

**News and Updates from SCDSS | August 2024**



*State Director's Angle*  
**Fostering Positive  
Intentions and Interactions**

*By Michael Leach, DSS State Director*

Each day encourages us to value and focus on fostering positive intentions in all our interactions with clients, colleagues, and various members of the community. By approaching every conversation and task with a mindset of understanding and goodwill, we can create a more supportive and productive environment for everyone.

Positive intentions can significantly impact our work culture and the satisfaction of those we serve. It improves client relationships, promotes personal growth, builds trust and stronger relationships. Let us strive to be empathetic, patient, and proactive in our communications, always seeking to understand and support each other. Thank you for your continuous dedication, hard work, and partnership!



**Child Support  
Awareness Month**

*"Putting children first to ensure a brighter tomorrow"*



**DSS Recognizes August as Child Support Awareness Month**



**[Governor Henry McMaster has proclaimed August as Child Support Awareness Month](#)** to highlight child support and the services available to both custodial and non-custodial parents provided by the South Carolina Department of Social Services. According to the **[Administration for Children and Families](#)**, approximately 1 in 5 children in the United States receives services from a child support program.

“Child support is essential in the overall well-being of a child. Every parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is supported until they reach adulthood,” said Michael Leach, DSS State Director. “August is a time to celebrate the tremendous job done by child support programs year-round in serving parents and custodians in improving the financial condition of children in single-parent homes.”

The South Carolina Department of Social Services provided services to over 194,000 children during the federal fiscal year 2023. During that period, the child support program collected \$300 million with 96% being distributed directly to families. South

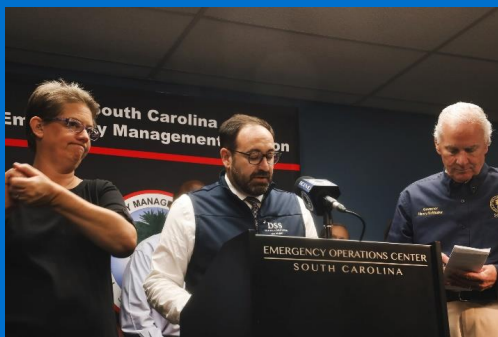
Carolina’s Child Support Program established 7,105 support orders as well as establishing paternity for 22,616 children during the period.

DSS has made strides to add new features to the **[agency’s website](#)** to enhance the customer’s experience with the Child Support Services Division. In July 2022, DSS launched an Online Application Portal, which gives 24/7 access to individuals who seek to apply for child support services. Over 29,000 applications have been submitted since that time. In 2021, another online portal was launched to help individuals paying or receiving child support inquire about their case status virtually on a 24/7 basis. Since the launch, over 64,000 individuals have created accounts, and the portal has received over 4.5 million visits. The Customer Service Portal was upgraded to a mobile device-friendly platform in February 2023.

Another one of the DSS Child Support Program’s offerings is the **[Visitation Involvement Parenting Program](#)**, also known as the V.I.P. Program. It currently operates in 16 South Carolina counties. The program offers parenting classes, mediation, and help with establishing and enforcing child support orders. Services were provided to over 700 people, with 359 children in common, during the federal fiscal year of 2023 through the V.I.P. Program. DSS also works closely with the **[South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families](#)** and their five regional programs to support fathers and families across the state.

To learn more about the child support program, its services, and how to apply, please visit: **<https://dss.sc.gov/child-support/>**.

To see Director Leach’s message on Child Support Awareness Month, click **[here](#)**.



## DSS Professionals Step Up to Assist During Tropical Storm Debby

During the week of August 5th, Tropical Storm Debby drenched South Carolina with rain. According to the National Weather Service, some areas in the Lowcountry saw as much as 15 inches of rain over a four-day period. The storm necessitated the opening of numerous shelters. As always, DSS professionals stepped up to help with shelter duty as needed.

