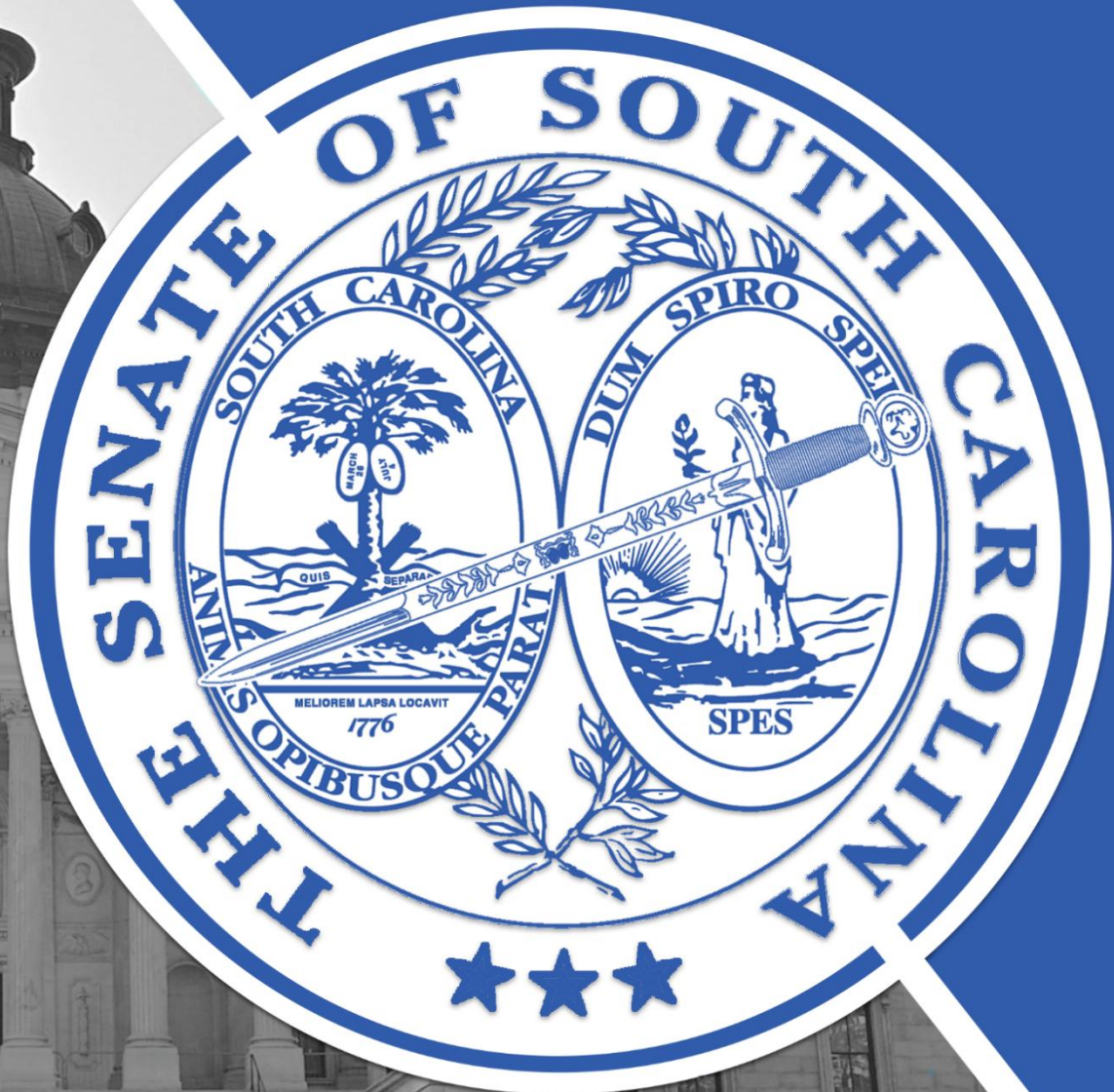


SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE  
LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE



**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY**  
COMMITTEE REPORT  
2026

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# SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP & CONTACT INFORMATION

### CHAIRMAN

Thomas C. Alexander

#### Full Committee Membership

Darrell Jackson  
Brad Hutto  
George E. "Chip" Campsen, III  
Kent M. Williams  
A. Shane Massey  
Tom Davis  
Tom Young, Jr.  
Wes Climer  
Karl B. Allen  
Harvey S. Peeler, Jr.  
Ronnie A. Sabb  
Margie Bright Matthews

#### Subcommittee Membership

Brad Hutto, *Co-Chair*  
Tom Young, Jr., *Co-Chair*  
Darrell Jackson  
Tom Davis  
Wes Climer  
Karl B. Allen

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# AGENCY OVERVIEW

## Organization

The Department of Children’s Advocacy (DCA) was established by Act 160 of 2018 to serve as an independent watchdog over nine child-serving agencies and to improve the delivery of services to children in South Carolina. DCA also has responsibility over the Foster Care Review Division, Guardians ad Litem, and Continuum of Care. The agencies that the Department is responsible for overseeing are enumerated in §63-11-2240(A) as follows:

- Department of Social Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Department of Health and Environmental Control
- Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
- John de la Howe School
- Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School
- School for the Deaf and the Blind

The State Child Advocate and Director of the Department of Children’s Advocacy is appointed by the Governor to a six-year term. The Joint Citizens’ and Legislative Committee on Children solicits applications, interviews candidates, and makes a recommendation of three applicants to the Governor for his consideration. The individual appointed by the Governor must then be confirmed by the Senate and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Senate Family & Veterans’ Services Committee. A large format version of the organizational chart (Figure 1) provided below can be found in Appendix 1 on page 16.

