

SOUTH CAROLINA FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD

2020—2021 Annual Report and Recommendations



Advocating permanent families for children

2020 DATA SNAPSHOT



STATS AT-A-GLANCE

- 2,549 CHILDREN ENTERED FOSTER CARE
- 22% OF CHILDREN ENTERING CARE HAD PREVIOUS OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS
- 3,042 CHILDREN LEFT FOSTER CARE
- 50% OF CHILDREN RETURNED HOME
- 25% OF CHILDREN REVIEWED WERE ADOPTED

REVIEWS

- 6,154 CHILDREN REVIEWED
- 4,475 CASES REVIEWED
- 271 REVIEW BOARD MEETINGS

AREAS OF CONCERN

- 31% AGENCY POLICY VIOLATIONS
- 28% LEGAL BARRIERS
- 32% CASE PLAN BARRIERS
- 4% ADOPTION SERVICE DELAYS
- 3% LEGAL HEARINGS NOT HELD TIMELY
- 2% LEGAL HEARINGS NOT HELD

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE 17 MONTHS OR LONGER

- 1,880 CHILDREN
- 32 % LEGALLY FREE FOR ADOPTION
- 12% IN CARE FIVE OR MORE YEARS

SC HEART GALLERY

- 1,220 INQUIRIES
- 90 ADOPTION EXHIBITS
- 24 CHILDREN PHOTOGRAPHED
- 22 VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS
- 31 CHILDREN MATCHED WITH FAMILIES

ADOPTIONS

- 450 FINALIZED ADOPTIONS
- 16% WITHIN 24 MONTHS
- 16% AGE 13 AND OLDER

PEOPLE POWER

- 183 VOLUNTEERS
- 2,918 CASE REVIEW HOURS
- 3,725 TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

Vernon Lee McCurry Lifetime Achievement Award

- JANE DANIEL, REVIEW BOARD 13C, GREENVILLE

2020 REVIEW BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR

- MARY LONG, REVIEW BOARD 5E, KERSHAW/RICHLAND

Data contained in this annual report represents children reported by the South Carolina Department of Social Services who remain in foster care at least four consecutive months and are reviewed by the South Carolina Foster Care Review Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS



The South Carolina Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) is supported by the South Carolina State Board of Directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The State Board meets quarterly and is responsible for reviewing and coordinating the activities of local review boards. The Foster Care Review Board's State Board also makes recommendations in an annual report to the Governor and the South Carolina General Assembly.

State Board 2020 Recommendations

1. **Collaborative Promotion of Timely Permanence:** The Board of Directors acknowledges that the COVID 19 pandemic exacerbated issues regarding hearing continuances, and the Board of Directors continues to be concerned about continuances and delays in completing merits hearings for children who are in foster care. The Board recommends that child and family wellbeing partners work collaboratively to promote timely merits, review, termination of parental rights, and/or adoption hearings to achieve timely permanence for children/adolescents.
2. **Engagement and Advocacy:** The Board of Directors recognizes that everyone's voice is important to ensure that reliable recommendations are made to the Court, and the Board of Directors encourages the engagement and participation of DSS, Guardian ad Litem Program, Richland County CASA, foster parents, kinship caregivers, providers and biological parents in the review process. The Board of Directors strives to work with these individuals and organizations as well as the Judiciary to have increased FCRB presence at court hearings regarding the Court's review and consideration of FCRB's recommendations.
3. **Internal Capacity:** The Board of Directors recognizes the need for a strengthened capacity within its Boards and recommends: Enhanced training for FCRB members and Chairpersons including observations of other boards and increased awareness regarding resource availability; increased board attendance at reviews; improved FCRB review scheduling with more time allotted for first reviews; reduced board vacancies; and more frequent communication among FCRB staff, review board members, and State Board members.
4. **Flexibility:** The Board of Directors appreciates the flexibility shown by Foster Care Review Boards and Foster Care Review Board Division staff in creating and implementing a process for conducting virtual reviews. The modified processes allowed reviews to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of this flexibility should be maintained to acknowledge health concerns as well as families' work and family schedules, but the Board of Directors recommends that in-person reviews resume.
5. **DSS Recruitment and Retention:** The Board of Directors recognizes that DSS is struggling to recruit and retain staff and supports DSS's efforts to increase pay and reduce caseloads to support a high-quality work force of child-serving professionals.
6. **Child Placement Support:** The Board of Directors recognizes that DSS has been recruiting more foster and adoptive homes which has included increasing its kinship care providers. The Board of Directors supports these efforts along with ongoing screening and support for foster parents, caregivers, and kinship providers.



MEET THE STATE BOARD



Monica Githens Hill, Chairwoman, State Board of Directors, AA (Finlandia University): Monica was born in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, but grew up in Spartanburg, and now resides in Inman, South Carolina. Monica worked professionally in the real estate industry for many years and has always been drawn to volunteer activities. She has served as President of the Finlandia University Alumni Board and the Congregational Nursing Program. In 2006, Monica joined the Foster Care Review Board in Spartanburg County and she was elected Chairperson of the State Board in 2017, serving from the 4th Congressional District. Monica also serves as a non-voting member of the South Carolina Heart Gallery Foundation Board of Directors. Monica is an active member of her Devenger Road ARP Church in Greenville. Monica is widowed and the proud new mother of an adult child, Priscilla Helen Hill, a 2020 Converse College Graduate whom she recently adopted. Monica loves to travel and uses her foreign language abilities whenever she can pursue her passion to explore new places around the world.



Jo Breeden Hecker, BA (Lander University), M.Ed. (University of South Carolina): Jo is a life-long South Carolinian and retired educator and school administrator. She served in various capacities within the public school system of the Midlands area, ranging from schoolteacher to assistant principal, and later principal. Jo's commitment to children and education has been life-long and continued after her retirement in 1999 when she became an educational consultant and served as a guest lecturer on middle school Initiatives. Jo's volunteer service is extensive and includes work on behalf of education, medical care, race and cultural appreciation as well as service as a Sunday school volunteer. Jo has received numerous awards and honorariums including a 1999 key to her city, Blythewood. Jo has served on the Review Board since 2000, a member of the State Board since 2005, and served as Chairperson of the State Board from 2014-2017. Jo is a parishioner at Transfiguration Catholic Church. She is married to Robert P. Hecker and has one son, Robert P. Hecker, Jr.



