



# Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division

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## Why we did this review

This report is a follow-up review of a special examination published in December 2018 (Report #18-14).

The original examination answered the House Appropriations Committee's questions regarding funding models for domestic violence (DV) shelters and sexual assault (SA) centers. The report discussed trends in funding (including funding gaps), services provided, and the availability of information to assess the performance of DV shelters and SA centers.

## About DV Shelters and SA Centers

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) manages the state's family violence appropriation and federal grants for crime victims. CJCC awards funding to DV shelters—which provide safe housing and other resources for victims of domestic violence and their children—and SA centers—which assist victims of sexual assault.

Shelters and centers must meet established eligibility standards to receive state funding. In fiscal year 2021, 48 shelters and 28 centers across Georgia received state funds. Eight are funded as a dual DV shelter and SA center.

## Follow-Up Review Funding of Domestic Violence Shelters and Sexual Assault Centers

### Services impacted due to pandemic but funding to drop

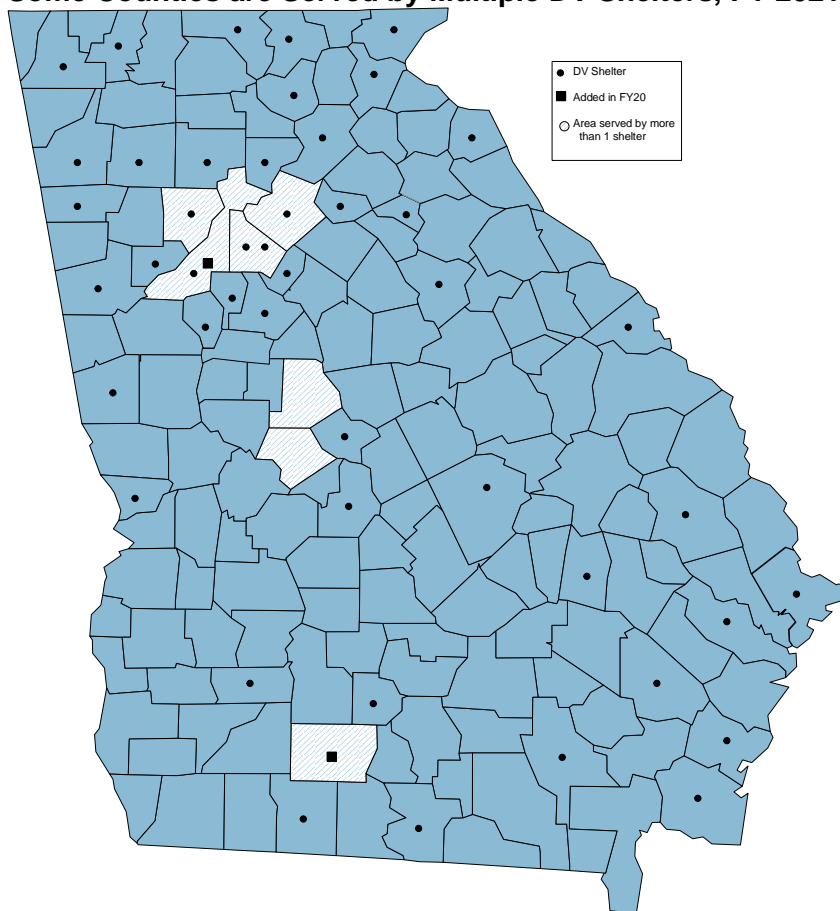
#### What we found

Since our 2018 examination, the number of state-funded domestic violence (DV) shelters and sexual assault (SA) centers has increased, diminishing previously identified gaps in service coverage. Although grant award amounts to shelters and centers increased from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020, future decreases in grant awards are likely because of steep cuts to federal funding, the largest funding source for these entities. Services provided by shelters and centers have generally increased, though these entities continue to face many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With upgraded case and grants management systems, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) will be better able to collect and analyze data on funding and services.

