

# House Way and Means Committee

Healthcare Subcommittee  
FY25 Budget Hearing



South Carolina Department of  
**CHILDREN'S  
ADVOCACY**  
Advocacy. Accountability. Service.

# Key Officials/ Attendees

- **Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., C.G.S. – Psychiatric Rehab., CWLS**  
Director, Department of Children's Advocacy
- **Kayla Capps, J.D.**  
Deputy Director
- **Thomas Kaminer**  
Agency Budget Director, Department of Administration Shared  
Services

# Agency Overview

## The Department of Children's Advocacy:

- **Supports** approximately 200 employees and 1500 volunteers/board members with offices throughout the state and a central office on the Statehouse complex.
- **Examines** system-wide services provided to children by nine (9) state agencies
- **Ensures** timely, safe, and effective services
- **Develops and promotes** a broad vision of reform
- **Recommends** quality improvements for children's services
- **Educates** the public regarding the role of Children's Advocacy's and other agencies' services
- **Serves** as a member of the State Child Fatality Advisory Committee(Chair, October 2022 -present), Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children, and other committees
- **Maintains** the Child Abuse Coordination Protocol and facilitates meetings

# Agency Overview

## The Department of Children's Advocacy administers the:

- **Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program** which provides Guardians ad Litem to serve as court-appointed special advocates for all abused and neglected children who are involved in DSS court cases;
- **Foster Care Review Division** which supports the local and state Foster Care Review Boards in reviewing the cases of children who are in foster care to advocate for permanence;
- **S.C. Continuum of Care** which provides High Fidelity Wraparound care coordination to youth with challenging emotional and behavioral issues to help safely maintain them in their homes, schools and communities;
- **Investigations Unit** which receives, refers, monitors and investigates complaints regarding services to children by nine (9) specific child-serving agencies; and
- **Critical Investigations Unit** which receives and responds to critical incident notifications including fatalities, near-fatalities, and sexual assaults from nine (9) child-serving agencies.

# **FY25 Budget Request**

**Recurring Funding:** \$ 3,440,508.00

**Non-Recurring Funding:** \$ 82,400.00

**Total:** \$3,522,908.00

This request aligns with the goals and targets of the agency's Annual Accountability Report and with the agency's mission, vision, and statutory mandates.

