

News and Updates from SCDSS | November 2025



Director's Angle
**Staying Compassionate,
Even When Fatigue Sets In**

By Tony Catone, DSS State Director

For many of us, the work we do is more than a job; it is a calling. When you have a passion for serving others, that service is rewarding, but it can also be demanding. Fatigue is a real thing. Whether we are helping a client, responding to a crisis, or managing day-to-day operations, the work can take a toll.

When fatigue sets in, it is easy to feel disconnected. Fatigue can involve feeling emotionally drained or detached, impatience, frustration, and a loss of motivation. These signs do not mean you have stopped caring; they mean you need care, too.

But even in those moments, compassion remains one of our most powerful tools. In our various forms of service, every interaction is an opportunity to build trust. A kind word, a patient explanation, or a moment of empathy can make a lasting impact — especially for someone who feels overwhelmed or unheard.

Even when we are tired, compassion helps us stay connected to the people and purpose behind our work. So, how do you stay compassionate when you are feeling drained?

Consider these ways to protect your energy and keep showing up with heart:

- Take micro-breaks. Step away for a few minutes to reset.
- Reconnect with your “why.” Remember the mission behind the task.
- Lean on your team. A quick check-in can lighten the load.
- Set healthy boundaries. You can be kind without overextending.
- Celebrate small wins. Every resolved issue or grateful smile counts.

Compassion is not just something we can give — it is something we can model. When we lead with empathy, even in tough moments, we create a culture where people feel seen, supported, and valued.

So, if you are feeling the weight of the work, take a breath. You are not alone — and your presence still matters.

SCDSS Celebrates Adoption Day



Dozens of forever families were made official on Monday, November 24th, as part of state Adoption Day. South Carolina Chief Justice John W. Kittridge authorized terms of Family Court for the finalization of public adoptions in Greenville, Sumter, Charleston, and Horry Counties on Adoption Day. The public adoptions of approximately 50 children were completed during the course of the day.

To see photos from Adoption Day, please visit or [social media](#).

Pictures are used with permission of the families.

DSS Recognizes National Adoption Month 2025

November is Adoption Month

Empower our youth by finding points of connection.

Providing opportunities and services that connect youth to their backgrounds is important to support meaningful permanent relationships.

DSS SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

In addition to Adoption Day, the month of November is recognized as National Adoption Month in South Carolina. As National Adoption Month began, 234 children in the state's foster care system were legally free with open adoption resources and waiting for a permanent place to call home – a forever family. Of those available for public adoption through DSS, 82% of those children are ages 6-18, and 18% are members of a sibling group. Older children and youth represent the agency's greatest need to provide permanency.

"All children should have a strong support system as they navigate through life," said Tony Catone, DSS State Director. "Public adoption is a way to build families and focus on children who are in foster care at no fault of their own. Providing a healthy and stable life is one step towards happiness and positive outcomes for the children we serve."

"Adoption Month serves as a reminder of the life-changing impact that a permanent family can have on a child's future," said Governor Henry McMaster. "Every child deserves a loving home, and as we recognize Adoption Day, we reflect on the importance of supporting the youth in our foster care system, ensuring they can build lasting bonds that enhance their well-being."

"The Judicial Branch is honored to participate in the final adoption hearings scheduled across the state during National Adoption Month," said Chief Justice John Kittridge. "Adoption is a profound act of love and commitment, bringing lasting stability and permanency to children and families. As Chief Justice, I am deeply proud that our family courts are able to play a part in these life-changing moments."

All year long, SCDSS works diligently with community partners to recruit and train families that best match the unique needs of every child awaiting adoption. November offers the chance to join the United States Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau's efforts to increase awareness and bring attention to the need for permanent families for children and youth in foster care.

For individuals interested in learning more about public adoption through DSS, here are the key steps in becoming a forever family for a child or teenager:

- Visit <https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/adoption/> to learn the steps to becoming an adoptive parent.
- Attend training to help identify what makes your family the best fit for a waiting young person.
- Complete background and FBI 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 [SCDSS Adoptions](#), 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 as the DSS Text to Connect system puts a full range of service options in the hands of users.

ECONOMIC SERVICES

Family Assistance | Early Care & Education | Employment Services

SNAP Disbursement

as of 2:00pm, Thursday, November 13

Based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Thursday, November 13th, SCDSS will issue full SNAP benefits for the month of November 2025 to approved and qualified households.

SNAP benefits for November 2025 will be available on EBT cards on Friday, November 14th for the following groups:

- a) Newly approved SNAP households whose benefits were authorized between October 16th and November 13th.
- b) SNAP households with a monthly issuance date between the 1st and the 14th.

