



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

MONTHLY UPDATE

Department of Children's Advocacy Monthly Update
Connecting with and updating our community

A Message from the State Child Advocate

I am grateful to share with you this edition of the Department of Children's Advocacy's Monthly Update which highlights child-serving advocacy during July 2022 including welcoming new members to the DCA team and featuring S.C. Heart Gallery children.



We also celebrate the launch of 9-8-8. The easy-to-remember suicide and crisis line phone number launched on July 16, 2022 and is supported by the Department of Mental Health and Mental Health America Greenville.

Part of crisis support and suicide prevention includes a continuum of support based on a person's needs not just at the moment of crisis but also for ongoing support and stability. Intensive in-home and community-based services improve outcomes for children by providing practical, family-focused skill-building and encouragement. This edition features how DSS and private providers have increased our state's array of services for children and families.



*Dum Spiro Spero
While I breathe, I hope*

Please share the news about the work that is underway in our state and contact us with questions, concerns, and recommendations at communications@childadvocate.sc.gov.

~ Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS
Director and State Child Advocate

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9-8-8 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LINE LAUNCHES IN SOUTH CAROLINA



MEET THE NEWEST MEMBERS OF OUR TEAM

S.C. HEART GALLERY FEATURES CORI AND G.K.



SHOUT OUT TO S.C. CONTINUUM OF CARE'S STATE OFFICE TEAM

DSS AND PRIVATE PROVIDERS INCREASE STATE'S SERVICE ARRAY

A New Suicide and Crisis Line: 9-8-8 Launched on July 16, 2022

9-8-8

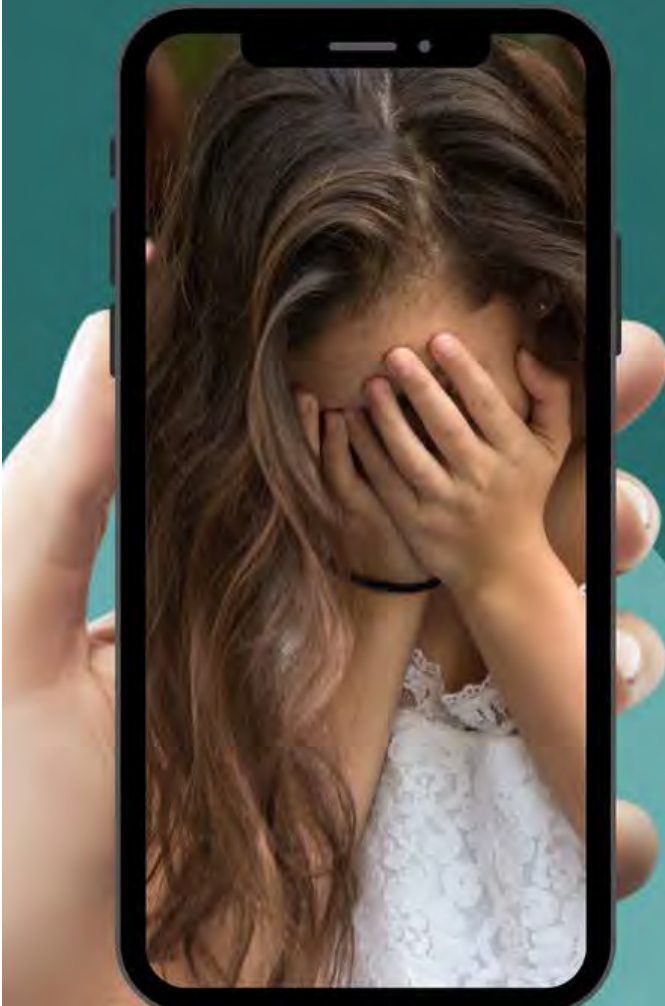
Effective July 16, 2022

Effective July 16, 2022, 988 replaces the 10-digit phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.

What is 988?

"Modeled after 911, the new three-digit 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is designed to be a memorable and quick number that connects people who are suicidal or in any other mental health crisis to a trained mental health professional." (NPR.org 7/16/2022)

South Carolina's 988 call lines are operated by the S.C. Department of Mental Health and Mental Health America Greenville.



www.childadvocate.sc.gov

S.C. Heart Gallery



Heart
Gallery
South Carolina

Features South Carolina Children Who Are Waiting on Their Forever Homes

Meet Cori



Corinthian, who likes to be called Cori, is an athletic teen who likes to play football and run track and would like to go to college on an athletic scholarship. He likes watching the NFL Network and his favorite entertainer is Jalen Ramsey, the NFL cornerback.

