

Facts



May is National
Foster Care Month!

Foster Care as a support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents.

With over 423,000 children and youth in foster care, it's time to focus on how child welfare systems—especially in partnership with the legal and judicial community—can support and strengthen families, prevent disruption, and promote reunification. As a Department, we could not begin to address the multiplicity and complexity of challenges present in meeting their individual needs without dedicated foster parents. As a foster parent, you are a vital member of this team. Foster care is meant to be a temporary living situation for a child. Your role in providing a temporary home for children in care and working in partnership with birth parents while serving as parenting mentors, when appropriate, is of the utmost importance.

THANK

you!

Every day you “step to the plate” and provide stability and a sense of normalcy to children in need; undoubtedly, making sacrifices in your personal lives to enhance the lives of others. Thank you for enduring and persevering through all of the obstacles you encounter as a foster parent. Thank you for answering that phone call and having the courage to welcome someone into your home with little to no knowledge of who they are or what impact they will make. Thank you for all you do to keep children safe, support parents, and help families stay connected. Although foster care is meant to be temporary, your impact in the life of a child in foster care is significant and lifelong.

Mourning the Loss of Carl Brown: A Lasting Legacy

“The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) is saddened to hear of the passing of Carl Brown. Carl, as a leader of the South Carolina Foster Parent Association, dedicated his life to bettering the lives of South Carolina’s foster children. He opened not only his heart, but also his home to welcoming those who needed support the most. He was a champion to the cause we hold so dear. His decades of dedication made a difference in the lives of countless children and is a lasting legacy we should all aspire to reach. We share our heartfelt condolences with his wife, Mary, and the many of lives he touched through his work.” -DSS State Director Michael Leach



Mr. Malachi “Carl” Brown, Jr.
April 2, 1939 - February 26, 2021



Mr. Brown was a fierce advocate for foster parents and children in South Carolina for over forty-five years, founding the South Carolina Foster Parent Association in 1975, serving as Executive Director since its inception; and working with foster families throughout the state to ensure foster parents had local representation and support through establishing local FPAs for each county. Mr. Brown served in many other leadership capacities, including National Foster Parent Association President and International Foster Parent Association Vice-President. He received numerous awards and honors through the years, including the

Order of the Palmetto, but his family and friends were his greatest treasure.

To read more about Carl Brown's service to South Carolina's foster children, please click [here](#) to read a recent Post and Courier article on his lifetime of service.



Leaders Show Solidarity in Addressing Child Abuse and Neglect

Gov. Henry McMaster has designated April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. On April 6th, he was joined by DSS State Director Michael Leach, Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, and other child-serving organizations and agencies for a ceremony at Riverfront Park in Columbia, S.C. State Child Advocate Amanda Whittle and Children's Trust CEO Sue Williams also spoke.

"South Carolina's most precious resources are its children," said Governor McMaster. "Bringing awareness to the harsh realities of child abuse and educating ourselves on the signs of abuse is a critical step towards ensuring a safe and bright future for our children." What happens in childhood can last a lifetime. Research shows that adversity in a child's life can have long-lasting negative health and social effects into adulthood. Happy, healthy children have better odds of becoming thriving, productive adults.

"Now more than ever, South Carolina families need us – organizations, governmental agencies, businesses, communities, neighborhoods, faith-based groups, and individuals – to join together," S.C. Department of Social Services State Director Michael Leach said. "When we support families where they are in life, our communities become stronger and more resilient, and children grow up healthy, nurtured and safe."

"As a mother, it breaks my heart to hear of children who suffer any form of abuse. I am so thankful for those who are working to prevent child abuse in our state and around the world. We must do our part to raise awareness and provide support to everyone on the frontlines of this serious issue," said S.C. Lt. Governor Pamela Evette.

Amanda Whittle, S.C. State Child Advocate and Director of the Department of Children's Advocacy remarked, "Now is the time for all South Carolinians to work together to strengthen families. Child abuse prevention is critically important to the future of our state. When we raise awareness about protective factors and provide services that promote resiliency, we improve outcomes for children."