Andrea McCoy, BS (University of South Carolina), certification in non-profit management (Winthrop University): Andrea is a life-long South Carolinian who was born and raised in Florence and moved to Columbia for college where she met her husband, Stephfon. Andrea has been a member of the Foster Care Review Board since 2015 and a member of the State Board since 2017. For 18 years, Andrea worked as Executive Assistant and Public Relations Director for Bible Way Church of Atlas Road, which serves as a church home to more than 14,000 members. Andrea is a former State Board member with Affordable Housing Resources and Sistercare. Andrea is now a Project Manager with a major corporation and is active in numerous community service activities, including as an Advisory Board Member with S.C. Mentor and Midlands Technical College Office Systems Department. Andrea has repeatedly been recognized for her volunteer service with awards and honorariums; however, the experiences that she is most proud of are having served on the planning committee for S.C. Dental Access

Days, where more than 1,500 patients received over \$500,000 worth of dental care in two days, and managing the We Are The Village project, resulting in Christmas gifts for nearly 400 kinship care and homeless families in the Midlands area. Andrea enjoys gardening, travel, solving puzzles and visiting museums. Andrea and Stephfon are the proud parents of one child, a daughter, Dr. Alexis McCoy of Dallas, Texas.



MEET THE STATE BOARD



Chuck Koches, BS (Michigan Tech.), M.B.A. (University of Virginia): As a resident of South Carolina for 45 years, Chuck has been a member of the Foster Care Review Board for 15 years, with eight of those years as a member of the State Board of Directors. Now retired, Chuck has more than 40 years of experience in manufacturing and administration as well as employment and organizational development in the paper-making industry. Chuck served as a volunteer with Junior Achievement, Boy Scouts of America, Meals on Wheels, Hands of Christ and Darkness to Light as well as an elder and adult Sunday school teacher at Yeamans Park Presbyterian Church. Married to Mary Mena Koches for 54 years, the couple has four adult children and 10 grandchildren. He enjoys volunteer work, gardening and family get-togethers.



Dan Bracken, BA (University of South Carolina): Dan is a life-long resident of South Carolina. Born in Easley, SC, Dan currently resides in Powdersville. Dan is employed in the real estate field and was appointed to the Foster Care Review Board in 2012, serving the 3rd Congressional District, and later appointed to serve on the State Board in 2016. Dan also finds time to participate in numerous community service activities, but he has a special interest in child welfare issues. Dan and his wife Nicole previously served as foster parents and are the parents of five children, three of whom were adopted. Dan attends Grace Church and in his free time, he enjoys running, exercising at the YMCA, reading and watching Clemson football.



SUMMARY OF REVIEWS



6,154

FCRB analyzes ongoing, comparative data of children in foster care in order to gain a better understanding of the trends impacting the system, as well as future implications related to permanency for each child reviewed.

During calendar year 2020, 45 local review boards held 271 local review board meetings, reviewing a total of 4,475 cases and 6,154 children in foster care. Data regarding entry into foster care for 2,549 children was received from DSS and entered in the FCRB data-management system during calendar year 2020. Local review boards held reviews for 1,267 of these children and 1,252 children either left foster care prior to a case review or had not been reviewed as of Dec. 31, 2020.

INDICATOR	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CASES REVIEWED	4,175	5,533	6,812	8,048	4,475
TOTAL CHILDREN REVIEWED	6,892	9,639	9,795	10,560	6,154
REVIEW BOARD MEETINGS	427	425	420	452	271
CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	1,927	1,933	1,899	1,465	1,267
CHILDREN RE-ENTERING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	970	1,269	1,087	868	538
CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	1,824	1,995	2,304	2,179	1,790

Areas of Concern

4,995

The monthly review process allows local review boards to identify systemic concerns that are barriers to permanence for children in foster care.

The following table provides these system deficiencies, or areas of concern, are items that are not in compliance with federal law, state law or DSS agency policy. The Areas of Concern are also available at the following URL: <http://fcrb.sc.gov>.

AREAS OF CONCERN



Major Group Headings	Text Displayed on Recommendation Issued to Family Court	Area of Concern Documented from the Review
Adoption Service Delays	Documentation of a thorough adoption assessment meeting the statutory requirements was not provided.	A:No Thorough Adoption Assessment S.C. Code § 63-7-1700(E)
	A referral and/or staffing for adoption services has not been made for this child as required by Agency policy.	A:Referral for Adoption Services Not Timely Policy 520.1 and 520.2
	Child specific recruitment has not been conducted for an adoptive placement targeted to the individual needs of this child as required by statute.	A:Child Specific Recruitment Not Conducted S.C. Code § 63-7-1700(E) S.C. Code § 63-9-1510(F) 42 U.S.C. § 622 (b)(12)
Agency Policy Violations	The agency did not provide documentation of this child being visited by a member of the casework team each month as required by statute and policy.	P:Face-to-Face Visits Not Conducted S.C. Code § 63-7-2310 Policy 510.4 and 550.5
	The agency did not invite one or more interested parties to attend the review as required by Review Board regulation.	P:Interested Parties Not Invited FRB Reg. 24-9 S.C. Code § 63-7-2310 (A)(8) Policy 540.1
	The agency did not provide the required material to the Review Board in advance as per Agency policy.	P:No Advance Review Packet Policy 540.1
	Documentation of a diligent search for one or more of the birth parents was not provided as per agency policy.	P:No Search for Absent Parent Policy 510.3
	One or more psychological evaluations were not provided as per agency policy and Review Board regulation.	P:No Psychological Eval (>60 days) Policy 540.1 FCRB Reg. 24-15(Q)
	One or more interested parties did not receive three weeks advance notice of this foster care review as required by Review Board regulation.	P:No Three Week Notice to Parties Policy 540.1 FCRB Reg. 24-9 S.C. Code § 63-7-2310 (A)(8)
Case Plan Barriers	Based on documentation provided, the placement plan is incomplete.	P:Incomplete Plan S.C. Code §63-7-1680 Policy 510.4, 520, and 540.1 42 U.S.C. § 675 (1) 42 U.S.C. § 675 (A) & (B) 42 U.S.C. § 671 (a)(16)
	There has been a lack of progress toward the permanent plan.	P:Lack of Progress Towards Permanency Plan 42 U.S.C. § 675 (5)(B)
	A concurrent plan has not been developed as required by policy.	P:No Concurrent Plan Policy 520.5c
	Based on documentation provided, a current case plan was not made available to the Review Board.	P:No Current Case Plan FCRB Reg. 24-15 42 U.S.C. § 675 (5)(A) 42 U.S.C. § 671 (a)(16) Policy 510.4

