



**Brain & Spinal Injury
Trust Fund Commission**

Resourcefulness

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

The Commission



We Have Strong Citizen and Legislative Support

In November 1998, Georgia voters overwhelmingly approved (by 73%) a constitutional amendment to create a Trust Fund for traumatic brain and spinal injuries, paid for by a surcharge on drunk driving fines. This landmark legislation won by a margin of greater than 2-to-1. Nearly 70% of voters approved an additional fine on reckless driving convictions in 2014 that is directed solely to the Trust Fund. The last legislative initiative for the Trust Fund in 2020 was passed by the General Assembly without a single “no” vote! We thank the legislature for their confidence in our mission and thank the Governor for signing this measure to keep our revenue level.

We Are Guided by Those with Firsthand Knowledge

The idea of the Trust Fund and the advocacy efforts on behalf of the founding legislation was driven by people with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury and those that serve them. Because of their first-hand experiences, they knew what was most important for people with these traumatic injuries--and what was missing in the range of services and resources available. They dreamed of an agency that understood the lifelong needs of people with traumatic injuries and was committed to supporting injured individuals at different stages in their life – not just in the critical moments after the injury occurs.

More than half of the people who serve on the Commission must have a brain or spinal cord injury or be a family member of a person with an injury. Other members are specialists in the field, or work with organizations providing services to people with traumatic injuries. Their collective knowledge and experience governs our day-to-day decisions, guides our recommendations for award distributions, and informs our public policy agenda.

We Connect People to Their Communities

Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries deserve lives of independence and inclusion, lives rich with vision and possibilities. Trust Fund awards assist individuals with injuries in reaching their chosen goals.

We Cast Vision

Our vision is a Georgia where people with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries are valued, have equal opportunity and real choices.



Trust Fund Awards Change Lives.

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is Georgia's only state agency that offers dedicated funding and support for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. The Commission's mission is to distribute much needed resources to eligible Georgia residents via direct grants for their post-acute care and rehabilitation.

The Commission serves through three major avenues:

The Central Registry identifies newly-injured individuals and their families and enables us to reach out to each one personally to educate them about and connect them to the resources they need to rebuild their lives. The registry allows us to efficiently gauge the needs across the state and the gaps we still need to address.

The Trust Fund provides much needed monetary resources for those who simply cannot afford necessary goods and services they need post-injury or whose insurance benefits have become depleted. Estimated lifetime costs of care for a person with a severe TBI can reach \$4,000,000. Care for an individual with a severe SCI can reach upwards of \$3,000,000.

Alleviating even a small portion of financial burden or resource obstacles for those working to define a new way of life and strive for rehabilitation can leave a lasting impact across their entire lives. We assure them that they are not alone. We stand with them and are encouraging them, every step of the way.

As The Lead Agency, we are collaborating with stakeholders across the state to make sure Georgia has a system of care that truly meets the needs of people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. Our State Action Plan partners are a collaboration of agencies, hospitals, schools, and service providers to improve comprehensive care. Our online, direct mail, and personal outreach efforts help potential applicants with the application process and connect them to services in their local community. Our legislative efforts have impacted laws that will reduce injury and make available added resources for Georgians with traumatic injuries. With the ever-changing landscape of the economy and healthcare coverage today, services and resources for individuals with traumatic injuries continue to be more expensive and harder to find. Hence, the role of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission has become more valuable than ever before. We are focused each day on making a difference across our state – through public awareness, grant administration and cultivating new partners.

The Commission has proven to be a dependable resource to help build lives of meaning, independence and inclusion.



Dear Friends,

The Trust Fund has continued to serve Georgians with direct grants for rehabilitation and care after sustaining a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. The Commission has once again awarded over one

million dollars to grant applicants. For three consecutive years the Commission has awarded 100% of budgeted grant money available to our injured grantees and there has been no waiting list. As we continue to navigate a COVID-19 environment of service we've expanded our outreach to ensure as many Georgians as possible have wide access to not only Trust Fund resources but other resources available from the community to the national level.