Sue Williams, CEO of Children's Trust, applauded these partners for participating in Child Abuse Prevention Month. "As South Carolina strives to give every child the opportunity to grow up in supportive environments, we know how important it is to all work together," Williams said. "There is no single public agency, community organization, or individual that can ensure success for our children. Together we can grow a better tomorrow for our state." You can read more about Child Abuse Prevention Month here.

[See the Governor's Proclamation declaring April 2021 as Child Abuse Prevention Month](#)



SCDSS Director Leach speaks to media
Source: Children's Trust of SC





Social Worker of the Month

Congratulations! Shanetta Kirkland with Sumter County DSS was recognized as SC Foster Parent Association's Social Worker of the Month for March 2021. From one family, "Shanetta is AWESOME! She has been our worker for almost 3 years. If we need anything she is right there. She truly advocates for our kids and does it with a smile on her face and love in her heart. It is our privilege to see her recognized as caseworker of the month." Others had this to say, "Shanetta works harder than anyone I know, but she always makes us feel like we are a priority." And, "If every caseworker was like Shanetta, we would always have everything we need for all the kiddos who come through our home!"



Shanetta Kirkland, March 2021

Who should be next month's Social Worker of the Month?



Thank you to Shanetta and to all social workers for giving your all daily to enhance the lives of others! SCFPA wants to recognize workers who are making a difference in the lives of children and families they serve. Each worker selected will

receive a \$100 gift card and a Certificate of Recognition. Send worker name, contact information and reasons for nomination to Mary Brown at maryscfpa@aol.com

Adoption: Children Deserve Forever Families.

In South Carolina, we have hundreds of children waiting to be adopted. Many of whom are older youth and sibling groups. A child, or children, in South Carolina may be waiting for you to be their forever family.



You can view a gallery of waiting children at the [DSS Adoption webpage](#), or by visiting the [Heart Gallery](#) or [Adopt US Kids](#). The DSS adoption page features all children in South Carolina with the plan of Adoption, who do not have an identified forever home. The Heart Gallery page features South Carolina's [legally-free](#) children.



Adopt US Kids is the nation's only federally funded photo listing service that connects waiting children and families. Children from all over the nation are featured on this page.

Adoption Inquiries on Waiting Children

By Brittany Brewer, Adoption Supervisor State Office

To help improve communication between prospective adoptive families and the agency, the State Office Adoptions implemented the Centralized Recruitment program on November 1, 2019. All inquiries on waiting children go to a centralized location at State Office Adoptions where they are reviewed for a potential match with children in DSS care who have the permanency plan of adoption and do not have an identified resource. State Office Adoptions implemented a strict response deadline with having to respond to the family acknowledging receipt of the inquiry within three business days of receipt and also review the adoption inquiry for a potential match within two weeks.

Since implementing this new process, State Office Adoptions has received more than 2,400 inquiries! This new system has received positive feedback from prospective adoptive families and the adoption offices in the

regions. One potential adoptive family provided the following feedback, “Brittany, even though (the child) isn’t a match, I just wanted to thank you for at least getting back to me. All the inquiries I’ve made from other states just leave us wondering forever. You’ve not only been one that has gotten back to me, but you also responded through the process in a way that didn’t make us feel like we were bothersome. So, thank you, I know your workload is full.”



Kinship Care in South Carolina: Kinship Care Means Keeping Family Connections

Kinship care is often an arrangement in which a relative or other adult known to the family takes a child to raise so that they will not enter foster care, often with adults that are not familiar to them. Kinship care is often the most widely used out of home placement. In South Carolina, 69,000 children were in kinship care placements between 2018-2020 (KIDS COUNT data).

Kinship caregivers are the first option for children involved in child welfare cases, however, with the added complexity of child welfare system involvement, financial stress and multigenerational loyalty binds, these families deserve assistance from professionals trained to meet their unique needs.