SNAP households whose monthly issuance date falls between the 15th and the 19th will receive their November benefit on their regularly scheduled issuance date.



DSS Issues November Food Assistance Benefits

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) has issued full Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for the month of November. On November 12, 2025, President Donald J. Trump signed into law the Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026 ("FY26 Appropriations Act") that provides funding for the SNAP program, including November 2025 benefits, through the current federal fiscal year ending on September 30, 2026.

Based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Thursday, November 13th, SCDSS began issuing full SNAP benefits for the month of November 2025 to approved and qualified households. SNAP households are encouraged to proactively protect their SNAP benefits by [locking their EBT cards when not in use](#), change PIN numbers frequently, and turn off the ability to use EBT cards for out-of-state purchases. SNAP fraud reminders can be found [here](#). SCDSS continues to have no mechanism or funding to replace EBT benefits that are electronically stolen, [as already announced by the agency on December 20, 2024](#).

ATTENTION



Tips to Protect SNAP Benefits:

SNAP EBT cardholders can select to Lock/Unlock their SNAP EBT card for specific purchases as well as send SNAP EBT Alert messages to their email or cell phone. All new functionality can be accessed via the *South Carolina EBT Cardholder Portal* or the *Connect EBT* mobile app.

This is the *only* official app recommended by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and can be found in the app store for Android and iPhones.

The South Carolina EBT Cardholder Portal can be accessed via the following URL:
www.connectebt.com.



ATTENTION



The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recommends the following activities to help protect your EBT card and EBT benefits:

- **Spot card skimmers.** Before you swipe your EBT — or any — card, pay attention to the card reader. Is it loose, off-center, or do parts of it wiggle? Then don't put your card there. Report it to the store manager and consider shopping elsewhere.
- **Change your PIN often.** Change your EBT PIN at least once a month, right before you get your next benefits.
- **Watch for phishing.** State agencies and EBT processors will never call or text you to ask for your PIN or card number. Anyone who does is a scammer.
- **Check your EBT account regularly for unauthorized charges.** If you see any, change your PIN right away to stop the thief from making new purchases — and contact your local SNAP office.



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



CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

**Infant Safely Surrendered in
Spartanburg County Under Safe Haven Act**



Officials with the Spartanburg Regional Health System in Spartanburg County recently accepted an infant safely surrendered under Daniel's Law, the state's Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies Act, on Thursday, November 6, 2025.

The white baby boy was born on November 4, 2025, at the hospital, and weighed 4 pounds, 1 ounce, and was 16.1 inches long at the time of birth.

The infant was safely surrendered at the Spartanburg Regional Health System in Spartanburg County. Under the Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies Act, Spartanburg County DSS took custody of the child, a medical evaluation was completed, and the infant will remain in the hospital to receive additional medical care. A Permanency Planning Hearing and Termination of Parental Rights Hearing will be held on December 18 at 10:00 a.m. at the Spartanburg County Family Court, located at 180 Magnolia Street, Spartanburg, S.C. Persons who believe they have parental rights to this child are required to attend the hearing to assert those rights.

The Department of Social Services has made a dedicated page on the agency's website regarding Daniel's Law in South Carolina with current data. **This is the sixth Daniel's Law baby** surrendered in South Carolina during the [2025 calendar year](#).

A safe abandonment such as this is a perfect time to remind the public that the SC Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies Act provides a safe, legal option to surrender an infant up to 60 days old. For more information about the Safe Haven Act, known as Daniel's Law in South Carolina, please click [here](#). For a listing of crisis pregnancy organizations, please see this [brochure](#).



Lowcountry 2025 Family of the Year Honored

The Lowcountry Permanency Office celebrated their 2025 Family of the Year with a luncheon at the Myrtle Beach Train Depot on Monday, November 10th. Councilman Larry White presented a proclamation on behalf of the mayor to the Nesmith family.

The Lowcountry Permanency Office would like to thank the following sponsors: The Spice is Right (catering), Coccadotts Cake Shop, Charleston Engravers, Legacy Theatre, Ripley's Aquarium, Dave and Busters, Sky Wheel, WonderWorks, and the Myrtle Beach Pelicans.

The picture is used with written permission from the family.



NEED HELP FINDING CHILD CARE?

[SCChildcare.org](https://www.sccildcare.org)



SC Child Care
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

Study Shows Economic Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect is \$74 Billion Per Year in SC

Tony Catone, DSS State Director, along with local leaders, gathered at the State House for a press conference on Wednesday, November 20th. They addressed the newly released study, commissioned by Children's Trust of South Carolina, on the economic impact of child abuse and neglect. The study by the [Darla Moore School of Business](#) at the University of South Carolina estimates South Carolina faces \$74.2 billion in economic losses every year due to childhood abuse and neglect. Learn more about the cause and the long-term impact [here](#).



