

View the latest edition of the Foster Parent Handbook at  
[https://dss.sc.gov/media/2440/foster-family-handbook\\_final-digital\\_08-12-20.pdf](https://dss.sc.gov/media/2440/foster-family-handbook_final-digital_08-12-20.pdf).

## By the numbers:

### Licensed Foster Parents

Total of **1,443** SC DSS licensed foster homes. This includes:

- **409** licensed homes in the **Upstate** Region
- **428** licensed homes in the **Midlands** Region
- **311** licensed homes in the **Pee Dee** Region
- **295** licensed homes in the **Low Country** Region

Total of **1,372** Private Agency licensed foster homes. This includes:

- **356** Private Agency- Regular Homes
- **1,016** Private Agency- Therapeutic Homes

### Licensed Homes without Foster Children

DSS Licensed Homes – 131 providers (decrease from 134 in May 2020)

- Less than 12 Months – 68 providers
- Greater or equal to 12 Months – 63 providers

Private Agency Licensed Homes – 208 providers (increase from 200 in May 2020)

- Less than 12 Months – 67 providers
  - Regular Providers – 30 providers
  - Therapeutic Providers – 37 providers
- Greater than or Equal to 12 Months – 141 providers
  - Regular Providers – 44 providers
  - Therapeutic Providers – 97 providers

### Pending Kinship/Foster Parent Applications for Licensure

Total of **352** pending kinship/foster parent licenses. This includes:

- **288** pending foster parent licenses
- **64** pending kinship licenses
- **337** non-kin regular foster family applications sent to CPA (Child Placing Agencies)

**Timely permanency is best for all children. Children need to be in a loving permanent home as quickly as possible so that they can flourish.**

Research shows that the longer a child is in foster care, the more he or she becomes estranged from his biological parents and reunification becomes less likely. Children with longer foster care stays also experience more frequent placement moves. Therefore, DSS monitors positive outcomes such as average months to reunification and average months to adoption for children.

- Average months to reunification: Of all children under the age of 18 who were reunified with their parent(s) or caretaker(s) at the time of discharge from foster care, for the reporting year, 43% of children were reunified in less than 12 months from the date of their latest removal from home.
- Average months to adoption: Of all children who left foster care due to finalized adoption, for the reporting year, 20% of children had finalized adoptions in less than 24 months from the date of their latest removal from home.

**Where do most children reside while in foster care?**

Most children reside in family like settings (83%) which includes kinship (495 or 12%) and other family like settings such as regular foster homes, therapeutic foster homes, and pre-adoptive or adoptive homes (3,003 or 71%).

Only 693 children or 16% are in congregate care settings. The percentage of children in congregate care has been decreasing with the increased emphasis on placing children into either kinship or other family.

**August 2020**

Age Range	0-6	7-12	13-18	Total
# in Congregate Care	18	98	577	693

**Greatest Need: Foster Parents for Teens & Siblings**

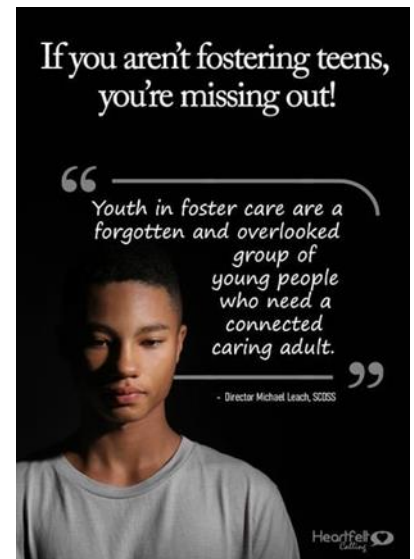
Children and youth do best in families, yet 3 out of 5 youth experience congregate care in DSS. **We need more foster homes willing to accept teens and large sibling groups.** Teens need the love, support, and stability that families provide. We value the importance of sibling relationships! Being placed with siblings and maintaining sibling connections while children are in foster care provides them with a sense of continuity and belonging. Please consider opening your home and heart to our teenagers and sibling groups.

Licensed foster parents are the best recruiters for others in the community to consider fostering. Please share and encourage others in your community the rewards of fostering!

**Becoming a Foster Parent is More Important Than Ever**

In a recent video message published on Facebook, DSS State Director Michael Leach remarked, “the agency is always in need of caring, loving, people who are willing to step out of their comfort zone and work with children and youth in foster care, who have had difficult experiences. It’s not always easy, but the rewards and the satisfaction in seeing children and youth in foster care heal, reunite with their family, and become successful, make it all worthwhile.”

“In the last year with your help we have seen an increase in baby net referrals, a decrease in children being overprescribed psychotropics, and a decrease in our re-entry rate. We are around 126 days on average to license homes and we saw 79% reunified in less than 12 months for our latest reporting year,” said Director Leach.



## **Becoming a Foster or Adoptive Parent**

Heartfelt Calling, a program of the South Carolina Foster Parent Association, is the first point of contact for anyone in South Carolina wanting to start the process to become licensed as a regular (non-therapeutic) foster home or approved to adopt with DSS. Heartfelt Calling is DSS' centralized intake for applications; although, families can directly contact Child Placing Agencies (CPAs). Heartfelt Callings will assist families with the intake application and paperwork, and in determining available licensing agencies in their area to choose from.



**For questions or to begin the process, call 888-828-3555 or email [info@heartfeltcalling.org](mailto:info@heartfeltcalling.org)**

**For additional support check out the Fostering Great Ideas Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SHAREfosteringSC/?ref=share>**

## **Foster Parent Handbook**

We are excited to announce that the new Foster Parent Handbook has been completed and can be found on our website [HERE](#).