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), enacted as part of P.L. 115-123, amended the Social Security Act (the Act) to allow title IV-E agencies (Child Welfare) to receive funding for kinship navigator programs. The Consolidates Appropriations Act, 2021 enacts temporary flexibilities for kinship navigation services during the COVID-19 public health emergency period from April 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

What’s Coming Soon? Direct financial assistance will be available in the future for eligible kinship caregivers who are raising children in the state of South Carolina. As we continue to promote a Kin-First culture in the State of South Carolina, this opportunity is available to support the placement stability of children who must remain with kinship caregivers. It is important that kinship caregivers have the information and resources to allow kinship families to function at their full potential, including the following:

- Those who are at risk of contracting COVID-19 have access to information and resources for necessities, including food, safety supplies, and testing and treatment for COVID-19.
- Access to technology and technological supports needed for remote learning or other activities that must be carried out virtually due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Health care and other assistance, including legal assistance and assistance with making alternative care plans for the children in their care if the caregivers were to become unable to continue caring for the children.
- Services to kinship families, including kinship families raising children outside of the foster care system.
- Assistance to allow children to continue safely living with kin.

More information on how to access these funds will be provided by our Kinship Team soon.

See SC information and resources and services for caregivers and children they are raising [here](#) and [here](#).

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. 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.

A NEW LAW has passed that provides funding to give current and former youth in foster care Help on Your Terms during this pandemic.

Contact: IndependentLiving@dss.sc.gov



See information on services, resources, manuals, and policies that ensures opportunities are available for youth to learn independent living skills necessary to become self-reliant [here](#).

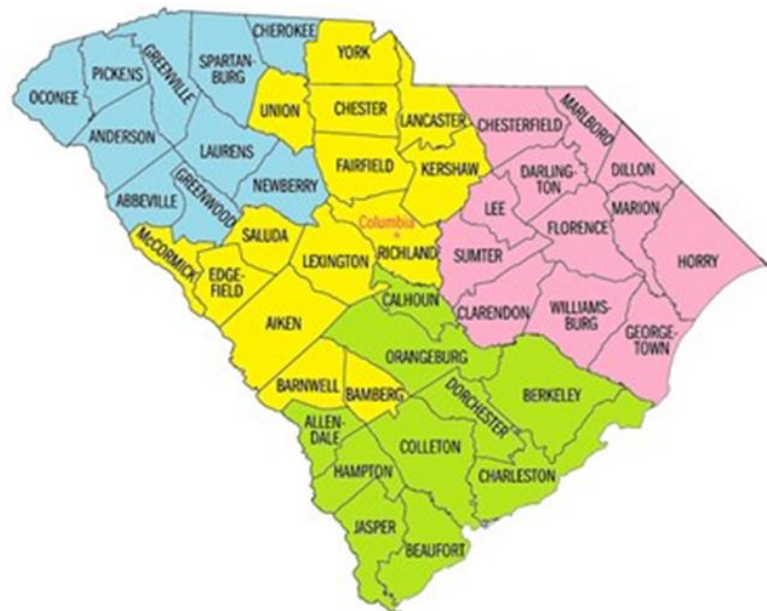
Who is Eligible for Chafee and ETV Funds? How to Apply for Chafee Program Funding? Available Funded Services? Services Available through ETV Funds? How to Apply for ETV Funding?

[Pathways to Success Chafee and ETV Program Booklet](#)

Placement Process: How do we identify placements for children and youth entering Foster Care?

When a child enters Foster Care or there is a reason to believe that a child will be entering foster care, DSS County Staff will notify the Foster Family and Licensing Support Placement Unit. The requesting DSS County Staff at a minimum must be able to provide the following information (if known):

