

# 2026 Annual Accountability Report

## Department of Children's Advocacy

## Agency Code: L080

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| AGENCY NAME: | Department of Children's Advocacy | | |
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| AGENCY CODE: | L080 | SECTION: | 41 |

# AGENCY'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Department of Children's Advocacy is an independent state agency that administers advocacy and accountability for children and youth in addition to examining, on a system-wide basis, the care and services state agencies provide children. Its enabling legislation transferred to the agency the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program (S.C. Code of Laws Ann. 63-11-500, et. seq.), Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children (S.C. Code of Laws Ann. 63-11-1310, et. seq.), and the Division for Review of the Foster Care of Children (S.C. Code of Laws Ann. 63-11-700, et. seq.), all of which were former divisions of the Office of Executive Policy and Programs within the Department of Administration.

The state child advocate, who is also the DCA director, is responsible for ensuring that children receive adequate protection and care from services or programs offered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD), the Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe (JDLH), the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School (WLG), and the School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB).

DCA's mission is to champion advocacy, accountability, and service to improve outcomes for children served by state agencies in South Carolina. Its vision statement is "Growing a community where children thrive."

DCA has seen many changes in FY26, perhaps the biggest of which was the appointment and confirmation of Margaret Bodman as South Carolina's second state child advocate. Bodman was appointed on July 11, 2025, and confirmed by the SC Senate on April 21, 2026.

## CONTINUUM OF CARE

Continuum of Care (COC), led by Division Director Greg Wright, was created by legislation in 1983 to develop and enhance the delivery of services to youth with severe emotional or behavioral health diagnoses and to ensure that the special needs of this population are met appropriately to the extent possible within the state. COC performs its work by providing intensive care coordination (ICC) services to children and families.

The end of FY25 coincided with the end of COC's five-year contract with DHHS for the Palmetto Coordinated System of Care (PCSC) waiver. Consequently, COC could no longer provide ICC services to youth enrolled in a Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) and had until July 31, 2025, to wrap up services with already-enrolled youth and transfer them to their MCO.

In FY26, COC continued to provide ICC to 37 children across the state who either receive Medicaid Fee for Service or do not receive Medicaid at all. This figure is in line with the total youths served in these categories in previous years. The absence of the PCSC waiver caused a dramatic reduction in the overall number of children receiving ICC services (and the amount of money COC could receive in reimbursement), forcing COC to spend much of FY26 actively exploring new revenue streams and better ways to provide services to children with complex and challenging mental and behavioral health needs.

COC uses the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) to objectively measure a youth's improvement and the efficacy of the ICC services it provides. CAFAS gauges how children function in daily life activities and assesses the level of impairment of children and adolescents who have been or are at risk for emotional, behavioral, substance abuse, psychiatric, or psychological problems. Youth are evaluated at enrollment to record a baseline number and then every 90 days until treatment concludes. By the end of the

program, youth should see a significantly reduced CAFAS score. That score, coupled with a team decision, helps determine when care coordination services are no longer needed.

Between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, CAFAS scores dropped an average of 37 points across the state's four regions, surpassing the 30-point goal set in DCA's FY25 Annual Accountability Report (AAR). The large reduction may be related to changes in the program's service delivery, including the transition away from the National Wraparound Implementation Center (NWIC) model. The reduced administrative demands associated with Wraparound allowed staff to focus more consistently on care coordination and the individual needs of youth and families. This, combined with an overall smaller number of youth receiving services during the reporting period meant that staff had greater capacity to provide individualized support, monitor progress more closely, and better coordinate services.

Of the 37 children served in FY26, 89 percent were able to stay in their homes, school, and communities thanks to the ICC services they received. This was higher than COC's goal of 80 percent, set forth in the FY25 AAR.

With the sharp decline of youth enrolled in ICC services, there was understandable uncertainty and concern from COC staff about what the future would hold. Some attrition was inevitable, and COC lost 10 employees, ending FY26 with a 38 percent vacancy rate, which was higher than its 33 percent goal. The 31 employees who stayed were redirected to other tasks, remaining active, productive, and able to continue child advocacy:

- Many staff members were trained and certified as guardians ad litem and took on cases assigned to GAL Program staff, lessening the workload of those employees.
- Others were assigned to research and write various grant proposals to find new revenue streams, or started outreach efforts with schools, agencies, and nonprofit organizations to increase referrals.
- COC's clinically licensed professionals provided direct support for site visits conducted with SI, checking the physical and emotional wellbeing of youth in juvenile detention centers.
- COC's trainer supported GAL, FCR, and SI by providing training to these divisions' staff members.

A hiring freeze was implemented for COC, while open positions in other divisions were first advertised internally for any staff member who wanted to move within the agency. Director Wright also began a new monthly newsletter, COC Quick Updates, to bolster transparency and ensure all staff were kept informed of decisions during the transition.

To maintain staffing levels and offset budget pressures during this transition and without new core funding, COC implemented various cost-saving measures throughout the fiscal year, including transferring nine vehicle leases to SI and GAL; scaling down the Fidelity EHR software licenses from 65 to 6; ending its 11-year contract with NWIC; and reducing its footprint by moving approximately half of the state office staff from the Edgar Brown Building on the State House grounds to the Midlands regional office.

COC was funded through general appropriations for FY26. However, the division has been working hard to secure a dedicated funding source and has been in talks with various state agencies, including DHHS, DJJ, DSS and the USC Children's Law Center, and has also applied for a grant through the US Department of Justice.

In May 2026, an MOU was signed with DSS and training began for a new partnership with DJJ and DSS to help justice-involved youth receive support services that will allow them to safely stay in their homes and communities. The ultimate goal is to create a community-based service to reduce youth crisis escalation and limit further DJJ or potential DSS involvement through participation in a Family Engagement Meeting (FEM). At the conclusion of the FEM, a decision is made to determine if the youth is able to remain in the community,

either with family or fictive kin. The program is expected to launch by mid-FY27 in Anderson, Greenville, Richland, and Spartanburg counties before expanding to other parts of the state.

In FY27, DCA will propose a revision regarding eligibility requirements to COC's legislative mandate, Article 13 and State Code Chapter 31. This would allow the division to expand its scope of work and provide early intervention services to children and youth with emerging emotional or behavioral health diagnoses, rather than serving as a system of last resort for children with long-term mental health conditions.

## FOSTER CARE REVIEW

The Foster Care Review Division (FCRD) was created in 1974 and is responsible for administering the Foster Care Review Boards (FCRB), which review the cases of children in foster care to advocate for permanency.

FCRD is led by Stephanie Spink, who became interim director when the former director, Lindsey Taylor, departed the agency in April 2026. While new to this position, Spink is a 21-year veteran of FCRD, having joined the division in May 2005 as a review board coordinator. She has also served as program supervisor and, for the last seven years, as program manager. Prior to her career with FCRD, she served 10 years with DSS in a wide variety of roles. She earned her bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies and her master's in social work from the University of South Carolina.

Statutorily, FCRB is tasked with reviewing case progress and steps being taken to expedite permanency for children in foster care. Local review boards begin reviewing the cases of each child who has been in foster care for four months and then again, every six months thereafter, while the child is in the legal custody of DSS. FCRD schedules each review, during which DSS provides case records and details, and parents, caregivers, and other involved parties share updates and their knowledge of the case.

In FY26, FCRD scheduled 6,419 reviews for 5,641 individual children as compared with 5,309 reviews for 3,558 children in FY25. The division also met its goal of having 100 percent of children in care be scheduled for a timely review throughout the fiscal year.

Efforts for statutory change that began in FY23 paid off in FY26. On May 18, 2026, Governor McMaster signed S858 into law. This legislation streamlines the board member appointment process by granting appointing authority directly to DCA's agency director upon recommendation from the county legislative delegation. It also updates the removal process for local board members and allows for adjustments to board structure and size.

Under the updated law, current board members may only serve until their terms expire, ending the practice of holdover status. Consequently, board members with expired terms may not participate in local review meetings until formally reappointed. The new law allows the division to confirm that local board members are in good standing and have completed the necessary paperwork to ensure that board recommendations are legally binding. FCRD collaborated with DCA to establish a new appointment and reappointment framework.

At the end of FY25, the division proposed regulatory amendments to enhance foster care advocacy and ensure consistent, transparent, and timely review processes statewide. Following two October 2025 stakeholder sessions and a consultation with board members, valuable feedback was incorporated into the final draft. Officially approved and adopted on May 22, 2026, these updated regulations represent the first formal promulgation since 1996, significantly streamlining review processes and aligning them with current standards.

FCRD ended FY26 with 79 local board vacancies (a 37 percent vacancy rate), a slight decrease over the 82 vacancies in FY25. In January, the former director, in conjunction with the State Board of Directors, began

developing a board restructuring plan to consolidate resources and maximize operational efficiency. After reviewing South Carolina's foster care trends over the past 10 years and analyzing the current board structure's ability to deliver a highly effective case review system, the division identified several areas where the local board structure could be modified to operate with increased efficiency. The proposal recommended deactivating six local boards, reducing the total number from 43 to 37 and overall board member positions from 215 to 185. Four of the six boards are scheduled to be deactivated in FY27, bringing the numbers to 39 active local boards and 195 board positions. A timeline for the deactivation of the other two boards has yet to be determined.

In October, the division began developing a quality assurance process with a goal of strengthening the services provided to children and families by building a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Enhancements to FCRD's Child Advocacy Management System (CAMS) made significant progress in FY26, most notably by completing integration with DSS's case management system. While refinements to system functionality and data exchange continue, this integration has already delivered key operational efficiencies for both FCRD and DSS. Furthermore, the division made advances toward its goal of becoming 100% paperless.

## SOUTH CAROLINA HEART GALLERY

The South Carolina Heart Gallery (SCHG), a program of FCRD, works to find forever families for children in foster care who are legally free and awaiting adoption. In FY26, the program received 836 inquiries from prospective families, resulting in four successful adoptions.

SCHG commemorated its 20th anniversary in November 2025, coinciding with National Adoption Month. Created in 2005 by former FCRD staff member Mildred Qualls, SCHG has been funded through a contract with the Department of Social Services since 2008. To fulfill its mission, SCHG recruits volunteer photographers who capture high-quality portraits of children at scenic locations across the state.

The program conducted 18 photoshoots for 65 children, including group sessions, photos taken at DSS adoption and recruitment events, and individualized "front porch sessions" for medically fragile children or those needing specialized attention. Thirty-three children also received professional videos through SCHG's continued partnership with Grant Me Hope, a nonprofit agency dedicated to elevating the voices of children who need forever families.

Photos and videos are shared on SCHG's website and Facebook page, and featured on television newscasts, including WIS in the Midlands, FoxCarolina in the Upstate, and ABC4 News in the Lowcountry. In addition to its "Forever Families" segment during evening broadcasts, ABC4 News also periodically features the Heart Gallery on its "Lowcountry Live" program, sponsored by Trey Harrell Law Firm. Framed portraits continued to be displayed at special exhibits statewide, including SCHG's ongoing partnership with Columbiana Centre, which began in FY24.

SCHG began discussions to integrate itself into FCRD's CAMS system, which will support improved data reporting and streamline operational processes. CAMS's functionality will allow for inquiry handling, vendor coordination, electronic form submissions, and exhibit management, enhancing SCHG's efficiency and long-term sustainability.

## GUARDIAN AD LITEM

The Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program is statutorily responsible for assigning a guardian ad litem (GAL) to serve as a court-appointed special advocate for each child who is involved in a DSS abuse and neglect case in family court in all counties except Richland. As a result, GALs are assigned to children who are in foster care, as well as children who are placed with their family or other adults through family preservation if there is a DSS legal proceeding in family court.

In FY26, GAL provided best-interest advocacy for 9,817 children, serving an average of 5,235 children each month. The program meets this need through a small army of approximately 1,000 active volunteers and 150 full-time staff. Volunteers, who typically carry an average of two cases at a time, were assigned to 44 percent of these children in FY26, while staff attended to the remaining 56 percent.

Following the departure of former state director Jennifer Burch, DCA leadership decided to split the responsibilities into two positions. The next state director would oversee the day-to-day operations of the division and manage the GAL Program in accordance with established federal, state, and local laws, policies, and procedures. The new assistant state director position would manage operations at GAL county offices statewide, ensuring policies and procedures are adhered to and applied consistently.

In October 2025, Estelle Stevenson was promoted as the new statewide director. Stevenson has more than 27 years of child welfare experience and has been with the GAL Program since 2013 as the county director for the Chester and Fairfield office. In December 2025, Krystal Jennings was named as the program's first assistant state director. Jennings previously served as GAL's Midlands regional director. She joined GAL in 2017 as the county director for Edgefield, Saluda, and McCormick counties.

FY26 marked the first full year that CasaManager has been in use. The case management system, which debuted in FY25, has increased efficiency by streamlining reporting processes and providing staff with timely access to accurate information. All documents in a child's file can now be uploaded into the system and easily viewed by computer, tablet, or phone. CasaManager has also strengthened quality assurance by ensuring compliance with established standards and policies. Monthly data reviews are easier to pull, allowing the division to identify and proactively address gaps, errors, and areas of concern more quickly. The data also highlights where additional resources are needed, providing continuously improved services.

In March 2026, the agency began training volunteers on how to use CasaManager's volunteer portal to enter, view, and update their case documents and information while still abiding by all confidentiality and HIPAA laws. Use of the portal is optional, but it provides volunteers other perks, like an easier way to track their service hours. The division has activated a slow rollout to ensure volunteers receive the proper training.

For both FY25 and FY26, GAL noted that despite the high number of new volunteers joining the ranks, the overall number of volunteers remained largely flat, so GAL decided to start deliberately tracking attrition. While the surprising 35 percent attrition rate played a major factor in the decrease of volunteers available to take cases, other factors included the purge of inactive volunteers that had still been on the rolls in CasaManager and the discovery that a number of volunteer GALs held caseloads higher than were recommended or allowed. Those cases were reassigned to staff to put them in alignment with division policy.