Overall, 25 different shelters were opened and the maximum population for a single day was 117 clients and 6 pets. DSS professionals pitched in to help in areas including Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Jasper, Marion, Marlboro, Orangeburg, and Williamsburg counties. For a closer look at DSS’ role in sheltering, please click **[here](#)**. You can also learn more about disaster preparedness by clicking **[here](#)**.



Thanks also to the leadership of Dr. Edward Simmer and the Mass Care team at the South Carolina Department of Public Health. A flood water evacuee housed in a state-supported DSS shelter in Dorchester County was able to receive needed medications in partnership with CVS pharmacy. Communication, collaboration, and cooperation with all parties involved helped this individual with the medicines they needed despite the conditions.





SOUTH CAROLINA IS NOW THE  
**15<sup>th</sup> State**  
TO PARTICIPATE IN  
**Military Child Care  
in Your Neighborhood-PLUS**



## **SCDSS Launches Child Care Fee Assistance to Military Families**

On Thursday, August 1, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) announced the launch of Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS (MCCYN-PLUS). The program offers child care fee assistance to eligible military and DoD civilian families when child care is unavailable on an installation or when families do not live close to an installation, giving families a sense of ease when searching for high-quality child care. MCCYN-PLUS was established by the Department of Defense (DoD).

A news conference was held at the Welcome Center at Shaw-Sumter Farm in Dalzell, SC. The event included presentations by DSS State Director Michael Leach, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, SC Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Todd B. McCaffery, and Sumter Mayor David Merchant. MCCYN-PLUS is made possible by the partnership between SCDSS and DoD. The program is available to eligible active-duty military personnel, National Guard members, reservists, and DoD civilian personnel.

"South Carolina is proud to join the MCCYN-PLUS program and to support our military families who have sacrificed so much for our nation," said Michael Leach, DSS State Director. "By offering accessible and affordable child care, we hope to ease the burden on our military families and ensure their children receive the care they need to thrive."

"The launch of this military child care network in South Carolina is a testament to the powerful collaboration between our state, child care providers, and the Department of Defense," said South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Todd B. McCaffery. "This program strengthens our military communities, fosters early childhood development, and provides peace of mind to the brave men and women who keep our nation safe."



According to [Military OneSource](#), there are 33,698 active-duty service members and 24,443 National Guard and reserve members who serve in South Carolina. MCCYN-PLUS will help to ease the minds of these military personnel who are looking for child care.

"South Carolina has a long and proud tradition of standing with our military community, and through the MCCYN-PLUS program, we continue to build on our reputation as one of the most military-friendly states in the country," said Governor Henry McMaster.

With the addition of South Carolina, MCCYN-PLUS is now [available in 15 states](#), as well as Miami-Dade County in Florida. Families [can choose eligible licensed child care and family home programs](#) that have at least a B+ rating through [ABC Quality](#), South Carolina's quality rating and improvement system. Interested child care programs can sign up to participate in MCCYN-PLUS through [Child Care Aware](#). For additional information about MCCYN-PLUS, visit the [Military OneSource website](#).



## DSS Hosts Columbia Fireflies Game

On August 10th, the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) sponsored PAW Patrol Night at the Columbia Fireflies baseball game. Several DECE programs and other partnering organizations handed out giveaways and valuable information about child care.

Angenette Vedder, director of First Nazareth Child Development Center in Columbia, threw the first pitch. The child care program will also be the recipient of the proceeds from the PAW Patrol jersey auction held that evening.





## DSS Announces Latest Grant for Child Care Providers

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) is offering a one-time Expansion/Operating grant for child care providers. The grant is primarily designed to support increased child enrollment, staff and educator retention, and child care center operating expenses.

"Our goal is to support child care providers in their efforts to expand and enhance the quality of care for children across our state," said DSS State Director Michael Leach. "This grant is just another example of significant steps DSS has made over the last four years towards ensuring more families have access to affordable, high-quality child care."

Funds from the Expansion/Operating grant may be used to retain current staff through salary increases or retention bonuses.