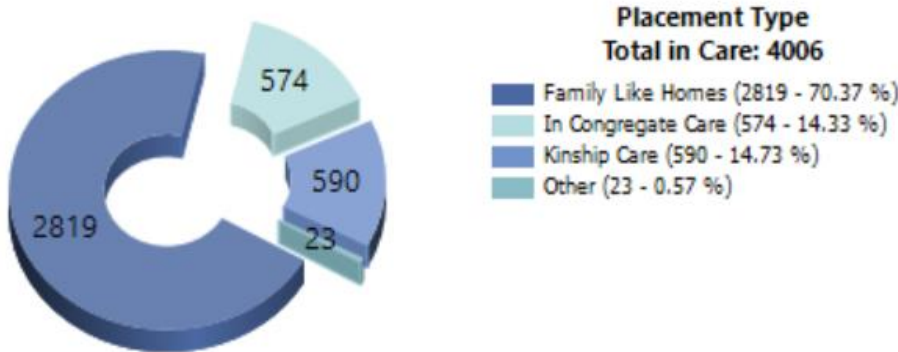
- Child's full name and date of birth
- Reason for entering foster care
- Are any of the child's family members / siblings in foster care?
- Does the child have any special needs or life-threatening conditions, including allergies?
- Is the child on any current medication?
- Does the child have DJJ involvement?
- Does the child have a Mental Health Diagnosis?



The requesting DSS County Staff must also provide a Placement Exception Form that shows diligent efforts to place the child/children with kin or fictive kin. DSS defines kin as anyone related to a child by blood, marriage, or adoption. Fictive kin is described as anyone with a significant relationship with the child. This could be a coach, pastor, teacher, or family friend, for example.

Once it has been established that no appropriate kin or fictive kin could be identified, the Foster Family and Licensing Support Placement Unit begins diligently working to locate a "Best Fit Placement" for the foster child. Priority is given to preserving sibling connections for children and youth entering foster care. Keeping in mind that siblings being placed together is a priority, placement staff begins searching for a placement:

- 1) Within the foster child's county of origin
- 2) The bordering county
- 3) The entire region
- 4) The entire state



DSS now has more children and youth placed in kinship care than in congregate care settings. Placement staff are utilizing the foster homes currently managed by the agency, while simultaneously working with Private Providers that also manage licensed foster homes.

If it appears that the child may need a higher level of care, the Placement Staff

works with the Wellbeing Team to establish the correct Level of Care that best meets the needs of the child. If the child is approved for Therapeutic Foster Care, the Placement Staff contacts the Private Providers for a Therapeutic Foster Parent. The Private Agency begins searching for a placement utilizing their pool of foster parents that are experienced with providing the specialized care that the child requires. The Providers are also attempting to place the children in the same order used by Foster Family Support Placement Unit:

- 1) Within the foster child's county of origin
- 2) The bordering county
- 3) The entire region
- 4) The entire state



Once placement has been secured, Foster Family and Licensing Support Placement Unit notify the requesting County Staff of the contact information and any details needed for the placement. The County Staff are expected to reach out to the Foster Parent immediately and communicate any additional information.

If ABC Vouchers are needed for childcare and this information is shared at the time of placement, the Foster Family and Licensing Support Placement Staff forwards the Contact Information and Name of the Daycare to our ABC Childcare Department. The ABC Childcare Department Staff contact the Foster Parent directly to request any additional information needed to process the request.

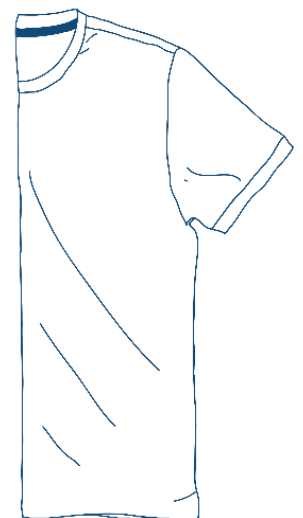
The Foster Family Licensing and Support staff are then responsible for any ongoing contact with the family. Staff will make contact for updates on placement and for any needs of the child and family. With regular contact and communication, the DSS staff will work together for the best interest of the children in South Carolina.

Clothing Allowances

All clothing allowances (initial and quarterly) are now issued through DSS's internal system, Child and Adult Protective Services System (CAPSS). This process will ensure the timely issuance of initial and quarterly allowances to eligible foster care providers.