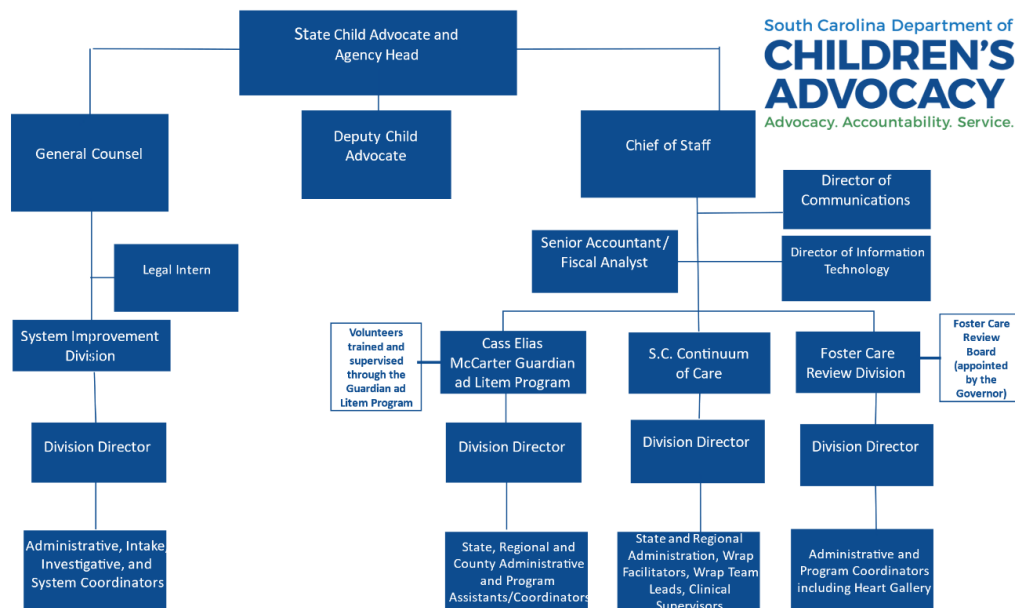


Figure 1 – DCA Organizational Chart, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

**The Department of Children’s Advocacy is organized into four primary programmatic divisions:**

### Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program

The division, comprised of state office staff, regional directors, and county directors and their teams, is tasked with assigning a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to every child involved in a DSS abuse and neglect case in family court. This includes, but is not limited to, children in foster care. These GALs are both paid staff and volunteers who are recruited, trained, supervised, and supported by the department. Guardians ad litem in abuse and neglect cases serve as court-appointed special advocates for children pursuant to §63-7-1620.

### Continuum of Care

Continuum of Care (COC) includes state office staff, regional program directors, supervisors, wrap team leads, and facilitators. COC supports children with serious emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric challenges, helping them stay in their homes, schools, or communities to minimize trauma for both youth and families. It also reduces the number of children in state care, whether in foster care or the juvenile justice system. As the only state entity providing High Fidelity Wraparound, an evidence-based intensive care coordination program, COC empowers families to set goals based on their own needs, connecting them to community resources and building on their strengths to achieve independence. COC uses the Child Adolescent Functional Assessment Score (CAFAS) to objectively measure a youth's improvement as well as the efficacy of the High Fidelity Wraparound model.

### Foster Care Review

This division supports the State Foster Care Review Board and 44 local boards. The local boards offer non-binding advisory opinions when reviewing cases of children in foster care. The state board reviews the decisions of local boards and makes reports and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on matters of policy. The Foster Care Review Division also manages the SC Heart Gallery, which works to promote children who are free and available for adoption to potential adoptive parents.

### System Improvement

The Department is responsible for evaluating and improving the care and services provided by state agencies to children, ensuring every child has the opportunity to live a full and productive life. System Improvement (SI), led by the Deputy Child Advocate, plays a central role in this mission by enhancing the effectiveness of programs for children and families. SI oversees two key reporting mechanisms through the Investigations Unit (IU): addressing complaints about child-serving agencies and critical incident reports from these agencies.

## Budget

Department of Children's Advocacy FY 2024-25 Budget			
Program	General Funds	Other Funds	Restricted Funds
ADMINISTRATION	754,546.25		
GUARDIAN AD LITEM	4,335,073.56	1,019,909.00	7,718,263.00
CONTINUUM OF CARE	3,029,072.95	2,150,413.00	
INVESTIGATIONS UNIT	1,107,710.44		
FOSTER CARE	1,423,529.33	1,186,474.00	
STATE EMPLOYER CONTR	3,186,797.00	1,130,518.00	2,513,028.00
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>13,836,729.53</b>	<b>5,487,314.00</b>	<b>10,231,291.00</b>
<b>Special Recurring Items:</b>			
NETWRK CHILDREN ADVOC	80,000.00		
CHILDRENS TRUST FUND	200,000.00		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>280,000.00</b>		
<b>Non-recurring items:</b>			
CHILD ADVOCACY CTRS	1,500,000.00		
AGENCY WORKSTATIONS	320,453.00		
CHILDREN'S TRUST	250,000.00		
ADMINISTRATION AND INVESTIGATIONS	25,000.00		
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>2,095,453.00</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,212,182.53</b>		

Figure 2 – DCA FY 2024-2025 Budget, Source: Department of Children's Advocacy

## Positions

The Department of Children’s Advocacy has a total of 250 positions with 221 filled and 29 vacant as of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, representing an 11.6% vacancy rate. As of February 1, 2025, the state government average vacancy rate among non-higher education institutions is 17.67%.

