



News and Updates from SCDSS | JANUARY 2022

State Director's Angle
The Fresh Start Effect
By State Director Michael Leach

Create a fresh start in the new year! Choose one bad habit, productivity killer, or area of struggle in your career and create an action plan to replace it with a positive habit or activity in the new year!

The "fresh start effect" suggests that it is easiest to adapt to new habits and make changes at natural transitions, like a new year. Conduct a personal review and identify your one area for improvement in your career and capitalize on the motivation to change the new year brings.

Maybe it is responding to emails more timely, being more organized with tasks on your to-do list, or planning ahead to make sure you meet those deadlines in 2022. Whatever it is, let us all capitalize on the fresh start effect together and make 2022 our best year yet!



ECONOMIC SERVICES

Family Assistance | Early Care & Education | Employment Services

A B C Quality



Celebrating our work with South Carolina's quality child care providers impacting children and families for 30 years!

Celebrating 30 Years of ABC Quality

Throughout 2022, DSS will be celebrating ABC Quality's 30 years of supporting families and early childhood programs.

ABC Quality is administered by the Early Care and Education Division of DSS. It connects families to early care and education programs with the support of an easy-to-understand A, B, and C rating system. For early childhood educators, ABC quality offers coaching, training, and educational resources to support the well-being of children in care.

"For 30 years, ABC Quality has positively impacted the lives of children, families, and communities by supporting early childhood settings statewide to develop strategies to increase the quality of care," said Michael Leach, DSS State Director. "For early childhood educators, ABC Quality offers coaching, training, and educational resources to support the well-being of children in care. We are so pleased to highlight and celebrate the program's great work in benefitting families."

The year 2022 is dedicated to celebrating milestones and implementing innovative partnership projects. Read more [here](#) and be sure to watch for many stories on ABC Quality's 30th anniversary celebration throughout the year!

ABC Quality in the News

On January 14th, 2022, DSS' ABC Quality program was highlighted in a story that aired on WBTW in Myrtle Beach. The piece focused on the easy-to-understand A-B-C system to help families who are searching for child care. Families can enter their zip codes [here](#) and find quality child care facilities in their area. ABC Quality is administered by DSS' Division of Early Care and Education. You can view WBTW's story about ABC Quality [here](#). ABC Quality will be celebrating its 30th anniversary throughout 2022. Michael Leach, DSS State Director, kicked off the celebration with [this message](#).



Early Childhood Leadership Cohort Benefits Families

By Beverly Hunter, Program Manager, ABC Quality

The Early Childhood Leadership Cohort brings together the Division of Early Care and Education and early childhood partner agencies' staff members from across South Carolina. The cohort strengthens their core early childhood knowledge and skills with an emphasis on leadership development. This

program is designed to provide a strong infrastructure of knowledge and practice within the early childhood field in our state. Throughout the cohort experience, which culminates in an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education, participants complete coursework to enhance and extend their knowledge of topics such as child development theory and research, early childhood curriculum, family engagement, diversity and equity, and technology.

Pictured above are Annia Knight, April McDaniel, April Winder, Ben Johnson, Carrie Kay, Christian Stevens, Diane Gerdy, Eriana Neiblum, Erin Martin, Jennifer Williams, Kelsey Stanley, Kena Hall, Kerri Wikel, Kimberly McCullough, LaMarcus Hudson, Lisa Morris, Manija Torian, Marilyn Rice, Natali Gonzalez, Sakina Bhagat, Samantha Daniels, Shaquitta Ray, Shawna Bynum, Shayla Pettigrew, and Teneshia Slempa.

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 under News and Announcements.



Foundation staff.

Shown in the photo, above, are Little Surf's management team members, along with Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation representatives. From left to right are Bequethia Pressley, Claudelia Dunmore, Kevin McCray, Ashley Nelson, Geales Sands, Terri Lottchea, Pamela Wilson, and Melissa Heston-Covert.

Early Childhood Program with A+ Rating Receives Foundation Award

By Melissa Heston-Covert, Quality Assessor, ABC Quality

Little Smurf's Child Care Center in Andrews, SC (Georgetown County) was awarded a Staff Discretionary Grant of \$10,000 by the Frances P. Bunnelle Foundation for earning an A+ quality level with the ABC Quality program.

Little Smurf's Child Care Center's management team was presented with a check from the Frances P. Bunnelle



Food Assistance for SC Families

Households, individuals, seniors, and the homeless may all be eligible for [SNAP](#) benefits. People who are working and need help to stretch their income to purchase food may also be eligible for SNAP benefits as well as those receiving Social Security benefits, child support, or unemployment.

DSS administers SNAP through DSS county offices. Eligibility caseworkers interview applicants and approve those who qualify to receive the food benefit. Qualified applicants for SNAP begin receiving benefits within 30 days of their application. Some families and individuals need expedited benefits, which begin within seven days of application.

