

A Message from the Heart to South Carolina Foster and Kinship Families



First, let me say thank you for sharing your love, hope, faith and positive energy in the life of a child or youth. You put yourself second and our children and youth first because you have unconditional love to share. Thank you for always being ready to extend your arms to embrace our children and youth whose hearts are hurting and need healing. We need more foster families like you in South Carolina and foster parents are the best recruiters! We need foster families for children and youth of all ages, but we have an urgent need for our tweens, teens, sibling groups

as well as children and youth with medically complex needs. Please consider sharing the need on social media, with your church, neighborhood, and any other community groups. Choosing to be a foster parent is a life changing decision, it's not always easy but it's always going to be worth it. Thank you for saying, "YES!"

With a grateful heart,

Dawn Barton, Director
SCDSS Permanency Management



A Message from SCDSS State Director Michael Leach

"I called 52 foster homes today and 15 child placement agencies. It feels like I called everyone. All said, no. Please, can you take her in? She did not ask to come into foster care. We have nowhere to place her."

This scenario is happening in South Carolina and everywhere around the country. More and more teenagers in South Carolina are coming into foster care. The stress and anxiety of schooling, the pandemic, economic instability, social stress and caregiver stress are all risk factors contributing to the increase. More large sibling groups and medically fragile children who need consistent medical care are coming into foster care. No placements are available due to staffing shortages of group care providers or foster parents who choose to restrict their home to only younger children. These children and youth need someone to love, support and minister to them for the short time they are in foster care. They are most likely going back home to their own family, but for a time, sometimes longer than shorter, they need you.

Some foster parents may have a preference for infants and small children with an eye towards the opportunity to potentially adopt and raise a young child if reunification efforts fail, but the urgent need right now in South Carolina is different. While adoption of a young child may be in your future, perhaps right now you are the person who has been prepared for such a time as this to help provide a caring, stable home environment to a teenager who desperately needs security. Will you answer the call?



If you are a current, licensed foster parent in South Carolina, please call your child placing agency or the [Department of Social Services](#) and say, **“I’m the one you can call when others say no.”** Call the Department of Social Services and say, **“Call me when this happens. I am willing to answer this calling and change a life.”**



Foster Parent Shout Out

“Mr. Gregory has been a great resource and foster parent for teenage boys and youth in foster care. He has been fostering for since 2014 and has had over 175 children in his home. He is always willing to help our teens that needs a home or even just a bed to sleep in for a few nights. Mr. Gregory goes above and beyond to make sure the boys in his home have everything they need. He also works hard to prepare these young men to have a successful future as they grow up and move into adulthood. We are very grateful to have Mr. Gregory as a foster parent and appreciate all the help and support he provides for the Department.”



Live webinars and pre-recorded webinars are offered by [SCFPA](#) on the [SCFPALMS](#) website. On the website you will be able to find a list of trainings that are available free of charge. Please take time, if you have not already, to go to this website and explore the different training opportunities for Foster Parents. We hope that by providing you with resources to help our Foster Parent community, we will continue to grow stronger for our children and youth. Thank you for all that you do to impact the lives South Carolina’s most vulnerable.

➔ Subscribe to the [SCFPA's mailing list](#) for training announcements and more.

➔ To register for live webinars through SCFPALMS, email the trainer listed on the website or in the weekly email notice. There is also information in the SCFPA's weekly announcements about web trainings offered by other agencies.

➔ To access pre-recorded trainings, go online to [SCFPALMS](#). Each person must create their own account. The system will only issue one training certificate per account per course, so each partner must have their own separate account and complete their own work.

- ❖ **As of January 2022, there are 6,029 active users on SCFPALMS**
- ❖ **There are currently 68 training topics available**
- ❖ **11,375 certificates were awarded for trainings through SCFPALMS in 2021.**

If you are a new Foster Parent, it can all be a bit overwhelming. We would like to encourage you to join your local [Foster Parent Association](#). These groups are a wonderful resource to help you navigate this journey. There are many benefits to joining a Foster Parent Association. Associations can help you become part of a support network, provide training resources and tools, answer many frequently asked questions, provide points of contact and so much more. The old saying, "It takes a village" could not ring more true than in the Foster Care community!



COVID-19 Vaccine Updates and Face Mask Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) issued updated recommendations related to COVID-19 vaccines for children, ages 12-17. Please review the below guidance and position as it relates to children and youth in foster care. The CDC and DHEC recommendations change frequently and DSS will update our guidance as new recommendations are released. We appreciate your patience and flexibility as we continue to monitor and navigate COVID-19. Thank you for all you do each day!

Updated mRNA COVID-19 Booster Recommendations

On January 5, 2022, for the prevention of severe illness and death from COVID-19, the CDC recommended the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine booster for children 12-17 years old at least five (5) months after children finish the first vaccination series. DHEC supports this recommendation and is now making the Pfizer COVID-9 vaccine booster available to children ages 12-17 years.



COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Youth age 5 and older

On November 2, 2021, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the CDC recommended the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech Pediatric COVID-19 vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 and the prevention of severe illness and death from COVID-19 in children age 5 to 11. DHEC supports the decision of the CDC and is now making this vaccine available to children age 5-11 (consent form at <https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Pfizer-Fact-Sheet-Administration-Form-D-4260-for-DHEC-clinics-only.pdf>).