The Commission has long advocated for and coached our grantees to be resourceful in their approach to obtaining the goods and services they need for their care and rehabilitation. A Trust Fund grant is a valuable resource but does not provide all that will be needed long-term. We connect Trust Fund grantees to local community providers who can assist with resources in their home communities. We refer applicants to the other state and nonprofit agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Georgia Ombudsman, Aging and Disability Resource Connection centers, Area Agencies on Aging, Waiver programs, Assistive Technology for children, Home Access funding through the GA Department of Community Affairs, and the Brain Injury Association of Georgia.

The Commission recently received a five-year grant from the Administration on Community Living (ACL) for the introduction of a pilot program to fund TBI Resource Facilitators for Georgia. This new TBI grant will further the work already begun with the Information and Resource (I&R) program funded by ACL and administered by the ADRC network and the Brain Injury Association. Georgia's Brain Injury Association has a proven I&R program. That coupled with their unique lived experience with TBI is an invaluable resource for those impacted by TBI in Georgia now and in the future.

Navigating the landscape of hospitals, insurance, and rehabilitation is challenging for all of us, but especially those with debilitating injuries. You simply don't know to ask or apply for resources and programs you don't know exist. Our Resource Facilitators will serve as a vital link for survivors and their families to connect to the resources they need to recover, rebuild, and return to lives of meaning and independence.

As we undertake this important project we ask for your input, partnership, and support that will continue to translate into expanded resources for restoration, health, and healing for our citizens. As always, we stand ready to serve.

Sincerely,



Craig Young

Call the Trust Fund at **1-800-233-5716** for grants and resource referrals for both brain and spinal cord injury survivors.

The Commission is guided by a strategic State Action Plan designed to help mold the state infrastructure and aid in the development of services to improve the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries. State Action Plan activities focus on seven core areas to ensure an individual's needs are being met by our direct grants:

- Screening and Identification
- Training and Awareness
- Rehabilitation and Wellness
- Service Coordination
- Long Term and Life Long Supports
- Independent and Integrated
- Living Community Participation

Representatives from advocacy organizations and service providers across the state, as well as individuals with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries and their family members actively serve on our strategic committees and multiple work groups. These dedicated members work tirelessly throughout the year to plan and assess the statewide service infrastructure and recommend changes to ensure care needs are being met and supports are available to promote community integration and independence for all individuals.

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is the lead agency for traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries in the state of Georgia. We collaborate with our state and community partners to ensure that the work we do has a sustainable impact on the lives of the individuals we serve.

For more details about the Needs Assessment and State Action Plan, visit <https://bsitf.georgia.gov/media-room>.

Collaboration Creates Efficiencies & Builds Trust

The Commission is pleased to have many partners within state and federal government agencies, as well as national, state and local nonprofits and other businesses and organizations. Some collaborations are formal with intergovernmental agreements, or grantee and grantor contracts. Others are business relationships that inform our service delivery and best practices.

The Commission is pleased to continue our collaboration for our home modifications program with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Commission appointees from other state agencies ensure that the voices of survivors of TBI and SCI are heard and transmitted as appropriate throughout Georgia.

The Commission also does business with 400 vendors in Georgia such as AMS Vans, Mobility Works, Side by Side Clubhouse, Beyond Therapy, YMCA, and scores of medical, therapeutic, and clinical providers that offer valuable goods, services and expertise for our grantees needs.

The Central Registry

Developing effective, focused programs to address the community needs of injury survivors requires accurate data. This was the intent of the legislation that created the Central Registry, and that's the intent of the Commission as we work with communities, local and statewide organizations, hospitals, schools, and government entities to improve opportunities for Georgians living with TBI and SCI.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES Total Injuries: 29,924 (2019)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
0-4	1115	281	*	*
5-9	1045	107	*	*
10-14	2175	121	17	*
15-19	2912	321	39	11
20-24	1981	375	36	*
25-29	1585	396	36	*
30-34	1288	347	28	12
35-39	1123	314	37	11
40-44	969	330	38	*
45-49	1019	376	55	*
50-54	945	398	52	12
55-59	841	451	69	11
60-64	805	525	65	12
65-69	709	612	44	10
70-74	699	704	46	*
75-79	623	745	44	*
80-84	503	655	22	*
85-89	391	608	17	*
90-94	228	316	10	*
95-99	59	89	*	*
100+	11	10	*	*
Total	21,026	8,081	674	143

*fewer than 10

*Note: some columns may not add up exactly because we do not report fewer than 10 individuals in a group for privacy reasons.

