



Where Youth & Families Gather

The Front Porch

Where Youth and Families Gather
A Community-based
Assessment Center



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

WHO IS THE FRONT PORCH?

THE FOUR INTERVENTION POINTS & PROCESS

YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

THE FRONT PORCH'S IMPACT, FAMILIES SERVED

Our Mission:

The Front Porch, Where Youth and Families Gather, is established as a community-based Assessment Center and risk reduction program designed to identify children and families who are at risk of becoming involved with the court for delinquency, dependency, and children in need of services ("CHINS"), and to utilize available community resources for the purpose of developing and implementing intervention actions or plans to divert the children and their families from becoming involved in future cases in court.

"We envision a Chatham County where every young person and family is met by their community and institutions with trust and compassion. Where they are emotionally and physically safe and where they have easy access to responsive resources they need to heal and thrive. So that they develop, the radical hope and power needed to navigate and overcome inequitable systems with knowledge, guidance, and support."



The Four Intervention Points

The Front Porch serves children who are at risk of becoming delinquent, dependent children, a child in need of services and children that are at risk for maltreatment are referred to the program by law enforcement, school employees, social service agencies or may self-refer. The Front Porch uses four main intervention points to disrupt pathways to the juvenile justice system:

Pre-police encounter diversion: The Front Porch engages community members as a whole to refer youth and families before law enforcement becomes involved. Referrals mostly come from schools, youth and family self referrals, and community-based organizations.

Pre-arrest diversion: The Front Porch referral system gives law enforcement discretion to divert youth for low-level misdemeanors or nonviolent criminalized behaviors instead of issuing citations or arresting youth.

Child Welfare and Court Intake Diversion: Oftentimes, parents or guardians call Juvenile Court, expressing frustration over their children's unruly behavior and advising that the police recommended they file a CHINS complaint. These cases are frequently referred to The Front Porch for services and interventions to address the issues and conflicts that are occurring at home. By serving these cases at The Front Porch, rather than through Juvenile Court, the families may be connected with services quicker and with greater consideration of their immediate needs while also alleviating some burden on the Court.

Post-file Diversion: Some cases come to The Front Porch after a complaint has been filed with Juvenile Court but circumstances of the incident indicate that the youth, and likely family, would be better served by receiving services to address issues which led to the incident. These incidents are often misdemeanor in nature and may have resulted due to a conflict with another or, simply, poor decision-making on the part of the youth. The Front Porch allows a case manager to gather insight into the youth and apply services and interventions to help the youth and family gain beneficial skills to help avoid future instances that may result in court-involvement.



Structure of The Front Porch

The Front Porch is a division of the Chatham County Juvenile Court. The Chatham County Juvenile Court and the members of the Interagency Oversight Group have policy oversight over the Front Porch. Agency operations are managed by the appointed agency director. The Interagency Oversight Group (or IOG) which consists of management-level individuals from each agency that enters into agreement with a Memorandum of Understanding. The IOG is made of representatives who provide "in-house" staff and of community partners that also give in the way of office space, panel member participation and overall agency advocacy.



The Front Porch Process

The Front Porch is a multi-agency assessment and resource center led by Chatham County Juvenile Court and established through an MOU with participating agencies. It is designed to serve Chatham County youth under the age of 18 and their families, who are in need of services due to a range of problems, especially behavioral and educational. The purpose of The Front Porch is to identify children and families who are at risk of becoming involved with the Court for delinquency, dependency and children in need of services (CHINS) and to utilize available community resources for the purpose of developing and implementing intervention actions or plans to assist the children and their families and divert them from becoming involved in future cases in Court.

The Front Porch **uses evidence-based screenings, referrals and case management** to divert at-risk youth from the juvenile justice system and provide appropriate and meaningful services, leading to better outcomes for youth and their families. Each child and their parents are assessed (on a voluntary basis) by the staff and referred to a multi-agency planning panel. The panel develops an intervention plan for each child and his or her parents. Subject matter experts research and discuss options at the weekly staffing. Once the case is staffed, the Case Manager will give the parent (when possible) multiple options to select from based on their location, child's interest and insurance information. Plans can include: family and/or individual counseling, prosocial activities for the family and child, and (if needed) access to basic human needs such as housing and job assistance, food and clothing resources. Front Porch staff follow up with the child and family for at least 90 days to ensure the plan is implemented and supports are provided along the way.