ABC Quality and Child Care Heroes Recognized

For the next several months, ABC Quality will be featured on various news stations across South Carolina to discuss important topics impacting child care. These stations are also recognizing Child Care Heroes who make a difference every day.



In November, ABC Quality and SC Endeavors staff, parents, and child care directors discussed the impact of the child care staffing shortage and how DSS is working to strengthen the child care workforce in South Carolina.

In addition to program spotlights, ABC Quality partnered with news stations to recognize outstanding early childhood educators as ABC Quality Child Care Heroes. These individuals are being honored for their dedication, compassion, and commitment to nurturing young learners.

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](#)

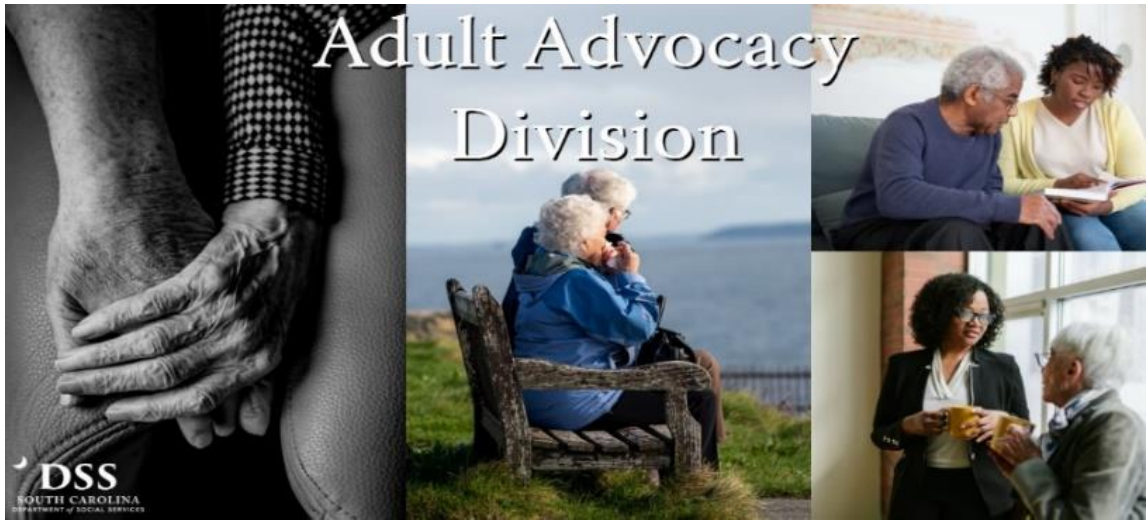
[Job Fair Announcements &
Employment Tools](#)

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!



Adult Advocacy Division

DSS
SOUTH CAROLINA
Department of Social Services

2025 National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA)

The Adult Advocacy leadership team recently attended the 2025 National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) conference in Bellevue, Washington. This inclusive event brings together Adult Protective Services professionals and allied experts from diverse fields to share insights, learn together, and build meaningful connections.



This year's theme was "Building Partnerships, Inspiring Innovation". This theme focuses on fostering collaboration and exploring new ideas within the field of Adult Protective Services.

While there, the team had the opportunity to visit Seattle, Washington, and stop by the infamous Space Needle. Shown in the picture are Kelly Cordell, Elexias Cotton, Selina Salley, Brandi Nerud, Emma Belcher, and Kendra Kuehn, Policy Analyst – NAPSA.



APS ComPASS Navigator Award Winner

The APS ComPASS Navigator Award recognizes Adult Protective Service professionals who embrace the ComPASS practice model values, guiding principles, and skills in their work. These are individuals who can articulate the model and apply the principles and skills when working with vulnerable adults in the APS system. The ComPASS Navigator Award winner for the month of October is Archana Singh, case manager in Barnwell County.

Ms. Archana consistently honors the adults' right to self-determination by evidence of meeting with her adults, asking their wishes, and advocating on their behalf while focusing on their well-being and taking into consideration the adults' needs, strengths, goals, culture, family, and values. When asked what Archana enjoys most about working with vulnerable adults, she answered, "Being there for them, listening to their needs, and helping them get the support and resources they need. It makes me happy to see them feel safe, cared for, and respected. I enjoy building trust and positive relationships with them".



THE APS ComPASS MODEL

Community focused Preservation of Adults' Safety and Self-determination

Navigating a path towards well-being and dignity

APS Value Statement

Every action taken by APS must balance the safety of the vulnerable adult with the adult's right to self-determination.