AREAS OF CONCERN



Major Group Headings	Text Displayed on Recommendation Issued to Family Court	Area of Concern Documented from the Review
Legal Barriers	Court orders from one or more hearings held at least thirty days prior to this review were not provided.	L:No Court Order at Review FCRB Reg. 24-15 (P) Family Court Rule 26(c) Policy 540.1
	This child did not receive a timely foster care review as required by statute.	L:No Timely Foster Care Review FCRB Reg. 24-9 FCRB Reg. 24-23(B) S.C. Code § 63-11-720 42 U.S.C. § 675(5) Policy 540.1
	The agency has not complied with one or more orders of the Family Court.	L:Non-Compliance with Court Order S.C. Code § 63-7-1680
	A Guardian ad Litem is not appointed for this child as required by statute.	L:GAL Not Appointed S.C. Code § 63-7-1620
	The agency did not seek to forego reasonable efforts to preserve or reunify the family, as required by statute.	L:Did Not Seek to Forego Reasonable Efforts S.C. Code § 63-7-1640(c) Policy 520
	The complaint for termination of parental rights was not filed pursuant to statutory requirements.	L:TPR Complaint Not Timely (60 days) S.C. Code §63-7-1700 Policy 540.3
	The agency did not provide documentation of appropriate and/or timely referral(s) to law enforcement regarding missing children, as required by statute and agency policy.	L:Inappropriate Response for Missing Child 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(35) Policy 550.4
	The agency did not provide documentation that efforts were made to ensure the child had opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, as required by statute and agency policy.	L:Non-Compliance with Normalcy S.C. Code § 63-7-20(24) S.C. Code § 63-7-25 Policy 520.4 and 760.3
Based on documentation provided, the permanent plan of APPLA is not age appropriate, as per statute.	L:Inappropriate Plan of APPLA S.C. Code § 63-7-1700(C)(2) 42 U.S.C. § 675A(a) Policy 520 and 520.4	
Required Hearings Not Held	The probable cause hearing has not been held.	L:Probable Cause Hearing Not Held S.C. Code §63-7-710
	The permanency planning hearing has not been held.	L:Permanency Plan Hearing Not Held S.C. Code §63-7-1700 S.C. Code §63-7-1640(E) 42 U.S.C. § 675(5)(c) Policy 510.9 and 540.2
	The removal hearing has not been held or completed.	L:Removal/Merits Hearing Not Held S.C. Code §63-7-710 S.C. Code §63-7-1660

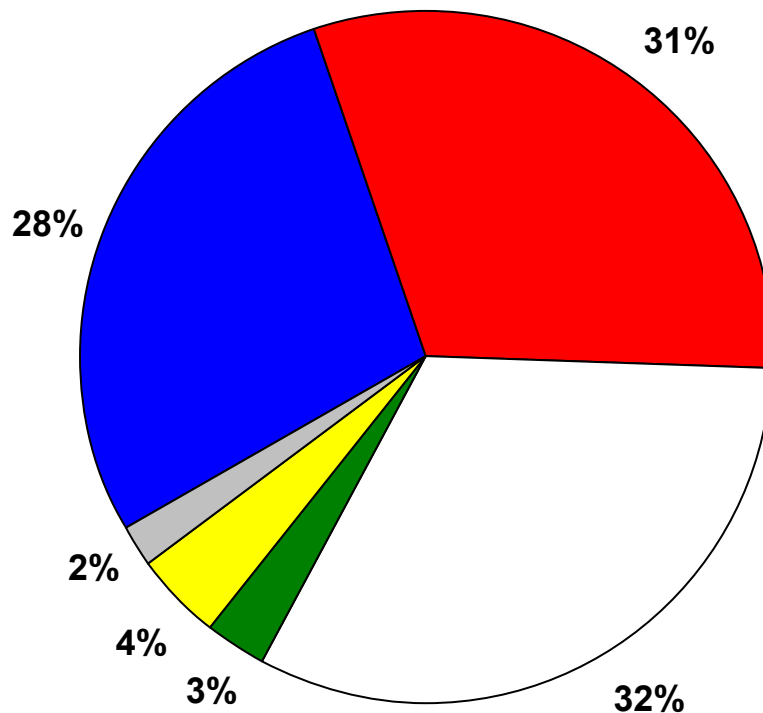
AREAS OF CONCERN



Major Group Headings	Text Displayed on Recommendation Issued to Family Court	Area of Concern Documented from the Review
Required Hearings Not Held Timely	The probable cause hearing was not completed within the statutory time frame.	L: Probable Cause Hearing Not Timely S.C. Code §63-7-710
	The permanency planning hearing was not completed within the statutory time frame.	L: Permanency Plan Hearing Not Timely S.C. Code §63-7-1700 S.C. Code §63-7-1640(E) 42 U.S.C. § 675(5)(c) Policy 540.2
	The removal hearing was not completed within the statutory time frame.	L: Removal/Merits Hearing Not Timely S.C. Code § 63-7-710 S.C. Code § 63-7-1660
	The termination of parental rights hearing was not held within the time frame required by statute.	L: TPR Hearing not Timely S.C. Code § 63-7-2530 Policy 540.3

In 2020, there were 4,995 areas of concern, which fall into 1 of 6 categories:

- * Legal Barriers = 1,380
- * Policy Violations = 1,527
- * Case Plan Barriers = 1,618
- * Hearings Not Held Timely = 156
- * Adoption Services Delayed = 201
- * Hearings Not Held = 113



■ Legal Barriers	■ Policy Violations	■ Case Plan Barriers
■ Hearings Not Held Timely	■ Adoption Services Delayed	■ Hearings Not Held