The “Connector” Role

Many of our parents and caregivers simply do not have the spare time it takes to research various prosocial activities, behavioral health organizations or navigate through the intricate systems entailed with seeking help for basic human needs.

The value of an assessment center not becoming part of the service provider community means that the assessment center is an **unbiased source of information** for the family. The idea is to present the family with options for service and let them decide which options suite them the best. Abstaining from the service provider community means being an impartial advocate for the family.



Community Engagement:

Each year the Front Porch hosts three major outreach events: Back to School Block Rock, Summer Camp Buffet and a Community Holiday event. During these events, over 1,000 families receive school supplies, school uniforms and/or holiday gifts and warm winter wear.

Additionally, free monthly 'lunch and learns' are held for parents and grandparents raising their grandchildren. The following topics are covered:

- Household Finances
- Grits and Grandparents – Resources for Grandparents raising their grandchildren
- The Healing Power of Humor
- Life Hacks for Dads
- Healthy Eating
- The Signs of Addiction
- Trauma Sensitive Yoga

The Front Porch provides onsite services such as a diaper bank, food pantry, hygiene pantry, tech access closet and this summer they will be launching an onsite back-to-school supply closet.

The Front Porch also hosts an annual update and awards luncheon in February where partners, stakeholders and many of our families served are invited to hear updates on the agency and witness awards being given to our outstanding families, partners and allies.

The Front Porch has a large social media presence on Facebook and Instagram and has recently launched a new website that provides a direct link to their online referrals.



*Hearing from our Youth & Parents*

THE FRONT PORCH'S IMPACT

In 2022, 92% of Caregivers surveyed said that they felt that a visit with The Front Porch had a positive impact on their child and their family & 93% of their youth said that the staff at the Front porch listened to their concerns.

307

families served with assessments, referrals, service linkages and case management

55

computer tablets secured for new Technology Access Closet

2,500

family and youth participants with school uniforms and/or school supplies at the Back-to-School Block Rock

204

additional working hours added for parent convenience

1000

over 1,000 socks collected for families in need

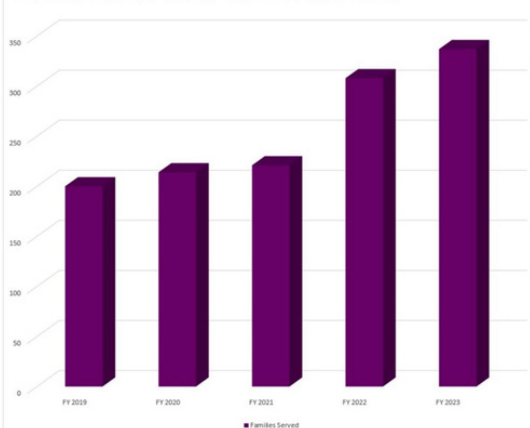
528

additional fans spreading the word



Funding Sources in 2022

- \$20,000 – Georgia State of Hope grant
- \$158,798.16 – Health and Human Services Family Resource Center Grant
- \$268,039 – Chatham County Blueprint Grant
- \$723,392 – In-Kind Donors Monetary Value
 - Chatham County Juvenile Court (Staff)
 - City of Savannah (Building Space)
 - Savannah Chatham County Public Schools (Building Space)
 - Gateway Behavioral Health (Staff)
 - Department of Family and Children Services (Staff)
 - Savannah State University Interns
 - Talented Individuals with Power (Staff)
 - Georgia State University Intern
 - University of Georgia Intern

**Families Served at The Front Porch**

FY 2019 – 200
FY-2020 – 214
FY 2021 – 225
FY 2022 – 307
FY 2023 – 337

An increase 59% since 2019