Other allowable expenses for the grant include:

- paying facility expenses, including rent/mortgage payments, utility bills, and personnel costs
- classroom materials
- playground repairs or upgrades
- technology equipment and services
- goods and services
- cleaning or sanitation costs

The grant, made possible by federal funds received by DSS as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is available to eligible licensed or registered child care centers, family child care homes, group child care homes, Head Start programs, and license-exempt programs. Providers must also be in compliance with Child Care Licensing requirements and fire codes, remain within licensed capacity for the facility, and have at least a provisional license as of July 1, 2024.

Grant amounts are determined based on the chart below:

Child Care Facilities (Based on Licensed Capacity)	Grant Amount
Small Child Care Centers (Up to 49 children)	\$70,000
Medium Child Care Centers (50-99 children)	\$80,000
Large Child Care Centers (100+ children)	\$90,000
License Exempt in ABC Quality	\$60,000
Group Child Care Homes	\$27,000
Family Child Care Homes	\$20,000

Providers can apply for the grant [here](#). For questions about the grant, providers can email [DECEGrants@dss.sc.gov](mailto:DECEGrants@dss.sc.gov) or call 1-800-476-0199. The deadline to apply is September 9, 2024.

## DECE Attends Pediatrics Conference



Morgan Massenburg, Division of Early Care & Education Outreach Manager, represented ABC Quality at the South Carolina American Academy of Pediatrics Annual Meeting that was held August 8th –August 11th.

At ABC Quality's booth, Morgan spoke with doctors about the importance of early childhood education and provided them with resources to help parents/patients in their search for accessible, affordable, and quality child care.

# Did You Know?



### **Head Start Programs**

Are designed to get children ready to succeed in school and in life through learning experiences tailored to their changing needs and abilities. Head Start programs support children's growth from birth to age 5. Services are available at no cost.

Head Start is family engagement focused, inclusive of leadership roles on the Head Start Policy Council.

### **Who is eligible?**

Children in foster care are Head Start eligible regardless of family income. In addition, children experiencing homelessness, children from families receiving public assistance (TANF, SSI, SNAP) are categorically eligible.







# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

## Improving Workforce Outcomes

### Child Welfare Academy: Pre-service Certification Training



- A two-year collaborative project
- Reimagine child welfare certification for Child Welfare Services case managers and team leaders

**The goals of this new training are to:**

1. Improve transfer of learning and casework readiness for new case managers
2. Increase supervisory and peer support from day one
3. Reducing turnover and retaining staff



On Thursday, August 8th, Michael Leach, DSS State Director, and Dr. Shanee` Moore, SD&T Child Welfare Training Director, took part in a valuable webinar. The Center for States webinar for our County-Administered State Partnership (CASP) peer group invited them to present on "Training & Beyond: Putting the Pieces Together for Improved Workforce Outcomes."

Director Leach discussed the agency's vision for a standard of excellence and developing a process that includes safety, trust, and making sure everyone is aligned with a strategic plan regarding the GPS practice model. Also discussed were retention and development strategies. The Child Welfare Academy Pre-service Certification Training was another highlight with the specifics shown above.

Dr. Moore discussed using the AWAKEN model to address bias and the agency's virtual reality training and what it encompasses. Additional retention and development strategies were also covered. At the conclusion, some outcomes were highlighted. They include an improvement in the Filled Position Rate and a decrease in the overall turnover rate.

## ECONOMIC SERVICES

Family Assistance | Early Care & Education | Employment Services





## Tribal Consultation

On June 28, 2024, the Office of Economic Services, Food and Nutrition Programs, and SNAP Employment and Training teams traveled to the Catawba Reservation in Rock Hill, SC to host the first SNAP Tribal Consultation Sharing Session with South Carolina's only federally recognized tribe, the Catawba Indian Nation.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Public Health, Economic Development, and ISWA Head Start were among the program areas represented by the Catawba Indian Nation during the Tribal Consultation Sharing Session. It provided an opportunity for the Catawba Indian Nation and SCDSS to share information regarding program areas of interest and to engage in conversation on how SCDSS and the Catawba Indian Nation may support each other as we strive to strengthen our communities. This blossoming partnership will be the first of many and the information exchanged will be beneficial to the communities both serve.