Department of Children's Advocacy Positions			
Area	Filled	Vacant	Total
<b>Dept. of Children's Advocacy</b>			
Agency Head	1	0	
Classified FTE	3	1	
Unclassified FTE	1	0	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Continuum of Care</b>			
Classified FTE	41	13	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Foster Care Review Division</b>			
Classified FTE	21	2	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Guardian ad Litem</b>			
Classified FTE	135	8	
Temporary Grant	3	0	
Unclassified FTE	1	0	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Systems Improvement</b>			
Classified FTE	15	4	
Temporary Grant	0	1	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>AGENCY TOTAL</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>250</b>

Figure 3 – DCA Positions Chart as of 4/2/2025, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

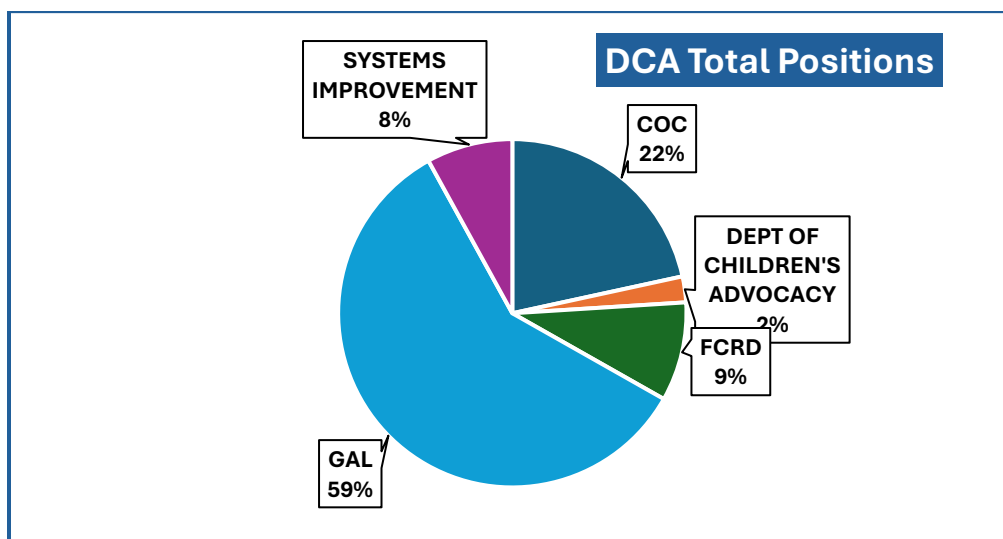


Figure 4 – DCA Positions Pie Chart as of 4/2/2025, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Agency Leadership & Operations

**Finding 1 (*State Child Advocate Qualifications*):** §63-11-2240(C) provides for the minimum qualifications when considering candidates for the State Child Advocate, they include: (1) a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university; and (2) at least ten years of experience in family or children’s law, children’s social work, or children’s health and welfare. However, the Governor increased the minimum qualifications in the job posting to require candidates to possess a juris doctorate degree as well as management and administrative experience. This limits the pool of potential applicants, potentially ignoring otherwise well-qualified candidates who may have other advanced degrees such as a Master of Social Work that could be complimentary to the role and would meet the statutory requirements.

**Recommendation 1 (*State Child Advocate Qualifications*):** **The Governor should use the statutory requirements established by the General Assembly and give the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children more flexibility to interview and consider the best candidates within this statutory framework. The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-2240(C) to increase the minimum qualifications to include either a graduate or terminal degree.**

**Finding 2 (*State Child Advocate Disqualifications*):** §63-11-2240(B) disqualifies any candidate for the office of State Child Advocate who served as a

director or deputy director of a state agency (excluding from the Department of Children’s Advocacy) for a period of four years prior to their appointment. However, this is an overly broad disqualification that could be more narrowly tailored to agencies that the State Child Advocate oversees.

**Recommendation 2 (*State Child Advocate Disqualifications*):** **The General Assembly should amend §63-11-2240(B) to apply only to the agencies listed in §63-11-2240(A).**

**Finding 3 (*State Agency Oversight*):** The list of agencies found in §63-11-2240(A) in which the State Child Advocate is responsible for ensuring “that children receive adequate protection and care from services or programs” includes two agencies that have been reorganized, thus rendering the list dated and in need of amending. Act 164 of 2020 reestablished the John de la Howe School as the Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe, shifting its mission from serving at-risk youth to providing agriculture-focused education similar to the other two Governor’s Schools. The department reports that since the agency’s inception they have not received a single critical incident report involving John de la Howe School. Act 60 of 2023 split the Department of Health and Environmental Control into the Departments of Environmental Services and Public Health.

**Recommendation 3 (*State Agency Oversight*):** **The General Assembly should amend §63-11-2240(A) and §63-11-2290(B) to delete references to the**

**Department of Health and Environmental Control and replace them with the Department of Public Health. Further, all references in these two code sections to John de la Howe School should be repealed.**

***Finding 4 (State Child Advocate Duties and Responsibilities):*** §63-11-2240 and §63-11-2270 contemplate the duties and responsibilities of the State Child Advocate. The language used in these two subsections suggests a broad, system-wide view of the state's child serving agencies by the State Child Advocate. It does not specifically give authority for the department to examine individual programs and services impacting children in South Carolina.

