



Strategic Plan

2016-2018

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Overview

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) is committed to its mission of serving South Carolina by promoting the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults, helping individuals achieve stability, and strengthening families. The Department encompasses five program areas: a) Child Welfare, b) Adult Protective and Domestic Violence Services, c) Economic Services, d) Early Care and Educational Services, and e) Integrated Child Support Services.

Mission

The Department's mission statement clarifies the agency's purpose and sets the tone and direction for the strategic plan:

To serve South Carolina by promoting the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults, helping individuals achieve stability and strengthening families.

Strategic Priorities

DSS believes that thoughtful planning is essential to the successful achievement of its mission. The Department's comprehensive approach to our work is outlined in the following strategic plan, organized around four overarching strategic priorities that address the most pressing challenges facing the Department. In addition to the priorities and goals articulated below, the strategic plan also includes detailed objectives and tactics for accomplishing the work.

Child & Adult Safety & Well-Being

Promote the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults; promoting permanency for children.

Family Strengthening & Stability

Help preserve the family unit by enhancing the capability of individuals and families to provide for their own needs.

Organizational Health

Ensure the DSS workforce is supported in their efforts to provide high-quality service that is responsive and engaged.

Partnerships & Communication

Foster trust, collaboration, and communication with stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.

The strategic plan was informed by and is in alignment with Child and Family Services Strategic Action Plan 2015-2019, recommendations from legislative oversight committees, the agency Accountability Report, and the 2016-2017 DSS budget request.

MISSION

To serve South Carolina by promoting the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults, helping individuals achieve stability and strengthening families.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Child & Adult Safety & Well-Being

Family Strengthening & Stability

Organizational Health

Partnerships & Communication

STRATEGIC GOALS

Promote the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults; promote permanency for children.

Help preserve the family unit by enhancing the capacity of individuals and families to provide for their own needs.

Ensure DSS workforce is supported in their efforts to provide high-quality service that is responsive and engaged.

Foster trust, collaboration and communication with stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.

OBJECTIVES

A1: Assess and improve the quality of Abuse and Neglect Report Intake decisions.

A2: Improve the timeliness of initiating investigations.

A3: Improve the quality and consistency of ongoing assessments of safety and risk to children and vulnerable adults.

A4: Reduce repeat maltreatment for children and vulnerable adults.

A5: Develop a Case Practice Model that clearly articulates Best Practice and the core values that inform how DSS interacts with children, families and vulnerable adults to increase safety and well-being.

A6: Improve the permanency and stability of children and vulnerable adults in their living situations by providing supports to help preserve the family unit.

A7: Ensure the educational, physical and mental health needs of children and vulnerable adults are addressed.

A8: Provide services and supports to help youth in foster care successfully transition to living independently.

A9: Improve the continuity of family connections and work towards equitable access to services by ensuring services are aligned with the needs of children and connected to their neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school and friends.

A10: Educate and train families to help ensure children receive safe and quality child care.

A11: Improve assessment, referral and follow-up of domestic violence services.

B1: Increase recruitment, retention, and capacity of foster and adoptive parents.

B2: Help prepare and transition clients to employment and self-sufficiency.

B3: Ensure appropriate resources are distributed with integrity and in a timely, accurate, and equitable manner.

B4: Provide assistance to custodial parents who need help obtaining child support payments.

B5: Complete the transformation of the Child Support Program.

C1: Recruit and retain sufficient workforce of qualified and diverse individuals.

C2: Improve performance and quality of service through continuous professional development, coaching, training, and cross training.

C3: Foster a culture of customer service, both internally and externally.

C4: Manage caseloads by establishing and implementing caseload standards.

C5: Establish and maintain a Continuous Quality Improvement System and enhance the capacity of DSS staff to analyze and use data to inform and improve decision-making.

C6: Strengthen and support the well-being of the DSS workforce, including assistance to address secondary trauma experienced by staff.

C7: Develop uniform process for updating and disseminating policy updates, including statutory changes.

C8: Ensure all contracts have a defined purpose and include measurable outcomes and deliverables.

C9: Protect the assets of DSS, ensure accountability over funds, and help prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse.

D1: Strengthen partner relationships and increase recognition that safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of the entire community.

D2: Increase awareness of DSS mission, programs, services and strategic priorities.

D3: Strengthen alignment among DSS and other governmental agencies to provide more effective and efficient services to clients.

D4: Foster a culture of transparency.

D5: Provide timely, consistent, accurate and culturally responsive communication.

D6: Improve responsiveness to public feedback.

D7: Provide two-way communication channels to keep employees and partners informed while soliciting on-going input.