Initial Clothing Allowance The initial clothing allowance in the amount of \$100 will be issued for any child that remains in foster care four days after entry. The payment is now being issued by staff in State Office and no longer by the county office staff. The payment will be issued to the foster parent that has the child on the fourth day of their entry into foster care.

Quarterly Clothing Allowance A quarterly clothing allowance in the amount of \$100 will be issued based on the following criteria: The child was in a licensed or provisionally licensed foster care placement the last day of the previous quarter and the child is in a licensed or provisionally licensed foster care placement as of the clothing allowance run date. All quarterly allowances are deposited at the same time as the board payment.



DSS Payment Methods

DSS ePay Debit Card

DSS ePay debit cards are automatically issued to foster parents the month after the first payment is to be received (foster care board payment, clothing allowance and/or supplemental payment, if applicable).

If the initial DSS ePay debit card has not been received by the 16th of the month or has been misplaced or stolen, the primary foster parent should call 1-855-270-4445 to request replacement card. If a DSS ePay debit card is not the preferred method of payment, the foster parent should follow the steps below for direct deposit.

Direct Deposit

If direct deposit is chosen, the foster parent will need to complete the direct deposit form (DSS Form 1105). Email the completed form along with a copy of a voided check to Anthony.Brown@dss.sc.gov or Jasmine.Dubose@dss.sc.gov. Be sure to place the word 'encrypt' in the subject line of the email.

Training Announcements

As partners in the agency's mission to provide for the safety and wellbeing of children in foster care, foster parents must possess the necessary knowledge and skills to do so.

The Child and Adult Information Portal Training for Foster Parents is available [here](#)!

As a reminder, this platform will allow South Carolina foster parents and providers (including group home designated staff) access to information on foster children in their care. All foster parents and providers will receive a secure username and password from DSS. Foster parents can access information about the children in their care using a smartphone, tablet, desktop or laptop computer. With the username and password, foster parents and providers will be able to log in to a secure website to instantly view and update important information about the children in their care, such as:

- Previous school records
- Special education and 504 accommodation information
- Behavioral plans
- Educational meeting details
 - Awards and achievements
- Medical appointments and medications
- Visitation and maintaining connections
- ...and much more!

The American Red Cross offers a variety of virtual programs to help adults and children better prepare for emergencies. Free presentations are offered by the regional Red Cross Preparedness Team and Red Cross Clubs via Microsoft Teams. You can find the Virtual Emergency Preparedness Programs [here](#).



Training Opportunities

- [Family Connections](#)
- [National Foster Parent Assoc](#)
- [USC Children's Law Center](#)
- [SC JCCA](#)
- [Tips for Child Care Institute](#)
- [ACEs](#)
- [Sharpen Minds APP](#)
- [Foster Parent College](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

Child Abuse & Neglect in SC



Open Investigations: 4,711
 Family Preservation Services: 6,713
 Children in Foster Care: 4,006

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

It is important to recognize high-risk situations and the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment. Reporting your concerns is not making an accusation, rather, it is a request for an investigation and assessment to determine if help is needed.

To make a report of abuse or neglect, call the SCDSS 24-hour Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-888-CARE4US or submit your report online by clicking [HERE](#).

According to the Child Welfare Information Gateway – the federal information service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – the following signs may signal the presence of the four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse.

Find more information on signs of abuse and/or neglect as well as signs exhibited by child/ren and parent/s [here](#).