SUMMARY OF REVIEWS



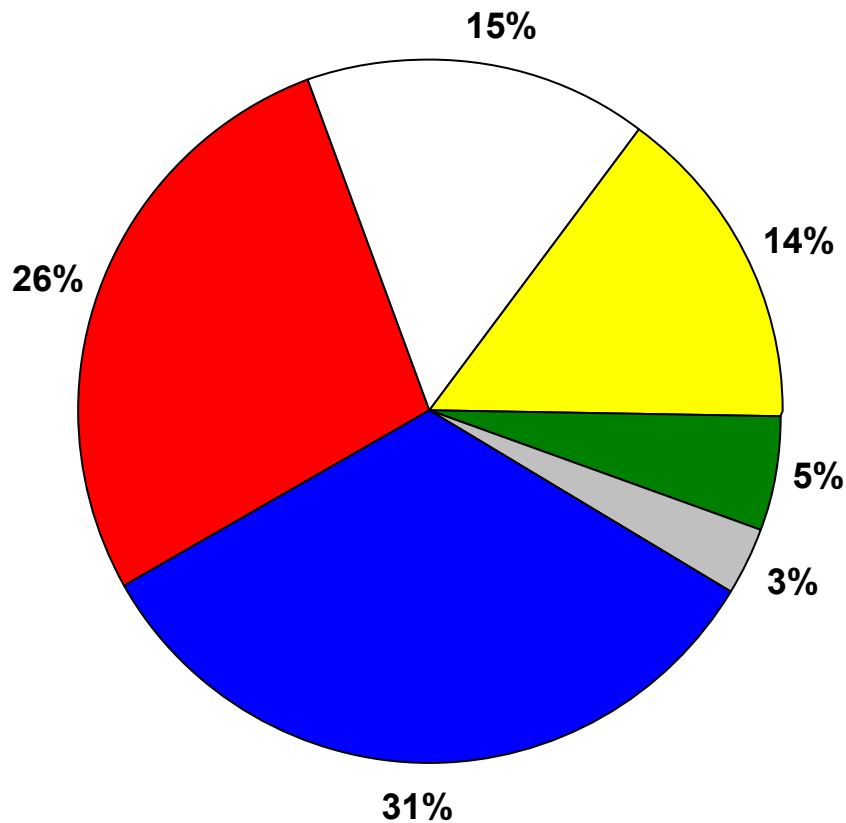
Case Decisions and Recommendations

Local review boards carefully consider input from interested parties prior to issuing a recommendation for each child’s case. Interested parties are invited by DSS to attend FCRB hearings. Recommendations are sent to the Family Court, DSS and Guardians ad Litem.

If a required interested party is not invited or if additional information is needed for the board members to make a permanency recommendation, no recommendation is made and the review is continued. Reviews that are continued or not held are rescheduled, usually within three months of the original review date.

The graph below illustrates the percentage and type for each recommendation issued by local review boards at the most recent child-specific review in 2020.

Review Board Recommendations



■ Termination of Parental Rights	□ Adoption
■ Reunification	■ Independent Living
■ Relative Placement	■ Review Continued/No Review

ENTERING FOSTER CARE



2,549

The number of children who entered foster care between January and December 2020 is 2,549. This is a 36% decrease from 2019.

The placement categories of **Abuse** (death of a child/sibling, domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, threat of physical abuse, threat of sexual abuse, threat of emotional abuse) and **Neglect** (educational neglect, emotional neglect, lack of food/clothing/shelter, lack of supervision, medical neglect, physical neglect, threat of neglect, unsanitary conditions) each accounted for 14 percent of children entering foster care in 2020. Additionally, 12 percent entered foster care due to drug exposure/testing positive for drugs by either the parent or child, and 2 percent due to abandonment or voluntary placement.