## Food Assistance for SC Families

Visit our Website



Households, individuals, seniors, and the homeless may 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.

# Did you know you can see your SNAP Benefits online?

## IT'S EASY!

To learn more visit:  
[dss.sc.gov/assistance-programs/snap/](https://dss.sc.gov/assistance-programs/snap/)

**DSS**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT of SOCIAL SERVICES



Need to report suspected SNAP fraud, waste, or abuse online?  
[Click HERE to Make a Report](#)

### The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program is still going.

Participants who received vouchers for the 2024 season have until October 15th to redeem the vouchers as they do not carry over from year to year. Eligible participants will receive \$50 in the form of five checks (\$10 each) to spend at participating authorized locations. Click the image below for more information.





# NEED HELP FINDING CHILD CARE?

[SCChildcare.org](http://SCChildcare.org)



## Employment Services

*Helping individuals achieve sustainability.*

### 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 to the right for resources and assistance.



**Employment  
Services Contact Form**

**Job Fair Announcements &  
Employment Tools**

### ATTENTION, SOUTH CAROLINA EMPLOYERS! DSS Can Help You 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 see how our community partners are changing lives!



**98**

TANF or SNAP E&T work program participants obtained employment in July 2024.

*\*(represents full- and part-time employments)*

learn more at [dss.sc.gov](https://dss.sc.gov)



**559**

TANF or SNAP E&T work program participants have cumulatively obtained employment in 2024.

*\*(represents full- and part-time employments from 1/1/2024 through 7/31/2024)*

learn more at [dss.sc.gov](https://dss.sc.gov)



The SCDSS Adult Advocacy Division administers the Adult Protective Services (APS) and the Domestic Violence Programs. The Division coordinates services to individuals who are 18 or older and are the victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Learn more about Adult Protective Services [here](#). Learn more about the Domestic Violence Program [here](#).



## Senior's Citizen's Day

Members of the DSS Adult Advocacy Team participated in the annual [Senior Resources Inc.](#) Community Champions week by packing, delivering, and learning more about Meals on Wheels operations and the volunteer activities in Richland County.

DSS State Director Michael Leach even joined in on the fun and delivered meals on Wednesday, August 21, including one to Mr. Asbill. It just so happened to be Senior Citizen's Day. The day is intended to increase awareness of the factors and issues that affect older adults, such as health deterioration and elder abuse.

# Community & Partner Shoutouts

## Spartanburg Bookbag Donation



On Thursday, July 25, Grace United Methodist Church donated 200 bookbags to Spartanburg DSS for our foster care children.

The bookbags will make a big difference to students of all ages as they begin a new semester and try to start the new school year off right.

Thanks to everyone who gave their time to donate and support such a worthwhile cause!

## Pee Dee Adoptions Recruitment Event

Pee Dee Region Adoption Services hosted a recruitment event, "It Takes a Village and A Carnival", on July 20, 2024. The carnival-themed event was complete with clowns, face painting, balloon twisting, a bouncy house, a funnel cake food truck, lots of games, activities, and other food. This fun-filled day was a way to engage prospective adoptive families with our waiting children and youth. A total of twenty-four families and guests attended. Also on hand were our partnering agencies, The Jade Bridge, Flourishing Families, and SC Heart Gallery. Several promising connections were made at this event, and it was a huge success.



## Thank You, Fostering Great Ideas

Fostering Great Ideas recently stopped by the Spartanburg office.

They donated luggage for our foster children so that they have something appropriate to put their belongings in when they have to move.

Donations such as these that make a huge difference in the lives of those served.

We are thankful for their generosity!