An analysis of the reasons for a volunteer GAL to separate from the program found that 27 percent were removed by the program for reasons related to being non-responsive, while more than half left for reasons related to health, employment, a move, or family or personal reasons, all things over which a volunteer has little control. GAL will further analyze these numbers in FY27 to develop strategies to help lower the attrition rate.

A silver lining is that, despite the attrition, the net number of volunteers remains approximately 1,000 thanks to the hard work of the recruitment and training team. Their efforts included attending 171 local events, issuing 785 press releases, conducting three radio/tv/podcast interviews, placing brochures in 34 counties across the state, sharing 224 social media posts, and disseminating 27 regional newsletters.

A strategic decision was made to not hold pre-service training in April, allowing recruitment and training staff to focus on outreach efforts during Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month. The success of this approach was particularly evident in the Upstate, where a television interview featuring the Upstate recruiter/trainer, along with focused recruitment efforts, contributed to 233 inquiries and 23 completed applications in April. That momentum continued with an additional 96 inquiries and 40 completed applications in May and June, for a total of 329 inquiries and 63 completed applications during the final quarter of FY26.

The recruitment and training coordinator (RTC) created a new tracking system to ensure volunteer-candidates met all training requirements, including class attendance, assignments, and documentation within six months of the end of training. While not all potential volunteers were able to complete the coursework (a total of 54 withdrew due to circumstances beyond their control), 64 who initially experienced difficulties were ultimately activated as volunteers, thanks to consistent follow-up, assistance, and encouragement from the RTC.

These efforts paid off, with GAL receiving 538 applications that led to 319 new volunteers who now serve as guardians ad litem. Pre-service training completion also jumped from 59 percent in FY25 to 63 percent in FY26. These totals do not include participants who began training in June but finished in July, as well as any candidates still working towards completion at the end of FY26. Those new volunteers will be reflected in FY27 figures. Schedules will also be modified to avoid having a training cycle start in one fiscal year and end in another.

To ensure that current volunteers feel supported and are more willing to stay involved, GAL created a mentorship program and is continuing to build out the mileage reimbursement initiative implemented in April 2025. Previously, all travel-related costs to visit children and attend court were borne solely by the volunteer. This incentive seeks to ease the financial burden for volunteers, which might otherwise have prevented them from taking a case, or staying involved at all.

During its trial rollout, volunteer reimbursements were capped at $150 per month. This was to measure its reception and usage. The feedback has been tremendous, with the amount reimbursed in FY26 totaling almost $150,000. Without the cap, the total would have been approximately $230,000. GAL is encouraged that this is a valuable way to help retain volunteers and have them be more willing to accept cases that involve traveling to children placed out of their county of origin. The division intends to request funding to continue the program in the FY28 budget cycle.

County-level quality assurance audits, conducted by the quality assurance team, determine how well both staff and volunteers are completing their duties. In FY26, 89 percent of county offices achieved a passing audit score of 80 or higher. The statewide average audit score was 86, including 16 offices that achieved an "Exceptional" rating of 90 or higher.

Since DCA's launch in FY20, GAL has been fortunate to receive either a Victim of Crimes Act (VOCA) or a Supplemental Allocation for Victim Services (SAVS) grant that has allowed the program to strengthen its staffing capacity. However, the grants have steadily decreased over the past six years, reducing the number of staff that can be hired through this funding source. In FY26, only 3 positions were filled, compared to 10 in FY20.

DCA requested and received 14 FTEs for the GAL program for FY26. The division's operational model anticipates that all court-appointed GALs will eventually be volunteers, but until there are a sufficient number to serve all of the children in DSS abuse and neglect court proceedings, additional staff are needed to ensure children are receiving best-interest advocacy as required by law and best practice. The agency requested 10 FTEs for FY27. These new positions will help phase out and replace the time-limited positions, which are not supported by recurring state funding.

Guardians ad litem must be represented by attorneys in court, and the GAL program works with approximately 32 independent attorneys to provide this representation. To strengthen legal oversight and support, GAL hired Mary Watters as general counsel in July 2025 and Justin Montgomery as staff attorney in December.

## SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

As part of its enabling legislation, DCA is responsible for ensuring children receive adequate protection and care from services and programs offered by nine specific child-serving state agencies. DCA is also tasked with examining on a system-wide basis the services these agencies provide and making recommendations to improve the quality of those services to give each child the opportunity to live a full and productive life.

System Improvement (SI), led by Division Director Melissa Pettinato-Irby, is key to fulfilling that mission and oversees the teams that are primarily responsible for ensuring children receive adequate protection and care from child-serving agencies. The Critical Investigations Unit (CIU) handles critical incidents that are self-reported by these agencies. The Investigations Unit (IU) handles complaints from the public concerning these agencies.

A third unit under SI began in FY26. The Direct Representation Program will provide direct legal representation for children aged 13 and up, including their younger siblings, who have entered foster care in Berkeley, Clarendon, and Sumter counties.

By the end of FY26, the program had one FTE attorney in place and was in various stages of hiring the other two. SI expects to have all three attorneys hired within the first quarter of FY27. South Carolina is one of only four states in the US that does not guarantee some form of right to counsel for children in abuse and neglect proceedings. This program aims to provide that representation.

The division completed 232 visits and program engagements across South Carolina in FY26. This included 12 facility tours, 17 leadership meetings, 56 child-specific visits, 54 planned visits, and 94 unannounced visits. These activities allowed IU and CIU to interact directly with children and personnel at provider locations; observe programs and services firsthand; and gain a better understanding of the environments and resources available to children across the state.

SI has begun the search for a new database management system to enhance its ability to identify trends, service gaps, barriers, recurring concerns, and potential systemic issues through information gathered from the complaints and critical incidents it receives and the investigations and other activities it conducts. A more flexible system would allow the division to examine information from multiple perspectives and other relevant factors, as needs and priorities emerge. In March 2026, SI developed a comprehensive list of operational, programmatic, and data requirements for its ideal case management system. These requirements are being used to evaluate available systems and identify a solution that will meet current needs while providing flexibility for future data collection, analysis, and reporting. SI will take steps toward procurement in FY27.

### CRITICAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Critical Investigations Unit, led by Wanda Banker, was officially established in FY23, but the agency has been handling "critical incidents" since its inception in FY20. Critical incidents are reported directly to DCA by the nine child-serving agencies and involve fatal, near-fatal, or serious bodily or emotional injuries to a child in the care of, or receiving services from, the state.

Six agencies reported a total of 5,301 critical incident notifications (CIN) in FY26, with an additional 165 cases held over from previous fiscal years. This brings the total number of complaints in the system during FY26 to 5,466. Of those 3,912 were reviewed, and it was determined that no investigation was necessary, as the agency

followed proper policies and protocols. The other 1,554 were reviewed and investigated with 1,153 finding adequate services were provided; 72 finding inadequate services that were remedied; 82 finding inadequate services that were not remedied; and 247 were still open and carried over into FY27.

The 5,301 CINs represents a 75% increase from FY25. The year-over-year rise in reports is not necessarily unusual in the history of the agency and does not necessarily indicate that critical incidents involving children are occurring more frequently. Notification volume can be influenced by a variety of factors, including reporting practices, awareness of reporting requirements, and an increase in meetings, site visits, and other interactions between SI and the reporting agencies. The number of notifications received should be understood solely as a measure of incidents reported to SI.

The response time within the statutory reporting time frame was 64 percent, almost twice as high as FY25 (34 percent). This may be due to increased meetings, site visits, and other interactions with the reporting agencies.

**INVESTIGATIONS UNIT**

Since DCA's founding, the Investigations Unit (IU) has been integral to child wellbeing by receiving, referring, investigating, and/or monitoring complaints from the public against nine child-serving agencies. It is led by Unit Director Laurie Davidson and includes state office investigative staff. The information they collect helps DCA and other agencies provide better services and assists the state child advocate in promoting and advocating for a broad vision of reform, including recommendations for improvement.

There were 2,383 complaints received in FY26 that were determined to involve services provided to children by one of the nine child-serving state agencies under DCA's purview. This represents an 18 percent decrease over the 2,918 complaints received in FY25. An additional 171 cases were carried over from previous fiscal years, bringing the total number of complaints in the system during FY26 to 2,554. Of those, 1,833 were resolved by referral instead of an investigation, with complainants being directed to the appropriate state agency or community organization for assistance; 547 were deemed within IU's scope and investigated; 60 were duplicate submissions; 108 lacked enough information to allow for review; and six were found to be non-agency referrals.

Of the 547 investigated complaints against state agencies, 233 identified that adequate services were provided; 49 identified inadequate services that were remedied; 22 identified inadequate services that were not remedied; and 243 were still open and carried into FY27.

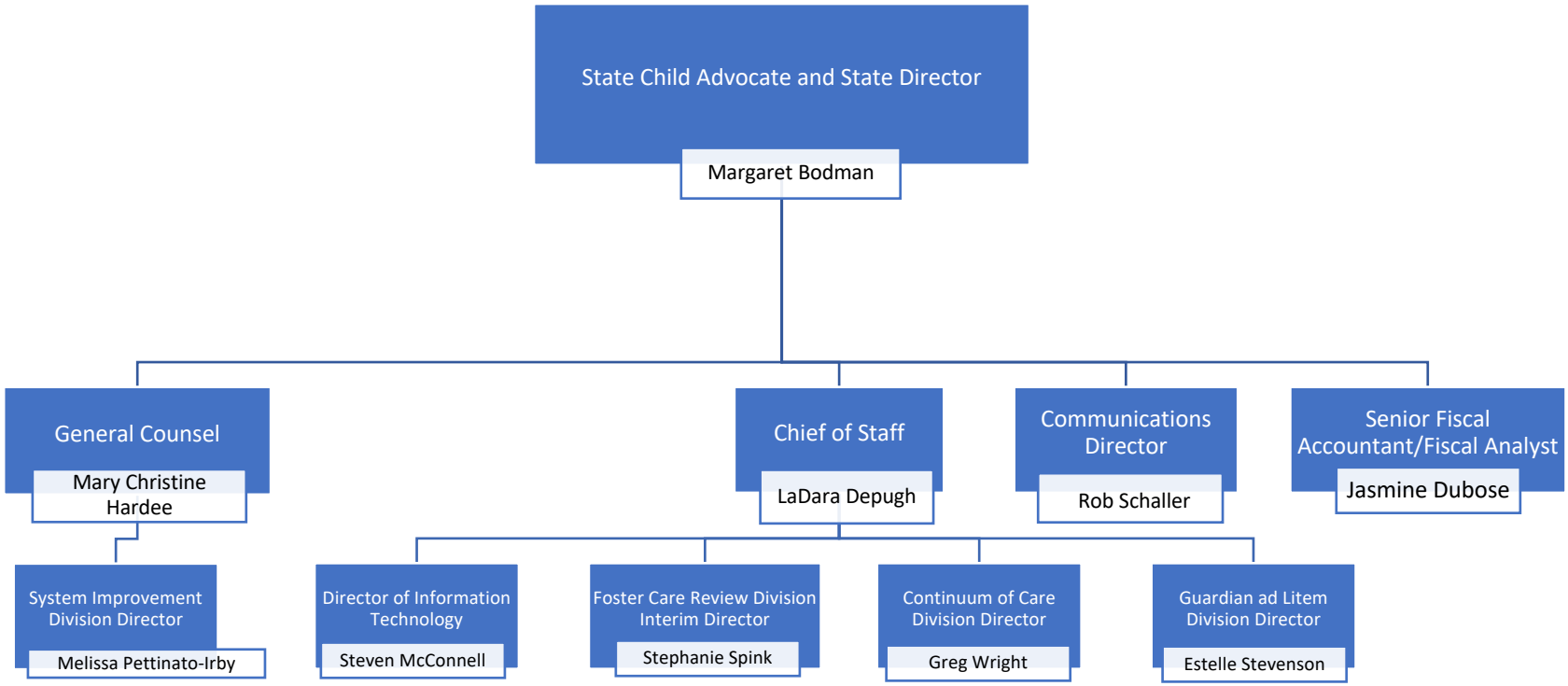
Although the number of complaints received decreased from FY25, the number of calls IU handled through the Children's Advocacy Hotline actually increased to 6,386 from 6,151 in FY25. This is in addition to the complaints received through other methods. Each call is reviewed to understand the concerns presented, determine the appropriate response, and assess whether additional review or investigation by the unit is warranted. In many instances, IU assists individuals immediately by helping them identify and connect with the appropriate agency or entity to address their concerns.

SI seeks to respond to complaints with urgency and empathy. In FY26, IU responded to 98 percent of complainants within one business day, meeting the goal set in the FY25 AAR.