This report provides an update on the current status of funding and services, particularly as a result of COVID-19. It also provides information on actions CJCC has taken since our original review.

At the time of the original report, CJCC distributed state funding via annual grants to 46 DV shelters and 22 SA centers located throughout the state. In fiscal year 2020, CJCC received state appropriations to award grants to two additional DV shelters and six additional SA centers (no additions occurred in fiscal year 2021). As shown in Exhibits 1 and 2, state-funded DV shelters and SA centers are located throughout the state (see Appendix A for a list of state-funded entities and their service areas). While the addition of the two DV shelters did not impact coverage, access to the shelters improved, with seven counties serviced by more than one shelter (see Exhibit 1).

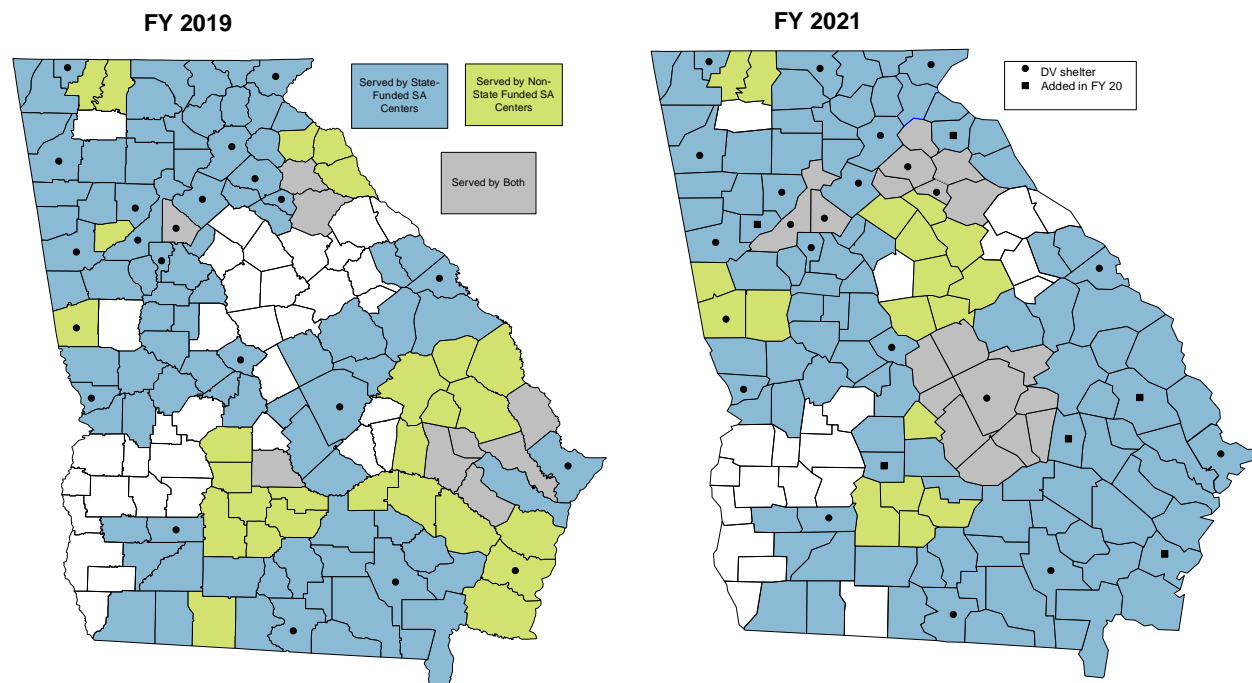
### Exhibit 1 Some Counties are Served by Multiple DV Shelters, FY 2021



Source: CJCC documents

As **Exhibit 2** shows, the additional six state-funded SA centers expanded coverage, and the number of counties without coverage has decreased from 35 to 21. With the expanded coverage, approximately 3% of the state's population currently resides in an area without service coverage—compared to 6% in fiscal year 2019. In particular, coverage in the eastern and southeastern parts of the state shifted from non-state funded to state-funded centers, while coverage in Central Georgia increased partly due to the addition of non-state funded centers—centers that meet state standards but do not receive state funding. In our previous report, we noted that state funding is “continuation funding” and thus provides a degree of stability for the centers. While there has been an overall increase in coverage, geographic gaps in service areas persist, particularly in Southwest Georgia.

