



Thank You Foster Families!

With only two months left of the year, the holiday season is rapidly approaching and 2020 is coming to a close. We all have navigated through ambiguity, uncertainty, and a truckload of disruptive changes. Together, we have adapted and pivoted down this unfamiliar path.

As a Department, we could not begin to address the multiplicity and complexity of challenges present in meeting families' needs during a pandemic without dedicated foster parents.

Every day you "step up to the plate" and provide stability and a sense of normalcy to children in need; undoubtedly, making sacrifices in your personal lives to enhance the lives of others. Thank you for enduring and persevering through all of the obstacles you encounter as a foster parent. Thank you for answering that phone call and having the courage to welcome someone into your home with little to no knowledge of who they are or what impact they will make. Thank you for all you do to keep children safe, support parents, and help families stay connected.

"We need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my problem'. Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

- Fred Rogers

Connect With Other Foster Parents



Interested in getting to know other foster parents in your area? Check out the [South Carolina Foster Parent Associations Website](#) to find contact information for the

Foster Parent Association President in your area. This is a great way to connect and find support in your community!

Support Through the Fostering Journey

We know that fostering is challenging and families, especially new foster families, need help in navigating the complexities of this journey. Having someone who 'just gets it' is immensely helpful.

Interested in providing guidance and support to new foster families? Do you have experience working with biological families toward reunification and navigating the child welfare system? If so, please contact Karla at karla@scfpa.com or your local SC Association directly.



Care2Foster™ is an initiative of Fostering Great Ideas® designed to **recruit new foster parents and support current foster parents**. The organization works closely with the Department of Social Services and private foster home licensing agencies to aid existing foster parents.

Through partnership and collaboration, they do the following to enhance the state's retention efforts:

- *Foster Family Handbook: Advice and Encouragement for Foster Parents, From Start to Finish*
Updated handbook prepared by Fostering Great Ideas® in partnership with SC Department of Social Services can be found [HERE](#).
- SHAREfostering Facebook Group- an online community of current and prospective foster parents where members can ask questions, find encouragement, and access updates/ resources. Join the group by clicking [HERE](#).
- Weekly Foster Parent Support Group (virtual) - prospective and current foster parents are invited to join together for a time of encouragement, support, and community. Foster parents that meet consistently develop deep and meaningful relationships.
- "Great Foster Parents" Group Chats- Bi-weekly discussions (with evidence-based tips and resources) on foster care related topics such as relationships with family, helping kids navigate foster care /foster sibling relationships, processing grief, etc.

2020 Emergency Supplemental Payment

Foster parents are currently receiving an additional payment each month for each child due to the COVID-19 emergency. 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. As a reminder, the supplemental payments that began in March of 2020 have only been authorized to be provided during the COVID-19 emergency declaration period. At this time, the payments are expected to end in December of 2020 with the last payment being received in January of 2021. Foster parents may email FPHelp@dss.sc.gov and/or call (803) 898-4174 for assistance.

Foster Parent Advisory Council

As foster parents, you spend more time with children in foster care than any other professional partners. You also have first-hand experiences of the effects of laws, policies and procedures.

We are excited about the formation of South Carolina's Foster Parent Advisory Council. It is facilitated by the SC Foster Parent Association with collaboration, contact, and support from SCDSS. The purpose of the Foster Parent Advisory Council is to provide SCDSS staff with guidance, assistance, and recommendations for addressing the service and support needs of foster parents, children in foster care and their families.

The council is currently comprised of seasoned and newly licensed foster parents throughout our state and includes foster parents licensed with private agencies.

If you have any suggestions for the council, contact Anna at anna@scfpa.com

Results from Foster Parent Survey completed in Spring

48% of surveyed foster parents reported frequent or some contact with biological families, while 52% report seldom or no

As we work to improve the quality of services and support for foster families in South Carolina, we invited foster parents around participate in a survey to gain a better understanding around training and ongoing support needs of foster parents. Specifically, we wanted to learn how we as SCDSS support you and where we can improve. 537 foster parents across the state participated! The results of the survey were presented to SCDSS leadership.