[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](#)

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

Reflections from Our Families: The Voices of Lived Experience

A Salute to Outstanding Georgetown County DSS Professionals



"Unfortunately, DSS recently had to intervene with my daughter and her family. They were in trouble and headed for disaster. To say the least, I was horrified at even the thought of DSS, much less having them involved with my family. I envisioned an unreasonable, stern, prim and proper elder woman who would drag my babies from my arms and cart them off to a foster home with 20 other children. That was until I met Nicole Shelton (*left, top*) and Chelsea Taylor (*left, bottom*).



I am telling you, these women are two of the smartest, most intuitive, most caring, and approachable people I have ever met in my life. They listened to everyone and made the right decisions, every time, for our family. It was so incredible and such a relief for me to see how good they are at what they do. It has truly been a pleasure and blessing for us to have the opportunity to work with them.

We are moving on to our assigned case worker, and I can only hope they exhibit a fraction of the qualities that Nicole and Chelsea have. Thank you for allowing them to work with us, as well as your service with our Georgetown County Department of Social Services."

Grateful for an Outstanding Caseworker



"I cannot let our time with Meccah end without telling you how amazing she is. I am sure you know, but seriously, she is top-notch. Everything she says she will do - she does. She is down-to-earth and very approachable. She is responsive and timely and gracious. Most importantly, she is open to all the kids in our home. I know you do not get a say in what kids you get and who is assigned to them - but every time we get a call from Lancaster from here on out, I will hope she is our caseworker." *Pictured left, Child Welfare Services Case Manager Meccah Nelson.*



Kinship Foster Parent Gives Thanks

"I just want you to know that I cannot say it enough that you are sent straight from God to help the foster children in South Carolina. I appreciate you and all you have done for my family." *Pictured left, Foster Care Case Manager Lakeva Drayton-Mines.*



Celebrating Academic Success

By Janeasha Stanley, Youth Engagement Coordinator/Program Coordinator II, Chafee/ETV Program

The journey to adulthood is a critical transition for youth in foster care. It is a time when young adults learn to take on the primary responsibility for their futures and the accompanying concerns of employment, education, healthcare, housing and home management, and maintaining significant relationships with those who will continue to support and encourage them beyond the transition to independence. [The John H. Chafee Foster](#)

[Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood Program](#) provides services and resources to ensure opportunities are available for youth to learn independent living skills necessary to become self-reliant.

The Chafee/ ETV (Educational and Training Vouchers) program proudly acknowledges young people in higher education programs. As the pandemic progresses and the challenges become greater, these young people still prevailed. They managed to not only push through school but excel, which is truly amazing!

**17 Chafee/ETV students in higher education programs earned a 3.0 or higher during the Fall 2021 semester!
Way to go! Keep up the great work!**

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

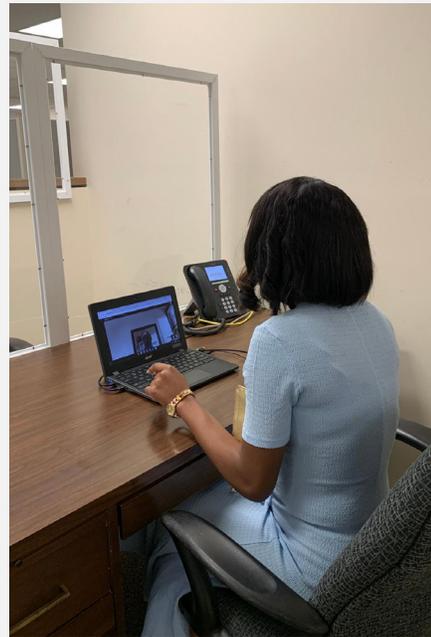
Child Support Services Continues Customer-Focused Innovations in 2022

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted creative approaches to customer care across the DSS system. During 2021, the Child Support Services Division (CSSD) launched virtual walk-in customer kiosks in all four of the division's regional offices. The kiosks provide a user-friendly, contact-free option for walk-in customers to meet virtually with CSSD professionals and get the timely information and assistance they need. As a result of this collaborative effort between CSSD and the agency's Division of Technology Services, **more than 4600 individuals were served through kiosks in 2021!**

More customer-centered services in 2022 include plans to launch an online child support services application.

\$311,767,681

Total federal IV-D Child Support Program collections during federal fiscal year 2021 (10/01/2020 through 9/30/2021)



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

DSS
SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
161500-0000

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.

Catawba Nation Partnership Focuses on Elder Care

The [SCDSS Adult Advocacy Division](#), which administers Adult Protective Services (APS), is pleased to announce a new partnership with the [Catawba Indian Nation](#) (CIN) Senior Program. Funds provided through the American Rescue Plan Act will be utilized by CIN to provide services and improve the lives of tribal senior citizens, their spouses or widow/widowers of tribal members. Targeted efforts will be aimed at closing current gaps in services needed in the Senior Program. An Elder Social Worker will be hired to provide prevention and intervention services and to facilitate social activities and gatherings for tribal elders and other vulnerable tribal adults.