## Exhibit 2 Despite Increased Coverage, Gaps Remain



Source: CJCC documents

### Funding

In our prior report, we noted that DV shelters and SA centers rely heavily on federal and state funding. As shown in Exhibit 3, approximately 80% of total funding available for DV shelters and SA centers is federal, and the largest portion comes from funds generated by the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant. Between fiscal year 2019 and 2020, VOCA funds decreased by 26%, and all other major federal funding sources—including S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)—experienced a decline. The single exception was the Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) grant, which experienced a one-time increase from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

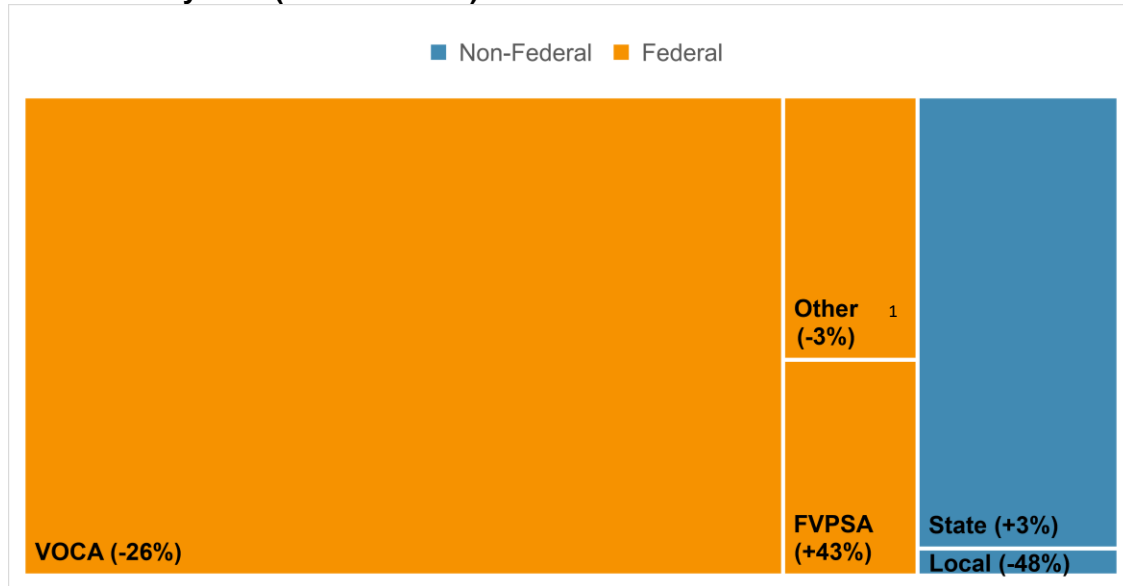
In contrast, state appropriations for the family violence program increased by 3% from \$12.8 million in fiscal year 2019 to \$13.2 million in fiscal year 2020. The increase in fiscal year 2020 appropriations was for the additional shelters and centers and did not increase award amounts to existing entities. State appropriations increased again in fiscal year 2021 to \$14.6 million, which will result in higher awards to all shelters and centers in fiscal year 2022.

Finally, local victim assistance program (LVAP) collections decreased by 50% in fiscal year 2020 and LVAP funding provided to DV shelters and SA centers decreased by approximately 48%.<sup>1</sup> Approximately half of the state-certified entities historically receive LVAP funds. However, as of January 2021, approximately 38% of state-certified entities had received LVAP funding.<sup>2</sup> In addition to LVAP funds, shelters and centers may also receive revenue from fundraising, local contributions, and operating small businesses (e.g., thrift shops). More than half of our survey respondents (25 of 48) indicated that total local funding had decreased in fiscal year 2020.