To see results from the survey, click [here!](#) Look out for 2021's survey in the spring!

New Virtual Tool Equips Foster Parents with Essential Information



A new online tool, called the *Child and Adult Information Portal (CAIP)*, will soon be launched to help South Carolina foster parents quickly access important information about the children in their care.

The CAIP includes school records and health information and allows SC Foster Parents to log-in to the secure DSS website using a smartphone, tablet, desktop or laptop computer, to instantly view and update information about the children in their care, including:

- Immediate healthcare needs
- Allergies
- Prescribed medications
- Physical, mental and behavioral healthcare provider information
- Dental provider information
- Immunization records
- Information about developmental needs
- Previous school records
- Awards and achievements
- Special interests
- Family, adult and community connections
- Events
- Visitation and maintaining connections
- ...and much more!



The portal is scheduled to go live late fall, with training for users expected to begin soon. The CAIP was created by the SCDSS Division of Technology Services and the USC College of Social Work and Health Information Technology Consortium and was funded by The Duke Endowment. The project team was informed by interviews and focus groups with SC foster parents, DSS case managers, supervisors, child placing agencies, education stakeholders and many others throughout the state.

Court News

Chief Justice Set Specific Court Terms for DSS Cases at Request of Agency

At the request of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), Chief Justice Donald W. Beatty has authorized specific terms of Family Court in Greenville and Richland Counties to be held in October and November. The purpose of these hearings is to address the pending DSS cases that have accumulated during the pandemic. See more [here](#).



Court Operations

Per Chief Justice Beatty's Memorandum dated September 14, 2020:

"All matters may be heard in-person effective September 21, 2020. Judges, however, have discretion to determine whether it is appropriate to conduct a hearing using remote communication technology. Consent of the parties or counsel is not required. Any matter heard in person must be conducted in a reasonably safe manner in accordance with established COVID-19 protocol. Reasonably safe manner assumes adherence to CDC

social distancing recommendations, wearing of personal protective equipment when appropriate, availability of adequate sanitizing supplies, and staggering of hearings.” See the entire memorandum [here](#). Additional court news can be found at sccourts.org

Where are Children in Foster Care being Placed?

Maintaining family connections is a focus when children and youth come into care and DSS has prioritized, where possible, to place siblings together. DSS has seen increases in children and youth placed together at the onset of the case, though it recognizes through this work and through analyses on the availability of foster homes that more foster homes who can take siblings are needed especially for older youth.

Sibling Placement at Intake	Sept 2019	August 2020
At least one sibling is placed together	67%	73%
All Siblings placed together	24%	40%

While the emphasis at placement of children and youth is to be placed with kin, that is not always possible. DSS recognizes the importance of placing children and youth in family-like settings as the next best placement, if placement with kin is not possible. DSS continues to improve. In September 2020, 82% of children and youth were placed in family-like homes at entry, when kin were not available, showing an increase compared to a year ago of 77%.

Teens are less likely to live in Family like settings compared to younger children. While teens make up 32% of all children and youth in care, they are less likely to be in foster homes or therapeutic foster homes than younger children and youth. For example, of all children and youth in foster homes or therapeutic foster homes, 47% are children 6 years and under, 31% are youth who are 7-12 years, and only 22% are teens. From a recent analysis on the need for foster homes, DSS’s highest need by age was for youth who are ages 13-17 years.

Medically fragile children and youth and other special needs populations.

DSS, as of the end of October 2020, has 81 medically fragile children and youth under the age of 18. This population, also classified as medical therapeutic foster care, all reside in therapeutic foster homes. There is still a need for adoptive homes as 16 of these children and youth are legally free.

In addition to children and youth who are medically fragile, there are an additional 67 children and youth who are special needs. The special needs designation is used for children and

youth who may have autism or are developmentally disabled. They also reside in therapeutic foster homes and at least 15 of them are legally free.

