

News and Updates from SCDSS | NOVEMBER 2022



State Director's Angle
Thanks and Gratitude

By Michael Leach, SCDSS State Director

November is here and that means the sprint to the holiday season and the end of the year is here. I am reminded that this time of year is the perfect time to stop and give thanks for all that has happened in our lives over the last year.

Thanksgiving is a special time of year, not just because of spending time with family, big football games, or food. This holiday is more about self-reflection. It's all about gratitude -- being grateful for what you have that is good in your life. It may seem simplistic, but maintaining a positive attitude concerning the events of your life is a good way to help maintain your mental health.

The work we do at SCDSS in service to the citizens of South Carolina, alongside our many partners, makes me grateful to be here. It's a significant part of what makes my life good. I extend heartfelt wishes for a joyous Thanksgiving, and hope you remember to take care of yourselves, your family and your colleagues.



*SNAP SCAM ALERT: Protect Your
EBT Card and SNAP Benefits from
Texting Scams*

The SC Department of Social Services wants to alert the public about a phishing campaign involving texts claiming EBT benefit cards are locked.
[Click HERE to Learn More](#)

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



November 2022
Adoption Month

family miracle
hope waiting birth family
forever blessed mother
love heart adoption smile
sacrifice dream child
always come gift
happiness true
❤️

DSS
SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

November is National Adoption Month

November is National Adoption Month, and South Carolina is celebrating all month long, recognizing Monday, November 21 as Adoption Day. This special day symbolizes time set aside for day-long hearings in South Carolina's family courts to finalize public adoptions in judicial circuits in Greenville, Sumter, Charleston, Horry (morning), and Florence (afternoon) Counties.

At the start of the month, 120 children in the state's foster care system were identified as legally free for adoption and waiting for a permanent place to call home – a forever family. Of those available for public

adoption through DSS, 83% of those children are ages 7-17 and 33% are sibling groups. They represent the agency's greatest need for providing permanency. This year's national theme is "Small Steps Open Doors."

"The small steps begin with asking yourself if you have a place in your home and heart to welcome a new member into your family," said Michael Leach, DSS State Director. "There is a great need for children with complex medical needs, for sibling groups, and older youth and teens. As an agency, we want to help youth secure stable connections to become independent, successful adults through permanency."

All year long, SCDSS works diligently with community partners to find families that best match the unique needs of every child awaiting adoption. November offers the chance to join the USDHHS [Children's Bureau's](#) efforts to increase awareness and bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in foster care.

Here are key steps in becoming a forever family for a young person:

- Make the call to HeartFelt Calling, (888) 828-3555, and fill out an application or visit www.heartfeltcalling.org
- Attend training to help identify what makes your family the best fit for a waiting young person.
- Complete background and fingerprint check requirements.
- Meet with a certified adoption investigator to begin your adoption home study process, including fire and sanitation inspections.
- A selection committee matches a young person with your family and shares their full background and unique needs.
- Meet the young person and begin getting to know each other with visits and overnight stays. You are now on the way to your final adoption day!

Families interested in adoption can view online profiles of South Carolina's waiting children at the [SCDSS Public Adoption Portal](#), the [SC Heart Gallery](#), and [AdoptUSKids](#). SCDSS has improved services and timeframes by creating a system that responds to families within three days of an initial inquiry. Families already approved to adopt are notified within two weeks if they are a potential match with a child and the final selection from all potential matches is made within 30 days. You can also learn about adoption services by texting "DSS" to 211211. Throughout the month of November, DSS will also be highlighting the stories of parents who are opening their homes and hearts and expanding their families through public adoption on the agency's social media channels.

Adoption and Foster Care Grants Available



The South Carolina Baptist Convention is making

\$100,000 available to help reduce barriers for church members to care for vulnerable children in the foster care system. Grants may be requested by the senior pastor of a SC Baptist congregation for one of the two following categories:

- Adoption-related expenses for families
- To help in the launch of a new foster care/adoption ministry

You can learn more by visiting <https://scbaptist.org/fostercare/grants>

**1496 children were reunified
with their families in 2021.**

1302 children have reunified thus far in 2022.

(See more data on the [SCDSS Reunifications Dashboard](#).)



Foster Parent Appreciation

By Andrea James-Favor, Pee Dee Regional Director

We wanted to share photos from our Pee Dee Foster Parent Appreciation event which was held at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Florence on Saturday, September 24th, 2022.

Emily Medere, Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Services, Pee Dee leadership, Foster Care case managers, and the Foster Family and Licensing Unit supported Amber Peeples, Statewide Foster Parent Liaison, in this effort. Thanks to all who participated!