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

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

SCDSS Highlights

Congratulations Employees of the Month, January 2022



Laura Bardsley
Pee Dee Region

Tarnesha Washington-Brown
State Office

Dalicia Watson
Orangeburg

Carrie Kay
Greenville

Tanya Wright
Columbia

Demond Elliott
Columbia

Quanesha Brown
Richland

Laura Bardsley, Regional Managing Attorney; **Tarnesha Washington-Brown**, Human Resources Specialist; **Dalicia Watson**, Low Country Intake; **Carrie Kay**, Tap & Credential Coordinator; **Tanya Wright**, Information Resource Consultant II; **Demond Elliott**, Curriculum Coordinator, Staff Development and Training; **Quanesha Brown**, APS, Human Services Specialist II



DSS Recognizes January Employees of the Month

On January 19th, seven DSS professionals will be 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 January are:

Demond Elliott, Training Division, Columbia; Tarnesha Washington-Brown, Human Resource Division, State Office; Laura Bardsley, Legal Service Division, Pee Dee Region; Dalicia Watson, Child Welfare Services, Orangeburg; Carrie Kay, Economic Services, Greenville; Quanesha Brown; Adult Protective Services, Richland County; and Tanya Wright, Child Support Services Division, Columbia.

The recognition celebration with Director Leach will be held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. Each honoree will have the use of a designated parking space for the entire month. Honorees will also receive 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!

Glenise Elmore Named DSS Human Resources Director

By Don Grant, Deputy State Director for Administration

As we transition into a new year, new challenges and new opportunities, DSS is pleased to congratulate Glenise Elmore, who has accepted the role of Director of Human Resources.

Elmore has been with the agency for over 12 years as an Assistant HR Director and Director of Employee Relations (ER), and also served as acting Human Resources Director on two separate occasions since 2017, most recently serving in that capacity since July of 2021.



In addition to her more than 20 years of professional experience in HR, Glenise brings a unique, unmatched level knowledge of the needs of our DSS team to this critical executive leadership role. In her role as acting Human Resources Director, she has continued to provide support to over 4,000 DSS staff across the State of South Carolina, leveraging her expertise, responsiveness and professionalism, and always soliciting real feedback from our team members both within HR and in the many program areas that HR serves to foster opportunities for innovation and improvement in how we do our jobs and serve the citizens of South Carolina.



Reading is Fundamental

A strong foundation in reading is fundamental to life-long success. On the morning of January 20th, DSS State Director Michael Leach read virtually to students at Bethel Learning Center. He read "Different" by Michael Buxton. Afterward, he talked with them about some of the things that make them different or stand out from others. Director Leach had a wonderful time with the children and with participating in the South Carolina First Steps MLK Week of Service statewide read-aloud.

DSS Professionals Answer the Call to Help During Winter Storms

DSS is designated as South Carolina's lead agency for coordinating mass care operations during an emergency, such as an ice storm. In partnership with the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, DHEC and other state agencies and volunteer relief organizations, DSS staff support the operation of shelters across the state.



On the weekend of January 15th as severe winter weather threatened the state, DSS professionals assisted with staffing shelters in Spartanburg and Oconee Counties. The shelters were opened as part of a statewide response to a winter storm that brought ice, snow, and extreme cold to parts of the state. In Spartanburg County, shelters were opened at Chapman High School, High Point Academy, Wofford College, and Dorman High School. In Oconee County, the Shaver Recreational Complex was used as a shelter. A huge thank-you is extending to all the staff who supported these operations!

Partner & Community Spotlights

Calhoun County Comforters for Kids

On December 18th, WIS News 10 covered the “Comforters for Kids” event at the Calhoun County DSS. That Saturday, more than 150 comforters and 200 pillows were given to children in the area. The items were donated by around a dozen different partners. The event was a big success with many families lined up before the doors opened. To see WIS’ coverage of the story, click [here](#). For more on the event, you can watch [here](#).



Pictured right, Calhoun County DSS staff with donated comforters, courtesy of [The Times and Democrat](#).



SCFPA’s January Social Worker of the Month

SCDSS would like to congratulate Jessica Parker, a case manager with the Upstate Adoptions team.

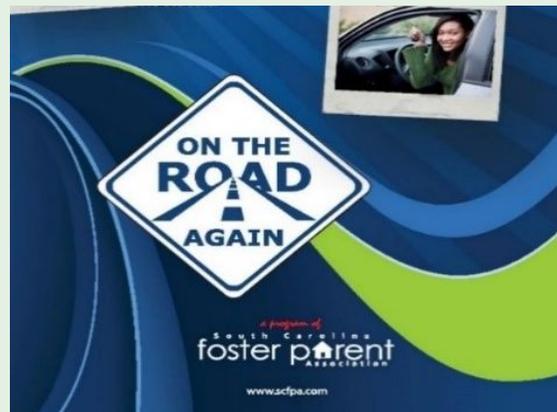
Jessica was recently named the South Carolina Foster Parent Association's Social Worker of the Month for January. Thank you for your outstanding service to children and families, Jessica. Congratulations!

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.

SC Department of Social Services
P.O. Box 1520
Columbia, SC 29202-1520
www.DSS.sc.gov



SC Department of Social Services | P.O. Box 1520, 1535 Confederate Ave., Columbia, SC 29202

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