We use the Central Registry data to:

- Contact each newly-injured Georgian with information on available resources.
- Identify Trends - Information on causes of injury and affected age groups is vital for needs assessment and injury prevention.
- Educate policy-makers and community stakeholders about the incidence of traumatic brain and spinal injuries, which ultimately illuminates the needs of injury survivors.

The Commission is committed to gathering accurate and useful information that will tangibly help the thousands of Georgians coping with new injuries each year and the agencies and service providers that support them. Our data is also used by other state agencies, hospitals, and nonprofits to support grant requests and strategic planning for the TBI and SCI populations.

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
Female	10,078	3,274	227	33
Male	10,939	4,792	447	110
unknown	9	15	0	0
Total	21,026	8,081	674	143
White	11,664	4,825	316	72
Black	6217	2077	259	41
American Indian/ AK native	141	16	3	1
Asian	273	135	12	1
Native Hawaiian/ Pac island	33	7	2	0
other	1288	516	51	15
refused	1401	502	31	13
No race reported	9	3	0	0
Invalid race	0	0	0	0
Total	21,026	8,081	673	143

Traumatic brain injuries cost Georgians over \$1.5 billion annually in medical costs and lost wages. Average yearly expenses for those with spinal cord injuries top \$18 million.

Grant Distributions

The primary purpose of the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is to fund direct grants for Georgians who have survived neurotrauma i.e. traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. (OCGA 15-21-140).

By supporting home and community-based services for the care and rehabilitation of those injured we will foster lives of meaning, independence, and inclusion. Grant applicants choose the type of assistance they need to get on with their lives. The Commission has a wide range of categories of goods and services available for our applicants to apply for (see chart below).

For many of our grant recipients the Commission is the only funder available. The Commission reviews all requests to be sure that there are no other funders or programs an applicant can take advantage

of. The Trust Fund can augment existing funding sources; insurance (either private or public), waivers from state and federal programs, and applicants' own resources. The Commission accepts applications from all Georgians who are medically eligible. The Commission's Distribution Committee is composed of individuals who have first-hand knowledge regarding costs of post-acute care and rehabilitation to ensure the most efficient, effective grant distributions.

A traumatic injury is not a one-time event like a broken arm that is treated and returns to preinjury function. Brain and Spinal Cord injury is disease causative and accelerative. Those with severe injury have recurring issues with the original injury and often, shortened lifespans. Even mild brain injury can, over time, cause cognitive and functional deficits that negatively impact the individual and their family.

Category	Award Amount
Assistive Technology	\$9,317.94
Computers	\$14,699.90
Dental Services	\$4,000.00
Durable Medical Equipment	\$63,573.00
Health & Wellness	\$55,483.90
Home Modification/Access	\$48,400.00
Housing	\$3,101.92
Medical Care	\$43,718.00
Neurobehavioral Programs	\$12,530.00
Personal Support Services	\$172,101.00
Psychology/Counseling	\$1,260.00
Recreation/Hobbies	\$121.00
Speech Services	\$3,000.00
Transportation	\$560,954.16
Vision/Hearing Services	\$9,656.37
Vocational Support	\$1,371.00

2021

Awards: 153

Total amount awarded: \$1,003,288.19

Paying Forward the Gift of Life

Chantal Davis' Story

Growing up in a family of eight children, Chantal Davis learned early how to be resourceful. Her mom and dad were hard working, foster-to-adopt parents. They instilled in her a strong faith and work ethic, a caring heart, a hunger for lifelong learning, and a positive can-do attitude that drives her spirit of resilience and fortitude.