Cori describes himself as energetic and joyful and this comes across in his outgoing personality that causes everyone to call him a social butterfly. He really wants a family where he can have siblings and would flourish with a strong father figure.

Cori's Photographer: 2Feet Productions c. 2022

To learn more
about Cori,
[click here.](#)



S.C. Continuum of Care Welcomes New Team Members



Christina Davis

Quality Assurance Director, State Office
S.C. Continuum of Care

Welcome to **Christina Davis, Quality Assurance Director for Continuum of Care!** Christina earned her BSW (Bachelor of Social Work) from Limestone College in 2019 and will begin graduate school in August for a MSW (Master of Social Work). Prior to joining COC, Christina worked at SCDHHS for 9 years in different roles including administration, eligibility processing, training, and supervision. Her professional experience also includes working as a victim advocate at a domestic violence and sexual assault emergency shelter, and volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem in Spartanburg County from 2017 - 2019. She is excited to be with the COC division and is looking forward to serving S.C.'s citizens and making a difference



Alisha Kammerude

Wrap Facilitator, Region B
S.C. Continuum of Care

Welcome to **Alisha Kammerude, Wraparound Facilitator with Continuum of Care in Region B!** Alicia previously worked as a Family Support Specialist providing Solution Based Casework (SBC) at Families First in Iowa. Alisha earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. Alisha is exploring her new home and has already made trips to Greenville Farmers Market, the Smokey Mountains, and Top Golf. Alisha is an outdoor enthusiast and is looking forward to experiencing all the trails and waterfalls the upstate has to offer as well as many other attractions throughout the state.

Welcome



S.C. Heart Gallery



Heart
Gallery
South Carolina

Features South Carolina Children Who Are Waiting on Their Forever Homes

Meet G.K.



G.K.'s Photographer: 2Feet Productions c. 2022



Learn more
about G.K. [here.](#)

Garrett, who likes to be called “GK”, describes himself as a cool dude who is passionate about things he cares about. He enjoys graphic novels and Minecraft and would love to visit Legoland. In his free time, he likes playing video games and with Legos. His favorite subject is math and, when he grows up, he’d like to have a gem mining business. Garrett likes pizza and chocolate ice cream but does not like macaroni and cheese. He would like a family with a mom and dad and he also likes pets.

Guardian ad Litem Program Welcomes New Team Members



Maticia Simmons

Program Coordinator II, Marlboro County
Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program

Welcome to Maticia Simmons, Program Coordinator II for the Guardian ad Litem Program in Marlboro County! Maticia holds a Master of Science degree in Administration of Human Services. Maticia is a certified parenting facilitator as well as a certified paralegal. Maticia has nearly two decades of legal and case management experience. Maticia served as regional supervisor for the National Youth Advocacy Program for several years. She was also a paralegal and Independent Living-Youth facilitator for DSS. Maticia has a strong passion for empowering and encouraging others to become better versions of themselves. Maticia is a local Pastor and has three amazing sons.



Michael Duarte

Program Coordinator I, Sumter County
Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program

Welcome to Michael Duarte, Program Coordinator I for the Guardian ad Litem Program in Sumter County! Michael is a 2016 University of Southern California MSW graduate with a concentration in mental health and sub-concentration in military social work. Michael served on active duty in the US Army for 20 years as a Flight Operations Specialist and retired in 2007. Michael appreciates the opportunity to work as a child advocate for the Guardian Ad Litem program.



Increasing the Service Array for Children and Families: DSS Leads State in Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation

DSS SOUTH CAROLINA
Department of Social Services

HOMEBUILDERS®

Family First Prevention Services Act

FFPSA will provide federal funding for prevention services to families of children who are at imminent risk of entering foster care. It underscores the importance of children growing up in families and seeks to avoid the traumatic experience of children being separated from their families when entering foster care.

Specifically, federal reimbursement will be available for trauma-informed and evidence-based mental health services, substance use disorder treatment and in-home parenting skill-based training to safely maintain children in their homes.

Eligible services must be included in South Carolina's approved Title IV-E Prevention Plan and be provided by a qualified provider who is participating in the Department's qualified provider listing and provided to eligible populations (i.e. defined candidates for care).