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# South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

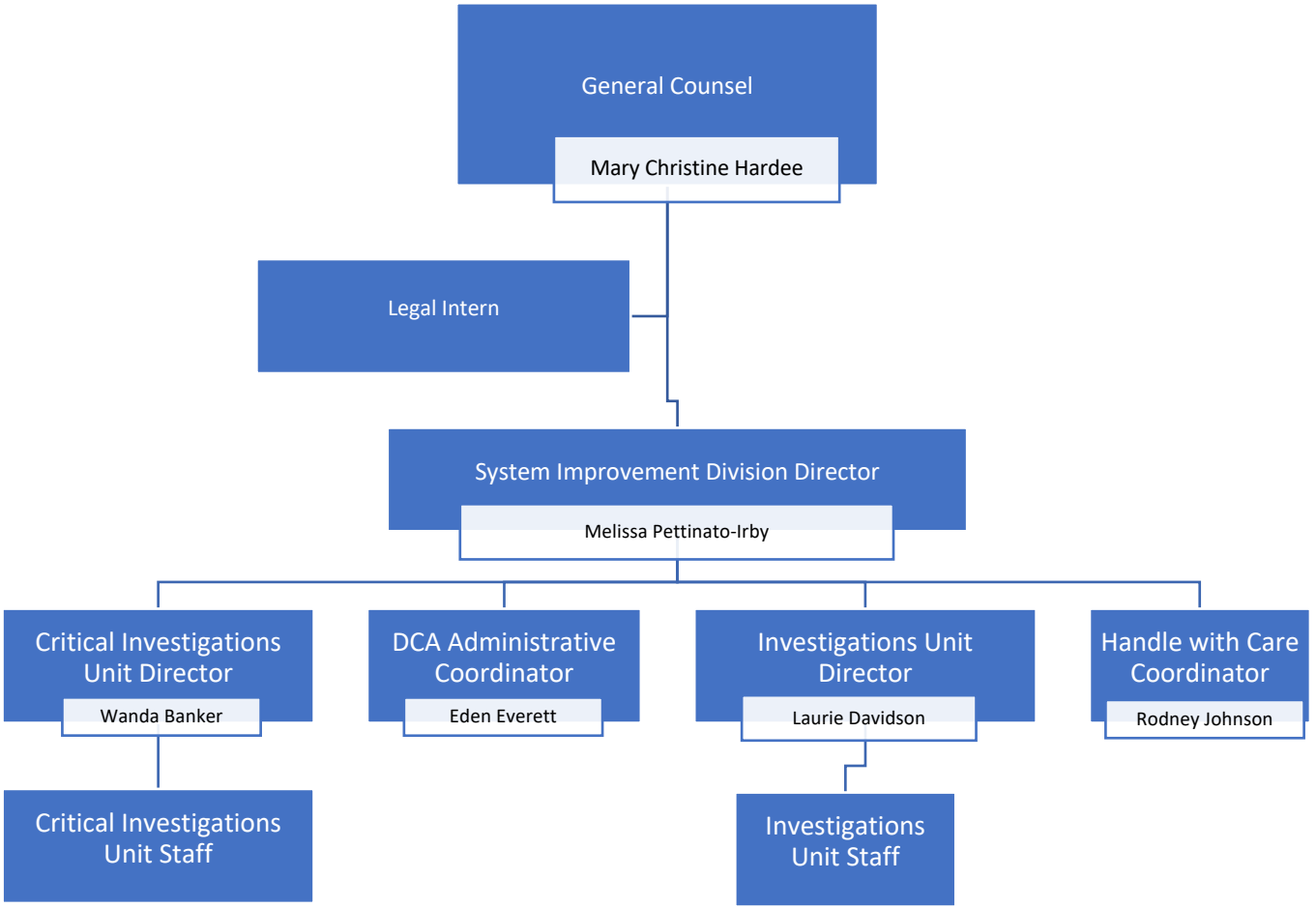
## State Child Advocate and State Director



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# South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

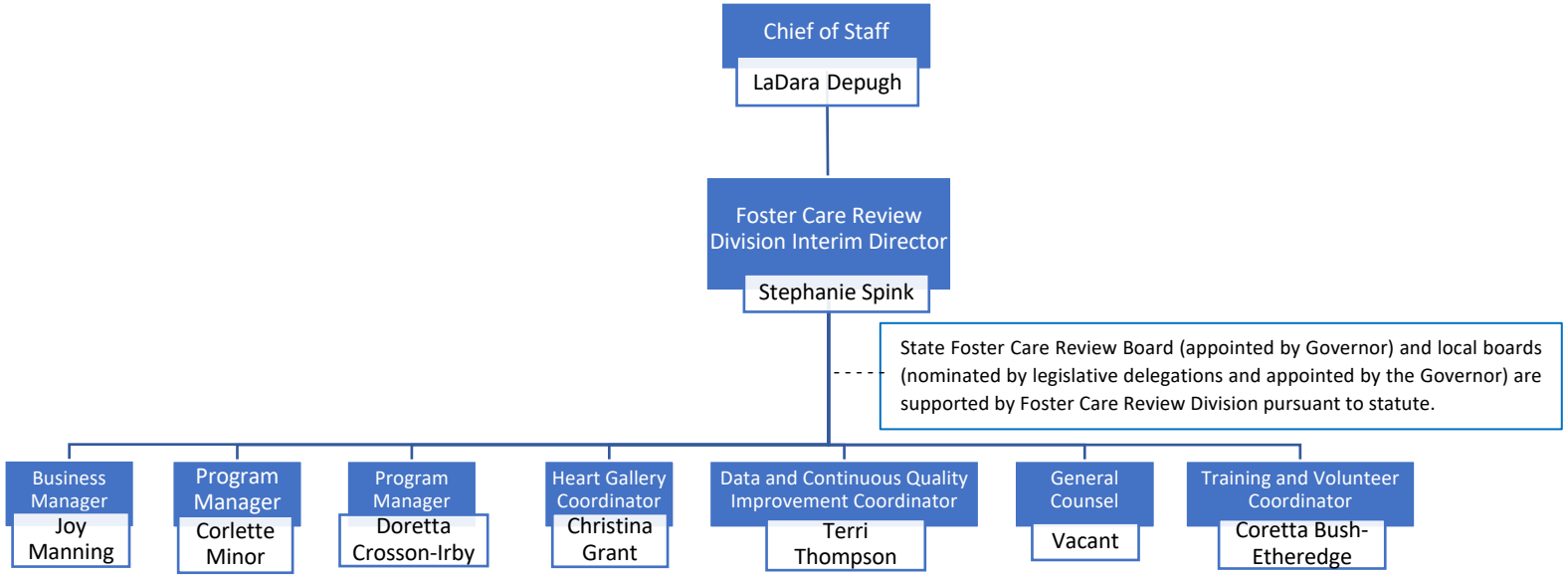
## System Improvement



| AGENCY NAME: | Department of Children's Advocacy | | |
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# South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

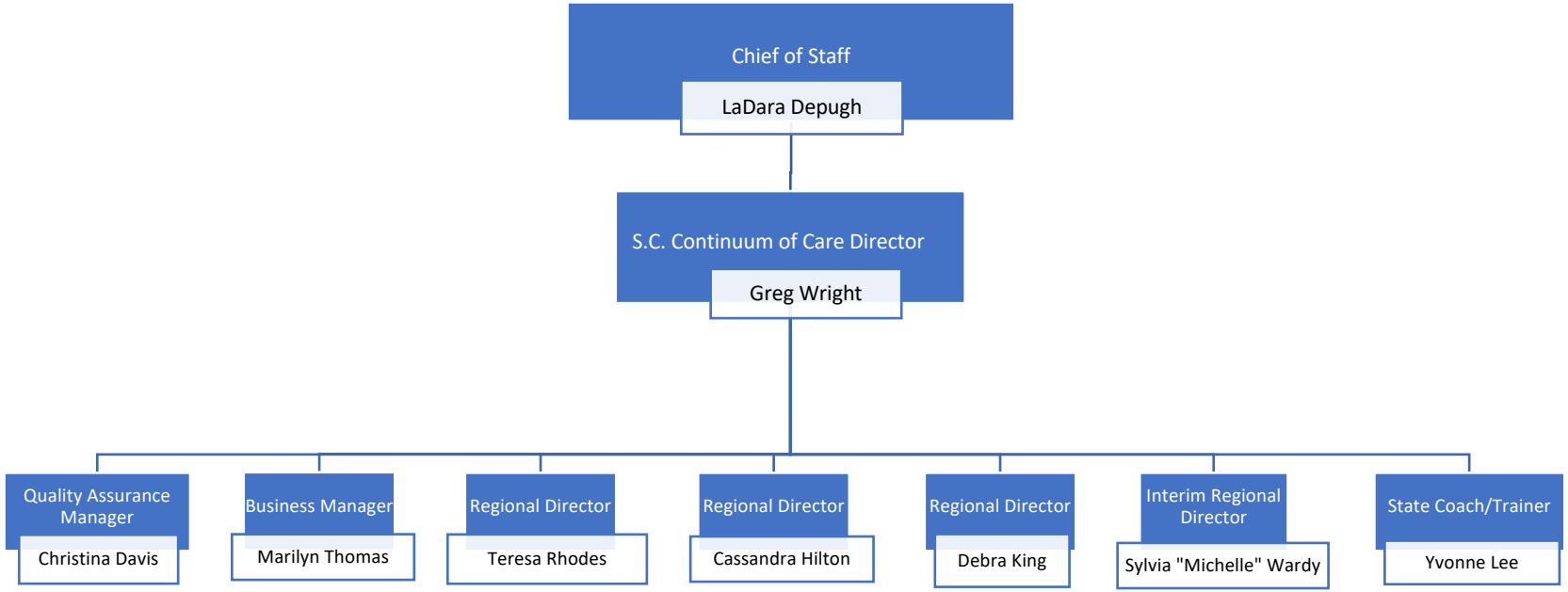
## Foster Care Review Division



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# South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

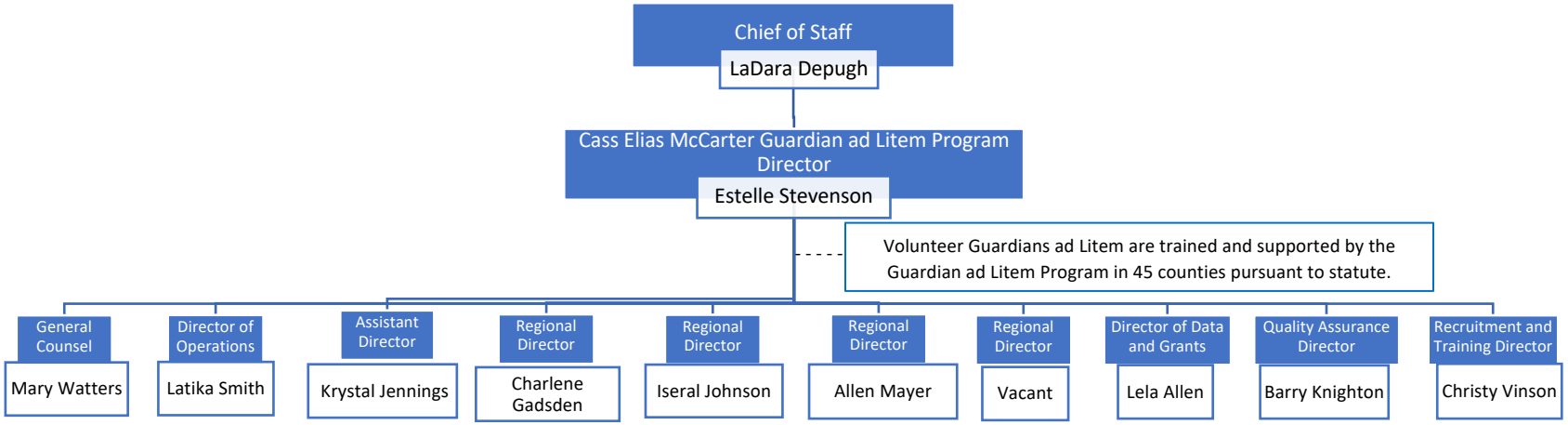
## S.C. Continuum of Care



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# South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

## Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program



# 2026

# Reorganization and Compliance

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

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| Agency Mission | Adopted in: | 2019 |
|---|---|---|

The S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy champions advocacy, accountability, and service to improve outcomes for children served by state agencies in South Carolina

| Agency Vision | Adopted in: | 2019 |
|---|---|---|

Growing a Community Where Children Thrive

**Recommendations for reorganization requiring legislative change:**

(1) The agency proposes amending Article 13 and State Code Chapter 31 regarding Minimum Continuum of Care (COC) Eligibility Requirements. This legislative update will expand COC's service scope, shifting its core focus from acting as a system of last resort for long-term mental health conditions (lasting one year or more) toward providing proactive, early-intervention support for children and youth displaying emerging emotional or behavioral health diagnoses; (2) Revision of 63-11-2240 - Child advocate responsibilities and qualifications in order to align with the restructuring of state agencies.

**Agency intentions for other major reorganization to divisions, departments, or programs to allow the agency to operate more effectively and efficiently in the succeeding fiscal year:**

(1) The agency is restructuring COC's service delivery to align with a front-end intervention through the roll out of Family Engagement Meetings (FEM) and guardian ad litem efforts to assist the GAL division, both of which are in addition to existing intensive care coordination services; (2) Reorganize all attorneys employed across divisions under the DCA General Counsel. This will allow for a separation of attorney/client relationship from attorney/client/supervisor relationship; (3) The agency proposes to create a new division titled "Program Integrity and Volunteer Development," which will bring training, recruiting, data, research, and quality assurance from the separate divisions under this single umbrella. This will create higher quality performance, consistency, and efficiency to each of these efforts when performed as a team.