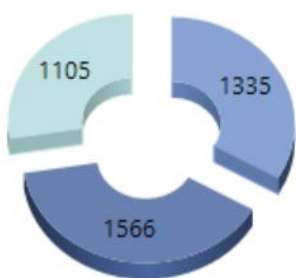
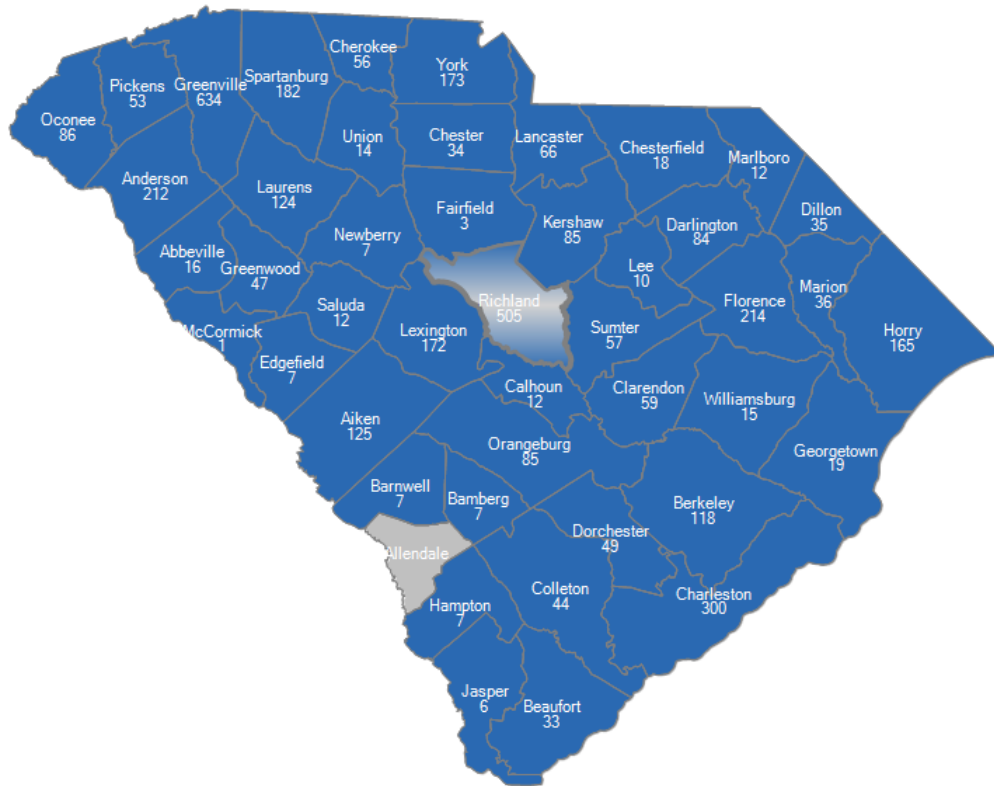
Children and Adolescents in Foster Care in South Carolina

Currently in South Carolina, there are 4,006 children and adolescents in Foster Care. The Foster Care dashboard provides the demographic information of children and adolescents receiving foster care services across the state with the ability to drill down by counties.

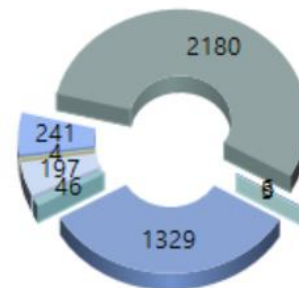
The illustration to the right represents the number of children currently in foster care in each county.

The graphs below represent foster care services for children by race and age range.

You can view the Foster Care Dashboard [here](#).



Age Range (in Years)
 Total in Care: 4006



Race
 Total in Care: 4006

Partnerships in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM)

What is a Child and Family Team (CFT)? A group of family members, fictive kin, friends, professionals, and other invested stakeholders who join to strengthen a family and provide protection and a Family Permanency Plan for the child or youth to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being. The family chooses the members of the team. The team also includes the child or youth when developmentally appropriate.