<sup>1</sup> LVAP funding is generated by a 5% penalty applied to any fines for criminal offenses or violations. Local governments distribute funds among LVAP-certified entities as they see fit. DV shelters and SA centers are not the only potential recipients of these funds.

<sup>2</sup> This percentage is with 102 counties reporting.

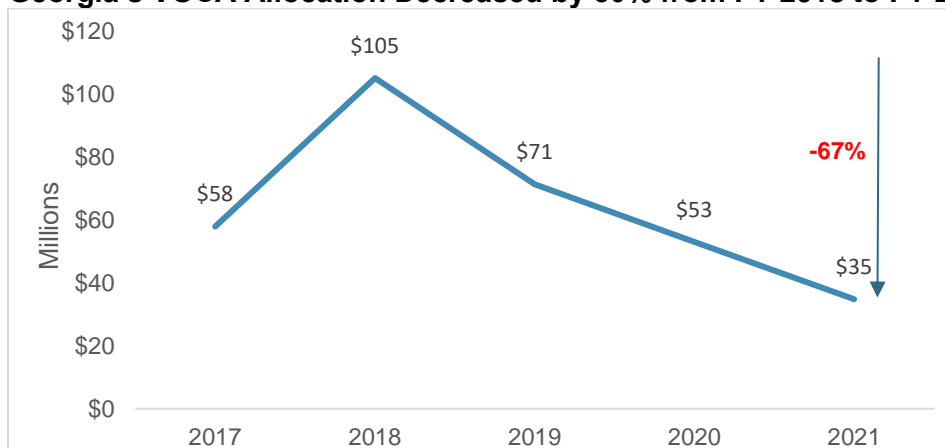
**Exhibit 3  
VOCA Funds Account for the Largest Portion of Funding and Decreased by 26% (FY 2019-2020)<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Other federal sources include the S.T.O.P Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP), and Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHBG)  
Sources: Federal websites, state appropriations bill, and CJCC documents

While total award amounts continued to increase from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2020, decreases are anticipated in the coming years because of a significant decline in VOCA funds. As Exhibit 4 shows, Georgia’s VOCA allocation experienced a 67% drop between fiscal years 2018 and 2021 from approximately \$105 million to \$35 million.<sup>3</sup> However, this has yet to impact grants to shelters and centers because previous years’ increases in VOCA funding (administered on a four-year cycle) have buffered the effects of the more recent cuts. According to CJCC, cuts to VOCA grant award amounts, ranging from approximately 10% to 15%, are anticipated beginning in fiscal year 2022.

**Exhibit 4  
Georgia’s VOCA Allocation Decreased by 50% from FY 2018 to FY 2020**



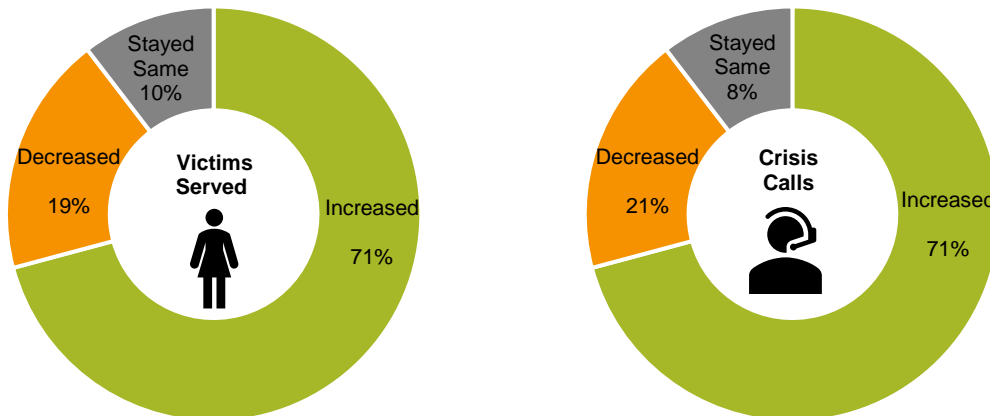
Source: CJCC documents

<sup>3</sup> CJCC is determining individual DV shelter and SA center award allocation amounts for fiscal year 2021 VOCA grant awards. Directors will be notified of these amounts in July 2021.