**Significant events related to the agency that occurred in FY2026**

| Description of Event | Start | End | Agency Measures Impacted | Other Impacts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| By the end of FY26, SI had one FTE attorney in place in Berkeley and were in various stages of the hiring process for the other two. We expect to have all three attorneys hired within the first quarter of FY27. | July | June | Launch Direct Representation pilot project in up to three counties in South Carolina | |
| SI implemented a process for documenting and tracking initial response timeliness within its case management system. This allows the division to monitor whether complaints receive an initial response within the established timeframe. SI leadership regularly reviews these reports to monitor performance, identify any areas of concern, and determine whether adjustments or improvements to the process are needed. | July | June | Initial response to complaints occurs within one business day of the Agency's receipt of telephone, website-submitted, or emailed complaints for FY26. | |

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| SI has  assessed its needs for a new case management system and developed a comprehensive list of operational and programmatic requirements. Following this assessment, the division began reviewing available systems to determine which options could best meet the identified needs. This work has continued throughout the fiscal year, and SI will take steps in FY27 toward procurement of a new system, which will improve case tracking, data collection, reporting, trend analysis, and the division's ability to evaluate its work across child-serving systems. | July | June | Review and improve the agency's tracking system for reviewing and evaluating services for children. | |
| "In April 2026, SI implemented a more structured reporting process in which inadequate findings are compiled and provided monthly in a spreadsheet to the appropriate agency leadership team. The spreadsheet includes information regarding the finding, the reason the case was determined to be inadequate, and any recommendations for improvement. Reports were communicated through individual emails to the applicable agency at the closure of each case.<br><br>This process provides agency leadership with a consistent method for reviewing inadequate findings and helps identify recurring concerns, trends, and opportunities for system improvement." | April | June | For all cases that are closed as "inadequate," SI will provide to the agency in question a data and analysis report informing them of the investigation outcome and recommendations for improvement. | |

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| In previous years, SI manually compiled data on the number and typology trends of complaints and critical incidents. The division has since improved this process by utilizing its case management system to generate these reports, providing a more efficient and consistent method for monitoring complaint and critical incident Notification data and identifying trends throughout the fiscal year. | July | June | Monitor and report total number and typology trends of complaints and critical incident notifications received by the DCA within a fiscal year. | |
| Use of Teams as a training platform for GAL is an ongoing barrier for prospective volunteers who are not technically savvy | July | June | Increase the completion rate of potential volunteers from the 30-hour pre-service training | |
| The total number of community events and outreach efforts that GAL participated in, including in-person events, Facebook posts, regional newsletters, and press releases statewide, was 1064. | July | June | Develop and deliver or attend and participate in at least 4 public or community meetings or events to share information about accessing and/or navigating services provided by state agencies for children | Increased overall awareness of the GAL Program statewide. |
| Estelle Stevenson was named the new statewide director for the GAL program. No performance measure was affected for this significant event. | October | June | | |

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| Krystal Jennings was named as the first assistant state director of the GAL program. This new position was created to help handle the growth of the division and will manage operations at GAL county offices, ensuring policies and procedures are adhered to and applied consistently. No performance measure was affected for this significant event. | December | June | | |
| GAL recognized the policy addressing the number of cases that can be assigned to a volunteer was not being followed. Began increased efforts to enforce the policy. | April | June | Increase the number of children served by volunteer guardians ad litem. | A number of cases had to be reassigned to staff. |
| Stephanie Spink was named interim director of FCRD. No performance measure was affected for this significant event. | April | June | | |
| At the end of FY25, the division proposed regulatory amendments to enhance foster care advocacy and ensure consistent, transparent, and timely review processes statewide. Following two October 2025 stakeholder sessions and consultation with board members, valuable feedback was incorporated into the final draft. Officially approved and adopted in May 2026 by the Senate Family and Veterans Services Committee and the House Regulations, Administrative Procedures, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee, these updated regulations represent the first formal promulgation since 1996. | July | May | Develop and deliver or attend and participate in at least 4 public or community meetings or events to share information about accessing and/or navigating services provided by state agencies for children | |

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| In May 2026, the governor signed S-858 into law, significantly streamlining the board member appointment, service and removal process by granting authority to the agency director. Additionally, the law mandates that the Department of Children's Advocacy promulgate supporting regulations. The division will continue to monitor child welfare issues yearly and will promulgate regulations as needed. No performance measure was affected for this significant event. | January | June | | |
| In November, in observance of National Adoption Awareness Month, the Heart Gallery celebrated its 20th anniversary. The event was featured on a local television station and on social media to highlight the critical need to find forever families for legally free children. | November | November | Provide information through television, radio, or other media outlet about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | |
| In November, in observance of National Adoption Awareness Month, the Heart Gallery celebrated its 20th anniversary. The event was featured on a local television station and on social media to highlight the critical need to find forever families for legally free children. | November | November | Provide information to the public through social media about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | |
| In February 2026, FCRD and DSS began integrating child- and case-specific data across their respective case management systems, completing full implementation by late spring. This system integration ensures accurate, real-time data for case reviews, enhances outcome reporting, and reduces the number of continued reviews. | April | June | Ensure all children in foster care are scheduled for a timely review in accordance with the statutory requirement of reviewing each case every 6 months. | |

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| In February 2026, FCRD and DSS launched a four-board pilot program to streamline the advance review packet process and reduce the frequency of continued reviews. | February | June | Ensure all children in foster care are scheduled for a timely review in accordance with the statutory requirement of reviewing each case every 6 months. | |
| In fall 2025, FCRD began developing a quality assurance (QA) framework to continuously enhance services for children and families. QA provides a structured mechanism to evaluate current practice, highlight strengths, and target areas for growth. Critically, it enables the division to identify program-wide trends to inform process improvements, training, and ongoing support. | October | June | Ensure all children in foster care are scheduled for a timely review in accordance with the statutory requirement of reviewing each case every 6 months. | |
| In fall 2025, FCRD began developing a quality assurance (QA) framework to continuously enhance services for children and families. QA provides a structured mechanism to evaluate current practice, highlight strengths, and target areas for growth. Critically, it enables the division to identify program-wide trends to inform process improvements, training, and ongoing support. | October | June | Monitor and report quarterly and annually on Division activities, recommendations for permanency, and any deficits or barriers in the foster care system that are impacting permanency for children in foster care each fiscal year. | |
| Palmetto Coordinated System of Care Waiver ended in May 2025, but COC had until July 31, 2025, to wrap up services to already-enrolled youth and get them transferred to their Mangaged Care Organization. | July | July | Secure at least one contract, MOU, or other funding source that allows COC to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions | |

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| COC ended its partnership with the National Wraparound Implementation Center. The contract officially expired on July 20, 2025. | July | July | Maintain youth in their homes, schools, and communities through intensive care coordination. | |
| COC ended its partnership with the National Wraparound Implementation Center. The contract officially expired on July 20, 2025. This cost saving measure helped COC continue to pay staff. | July | July | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC implemented a hiring freeze for all of FY26; staff reduced from 41 to 31 during that time. | July | June | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC director started a monthly email newsletter called COC Quick Updates to increase relevant communication and transparency with staff so they felt informed about all changes taking place. | July | June | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC staff were trained and certified as GAL advocates and were assigned cases to ensure they had work to do during transition. | September | June | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| Reduced Fidelity EHR licenses from 65 to 6. This cost saving measure helped COC continue to pay staff. | September | September | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |

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| Transferred 9 vehicles to GAL and SI. This cost saving measure helped COC continue to pay staff. | September | September | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC held conversations with DJJ and DSS to provide Removal Prevention/Child and Family Team Meetings to DJJ youths and their families who are not in DSS custody. MOU signed in May 2026, calling them Family Engagement Meetings (FEM), and 10 staff completed training and certification to facilitate those meetings with initial rollout occurring in Anderson, Greenville, Richland, and Spartanburg counties. Design team engaged for a full launch of FEM in FY27. | November | June | Secure at least one contract, MOU, or other funding source that allows COC to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions | |
| Half of state office staff moved from Edgar Brown Building to Midlands regional office week of Jan 12-16, 2026. This cost-saving measure helped COC continue to pay staff. | January | January | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC staff provided support to SI, helping with site visits to youth detention centers to check their physical and emotional wellbeing. This ensured staff had work to do during transition. | January | April | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |
| COC trainer/coach supported GAL, FCR, and SI by providing direct and indirect training for to staff, and ensuring trainer had work to do during transition. | January | June | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | |

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| Interim appointment of Margaret Bodman as the new state child advocate and director of DCA. This event does not impact any measures. | July | April | | |
| Confirmation of Margaret Boddmans as new state child advocate and director of DCA. This event does not impact any measures. | April | April | | |
| Presentation to Duke Endowment for grant to support the evaluation and data piece of the Direct Representation Pilot Program. As a result of the meeting the Children's Law Center was granted $500,000 to conduct the evaluation for our program. | March | March | Launch Direct Representation pilot project in up to three counties in South Carolina | |
| **Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 2-1-220, which requires submission of certain reports to the Legislative Services Agency for publication online and the State Library? (See also S.C. Code Ann. § 60-2-20).** | | | | Yes |
| **Reason agency is out of compliance:** (if applicable) | | | | |
| **Is the agency in compliance with various requirements to transfer its records, including electronic ones, to the Department of Archives and History? See the Public Records Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 30-1-10 through 30-1-180) and the South Carolina Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 26-6-10 through 26-10-210).** | | | | Yes |
| **Does the law allow the agency to promulgate regulations?** | | | | Yes |

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| **Law number(s) which gives the agency the authority to promulgate regulations:** | **S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-700(E) for Foster Care Review Division; S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-1340 for Continuum of Care** |
| **Has the agency promulgated any regulations?** | Yes |
| **Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-120 (J), which requires an agency to conduct a formal review of its regulations every five years?** | No |
| **(End of Reorganization and Compliance Section)** | |

# Strategic Plan Results

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

**L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY**

**FY2026**

**Goal 1** Serve as advocates for timely, safe, and effective services for children

**Goal 2** To ensure that children, parents, and concerned citizens in South Carolina know how to connect children in need to the right services

**Goal 3** Develop and promote a broad vision for reform, driven by the values and goals of child-serving agencies, to make the services and programs provided by state agencies more effective for children, youth, families and communities

