



A CONDENSED HISTORY OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN GEORGIA

- Like most states, Georgia started with a remote, single mental health institution – Central State Hospital.
- 1959: Complaints made against Central State Hospital.
- 1960s: In response, Georgia built or renovated regional hospitals to decentralize Central State Hospital.
- 1963: Community mental health centers were encouraged in the Kennedy administration, starting construction and the phasing in of six services, including community-based inpatient services.
- With concentrated leadership, Rosalynn Carter was able to extend offices for community services in many counties in the state.
- 1972: Jimmy Carter created the Department of Human Resources (DHR). DHR included Medicaid, vocational rehab, public health, mental health, mental retardation, welfare, foster care, child welfare and juvenile justice.
- Voc rehab, Medicaid and juvenile justice were eventually taken out from under DHR.
- DHR had separate public health and disability divisions, but disabilities (which included mental health) were under the state's regional health directors (at the local level), and received less interest than if they were directly under the state.
- 1980s: Private psychiatric hospitals became more prevalent.
- 1993-4: HB 100 attempted to institute a government-managed system in which hospitals and community programs both reported to regional boards (there were 19 local regions) which distributed money to both – with family and consumers dominating the boards. This was an attempt to force community and hospital resources to work together. The goal was to encourage more contracting with community-based non-profits to create a more competitive program environment, urging each side to perform better.
- 1997: The number of regions was cut from 19 to 13.
- 1998: HB 1131 was passed, which reauthorized HB 100.
- 1999: LC vs. Olmstead – Supreme Court decision which held that consumers must be served in the least restrictive setting to meet their needs.
- 2001: Bill introduced that took away the regional boards' ability to oversee their own contracts. This task went back to the state.
- 2002: Regional boards became Regional Planning Boards – they could only plan, not finance services. Number of regions cut from 13 to 7.
- 2005: Number of regions cut from 7 to 5 – the current number.
- 2006: CMS required changes to the levels of care system for children and adolescents with a mental health diagnosis.
- 2007: Atlanta Journal-Constitution began publication of a series of articles documenting abuse and neglect in Georgia's state-run psychiatric hospitals. In response, Governor Perdue created a Commission on Mental Health to study the problems brought up in the articles.
- 2008: House and Senate each pass resolutions for a study committee on children's mental health services.
- 2009: DHR restructured - mental health, along with addictive diseases and developmental disabilities, was given its own Department at the state level. The new name became the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.