

News and Updates from SCDSS - December 2021

*State Director's Angle*  
**Time to Celebrate and Anticipate**

*By State Director Michael Leach*

The hustle and the bustle of the holiday season is here! It is hard to believe that 2021 is almost history and we will start a new year in just a few short weeks.

I hope you'll join me and Team DSS in taking time this month to reflect on and write down your top five personal or professional accomplishments from the previous year. Share them with your colleagues and make space to celebrate together! Also, take time to anticipate opportunities to achieve personal and professional goals in the coming year. Think big! Aim to do something you've always wanted to do and make it happen!

We are so thankful for privilege of serving children, families and vulnerable adults. As an agency, our greatest accomplishments are realized when those we serve are BETTER because of our efforts. We are so honored to serve alongside so many dedicated providers and stakeholders whose collaboration and support are essential to our ability to achieve our mission.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season from Team DSS!



View a holiday video message from Director Leach [here](#).

# ECONOMIC SERVICES

Family Assistance | Early Care & Education | Employment Services



## Honoring Child Care Heroes

Before tip-off the December 5th men's basketball game between South Carolina and Georgetown, a ceremony was held to honor a Midlands Child Care Hero. Gamecocks Athletics recognized Melanie Butler of Chapin Baptist Child Development Center as the ABC Quality Child Care Hero of the game. Melanie and her team assisted their local school district in providing virtual learning for school children in their program and developed a pandemic handbook following CDC recommendations.

Congratulations, Melanie! Other Child Care Heroes will be recognized over the course of the season.



## Making Childcare More Affordable for South Carolina Families

Rate Changes Impact Reimbursement Rates in the State

SCDSS is taking additional steps to assist parents as they balance work and child care. Since October 1, 2021, the Division of Early Care and Education began implementing a new reimbursement rate structure for payments issued to child care providers participating in ABC Quality and accepting SC Voucher recipients. Overall, that means increases in the maximum amount providers are reimbursed. The new structure is based on the individual age of the child as opposed to a grouping of ages. Read more [here](#).

The rate restructure is not automatic and requires providers to apply for a rate increase. For more information, please call the SC Voucher Program at 1-800-262-4416.



## Support Available for Parents and Child Care Providers

The SCDSS Division of Early Care and Education continues to offer financial assistance for child care for working families that have income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. Information and an application for parents can be found on [www.scchildcare.org](http://www.scchildcare.org) under News and Announcements.



## Emergency Allotments (Supplements) for Existing SNAP Households

Since March 2020, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) has implemented the assignment of federally-approved, emergency allotments of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to all South Carolina SNAP households. The assignment of emergency SNAP allotments (supplements) has brought

all authorized households up to the maximum benefit allotment, based on household size, regardless of income.

All program rules, including verification of income, are not waived due to this emergency supplement process.

As DSS receives monthly, federal approval, eligible SNAP recipients will receive their monthly benefit on their normal schedule at the regular allotment amount. The emergency supplement will be issued separately and may show up on a SNAP household's EBT card within 48 hours after their regular allotment amount.

[Apply for SNAP online.](#)

## ATTENTION JOB SEEKERS

### Who Receive SNAP or TANF...

Each year DSS helps find jobs for thousands of recipients of [TANF](#) (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and [SNAP](#) (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. Research shows that children are more likely to escape a life of poverty if their parents enter the workforce.

DSS is committed to continuing to help people in South Carolina find employment quickly and to develop the skills necessary to obtain careers in fields where jobs are available and in demand.

If you are, or know of, a recipient of either SNAP or TANF benefits who needs assistance finding employment, click on the buttons below for resources and assistance.

[Job Fair Announcements & Employment Tools](#)

[Employment Services Contact Form](#)



**So far in 2021, more than 300 TANF recipients have been coached, mentored, and guided to gainful employment with an average wage of \$12.65 per hour!**

SCDSS is especially appreciative of its workforce consultants whose dedication has resulted in these outcomes, considering a pandemic, a turbulent year in workforce development, and countless other challenges. Way to go!

## DSS Helps SC Employers Build a Quality Workforce

The [SCDSS Division of Employment Services](#) works to support business owners who hire **SNAP** (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and **TANF** (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program participants entering the workforce. When you hire our customers, you become eligible for a variety of benefits, incentives and supports designed to meet your specific needs. Hiring through DSS Employment Services programs provides businesses and new employees a promising future. We assist with:

- Tax credit opportunities for employers
- Workforce Consultants statewide
- Vocational assessments
- Pre-screened job referrals
- Background screening
- Ongoing assistance



Click here to view a [video](#) about how our partnership with Homes of Hope in Greenville, SC is changing lives!