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
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| **1.1** | **Establish, maintain, and continue to improve innovative and competitive recruitment efforts** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 1.1.1 | Increase the number of children served by volunteer guardians ad litem. | 47% | 55% | 44% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of children served by volunteer Guardians ad Litem/Total number of children served by the Guardian ad Litem program. | GAL Casa Manager System "Case Listing by Volunteer" or another case management tool created to track this information | GAL Casa Manager System "Case Listing by Volunteer" or another case management tool created to track this information | Children will have a trained volunteer Guardian ad Litem appointed to their case whose sole role is to advocate for their best interests. Staff also benefit because they are assigned to serve as Guardians ad Litem for any case that cannot be delegated to a volunteer. | Abused and neglected children who are named in DSS abuse and neglect actions filed in Family Court and Guardian ad Litem Program staff | 0500.050100.000 | The high attrition rate in FY26 kept the overall number of volunteers flat, negatively impacting the number of volunteers available to take cases. Additionally, GAL also discovered certain volunteers held higher caseloads than were recommended or allowed, and those had to be reassigned to staff. |
| 1.1.2 | Improve or maintain agency turnover rate through effective recruitment and retention | 15% | 15% | 15% | Percent | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | (number of separations / average number of employees) / 100 = Staff Turnover Rate | The DCA will track progress on this measure with State HR/Admin HR Shared Services; Turnover rate is calculated by Admin HR Shared Services. | Dept. of Admin. Human Resources Vacancy Turnover Report | Staff and the public benefit from having a stable workforce of quality, trained individuals who have a positive relationship with their employer. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 1.1.3 | Maintain current staffing levels within the division, with a focus on employee retention, until a new funding source is secured. | 33% | 33% | 38% | Percent | Equal to or less than | State fiscal year | The number of vacant positions divided by the number of FTE positions | Continuum of Care will track progress on this measure both within its division and with State HR/Admin HR Shared Services; Vacancy rate is calculated by Admin HR Shared Services. | Dept. of Admin. Human Resources Vacancy Report | Serving youth and families in their homes and communities can reduce foster care entry, juvenile justice involvement, and trauma for youth and families. Continuum of Care must have a trained and consistent workforce to provide intensive care coordination services for children to avoid waitlists. | Staff, Public children; other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | The higher vacancy rate was related to staff resignations during a time of significant transition and uncertainty for COC following the end of the PCSC Waiver in FY25. |
| 1.1.4 | Decrease the attrition rate of active volunteers | New Measure, No prior data available<br><br>0% | 15% | 35% | Percent | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | (Total number of volunteer departures/Average number of volunteers) x 100 = attrition rate percentage | GAL Casa Manager Case Management System | GAL Casa Manager Case Management System | Children will have a trained volunteer Guardian ad Litem appointed to their case whose sole role is to advocate for their best interests. Staff also benefit because they are assigned to serve as Guardians ad Litem for any case that cannot be delegated to a volunteer. | Abused and neglected children who are named in DSS abuse and neglect actions filed in Family Court and Guardian ad Litem Program staff | 0500.050100.000 | An analysis of the reasons for a volunteer GAL to leave the program found that 27% were removed by the program primarily for being non-responsive, while more than half left for reasons related to moving, health, employment, family or personal reasons, all things that a volunteer has little control over. GAL will further analyze these numbers in FY27 to come up with strategies to help lower the attrition rate. |
| **1.2** | **Support our employees with clear expectations, measurable and achievable success criteria, and regular feedback to help them be successful in the workplace** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
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| 1.2.1 | Foster innovation in retention methods for staff. Survey Guardian ad Litem staff regarding their satisfaction with their relationship with leadership | 82% | 85% | 89% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of staff answering "pleased" or "very pleased" to question #10 of a survey developed for staff divided by total number of staff participating in survey | GAL staff survey results | GAL staff survey results | This goal will assist with identifying training needs that can strengthen supervisors' ability to manage and support their staff. Supported staff are happier and less likely to leave. Reducing turnover also ensures experienced staff can continue to grow in their knowledge, understanding and ability to advocate. Children will receive better advocacy when there is more continuity in staff handling cases. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | |
| 1.2.2 | Develop and deliver one annual statewide training and four regional trainings to serve as the mandatory training program for FCRB board members and FCRD staff to improve the quality of case reviews. | 15 | 5 | 13 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of Trainings | FCRD regional and annual training dates | FCRD will maintain records of dates, locations, times, and attendance regarding completed training sessions. | Regular trainings provide an opportunity for relevant legislative and caselaw updates in addition to strengthening ongoing mission objectives and focus. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 1.2.3 | Review and augment existing policies and procedures for the System Improvement Division to ensure clear expectations for staff and alignment with the agency's mission and duties. | 100% | 100% | 75% | Percent | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Percent Completion | Department of Children's Advocacy policy and procedure; SCEIS database | Department of Children's Advocacy policy and procedure; SCEIS database | Policies that have been created should be reviewed and augmented to meet the increased capacity of the unit to ensure that staff know what the expectations are and to ensure alignment of policy and practice with the agency's mission and duties. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | SI completed a review of its existing policies and procedures and revised them based on the division's current operational needs. Additional policies and procedures were also identified as the division continues to grow and its work evolves. The revised policies and procedures are currently undergoing final review prior to being incorporated into division operations. |
| **1.3** | **Foster innovation in retention methods for volunteers** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 1.3.1 | Increase the completion rate of potential volunteers from the 30-hour pre-service training | 59% | 65% | 63% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of volunteers who completed pre-services training/ the number of enrollees | Case management system | Case management system | Collecting and considering this type of information will help the Guardian ad Litem Program increase the number of qualified volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | A number of potential volunteers who began training on or before June were not able to complete all requirements that would allow them to take cases prior to the end of the fiscal year. To provide a more accurate count moving forward, the training schedule is being reconsidered to ensure a training class doesn't bridge two fiscal years. More than 50 additional potential volunteers had to withdraw prior to completion for a variety of reasons including financial, personal, health, or job-related hardships. |
| **1.4** | **Identify and secure dedicated funding to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
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| 1.4.1 | Secure at least one contract, MOU, or other funding source that allows COC to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions | 0 | 1 | 1 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by the number of new contracts or MOUs | Continuum of Care will track the number of new funding sources | Continuum of Care | Securing a funding source will allow COC to partner with youth and families, which will help decrease PRTF placements, ER visits, youth incarceration, and/or removal of the child from the home. | Staff; Public; children, families, other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | During the reporting period, one MOU was successfully executed with the Department of Social Services (DSS), meeting the MOU component of the target. However, a dedicated funding source was not secured due to systemic and financial challenges within state government funding structures. Despite these challenges, efforts continued to explore opportunities for expanded services, identify potential funding sources, and develop partnerships that may support future program sustainability and growth. |
| **1.5** | **Launch Direct Representation pilot project that will provide legal representation to children involved in abuse and neglect court proceedings.** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 1.5.1 | Launch Direct Representation pilot project in up to three counties in South Carolina | 0 | 3 | 1 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by number of counties the pilot program is launched and operated in. | Court Administration | Court Administration | Youth in foster care will experience a higher rate of exit from foster care to permanency, positive placement matching and retention in positive placements, fewer group home and traditional foster homes with increased kinship placements, and a reduction in the rate of non-normative school transitions. | Youth in foster care and Department of Social Services | 0100.000000.000 | By the end of FY26, the unit had one FTE attorney in place in Berkeley and were in various stages of the hiring process for the other two. We expect to have all three attorneys hired within the first quarter of FY27. |
| **2.1** | **Educate the public about state agency services** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 2.1.1 | Review and update the agency's online resource directory of state services and resources for children | 10% | 100% | 26% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent completion | Department of Children's Advocacy's website | Department of Children's Advocacy's website | Public awareness of the availability of services in their homes and communities could reduce incidences of abuse, neglect and institutionalization of children. It also improves awareness, accessibility and relationships with child-serving agencies and organizations. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | Progress was made over last year, but one large update was lost and not recoverable due to technological issues. To help with this in FY27, the agency will enlist the help of the Legal Extern to stay on track for completion. |
| 2.1.2 | Develop and deliver or attend and participate in at least 4 public or community meetings or events to share information about accessing and/or navigating services provided by state agencies for children | >4 | 4 | 253 | Count | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Count of meetings | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | Participating in public forums allows community members to learn how to access and navigate services and programs, not only helping them know what services are available but also feel less intimidated, confused, and overwhelmed when applying for and accessing available services to children. | Staff; Public; children, families, other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | |
| 2.1.3 | Provide information through television, radio, or other media outlet about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | 60 | 25 | 65 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of times Heart Gallery and/or Foster Care Review Division provides information about adoption through media outlets | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 2.1.4 | Provide information to the public through social media about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | 48 | 52 | 52 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of social media posts by Heart Gallery regarding adoption | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| **2.2** | **Develop processes to provide an excellent customer experience.** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
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| 2.2.1 | Create and disseminate at least 4 effective and engaging training modules for Department of Children's Advocacy staff and volunteers by the end of FY26. | 20% | 100% | >100% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of training modules completed/4 | Department of Children's Advocacy online training modules; SCEIS database | Department of Children's Advocacy online training modules; SCEIS database | The agency will create and launch training modules for staff and volunteers. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 2.2.2 | Ensure 80% of Continuum of Care parents interviewed will feel satisfied with the services they receive overall each fiscal year. | 73% | 80% | 60% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of parents who report being satisfied with the services they receive overall from the Continuum of Care program/total number of parents who complete the survey. | Customer satisfaction surveys submitted by families/guardians of children served by Continuum of Care | Continuum of Care's subscription program | DCA seeks to develop processes to provide excellent customer service through measuring customer service and establishing a customer feedback process which guides service improvements. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 050.150100.000 | While falling short of the goal, results show that a majority of respondents reported a positive experience with services provided. Because fewer youth were receiving services, fewer participants were available to fill out the survey. The response rate was also low, which means the limited number of completed surveys had a greater impact on the overall measure and may not fully capture the experiences of all families receiving services. |
| 2.2.3 | Maintain or improve efficacy of Continuum of Care's services for children and youth as measured through dashboard data. | 30.5 | 30 | 37 | Rank | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Difference between youths' beginning and ending CAFAS scores. | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | A child's improvement is the single-most important goal of DCA. Continuum of Care's ability to objectively measure a youth's improvement is fundamental to the effectiveness of COC's model and professionals. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.150150.000 | |
| 2.2.4 | Initial response to complaints occurs within one business day of the Agency's receipt of telephone, website-submitted, or emailed complaints for FY26. | 99% | 98% | 98% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of complaints for which agency's initial response was within one business day of agency's receipt of the complaint/total number of complaints received by the agency. | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | DCA shall respond to complaints within one business day, not counting holidays or weekends, to determine which matters require an agency referral or an investigation. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 2.2.5 | Review and update 100% of FCRD/FCRB policies and procedures to streamline and improve consistency across the state. | 90% | 100% | 82% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent Completion | Foster Care Review Division policies; SCEIS database | Foster Care Review Division policies; SCEIS database | The Foster Care Review Board and Foster Care Review Division have established policies and procedures which are outlined in separate formats for staff and volunteers. FCRD/FCRB operations will perform more smoothly and interact more efficiently with volunteers and other offices with more streamlined and updated office management policy and procedure. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | By the end of FY26, 82% of FCRD policies were published. Three additional policies were submitted for review in June 2026 and are awaiting approval. FCRD has a project plan to complete and publish the remaining policies by the end of December 2026. |
| **3.1** | **Examine, on a system-wide basis, the care and services that state agencies provide children** | | | | | | | | | | **State Objective: Government and Citizens** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1.1 | Review and improve the agency's tracking system for reviewing and evaluating services for children. | 100% | 100% | 80% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent completion - Explore modification of current case management system to add fields for automated reports and/or development of an evaluation tool and report development process | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | One of the statutory duties of the Dept. of Children's Advocacy includes examining, on a system-wide basis, the care and services that state agencies provide children. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | SI has assessed its needs for a new case management system and developed a comprehensive list of operational and programmatic requirements. Following this assessment, the division began reviewing available systems to determine which options could best meet the identified needs. This work has continued throughout the fiscal year, and SI will take steps in FY27 toward procurement of a new system, which will improve case tracking, data collection, reporting, trend analysis, and the division's ability to evaluate its work across child-serving systems. |
| 3.1.2 | Review and report on services that state agencies provide to children to the General Assembly and Governor. | 1 | 1 | 1 | Count | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Report submission or delivery | Department of Children's Advocacy records and data/information from other agencies/sources as noted in the report | Department of Children's Advocacy website and in print; Department of Archives; S.C. State Library | One of the statutory duties of the Dept. of Children's Advocacy includes providing a report to the General Assembly regarding the activities of the SCA. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 3.1.3 | Monitor and report audits scores for local county offices, with an increased focus of records in the case management system, to ensure quality standards are met. | 88% | 80% | 86% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Average final audit score for all county offices; weight of QA scores of case management system is 50%, volunteer files is 15%, and physical case files is 35%. Note: The formula for this target is revised for FY26, giving more weight to case management system score. | Case management system | Case management system | Collecting, reviewing, and considering this type of information will help the Guardian ad Litem Program provide better advocacy for children | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | |
| 3.1.4 | Maintain youth in their homes, schools, and communities through intensive care coordination. | 92% | 80% | 89% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of youth who remain at home/total number of youth partnered by COC | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | Improving youth functionality through decreasing emotional and behavioral challenges. This measure is a percentage of youth who remain at home in the community compared with youth who are placed in a residential facility. Youth outcomes are improved when they can safely and appropriately live at home and have access to their family and friends. | Staff; public; children; other agencies | 0500.150150.000 | |
| 3.1.5 | Increase the number of adoption referrals received by Heart Gallery by 10% | 501 | 551 | 836 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of referrals received by Heart Gallery | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Actual | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1.6 | Ensure all children in foster care are scheduled for a timely review in accordance with the statutory requirement of reviewing each case every 6 months. | 99.90% | 100.00% | 100.00% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of children in foster care who were in foster care for at least four months and were scheduled for a timely review/Total number of children who were in foster care for at least four months.<br><br>While this is a new measure for FY26, this data was available for FY25, which set the baseline measure at 99.9% | Foster Care Review Division case management system; DSS Child and Adult Protective Services Systems (CAPSS) | Foster Care Review Division annual report on website and in print | Children in foster care are receiving the reviews required by statute. | Children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| **3.2** | **Receive, refer, monitor and investigate complaints regarding state agencies** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Government and Citizens** | | | |
| 3.2.1 | For all cases that are closed as "inadequate," SI will provide to the agency in question a data and analysis report informing them of the investigation outcome and recommendations for improvement. | Revised Measure<br><br>0% | 95% | 95% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of reports for cases closed as "inadequate" that were sent to agencies /total number of cases investigated and closed as "inadequate." | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Collecting, reviewing, and considering this type of information will help DCA and other agencies provide better services for children and families and will assist in the State Child Advocate in developing a broad vision for reform that includes recommendations for improvement. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 3.2.2 | Encourage a culture of collaboration and coordination among state agencies which serve children by developing relationships and communicating regularly in a professional and respectful manner. Regular meetings should occur, with a minimum of one virtual or in-person meeting occurring with each of the nine state agencies each fiscal year. | >100 | 9 | 251 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of meetings | Department of Children's Advocacy will keep records of the number of meetings that occur | Department of Children's Advocacy will keep records of the number of meetings that occur | DCA should be involved in regular conversations with agency leadership to inform agencies of issues, to enlist their help and cooperation in resolving issues, and to learn more about other agencies' processes and resources to better-assist DCA with assisting callers and with making recommendations and advocating for systemic improvement. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| **3.3** | **Establish the capacity to manage, monitor, and report on statewide and/or internal projects.** | | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Government and Citizens** | | | |
| 3.3.1 | Monitor and report quarterly and annually on Division activities, recommendations for permanency, and any deficits or barriers in the foster care system that are impacting permanency for children in foster care each fiscal year. | 5 | 5 | 5 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of annual report (1) and count of (4) quarterly reports during fiscal year | Foster Care Review Division case management system; DSS Child and Adult Protective Services Systems (CAPSS) | Foster Care Review Division website and in print | Foster Care Review Division will track and report the achievement of timely permanence for children by permanence type and by time achieved. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 3.3.2 | Monitor and report total number and typology trends of complaints and critical incident notifications received by the DCA within a fiscal year. | Revised Measure<br><br>0 | 1 | 1 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Electronic network database captures which agencies receive complaints against their services or programs, how complaints are categorized internally, and how our complaints are resolved and coded. | System Improvement Division electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | SI portion of the FY26 Annual Report | DCA of Investigations will monitor and compile data trends within CI notifications from CI dashboard and provide a report to be included in the agency's Annual Report | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |

# Strategic Plan Development

# FY2027

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

## L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY

**Goal 1** Serve as advocates for timely, safe, and effective services for children

**Goal 2** To ensure that children, parents, and concerned citizens in South Carolina know how to connect children in need to the right services

**Goal 3** Develop and promote a broad vision for reform, driven by the values and goals of child-serving agencies, to make the services and programs provided by state agencies more effective for children, youth, families and communities