They were a close-knit family, so Chantal's world was rocked when her mom was diagnosed with cancer in 2008 and her dad in 2009. Chantal immediately stepped into full caregiving mode and helped her parents navigate the myriad of doctor appointments, treatments, and healthcare systems along the way. For years she lived a nomadic life going back and forth caring for them while working to complete her master's degree in organizational leadership. Her mom passed in 2010 and her dad in 2015. All of Chantal's life her parents had been her rock, but ironically, at the end of their lives, she was theirs. When they were gone Chantal tells "I truly felt like an adult orphan. I was lost and felt my lifeline was gone. I was at a place of complete rebuilding. Rather than give into anxiety and despair, I chose to chart a new course for my life."

Chantal left her home in Michigan and moved to Georgia. Having been a second mom to five younger siblings, Chantal had a deep love for children, so she went to work as an Infant Care Specialist helping moms cope with postpartum depression during the day and served as an overnight nanny at night. Those families called her their "baby whisperer" and "night angel." Soon Chantal's yearn to learn welled up again, so on top of everything else, she decided to pursue her doctorate. She worked long hours to juggle it all, yet she was loving life.

On April 15, 2018 it all came to a halt. As she left work that stormy morning to



head home to study, she was t-boned in an intersection left unmanned without traffic lights. The storm had knocked the power out. As the oncoming car did not realize they were approaching an intersection, the impact came at full speed.

In the ER Chantal was treated for an abdominal hematoma and released. She was sore and very shaken up, but she felt blessed to have walked away from such a horrific accident. But four days later a wave of neurological symptoms set in that proved to be life-altering. Chantal began to suffer from severe headaches, memory loss, imbalance, sound and light sensitivity, blurred vision, anxiety, and more. She returned to the ER knowing something was very wrong. The original focus of doctors had been on her abdominal injury. No one thought to ask if she had hit her head. Days later it was clear to everyone Chantal had most certainly suffered a traumatic brain injury.



Chantal had suffered another traumatic brain injury as a child when she attempted to jump a fence and landed headfirst. She recognized many of the same symptoms, but these came with much stronger force. This time, she didn't have her parents to lean on.

Chantal struggled to get the care she needed because of the outstanding legal battle over liability and coverage. Thankfully her experience had taught her how to be resourceful, to advocate for herself, and best navigate the healthcare maze. But doing so while suffering from a traumatic brain injury was grueling. It took months of determination and perseverance for her to fight the system to get the care she needed.

Chantal shares, "It was a really dark time, both literally and figuratively. I had to spend so much time in the dark giving my brain the rest it needed that it was almost impossible to function. It took every ounce of energy for me to advocate for myself. I had to fight for my right to care. I couldn't

work. I couldn't get disability. The litigation and insurance battle locked all resources. Had it not been for family, friends, and my local community I would have lost the roof over my head."

Just when Chantal turned a corner and was ready to try to return to school, the day before classes started, she fell while doing her therapy exercises and hit her head again. All the progress she had made began to unravel. She was devastated and knew she was going to need additional resources to ensure a full recovery.

Just a few weeks later, Chantal got an unexpected letter in the mail from the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund about their grants. She says, "I couldn't believe what I was reading. It said if you can't work, don't have insurance, and can't get disability, call us. I honestly didn't think it was real." But, it most certainly was. Chantal applied for a TBI grant to receive rehabilitative services at the Amen Clinic in Atlanta. Chantal says, "Thanks to the Trust Fund grant I was able

to connect to Dr. Matthews and Dr. Duffey and it changed my life. They specialize in traumatic brain injury recovery. Their functional neurologists helped determine what was going on in my brain and how to chart a more successful course of treatment. Every brain is unique, hence every course of treatment for a brain injury must be too."

Working with her new treatment team Chantal began working on restoring brain function where possible and retraining her brain to think differently. Once Chantal connected to the right medical professionals and therapeutic resources, she was on the road to recovery. Her regime of care included speech, occupational, physical, and psychological therapies. The injury altered the way her brain processed light, so connecting to an Irlen Syndrome specialist brought clarity to her vision again. She finally had a team that saw her as a whole person not the sum of various body parts.

She tells, "I had to completely relearn myself. My brain no longer thought the same way. I would hit walls and had to train my brain how to work around them. It was like brain boot camp. My cognitive processing, memory, and emotions were completely off. I had to find a new stride and set a new pace. My brain would totally shut me down when she'd had enough, so I had to learn my new limits if I was going to have any life at all. I had to learn to work with my brain, not fight it." The Trust Fund grant made it possible for Chantal to get the support team and resources she needed to begin to thrive again in her new state of "normal."