Child & Adult Safety & Well-Being

STRATEGIC GOAL

Promote the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults; promote permanency for children.

OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

A1: Assess and improve the quality of Abuse and Neglect Report Intake decisions.

- A1a: Regularly evaluate results of initial regional intake roll-out (volume and quality).
- A1b: Develop plan for statewide implementation of regionalized intake, including hiring of additional Human Services employees needed for successful implementation.
- A1c: Complete conversion and training for VOIP phone system.
- A1d: Improve tools and consistency across regions for screening children and vulnerable adults.
- A1e: Increase public awareness regarding mandated reporters and criteria for accepted abuse and neglect reports.

A2: Improve the timeliness of initiating investigations.

- A2a: Conduct regular review of Investigation timeframes.
- A2b: Conduct regular quality assurance case reviews to ensure timely services.
- A2c: Complete the Business Process Redesign for Assessment and implement recommendations.

A3: Improve the quality and consistency of ongoing assessments of safety and risk to children and vulnerable adults.

- A3a: Complete the development and pilot of the new Child and Family Assessment and Case Planning Tool.
- A3b: Develop a new Adult Assessment and Case Planning Tool.
- A3c: Build capacity and skills for identifying, reporting, and determining services for victims of sex trafficking.
- A3d: Build Supervisory capacity and skills to continually improve support for critical thinking around child and adult vulnerability and caregiver protective capacity.
- A3e: Implement trauma-based assessment.

A4: Reduce repeat maltreatment for children and vulnerable adults.

- A4a: Utilize Family Engagement services in conjunction with the Signs of Safety framework to identify and engage family networks and enhance the family's ability to provide ongoing safety.
- A4b: Build staff competencies to create ongoing safety networks for children prior to all case closures.
- A4c: Develop a strategy / framework for engaging family and community supports for vulnerable adults.
- A4d: Assess services on a regional level that are available for children and vulnerable adults and their caregivers.
- A4e: Collaborate with Regional Fatality Review Teams.

A5: Develop a Case Practice Model that clearly articulates Best Practice and the core values that inform how DSS interacts with children, families and vulnerable adults to increase safety and well-being.

- A5a: Provide regional trauma-informed care training for all front line staff.
- A5b: Continue progress towards full statewide implementation of Signs of Safety.

A6: Improve the permanency and stability of children and vulnerable adults in their living situations by providing supports to help preserve the family unit.

- A6a: Promote positive permanency through ensuring that decisions made for children are helping to meet the ultimate goal of 1) Reunification 2) Adoption by Family 3) Custody and Guardianship by Family or 4) Adoption by other.
- A6b: Improve caseworker decision-making to help ensure placement, including Kinship placement, is in the best interest of the child and consistent with achieving the goal of permanency.
- A6c: Develop protocol and guidelines to help DSS staff evaluate and better assess the need for congregate care.
- A6d: Develop and increase placement options for vulnerable adults.
- A6e: Evaluate need for implementation of training for Adult Protective Services homemaker staff to assist adults in

meeting their Activities of Daily Living.

A7: Ensure the educational, physical and mental health needs of children and vulnerable adults are addressed.

- A7a: Increase eligibility and access for children and youth to Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC).
- A7b: Address barriers for access to Medicaid services.
- A7c: Implement the Health and Education passports in Child and Adult Protective Services System (CAPSS).
- A7d: Increase technical assistance for implementation of Developmental Screenings.
- A7e: Improve the quality and availability of services for vulnerable adults.

A8: Provide services and supports to help youth in foster care successfully transition to living independently.

- A8a: Utilize best practices to engage and support youth in identifying positive supports and lifelong connections to assist youth in the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.
- A8b: Conduct case planning with all youth to include at least two adults of the youth's choice.
- A8c: Conduct transition planning with youth and their support network prior to the youth's 18th birthday.
- A8d: Improve practice, services, and resources for youth through continued tracking and data analysis of the National Youth in Transition Database.

A9: Improve the continuity of family connections and work towards equitable access to services by ensuring services are aligned with the needs of children and connected to their neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, tribe, school and friends.

- A9a: Provide program service array aligned with the needs of children, youth, families and vulnerable adults.
- A9b: Provide access to Community Based Prevention Services; ensure services are aligned with DSS policy and expected outcomes are clearly articulated and measured.

A10: Educate and train families to help ensure children receive safe and quality child care.

- A10a: Inform parents about safe child care and provide accurate and updated information to guide parent's informed decision-making.
- A10b: Recruit Centers to participate in Quality Child Care program.
- A10c: Implement business redesign recommendations to increase safety measures and monitoring of child care facilities.

A11: Improve assessment, referral and follow-up of domestic violence services.