### Service Activity

We surveyed 68 shelter and center directors to determine what challenges they have faced during the pandemic and the changes in services they experienced. Of the 48 that responded, 34 (71%) indicated they have served more victims and answered more crisis calls in fiscal year 2020 compared to fiscal year 2019 (see Exhibit 5). However, along with these increases, shelters' and centers' ability to serve (i.e. capacity) has been limited due to impacts from COVID-19, including decreases to staffing and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines on social distancing.

#### Exhibit 5 Most Survey Respondents Indicated More Victims Served and Crisis Calls Completed in FY 2020



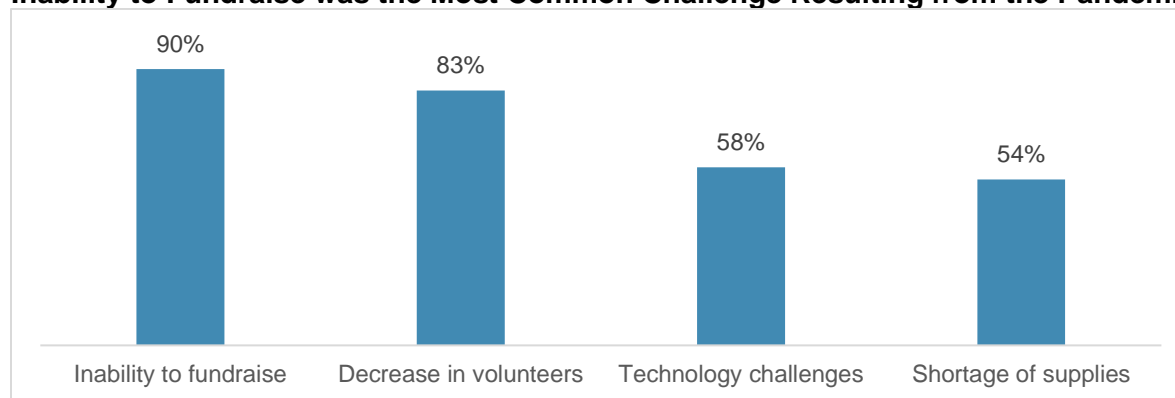
Source: DOAA survey of entity directors

Survey respondents were less aligned when discussing trends in bed nights.<sup>4</sup> Of those providing shelter services, approximately 39% (15 of 38) indicated that bed nights had increased, while an equal percentage indicated that bed nights had decreased. However, 58% of all respondents (28 of 48) also indicated that there was an increase in the number of victims relocated due to capacity. Similarly, CJCC's survey of shelters and centers found that many shelters were met with an increased demand for services; however, they also had to reduce the number of victims in the shelters to ensure proper social distancing. As a result, it is unclear whether the pandemic impacted bed nights because of increased demand or limited capacity due to social distancing restrictions.

Our survey also asked directors about other impacts of the ongoing pandemic on shelters and centers. Approximately 90% of directors who responded (43 of 48) indicated that social distancing guidelines during the pandemic created fundraising challenges, while 83% (40 of 48) noted a decrease in volunteers (see Exhibit 5). CJCC's survey of shelters and centers also indicated that the inability to fundraise during the pandemic would negatively impact services moving forward. Shelters also reported purchasing additional equipment to obtain or update technology to serve clients remotely and meet their needs. For example, one shelter director indicated that they purchased new technology and hired additional personnel to assist the children staying in the shelter with maintaining schoolwork and virtually connecting with their schools.

<sup>4</sup> Bed nights refer to the number of nights for each person who is provided a bed in the shelter.