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1.1** | **Establish, maintain, and continue to improve innovative and competitive recruitment efforts** | | | | | | | | **State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families** | | | | |
| 1.1.1 | Increase the number of children served by volunteer GALs | 44% | 48% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of children served by volunteer Guardians ad Litem/Total number of children served by the Guardian ad Litem program. | GAL Casa Manager System "Case Listing by Volunteer" or another case management tool created to track this information | GAL Casa Manager System "Case Listing by Volunteer" or another case management tool created to track this information | Children will have a trained volunteer Guardian ad Litem appointed to their case whose sole role is to advocate for their best interests. Staff also benefit because they are assigned to serve as Guardians ad Litem for any case that cannot be delegated to a volunteer. | Abused and neglected children who are named in DSS abuse and neglect actions filed in Family Court and Guardian ad Litem Program staff | 0500.050100.000 | |
| 1.1.2 | Improve or maintain agency turnover rate through effective recruitment and retention | 15% | 15% | Percent | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | (number of separations / average number of employees) / 100 = Staff Turnover Rate | The DCA will track progress on this measure with State HR/Admin HR Shared Services; Turnover rate is calculated by Admin HR Shared Services. | Dept. of Admin. Human Resources Vacancy Turnover Report | Staff and the public benefit from having a stable workforce of quality, trained individuals who have a positive relationship with their employer. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| **1.2** | **Support our employees with clear expectations, measurable and achievable success criteria, and regular feedback to help them be successful in the workplace** | | | | | | | | **State Objective: Healthy and Safe Families** | | | | |
| 1.2.1 | Foster innovation in retention methods for staff. Survey GAL staff regarding their satisfaction with their relationship with leadership | 89% | 90% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of staff answering "pleased" or "very pleased" to question #10 of a survey developed for staff divided by total number of staff participating in survey | GAL staff survey results | GAL staff survey results | This goal will assist with identifying training needs that can strengthen supervisors' ability to manage and support their staff. Supported staff are happier and less likely to leave. Reducing turnover also ensures experienced staff can continue to grow in their knowledge, understanding and ability to advocate. Children will receive better advocacy when there is more continuity in staff handling cases. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.2.2 | Develop and deliver one annual statewide training and four regional trainings to serve as the mandatory training program for FCRB board members and FCRD staff to improve the quality of case reviews. | 13 | 5 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of Trainings | FCRD regional and annual training dates | FCRD will maintain records of dates, locations, times, and attendance regarding completed training sessions. | Regular trainings provide an opportunity for relevant legislative and caselaw updates in addition to strengthening ongoing mission objectives and focus. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 1.2.3 | Augment existing policies and procedures for SI to ensure clear expectations for staff and alignment with the agency's mission and duties. | 75% | 90% | Percent | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Percent Completion | DCA policy and procedure; SCEIS database | DCA policy and procedure; SCEIS database | Policies that have been created should be reviewed and augmented to meet the increased capacity of the unit to ensure that staff know what the expectations are and to ensure alignment of policy and practice with the agency's mission and duties. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 1.2.4 | All COC staff providing direct care to youth and families through the FEM initiative will complete the certification process per DSS standards | New Measure<br><br>0 | 6 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by number of training certificates earned by staff for FEM. | Continuum of Care training records | Continuum of Care training records | Having enough staff trained and certified will maximize the number of youth who can be served. | Staff, Public, children, families, other agencies. | 0500.150100.000 | |
| **1.3** | **Foster innovation in retention methods for volunteers** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 1.3.1 | Increase the completion rate of potential volunteer GALs from the 30-hour pre-service training | 63% | 65% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of volunteers who completed pre-services training/ the number of enrollees | Case management system | Case management system | Collecting and considering this type of information will help the Guardian ad Litem Program increase the number of qualified volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | |
| 1.3.2 | Decrease the attrition rate of active volunteer GALs | 35% | 30% | Percent | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | (Total number of volunteer departures/Average number of volunteers) x 100 = attrition rate percentage | GAL Casa Manager Case Management System | GAL Casa Manager Case Management System | Children will have a trained volunteer Guardian ad Litem appointed to their case whose sole role is to advocate for their best interests. Staff also benefit because they are assigned to serve as Guardians ad Litem for any case that cannot be delegated to a volunteer. | Abused and neglected children who are named in DSS abuse and neglect actions filed in Family Court and Guardian ad Litem Program staff | 0500.050100.000 | |
| **1.4** | **Identify and secure dedicated funding to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.4.1 | Secure at least one new contract, MOU, or other funding source that allows COC to provide and expand services for youth with severe mental health conditions | 1 | 1 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by the number of new contracts or MOUs | Continuum of Care will track the number of new funding sources | Continuum of Care | Securing a funding source will allow COC to partner with youth and families, which will help decrease PRTF placements, ER visits, youth incarceration, and/or removal of the child from the home. | Staff; Public; children, families, other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | |
| **1.5** | **Maintain Direct Representation pilot project that will provide legal representation to children involved in abuse and neglect court proceedings.** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 1.5.1 | Operate Direct Representation pilot project in at least three counties in South Carolina. | 1 | 3 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by number of counties the pilot program is launched and operated in. | Court Administration | Court Administration | Youth foster care will experience a higher rate of exit from foster care to permanency, positive placement matching and retention in positive placements, fewer group home and traditional foster homes with increased kinship placements, and a reduction in the rate of non-normative school transitions. | Youth in foster care and Department of Social Services | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 1.5.2 | Launch data collection and evaluation component of the Direct Representation pilot program. | New Measure 0 | 1 | Count | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | Number of closed cases with attorney | DCA Direct Representation Program | Direct Representation Program Case Management Electronic System | Youth in foster care will experience a higher rate of exit from foster care to permanency, positive placement matching and retention in positive placements, fewer group home and traditional foster homes with increased kinship placements, and a reduction in the rate of non-normative school transitions. | Youth in foster care and Department of Social Services | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 1.5.3 | Draft Direct Representation Program Manual | New Measure 0 | 1 | Count | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | Manual publication | DCA Direct Representation Program | Department of Children's Advocacy Direct Representation Program | Youth in foster care will experience a higher rate of exit from foster care to permanency, positive placement matching and retention in positive placements, fewer group home and traditional foster homes with increased kinship placements, and a reduction in the rate of non-normative school transitions. | Youth in foster care and Department of Social Services | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 1.5.4 | Draft Direct Representation Standards of Practice | New Measure 0 | 1 | Count | Equal to or less than | State Fiscal Year | Standards of Practice publication | DCA Direct Representation Program | Department of Children's Advocacy Direct Representation Program | Youth in foster care will experience a higher rate of exit from foster care to permanency, positive placement matching and retention in positive placements, fewer group home and traditional foster homes with increased kinship placements, and a reduction in the rate of non-normative school transitions. | Youth in foster care and Department of Social Services | 0501.200100.000 | |
| **1.6** | **Provide and/or expand services to children and youth to help them exit the system to prevent entry into DSS system.** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.6.1 | Launch and implement FEM initiative in at least two (of four) regions of South Carolina (Upstate, Midlands, Pee Dee, Lowcountry) | New Measure 0 | 2 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count will be determined by number and location of counties FEM is launched and operated in. | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | Outcomes are improved when youth can safely and appropriately live at home and have access to their family and friends. | Staff, Public, children, families, other agencies. | 0500.150100.000 | |
| **2.1** | **Educate the public about state agency services** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 2.1.1 | Review and update the agency's online resource directory of state services and resources for children | 26% | 100% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent completion | Department of Children's Advocacy's website | Department of Children's Advocacy's website | Public awareness of the availability of services in their homes and communities could reduce incidences of abuse, neglect and institutionalization of children. It also improves awareness, accessibility and relationships with child-serving agencies and organizations. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 2.1.2 | Develop and deliver or attend and participate in at least 4 public or community meetings or events to share information about accessing and/or navigating services provided by state agencies for children. | 253 | 4 | Count | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Count of Meetings | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | Participating in public forums allows community members to learn how to access and navigate services and programs, not only helping them know what services are available but also feel less intimidated, confused, and overwhelmed when applying for and accessing available services to children | Staff, Public, children, families, other agencies. | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 2.1.3 | Provide information through television, radio, or other media outlets about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | 65 | 25 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of times Heart Gallery and/or Foster Care Review Division provides information about adoption through media outlets | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 2.1.4 | Provide information to the public through social media about children awaiting adoption in South Carolina | 52 | 52 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of social media posts by Heart Gallery regarding adoption | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| **2.2** | **Develop processes to provide an excellent customer experience.** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Healthy and Safe Families** | | | |
| 2.2.1 | Create and disseminate at least 4 effective and engaging trainings for Department of Children's Advocacy staff and volunteers by the end of FY26. | >100% | 4 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of trainings conducted | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | Department of Children's Advocacy will maintain a count | The agency will provide training opportunities for staff and volunteers to help them better perform their jobs. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.2.2 | Ensure 75% of Continuum of Care parents interviewed will feel satisfied with the services they receive overall each fiscal year. | 60% | 75% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of parents who report being satisfied with the services they receive overall from the Continuum of Care program/total number of parents who complete the survey. | Customer satisfaction surveys submitted by families/guardians of children served by Continuum of Care | Continuum of Care's subscription program | DCA seeks to develop processes to provide excellent customer service through measuring customer service and establishing a customer feedback process which guides service improvements. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | |
| 2.2.3 | Maintain or improve efficacy of Continuum of Care's services for children and youth as measured through dashboard data. | 37 | 30 | Rank | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Difference between youth's beginning and ending CAFAS scores. | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | A child's improvement is the single-most important goal of DCA. Continuum of Care's ability to objectively measure a youth's improvement is fundamental to the effectiveness of COC's model and professionals. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.150100.000 | |
| 2.2.4 | Initial response to complaints occurs within one business day of SI's receipt of telephone, website-submitted, or emailed complaints for FY25. | 98% | 98% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of complaints for which agency's initial response was within one business day of agency's receipt of the complaint/total number of complaints received by the agency. | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | DCA shall respond to complaints within one business day, not counting holidays or weekends, to determine which matters require an agency referral or an investigation. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 2.2.5 | Review and update 100% of FCRD/FCRB policies and procedures to streamline and improve consistency across the state. | 82% | 100% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent Completion | Foster Care Review Division policies; SCEIS database | Foster Care Review Division policies; SCEIS database | The Foster Care Review Board and Foster Care Review Division have established policies and procedures which are outlined in separate formats for staff and volunteers. FCRD/FCRB operations will perform more smoothly and interact more efficiently with volunteers and other offices with more streamlined and updated office management policy and procedure. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| 2.2.6 | Ensure 75% of youth participating in FEM initiative stay in the community and do not enter into DSS custody or deeper system involvement | New Measure<br><br>0 | 75% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of youth participating in FEM initiative who, at the end of the meeting, have a live custody decision allowing them to remain in the community /total number of youth participating in the FEM initiative. | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | Outcomes are improved when youth can safely and appropriately live at home and have access to their family and friends. | Staff, Public, children, families, other agencies. | 0500.150100.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.2.7 | Maintain youth in their homes, schools, and communities through intensive care coordination | 89% | 80% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of youth who remain in their homes while receiving ICC services from COC /total number of youth served by COC | Continuum of Care client records | Continuum of Care client records | Improving youth functionality through decreasing emotional and behavioral challenges. Youth outcomes are improved when they can safely and appropriately live at home and have access to their family and friends. | Staff, Public, children, families, other agencies. | 0500.150100.000 | |
| **3.1** | **Examine, on a system-wide basis, the care and services that state agencies provide children** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Government and Citizens** | | | |
| 3.1.1 | Review and improve SI's tracking system for reviewing and evaluating services for children. | 80% | 90% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Percent completion - Explore modification of current case management system to add fields for automated reports and/or development of an evaluation tool and report development process | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | One of the statutory duties of the Dept. of Children's Advocacy includes examining, on a system-wide basis, the care and services that state agencies provide children. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 3.1.2 | Review and report on services that state agencies provide to children to the General Assembly and Governor. | 1 | 1 | Count | Complete | State Fiscal Year | Report submission or delivery | Department of Children's Advocacy records and data/information from other agencies/sources as noted in the report | Department of Children's Advocacy website and in print; Department of Archives; S.C. State Library | One of the statutory duties of the Dept. of Children's Advocacy includes providing a report to the General Assembly regarding the activities of the SCA. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0100.000000.000 | |
| 3.1.3 | Monitor and report audits scores for local county GAL offices, with an increased focus of records in the case management system, to ensure quality standards are met. | 86% | 90% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Average final audit score for all county offices; weight of QA scores of case management system is 50%, volunteer files is 15%, and physical case files is 35%. | Case management system | Case management system | Collecting, reviewing, and considering this type of information will help the Guardian ad Litem Program provide better advocacy for children | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0500.050100.000 | |
| 3.1.4 | Increase the number of adoption referrals received by Heart Gallery by 5% | 836 | 878 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State fiscal year | Number of referrals received by Heart Gallery | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Foster Care Review Division will track the number of times | Children who are in foster care awaiting adoption. | Staff, board members, public, children, other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1.5 | Ensure all children in foster care are scheduled for a timely review in accordance with the statutory requirement of reviewing each case every 6 months. | 100% | 100% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Number of children in foster care who were in foster care for at least four months and were scheduled for a timely review/Total number of children who were in foster care for at least four months. | Foster Care Review Division case management system; DSS Child and Adult Protective Services Systems (CAPSS) | Foster Care Review Division annual report on website and in print | Children in foster care are receiving the reviews required by statute. | Children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |
| **3.2** | **Receive, refer, monitor and investigate complaints regarding state agencies** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Government and Citizens** | | | |
| 3.2.1 | Provide data and analysis regarding complaint dispositions in an effort to inform recommendations for improvement. | 95% | 95% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Electronic network database captures which agencies receive complaints against their services or programs, how complaints are categorized internally, and how our complaints are resolved and coded. | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Investigations Unit electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | Collecting, reviewing, and considering this type of information will help DCA and other agencies provide better services for children and families and will assist in the State Child Advocate in developing a broad vision for reform that includes recommendations for improvement. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |
| 3.2.2 | Encourage a culture of collaboration and coordination among state agencies which serve children by developing relationships and communicating regularly in a professional and respectful manner. Regular meetings should occur, with a minimum of one virtual or in-person meeting occurring with each of the nine state agencies each fiscal year. | 251 | 9 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of meetings | Department of Children's Advocacy will keep records of the number of meetings that occur | Department of Children's Advocacy will keep records of the number of meetings that occur | DCA should be involved in regular conversations with agency leadership to inform agencies of issues, to enlist their help and cooperation in resolving issues, and to learn more about other agencies' processes and resources to better-assist DCA with assisting callers and with making recommendations and advocating for systemic improvement. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |
| **3.3** | **Establish the capacity to manage, monitor, and report on statewide and/or internal projects.** | | | | | | | | **State Objective:** | **Government and Citizens** | | | |
| 3.3.1 | Monitor and report quarterly and annually on FCRD's activities, recommendations for permanency, and any deficits or barriers in the foster care system that are impacting permanency for children in foster care each fiscal year. | 5 | 5 | Count | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | Count of annual report (1) and count of (4) quarterly reports during fiscal year | Foster Care Review Division case management system; DSS Child and Adult Protective Services Systems (CAPSS) | Foster Care Review Division website and in print | Foster Care Review Division will track and report the achievement of timely permanence for children by permanence type and by time achieved. | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0502.100100.000 | |

| Perf. Measure Number | Description | Base | Target | Value Type | Desired Outcome | Time Applicable | Calculation Method | Data Source | Data Location | Stakeholder Need Satisfied | Primary Stakeholder | State Funded Program Number Responsible | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3.2 | Monitor and report total number and typology trends of complaints and critical incident notifications received by SI within a fiscal year. | 100% | 100% | Percent | Equal to or greater than | State Fiscal Year | System Improvement Division section regarding complaints and critical incident notifications in agency's Annual Report | System Improvement Division electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | System Improvement Division electronic case management system (Intranet Quorum) | DCA of Investigations will monitor and compile data trends within CI notifications from CI dashboard and provide a report to be included in the agency's Annual Report | Staff; Public; children; other agencies | 0501.200100.000 | |