Saluting Those Who Make a Difference

By Brianna Kaldenbach, Statewide Foster Parent Liaison

In partnership with the SC Foster Parent Association, SCDSS was able to serve well over 600 people who made up around 200 families. In addition to the raffles, food, and fellowship, attendees heard from county, regional, and state leadership who shared notes of appreciation for the foster parents who continue to answer the call to care for children and families across the state. These events are a true testament to how things can come together when multiple departments work together to serve our families!



Are you raising grandchildren or the child of a relative or friend?

You may be a candidate for our research study

HALOS and Child Trends are looking for caregivers raising a relative child or the child of a close friend to participate in a study about caregiver services and well-being.

If eligible to participate you will receive:

- Up to \$90 in gift cards for survey responses over the course of the study
- Information about services currently available statewide for kinship caregivers



Scan here with your phone's camera for online screener

What you should know:

- Participation is voluntary and everything you share about yourself and your experiences as a caregiver will be confidential
- We will ask you to take 3 surveys over a period of 6 months and will offer a \$30 gift card for each completed survey.

Contact: Rebecca at HALOS if you are interested in participating!
843-974-3860 or
rebecca@charlestonhalos.org



23% **of children and youth in foster care are placed with kin.**

(Data as of 11/15/22)

We are promoting a "kin-first" culture in South Carolina and supporting the placement stability of children who reside with kinship caregivers while we serve their families.

\$3.4 Million in federal pandemic relief funding provided to Kinship Caregivers.



Children and older youth in foster care need loving homes.

BECOME A SC FOSTER PARENT TODAY!

Many steps in the process are online or offered virtually.
Learn more and get started today!

1-888-828-3555 or scfamilies.org

ADULT ADVOCACY

Adult Protective Services | Domestic Violence Prevention

Protection. Respect. Independence.



Adult Advocacy Division Updates

By Selina Salley, Practice Compliance Coordinator

On October 20th, the Adult Advocacy Division had a day of training and employee appreciation at Brookland Baptist Banquet and Conference Center in West Columbia. The day started with a warm welcome and words of appreciation from Michael Leach, DSS State Director. It was followed by a brief overview of the division's evolution and a look at what is to come by Kelly Cordell, Adult Advocacy Director.

The remainder of the day was a training focused on APS investigations. It was a refresher on how case managers provide intervention and support for vulnerable adults who cannot provide care or protection for themselves in a manner that ensures the adult's right to self-determination, well-being, lifestyle, and culture. These services must be provided in the least restrictive environment as determined by the adult's level of care and safety. There was staff in attendance from SCDSS county offices, the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Strategic Planning & Innovation, Accountability, Data and Research (ADR), Adult Advocacy Staff Development and Training, and all APS staff.

On October 8th, the Adult Advocacy team participated in the Alzheimer's Association's Walk to End Alzheimer's Midlands. It is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support, and research. The Adult Advocacy Division was one of 153 registered teams and joined 1,235 participants for the walk. It was a beautiful sight with spinning-colored flowers from the "Promise Garden" to personalize and represent reasons for walking. Orange is for support of the cause and the vision of a world without Alzheimer's. Yellow is for support or care for someone with Alzheimer's. Purple is for those who have lost someone to Alzheimer's. Blue is for those who have Alzheimer's disease.



Click [HERE](#) to visit our website and learn more about Adult Protective Services

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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](#).



The SCDSS **Adult Advocacy Division** has provided over

\$4.8 Million

in regular program funding and federal pandemic relief funding to

13 SC domestic violence shelters serving South Carolina citizens.

ECONOMIC SERVICES

Early Care & Education | Family Assistance | Employment Services

ABC Quality



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



Dottie Campbell

Remembering When: Celebrating 30 Years of ABC Quality

“Wow! 30 years! I remember when we began the child care funding program in SC. It was exciting to know that we could provide this much-needed quality child care to families. Although we never had enough money to assist every deserving family, we were grateful to help those we could. And the ABC Quality system is serving families today, 30 years later. Congratulations and Happy Anniversary to everyone working today for ABC Quality. You are doing amazing work.”

Now Available!