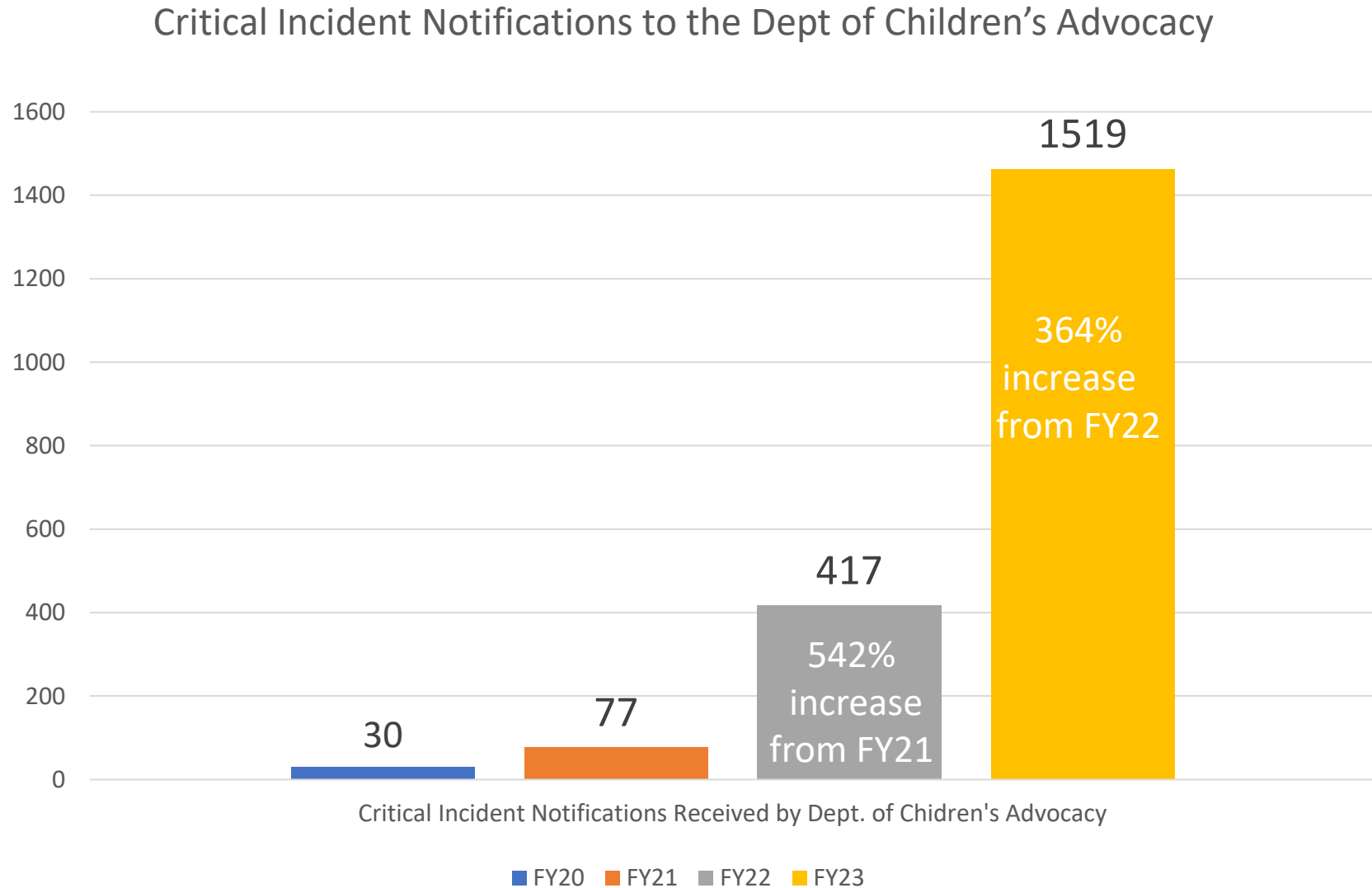
# FY25 Budget Requests

## *Priority 1*

### Agency Priority 1 – Recurring Funds System Improvement \$ 1,013,517.00

- Complaint submissions to the Investigations Unit (IU) increased by 38.9% during FY23. The Unit had 2 FTE Investigators in FY23. All cases should be assigned to Investigators, and Investigator caseloads should be between 25 and 30 cases per Investigator. Three additional Investigations Unit positions are requested.
- Critical incident Unit (CIU) notifications including fatalities and near fatalities increased by 364% in FY23 after an increase of 542% in FY22. There were 1519 critical incident notifications to the agency in FY23 with 1 FTE Investigator to review these matters and conduct investigations when appropriate.
- For FY24, the Agency requested 2 FTEs for the Investigations Units and received 2 FTEs.
- A total of 10 FTEs (3 for complaint responses and 7 for responses to critical incident notifications) are requested to create sufficient capacity to respond to complaints and critical incident notifications.

# Critical Incident Notifications to the Department of Children's Advocacy



# Investigations

Units'



# Workloads

## Investigations Unit

- The complaint intake for the year was 2,955.
- This unit conducted 349 investigations.
- This unit currently has 5 FTEs.

## Critical Investigations Unit

- The critical incident notifications were 1,519.
- This unit had 624 investigations.
- This unit currently has 3 FTEs.





# Impact

# Investigations

Units'



# Workloads

## Investigations Unit

- The complaint intake for the year was 2,955.
- This unit conducted 349 investigations.
- This unit currently has 5 FTEs.
- Requesting 3 new FTEs for a total of 8 FTEs.

## Critical Investigations Unit

- The critical incident notifications were 1,519.
- This unit had 624 investigations.
- This unit currently has 3 FTEs.
- Requesting 7 new FTEs for a total of 10 FTEs.

# FY25 Budget Requests

## *Priority 2*

### Agency Priority 2 – Recurring Funds **Best-Interest Advocacy for Abused and Neglected Children** \$1,843,300.00

- State law requires the appointment of a Guardian ad Litem in abuse and neglect actions. These appointments are different from Guardians ad Litem for private cases.
- The Program served 12,058 children with an average of 6,872 served per month in FY23.
- At the end of FY2023, 48% of children had qualified and trained Department of Children's Advocacy **staff** appointed to serve as Guardians ad Litem for upwards of 50 children per employee due to a lack of volunteers.
- The Heart Gallery recently opened its newest and largest exhibit at the Columbiana Centre and partners with the Department of Social Services to recruit adoptive families for children in foster care. There is currently one FTE for the Heart Gallery. Additional support will allow the Heart Gallery to create and support additional beautiful exhibits.
- For FY24, the Agency requested 16 FTEs for the GAL Program and received 4 FTEs.
- A total of 22 FTEs (21 for the Guardian ad Litem Program and 1 for the Heart Gallery) are requested to create sufficient capacity to provide quality best-interest advocacy and adoptive recruitment for abused and neglected children.