Chantal's faith, determination, and resourcefulness allowed her to push forward with hope. Once her symptoms became more manageable, she rallied every resource she could to set herself up for success. With the help of new technologies, academic accommodations, and support from her professors and success coach,

Chantal managed to continue with her studies. The part of her brain that processed organizational development skills proved very much intact and on April 27, 2021 she triumphantly claimed the title of Dr. Chantal L. Davis, DSL.

Following in the footsteps of her parents, Chantal wakes up every day with a mission to serve and pay forward her gift of life. As an entrepreneur and owner of Mallory Davis Inc., Chantal serves others as an organizational leadership consultant and success coach. She works part-time for a personal injury attorney to help guide others injured to the resources they need. She's worked to pay forward her grant award volunteering on some of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission's committees and advisory boards. Moving into 2022 Chantal is excited to serve as one of Georgia's first resource facilitation counselors with the Brain Injury Association of Georgia.

Chantal shares, "Many days are still hard, but I try to stay focused on gratitude and giving. I've learned to build my life around my abilities, not my disabilities." Her words of encouragement to other brain and spinal cord injury survivors: "Know there are people out here that understand your journey and truly want to help. You don't know what you don't know. The Brain & Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Commission can connect you to a wealth of resources that can help change your life for the better."

“
*Many days are still hard,
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not my disabilities.*
”

2018-2021

Administration for Community Living Traumatic Brain Injury Grant

The goal of the Georgia TBI Partnership Project awarded in 2018 was to **strengthen and expand sustainable TBI services in Georgia that are best practice, person-centered, and maximize independence across the lifespan for individuals with TBI and their families.** The grant coordinated by the Administration for Community Living and administered by the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission came to completion in November of 2021. Grant objectives and achievements are as follows:

Objective 1:

Increase Access to Services

- Partnered with Brain Injury Association of Georgia to provide Information & Referral coordination (I&R), screening for eligibility, and hospital outreach for clients who have sustained a TBI
- I & R completed through ARC Empowerline (ARDC resource database)

Objective 2:

Expand the Surveillance Efforts of the Central Registry

- Targeted campaign for identified constituents for surveillance across the state
- Launched an education campaign to inform physicians of statutory requirement to submit diagnosis and patient information to Central Registry
- Captured new data on TBI incidence and demographics of Georgians who have sustained TBI that have not been previously reported to the Central Registry
- Sent Central Registry mailings to survivors
- Produced television and radio PSAs with Georgia Public Broadcasting

Objective 3:

Staff Member 100% Dedicated to TBI Grant

- TBI Grant Program Manager hired in 2018
- Served as liaison to the Administration for Community Living – TBI State Partnership Program, Advisory Boards & Survivor Engagement, Sustainable Partnerships, Using Data to Connect People to Services.
- Served as liaison to state of Georgia: Traumatic Injury Advisory Committee, Aging and Disability Resource Connection Advisory board (ADRC), Children & Youth committee, DCH ICWP advisory committee, Falls Coalition, Injury Prevention Research Center – Emory University Public Health, Georgia Department of Injury Prevention.

Next Steps for 2021-2026

In August of 2021, the Commission was awarded a new 5-year grant cycle. In August of 2021, the Commission was awarded a new 5-year ACL TBI grant with the call to **enhance person-centered and culturally competent TBI supports and services in Georgia.** The Commission will specifically focus to serve and support diverse and underserved populations while maximizing independence across the lifespan for Georgians with TBI, their families, and caregivers.

Objective 1:

Create a facilitation program to increase access to resources for individuals with TBI, their families, and caregivers

Objective 2:

Increase timeliness of Georgia Central Registry mailings

Objective 3:

Conduct a formal statewide needs assessment to better inform our work

Objective 4:

Draft the next cycle of our state TBI strategic plan

As part of this effort, Georgia TBI SPP will work in partnership with the Commission and the Brain Injury Association of Georgia to pilot and implement a statewide network of TBI Resource Facilitation services, as well as a training program for Resource Facilitation Counselors. The program will be piloted in the metro Atlanta area in year one and rolled out across the state in years two through five reflecting learned best practices. The team will create and maintain a new, cloud-based Resource Facilitation database to streamline referrals and better track services and outcomes. The Institute on Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia has been engaged to conduct the statewide needs assessment.

