen 50 agencies close in the last three years."

He's also concerned about the effect of what he considers to be budget-driven pressures to reduce the number of children in state care.

"Four years ago [Georgia] was serving 12,000 foster children, now we have 7,500 in care," he says. "Some have been placed in a home with their family or have been adopted but that's not always the case. If kids are safe, we support that, but let's not reduce the number [of kids in care] for the sake of reducing numbers. We need to make sure they are safe."

Adams and Russell say they hope Governor Perdue, after reviewing the proposed cuts, will consider the impact on children.

"It's a question of priorities," Russell says. "We have to ask ourselves that question as a society. The question needs to be asked 'are we making the cuts that have the least impact on children.' When we don't invest in our kids we either pay [for it] now, or pay [for it] later."

---

*Got a juvenile justice story idea? Contact JJIE.org staff writer Chandra R. Thomas at [cthom141@kennesaw.edu](mailto:cthom141@kennesaw.edu). Thomas, a former Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism Fellow and Kiplinger Public Affairs Journalism Fellow, is an award-winning multimedia journalist who has worked for Atlanta Magazine and Fox 5 News in Atlanta.*



#### Related posts:

1. [Budget Cuts: Will Children Pay?](#) Juvenile Court Judge Timothy Pape has a disturbing prediction for Georgia. He expects to see...
2. [DJJ Unveils Severe Budget Cuts: Is There A Silver Lining?](#) By Chandra R. Thomas Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice Board members say there's possibly a...
3. [Normer Adams: DJJ Budget Tragedy](#) If you thought that the Department of Human Services budget was bad, the Department of...

[« Previous Post](#)