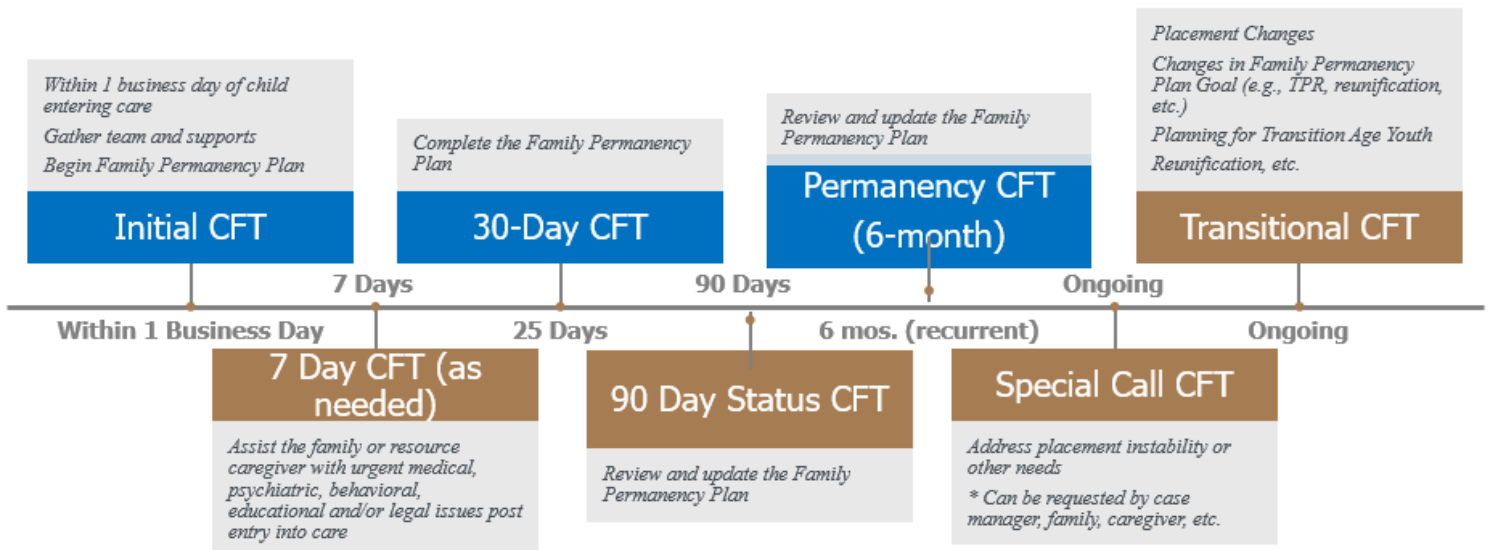
What is a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM)? Child and Family Team Meetings occur when the Child and Family Team members are brought together to a common table, where they discuss goals, identify strengths, and assess progress to make decisions about the safety, permanency, and well-being of their children or youth in the development of an individualized Family Permanency Plan. CFTMs are planned so that meaningful participation by all members is possible, including virtual attendance for those that cannot attend in person and scheduling interpreter services, if interpreter services are needed.

What is a Family Permanency Plan? The sole collaborative plan that describes the reasons for the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) involvement, the actions and services required to change behaviors, and the strategies to reduce safety concerns and risks that promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child or youth and family.

Family teaming creates opportunities to bring families, their supports, and the professionals involved together: Ensuring that all children or youth, families, and their support systems have a voice in the decision-making process throughout the life of their case. The CFTM provides a forum to create and sustain working teams with families, their support system, and professionals who share a common purpose, unity in an effort, and a demonstrated effectiveness in problem-solving towards safe case closure.

Child & Family Teaming Foster Care Timeline

(Blue is facilitated by FES Facilitator; Brown is facilitated by Case Manager - Facilitator Optional)



Pandemic EBT Benefits

The first installment of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits for the 2020-21 school year was mailed in April. P-EBT is an optional federal program designed to provide food benefits to children who have temporarily lost access to free and reduced-price meals at school due to school closures triggered by COVID-19. For the 2020-21 school year, eligible children will receive P-EBT benefits **based on the number of days they attend school virtually each month.**

P-EBT benefits for the 2020-21 school year will be issued in four different installments between April 2021 and July 2021. All benefits will be issued on the same P-EBT card. Once the P-EBT card is issued, foster parents should hold on to the card and ensure that the card follows the child. **If the foster child moves to a new placement or returns home, the card must go with the child.**

Click [HERE](#) to view the Frequently Asked Questions document containing additional information about P-EBT benefits. You can also reach out to us on the Foster Parent Helpline at 803-898-4174 or by emailing us at FPHelp@dss.sc.gov with additional questions.