Recertification Training Hours

As partners in the agency's mission to provide for the safety and wellbeing of children in foster care, foster parents must possess the necessary knowledge and skills. Under the current State of Emergency, SCDSS is not limiting the number of virtual/online training hours to meet the foster initial licensing or renewal licensing standards.

Mandatory trainings required for foster parents include: Safe Sleep, Water Safety, Shaken Baby, and Psychotropic Medications. These mandatory trainings are only required to be completed once but may be repeated if determined and recommended by the Agency. Also, secondary medical consent training is required for all foster parents and must be updated annually. All recertification training must be relevant to: the foster care process; caring for the child in foster care; meeting the emotional, physical, or educational needs of the child in foster care; or the impact fostering has on the foster family. If you are having trouble completing mandatory training or have not acquired sufficient training hours, please contact your Family Support Coordinator or Licensing Specialist for assistance in locating and/or registering for courses.

Below are training opportunities/websites:

-SC Foster Parent Association: training is open to all Foster Parents, Adoptive Parents, Kinship Caregivers, DSS Child Welfare Staff, GALs, Group Home Staff, and Child Placing Agencies. There is no charge for attending their trainings. <https://www.scfpalms.com/>

-The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: The NCTSN offers both online and in-person training on a range of topics, from general trauma education, to assessment and intervention techniques, to Breakthrough Series Collaboratives focused on systems change. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/training>

-Centers of Disease Control and Prevention- Preventing ACEs: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/aces-training/#/>

-United Way-SharpenFamily: <https://www.uwpiedmont.org/sharpen-family/>

-TIPS for Child Care Institute: <https://www.fosterparentclasses.com/>

Clothing Allowances

Effective October 1, 2020, all clothing allowances (initial and quarterly) began being issued through DSS's internal system, Child and Adult Protective Services System (CAPSS). This new process will ensure the timely issuance of initial and quarterly allowances to eligible foster care providers.

Initial Clothing Allowance: The initial clothing allowance will be issued for any child that remains in foster care four days after entry. The payment is now being issued by staff in State Office and no longer by the county office staff. The payment will be issued to the foster parent that has the child on the fourth day of their entry into foster care.

Quarterly Clothing Allowance: A quarterly clothing allowance will be issued based on the following criteria: The child was in a licensed or provisionally licensed foster care placement the last day of the previous quarter and the child is in a licensed or provisionally licensed foster care placement as of the clothing allowance run date.

All quarterly allowances are deposited at the same time as the board payment.

1st Quarter Clothing Allowance covers July – September

2nd Quarter Clothing Allowance covers October – December

3rd Quarter Clothing Allowance covers January – March

4th Quarter Clothing Allowance covers April – June

Payments for clothing vouchers go out in Jan, April, Jul. When you receive the clothing allowance it is for the previous quarter. However, if the child is no longer in your home, you will not receive the clothing voucher.

Youth are not eligible for the initial or quarterly clothing allowance if any of the following have occurred on the clothing allowance run date: 1) Youth is in a placement that has signed an adoption agreement; 2) Youth is in an unlicensed placement; 3) Youth is on runaway; 4) Youth is incarcerated or in a juvenile detention center; 5) Youth is placed in a psychiatric facility; 6) Youth is placed in any out of state placement with the exception of a licensed out of state foster home.

Overpayments: If the county office does not update the placement in CAPSS timely, the clothing allowance could mistakenly be sent to the wrong foster parent. If this occurs, State Office will contact you and request that the funds be returned.

If you have questions about clothing allowances or do not receive the clothing allowance for a child in your care, please contact the child's case manager or reach out to the foster parent liaisons at FPhelp@dss.sc.gov.

If you would like to receive clothing allowances via direct deposit, please complete the form found [HERE](#). Email the completed form along with a voided check to Anthony.Brown@dss.sc.gov or Jasmine.Dubose@dss.sc.gov. Be sure to place the word 'encrypt' in the subject line of your email.

Well Child Visits & Dental Visits

A note from Karen McDaniel, Nurse Manager

Thank you for your efforts to ensure children and youth follow the Enhanced Schedule for Well Child Visits and Dental Visits outlined below.