The Department plans to implement its prevention program in October of 2021 and will begin partnering with our provider partners early in 2021 to assist in capacity building for select interventions and network development.

For updates on FFPSA implementation please visit: <https://dss.sc.gov/family-first-prevention-services-act>

Title IV-E Clearinghouse

Program Type:
Parenting Programs

Rating:
Well-Supported

For additional information related to the Title IV-E Clearinghouse please visit:
<https://www.fostercare.org/>
<https://www.dhs.gov/fostercare/>

Service Description

Homebuilders provides intensive, in-home counseling, skill building and support services. Homebuilders practitioners conduct behaviorally specific, ongoing, and holistic assessments that include information about family strengths, values, and barriers to goal attainment. Homebuilders practitioners collaborate with family members and referents in developing intervention goals and corresponding service plans.

Intervention goals and service plans focus on factors directly related to the risk of out-of-home placement or reunification. Throughout the intervention the practitioners develop safety plans and use clinical strategies designed to promote safety. Homebuilders utilizes research-based intervention strategies including Motivational Interviewing, a variety of cognitive and behavioral strategies, and teaching methods intended to teach new skills and facilitate behavior change.

Practitioners support families by providing concrete goods and services related to the intervention goals, collaborating with formal and informal community supports and systems, and teaching family members to advocate for themselves. Homebuilders services are concentrated during a period of 4 to 6 weeks with the goal of preventing out-of-home placement and achieving reunifications. Homebuilders therapists typically have small caseloads of two families at a time and receive 40 or more hours of direct face-to-face services. The family's therapist is available to family members 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Treatment services primarily take place in the client's home.

Targeted Populations

Families who have children and youth 0-18 at imminent risk of out-of-home placement or who are in placement and cannot be reunified without intensive in-home services.

Outcomes

- Teach families skills needed to prevent placement or successfully reunify with children.
- Reduce child abuse and neglect.
- Reduce family conflict.
- Reduce child behavior problems.

Questions? Email us at: FamilyFirstPSAinfo@dss.sc.gov or call **The Office of Child Health and Well-Being** at (803) 898-7788. We are here to help.

One of the Department of Social Services (DSS)'s current efforts to transform South Carolina's child welfare system into a child and family wellbeing system is the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). DSS's website shares, "FFPSA is the most substantial funding reform in the child welfare arena in the last 20 years. It aims to correct the value-policy mismatch perpetuated by the former funding system, which incentivized foster care placement and did not provide funding for noncustodial and prevention services. The new approach to funding incentivizes placing children in family settings, providing evidence-based services, and working with relatives who care for children in their families outside of the foster care system." In 2020, DSS submitted a grant application to the Children's Bureau for Family First Transition funding to support South Carolina's implementation of FFPSA. Since then, DSS has issued nine (9) capacity-building grants utilizing FFTA transition dollars.

DSS acknowledged that the ability to receive FFPSA funding for prevention services actually required capacity-building funding: "This aspect of the legislation is transformative and has far-reaching implications that will fundamentally change the practice for the Department but requires that approved services must meet certain qualifying thresholds designated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse. When FFPSA was first implemented, the Clearinghouse had a limited number of evidence-based programs (EBPs), which when compared with the state's service array were either not present in South Carolina or were present but geographically limited." On January 27th of 2022, the DSS's Federal Prevention Plan was officially approved by the Children's Bureau. Three categories of evidence-based services are approved in South Carolina's plan: mental health, substance abuse, and parenting. Services may be federally funded for up to a twelve-month period and families can receive services for multiple periods.

Approved Services

- Brief Strategic Family Therapy
- Parents as Teachers
- Healthy Families America
- Functional Family Therapy
- Homebuilders
- Multi Systemic Therapy
- Nurse-Family Partnership
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

Three Evidence-Based Programs are being implemented statewide: Homebuilders, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, and Parents as Teachers. Homebuilders is an intensive in-home service that works with the whole family and serves youth ages 0-18. Homebuilders is available in all 4 regions of the state through 5 capacity building grants. Brief Strategic Family Therapy is a family therapy model that works with youth ages 6-18 to reduce behavior problems and improve family interactions. BSFT is available in 3 regions throughout the state through 4 capacity building grants. Parents as Teachers is a home-visiting parent education model that serves families with children ages 0-5 and works to increase parent knowledge and prevent child abuse and neglect. The Department is teaming with the Office Of First Steps to deliver PAT to 3 regions across the state. **Families with open Family Preservation cases can access these Evidence-Based Programs through a referral from their case manager. For additional information or opportunities for capacity building grants, visit [DSS's website](https://dss.sc.gov) or contact FamilyFirstPSAinfo@dss.sc.gov.**