## CHILD WELFARE SERVICES



*SCDSS Child Welfare Services has adopted the theme **Better Together: Enhancing Practice, Transforming Lives** to reflect our commitment to achieve best outcomes for the children, youth and families we serve. This means working **hand-in-hand** with families, supported by a statewide network of service providers, judicial and education partners, foster parents, the faith community and so many others who are dedicated to helping families thrive.*

**#BetterTogether**

## Transforming Child Well-Being Through Evidence-Based Practices

By Lauren Tinman, Prevention Services & Special Populations Manager,  
Office of Child Health & Well-Being



The **Office of Child Health and Well-Being** is excited to announce new evidence-based practices across the state. These practices are brought to us through the **Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)**. FFPSA was signed into law on February 9, 2018, and it dramatically alters the federal financing structure for child welfare programming. This legislation allows agencies to provide families services to prevent entry into foster care and increase the use of evidence-based practices to strengthen families. Through Family First Prevention Services, DSS is...

- Transforming the child welfare focus from foster care to prevention
- Investing in evidence-based practices to strengthen youth and families
- Applying a trauma-responsive lens to the continuum of prevention services
- Partnering across systems (mental health, substance use disorder, juvenile justice, early childhood, health, etc.) to align prevention efforts

Evidence-Based Practice involves identifying, assessing, and implementing strategies that are supported by scientific research. This focus on evidence ensures that children and families receive services with demonstrated effectiveness and is part of the larger movement across child welfare toward evidence-based policy. The purpose of EBP's is to provide evidence-informed, intensive, in-home clinical treatment services to children and families that support and strengthen families in hopes of preventing foster care. Evidence-based practices address the need of the individual so that the family unit is maintained while promoting the child's safety and well-being. Under Family First, there are three types of in-home services: parenting skills, substance abuse, and mental health.

### Who is Eligible for These Services?

- Pregnant or parenting youth in foster care
- Children under 18 named in a Child Protective Services investigation with no identifiable safety factors but may possess any of the risk characteristics below
- Children under 18 who are receiving Family Preservation services

Brief Strategic Family Therapy is a family therapy model that identifies interactional patterns that give rise to and/or maintain problematic youth behavior. BSFT is approved for the treatment of substance abuse, mental health, and parenting. BSFT seeks to reduce youth behavior issues and drug use while improving self-control and building pro-social behavior skills. For the family, BSFT can improve family functioning, communication, conflict-resolution, and problem-solving skills. Practitioners establish relationships with family members to better understand the family system. Practitioners also coach family members to try a new way of relating to one another to identify patterns that are associated with problematic youth behavior. Children (ages 6-17 years old) are eligible to receive this service over a 60-90-minute weekly session. BSFT can be delivered in a variety of settings such as in homes, community centers, clinics, or health agencies. Currently, the National Youth Advocacy Program and Nancy K. Perry Children's Home are offering Brief Strategic Family Therapy in the following counties: Greenville, Spartanburg, Charleston, Dorchester, and Lexington. If you have further questions regarding Evidence-Based Practices or Brief Strategic Family Therapy, please email [familyfirstpsainfo@dss.sc.gov](mailto:familyfirstpsainfo@dss.sc.gov).



## Adoption Day Leads to Forever Families in South Carolina

Monday, November 22nd was Adoption Day in South Carolina. That day, **63 children were adopted by 43 families** in courthouses in Anderson, Charleston, Horry, and Sumter Counties. After going virtual last year due to the pandemic, hearings were again held in person this year.

As you can see, the day was a huge success with families officially adding new members just in time for the holidays. There was widespread media coverage of Adoption Day with multiple media outlets covering the proceedings. You can see some of the coverage [here](#). For a photo gallery of Adoption Day 2021, click [here](#). Thanks to the hard work of many who made the day such a success!

# CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES



## Recognizing Improvements in Paternal Acknowledgment

[Tidelands Health Waccamaw Community Hospital](#) is recognized for having the highest improvement for voluntary in-hospital paternity acknowledgement during federal fiscal year 2021. The recognition is from the South Carolina Parenting Opportunity Program (SCPOP), a division within the SCDSS Child Support Services Division.

Waccamaw Community Hospital increased its performance by nearly 30% from the previous year. The birth registration team members that helped the hospital achieve this recognition are Wenokia Cokley (Main Birth Clerk), Sherry Bostic, and Sabrina Patterson.



The voluntary, in-hospital paternity acknowledgement program is part of the birth registration process that assists unmarried parents with establishing paternity following the birth of a child at the hospital. This process allows children born to unmarried parents obtain the benefits that paternity establishment offers. SCPOP monitors the voluntary in-hospital performance of birthing hospitals in SC to ensure they are following Federal and State mandates as required. To learn more about the South Carolina Parenting Opportunity Program (SCPOP) click [here](#).

