

The State of Child Health and Well-Being in Georgia 2026

A Data-to-Action framework for advocates, policymakers, and practitioners.

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Bridging clinical care, home realities, and policy

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We listen to parents to identify the biggest challenges facing children. We ask parents what should be done about those challenges.



Identify emerging trends & challenges via caregiver surveys.



Combine with rigorous research.



Produce clear, actionable evidence for policymakers and community organizations.

A representative pulse of Georgia's parents



1,002

qualified responses from
Georgia parents.



**Oct 30 –
Nov 24**

2025 field period.



±4.8 pts

margin of sampling error
(95% CI). Oversampled
in rural counties.



Year 2

of annual polling on core
child health topics.

Audience Poll: What do you think is the #1 concern?

What issue do you believe Georgia parents rank as the highest threat to their children's well-being today?

**A. Gun
Violence**

**B. Education
Quality**

**C. Social
Media**

**D. Mental
Health**

Take 30 seconds to lock in your answer before we reveal the data...

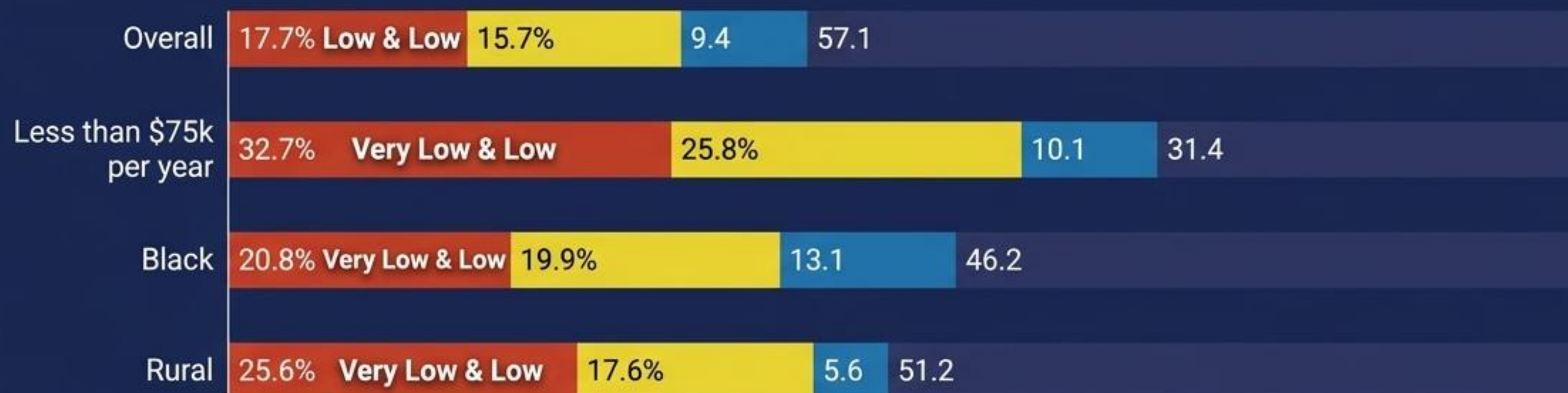
Top concerns shift dramatically by demographic

Overall Top 5	Black Parents	Hispanic Parents	White Parents
Gun violence (32.5%)	Racism (30.1%) and Car accidents (20.8%) emerge in the top concerns.	Drug and alcohol use (34.5%) ranks highest.	Physical activity and healthy eating (30.6%) rises to the top.
Education (31.5%)			
Social media (30.4%)			
Mental health (27.8%)			
Bullying (26.2%)			



1 in 3 Georgia households are food insecure

33.4% of households with children face food insecurity.



Rural

43.2% of rural families are food insecure.

Black

40.7% of Black families are food insecure.

Income

58.5% of households earning <\$75k per year face insecurity.

Economic strain drives overwhelming support for universal meals



59.5%

of families changed food spending due to higher prices (a 6.5% increase from last year).



14.3% of children lost access to free school meals at least temporarily. Average school lunch debt is \$100.

85.9% support free breakfast and lunch for all students.