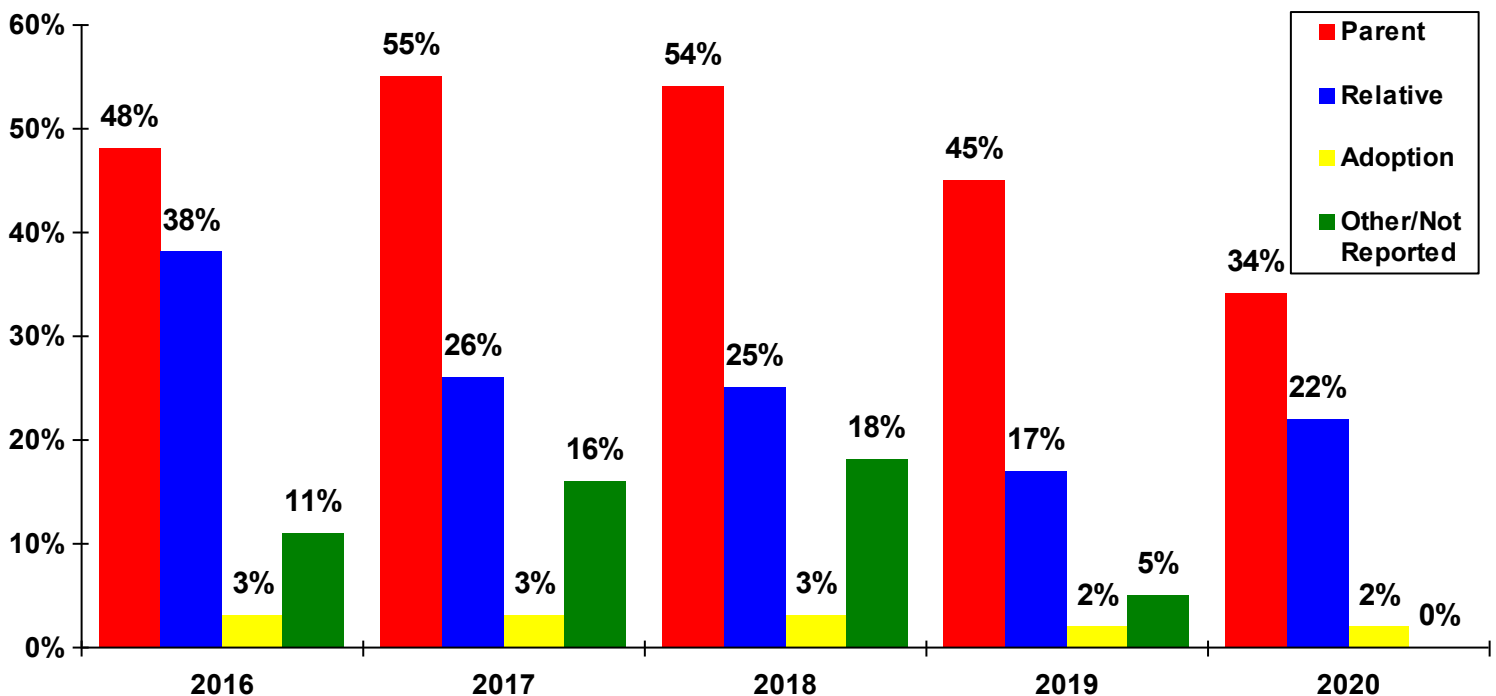
Previous Out-of-Home Placements

566

Of the 2,549 children reported to have entered foster care in 2020, 22 percent had at least one reported previous out-of-home placement. Of the 566, 34 percent entering foster care came from the home of a parent, 22 percent from the home of a relative, and two percent from an adoptive home.

FCRB reports on all out-of-home placements for children who enter foster care because moving from home to home or going in and out of foster care creates additional trauma for a child. The chart below displays prior placement data for the most recent entry to foster care by calendar year.

Placement prior to most recent entry



LEAVING FOSTER CARE



3,042

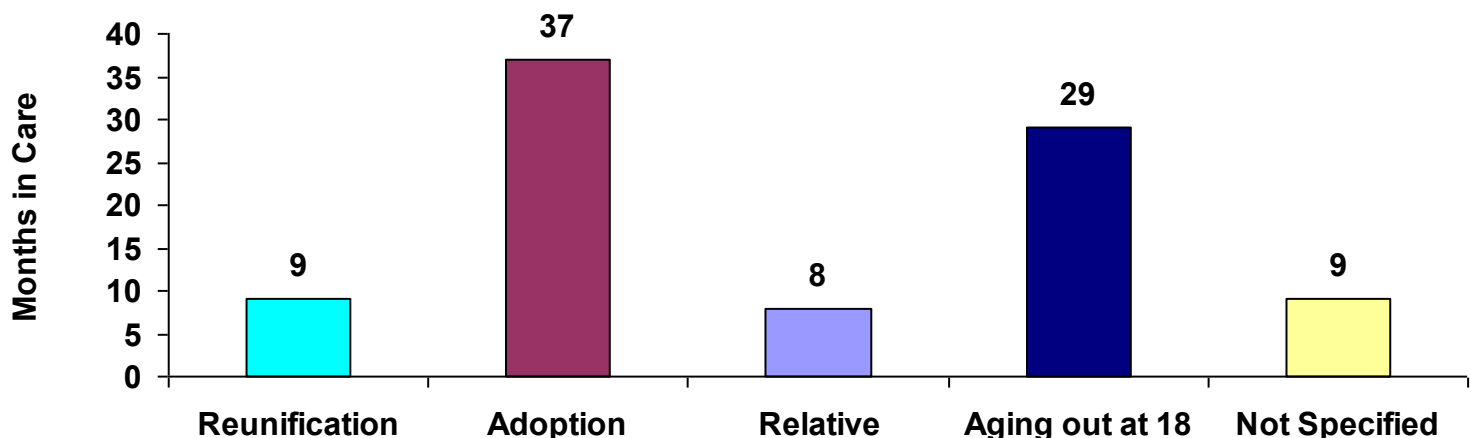
DSS reported that 3,042 children left the foster care system in 2020. Local review boards reviewed 1,790 of these children prior to them leaving foster care. The remaining 1,252 children left DSS custody before local review boards conducted a review.

Pursuant to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the two most permanent options for children who leave foster care are (1) returning a child to a parent or (2) finalizing an adoption. In 2020, 65 percent of children reviewed were returned to a parent or had a finalized adoption. The following table summarizes data for all children leaving foster care in 2020.

INDICATOR	ALL CHILDREN	CHILDREN REVIEWED	CHILDREN NOT REVIEWED
CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE	3,042	1,790	1,252
PERMANENCY OUTCOMES			
REUNIFICATION	1,529	777	752
FINALIZED ADOPTION	450	444	6
OTHER OUTCOMES			
RELATIVE CUSTODY	710	298	412
EMANCIPATED OR TURNED 18	251	209	42
OTHER /NOT REPORTED	33	23	10

The graph below provides the average number of months a child remains in foster care based on the indicator for leaving foster care in 2020.