***Recommendation 4 (State Child Advocate Duties and Responsibilities):*** The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-2240 and §63-11-2270 to specifically confer upon the Department of Children's Advocacy the duty to review and evaluate programs and services offered to children and make recommendations to state

**agencies, the Governor, and the General Assembly concerning improvements. If such reforms are enacted, the General Assembly should further fund additional positions as necessary to hire appropriate staff to conduct such program reviews.**

***Finding 5 (State Child Advocate Advisory Body):*** The State Child Advocate currently does not have a formal mechanism by which to obtain non-agency feedback and recommendations concerning the state's child welfare, correctional, education, and healthcare systems. Such advisory bodies do exist sporadically within this policy space, namely the Foster Care Health Advisory Committee, the Kinship Advisory Panel, and the State Advisory Committee on the Regulation of Child Care Facilities.

***Recommendation 5 (State Child Advocate Advisory Body):*** The State Child Advocate should convene an advisory board of parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, volunteer guardians ad litem, case workers, and service providers to advise and inform the department of relevant matters pertaining to children's services.

## Guardian ad Litem Program

***Finding 6 (Guardian Ad Litem Program Structure):*** §63-11-500(A) establishes the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program, a statewide effort administered by the Department of Children's Advocacy covering 45 of the state's 46 counties. The purpose of this program is to train and supervise volunteer guardians ad litem and, when volunteers are unavailable, provide

paid staff as GALs. Guardians ad litem serve as independent special advocates for children in abuse and neglect cases, not civil actions.

The outlier in this scheme, permitted under §63-11-500(B), is Richland County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) which predates the state program. Agency leadership testified that informal conversations had been initiated by staff of

the Richland County CASA to explore the possibility of merging their operations. No actions were taken to pursue such an arrangement formally and staff from Richland County CASA have since indicated that they have no intention at this time of seeking to have their program absorbed by the Department of Children’s Advocacy.

**Recommendation 6 (Guardian Ad Litem Program Structure): The Legislative Audit Council should be engaged to conduct a performance review to determine whether absorbing Richland County CASA into the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program would potentially yield better outcomes for children, taxpayers, or both.**

**Finding 7 (Volunteer Guardians Ad Litem Recruitment):** The department’s goal is that every GAL is a non-paid volunteer. By the end of FY 2024, there were only enough volunteer guardians ad litem (999 volunteers) to be appointed to 56% of children in need of one. The remaining 44% were appointed a paid staff member (128 employees) at the Department of Children’s Advocacy to serve as their court-appointed advocate. In FY 2024, there were a total of 11,477 children served through the 45-county state GAL program. As of March 24, 2025, a total of 736 volunteer GALs were needed to provide a non-paid GAL to every child in an abuse or neglect case, exclusive of Richland County. Appendix 2 on page 17 shows the number of volunteers needed in each county as of March 24, 2025. Figure 5 shows the percentage of volunteer guardians ad litem in each of the last five fiscal years.

The Department has undertaken several initiatives to shore up their volunteer ranks, including creating positions for regional and state recruiters as well as transitioning the training model to be completely virtual.

Percentage of Volunteers Serving as Guardians ad Litem for Children	
Year	Percentage of GALs who were Volunteers*
FY20	59%
FY21	61%
FY22	56%
FY23	52%
FY24	56%

\* All children were appointed a Guardian ad Litem as required by state law. When a volunteer is not available to be appointed, a qualified, trained Guardian ad Litem Program staff person is appointed.

Figure 5 – Volunteer GAL Percent, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

**Recommendation 7 (Volunteer Guardians Ad Litem Recruitment): The General Assembly should consider putting additional resources into volunteer GAL recruitment efforts that could include, but are not limited to: advertisement, recruitment coordinator(s), and financial incentives. Recruiting and training qualified volunteer guardians ad litem may realize a net cost savings of GAL program staff that would no longer be needed.**

**Finding 8 (Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem Incentives):** Volunteer guardians ad litem are not provided per diem or mileage while traveling the state and attending court hearings. Many members of various boards and commissions, both local and statewide, are provided per diem and mileage to improve recruitment and to enable public service to be more accessible.

**Recommendation 8 (*Volunteer Guardian Ad Litem Incentives*): The General Assembly should consider amending state law to allow volunteer**

**guardians ad litem to claim per diem and mileage when carrying out their duties. The General Assembly should further consider appropriating adequate funds to support this policy.**

## Continuum of Care

**Finding 9 (*Continuum of Care Administration*):** Act 160 of 2018 moved the S.C. Continuum of Care from the Department of Administration to the Department of Children’s Advocacy. Continuum of Care was established in §63-11-1310 to “develop and enhance the delivery of services to children and youth with severe emotional and behavioral needs and to ensure that the special needs of this population are met appropriately to the extent possible within South Carolina.”

By its nature, the Continuum of Care program is a direct service provider of intensive care coordination, seeking to keep children out of the custody of the Department of Social Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice. This is not unlike other agencies providing direct services within the broader child welfare system. As such, it is reasonable to believe that the program could benefit from a measure of independence and separation from the state’s child services watchdog. Moving the Continuum of Care out of the DCA’s administration would also remove a possible conflict of interest.