### Exhibit 5 Inability to Fundraise was the Most Common Challenge Resulting from the Pandemic



Source: DOAA survey of entity directors

Approximately 42% of the respondents (19 of 45) reported that hotel stays have been the largest expense resulting from the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> Shelters may place clients in hotels if they do not have beds available due to capacity, and social distancing guidelines further limited the number of people shelters can house. The cost of supplies, including personal protective equipment, was the second most often cited expense resulting from the pandemic.

#### Management Systems

Since our prior report, CJCC has implemented new systems that will improve its ability to collect and analyze activity data, such as the number and types of services provided.<sup>6</sup> Once the upgrades described below are complete, CJCC should have better data to inform any future changes to the grant awards processes.

- **Case Management System (CaseWorthy)** – CJCC launched CaseWorthy for DV shelters and dual DV shelter/SA centers in fiscal year 2019, and SA centers joined in fiscal year 2020. CaseWorthy allows entities to generate different activity reports for various purposes and check for data accuracy. According to CJCC, CaseWorthy will also allow it to develop a map function that provides real-time information on the geographic availability of beds at individual shelters. CJCC indicated that Georgia would be the first state in the country to add such a functionality.
- **Grants Management System (IntelliGrants)** – CJCC’s IntelliGrants—slated to go live in July 2021—will streamline the process so the grants reimbursements can be handled and tracked in one place. CJCC staff stated they plan to release grant requests for applications using the new system for grants scheduled to begin in October 2021.

With these system upgrades, CJCC will be able collect and analyze performance information that will assist in its new responsibility of evaluating how it awards family violence program grants. In our original report, we noted that the process was based on historical precedent rather than a methodology that considers factors related to the program’s goals. The fiscal year 2021 appropriations bill calls for CJCC to evaluate the current funding formula and submit a report of its findings to the chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees by December 31, 2021. According to CJCC staff, it is meeting with stakeholders in July 2021 to determine how it will conduct this evaluation.

<sup>5</sup> There were 45 responses to this particular question.

<sup>6</sup> We were unable to use the information from CaseWorthy to compare activity data from fiscal years 2019 to 2020 because the system had not been fully implemented in fiscal year 2019.

*CJCC's Response:* In its response, CJCC indicated the follow-up review “reflects an updated and accurate picture of the domestic violence (DV) shelter and sexual assault (SA) center funding models in Georgia.”

They noted that, while it views its relationship with the DV shelters and SA centers as a partnership, “there have been and will continue to be highs and lows in this area of service due to the nature of the work, the difficulty to maintain a consistent level of service, and reductions in available grant funds...”. They indicated they continue to provide technical assistance and training and will seek out additional resources to sustain and expand victim services. CJCC noted that DV and SA providers have modeled “resilience and commitment” in their provision of services throughout the pandemic.

A copy of the 2018 special examination (#18-14) may be accessed at: <http://www.audits.ga.gov/rsaAudits>.

## Appendix A: Listing of State-Funded DV Shelters and SA Centers

State-Funded Domestic Violence Shelters			
	Shelter Name	City	Counties Served
1	Battered Women's Shelter (The Haven)	Valdosta	Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Colquitt, Cook, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes
2	Camden Community Crisis Center (Camden House)	St. Marys	Camden, Charlton
3	Carroll County Emergency Shelter	Carrollton	Carroll, Coweta, Haralson, Heard, Meriwether
4	Center for Pan Asian Community Services <sup>1</sup>	Atlanta	Gwinnett, Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb
5	Cherokee Family Violence Center	Canton	Cherokee
6	Christian League for Battered Women (Tranquility House)	Cartersville	Bartow
7	Circle of Love Center	Greensboro	Baldwin, Greene, Hancock, Morgan, Putnam
8	Citizens Against Violence (Safe Haven)	Statesboro	Candler, Bulloch, Effingham, Jenkins, Screven, Washington
9	Clayton County Association Against Domestic Violence (Securus House)	Morrow	Clayton
10	Columbus Alliance for Battered Women (Hope Harbour)	Columbus	Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Muscogee, Talbot, Taylor
11	Colquitt County Serenity House <sup>1</sup>	Moultrie	Colquitt
12	Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia	Macon	Bibb, Crawford, Jones, Monroe, Twiggs
13	Fight Abuse in the Home (FAITH)	Clayton	Rabun
14	Family Crisis Center of Walker, Dade, Catoosa, & Chattooga Counties	Lafayette	Chattooga, Catoosa, Dade, Walker
15	Fayette County Council on Domestic Violence (Promise Place)	Fayetteville	Fayette, Pike, Spalding, Upson