DSS is not providing an update to its guidance on the wearing of face masks. The guidance issued May 2021, as re-stated in this memorandum, remains in effect.

Policy

Agency policy makes immunizations “routine (ordinary) medical care” and, when a child is in the legal custody of DSS, the agency has the authority to make decisions regarding routine (ordinary) medical care. However, parental engagement in all health care decisions is best practice and is encouraged as well as listening to the child’s voice in the matter.

Guidelines: COVID-19 Vaccination

DSS staff and caregiving providers should consult (1) the parents and (2) the child or youth, if age and developmentally appropriate, regarding COVID-19 vaccination for those 5 years and older, as well as (3) the healthcare provider for the child or youth, if possible, for that provider’s general recommendations regarding the COVID-19 vaccine for children and youth age 5 and older.

The decision of the parent and the child or youth should be memorialized in writing and signed by the parent. For those children or youth whose parents have had parental rights terminated, the decision rests with DSS, but again, the child or youth’s perspective/opinion should be sought and documented. The preference is to obtain medical advice or guidance on each child from the healthcare provider and document that opinion as well.

If parental rights have been terminated and the youth is in an adoptive placement, DSS should consult with the prospective adoptive parents and the child or youth. The decision of the prospective adoptive parent and child or youth should be memorialized in writing.

Foster Care Children Wearing Masks in Schools

As the legal custodian of children in foster care, and based upon the latest CDC guidance May 12, 2021, DSS does not authorize caregivers (foster parents or group home staff members) to sign the school opt-out form at this time for children who have not been vaccinated.



Children in the legal custody of DSS who have not been vaccinated should continue to wear masks in accordance with CDC and DHEC recommendations for school and public settings, and as required by school rules. However, caregivers are authorized to sign the school opt-out form for children who have been fully vaccinated.

Fully vaccinated means a period of 2 weeks has passed after the second dose in a 2- dose vaccine, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine (*only the 2-dose Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been approved for use in children at this time). The relevant risks and guidance will be re-assessed based upon the facts and circumstances during the transition to the new school year.

If you require further clarification, please email FPhelp@dss.sc.gov.



Direct Deposit

Are you still receiving paper checks from DSS for payments related to the children or youth in your care? In order to ensure that you receive all payments timely, please complete the [form for direct deposit](#). After you have completed the form, please email the form and a voided check to _DSS-EPAY@dss.sc.gov. Be sure to put the word ENCRYPT in the subject live of the email to protect your information. We do not recommend that you mail the form to DSS.



SCDSS Policy on *Provisional* License for Kinship Foster Care

The agency may issue a **provisional** license for kinship foster care. Except in extenuating circumstances, a provisional license should remain in effect for no more than 90 days. SCDSS shall provide a monthly stipend to kin during the period of provisional licensure. A provisional license for kinship foster care may be issued under the following circumstances:

- ✓ The child is in the legal and physical custody of the department; and
- ✓ Kin has indicated in writing that the kin wants to become a licensed kinship foster parent; and

- ✓ Kin is eighteen years of age or older; and
- ✓ Kin and other adults living in the home have provided a written statement containing information necessary to determine whether a criminal history or history of child abuse or neglect exists and whether this history indicates there is a significant risk that a child would be threatened with abuse or neglect if placed in the home of the kin.
- ✓ The agency has completed a thorough review and home assessment to verify the information contained in the written statements provided pursuant to 114-550(E)(4)(d) by completing a check of the Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect and other relevant records, a sex offender registry check, a check of criminal records for the preceding five years of the State Law Enforcement Division, and to the extent reasonably possible, criminal records of other jurisdictions in which the kin or other adult resided during that period. The department must not agree to or acquiesce in a placement if the review and assessment indicate there is a significant risk that a child would be threatened with abuse or neglect if placed in the home. Kin and other adults living in the kin's home must consent to a check of records by the department.

Contact Information for our Kinship Care Team



Tamra Scott, Statewide Kinship Care Manager 803-898-2084

Erica Cunningham, Upstate Kinship Care Coordinator, 864-314-0496

Chasiti Washington, Midlands Kinship Care Coordinator, 803-898-7421

Arnetta Washington, Low Country Kinship Care Coordinator, 803-584-8112

Jada Moody-Davis, Pee Dee Region Kinship Care Coordinator, 843-413-6480



Interpretation and Enforcement of DSS Regulation Regarding Swimming Pool Standards

In recent months, DSS has learned from its licensing staff and private provider partners that DSS Regulation 114-550(N)(4) is negatively impacting efforts to recruit and retain much needed foster and adoptive family homes for children in foster care. DSS Regulation 114-550(N)(4) states, in pertinent part,
(4) The applicants' home must meet the following standards

concerning swimming pools, wading pools, hot tubs, and spas:

*(a) Swimming pools and wading pools shall be **enclosed with protective fencing at least four feet high, secured with a safety device (i.e., latch, lock, etc.) to restrict child's access, and any method of access must be through a safety device.** . . . [emphasis added]*

Swimming Pool Policy Guidelines

Effective immediately, the Department will broadly interpret the requirement to enclose swimming pools and wading pools with a fence, so long as the fence creates a safe, secure barrier, the fence is secured with a safety device or pool entry is otherwise secure, and a child's entry to the pool requires adult knowledge and authorization.