THE NEW SC VOUCHER ONLINE BENEFITS PORTAL

A more convenient way to apply for child care financial assistance

Families can now:

- Apply and submit their application online
- Upload all supporting documents
- Track the status of their application
- Receive email notifications

For more information, visit

SCChildcare.org



[Click HERE to learn more](#)

T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Applications Open for Child Care Professionals

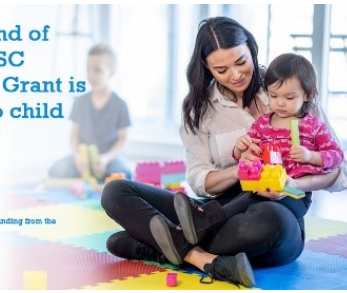
The SC Endeavors T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program awards scholarships to child care teachers, directors, owners, and family/group providers currently working in a licensed or registered child care program. [Applications](#) for the program are now open for the spring 2023 semester. If you know a child care professional who wants to earn their credentials, associates, or bachelor's degree in early childhood education, please encourage them to apply. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program has made a positive impact on many child care professionals. In this [video](#), Georgette Fleming, Assistant Director of the Incarnation Lutheran Child Development Center in Columbia, shares how the program gave her the courage to go back to school and earn her early childhood education degree.



The second round of funding for the SC Building Blocks Grant is now available to child care providers.*

Apply for the grant at scchildcare.org

*Only available for providers who received funding from the first round of grants.



\$679 Million

provided to SC child care providers in operating and stabilization grants to help recover from lost revenue due to low enrollments during pandemic response.

(Note: Data as of 11/08/22. Total disbursement includes providers that received more than one grant.)



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.

43,250 children

have been approved for SC Child Care Vouchers and approximately

\$539 million

has been allocated for SC Vouchers since October 2020, when DSS began offering additional child care assistance programs for working parents in response to COVID-19. (Data as of 11/08/22)

CACFP Reimbursement Rates Increase

From July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is increasing meal reimbursement rates for participating CACFP programs. Family and group child care homes participating in CACFP can now receive reimbursement at the Tier 1 rate, the highest reimbursement rate for CACFP homes. Plus, all facilities will receive an additional 10-cent reimbursement per meal or supplement. Providers interested in participating in CACFP can visit scchildcare.org to apply.



CACFP
Child & Adult Care Food Program

Food Assistance for SC Families



Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Celebrates Great Year

A shout out goes to the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The program wrapped up a successful fiscal year on October 31, 2022, with a 95% voucher distribution rate statewide, along with a new banking vendor, and approximately a 10% increase in client redemption.



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 may be approved for expedited benefits, which begin within seven days of application.

[Apply for SNAP online.](#)

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.



[Employment Services Contact Form](#)

[Job Fair Announcements & Employment Tools](#)

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.

**3,321 TANF or SNAP E&T participants
obtained employment**

during the 2-year pandemic response period.

(Represents full- and part-time employments between 3/2020 through 2/2022.)

**2,955 TANF or SNAP E&T participants
have gained employment in 2022.**

(Represents full- and part-time employments from 1/1/2022 through 10/30/2022.)

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

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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

DSS Child Support Customer Service Portal

(Click the button above to access portal now.)

A secure way for parents to **APPLY** for child support services and **ACCESS** important case information any time, any day.

- Create a unique user ID and password
- Apply for services or access existing case information
- View payment information, hearing dates, enforcement measures in place
- Receive occasional announcements affecting the case.
- Update contact information

Child Support Customer Portal Facts (October 2022)

- **37,884** individual users!
- **1,300** new subscriptions!
- **130,250+** visits to the online portal. Over 100K visits for the last 7 consecutive months!

Child Support Collections

- **\$303,725,844** collected for families in Calendar Year 2021.
- **\$246,204,142** collected as of November 1, 2022.

SCDSS Highlights

CONGRATULATIONS! | NOVEMBER 2022

SCDSS Employees of the Month



Row 1: Kim Brown, Program Coordinator, Pee Dee Region; Rodney Davis, Admin. Assistant, State Office; Tiffney Miles, Public Information Coordinator, State Office;
Row 2: Joan Boston, Human Services Coordinator, Adult Advocacy, Richland; Jade Arant, Foster Care Case Manager, Chesterfield; Josue Rodriguez, Program Coordinator, Individual and Provider Rights, Columbia;
(Not Pictured) Alfonso Meares, Paralegal, Office of General Counsel, N Charleston

November Employees of the Month Recognized

On November 30th, seven DSS professionals will be recognized by State Director Michael Leach as agency Employees of the Month for November 2022.

Recognized for their hard work and leading with *Competence, Courage, and Compassion* are Kim Brown, Child Support Services Division, Pee Dee Region; Rodney Davis, Economic Services, State Office; Tiffney Miles, Office of Communications & External Affairs, State Office; Joan Boston, Adult Advocacy Division, Richland County; Jade Arant, Child Welfare Services Division, Chesterfield County; Josue Rodriguez, Individual & Provider Rights Services Division; Alfonso Meares, Legal Services, North Charleston (*not pictured*).