For more information about this work, contact Kenisha.Tait@dph.ga.gov

From Our Chairman



My fellow Georgians,

The Commission faced another challenging year adjusting how best to serve our clients amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking precautions to protect clients', staffs', and our commissioners' health and wellbeing has presented unique hurdles to overcome. However, we've been resourceful. The commission and staff continued to meet remotely, and staff rotated through the office regularly to ensure normal operations continued without interruption. We're very thankful to everyone involved for their dedication to keep our grants moving.

Our grantees have likewise been challenged and forced to be more resourceful to adapt to new challenges that have persisted throughout the pandemic. There are several areas in particular where we've noticed grantees experiencing additional difficulty due to COVID and the pandemic's effects.

The first centers around increased difficulty finding, retaining, and navigating personal support services due to fewer service providers, limited workforce, increased cost of services, and risk of exposure to COVID due inherent proximity required for such services. Second, finding modified vehicles for accessible transportation has proven much more difficult due to supply chain disruptions. With fewer new and used vehicles available and higher prices for those in inventory, those we serve are facing significant transportation barriers than ever before. Third, the cost of housing across the state rose significantly. The overall available housing supply lags significantly behind the current demand, and supply is not expected to catch up for several years. Affordable housing is even more scarce. These trends compounded the hardship many of our grantees face securing housing (often on fixed incomes) that is accessible, affordable, and safe. These are not minor inconveniences but significant impacts on the health, well-being and quality of life for many Georgians.

To help better meet the needs of our grantees and to ensure our grants are able to make significant impact on their lives, the Commission is actively pursuing ways to continue to improve the overall network of care in place for and resources available to those we serve. We are undergoing a review of our grant distribution policies, largely unchanged in the last decade, to better address today's needs. Additionally, the Commission's success in drawing down an additional competitive Federal grant will be the catalyst for expanded services in resource facilitation across the state.

We remain diligent in knowing and responding to the real-time needs of Georgians living with brain and spinal cord injuries and are committed to aligning resources to ensure they are valued, have equal opportunity, and real choices.

Kindest regards,

Chase Jones
Chairman – Georgia Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

Commission Members

Commission Members are a dedicated, group of individuals from around the state. They are committed to improving the effectiveness of the Trust Fund by overseeing its operations and resources to give Georgians new opportunities.

The Governor appoints 10 members for two-year terms, although many of our members serve longer. To ensure a breadth of experience and opinion, the Commission's Governor appointees must consist of: seven individuals or family members with traumatic brain or spinal cord injury and three representatives from medical or other relevant professions. Six Commissioners are appointed by state agencies.



Bob Bauer, PhD - Buford

- was appointed by the Governor in 2011. Bob is the retired chair of the Dept. of Psychology & Counseling at Valdosta State University and an EX-Peace Corps Volunteer. He has served as a: board member of Georgia Family Connection; chair of the Lowndes/Valdosta Commission for Children and Youth; board member of Elderhostel (now Roads Scholar), Inc. Bob has held several positions on the BSITFC Executive Committee and sub-committees, with particular interest in data evaluation and measurement.



Lisa Dawson, MPH - Atlanta

- was appointed to the Commission as the representative of the Georgia Department of Public Health. Lisa is the Director of Public Health's Injury Prevention Section and is active as a member of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety - Safety Advisory Board, Emory Center for Injury Control, and SAFE KIDS Georgia.



Andrew Dennison, MD - Atlanta

- is a Governor's appointee. Andrew is a physician at Atlanta's Shepherd Center. Dr. Dennison attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and completed a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Baylor College of Medicine/University of Texas-Houston. He also completed a fellowship in Traumatic Brain Injury at Carolinas Rehabilitation in Charlotte, NC. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and is an active member in the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine.