**Recommendation 9 (*Continuum of Care Administration*): The General Assembly should consider amending the code to move Continuum of Care to the Department of Behavioral Health and**

**Developmental Disabilities. If Continuum of Care is moved to this new agency, then the General Assembly should also appropriately amend the list of entities enumerated in §63-11-2240(A) that DCA has a duty to oversee and ensure that appropriate services are provided to the children of this State.**

**Finding 10 (*Continuum of Care Program Improvements*):** As Figure 6 shows, there has been a steady decline over the last five years in the number of youth served by Continuum of Care. Department leadership has indicated that the reason for this is a combination of a decline in referrals and staff vacancies trying to address a waitlist. However, as the Inspector General found in their November 2024 report on COC (which was requested by the Department), current staff are oftentimes not carrying a full caseload. This fact, coupled with the finding that there are significant COC staff vacancies, would not necessitate hiring a significant number of additional staff.

Department leadership has also indicated that they do not keep readily available historical records of the number of referrals received for COC services each year. Since that claim was made, leadership was able to furnish records showing the number of referrals for each of the previous five fiscal years. Further, the Inspector General found numerous deficiencies in program

administration, operations, and outcome evaluation. The Department has indicated that they are actively working to implement the OIG recommendations.

Continuum of Care # of Referrals and Youth Served		
Fiscal Year	# of Referrals	# of Youth Served
2019-20	386	307
2020-21	337	252
2021-22	322	283
2022-23	237	208
2023-24	186	143

Figure 6 – COC Ref. & Served, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

**Recommendation 10 (Continuum of Care Program Improvements):** The Senate Legislative Oversight Committee should be tasked with a follow-up, program-specific review to ensure the division has implemented necessary changes to improve outcomes and increase accountability. This may be conducted regardless of any action taken to move the division to a new agency. If deficiencies persist or new concerns are identified, it is further recommended that the Legislative Audit Council conduct an in-depth program review of Continuum of Care.

**Finding 11 (Continuum of Care Service Gap):**

While there is no verifiable data to support the assertion, Department leadership believes that only a few youth who could benefit from COC’s High Fidelity Wraparound services that are not currently receiving them. Their rationale is that these youth are typically involved with another agency such as the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Social Services. It was further asserted that families seek out other therapy services in the private sector.

**Recommendation 11 (Continuum of Care Service Gap):** The Senate should request that the Legislative Audit Council review both the division and related agencies to study the system of care provided to youth experiencing serious emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric challenges, building upon its work from the September 2019 audit “A Review of Children’s Behavioral Health Services at the S.C. Department of Health and Human Services.

### Foster Care Review

**Finding 12 (Local Foster Care Review Board Appointments):** There are 43 local foster care review boards distributed among the 16 judicial circuits. Each board has five seats that are appointed by the governor upon the recommendation of their legislative delegation. Local boards submit written reports and recommendations to the court concerning the case(s) before

them. Decisions made by a local board are nonbinding and advisory in nature. §63-11-710 initially established 16 local boards, distributed among the 16 judicial circuits. However, the statute also permitted the same boards to create or dissolve additional boards to manage circuits with heavier caseloads, resulting in the 43 that exist today.

As of February 19, 2025, there are 82 vacancies among the 215 total seats, representing a 38.14% statewide vacancy rate. Fourteen of the forty-six boards do not have enough members appointed and seated to constitute a quorum and six of the sixteen circuits have a vacancy rate of over 50%. However, §63-11-740 allows current or former local board members, regardless of circuit, to serve as a substitute for the purpose of achieving a quorum. Agency leadership indicates that former board members are not currently being utilized in this manner. This is an unsustainable system that makes it cumbersome for board members to be appointed and serve.

**Recommendation 12 (Local Foster Care Review Board Appointments):** **The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-710 to grant the State Child Advocate the authority to appoint members of local Foster Care Review Boards through an open referral and application process.**

**Finding 13 (Local Foster Care Review Board Vacancies):** As noted in Finding 11, there are a large number of boards and board positions; however a significant issue with vacancies. Data from the department, found in Appendix 3 on page 18 shows that there is a significant disparity between local boards and their caseloads. The board with the fewest number of case reviews scheduled in FY2024 was Board 15A in Georgetown, at 31 cases while the board with the highest was Board 5D in Richland at 269 cases.

**Recommendation 13 (Local Foster Care Review Board Vacancies):** **The General Assembly should further consider reorganizing the local boards to reduce the number of boards and increase**

**the size of each board. One such model could be the regional structure used by both DSS and DCA, consisting of four regions, Upstate, Midlands, Pee Dee, and Lowcountry. These larger regional boards could serve as a pool for reviews to take place by a smaller number of members in a more efficient manner. This could both address the vacancy issue and increase the training and consistency among the boards while providing them flexibility.**

**Finding 14 (Former Local Foster Care Review Board Members):** Local foster care review board members must submit to a background check to ensure they are not in violation of any provision of §63-11-730. However, it is unclear whether former local board members who are legally able to serve as substitutes to achieve a quorum are required to complete background checks following the end of their term and before they serve in a substitute capacity. Agency leadership indicates that former board members are not currently being utilized in this manner.