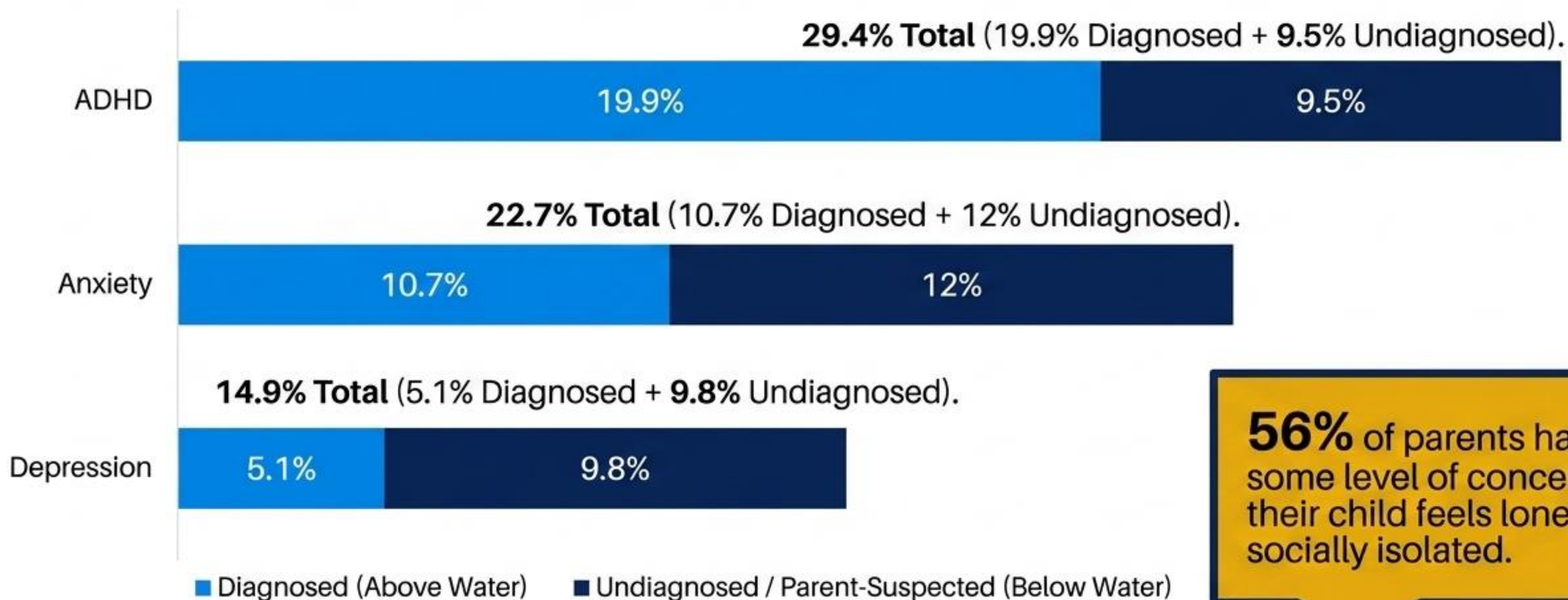


Invest in SNAP admin: 52% of SNAP families lost benefits temporarily; streamlining administration over limiting eligibility is critical.