- A11a: Ensure staff is properly trained on domestic violence assessment and referrals.
- A11b: Implement programming aimed at reducing domestic violence.

Family Strengthening & Stability

STRATEGIC GOAL

Help preserve the family unit by enhancing the capacity of individuals and families to provide for their own needs.

OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

B1: Increase recruitment, retention, and capacity of foster and adoptive parents.

- B1a: Enhance availability and quality of post-adoptive support services.
- B1b: Target recruitment for adoption of older children and sibling groups.
- B1c: Implement business process redesign for foster care licensing.
- B1d: Develop and implement business process redesign for recruitment of prospective adoptive families.
- B1e: Increase monthly foster care rate based on current data for the Southeast region, provide assistance to kinship caretakers.
- B1f: Complete county-based data sheets for foster home recruitment campaign.
- B1g: Provide ongoing training for foster parents and congregate care providers on services and resources available to youth and how to access and receive funding for these services.
- B1h: Periodically review payment rates paid to foster parents and other foster care providers and assess if they are reasonable for current conditions.

B2: Help prepare and transition clients to employment and self-sufficiency.

- B2a: Provide temporary resources, programs and support services to qualified recipients, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Child Care Vouchers.
- B2b: Increase number of child care vouchers.
- B2c: Provide quality workforce readiness training.
- B2d: Enhance the marketing of workforce services to prospective employers.
- B2e: Provide family strengthening programs and support services.
- B2f: Evaluate the effectiveness of family strengthening programs and support services and modify as needed to improve outcomes.

B3: Ensure appropriate resources are distributed with integrity and in a timely, accurate, and equitable manner.

- B3a: Help prevent fraud and abuse of programs by maintaining effective benefits integrity program.
- B3b: Provide timely and accurate Board payments for Foster Parents and congregate care facilities.
- B3c: Evaluate and improve process of providing clothing allowance for children in foster care.
- B3d: Develop and evaluate process of Medicaid eligibility for children in care and vulnerable adults in DSS custody.
- B3e: Work with Clerks of Court to ensure child support payments are disbursed in a timely manner.

B4: Provide assistance to custodial parents who need help obtaining child support payments.

- B4a: Ensure Support Orders are established accurately and in a timely manner.
- B4b: Utilize administrative remedies and behavioral economics to promote consistent, timely payments of child support.

B5: Complete the transformation of the Child Support Program.

- B5a: Complete the development of the Palmetto Automated Child Support System (PACSS).
- B5b: Clearly communicate Child Support System project milestones, progress and challenges, both internally and externally.
- B5c: Complete change management policies, procedures, and practice to move from a decentralized program to a centralized program for collection and distribution of child support and spousal support.

Organizational Health

STRATEGIC GOAL

Ensure DSS workforce is supported in their efforts to provide high-quality service that is responsive and engaged.

OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

C1: Recruit and retain sufficient workforce of qualified and diverse individuals.

- C1a: Streamline hiring and on-boarding of staff.
- C1b: Work with Universities to establish pipeline of qualified applicants.
- C1c: Enhance recruitment marketing efforts.
- C1d: Improve HR systems throughout hiring process.
- C1e: Enhance employee orientation.
- C1f: Implement student loan repayment and tuition incentive program for DSS Staff.
- C1g: Develop career ladder, with performance incentives, for staff in human services, economic services, child support and other divisions.
- C1h: Provide in-band and equity pay increases.
- C1i: Hire and train casework staff to expand 2nd and 3rd shift pilot program; evaluate impact of pilot on staff turnover.
- C1j: Conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys and provide feedback to staff on results; utilize results to improve retention efforts.
- C1k: Evaluate and improve employee exit survey process; utilize results to improve retention efforts.

C2: Improve performance and quality of service through continuous professional development, coaching, training, and cross training.

- C2a: Hire Training Director and Regional trainers.
- C2b: Create comprehensive staff training plan.
- C2c: Support staff in attending Leadership Development opportunities for DSS middle managers and executive leadership across all disciplines.
- C2d: Implement system to track employee training.
- C2e: Develop strategies for cross-training throughout the Department.
- C2f: Ensure proper resources and infrastructure (e.g. desks, phones, computers, building space, etc.) are provided for newly hired employees in a timely manner.

C3: Foster a culture of customer service, both internally and externally.

- C3a: Ensure customers are well-informed of services and resources available; communicate consistently throughout the Department.
- C3b: Provide Customer Service training (during onboarding and on-going).

C4: Manage caseloads by establishing and implementing caseload standards.