## CHILD SUPPORT Customer Service Portal



A secure way for parents to access important information about their case. Parents will have access to view:

- Payment information
- Hearing dates
- Enforcement measures in place
- Announcements affecting their case

The Customer Service Portal can be used to update:

- Address, phone, email
- Employment information

To access the portal, you will need to create a unique **USER ID** and **PASSWORD**.  
To get started, call 1-800-768-5858



[clientportal.dss.sc.gov](http://clientportal.dss.sc.gov)

## DSS Child Support Customer Service Portal

(Click the button above to access portal now.)

*A secure way for parents to access important child support case information any time, any day.*

Whether paying or receiving support, parents can create a unique user ID and password to view payment information, hearing dates, enforcement measures in place, and receive occasional announcements affecting their case. The portal can also be used to update address, phone number, employment and email information.

## ADULT ADVOCACY

Adult Protective Services | Domestic Violence Prevention  
**Protection. Respect. Independence.**



## KNOW THE FACTS...

**Domestic Violence** is present in every community, across all demographics. The effects of abuse suffered can be both physical and mental and can last a lifetime. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. In one year, that equals more than 10 million

Click here to visit our website and learn more about Adult Protective Services

people. To learn more about making a difference, click [here](#).

# SCDSS Highlights



## 2021 December Employees Of The Month ❄️



### Congratulations!

Row 1: Santana Jones, Strategic Planning and Innovation, State Office; Jim Duke, Information Technology, Columbia; Kyra McMillan, Legal Services, North Charleston; Autumn Goodwin, Child Welfare Services, Spartanburg County; Mahalie Milstead, Child Welfare Services, Anderson; Row 2: Kishia Gibbs, Adult Advocacy Services, North Charleston; Brittany Smith, Child Support Services Division, Columbia and Angela Blyther, Economic Services, State Office.



## DSS Recognizes December Employees of the Month

On December 2nd, eight DSS professionals were recognized by State Director Michael Leach as agency Employees of the Month. Recognized for their hard work and leading with *Competence, Courage, and Compassion* for December are:

Santana Jones, Strategic Planning and Innovation, State Office; Jim Duke, Information Technology, Columbia; Kyra McMillan, Legal Services, North Charleston; Autumn Goodwin, Child Welfare Services, Spartanburg County; Mahalie Milstead, Child Welfare Services, Anderson;

Kishia Gibbs, Adult Advocacy Services, North Charleston; Brittany Smith, Child Support Services Division, Columbia and Angela Blyther, Economic Services, State Office.

The recognition celebration with Director Leach was held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. Each honoree has the use of a designated parking space for the entire month. Honorees also received a DSS lapel pin, a gift card donated by A Home for Me to be used to purchase lunch and an announcement sent to their local newspaper. Congratulations!



## SCFPA's Social Worker of the Month

Congratulations to Autumn Goodwin with Spartanburg County DSS! Autumn has been named the [South Carolina Foster Parent Association's](#) Social Worker of the Month for December. She is being recognized for her outstanding service to children and families!

One foster family said Autumn was "among the kindest, most dedicated, and best communicators that we have worked with in our years of foster parenting." Within the short time the children were in the home, she saw the children in the home as well as arranged multiple phone and Facetime calls between the children and parents. In addition, she went to great lengths to be sure the children had

everything they needed. This family wanted to be sure that Ms. Goodwin was recognized as an exceptional caseworker and for her commitment to excellence.

## Alston Wilkes Society Recognizes Child Welfare Case Manager

Congratulations to Annette Dye, Senior Child Welfare Specialist with the York County DSS office. She was recognized as the [Alston Wilkes Society](#) Case Manager of the Year. She received the award during the organization's 59th annual meeting and awards luncheon at Seawell's in Columbia on November 18th. She was recognized for her expertise and dedication in managing cases.



Shown in the group photo are Emily Parks, Chief Deputy Director of Agency Development & Innovation; Michael Leach, DSS State Director; Annette Dye, Senior Child Welfare Specialist; Marketta Jeter, Foster Care Supervisor; Nicole Foulks, Midlands Regional Director; and Laura Wasson, York County Director. You can see more pictures [here](#).

# Partner & Community Spotlights

## Richland County Shout Outs

By: Terri Thompson, Richland County Director

Richland County DSS would like to extend a huge shout out and heartfelt gratitude to Scott at [Cola Town Bike Collective](#) (shown on the left) for donating his time and talent to help a family that is currently working towards reunification. We were able to obtain two bicycles from an anonymous donor to help a mother and father with their transportation needs. The bicycles are new, but the tires were damaged, so Scott graciously agreed to fix the tires. This transportation assistance will help the mother and father get to work and access other community resources when needed.



