

CHINS Q&A

WHAT IS CHILD IN NEED OF SERVICES (CHINS)?

Children who experience certain behaviors within the home or in the community is an indication that they are in need of support and services to help them address underlying issues.

It is purposed in code section [O.C.G.A. § 15-11-380](#) that these children receive collaborative support and cooperation to ensure that these children become responsible contributors of society.

WHAT DOES THE CHINS UNIT DO?

The CHINS Unit incorporates a proactive approach to offering resources and services to status offense children and families on the front-end. The Unit also provides case management services that includes and is not limited to follow-up and monitoring of case plans from vetted service providers.

Overall, our vision is to proactively eliminate and reduce formal court-involvement through an individualized approach which is designed to maximize the impact to every child.

WHAT IS A STATUS OFFENSE?

In the state of Georgia, status offense cases involves children 17 and under who are in need of services and falls under the following categories: truancy/educational neglect, ungovernable/unruly, runaway, curfew violations, patronizing a bar without parental supervision, and possession of alcohol. Click [here](#) for more information.

CAN I MAKE A REFERRAL TO THE CHINS UNIT?

Currently, the CHINS Unit receives truancy/educational neglect referrals and runaway complaints from Fulton County Juvenile Court's Intake Office. Ungovernable/unruly referrals are scheduled by **appointment only** (See "**How to File an Ungovernable/Unruly Referral**").

Under normal circumstances, the CHINS Unit do not receive referrals for youth who have been adjudicated delinquent or dependent.

If you have a child who has a **pending delinquency or dependency** at Fulton County Juvenile Court and services are currently not in place, please call CHINS Social Services Program Manager Miriam Kirby at 404.613.4836 or send an email to Miriam.kirby@fultoncountyga.gov for additional information.

WHO CAN FILE A CHINS REFERRAL?

In this context, CHINS referrals and CHINS complaints are used interchangeably. According to code section [O.C.G.A. § 15-11-390](#), complaints can be filed by any person alleging that a child is a child in need of services.

HOW TO FILE AN UNGOVERNABLE/UNRULY REFERRAL?

Ungovernable/unruly referrals are filtered through Fulton County Juvenile Court's Behavioral Health Unit for the initial screening process. Parents/legal guardians must complete the online CHINS Intake Form at fultonjuvenilecourt.org; send an email to shelly.spizouco@fultoncountyga.gov or call 404.613.4637 for instructions on CHINS intake forms and to schedule a clinical interview.

HOW TO FILE A RUNAWAY COMPLAINT?

Parents/legal guardians can file runaway complaints in person at Fulton County Juvenile Court's Complaint Office or by calling 404.612.4419. Once the complaint is filed, the case is assigned to the CHINS Unit to begin the CHINS intake process.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT?

Educational neglect involves children under the age of 12 who have accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences throughout a given school year. The educational neglect of a child refers to a lack of parental responsibility to:

- enroll or register their child in school
- attend to their child's special education needs, or
- make necessary arrangements to eliminate or reduce excessive unexcused absences.

At 10 or more unexcused absences, school officials can report violations of Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law as pursuant to [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1](#), to Fulton County Juvenile Court or Magistrate Court, and to legally enforce code section [O.C.G.A. § 15-11-29.1](#) after the school has exhausted all efforts to help the family address educational neglect issues.

WHAT IS TRUANCY?

Truancy involves youth ages 12 and older who have accumulated 10 or more unexcused absences throughout a given school year. Children with excessive tardies or attendance reports of classes/school missed without an appropriate excuse are classified as truant.

At 10 or more unexcused absences, school officials can report violations of Georgia's Compulsory Attendance Law as pursuant to [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1](#), to Fulton County Juvenile Court and to legally enforce code section [O.C.G.A. § 15-11-29.1](#) after the school has exhausted all efforts to help the family address truancy issues.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATION OF GA'S COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW?

By law, children between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to attend school. A parent or guardian who violate this law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, will be subjected to:

- a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00
- imprisonment not to exceed 30 days
- community service; or
- any combination of the above penalties and at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction.

HOW TO FILE A TRUANCY OR EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT REFERRAL?

At 10-unexcused absences, School Social Workers can submit all supporting documents in-person to Fulton County Juvenile Court's Intake Office on the first floor.

CAN I BRING MY CHILD TO THE FULTON COUNTY JUVENILE COURT TO BE DETAINED?

No. Detaining a child on a status offense does more harm and could have long-term criminogenic effects. A child can only be detained if they have committed a delinquent act or have been ordered detained by a judge.

HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD REMOVED FROM MY HOME?

The CHINS Unit do not facilitate removals from the home. If you are experiencing an emergency, please call 911 for assistance or the GA's Crisis & Access Hotline at **1-800-715-4225**.

IF COUNSELING/THERAPY DOESN'T WORK, THEN WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Please understand that it takes time for families to see changes or improvements after participating in services. The CHINS staff strongly encourages families to consistently attend scheduled sessions consecutively, work to accomplish the goals outlined in their case plans, and adhere to the recommendations of your service provider(s) for at least 4-5 consecutive sessions to promote improvements.

If you have tried all of the above, please email CHINS Administrative Assistant at shandi.kent@fultoncountyga.gov with additional questions for guidance to help navigate services.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS IF MY CHILD REFUSES TO COMPLY WITH SERVICES?

CHINS services are voluntary. The CHINS staff can only provide services to children and families who are willing to participate in services. Our staff understand that children and parents/legal guardians are experts on what is needed to help improve behaviors.

Please consider the following alternatives for additional support:

★ Close family and friends ★ Trusted religious leaders/members	★ School Counselor ★ School Social Worker	★ Your child's pediatrician or family doctor
★ Health Insurance Providers	★ School Parent Liaison or other school official	★ Your child's Coach or Teacher

Or, please also call **1-800-CHILDREN (224-5373)** for assistance.

HOW TO CONTACT THE FULTON COUNTY JUVENILE COURT CHINS DEPARTMENT?

Please direct all CHINS related questions and requests to:

Shandi Kent

CHINS Administrative Assistant

Telephone: (404) 612-8436

Email: shandi.kent@fultoncountyga.gov

WHAT ARE THE INTAKE HOURS FOR THE CHINS UNIT?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, walk-ins are no longer accepted. Intake hours are by appointment only for ungovernable referrals. Please email the court's Behavioral Health Unit contact person shelly.spizouco@fultoncountyga.gov to schedule a clinical interview or call 404.613.4637 for information on the initial screening process.

FULTON
COUNTY