- C4a: Conduct ongoing analysis and evaluation of statewide caseload / caseworker need based on best practice standards.
- C4b: Develop formal methodology for even distribution of caseloads and allocation of staff across all Divisions.
- C4c: Hire additional caseworkers across all program areas to decrease caseloads and improve service quality statewide.
- C4d: Improve resources in General Counsel's office to help reduce caseloads, expedite case processing, and improve case quality.

C5: Establish and maintain a Continuous Quality Improvement System and enhance the capacity of DSS staff to analyze and use data to inform and improve decision-making.

- C5a: Develop written protocol and policies for CQI.

- C5b: Evaluate the use of data for performance management.
- C5c: Ensure staff are equipped and resourced to accurately conduct data entry.
- C5d: Effectively communicate agency data and outcomes to stakeholders.

C6: Strengthen and support the well-being of the DSS workforce, including assistance to address secondary trauma experienced by staff.

- C6a: Develop and implement counseling support program for workforce.

C7: Develop uniform process for updating and disseminating policy updates, including statutory changes.

- C7a: Update policy manuals throughout the Department.
- C7b: Evaluate use of Directed Memos in policy updates.
- C7c: Evaluate possibility of developing an Office of Policy Management.

C8: Ensure all contracts have a defined purpose and include measurable outcomes and deliverables.

- C8c: Standardize process for grants and contracts including approvals, tracking, and evaluation.

C9: Protect the assets of DSS, ensure accountability over funds, and help prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse.

- C9a: Create an Office of the Inspector General to improve oversight of the agency and to increase the safety and security of agency personnel and assets.
- C9b: Continue to provide, through the Administrative Services divisions, services that support divisions, regional and county offices in providing effective client services, oversight and internal controls.
- C9c: Perform internal audits on a regular basis to help to determine if internal controls within the Agency are performing properly, and make recommendations to help resolve any findings.
- C9d: Monitor and help to resolve any findings that might relate to DSS, when they are found in Single Audits received from our subrecipients.
- C9e: Continue to carry out a Fraud Prevention and Detection Program, which includes periodic random surprise audits, an Agency fraud hotline for reporting fraud, and periodic Fraud Prevention training.
- C9f: Coordinate with law enforcement, DSS Inspector General's Office and the SC Inspector General's Office on fraud investigations.

Partnerships & Communication

STRATEGIC GOAL

Foster trust, collaboration and communication with stakeholders to improve outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.

OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

D1: Strengthen partner relationships and increase recognition that safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of the entire community.

- D1a: Define “partners”; ensure consistent definition throughout DSS through standardized MOU processing.
- D1b: Inventory existing partnerships and identify which divisions work with each; publish on Unite.
- D1c: Enhance Partner Meetings and ensure more consistency in meeting processes and outcomes across regions.
- D1d: Provide “DSS 101” for legislators, media and partners.
- D1e: Continue to strengthen DSS Advisory Group.

D2: Increase awareness of DSS mission, programs, services and strategic priorities.

- D2a: Develop a Strategic Communications Plan including:
 - Guidelines for external communication.
 - Guidelines on what information is legally discoverable.
 - Policy for approvals for utilizing social media, response to media requests, etc.
 - Common definitions for key terms.
- D2b: Develop a plan for quarterly video messages from Director.
- D2c: Proactively tell the positive stories and outcomes of DSS

D3: Strengthen alignment among DSS and other governmental agencies to provide more effective and efficient services to clients.

- D3a: Convene “roundtables” consisting of DSS and partner agency representatives.

D4: Foster a culture of transparency.

- D4a: Train agency staff on how to safely share information while adhering to statutory requirements as it relates to confidentiality.
- D4b: Increase awareness among external stakeholders and legislators about confidentiality requirements.

D5: Provide timely, consistent, accurate and culturally responsive communication.

- D5a: Ensure internal and external audiences can easily access a comprehensive, up-to-date DSS resource directory and information.
- D5b: Improve access, capabilities and utilization of technology in communication.
- D5c: Develop, update and publish information using a wide range of vehicles such as videos, tip sheets, brochures, TV monitors, fact sheets, etc.
- D5d: Establish a speaker’s bureau.
- D5e: Launch the redesigned internal and external website.

D6: Improve responsiveness to public feedback.

- D6a: Standardize mechanisms for constituent feedback including centralized log for all divisions.
- D6b: Standardize process for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responses.
- D6c: Develop critical incidence response protocol.

D7: Provide two-way communication channels to keep employees and external stakeholders informed while soliciting on-going input.

- D7a: Create electronic internal feedback loop for staff on website.
- D7b: Improve utilization of face-to-face meetings as a two-way communication vehicle.
- D7c: Utilize employee satisfaction surveys as two-way communication vehicle.