Rebecca Dugger, MA - Atlanta

- appointed by the Georgia Department of Community Health. Rebecca is currently the Director of Programs and Community Support with the DCH, where she has oversight of the Home and Community Based waiver services, Behavioral Health and Long-term care programs. Rebecca earned her BA and MA in Communications from Georgia State University, and another master's in human services (MHS) from Capella University. She also holds several certifications including Six Sigma Black Belt, Medical Coding and Billing, Medicaid Certifications and Project Management. Volunteering at the High Museum of Art, Rebecca developed art programs for the families with special needs by working with the Green Family Learning Center.

Commission Members



Paula Gumpman, MS, EdS

- Atlanta - is a Program Specialist with the Georgia Department of Education with the Division for Special Education Services and

Supports, in the Post School Outcomes unit. Her work in the Division for Special Education and Supports is to support districts and administrators in realizing how using good instructional design can support all students including students with disabilities. Paula's focus is assistive technology and she trains district leaders and administrators on how to consider technology for students with disabilities as well as sharing new and innovative approaches to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. She received her Ed.S. from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and her Masters of Science degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Chase Jones, Chairman

- Carrollton - is a native of Carrollton, Georgia where he currently resides and works in real estate investment and property

management. Chase has previously worked for the Georgia Department of Public Safety and Georgia House of Representatives focusing on government affairs, project management, and budget analysis. He is a proud graduate of the University of Georgia's School of Public and International Affairs, and holds additional certification from Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. Chase is a spinal cord injury survivor, and advocate for the disability community. He has served as a Governor's appointee to Georgia's Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

since 2014. In addition to currently serving as Commission Chairman, he is a member of the Commission's Executive, Public Policy, and various Ad Hoc Committees.



Susannah Kidwell - Atlanta

- is a Governor's appointee from Fulton County. Susannah is Director of Rehabilitation Services at Children's Healthcare of

Atlanta, where she has worked for the past 15 years. Kidwell has worked in the field of brain injury rehabilitation for more than 25 years. Kidwell received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Speech Language Pathology from Florida State University.



Gwen McKee, Vice Chairman - Savannah

- is a Governor's appointee from Chatham County. Gwen is past board chairman of the Brain Injury Association

of Georgia and also serves on numerous non-profit organization boards in the Savannah area. She is a tireless advocate for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Gwen is a member of the Commission's Distribution committee and the Traumatic Injury Advisory committee.



Randy Owens, Treasurer - Gainesville

- is a Governor's appointee from Hall County. Randy is currently employed at Gainesville Internal Medicine. He serves as a board member of

Challenged Child and Red Rabbit Transit and is an advisor to Northeast Georgia Medical Center. He is co-founder of Our Neighbor Inc., a nonprofit that serves the needs of those with limitations and

enables them to be active in the community. Because of Owens' permanent injury that resulted from a car accident, Challenged Child and Friends was founded. He has been an impactful advocate for young adults with disabilities.



Stephanie Stallings, Lt. Col. - Atlanta

- appointed by Georgia Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, Stephanie serves as GSP's Director of Support/

Administrative Operations to include the Capitol Police Division, Dignitary Protection Unit, the Special Services Mansion Security, Regional K-9 Task Force, Honor Guard, Governor's Task Force, and the Agency's Support Detachments. Prior to this appointment, Lieutenant Colonel Stallings served as the Director of the Public Information Office for the Georgia Department of Public Safety since March 2019. She began her career with the Georgia State Patrol in 1997 when she became a radio operator at Post 4 - Villa Rica. Lieutenant Colonel Stallings is an active member of the Department of Public Safety's Critical Incident Support Team which provides peer support to public safety personnel across the state during their time of need.



Chuck Stone, MPA - Atlanta

- appointed by the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Chuck serves as the Constituent Services Manager for GVRA which

assists individuals with disabilities to become prepared for and find employment to become as independent as possible. Chuck went through the Vocational Rehabilitation program due to difficulties from childhood rheumatoid arthritis. As a result, he has gone through four joint replacements and is passionate about

helping those in need. After graduating from the University of West Georgia with a Master's in Public Administration he began to work for GVRA as a Constituent Services Specialist.