## Midlands Community Resource Fair





Margaret B



Margaret B

On Wednesday, July 31, a Midlands Community Resource Fair was held at the Charles R. Drew Wellness Center in Columbia. Participants at the free family-friendly event had the opportunity to discover community resources including employment, training, clothing, and more. There was a tremendous turnout along with widespread media coverage. Thanks to everyone who came out!

## York County School Donations

The York County DSS Office is beyond grateful for the community support for families. The York community always shows their generosity by assisting families with school supplies.

Thank you to Ms. Aliyah Sherer and her staff from Income Tax Auditor of Rock Hill, Mr. William Hannibal of Four Cross Lodge, and Blessed to be a Blessing Outreach Ministries.

Thank you for your donations and the families are grateful for you.





## Fairfield County Event

Fairfield County participated in a back-to-school bash on Saturday, July 20, 2023. Pamphlets were handed out to parents about healthy communication with children, how to support child development and resiliency.

Also handed out was some SCDSS “swag” materials to the public which included cups, pens, and magnets. It was a great opportunity to meet with the public and share great information!



## Edgefield County Event

Edgefield County DSS recently participated in a Back to School Bash sponsored by the Edgefield County School District. The event was held at Strom Thurmond High School. DSS distributed school supplies and hygiene products. The event was well attended by the community. Everyone enjoyed meeting the public in a different setting and having the chance to engage other community partners as well. Pictured to the left are Sherri Saxon, Economic Services Team Lead; Moronda Talley, County Director; and Demeterius Brown, Human Services Team Lead. Not pictured is Yolanda Williams, HRL/Admin Supervisor.



## Allendale County Event

Allendale County DSS joined our community partners in the annual Back-to-School Bash sponsored by our Allendale County School District on July 27, 2024.

The Allendale DSS team collected school supplies to hand out to hundreds of young people. Allendale County DSS is proud to be a partner in our children’s education.





## Clarendon County DSS Foster Care Suitcases

Clarendon County DSS Team Leader Denise Wilson received suitcases and bags for our foster children from Westminster Presbyterian Children, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry on July 19, 2024.

Our foster children are thankful for the unwavering support and for Westminster's kindness in donating suitcases and bags.

Some children have clothes in black trash bags when they come into foster care or move to a new placement. However, Westminster Presbyterian has made our foster children happy by providing suitcases and bags for them. Westminster Presbyterian has provided comfort and great support for our foster children. Clarendon County appreciates Westminster's involvement in helping our foster children. The picture is used with permission.

# SCDSS Agency News



## New Lowcountry Child Welfare Services Regional Director Named

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) would like to announce Mrs. Robin "Holly" Morris as the new Child Welfare Services Lowcountry Regional Director. Morris, a 28-year veteran of working with children and families, began her new role on Friday, August 2nd.

Mrs. Morris most recently served as the Sumter County DSS Director after beginning her career working in foster care in Sumter. In 2001, she earned her master's degree through a collaborative program between the University of South Carolina and DSS. Mrs. Morris was a team leader and program coordinator before being promoted to Clarendon County Director in 2013. She later became the Director of Sumter County in 2018.

"I am so excited about this new chapter in my career and look forward to supporting the wonderful leaders in the Lowcountry," said Morris. "Together, with our DSS professionals and our engaged community partners and providers, we will give it our all to strengthen the families we serve."

Mrs. Morris is originally from Clarendon County and graduated from Clarendon Hall Academy before obtaining an undergraduate degree from the University of South Carolina in Sociology, and then a master's degree in social work in 2001. She is married to Darren Morris, and they share eight children and four grandchildren.

The Lowcountry region for DSS is made up of Allendale, Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Hampton, Jasper, and Orangeburg counties.





## SC DSS Honors July Employees of the Month

On Monday, July 22, seven DSS professionals were recognized by DSS State Director Michael Leach as agency Employees of the Month for July 2024.