**Recommendation 14 (Former Local Foster Care Review Board Members):** **The General Assembly should consider repealing the provision in §63-11-740 that allows former local board members to serve in any capacity, regardless of whether a quorum is met or not.**

**Finding 15 (Foster Care Review Board Regulation Promulgation):** §63-11-700(E) gives the Foster Care Review Board, upon recommendation of the division director, the authority to promulgate regulations. Most state agencies promulgate regulations at the agency director's direction, not the direction of a lower body or employee.

**Recommendation 15 (*Foster Care Review Board Regulation Promulgation*): The General Assembly should consider amending the code to transfer the promulgation authority of foster care regulations to the State Child Advocate.**

**Finding 16 (*Foster Care Review Division Director Appointment*):** §63-11-700(F) gives the Governor the authority to employ the Foster Care Review Division Director and set their salary. This is another vestige of its former status as a quasi-independent body when under the Governor's Office.

**Recommendation 16 (*Foster Care Review Division Director Appointment*): The General Assembly should consider amending the code to transfer all hiring and firing authority of employees of the Department to the State Child Advocate.**

**Finding 17 (*Kinship Care*):** §63-11-720 describes the functions and powers of the Foster Care Review Division and Foster Care Review Board. Since Act 168 of 2022 and Act 25 of 2023 became law, a

corresponding update has not been made to include kinship care in a review of a foster care case. Kinship care is a state-sanctioned placement of a child who has been removed from their home with a family member or a person who has a close, nonfamilial relationship with a child, known as "fictive kin".

**Recommendation 17 (*Kinship Care*): The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-720 to include the concept of kinship care in evaluations of a child's placement with the child's short- and long-term needs.**

**Finding 18 (*Foster Care Agency Cooperation*):** §63-11-770 requires public and private agencies that provide for or arrange foster care for children to cooperate with local foster care review boards.

**Recommendation 18 (*Foster Care Agency Cooperation*): The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-770 to mandate a more comprehensive model that captures the Foster Care Review Board, Foster Care Review Division, and the State Child Advocate.**

## System Improvement

**Finding 19 (*Children's Case Resolution System*):** The Children's Case Resolution System (§63-11-1110), was a statutory process (prior to 2018) for determining the appropriate placement for a child who may be involved with multiple overlapping agencies. Occasionally, these agencies cannot come to an agreement on who should be primarily responsible for a

child in need of care. This system was repealed by Act 160 of 2018 which created the Department of Children's Advocacy. However, a commensurate tool for the State Child Advocate to force agencies into a binding decision was never put into place.

**Recommendation 19 (*Children's Case Resolution System*): The**

**General Assembly should consider reinstating a version of this system that would make the State Child Advocate an independent arbiter between agencies, acting in the best interest of the child.**

**Finding 20 (DJJ Inclusion in ISCEDC Staffing):**

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is not included in the Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC) found in §63-11-1510. While mentally ill children should not be confined to DJJ (*Alexander S. v. Boyd, D.S.C. 1995*), it is nevertheless a reality that cases may, and do, occur. The current statutory structure includes the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Social Services, with the Department of Children’s Advocacy, through Continuum of Care, acting as the convening entity.

**Recommendation 20 (DJJ Inclusion in ISCEDC Staffing):** The General Assembly should consider amending §63-11-1510 to include the Department of Juvenile Justice as a party to ISCEDC staffing decisions.

**Finding 21 (ISCEDC Modernization):**

The Interagency System for Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC) statute, §63-11-1510, has not been significantly updated since its enactment in 2008. Since that time, there have been significant evolutions both in our understanding of mental illness and how state agencies approach children with such illnesses.

**Recommendation 21 (ISCEDC Modernization):** The General Assembly should consider working with the relevant state agencies and stakeholders to amend the ISCEDC statute; modernizing it so that current law is reflective of current best practices.

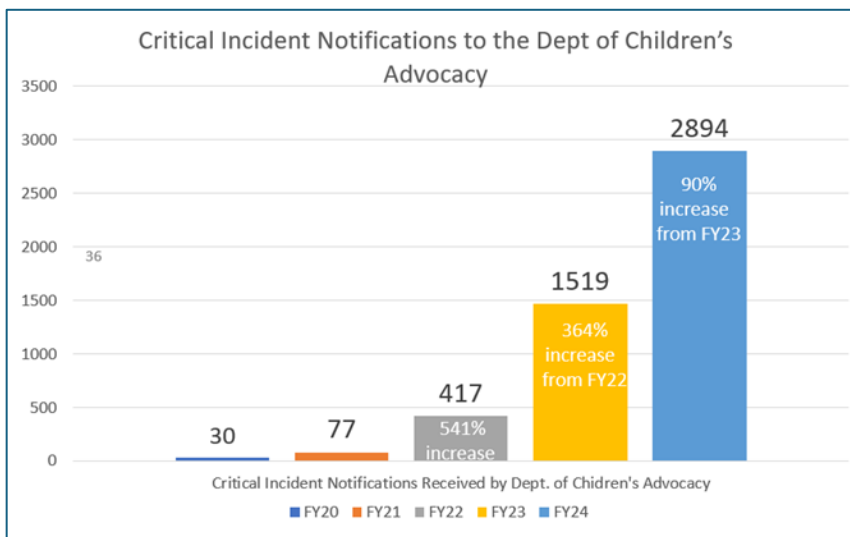


Figure 7 – Critical Incident Notif., Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

**Finding 22 (Critical Incident Reports):**

The number of critical incident reports has increased dramatically over the last several fiscal years as seen in Figure 7. Critical incident reports are defined as “fatal, near-fatal, or serious bodily or emotional injury to a child in the care of, or receiving services from, the state.” Department leadership indicates that this is not necessarily a sign that incidents are rising, but that awareness of the reporting and investigative system is increasing, which has translated to higher reporting volume.