APS Guiding Principles

- Safety
- Well-being
- Adult-centered
- Self-determination
- Community
- Dignity

APS Practice Model Skills

- Engaging
- Assessing
- Adapting
- Partnering
- Planning
- Empowering
- Advocating



South Carolina Department of Social Services
Adult Advocacy Division



BECOME AN ADVOCATE FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS

TEXT "DSS"
TO 211-211



This project is made possible by support from Duke Energy.



SCDSS Agency News

63rd Annual Alston Wilkes Society Meeting and Awards Luncheon

On Thursday, November 20th, Christie Hillers was recognized as the Alston Wilkes Society Case Manager of the Year. She received the award during the 63rd Annual Meeting and Awards luncheon at Seawell's in Columbia. Congratulations to Christie Hillers, Child Care Licensing Specialist for the Pee Dee region!



DSS Recognized October Employees of the Month

On Thursday, October 30th, seven DSS professionals were recognized by DSS State Director Tony Catone as agency Employees of the Month for October 2025 (bottom left). And on Wednesday, November 19th, DSS State Director Tony Catone recognized November Employees of the Month (bottom right).

Honorees are selected by their program area leadership for the Employee of the Month program and enjoy lunch with Tony Catone, DSS State Director, along with other attendees. Honorees were able to enjoy the use of a dedicated parking space during the month, a photo and write-up displayed at the State Office, and a write-up sent to their community newspaper. Congratulations!



Community & Partner Shoutouts



DSS Leaders Participate in Man 2 Man Fatherhood Event

On Thursday, November 13, 2025, Tony Catone, DSS State Director, along with several other DSS leaders, attended the Man 2 Man Fatherhood Initiative event in Florence, South Carolina. Man 2 Man helps fathers and young men learn how to be positive, present, and consistent in the lives of their children.

The organization addresses the effects of absent fathers leads to building stronger families. They do this through providing classes, connecting them with resources and jobs, helping fathers navigate the child support system, and much more.

The event was also a celebration of 25 years of service to the community in the PeeDee region.

Calhoun County Community Event

On Friday, November 14, 2025, Kimberly Glover, Calhoun County Team Lead, attended a community resource event at Calhoun County K-8 School. In addition to DSS, Calhoun County School Districts attended, along with Mental Health, CASA Family Systems, First Steps, and a host of other community agencies. The event was a success, as children who attended were able to learn about DSS services. Community

involvement has been instrumental in Calhoun County DSS having 0% children in foster care and 0% repeat maltreatments for nearly three years.



Chesterfield County National Night Out

On October 21, 2025, Chesterfield County DSS participated in National Night Out-Jefferson. It was hosted by the Chesterfield County Sheriff's Department. This annual community-building campaign promotes police-community partnerships and helps to build a stronger and safer community. Families came out to enjoy free food, a gaming truck, emergency vehicles, law enforcement personnel, information booths from community partners, music/live DJ, free giveaways, and more.



In the picture above are Tumeka Fair Watson, Chesterfield Co. Director; Shekita Sinclair Covington, Family Preservation Team Lead; Sa'Nyah Nivens, Family Pres. Case Manager; and Monique Chambers, Family Pres. Case Manager.

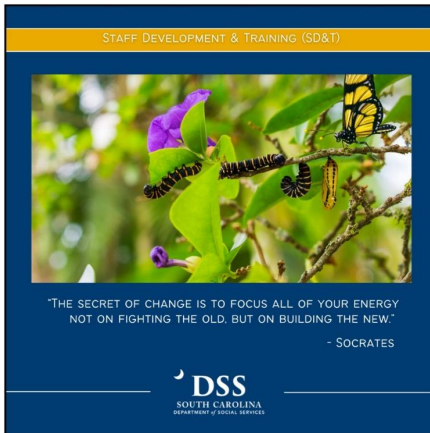
Newberry County Community Engagement

Newberry County DSS continues to network and collaborate with county community organizations! We participated with Westview Behavioral Health's community baby shower on October 25, 2025.

In addition to setting up a vendor table, we were given the opportunity to discuss SNAP and TANF benefits with existing clients and new/potential clients. Valuable resource information was also given. Participants as well as the organizers were appreciative of DSS being in attendance!



They had a great time and look forward to attending future community events. Pictured from left to right are Tené Greenwood and Michelle “Jenna” Perez.



New i3 Podcast: Navigating Transitions

DSS makes podcasts available [on the DSS website](#) for professionals seeking to enhance their 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.

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.*

SC Department of Social Services

P.O. Box 1520

Columbia, SC 29202-1520

www.DSS.sc.gov