Timothy Wall - Brooklet

- was appointed by the Governor in 2010. He is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with a BS and MS in Sport Psychology. He is

a wheelchair tennis enthusiast, having competed in regional championships since his spinal cord injury in 2001. Tim's brings valuable recreation/respite background to the Commission and first-hand experience working with organizations that provide recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Tim serves as Chairman of the Distribution committee.



Jane Warnock, Vice Chairman - Eastman

- is a Governor's appointee that has been an advocate for people with disabilities since her daughter, Christy, sustained a traumatic brain

injury in a car crash in 2002. Jane is the Commission's Vice Chairman and has served on the Executive committee as Secretary and Treasurer.

We can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.

~ Mother Teresa



TBI Resource Facilitation Program

Powered by
Brain Injury Association of Georgia

Pilot Program for Fulton, Clayton, Henry Counties

The Georgia Resource Facilitation Program is a free service offered by the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission via the Brain Injury Association of Georgia to eligible Georgians who have a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

This service helps survivors, their families, and caregivers navigate medical services and supports, rehabilitation providers and services and general life challenges after a TBI. We help connect individuals with the support needed through information, education and resources provided in a variety of ways:

- One-on-One via phone or virtual platform
- Person-centered decision making **approach** to help with goals supporting transitioning back into their home, family, jobs, community
- Support Team engaging friends, family, professionals – people they choose to be a part of their support team, helping them understand situations and choices they may face

Resource Facilitator services could include the following:

- Caregiver support (Care-Net, support groups, structured family caregiver(paid))
- Creative problem-solving to barriers
- Emotional support coping with a new normal (education, understanding short and long-term challenges with strategies)
- Navigating social security disability applications, Medicaid and Georgia’s Medicaid waivers
- Locating services such as:
 - o financial (GA Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund grants)
 - o aging and advocacy
 - o home help (Medicaid waivers, private insurance)
 - o housing (HUD/GA Dept of Community Affairs, assisted living, group homes, nursing homes)
 - o providers: mental health/counselor/psychologist, psychiatrist, neurologist, therapy or rehab service, life care planner
 - o peer mentor/buddy
 - o respite
 - o support groups
 - o employment and supported employment services
 - o transportation
 - o volunteer opportunities
 - o vocational and educational services (Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Follow-up and accountability – stay in touch to ensure goals are being met, or need additional support or resources, via phone on quarterly, or as needed, basis up to 2 years+

Call **1-404-712-5504** to reach the Brain Injury Association of Georgia’s TBI Resource Facilitators.

Special Thanks to our Community Advisory Council

The Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund would like to thank the following people for serving on our 2021 Community Advisory Council. These members meet with our team regularly to bring valuable knowledge, expertise, insights, and perspectives to the table to inform our work. Advisory members are neurotrauma survivors, caregivers, representatives from centers for independent living, aging and disability specialists, protection and advocacy workers, long-term care ombudsman, healthcare providers, and model TBI system and nation brain injury organization representatives. We thank them for their service and dedication to the mission of the Commission.

Claire Creech, Chair

Bob Bauer

Jennifer Broom

Naquan Escort

Paige Havens

Jane Jackson

Chase Jones

William Lee

Gwen McKee

Randy Owens

Joe Sarra

Jeff Taylor

Molly Welch

3 Easy Steps

STEP
1



Determine Eligibility.

You must be a U.S. citizen, a Georgia resident, and have a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury.

STEP
2



Identify your need.

Select an item or service that will improve your quality of life, independence and participation in the community.

STEP
3



Submit the required documents.

Complete the application and all required materials (see list below) and submit for review.

Required Documents



Injury Documentation

Medical documentation or letter on medical facility letterhead describing **nature, cause, and date** of your injury.

Affidavit of Citizenship

Present a Notary Public with a valid proof of U.S. citizenship; sign and notarize the affidavit and submit with original application.



Cost Quote

Include one cost quote or estimate from a vendor for each request.

Proof of Georgia Residency

Submit a copy of proof of Georgia residency (e.g., valid driver's license, utility bill from past 60 days, paycheck stub, etc.)



For additional support, call us toll free at 1-888-233-5760.