**Recommendation 22 (Critical Incident Reports):** The General Assembly should consider monitoring this trend to ensure that appropriate resources are provided to the agency, enabling them to carry out their statutory duties.

**Finding 23 (24-Hour Critical Incident Notifications):** §63-11-2280 requires the nine agencies enumerated in §63-11-2240(A) to report to the State Child Advocate when a critical incident has occurred involving a minor in their care. In the Department’s most recent annual report, it notes that while the number of agencies reporting critical incidents has increased over the previous fiscal year, the timeliness of these reports has, unfortunately, decreased significantly. In FY23, the agency reported a 65% rate of reports made within the statutorily required 24 hours. In FY24, however, this rate dropped to 56%. As Figure 8 shows, some agencies have a 100% rate of reporting within the statutory period, but others fall significantly short of that standard.

**Recommendation 23 (24-Hour Critical Incident Notifications):** The Senate should request that the Legislative Audit Council conduct a system level performance audit of this issue to determine why agencies are delayed in their reporting and make recommendations to the General Assembly on ways this issue can be remedied.

Agency	Total Notifications	Within 24 Hours	After 24 Hours	Timeliness not Reported	Compliance Rate
DDSN	1	-	1	-	0%
DHEC	50	5	44	1	10%
DHHS	83	36	47	-	43%
DJJ	1957	1189	761	7	61%*
DMH	373	225	147	1	60%
DSS	426	165	250	11	39%
SCSDB	1	1	-	-	100%
WLG	2	2	-	-	100%
Not Recorded	1	1	-	-	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,894</b>	<b>1,624</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>56%</b>

Figure 8 – CIN Response Times by Agency, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

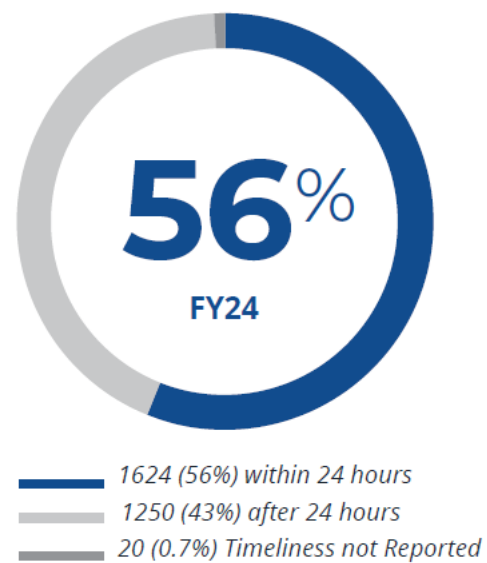
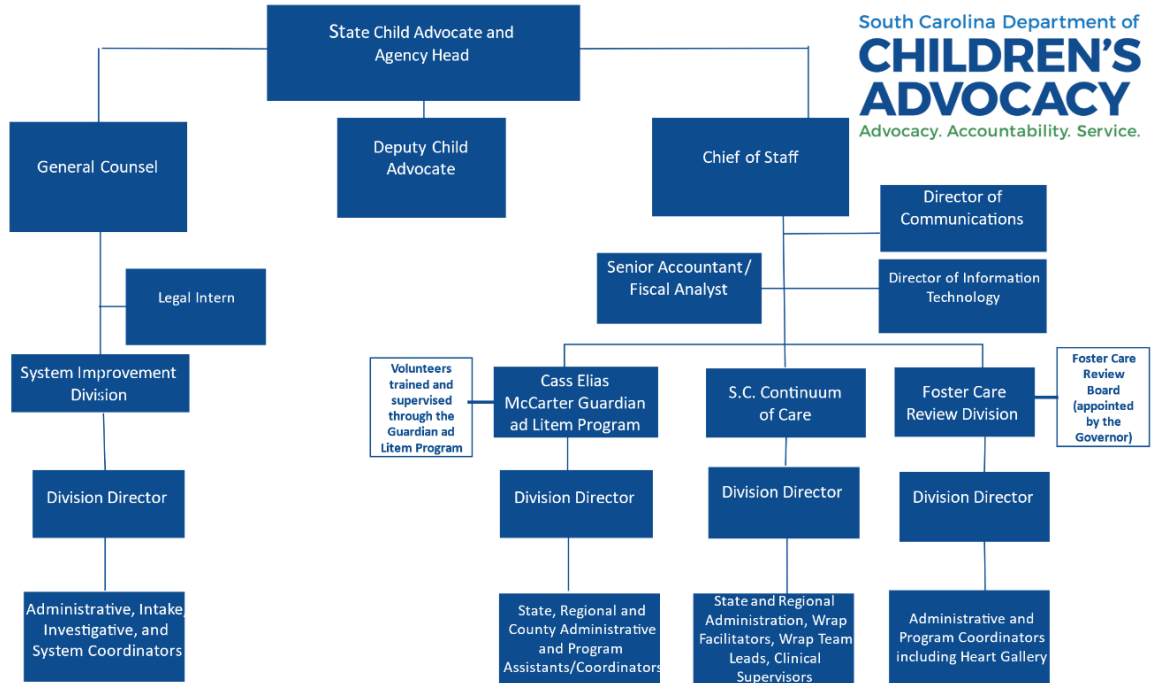