# Advocacy for Abused and/or Neglected Court-Involved Children



12,058 children in FY23

The Guardian ad Litem Program assigned best-interest advocates for 12,058 children in FY23

6,872 children per month

The Guardian ad Litem Program served an average of 6,872 children per month in FY23

1300 active volunteers across 45 counties

52% of children were appointed a volunteer Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

120 Guardian ad Litem staff

48% of children were appointed a trained staff person as their GAL



# Impact

# FY25 Budget Requests

## *Priority 3*

### Agency Priority 3 – Recurring Funds Continuum of Care Transfer Alignment \$400,000

- DCA seeks a budget alignment in the event DMH is no longer required to transfer \$400,000 to Continuum of Care pursuant to Proviso 35.1
- Proviso 35.1 has been in effect for approximately 20 years.
- **This request is not necessary if Proviso 35.1 is not changed.**



# Impact

# **FY25 Budget Requests**

## ***Priority 4***

Agency Priority 4 – Recurring Funds  
**Senior Accountant/Fiscal Analyst for the Agency**  
\$98,691.00

- Children's Advocacy current internal budget liaison is the Agency Director who is also the State Child Advocate.
- A Senior Accountant/Fiscal Analyst, in concert with Shared Services, State Child Advocate, and agency leadership, would organize and supervise program compliance and financial audits for the diverse budgets within the agency.
- **1 FTE is requested to provide capacity for fiscal analysis and budget support within the agency.**





# Impact

# FY25 Budget Requests

## *Priority 5*

### Agency Priority 5 – Recurring Funds **Microsoft Office 365/IT Licensing** \$85,000

- The South Carolina Department of Administration (Admin) conducted an audit of its Division of Technology Operations (DTO) regarding Microsoft Office 365 licensing.
- While in the past Admin assumed Office 365 licensing costs for its customers, DTO has passed on this fee to its Shared Services agencies as it engages with customers in other activities.
- The July 1, 2023 bill was \$84,669.36.
- **Recurring funding of \$85,000 is requested to support the Agency's subscription to Microsoft Office 365 including Teams, One Drive and SharePoint.**



# Impact

# FY25 Budget Requests

## *Priority 6 and Priority 7*

### Agency Priority 6 – Non-Recurring Funds **Workstations and Equipment for New FTEs** \$82,400

- This non-recurring funding is for equipment, including workstations, for 33 new FTEs to be divided among Guardian ad Litem Program (21 FTEs), Investigations Unit (3 FTEs), Critical Investigations Unit (6 FTEs), System Improvement Division (1 FTE), Heart Gallery (1 FTE), and Administration (1 FTE).
- Non-recurring funding is requested for workstations and equipment to support new FTEs and office moves.

### Agency Priority 7 – Does not require funding **Realignment of Earmarked FTE Authorization** \$ none

- This is not a request for fund transfer but a request for realignment of earmarked FTE authorization.
- In response to the agency's needs and based on the divisions' funding, positions were reclassified from Foster Care Review Division and Continuum of Care to positions for Guardian ad Litem Program and Investigations Unit.
- There needs to be a realignment of earmarked FTE authorizations to reflect these positions transfers. Specifically, Foster Care Review Divisions earmarked FTE authorization should be changed from 19.19 to 14.40, and Continuum of Care's earmarked FTE authorization should be changed from 42 to 30.



# Impact

# FY25 Budget Request Summary

## Agency Priority 1 – System Improvement and Investigations

**\$1,013,517.00**

Complaint submissions increased by 38.9% during FY23. Critical incident notifications including fatalities and near fatalities increased by 542% in FY22 and by an additional 364% in FY23. A total of 10 FTEs (3 for complaint responses and 7 for responses to critical incident notifications) are requested to create sufficient capacity to conduct investigations and respond to complaints and critical incident notifications with quality, efficiency, and effectiveness.

## Agency Priority 2 – Best-Interest Advocacy for Abused and Neglected Children

**\$1,843,300.00**

State law requires the appointment of a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in abuse and neglect actions. Last year, the Guardian ad Litem Program served 14,425 children, and 48% of children had qualified and trained Department of Children's Advocacy **staff** appointed as GALs. The Heart Gallery has one FTE to recruit adoptive families for children in foster care. A total of 22 FTEs (21 for the Guardian ad Litem Program and 1 for Heart Gallery) are requested to create sufficient capacity to provide quality best-interest advocacy and adoptive recruitment for abused and neglected children.

## Agency Priority 3 – Continuum of Care Transfer Alignment

**\$400,000 (no funding requested if there is no proviso change)**

## Agency Priority 4 – Senior Accountant/Fiscal Analyst for the Agency

**\$98,691.00**

## Agency Priority 5 – Microsoft Licensing

**\$85,000.00**

## Agency Priority 6 – Workstations and Equipment for New FTEs

**\$82,400.00 (non-recurring)**

## Agency Priority 7 – Realignment of Earmarked FTE Authorization

**\$0 (no funding requested)**



South Carolina Department of

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