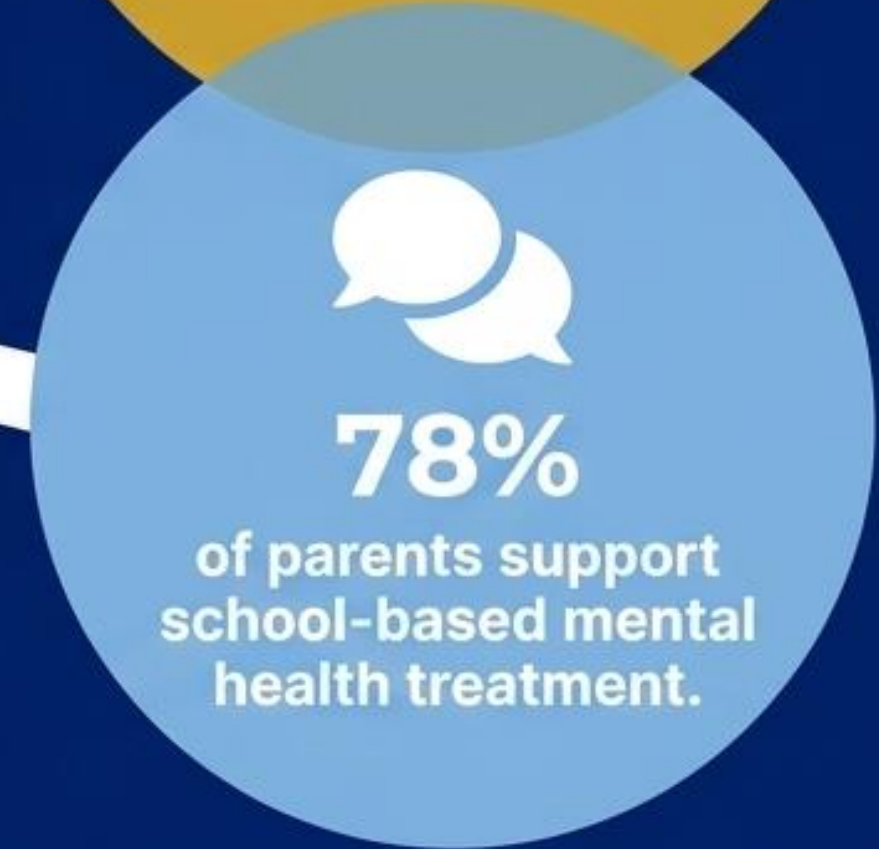
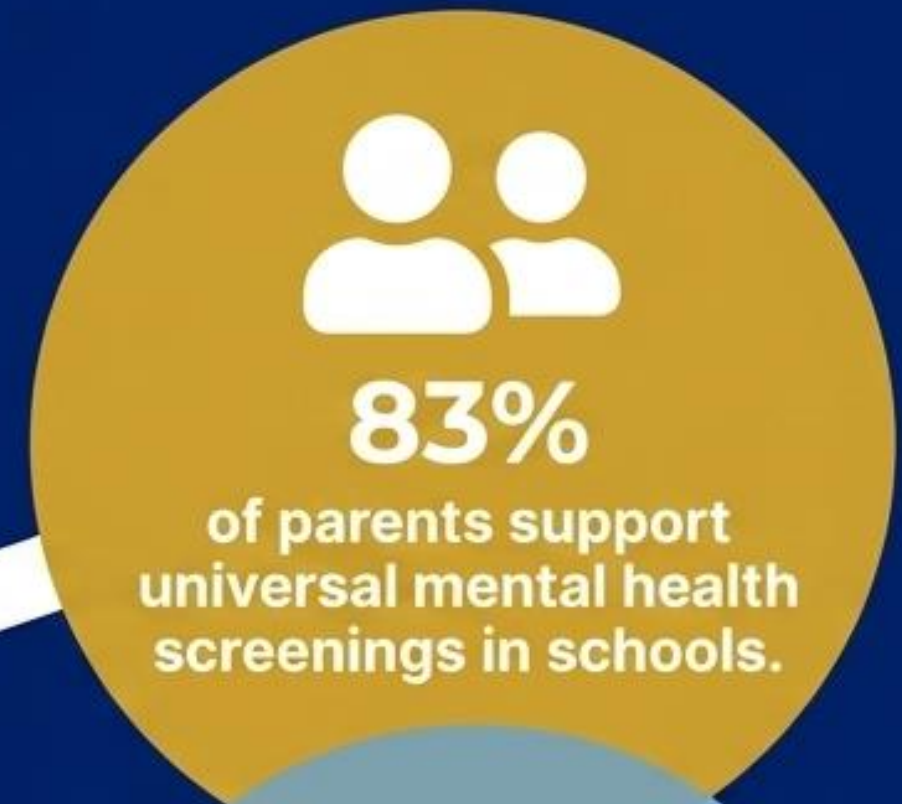
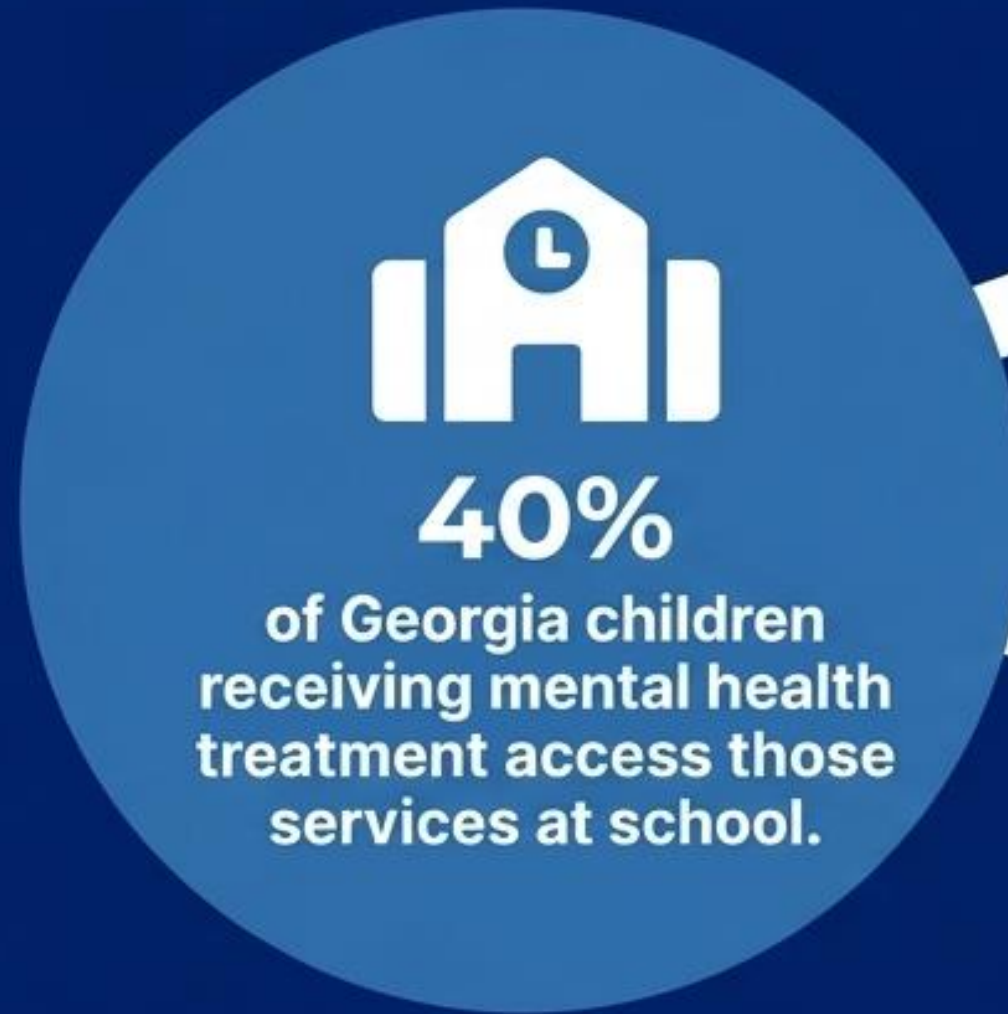
The hidden burden of mental and behavioral health