Recognized for their hard work and leading with Competence, Courage, and Compassion for July were (shown left to right with Director Leach) Dylan Phillips, Office of Policy & Engagement, Columbia; Crystal Muye, Child Support Services, Columbia; Antranasha White, Adult Advocacy Division, Berkeley County;

Danielle Gaddy, Child Welfare Services, Horry County; Kristie Deese, Individual & Provider Rights, Columbia; Teresa Franklin, Economic Services, Orangeburg County and Johnetta Brown, Office of General Counsel, Orangeburg County (not pictured).

Staff selected by their program area leadership for the Employee of the Month program enjoyed lunch with the state director along with other attendees, a dedicated parking space to use for the month, a photo and write-up displayed at State Office, and a write-up sent to their community newspaper.

Congratulations to all!



## Fiscal Leadership Circle

Susan Roben, DSS Chief Financial Officer, is one of 13 finance professionals participating in the 2024 Fiscal Leadership Circle. The 12-month hybrid fellowship aims to help finance professionals imagine and implement new ways to direct funding toward prevention programming to keep children at home with their families. In late July, the representatives met in Denver, Colorado to discuss ways of overcoming the fundamental challenge of keeping children out of foster care while addressing the associated financial costs.

“Fiscal leaders are not often positioned as innovators — they are implementers,” said Deszeree Thomas, Foster America Director of Capacity Building. “The Fiscal Leadership Circle is an opportunity to empower them to make change and to give them the knowledge and resources that they need to do things differently.”

Participants are learning to use child welfare funding strategically, including by accessing diverse funding streams to maximize investment in prevention services. Each participant comes to the fellowship with a project to further over the course of the program.

Learn more about the ongoing efforts [here](#) and [here](#). Congratulations, Susan!



*Have a great  
Labor Day  
weekend!*

All DSS offices will be closed  
Monday, September 2nd



**The Annual Trunk or Treat at State Office  
is Coming. Make Plans to Join us This Fall!**

A purple-themed poster for a "Trunk or Treat" event. The background is dark purple with a white crescent moon in the top left and a string of white triangular bunting across the top. The text "Make plans to join us for a" is in orange, followed by "TRUNK or TREAT" in large white letters. Below this, it says "Snacks • Games • Prizes" in orange, followed by "Friday, October 11, 2024" and "5:30pm - 7:00pm" in white. The location is "SCDSS State Office" and "1535 Confederate Ave | Columbia, SC 29201". On the right, there is an illustration of the back of a blue car with its trunk open, decorated with Halloween items: a black bag with a white ghost, three jack-o'-lanterns, and a string of orange and white bunting. Four black spiders are hanging from the top of the trunk. The DSS logo is in the bottom right corner.

Make plans to join us for a  
**TRUNK  
or  
TREAT**  
Snacks • Games • Prizes  
.....  
Friday, October 11, 2024  
5:30pm - 7:00pm  
SCDSS State Office  
1535 Confederate Ave | Columbia, SC 29201

The logo for the Department of Social Services (DSS) of South Carolina, featuring the letters "DSS" in a large, serif font, with "SOUTH CAROLINA" and "DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES" in smaller, sans-serif fonts below it.



## DSS Podcasts for the Public

DSS makes podcasts available [on the DSS website](#) for professionals seeking to enhance knowledge and skills. The i3-Imagine.Ideate.Innovate Podcast, hosted by the Staff Development and Training Division, highlights innovative ways to improve policy, practice, and the culture within the social services profession.

The Driving Sustainable Success in Child Welfare Podcast, hosted by the Child Welfare Division, prompts great discussion and explores strategies for serving children and strengthening families. Be sure to check them out!

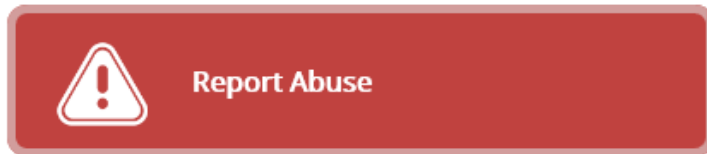


## Report abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults.



# 1-888-CARE4US

**Click the red 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](http://www.DSS.sc.gov)



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

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