Number of Months in Care by Reason Left Care



ADOPTIONS

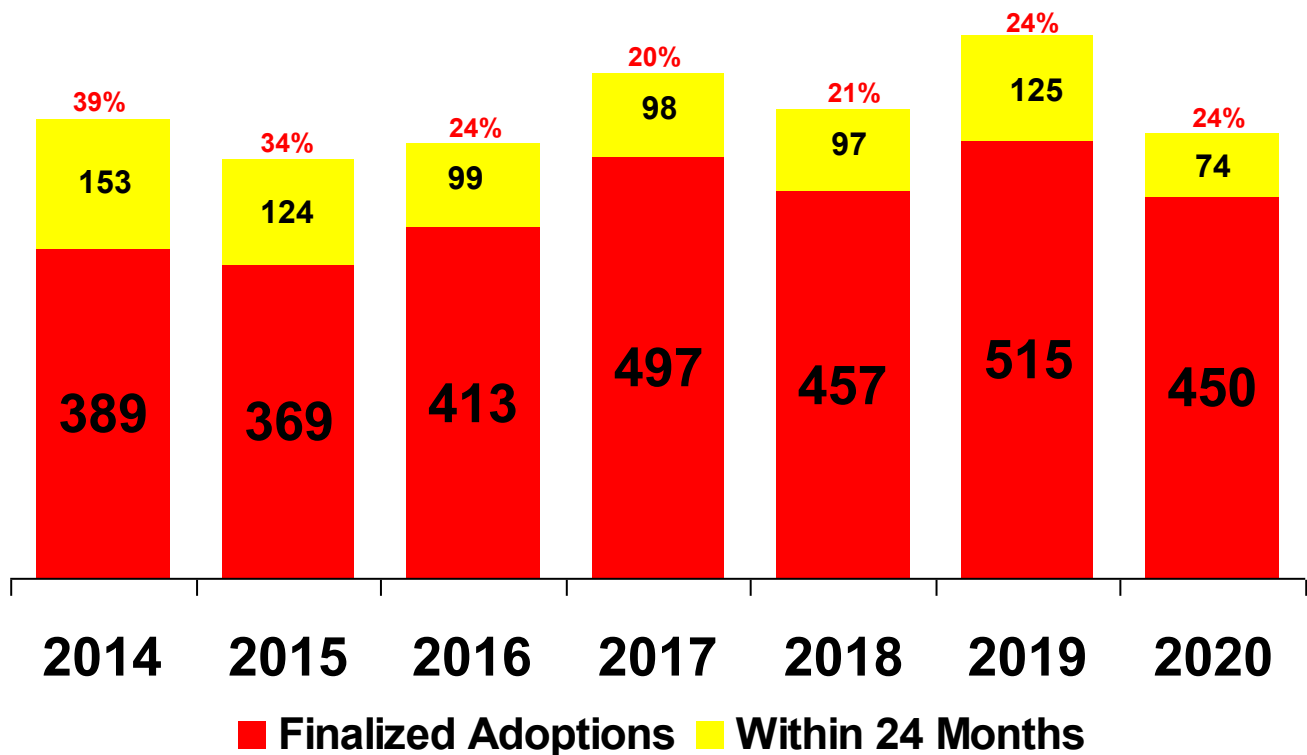


450

Of all children who left foster care in 2020, 450 had finalized adoptions; 74 of these adoptions were completed within the federal standard of 24 months. The average length of time a child spends in foster care before a finalized adoption is 37 months.

The average age at adoption was 7 years. In 2020, adoptions were finalized for 72 children age 13 and older.

Finalized Adoptions by Calendar Year



Percentage Completed within Federal Standard of 24 months

REMAINING IN CARE



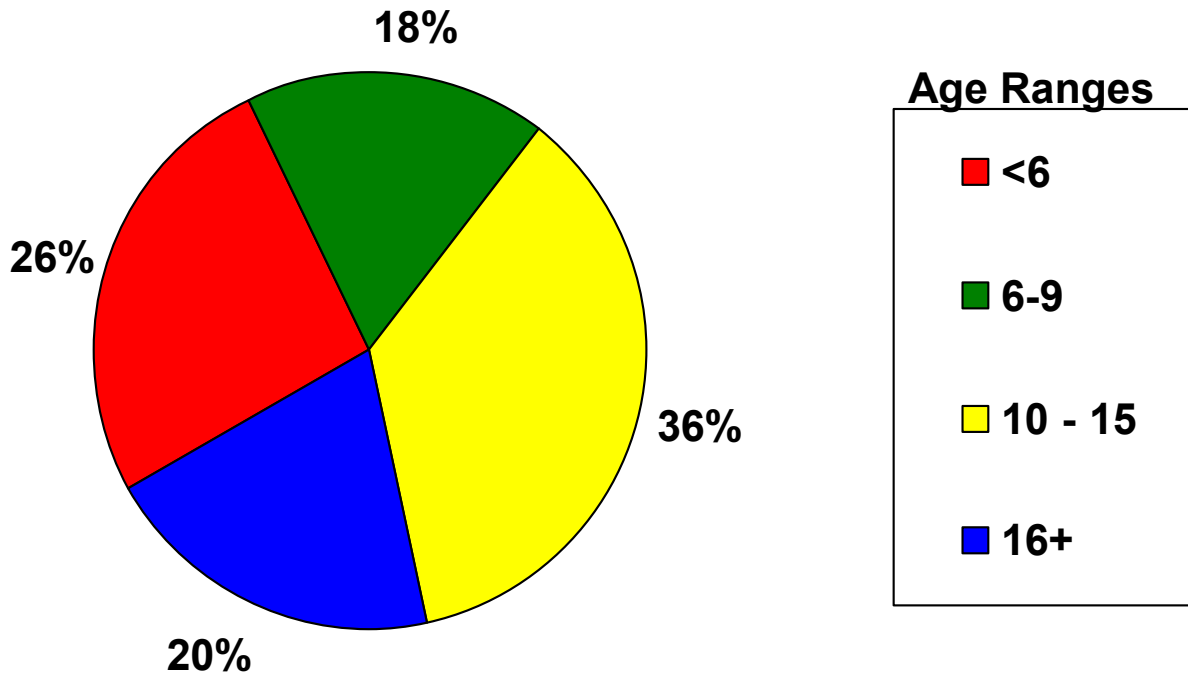
1,881

DSS reported to FCRB that there were 4,097 children in foster care as of Dec 31, 2020. Of these, 1,881 have been in the foster care system since their most recent foster care entry for 17 continuous months or longer.

The average length of time in care for these children is three years. The length of time in foster care ranges from 17 months to 18 years, and 12 percent of children have spent five or more years in foster care. The graph below illustrates the age break-down for children in foster care for 17 months or longer.

Children in Foster Care for 17 Months or Longer

Age as of December 31, 2020



HEART GALLERY



2020 proved to be an unusual year full of challenges posed by a national health pandemic, resulting in a state of emergency that prohibited group gatherings and routine travel. Although group photo shoots were limited as a result, volunteer photographers quickly adapted to scheduling individual “porch photo” sessions for participating children. The SC Heart Gallery continued to provide child-specific recruitment via permanent community exhibits featuring framed portraits and biographies of waiting children. Opportunities were sought to utilize digital photos and videos produced by the SC Heart Gallery *Foundation* in lieu of physical community exhibits. Social media highlights posted by the *Foundation* continued to generate nationwide interest from families already approved to adopt, as well as new families requesting to initiate the adoption application process.



**Heart
Gallery**
South Carolina TM

The Heart Gallery model continues to demonstrate consistent success across the United States and Canada in matching waiting children with adoptive families, especially as the program is able to personalize each child’s story and give them an individual voice. From 2005 – 2020, 1,811 children attended SC Heart Gallery photo shoots; as of 12/31/20, the cumulative match rate for children featured by the SC Heart Gallery is 61%.