Figure 9 – CIN Response Times, Source: Department of Children’s Advocacy

# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1 Department of Children’s Advocacy Organizational Chart



## Appendix 2 - Volunteer Guardians ad Litem Needed by County (as of March 24, 2025)

Region	County Name	Volunteers needed*
1	ABBEVILLE	2
3	AIKEN	29
4	ALLENDALE	1
1	ANDERSON	48
3	BAMBERG	1
3	BARNWELL	3
4	BEAUFORT	11
4	BERKELEY	39
4	CALHOUN	3
4	CHARLESTON	44
1	CHEROKEE	19
3	CHESTER	15
2	CHESTERFIELD	7
2	CLARENDON	6
4	COLLETON	17
2	DARLINGTON	31
2	DILLON	7
4	DORCHESTER	7
3	EDGEFIELD	5
3	FAIRFIELD	4
2	FLORENCE	32
2	GEORGETOWN	1
1	GREENVILLE	64

Region	County Name	Volunteers needed*
1	GREENWOOD	13
4	HAMPTON	6
2	HORRY	5
4	JASPER	10
3	KERSHAW	16
3	LANCASTER	15
1	LAURENS	24
2	LEE	5
3	LEXINGTON	19
2	MARION	11
2	MARLBORO	3
3	MCCORMICK	1
1	NEWBERRY	3
1	OCONEE	16
4	ORANGEBURG	29
1	PICKENS	9
3	SALUDA	3
1	SPARTANBURG	76
2	SUMTER	12
1	UNION	5
2	WILLIAMSBURG	10
3	YORK	49
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>736</b>

Source: Department of Children's Advocacy via email dated March 24, 2025

\*Chart determined by dividing the total number of staff cases by 2, as each volunteer typically carries two cases at a time.

## Appendix 3 Foster Care Review Board – Local Board Reviews FY 2024

<b>Board</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Counties Served</b> (every board also reviews children managed by the regional adoptions office)	<b>Total Child Reviews Scheduled</b>	<b>Child Reviews Completed</b>	<b>Child Reviews Continued</b>	<b>Child Reviews Canceled</b>
01A	Low Country	Calhoun, Orangeburg	130	107	13	10
01B	Low Country	Dorchester	93	85	8	0
09A	Low Country	Charleston	110	103	5	2
09C	Low Country	Charleston	75	64	4	7
09D	Low Country	Charleston	114	107	6	1
09E	Low Country	Berkeley	252	161	88	3
14A	Low Country	Allendale, Colleton, Hampton	90	80	9	1
14B	Low Country	Beaufort, Jasper	121	99	19	3
02A	Midlands	Aiken, Barnwell	123	112	11	0
02B	Midlands	Aiken, Bamberg	120	104	13	3
05A	Midlands	Richland	202	110	68	24
05B	Midlands	Richland	221	141	79	1
05C	Midlands	Richland	199	136	56	7
05D	Midlands	Richland	269	187	71	11
05E	Midlands	Kershaw	195	180	14	1
06A	Midlands	Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster	202	166	33	3
11A	Midlands	Lexington	149	132	15	2
11B	Midlands	Edgefield, Lexington, McCormick, Saluda	162	128	32	2
16B	Midlands	York	111	92	17	2
16A	Midlands/Upstate	Union, York	167	143	24	0
03A	Pee Dee	Clarendon, Williamsburg	95	83	12	0
03B	Pee Dee	Sumter, Lee	108	76	31	1
04A	Pee Dee	Dillon, Marlboro	71	65	6	0
04B	Pee Dee	Chesterfield, Darlington	162	152	1	9
12A	Pee Dee	Florence	106	91	13	2
12B	Pee Dee	Marion	49	49	0	0
15A	Pee Dee	Georgetown	31	28	3	0
15B	Pee Dee	Horry	141	84	56	1
15C	Pee Dee	Horry	179	146	33	0
07A	Upstate	Spartanburg	169	149	18	2
07B	Upstate	Cherokee	77	75	2	0
07C	Upstate	Spartanburg	109	74	31	4
07D	Upstate	Spartanburg	119	77	42	0
08A	Upstate	Abbeville, Greenwood, Newberry	138	103	34	1
08B	Upstate	Laurens	231	170	60	1
10A	Upstate	Oconee	88	86	2	0
10B	Upstate	Anderson	135	120	10	5
10C	Upstate	Anderson	110	104	0	6
13B	Upstate	Greenville	71	62	9	0
13C	Upstate	Greenville	160	129	31	0
13D	Upstate	Greenville	100	86	14	0
13E	Upstate	Pickens	74	69	4	1
13F	Upstate	Greenville	78	70	8	0
<b>Total</b>			<b>5706</b>	<b>4585</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>116</b>



# SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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If you have information concerning waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, misconduct, violations of state or federal law, and wrongdoing in the Executive Branch of state government, please contact the Office of Inspector General. You can file a complaint at: [oig.sc.gov](http://oig.sc.gov)

If you have information pertaining to this or any other agency under review by the Senate Legislative Oversight Committee, please contact us in one of the following ways:

**Legislative Oversight Committee  
Post Office Box 142  
Columbia, SC 29202**

**Tel: (803) 212-6442**

**SenateOversight@scsenate.gov**