Sources for this article: Photos and quotes from DSS's [website](https://dss.sc.gov) with additional contributions by Lauren Tinman, M.Ed. (SCDSS Director of Family and Community Services and Strategic Projects) and Emily K. Medere, MSW (SCDSS Chief Deputy Director of Agency Development & Innovation)

Increasing the Service Array for Children and Families: Private Providers Aim to Identify and Meet Children's and Families Needs



Epworth Center for Counseling



During July, Department of Children's Advocacy leadership had the opportunity to meet with and learn more from private providers at a meeting which was arranged by the Palmetto Association for Children and Families (PAFCAF) and at separate meetings with Epworth Children's Home, Thornwell and South Carolina Youth Advocate Program (SCYAP). The big takeaway from these meetings was a realization that private providers see people's needs, recognize the gaps in services, and are intentionally meeting those needs. PAFCAF's website shares, "PAFCAF and member agencies are advocating for resources that are needed to transform and expand needed community-based services across South Carolina." Epworth Center for Counseling, Thornwell, and South Carolina Youth Advocate Program (SCYAP) are examples of innovative responses to children's and families' needs.

In addition to residential foster care services, Epworth, SCYAP, and Thornwell have offer a robust array of services including behavioral health screenings, diagnostic assessments, individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy, and crisis services and transitional living.

Epworth Children's Home has been part of South Carolina for more than 120 years and offers placement for children through DSS and directly with families. In addition to placement on their 32-acre campus, they offer services to strengthen children and families through intervention and prevention. One example is the Epworth Center for Counseling. Epworth Center for Counseling provides Outpatient Counseling for children, teens and adults. Finding a counselor and support team that work well with a particular family is life-changing. Their licensed and certified therapists specialize in behavioral, mental and substance use issues. Community referrals are welcomed. Most insurances are accepted, and a sliding fee scale is available with appropriate documentation. Learn more about Epworth's services [here](#).

South Carolina Youth Advocate Program (SCYAP) began more than thirty years ago as out of home, specialized foster care for youth with special needs in Charleston, South Carolina and "quickly spread up the state's coastline." SCYAP's State Office is in Columbia and has regional offices throughout the state as SCYAP has grown in its scope of work and service spectrum. They offer a wide array of services including mental health and psychiatric services, in-home family services, wraparound, transportation, and foster care. SCYAP's services can be provided as "stand alone" services or can be a component of a larger array of services for a youth or family, such as in-home therapy or community-based services. Learn more about SCYAP [here](#).

Increasing the Service Array for Children and Families: Private Providers Aim to Identify and Meet Children's and Families Needs (continued)

Thornwell is located in Clinton, South Carolina, and their services extend beyond their beautiful campus which opened its doors on October 1, 1875. Through its almost 150 years of service, Thornwell has increased its service array to include residential care, foster care recruitment, transitional living, family services, child development, and academic services. One example of family services is "Building Families" which provides in-home counseling and telehealth therapy for children and their families. In this program, Master's Level therapists, known as Family Specialists, "partner with you to develop a personalized plan that supports your child in making the positive changes you hope to see— behaviorally, socially, and emotionally." Learn more about scheduling a free consultation or referring a family [here](#). Read more about Thornwell's services [here](#).



If you have services that you would like to share with us or if there are services you need but cannot find, please contact us at communications@childadvocate.sc.gov.

Shout Out to S.C. Continuum of Care's State Office Team!



S.C. Continuum of Care's State Office Team took a moment to pose in their Department of Children's Advocacy polo shirts following Continuum of Care's state office staff meeting this month. Pictured from left to right are Vivian Ward, Cheryl Maybin, Marilyn Thomas, Leslie Johnson, Continuum of Care Director Greg Wright, Yvonne Lee, Christina Davis and Alicia Blackmon. Thank you for all you do to provide intensive care coordination to youth and families in South Carolina!