## **Well-Being Teams—Praise for the Frontline and Clinical Team**

For the past four years, the Clinical Team has been training SCDSS staff and stakeholders on the overuse of psychotropic medication for children in foster care. As of last year, DSS adopted a new psychotropic informed consent policy and training for foster parents. The training promotes safe and appropriate use of psychotropic medications and raises awareness on potential over use and side effects. Pharmaceutical data from SCDHHS identifies children having “red flags” whose medications need to be reviewed.

These “red flags” are:

- 1) any prescribed antipsychotic,
- 2) four or more prescribed psychotropic medications, and
- 3) any child age six or under on psychotropic medication.

Each week the Regional Clinical Specialist and Case Managers discuss five or six children and youth who have a “red flag” with Dr. Khetpal, DSS' Child Psychiatrist, and Tim Nix, the Lead Clinical Specialist. As a result of their work to follow up on clinical recommendations, there has been an overall 57% reduction in psychotropic “red flags”.

In June 2019 there were 840 children and youth with “red flags” and in April 2020 the number dropped to 361. The most dramatic decrease has been in children and youth on four or more psychotropic medications. From June of 2019 to April of 2020, there was a 93% reduction. For children and youth on an antipsychotic there was a 43% reduction. For children age six and under on a psychotropic there was a 3% reduction.

## **2020 Emergency Supplemental Payment**

These are difficult times for us all, and your commitment to the health and well-being of the children/youth has never been more important. Beginning March 2020 and continuing throughout the COVID-19 emergency declaration period, foster parents will receive an additional payment each month per child to support the needs of children and youth at this time. The supplemental amounts are based on the age of the child and the current board rates approved in state law, compared to computed USDA standard costs for our region.

Starting with the July 2020 supplemental payments (which will be issued in August 2020), the following will occur for a child placed in the foster home for the entire previous month:

Foster homes that have a provisional or standard license will receive the following supplemental payment, based on the age of the child, in the eligible month for additional COVID-19 costs:

- a. 0 – 5 years of age \$100.80/month/child
- b. 6 – 12 years of age \$179.40/month/child
- c. 13 – 20 years of age \$152.70/month/child

**Q: Am I eligible to receive the emergency payment?**

*A: All of the following must be met in order to be eligible to receive the payment: 1) The child in SC custody must be in a licensed foster home/provider or an out of state foster care provider (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children). 2) The child must be placed in your home for the entire calendar month for which the additional payment is being received (i.e., July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>).*

**Q: How will the payments be distributed for children in foster care?**

*A: Eligible foster care providers who normally receive board payment directly from SC DSS will receive the supplemental payment using the same payment method (direct deposit, ePay debit card, or check) as you currently receive the monthly or daily board payment. Foster care providers that normally receive the foster care board rate through their Child Placing Agency will receive the payment via check; unless the provider receives some other payment directly from SCDSS then they will receive the payment using that same payment method.*

**Q: When are the payments distributed?**

*A: Like board payments, the supplemental payment is payable the following month the child is in your home (i.e., receive June's board payment by the 16<sup>th</sup> of July). Eligible foster care providers can expect the supplemental payments to be deposited about five (5) days' after their board payment is received.*

**Q: Will I receive the emergency payment if I have a provisional license?**

*A: Yes. For provisionally licensed kinship homes currently receiving a partial board payment, the temporary COVID-19 cost supplement will also include an additional amount to account for the difference in the partial payment and the amount paid to fully licensed homes.*

If you have questions, foster parents may email [FPHelp@dss.sc.gov](mailto:FPHelp@dss.sc.gov) and/or call (803) 898-4174 for assistance.

## **Clothing Allowances**

### **Initial Clothing Allowances**

The county office is responsible for issuing initial clothing allowances upon child/ren's entry into foster care.

### **Quarterly Clothing Allowances**

- State office issues the quarterly clothing allowance to the foster care provider with eligible children.
- Allowances will be issued using the same payment method on file at DSS, i.e., direct deposit, ePay debit card or check. Checks mailed may take a little longer to receive depending on the USPS.
- When are quarterly clothing allowances issued?
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: July (covers July-September)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: October (covers October-December)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: January (covers January-March)
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: April (covers April-June)

**Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) for SC K-12 Students**

A one-time federal benefit to help supplement family food costs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and prolonged school closures. Children in foster care who attend a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school or are enrolled in a free or reduced-price school meals program under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will receive a P-EBT benefit.

If a child in foster care was enrolled in a free-or reduced price (FRP) meals program or attending a CEP school as of March 13<sup>th</sup> and is living in your home as of July 20<sup>th</sup>, the P-EBT benefit will be mailed to your address July 24, 2020. The P-EBT benefits will be issued on an EBT card, and in the name of the qualifying child.

For questions regarding PEBT or a PEBT issuance please email [PEBTBenefits@dss.sc.gov](mailto:PEBTBenefits@dss.sc.gov) .

**Guidance for Educational Decisions for Children and Youth in Foster Care**

SCDSS encourages in person instruction for children and youth in foster care if that option is offered by a school district. If virtual instruction is the only format being offered by the school district, then virtual instruction is appropriate for children and youth in foster care until the district plan is revised.

When in-person instruction is available, but a person involved in the child or youth's care would prefer the child or youth in foster care receive virtual instruction, the Case Manager or Supervisor facilitates input from:

- (1) the birth parents (if parental rights have not been terminated),
- (2) foster parents or residential staff, and if age and developmentally appropriate,
- (3) the child or youth.

**Welcome**

SCDSS Office of Permanency Management welcomes Amber Peeples to the Foster Parent Liaison program. Amber has been with SCDSS for 8 years and has experience in foster care and foster home licensing. We are excited to have Amber in this role. You can reach Amber Peeples and Randi Fullwood at [FPhelp@dss.sc.gov](mailto:FPhelp@dss.sc.gov) .

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