Well Child Visits

This schedule is based on the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for children in Foster Care.

Monthly until
6 months
of age

Every 3 months
until 2 years
of age

Every 6 months
after 2 years
of age

TIP: Select Health allows several Well Child Visits per year. If your provider is not aware of this benefit, email us at: childhealth@dss.sc.gov We can connect them to someone who can assist the provider.



Dental Visits

TIP: Medicaid allows the initial dental visit to occur regardless of the last time the child saw a dentist. If the dental provider is not aware of this benefit email us at: childhealth@dss.sc.gov

All children 2 to 18 years old are expected to receive a Dental Visit every 6 months. As you know from managing your busy schedule, it is best to:

- Schedule future appointments prior to leaving the medical, dental or behavioral health appointment.
- Leave medical provider with an after visit summary (Medical); treatment summary (Dental); or [DSS Form 30260 Medical/Dental Encounter Form](#).
- Clinical documentation from all visits can continue to be shared with SC DSS Case Managers or faxed to DSS Nurses at **(803) 734-2837** or emailed to WellBeingStateOffice@dss.sc.gov



Please do not hesitate to contact SC DSS RN, Karen J. McDaniel, and (864) 467-4921 with any questions. Our Team is available to help you with access to care questions or a Medical Provider needs further guidance regarding reimbursement for visits following the enhanced schedule.

Partnership with First Choice by Select Health provides extra resources to ensure children and youth in Foster Care have their needs met. Please expect to continue to receive calls from a Select Health Care Manager. Care Managers are there to answer questions and provide education needs for mental health or physical health. Please respond to your care coordinator's call when they reach out. When you receive a call, Care Connectors will introduce themselves as part of the Foster Care team with Select Health. They will explain that due to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) they must make sure they are talking to the right person. **Foster parents or residential staff will be asked to verify the foster child's first and last name, date of birth, and address where the child lives.**

Any Select Health call will include a HIPAA verification **each time** at the beginning of call. For questions or to reach the Foster Care team, please call First Choice Member services at 888276-2020 and press Option #3.

November is National Adoption Month



As National Adoption Month begins, 154 children in the state's foster care system are legally free for adoption and waiting for a permanent place to call home – a "forever family."

To highlight the significance of the month, Gov. Henry McMaster issued a proclamation declaring November as Adoption Month.

"There are currently 154 young people in foster care in South Carolina who are in need of permanent families," said Governor Henry McMaster. "A loving home can make all the difference to

a child's ability to tap into his or her greatest potential. South Carolinians are a caring and compassionate people who want the best for their neighbors, and I ask that everyone consider whether adoption is a possibility for your family."

"Every child deserves the chance to grow up in a home where they feel safe, loved and protected and many waiting children in our system are ready to benefit from adoption," DSS State Director Michael Leach said. "It's a fact that fewer families adopt sibling groups and older youth and teens, who linger in foster care and are most likely to age out of the system without the support and safety net they need to flourish as young adults. This is our greatest need. As an agency, we want to change that and help youth

secure stable connections to become independent, productive adults through permanency. Our society as a whole benefits when that happens.”

The pandemic has not stopped our work to help children and families,’ Leach said. “I urge families to consider the joy an older youth can add to your life and the chance you have to make a lifechanging difference in theirs.”

Families interested in adoption can view online profiles of South Carolina’s waiting children at SCDSS Adoptions, the SC Heart Gallery, and AdoptUSKids. In November 2019, SCDSS implemented a new Centralized Recruitment program that has improved services and timeframes by creating a new system that responds to families within three days of an initial inquiry. Now, families already approved to adopt are notified within two weeks if they are a potential match with a child and final selection from all potential matches are made within 30 days. Since launching this new system in November 2019, SCDSS has had over 1675 inquiries and 157 matches.

Questions? Email us at: fphelp@dss.sc.gov or call The Foster Parent Help Line at **(803) 898-4174**.