2020 STATISTICS:

24	CHILDREN PHOTOGRAPHED
0	CHILDREN VIDEOTAPED
22	VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS
90	PUBLIC EXHIBITS/MEDIA FEATURES
1,220	INQUIRIES RECEIVED FROM FAMILIES INTERESTED IN ADOPTING
31	CHILDREN MATCHED WITH FAMILIES
65	NEW SC FAMILIES INITIATED THE ADOPTION PROCESS
0	HOME STUDIES COMPLETED AND ACCEPTED FOR APPROVAL

HEART GALLERY



Heart Gallery exhibits at Cornerstone Church in Orangeburg (above) and Midtown Fellowship Church in Columbia (right).



OUTCOMES BY COUNTY



The following table compares 2020 Review Board data in South Carolina's 46 counties for children reviewed, children entering/re-entering care, children leaving care and permanency.

FCRB considers permanency as a child being returned to a parent or having a finalized adoption. For children who left care but did not achieve permanency, 710 went to the custody of a relative and 251 turned 18, or the reason they left care was not provided.

For children entering and leaving care, these numbers reflect all children reported to the FCRB by DSS to include children who were reviewed and children that DSS reported leaving care prior to a review being held.

County	Children Reviewed	Cases Re-viewed	# Entered FC	Previous Out-of-Home Placement	# Left FC	Permanency Outcomes		Other Outcomes	
						# Returned to Parent	# Adopted	# Relative Custody	# Other
State Total	6,154	4,475	2,549	566	3,042	1,529	450	710	33
Abbeville	24	22	3	1	8	2	1	3	0
Aiken	208	160	79	23	70	35	12	10	2
Allendale	7	6	134	0	5	3	0	0	0
Anderson	308	242	5	52	128	47	31	31	2
Bamberg	12	11	3	0	8	6	0	1	0
Barnwell	17	16	22	0	6	0	2	3	0
Beaufort	48	34	90	2	39	19	4	10	1
Berkeley	174	149	6	7	122	74	11	23	1
Calhoun	8	8	185	3	10	0	0	8	0
Charleston	465	280	61	41	224	112	38	42	1
Cherokee	136	93	21	8	74	27	8	34	0
Chester	48	37	24	3	32	22	1	7	0
Chesterfield	47	23	44	8	32	20	5	5	0
Clarendon	71	43	28	3	20	13	0	2	0
Colleton	64	53	66	1	22	12	2	7	0
Darlington	143	119	22	17	77	53	4	12	0
Dillon	35	26	36	4	25	14	3	8	0
Dorchester	82	54	10	15	54	13	8	29	1
Edgefield	15	12	6	1	3	0	0	3	0



OUTCOMES BY COUNTY

County	Children Reviewed	Cases Re-viewed	# Entered FC	Previous Out-of-Home Placement	# Left FC	Permanency Outcomes		Other Outcomes	
						# Returned to Parent	# Adopted	# Relative Custody	# Other
State Total	6,154	4,475	2,549	566	3,042	1,529	450	710	33
Fairfield	34	23	9	0	26	14	3	8	0
Florence	135	89	68	13	72	35	1	27	2
Georgetown	43	40	18	9	16	4	6	5	0
Greenville	723	545	279	75	324	157	57	68	3
Greenwood	43	36	36	3	36	14	5	10	3
Hampton	13	13	6	4	5	3	0	2	0
Horry	287	225	142	21	222	129	34	44	4
Jasper	13	12	7	4	10	4	0	2	0
Kershaw	116	84	50	10	50	20	1	25	2
Lancaster	112	87	37	7	61	39	7	6	1
Laurens	227	148	63	16	82	36	19	22	0
Lee	24	15	9	1	5	2	0	2	0
Lexington	345	225	141	24	129	63	28	27	0
Marion	33	21	22	4	41	34	0	7	0
Marlboro	20	18	15	4	17	14	0	2	0
McCormick	0	0	1	0	26	4	11	10	0
Newberry	28	18	6	0	59	29	22	4	1
Oconee	175	131	49	8	55	25	2	22	0
Orangeburg	69	49	31	7	59	30	11	9	0
Pickens	129	87	33	8	1	0	0	0	0
Richland	630	505	351	70	359	247	21	54	3
Saluda	13	12	6	0	7	2	0	3	0
Spartanburg	569	365	160	37	235	84	60	63	5
Sumter	157	102	30	13	50	24	12	9	1
Union	22	12	9	1	4	2	1	0	0
Williamsburg	40	21	15	3	12	3	0	4	0
York	242	204	117	35	120	39	19	37	0

BARRIERS BY COUNTY



The FCRB is statutorily mandated to report deficiencies in the child welfare system. One tool for measuring deficiencies is areas of concern. These are defined as non-compliance with federal and state law and/or DSS policy and are identified during the review of a child's case.

The following table summarizes data collected during reviews held in calendar year 2020. The data compares areas of concern in individual counties. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Areas of Concern

County	Total Areas of Concern	Areas of Concern per Child	Case Plan Barriers	Agency Policy Violations	Legal Barriers	Hearings Not Held	Hearings Not Held Timely	Adoption Service Delays
State Total	4,995	0.81	1,618	1,527	1,380	113	156	201
Abbeville	36	1.50	23	2	7	0	4	0
Aiken	213	1.02	63	81	55	6	0	8
Allendale	5	0.71	4	0	1	0	0	0
Anderson	284	0.92	79	85	64	11	39	6
Bamberg	31	2.58	7	16	5	0	0	3
Barnwell	15	0.88	1	8	6	0	0	0
Beaufort	22	0.46	3	0	19	0	0	0
Berkeley	271	1.56	69	28	80	22	21	51
Calhoun	2	0.25	0	2	0	0	0	0
Charleston	384	0.83	116	129	126	2	6	5
Cherokee	15	0.11	2	2	9	0	2	0
Chester	70	1.46	15	34	20	1	0	0
Chesterfield	31	0.66	8	9	7	0	0	7
Clarendon	23	0.32	13	7	3	0	0	0
Colleton	32	0.50	7	1	24	0	0	0
Darlington	61	0.43	14	9	36	1	1	0
Dillon	25	0.71	9	11	5	0	0	0
Dorchester	64	0.78	19	18	27	0	0	0
Edgefield	6	0.40	4	2	0	0	0	0