We also wanted to give a huge thank you to [Givation](#). They are a nonprofit organization that coordinates people, contributions, and energies around local charities.



As you can see from all the boxes in the picture to the right, they made a massive donation of hand sanitizer to be shared with foster and kinship families and vulnerable adults in our community!

Workers at the [Michelin Tires](#) plant on Two Notch Road recently generously donated to help foster children. For Michelin workers, this has become a yearly tradition. They routinely sign up to sponsor 30-40 kids.



DSS partners with the [Richland County Foster Parent Association](#), which runs a wish list and a sponsorship list. Overall, more than 250 children were signed up for sponsors. For more on the donations, click [here](#).

We would also like to thank our community partners over at [Fair Lawn United Methodist Church](#) on Wilson Boulevard in Columbia.



They donated a truckload of toys and other gifts for Richland County foster children for Christmas!



## Chesterfield County Donation for Foster Children

By T. Brooke Allen, Managing Attorney, 4th Judicial Circuit, Counsel for Darlington and Chesterfield Counties

Davis Campbell is the son of Sarah Campbell, an attorney in Cheraw. Davis wanted to donate toys to the foster children of Chesterfield County, so he recently dressed as Santa and delivered toys to the Chesterfield County Sheriff's office.

## Making Connections with Tomorrow's Leaders

By Antionette Alston, Newberry County Director

[Newberry College](#) invited Newberry County DSS as one of the participants to attend their internship/job fair on November 17th. The event was described as one of the best the organizers have had. We were happy to support our Wolves on their path on their next phase of their lives. DSS was also able to identify two potential interns for the upcoming semester.



Shown in the picture left to right are FC/FP Supervisor George Goodson, County Director Antionette Alston, and APS Supervisor Rhonda Goodman.



## Shout

### Out to our Partners at Dollar General

By: Donald Staton, Business Manager, Spartanburg County

Spartanburg County received 80 turkeys from Drake Jackson, HR Liaison for [Dollar General](#) on November 23, 2021. We also received bags of canned food and other items from Spartanburg High School. Both turkeys and food bags were given out to our clients who entered our lobby. Thank you!

## Thankful for a Thoughtful Gesture

By Christine Wright, Aiken County Director

One of our local churches, Victory Baptist, recently provided Chick-fil-A lunch for our child welfare staff. They really enjoyed and appreciated it.

The group also donated gift cards for foster youth meals when an emergency need arises. The gift cards for foster youth meals were definitely needed and will come in handy especially when children come into emergency protective custody.

Natrice Brighthop-Carpenter took a few pics after the food was delivered. We would also like to say "thank you" to everyone in [The Forgotten Initiative](#) for their support.

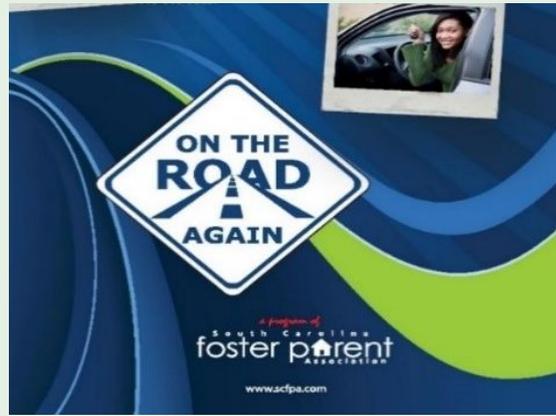


## On the Road Again

Do you have a used car or truck that you no longer need, but you do not think you can get much for it? Before you try to sell it or trade it in, why not consider donating it to help the [South Carolina Foster Parent Association](#)?

There is a desperate need for used vehicles and all cars donated to the ["On the Road Again" program](#) go to help deserving foster care youth.

Your donation could make a huge difference in the life of a young person who lacks transportation. They may be trying to get to school or work or need help to gain independence. To find out how you can make a lasting, positive impact, call Brian Marion at 803-665-9225.



## Report abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

**DSS**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL SERVICES

# 1-888-CARE4US

**Click the red "Report Abuse" button to make an online report of suspected abuse and/or neglect, now!**



*Reporters may remain anonymous or provide contact information to receive follow up on the outcome of their report.*



*All offices of SC Department of Social Services will be closed for state holidays on December 24-28, 2021 for Christmas and January 3, 2022 for New Year's Day.*

SC Department of Social Services  
P.O. Box 1520  
Columbia, SC 29202-1520  
[www.DSS.sc.gov](http://www.DSS.sc.gov)



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