# Budget Data

2026

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

## L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY

| State Funded Program No. | State Funded Program Title | Description of State Funded Program | (Actual) General | (Actual) Other | (Actual) Federal | (Actual) Total | (Projected) General | (Projected) Other | (Projected) Federal | (Projected) Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0100.000000.000 | Administration | Provides support for the agency as a whole and promotes a broad vision for reform to improve services provided by child-serving agencies in South Carolina | $331,737.21 | $- | $- | $331,737.21 | $298,516.00 | $- | $- | $298,516.00 |
| 0119.100000X000 | Network of Children's Advocacy Centers | | $80,000.00 | $- | $- | $80,000.00 | $- | $- | $- | $- |
| 0121.050000X000 | Children's Trust Fund | Provides prevention services for children and families | $200,000.00 | $- | $- | $200,000.00 | $- | $- | $- | $- |
| 0500.050100.000 | Guardian ad Litem Program | Advocates for abused and neglected children | $5,024,451.96 | $6,641,368.96 | $75,901.66 | $11,741,722.58 | $5,422,074.00 | $6,523,918.00 | $132,126.00 | $12,078,118.00 |
| 0500.150100.000 | Continuum of Care | Assists children with emotional and behavioral needs | $1,634,479.08 | $1,128,586.94 | $- | $2,763,066.02 | $1,990,414.00 | $342,676.00 | $- | $2,333,090.00 |
| 0501.200100.000 | Investigations Unit | Receives, refers, monitors, and investigates complaints about and critical incidents from child-serving agencies in South Carolina | $1,397,421.60 | $65,439.84 | $- | $1,462,861.44 | $2,223,602.00 | $65,440.00 | $- | $2,289,042.00 |
| 0502.100100.000 | Foster Care Review Division | Provides accountability for children in foster care | $1,336,803.32 | $392,445.42 | $- | $1,729,248.74 | $887,595.00 | $1,005,806.00 | $- | $1,893,401.00 |

| State Funded Program No. | State Funded Program Title | Description of State Funded Program | (Actual) General | (Actual) Other | (Actual) Federal | (Actual) Total | (Projected) General | (Projected) Other | (Projected) Federal | (Projected) Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9500.050000.000 | State Employer Contributions | To provide state employer contribution funding source | $3,755,269.33 | $2,748,410.88 | $29,487.93 | $6,533,168.14 | $4,548,021.00 | $2,334,720.00 | $65,376.00 | $6,948,117.00 |
| 9828.050000X000 | Agency Workstations | | $17,691.75 | $- | $- | $17,691.75 | $119,296.00 | $- | $- | $119,296.00 |
| 9838.020000X000 | Investigations Unit N/R | | $- | $- | $- | $- | $25,000.00 | $- | $- | $25,000.00 |
| 9839.080000X000 | IT Operations | | $- | $- | $- | $- | $77,000.00 | $- | $- | $77,000.00 |

# 2026

## Legal Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

**L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY**

| Law number | Jurisdiction | Type | Description | Purpose the law serves: | Notes: | Changes made during FY2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022-23 Appropriations Act Section 41 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad litem Program | Funding agency deliverable(s) | | Reenacted |
| 2022-23 Appropriations Act Section 41 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Foster Care Review Board | Requires a service | May suspend reviews of children in certain settings | Reenacted |
| 2022-23 Appropriations Act Section 41 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children | Funding agency deliverable(s) | | Reenacted |
| 63-11-2410(2) | State | Statute | S.C. Child Abuse Response Protocol | Requires a service | Requires agency to convene the first meeting and to provide staff support for the committee | No Change |
| 63-11-2420 | State | Statute | S.C. Child Abuse Response Protocol | Requires a service | Requires agency to maintain the protocol and the committee's updates | No Change |
| Proviso 103.3(2) | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office: S.C. Health and Human Services Data Warehouse | Report our agency may/must provide | Provides that Continuum of Care and Foster Care Review Division should submit data | Reenacted |

| Law number | Jurisdiction | Type | Description | Purpose the law serves: | Notes: | Changes made during FY2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proviso 35.1 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Department of Mental Health Transfer | Funding agency deliverable(s) | Authorizes DMH to transfer funds to Continuum of Care | Reenacted |
| Proviso 41.2 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Guardian ad Litem Trust Proviso | Funding agency deliverable(s) | | Reenacted |
| 2025-26 Appropriations Act Section 41 | State | FY26-27 Proviso | Administration/Investigations Unit | Funding agency deliverable(s) | Provides funding for Administration division of agency as well as statutory requirements associated with Investigations Unit | Reenacted |
| S. C. Code of Regs. 31-10 | State | Regulation | Office of the Governor - Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children | Requires a service | Minimum eligibility requirements and application process for selection as a client of Continuum of Care | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-1310, et.seq. | State | Statute | Continuum of Care for Emotionally Disturbed Children | Requires a service | Enhances the delivery of services to severely emotionally disturbed children and youth | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-1900, et.seq. | State | Statute | Department of Child Fatalities and State Child Fatality Advisory Committee | Board, commission, or committee on which someone from our agency must/may serve | State Child Advocate serves on committee to review child fatalities | No Change |

| Law number | Jurisdiction | Type | Description | Purpose the law serves: | Notes: | Changes made during FY2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-2210, et.seq. | State | Statute | Department of Children's Advocacy | Requires a service | Duties regarding reviewing and making recommendations regarding services provided to children by state agencies | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-2210, et.seq. | State | Statute | Department of Children's Advocacy | Report our agency must/may provide | Participates in or leads investigations regarding critical incidents; provides an annual report to General Assembly, JCCLC and Governor | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-500, et.seq. | State | Statute | Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program | Requires a service | Recruiting, training and supervising volunteer guardians ad litem; Confidentiality of investigations | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-700, et.seq. | State | Statute | Foster Care Review Board | Requires a service | Monitoring progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | Amended |
| S.C. Code of Regs. 24-1 | State | Regulation | Office of the Governor-Division for Review of the Foster Care of Children | Requires a service | Monitoring progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | Amended |
| Proviso 117.19 | State | FY23-24 Proviso | Per Diem for Boards, Commissions and Committees | Distribute finding to another entity | Increased the authorized payment of per diem to Foster Care Review Board members | No Change |

| Law number | Jurisdiction | Type | Description | Purpose the law serves: | Notes: | Changes made during FY2026 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proviso 117.20(E) | State | FY23-24 Proviso | Meals and mileage reimbursement for Board members | Distribute finding to another entity | Authorizes reimbursement of mileage and meals to Foster Care Review Board members | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. 63-1-50(A) | State | Statute | Addition to Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (JCLCC) | Board, commission, or committee on which someone from our agency must/may serve | Adds State Child Advocate as ex officio, non-voting member of the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children (JCLCC) also known as The Children's Committee | No Change |
| S.C. Code of Laws Ann. 63-7-2750(C) | State | Statute | Extension of foster care | Requires a service | Requires the appointment (or ongoing appointment) of a guardian ad litem with the Guardian ad Litem Program beyond the child's 18th birthday if the young adult remains in foster care. Prior to this change, guardian ad litem appointments ended at the child's 18th birthday. | No Change |

# 2026

# Services Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

## L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY

| Description of Service | Description of Direct Customer | Customer Name | Others Impacted by Service | Division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Primary negative impact if service not provided. | Changes made to services during FY2026 | Summary of changes to services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Foster Care Review Division provides support and coordination to local Foster Care Review Board member volunteers and State Board of Directors | Agency FTEs with the Foster Care Review Division work with appointed local FCRB members in each county in South Carolina and State Board of Directors representing each Congressional District in South Carolina | DSS, Judicial System, federal oversight, children/families | foster parents, family members, fictive kin | Foster Care Review Board | The Foster Care Review Board monitors progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | lack of accountability or reliability for reviews and recommendations | No Change | |
| The Foster Care Review Board conducts periodic case reviews of children residing in foster care in South Carolina | Children and families involved in South Carolina's foster care system | DSS, Judicial System, federal oversight, children/families | foster parents, family members, fictive kin | Foster Care Review Board | The Foster Care Review Board monitors progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | lack of accountability or reliability for reviews and recommendations | No Change | |
| The FCRB provides the Family Court in every county in South Carolina a child-specific written recommendation following each case review of a child in foster care | Family Court Judges who are making decisions about permanency for children in foster care | DSS, Judicial System, federal oversight, children/families | foster parents, family members, fictive kin | Foster Care Review Board | The Foster Care Review Board monitors progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | lack of accountability or reliability for reviews and recommendations | No Change | |
| The FCRB provides the S.C. Dept. of Social Services and Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program in every county in South Carolina a child-specific written recommendation following each case review of a child in foster care | Department of Social Services and guardians ad Litem who are making decisions about permanency for children in foster care | DSS, Judicial System, federal oversight, children/families | foster parents, family members, fictive kin | Foster Care Review Board | The Foster Care Review Board monitors progress in achieving permanent placements for children in foster care | lack of accountability or reliability for reviews and recommendations | No Change | |

| Description of Service | Description of Direct Customer | Customer Name | Others Impacted by Service | Division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Primary negative impact if service not provided. | Changes made to services during FY2026 | Summary of changes to services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The S.C. Heart Gallery coordinates photos and video shoots for legally free children and maintains photo exhibits, an interactive website, and media relationships for enhanced targeted adoption recruitment. | Legally free children in foster care in South Carolina; interested families approved to adopt; interested families not yet approved to adopt; and South Carolina families assigned for completion of adoptive home studies | DSS, Judicial System, federal oversight, children/families | foster parents, family members, fictive kin | Foster Care Review Division - Heart Gallery | The SC Heart Gallery, a program of the Foster Care Review Division, provides enhanced child-specific adoption recruitment services | lack of recruitment and advocacy for youth in foster care who are awaiting adoption | No Change | |
| Evidenced-based, intensive care coordination with Medicaid Targeted Case Management | South Carolina youth under age 18 with severe emotional disturbance and/or behavioral health challenges; may serve up to age 21 if youth is in special education | children, families | Emergency departments, DBHDD-OMH, DHHS, DJJ, DSS, | Continuum of Care | Continuum of Care serves children with the most severe and complex emotional or behavioral health challenges whose needs are not being adequately met by existing services or programs | lack of appropriate services for children, youth and families such that youth suicide, foster care entry, juvenile justice entry and hospitalizations may increase | Amend | Removed "a Medicaid waiver or" from description of service, because the contract with DHHS ended in FY25. |
| Establish capacity to examine nine specific state agencies/offices | Child-recipients of state services and families who need to access services | Children, families, General Assembly, Governor, DHHS, DBHDD-OMH, DBHDD-OIDD, DSS, DJJ, DPH, John de la Howe, Wil Lou Gray, School for the Deaf and for the Blind | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division examine the adequacy of services for children by nine specific state agencies/offices | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Online directory, public forums or other methods of informing public | Child-recipients of state services and families who need to access services | children, families | emergency departments, DJJ, DSS, DBHDD-OMH, DHHS | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division educate the public about services available to children by state agencies/offices | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |

| Description of Service | Description of Direct Customer | Customer Name | Others Impacted by Service | Division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Primary negative impact if service not provided. | Changes made to services during FY2026 | Summary of changes to services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attend public forums, speak with members of community and research availability of services to determine service array | Members of the community and families who benefit from coordination of services and processes | children, families | | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division educate the public about services available to children by state agencies/offices | lack of awareness, access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Attend public forums, speak with members of community, research availability of services, and collaborate with agency leadership to coordinate service array | State agencies which function better as a result of coordination of services and processes | DHHS, DBHDD-OMH, DBHDD-OIDD, DSS, DJJ, DPH, John de la Howe, Wil Lou Gray, School for the Deaf and for the Blind | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division educate the public about services available to children by state agencies/offices | lack of awareness, access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Establish capacity to receive, refer, monitor, review, and/or investigate complaints regarding nine specific state agencies/offices | Child-recipients of state services and families who are dissatisfied with state agency services | children, families | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division receive, refer, monitor, review, and/or investigate complaints against nine specific state agencies/offices | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Establish capacity to receive, refer, monitor, review, and/or investigate complaints regarding nine specific state agencies/offices | State agencies who are seeking to improve the delivery of their services | DHHS, DBHDD-OMH, DBHDD-OIDD, DSS, DJJ, DPH, John de la Howe, Wil Lou Gray, School for the Deaf and for the Blind | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate and System Improvement Division | The State Child Advocate and the System Improvement Division receive, refer, monitor, review, and/or investigate complaints against nine specific state agencies/offices | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Prepare and submit annual report | State agencies/offices and state leadership who are seeking to improve the delivery of their services | DHHS, DBHDD-OMH, DBHDD-OIDD, DSS, DJJ, DPH, John de la Howe, Wil Lou Gray, School for the Deaf and for the Blind | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate/ DCA Administration | The State Child Advocate and DCA Administration submit the annual report, which includes the activities of the State Child Advocate | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |

| Description of Service | Description of Direct Customer | Customer Name | Others Impacted by Service | Division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Primary negative impact if service not provided. | Changes made to services during FY2026 | Summary of changes to services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prepare and submit annual report | Legislators who are seeking to determine the efficacy of state agencies' services to determine whether legislative changes are necessary to improve access, quality and delivery of services | General Assembly | communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | State Child Advocate/DCA Administration | The State Child Advocate and DCA Administration submit the annual report, which includes the activities of the State Child Advocate | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Prepare and submit annual report | General public who seeks to better understand, access, or improve state agencies' services | children, families and concerned citizens | children, families, General Assembly, Governor, DHHS, DBHDD-OMH, DBHDD-OIDD, DSS, DJJ, DPH, John de la Howe, Wil Lou Gray, School for the Deaf and for the Blind | State Child Advocate/DCA Administration | The State Child Advocate and DCA Administration submit the annual report, which includes the activities of the State Child Advocate | lack of appropriate oversight and improvements such that access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Maintain the Child Abuse Response Protocol; convene the first meeting of the Protocol Review Committee | Children and families who will have consistent access and availability to services; agencies who will have a clear understanding of expectations | children, families and concerned citizens | Law enforcement, Child Advocacy Centers, Judicial Branch, General Assembly, Governor, DBHDD-OMH, DSS, DJJ, Attorney General's Office/Human Trafficking Task Force | State Child Advocate/DCA Administration | The State Child Advocate and DCA Administration maintain the Child Abuse Response Protocol; the State Child Advocate convenes the first meeting of the Protocol Review Committee | lack of awareness, access and availability to quality services may harm or increase problems for children and families | No Change | |
| Serve on the State Child Fatality Advisory Committee | Review child fatalities in the state and make recommendations to prevent future child deaths | children, families and concerned citizens | Law enforcement, emergency departments, coroners, and other agencies | State Child Advocate | The State Child Advocate is the agency director for the Department of Children's Advocacy | The committee serves as a cross-section to provide recommendations and raise awareness about child fatalities and prevention opportunities. | No Change | |

| Description of Service | Description of Direct Customer | Customer Name | Others Impacted by Service | Division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Description of division or major organizational unit providing the service. | Primary negative impact if service not provided. | Changes made to services during FY2026 | Summary of changes to services |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Serve on the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children | Serve as an ex officio member of the JCLCC also known as the Children's Committee | children, families and concerned citizens | Law enforcement, foster parents, kinship providers, juvenile correctional officers, Judicial Branch, General Assembly, Governor, DBHDD-OMH, DSS, DJJ, DBHDD-OIDD, DHHS, providers, schools, Attorney General's Office/Human Trafficking Task Force | State Child Advocate | The State Child Advocate is the agency director for the Department of Children's Advocacy | The JCLCC "is a consortium of appointed citizens, legislators, and agency directors charged with the critical responsibility of identifying and studying key issues facing South Carolina's children, then promoting sound strategies for the development of children's policy. The Committee makes recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly to use in consideration of policy, funding, and legislation to benefit our children's future." | No Change | |
| Provide guardians ad litem for children who turn 18 years of age and remain in foster care pursuant to "extension of foster care" statute | Provide guardians ad litem for children who turn 18 years of age and remain in foster care pursuant to "extension of foster care" statute | children in foster care from ages 18 to 21 | foster parents, family members, fictive kin, DBHDD-OIDD, DBHDD-OMH, DHHS | Guardian ad Litem Program | The Guardian ad Litem Program provides best-interest advocates for children and youth in foster care. | The young adult will not have someone to advocate for their best interests as required by law and best practice. | No Change | |
| Provide guardians ad litem with continuing education training beyond the 30 hours of required pre-service training. | Provide guardians ad litem with training to help them better service children and families pursuant to current statute and updated policy changes | Current Guardians ad Litem and Program Staff | children and youth in foster care, kinship care, foster parents, family members, DSS, and other service providers | Guardian ad Litem Program | The Guardian ad Litem Program provides best-interest advocates for children and youth in foster care. | Guardians ad litem would not be up to date with the most current information on new statue or policy required to allow them to advocate for the childrens best interests as required by law and best practice. | Add | Not new to division, just adding to this list. |
| Provide legal representation to children involved in abuse and neglect court proceedings. | Child-recipients of state services and families who need to access services | Children, families | Communities, service providers, placement providers, other agencies | System Improvement | Receive, refer, monitor, review, and/or investigate complaints against 9 specific state agencies | Children appointed client-directed attorneys experience better results, less time in foster care or group settings, shorter time to adoption or guardianship, and more successful reunifications | Add | Adding Direct Representation Service |

# 2026

## Partnerships Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

**L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY**

| Type of Partner Entity | Name of Partner Entity | Description of Partnership | Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Governmental Organization | National CASA | Guardian ad litem Program | No Change |
| Individual | Professional and Non-Professional Photographers | Foster Care Review Board/Heart Gallery | No Change |
| State Government | S.C. Attorney General's Office | Guardian ad litem Program (SAVS grant) | No Change |
| State Government | S.C. Dept. of Social Services | Foster Care Review Board (Title IVe and IVb funding regarding review of foster care placements) | No Change |
| State Government | S.C. Dept. of Social Services | Foster Care Review Board/Heart Gallery (contract for enhanced adoption recruitment) | No Change |
| State Government | S.C. Dept. of Social Services | Guardian ad litem Program (Title IVe funding for training of volunteer guardians ad litem) | No Change |
| Non-Governmental Organization | S.C. Network of Children's Advocacy Centers | SC Child Abuse Response Protocol implementation and maintenance | No Change |

| Type of Partner Entity | Name of Partner Entity | Description of Partnership | Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year |
|---|---|---|---|
| State Government | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA) | Continuum of Care (SAMHSA grant with DMH) | No Change |
| Non-Governmental Organization | Various Child Welfare Organizations | Foster Care Review Board | No Change |
| Non-Governmental Organization | Various Child Welfare Organizations | Guardian ad litem Program | No Change |
| Private Business Organization | Various Continuum of Care Qualified Providers | Continuum of Care | No Change |
| Federal Government | Various Federal Agencies | Continuum of Care | No Change |
| Local Government | Various Local Agencies | Foster Care Review Board/Heart Gallery | No Change |
| Local Government | Various Local Agencies | Guardian ad Litem Program | No Change |
| Private Business Organization | Various Medicaid Contracted Care Organizations | Continuum of Care | No Change |

| Type of Partner Entity | Name of Partner Entity | Description of Partnership | Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-Governmental Organization | Various South Carolina and National Adoption Recruitment Organizations | Foster Care Review Board/Heart Gallery | No Change |
| State Government | Various State Agencies | Continuum of Care | No Change |
| State Government | Various State Agencies | Foster Care Review Board | No Change |
| State Government | Various State Agencies | Guardian ad Litem Program | No Change |
| Higher Education Institute | Various State Agencies | Guardian ad Litem Program (Training providers) | No Change |
| State Government | Various State Agencies, Legislators, and Gubernatorial Appointees from the Community | Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children regarding legislation affecting children | No Change |
| State Government | Various State Agencies, Legislators, and Gubernatorial Appointees from the Community | State Child Fatality Advisory Committee | No Change |
| Non-Government Organization | Various State Agencies, Legislators, and Gubernatorial Appointees from the Community | State Child Fatality Advisory Committee | No Change |

| Type of Partner Entity | Name of Partner Entity | Description of Partnership | Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year |
|---|---|---|---|
| Local Government | Various State Agencies, Legislators, and Gubernatorial Appointees from the Community | State Child Fatality Advisory Committee | No Change |
| Private Business Organization | Columbiana Centre | Foster Care Review Board/Heart Gallery standing exhibit space | No Change |
| Non-Government Organization | Grant Me Hope | Video production and adoption recruitment services for South Carolina Heart Gallery | No Change |
| Private Business Organization | Various Media Outlets | South Carolina Heart Gallery | No Change |
| State Government | SC Children's Justice Act Task Force | Federally mandated task force for the development and operation of programs designed to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases, the handling of suspected maltreatment related fatalities, and the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. | No Change |
| State Government | Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Social Services | Continuum of Care RPCFTM (FEM) Teaming for Teens Initiative | Add |
| Non-Government Organization | Various State Agencies, Non-profit organizations, and Community Stakeholders | SC Institute of Medicine and Public Health Foundations for Success Taskforce focused on developing actionable, consensus-based strategies to reduce early age suspensions and expulsions | Add |

| Type of Partner Entity | Name of Partner Entity | Description of Partnership | Change to the partnership during the past fiscal year |
|---|---|---|---|
| State Government | SCDPS | SC Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program, Advisory Committee | Add |

# 2026

# Reports Data

as submitted for the Accountability Report by:

## L080 - DEPARTMENT OF CHILD ADVOCACY

| Report Name | Law Number (if applicable) | Summary of information requested in the report | Date of most recent submission DURING the past fiscal year | Reporting Frequency | Type of entity/entities | Method to access the report | Direct access hyperlink or agency contact (if not provided to LSA for posting online) | Changes to this report during the past fiscal year | Explanation why a report wasn't submitted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agency Annual Accountability Report | §1-1-810 | The report "must contain the agency's or department's mission, objectives to accomplish the mission, and performance measures that show the degree to which objectives are being met." Agencies must "identify key program area descriptions and expenditures and link these to key financial and performance results measures." | September-25 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities | Provided to LSA for posting online | www.admin.sc.gov | No Change | |
| Agency Head Performance Evaluation | §8-11-160 | Evaluation of Performance of the Agency Director | | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | | State Fiscal Accountability Authority, Agency Head Salary Commission | No Change | To be completed in FY27. |
| Agency Head Planning Stage | §8-11-160 | Performance Expectations of the Agency Director | November-25 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | | State Fiscal Accountability Authority, Agency Head Salary Commission | No Change | |
| Annual Comprehensive Financial Reporting (ACFR, formerly CAFR) Reports | S.C. Code of Laws Ann. § 11-3-175 | Closing packages for GASB, leases, and other reporting | January-26 | Other | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on another website | admin.sc.gov | No Change | |
| Annual Report of Continuum of Care | §63-11-1360 | The Continuum of Care Division shall submit an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly on its activities and recommendations for changes and improvements in the delivery of services by public agencies serving children. | June-26 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on agency's website | https://childadvocate.sc.gov/sites/scdca/files/Documents/Dept_Childrens_Advocacy_24-25_Annual_Report.pdf | No Change | A stand-alone Continuum of Care annual report has not been submitted for at least a decade, but information for COC (activities, recommendations, improvements) are always included in the DCA's Annual Report. |
| Annual Report of State Child Advocate | §63-11-2270(7) | The State Child Advocate is to annually submit a report to the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children detailing the State Child Advocate's activities. | June-26 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on agency's website | https://childadvocate.sc.gov/sites/scdca/files/Documents/Dept_Childrens_Advocacy_24-25_Annual_Report.pdf | No Change | |
| Budget | §11-11-30 | Budget and proviso requests | September-25 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on another website | admin.sc.gov | No Change | |
| Continuum of Care Annual Cost Report | | Reports concerning Targeted Case Management | March-26 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Electronic copy available upon request | n/a | No Change | |

| Report Name | Law Number (if applicable) | Summary of information requested in the report | Date of most recent submission DURING the past fiscal year | Reporting Frequency | Type of entity/entities | Method to access the report | Direct access hyperlink or agency contact (if not provided to LSA for posting online) | Changes to this report during the past fiscal year | Explanation why a report wasn't submitted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Earmarked Appropriations Reporting | Proviso 117.21 of the FY 2023-24 Appropriations Act and Governor McMaster's Executive Order 2025-24, which replaces Executive Order 2022-19 | Quarterly reports on the website and an annual report to report whether the organizations receiving earmarked state appropriations are in compliance with submitting their Expenditure Reports | June-26 | Quarterly | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on agency's website | https://childadvocate.sc.gov/resources | No Change | |
| Federal Funds Survey | South Carolina Federal and Other Funds Oversight Act (Title 2, Chapter 65 of the SC Code of Laws, 1976 as amended | Financial information on federal projects/federal grants | October-25 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on another website | admin.sc.gov | Amend | The Federal Project Review Report no longer exists, and has been converted to the Federal Funds Survey. We have changed the title of this report in Column D from "Federal Project Review Report" to "Federal Funds Survey." |
| Foster Care Review Board Annual Report | §63-11-700(D) | The FCRB prepares an annual report with data regarding case reviews of children in foster care. | April-26 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on agency's website | https://fcrd.sc.gov/resources/publications | No Change | |
| Foster Care Review Board quarterly reports to DSS | | Quarterly reports are prepared by the Foster Care Review Division regarding Foster Care Review Board reviews. These reports are sent to DSS quarterly. | May-26 | Quarterly | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Hard copy available upon request. | n/a | No Change | |
| IT Data Collection Survey | Proviso 117.114 IT Data Collection | IT Employee Salary and Position Information | August-25 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on another website | admin.sc.gov | No Change | |
| Minority Business Enterprise Utilization Plan | §11-35-5240 | Utilization plan for the procurement of materials, supplies, and services from small and minority businesses pursuant to S.C. Code Section 11-35-5240 | July-25 | Annually | Governor or Lt. Governor AND Legislative entity or entities | Electronic copy available upon request | n/a | No Change | |
| Travel Summary | Proviso 117.26 | Travel summary for Travel Report pursuant to Proviso 117.26 | August-25 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Available on another website | www.cg.sc.gov/financial-reports/travel-reports | No Change | |
| Year-End Inventory | §10-1-140 | Inventory of Assets | May-26 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Electronic copy available upon request | n/a | No Change | |
| Telecommute Business Case Report | | Business case for allowing staff to telecommute | October-25 | Annually | South Carolina state agency or agencies | Electronic copy available upon request | n/a | No Change | |

| AGENCY NAME: | Department of Children's Advocacy | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| AGENCY CODE: | L080 | SECTION: | 41 |

# 2026
# Accountability Report

## SUBMISSION FORM

I have reviewed and approved the data submitted by the agency in the following templates:

- Data Template
  - Reorganization and Compliance
  - FY2026 Strategic Plan Results
  - FY2027 Strategic Plan Development
  - Legal
  - Services
  - Partnerships
  - Report or Review
  - Budget
- Discussion Template
- Organizational Template

I have reviewed and approved the financial report summarizing the agency's budget and actual expenditures, as entered by the agency into the South Carolina Enterprise Information System.

The information submitted is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| AGENCY DIRECTOR *(SIGN AND DATE)*: | **SIGNATURE ON FILE** | **Signature Received:** 09/15/2026 |
| *(TYPE/PRINT NAME)*: | Margaret Bodman | |

| | |
|---|---|
| BOARD/CMSN CHAIR *(SIGN AND DATE)*: | **N/A** |
| *(TYPE/PRINT NAME)*: | |