For example, this means, the fence need not create an immediate enclosure surrounding the pool, but that a safe, secure fence surrounding the applicant's yard can be compliant with the regulation.

If an applicant utilizes a safety barrier that is not a fence to safeguard a swimming pool or wading pool, the Department will evaluate the alternative safety barriers on a case-by-case basis. Before making a licensing decision, licensing staff shall consult with the Department's Office of General Counsel. If the Department determines the barrier is otherwise safe, secure, and requires adult knowledge and authorization while a child utilizes the pool, the Department may deem the barrier compliant with the intent of the regulation.

If you have questions, please contact FPhelp@dss.sc.gov.

Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP)

Training & Access:

DSS launched the Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP) platform on March 15, 2021. CAIP is a virtual platform to view and share health, education and well-being information about children in foster care. CAIP Training is being offered as a recorded webinar by the University of South Carolina and there is a link to the training on the SCFPALMS (<https://www.scfpalms.com/>).

This training will teach foster care providers how to access and enter a wide range of important information about the children in their care.



Once this virtual training is complete, foster care providers will receive a secure username and password from DSS to access CAIP. Foster parents can then access CAIP 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!



A Look Back at 2021

Thanks to the child wellbeing system as a whole, South Carolina continues to see improvement on federal outcome metrics. Foster parents are part of the child serving system. One area that we continue to struggle in is placement stability of children in foster care. This means the ability to place a child in a foster home and they remain in that same home throughout their time in foster care.

- SC has seen a **decrease in maltreatment recurrence**. SC was 36th in the country at 7% recurrence, we are now 28th in the country at 5%.
- SC has seen a **decrease in re-entry into care**. SC was 22nd in the country at 6% re-entry, we are now 17th in the country at 5%.
- SC has seen **an increase in permanency over two years**. SC was 1st in the country at 60%, we are now 1st in the country at 64%.
- **SCDSS finalized 460 adoptions in 2021.**

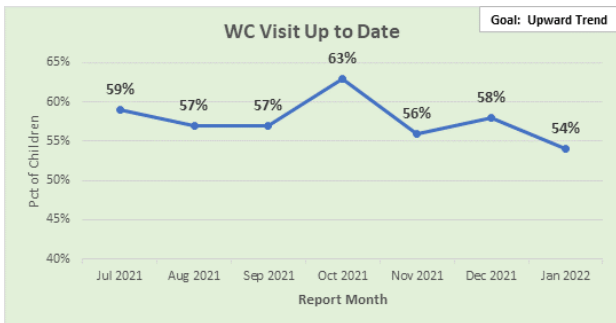
Well Child Visits

Well Child Visits should occur more frequently for children in foster care. The schedule below is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for children in Foster Care. Select Health allows several Well Child Visits per year. If your provider is not aware of this benefit, email us at: childhealth@dss.sc.gov We can connect them to someone who can assist the provider.

Monthly until 6 months of age	Every 3 months until 2 years of age	Every 6 months after 2 years of age
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Foster Parent Facts

February 2022



As of January 2022, **54% of children in foster care were up to date on their Well Child Visit.** Please be sure that you are providing Clinical Documentation from each visit to your caseworker, faxed to DSS Nurses at (803) 734-2837, emailed to WellBeingStateOffice@dss.sc.gov or uploaded through the CAIP system.

Dental Visits

All children 2 to 18 years old are expected to receive a Dental Visit every 6 months. As of January 2022, **59% of all children in foster care were up to date on their dental visits.**

Remember to obtain an after-visit summary (Medical); treatment summary (Dental); or DSS Form 30260 Medical/Dental Encounter Form before leaving the appointment.



Foster Parents Recognized with Innovator Award by Fostering Great Ideas

Local Foster Care Innovator Award

November 2021



Help us say thank you to...

Emily F.
Greenville Cty. Foster Parent

"When we were overwhelmed with a new placement, Emily drove all her kids to my house and watched my foster daughter for the day. She took her to an easter egg hunt and loved on her! When Emily brought her back home, I could breathe again!"
- Andrea H., Foster Parent



Local Foster Care Innovator Award

December 2021



Help us say thank you to...

Christy M.
Lexington Cty. Foster Parent

"She is the epitome of what a foster parent should be... Christy is my go-to-person for difficult issues that I run into or [when I] need to vent."
- Maria D., Foster Parent



Local Foster Care Innovator Award

January 2022 - Foster Parent



Help us say thank you to...

Christi H.
York Cty. Foster Parent

"Christi makes extra room for emergency teen boy placements, including fostering the friend of a long-term placement. They have a full house. And yet she still wants to do more."
- Kaley L., Foster Parent



To nominate a foster parent for the Innovator Award, go to:

<https://forms.gle/e9kN6EKfib4Xmxs98>