<b>State-Funded Domestic Violence Shelters - Continued</b>			
	<b>Shelter Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>
16	Flint Circuit Council on Family Violence (Haven House)	McDonough	Butts, Henry, Jasper, Lamar
17	Forsyth County Family Haven	Cumming	Forsyth
18	Georgia Mountain Women's Center (Circle of Hope)	Cornelia	Habersham, Stephens, White
19	Gateway House	Gainesville	Hall
20	Glynn Community Crisis Center (Amity House)	Brunswick	Glynn, McIntosh
21	Halcyon Home for Battered Women	Thomasville	Decatur, Grady, Mitchell, Seminole, Thomas
22	Harmony House Domestic Violence Shelter	LaGrange	Troup
23	Hospitality House for Women	Rome	Floyd
24	International Women's House (IWH)	Decatur	DeKalb
25	Liberty House of Albany	Albany	Baker, Calhoun, Clay, Crisp, Dooly, Dougherty, Early, Lee, Macon, Miller, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Terrell, Webster
26	liveSAFE Resources	Marietta	Cobb
27	Northeast Georgia Council on Domestic Violence (Heart Haven)	Hartwell	Elbert, Franklin, Hart
28	NOA's Ark (No One Alone)	Dahlonega	Dawson, Lumpkin
29	North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network	Blue Ridge	Fannin, Gilmer, Pickens
30	Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center	Dalton	Cordon, Murray, Whitfield
31	Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV - Fulton County)	Atlanta - Fulton	Fulton

<b>State-Funded Domestic Violence Shelters - Continued</b>			
	<b>Shelter Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>
32	Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV - Gwinnett County)	Atlanta - Gwinnett	Gwinnett
33	Peace Place	Winder	Banks, Barrow, Jackson
34	Polk County Women's Shelter (Our House)	Cedartown	Polk
37	S.H.A.R.E. House	Douglasville	Douglas, Paulding
38	Safe Homes of Augusta	Augusta	Burke, Columbia, Glascock, Jefferson, Lincoln, McDuffie, Richmond, Taliaferro, Warren, Wilkes
39	Savannah Area Family Emergency Shelter (Safe Shelter)	Savannah	Chatham
40	Support in Abusive Family Emergencies (SAFE)	Blairsville	Towns, Union
41	The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter	Vidalia	Emanuel, Montgomery, Toombs, Treutlen, Wheeler
42	The Salvation Army Safe House	Warner Robins	Houston, Peach, Pulaski
43	Tift Judicial Circuit Shelter (Ruth's Cottage)	Tifton	Ben Hill, Irwin, Tift, Turner, Worth
44	TriCounty Protective Agency	Hinesville	Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, Tattnall
45	Waycross Areas Shelter for Abused Women & Children (Magnolia House)	Waycross	Bacon, Brantley, Coffee, Pierce, Ware
46	Wayne County Protective Agency (Fair Haven)	Jesup	Appling, Jeff Davis, Wayne
47	Women in Need of God's Shelter (WINGS)	Dublin	Bleckley, Dodge, Johnson, Laurens, Telfair, Wilcox, Wilkinson
48	Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence (Women Moving On)	Decatur	DeKalb