Honorees use designated parking spaces for the entire month, receive a DSS lapel pin and announcements are sent to their local newspaper. Congratulations to all!



National Night Out in Jasper County

By Alicia Salters, Administrative Specialist III/ HR liaison, Jasper County

Jasper County participated in a "National Night Out" event with the Hardeeville Police Department on October 11, 2022. The first picture shows Priscilla Stevenson, Deborah Ferguson, and Jasper County Sheriff Donald Hipp. The second picture features Deborah Ferguson & Mildred Daniels. The third picture shows Priscilla Stevenson and Mildred Daniels. Jasper County DSS appreciates opportunities to connect with community partners who work alongside us in service to children and families.

A Great Career Awaits YOU at SCDSS!

The Department of Social Services currently has job openings for case managers and a variety of other positions.

[Click HERE](#) and [APPLY TODAY!](#)

Partner & Community Spotlights

Sumter County Receives Generous Donation

On Friday, October 21, 2022, Sumter County Received \$300 worth of McDonald's gift cards for our foster children. The gift cards were donated by a mother, Tamiila Green, and her son, Isaiah Green. Many thanks are extended to the Green Family for this thoughtful gift!



Oconee County Celebrates New Playground

By Stephanie Gentry, Oconee County Direct

Oconee DSS and Fostering Faithfully held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 9th, 2022, for the newly renovated playground at Oconee DSS. The playground includes a swing set, benches, and picnic tables for families to utilize while visiting with children.

The Oconee County Administrator provided the DHEC-grade mulch for the area. There are also outside toys and kickballs for children to play with. It is a great addition to the visitation rooms we currently have and it

allows children and families to enjoy time outside.



Donation to Help Foster Children

Tis the season for sharing with others and Richland DSS has been blessed beyond measure already this season. An insurance group from the Midlands reached out to Richland County Business Manager Christina Jones about a donation to aide foster children during the season of giving. A suggestion of large tote bags to hold the children's belongings was decided on and a shipment of 20 XXL bags arrived from an insurance group that wanted to remain anonymous.

"What a blessing it is to have such thoughtful neighbors who care about the foster children of South Carolina," Christina said. "The first donation rolls into two and then three once others begin realizing the

need and thankfulness of not only the children but the workers as well." Shown in the picture are Business Manager Christina Jones and Case Manager LaWanda Moorer who came to get a bag for a foster child's belongings.



Family Connection Parent Training and Information Center

Serving parents of children or youth with a disability, chronic health condition or behavioral health diagnosis.

Watch this [video](#) to learn more.

Making a Connection

DSS is thankful for all of our partner organizations supporting our children, youth, families and vulnerable adults. One of them is Family Connection of South Carolina. Since 1990, they have been serving families of children with disabilities and chronic health conditions. They have served more than 100,000 families and officials say today the need is greater than ever.

Family Connection is the Parent Training and Information Center for the state of South Carolina. They are the largest family-serving organization in our state, offering education, healthcare, parent support programs, and trainings to all 46 counties, at no cost to families. Click here to learn more.



Thankful for Thoughtful Donation

By Josie Jones, Spartanburg County Director

The Family and Friends Committee at New Trinity Baptist Church and surrounding community partners in Lyman, South Carolina raised funds for children in foster care at Spartanburg County DSS.

On Sunday, November 6th, 2022, Director Josie Jones attended New Trinity Baptist Church where they presented her with a \$2,000 check. Director Jones was able to provide words of gratitude on

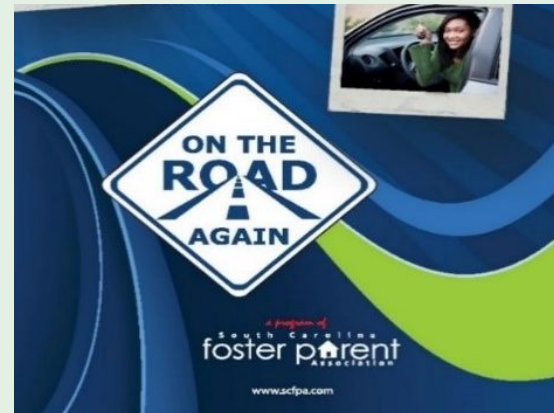
behalf of Spartanburg County DSS and the agency for this community's act of generosity. Director Jones also shared the need for foster parents and provided the congregation with information on how to become a foster parent.

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 button
to make an online
report of suspected
abuse and/or neglect,
now!**



Report Abuse

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



**Our offices will be closed
Thursday, November 24th and
Friday, November 25th
in observance of Thanksgiving.**

**Normal hours will resume on
Monday, November 28th.**

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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