



**MEMORANDUM**

To: Re-Open SC Select Committee  
From: Michael Leach, DSS State Director  
Date: August 12, 2020  
Re: Update on Uncontacted Students During COVID-19

The ReOpenSC Senate Select Committee's [report](#) to the Senate President as of June 11, 2020, included a recommendation that the Department of Education shall seek the assistance of the Department of Social Services (DSS) to help locate students who were unengaged with schools during the period of school closure.

DSS is currently working to find these students who were reported as uncontacted during the time period of mid March through the first week of June 2020. Schools and school districts were instructed by Superintendent Spearman's office to submit uncontacted student names and known contact information by July 17, 2020.

DSS received the data file from the State Department of Education (SDE) on July 22, 2020. The number of children on this list totaled 3,275 children/youth to be contacted. DSS data and technology staff went to work immediately on a data clean-up on the file received and removed duplicate names of children from the spreadsheet. The result was a total of 3,182 children/youth to be contacted.

Thanks to the assistance of legislators, DSS was able to receive remaining data on children/youth to be contacted from the five remaining districts listed in the August 4, 2020 memo. This brought the total number of children/youth to be contacted to 3,234 children/youth.

DSS performed a data match in CAPSS (the Child Welfare system of record) and found that 152 children/youth have an open case with DSS. Our internal data team also matched with other case records for Economic Services and Child Support systems to make sure DSS had the most complete address and contact information for each child/youth to be visited. Additionally, DSS has outreached to the Department of Mental Health to perform a data match regarding any children/youth to be contacted who may be receiving therapeutic services. DSS expects to receive this information from DMH by Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>.

DSS sent individualized lists to DSS County Directors beginning on Wednesday, July 29, 2020 for staff to be assigned and visits to be conducted in coordination with local Sheriff departments. DSS County Directors also conducted outreach to local Superintendents to determine if there were any updates on contacted students since lists were sent to the State Department of Education.

Of the 3,324 children/youth to be contacted, over the last 14 days, including updates from local school officials, DSS staff and local law enforcement have been able to determine contact has been made with 519 children.



Re-Open SC Select Committee

Page 2

August 12, 2020

The Department has also been able to make phone contacts with parents, emergency contacts, and landlords, to determine that an additional 33 children/youth have moved from the address previously provided by the Department of Education. For an additional 48 children/youth, DSS staff and local law enforcement have conducted diligent efforts, which consist of multiple attempted home visits and attempted phone contacts, to all information provided by the Department of Education. These diligent efforts have been unsuccessful in leading to face to face contact with these children/youth.

Visits by local county-based teams are currently being conducted. Teams are made up of both DSS staff and local law enforcement. Visits are being conducted as well check visits with the goal of placing eyes on the child.

Questions being asked of the parent or guardian with safety being the primary focus as well as other questions including why contact with school was lost, what are the child's plans for participating in the 2020-2021 school year, does the family have any immediate needs, and if the family completed the 2020 Census.

Of the successful 519 conducted visits, children/youth, parents and guardians have shared the following barriers to completing and/or turning in their school work:

- No available computer/device
- No available internet service
- Students/parents did not have knowledge on how to complete the material, or described the material as too difficult
- Difficulty contacting teachers for assistance
- No transportation to pick-up or drop-off work packets
- Language/Translation barriers – work packets were provided in English to Spanish speaking families

Of the counties received by DSS to assist with contacts, diligent efforts and/or successful contact has been conducted with all provided uncontacted children and youth in the following ten counties:

- Abbeville
- Aiken
- Allendale
- Barnwell
- Berkeley
- Calhoun
- Dillon
- Fairfield
- Greenwood
- Saluda

County-based teams will continue to attempt contact with the remaining 2,634 children and youth. DSS is extremely grateful for the coordination from the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association in mobilizing law enforcement to help with contacting these children. DSS plans to share an additional report on uncontacted students and how many were located by the first week of September.