<sup>1</sup> Shelter added in fiscal year 2020.  
Source: CJCC documents

<b>Sexual Assault Centers</b>			
	<b>Center</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>
1	Battered Women's Shelter, Inc.	Valdosta	Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Colquitt, Cook, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes
2	Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia, Inc.	Macon	Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Peach
3	The Cottage aka Sexual Assault Center of NE GA	Athens	Clarke, Madison, Oconee, Oglethorpe
4	DeKalb Rape Crisis Center, Inc.	Decatur	DeKalb, Fulton, Henry, Newton, Rockdale
5	Douglas County Task Force <sup>1</sup>	Douglasville	Douglas
6	FAITH / Fight Abuse in the Home	Clayton	Rabun, Stephens
7	The Gateway Center, Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Cordele	Ben Hill, Crisp, Dooly, Wilcox
8	Grady Rape Crisis Center	Atlanta	DeKalb, Fulton
9	Harmony House Child Advocacy Center <sup>1</sup>	Royston	Elbert, Franklin, Hart, Madison, Oglethorpe
10	The Lily Pad SANE Center	Albany	Baker, Calhoun, Decatur, Dougherty, Grady, Mitchell
11	liveSAFE Resources	Marietta	Cherokee, Cobb, Paulding
12	Mosaic Georgia, Inc.	Duluth	Gwinnett, Rockdale
13	North GA Mountain Crisis Network	Blue Ridge	Fannin, Filmer, Pickens
14	Piedmont Rape Crisis Center	Hoschton	Banks, Barrow, Jackson
15	Rape Crisis Center of the Coastal Empire, Inc.	Savannah	Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, Evans, Liberty, Long, Tattnall
16	Rape Response, Inc.	Gainesville	Dawson, Forsyth, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin, White

<b>Sexual Assault Centers - Continued</b>			
	<b>Center</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>
17	The Refuge SA Shelter, Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Vidalia	Toombs, Montgomery, Wheeler, Treutlen, Emanuel
18	SAFE/Support in Abusive Family Emergencies, Inc.	Blairsville	Towns, Union
19	Safe Harbor Children's Shelter (Connie Smith Rape Crisis Center) <sup>1</sup>	Brunswick	Appling, Camden, Glynn, Jeff Davis, McIntosh, Wayne
20	Satilla Health Foundation	Waycross	Bacon, Brantly, Charlton, Coffee, Pierce, Ware
21	Sexual Assault Center of NW GA	Rome	Bartow, Chattooga, Floyd, Polk
22	Sexual Assault Support Center, Inc.	Columbus	Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Muscogee, Talbot, Taylor
23	The Sexual Assault Victims Advocacy Center, Inc.	Ft. Oglethorpe	Catoosa, Dade, Walker
24	Southern Crescent Sexual Assault Center	Jonesboro	Butts, Clayton, Coweta, Fayette, Henry, Lamar, Pike, Spalding, Upson
25	Statesboro Regional Sexual Assault Center <sup>1</sup>	Statesboro	Bryan, Bulloch, Candler, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Jenkins, Long, Screven, Tattnall, Toombs
26	University Health Services, Inc. (Rape Crisis & Sexual Assault Services)	Augusta	Burke, Columbia, Jefferson, McDuffie, Richmond, Washington
27	West Georgia Prevention and Advocacy Center, Inc.	Carrollton	Carroll, Coweta, Haralson, Heard
28	WINGS / Women in Need of God's Shelter, Inc.	Dublin	Bleckley, Dodge, Johnson, Laurens, Telfair, Wilcox, Wilkinson

<sup>1</sup> Center added in fiscal year 2020.

Source: CJCC documents

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The Performance Audit Division was established in 1971 to conduct in-depth reviews of state-funded programs. Our reviews determine if programs are meeting goals and objectives; measure program results and effectiveness; identify alternate methods to meet goals; evaluate efficiency of resource allocation; assess compliance with laws and regulations; and provide credible management information to decision makers. For more information, contact us at (404)656-2180 or visit our website at [www.audits.ga.gov](http://www.audits.ga.gov).