"Iceberg Model" Diagnosed vs. Undiagnosed Conditions in Children



56% of parents have some level of concern that their child feels lonely or socially isolated.

Parents view schools as the central hub for intervention



Policy Context: Aligning Georgia's approach with national trends (e.g., Illinois' universal screening laws) matches parental demand.



Trust in doctors remains high, but cost is a critical vulnerability

High Trust in Medical Professionals



- **87.9%** of parents believe routine childhood vaccines are safe.

- **68.3%** trust children's doctors "a great deal" for vaccine information.

Economic Vulnerability Threatens Uptake

Likelihood to Vaccinate by Income Level

Overall



Less than \$75k per year



\$75k + per year



Only **34%** are "very likely" to get routine vaccines for their children if required to pay out of pocket. Drops to **23.7%** for households earning <\$75k.

Policy Stance: Adopt evidence-based schedules from trusted medical groups (like AAP) and maintain school requirements (**supported by 70.9% of parents**).



Pushing back on 3.8 hours of daily screen time



Children spend 3.8 hours/day using screens for fun; 70.2% use social media/gaming.

Top 3 Parental Concerns:

1. Amount of time spent (53.7%)
2. Distracted from school, sleep, physical activity (51%)
3. Accessing harmful content (50.7%)

Parent-Backed Solutions:

- 70.8% support bell-to-bell personal device bans in high schools.
- Require digital literacy and technology safety curriculums to teach responsible use.



1 in 3 Georgia children cannot swim unassisted

Context: Drowning is a leading cause of death among U.S. children.
89.5% of GA parents believe swim skills are important.

The Racial Gap

77.4%

of **White** children can swim.

51.7%

of **Black** children can swim.

The Income Gap

73.9% of children in households >\$75k can swim vs. **54.5%** in households <\$75k.

Cost is the primary barrier to water safety



The Barrier Data:

- 19.8% of parents overall cite cost as a barrier.
- This rises to 23.4% for Black families and 29.4% for lower-income families.
- Secondary barrier: Parents not knowing how to swim (18.5% of Black parents).

The Policy Solution: Create a state-led swim lesson voucher program. Modeled after Florida's state-funded program, providing free/reduced-price flexible vouchers to expand access and save lives.

The 2026 Parent-Informed Policy Blueprint

The Core Issue	The Parent Insight	The Policy Blueprint
 Food	85.9% support free meals	Expand universal free school breakfast/lunch & streamline SNAP.
 Mental Health	83% support school screenings	Implement universal school-based mental health screening & treatment.
 Vaccines	34% drop-off if out-of-pocket	Adopt evidence-based schedules to ensure insurance/public program coverage.
 Tech	70.8% support device bans	Enforce bell-to-bell bans & require digital safety curriculum.
 Injury	29.4% low-income priced out	Create a state-led swim lesson voucher program.

Data is only as powerful as the coalitions that use it.

Georgia parents are aligned on the solutions. Now, it is up to state and local leaders to act on this evidence-based agenda.



Action Items:

1. Download the detailed data tables for your specific advocacy efforts.
2. Share this parent-informed blueprint with your local representatives.
3. Partner with us for the Fall 2026 poll fielding.

Explore the full report at
www.childpolicy.org

Contact: childpolicy@emory.edu



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