BARRIERS BY COUNTY

Areas of Concern

County	Total Areas of Concern	Areas of Concern per Child	Case Plan Barriers	Agency Policy Violations	Legal Barriers	Hearings Not Held	Hearings Not Held Timely	Adoption Service Delays
State Total	4,995	0.81	1,618	1,527	1,380	113	156	201
Fairfield	46	1.35	17	14	13	0	0	2
Florence	135	1.00	41	46	36	0	4	8
Georgetown	37	0.86	11	4	12	0	0	10
Greenville	683	0.94	236	237	165	11	19	15
Greenwood	23	0.53	6	10	7	0	0	0
Hampton	18	1.38	5	5	8	0	0	0
Horry	195	0.68	65	70	52	3	0	5
Jasper	6	0.46	0	1	5	0	0	0
Kershaw	116	1.00	28	60	6	12	3	7
Lancaster	172	1.54	63	45	52	6	4	2
Laurens	332	1.46	92	129	93	0	0	18
Lee	21	0.88	3	5	9	0	1	3
Lexington	204	0.59	78	66	56	0	0	4
Marion	55	1.67	30	6	17	0	0	2
Marlboro	11	0.55	1	5	5	0	0	0
McCormick	0	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newberry	26	0.15	14	3	8	0	0	1
Oconee	41	0.59	22	11	5	2	1	0
Orangeburg	1	0.01	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pickens	46	0.36	10	7	22	0	3	4
Richland	538	0.85	208	135	124	24	17	30
Saluda	10	0.77	4	2	2	0	2	0
Spartanburg	405	0.71	124	143	110	0	25	3
Sumter	62	0.39	17	19	22	3	1	0
Union	4	0.18	0	3	1	0	0	0
Williamsburg	1	0.03	1	0	0	0	0	0
York	217	0.90	85	57	56	9	3	7

AWARDS



The State Board of Directors selects a Review Board and Review Board Member of the Year. Community partners, staff and Review Board members nominate boards and individual members. The Professional Development and Awards Committee of the State Board reviews all nominations and makes recommendations to the State Board.

Jane Daniel (13C) was awarded the Vernon Lee McCurry Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020. Jane began her career as a teacher. She later gravitated towards charities that fed the hungry and advocated for abused women and children. She applied for a role on the Foster Care Review Board, serving on the State Board for two terms as well as a charter member of the Heart Gallery Foundation. Jane's nomination states that she is a remarkable woman who excels at "putting people together." She has served in every capacity on her local board, attended court and provided many community contributions, even making dreams come true for a foster child who adored the Clemson Tigers. Jane went above and beyond to coordinate a meeting with Coach Dabo Swinney and Clemson team members.

**Vernon Lee McCurry
Lifetime Achievement
Award**

Jane Daniel

Jane Daniel, Vernon
Lee McCurry Lifetime
Achievement Award
winner



AWARDS



Mary Long (5E) was named the 2020 Foster Care Review Board Member of the Year. Mary has displayed exemplary community services for the youth in foster care in Kershaw County and across SC. For the past 11 years, she worked diligently alongside her local board members, Kershaw County Department of Social Services, community partners, and other local review boards across the state to ensure quality reviews for children in foster care. Mary's willingness to serve as a substitute and sometimes chair on other boards shows her commitment and dedication to the mission of the Foster Care Review Board and her advocacy for children in foster care. Mary also has a wealth of knowledge about services in the community and many times provides information to DSS and other interested parties at reviews. She is always kind, compassionate, and respectful to all parties.



Mary Long, 2020 Foster Care Review Board Member of the Year.

Additional Awards

State Board Chair Monica Hill also announced additional award recipients.

Boards with perfect attendance for 2020: 5D members Kathryn Fenner and Thewanda Cooper; 9D members Barbara Acobe, Doris Mines and Linda Lucas.

Board members who substituted on other boards five or more times: 13C Jane Daniel (5), 16B Seanta Clark (6), 16B Mary Evans, 5B Millercin Weeks (9) and 9A John Seignious (13).

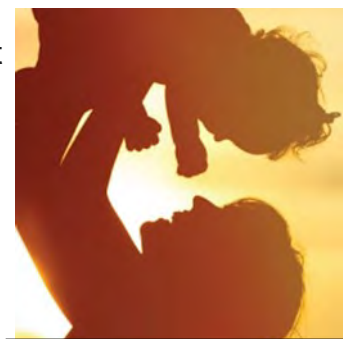
The Foster Care Review Board congratulates all of the board member winners and appreciates their dedicated work.



2021 Annual Professional Development Day (APD)

This 2021 Annual Professional Development Day (APD) was held on April 30, 2021 and featured several presentations that provided valuable resources and information for Foster Care Review Board staff and board members. The day kicked off with an annual update from our State Child Advocate and State Director of the Department of Children's Advocacy Amanda F. Whittle. Director Whittle discussed achievements, goals met and new and important partnerships with other statewide agencies. DSS Director Michael Leach and DSS Deputy Director of Child Welfare Karen Bryant provided insightful data and strategies DSS has implemented leading to recent accomplishments. Court Improvement Program Director Cody Lidge discussed the role of the Court Improvement Program (CIP) as a part of the Children's Law Center and how the program is improving the quality of child abuse and neglect hearings.

Chavis Gash presented on Safe Babies. In August of 2020, South Carolina was chosen by Zero to Three for a \$425,000 grant to start Infant Toddler Courts (Safe Babies Courts) in three South Carolina counties. Implementation of Safe Babies Courts in other states has reduced the number of contested hearings and continuances (because cases are resolved prior to court), strengthened families by reducing re-entry to the child welfare system, and ultimately reduced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) endured by children. Spartanburg, Laurens and Richland counties were selected as sites for this grant based upon the availability and readiness of community partners, including legal and judiciary partners, with a commitment to innovative solutions to improve child welfare and court processes to meet the needs of infants and toddlers and their families through collaborative team efforts, ultimately providing a safe home for children. To learn more about Infant-Toddler (Safe Babies) Courts visit the following URL: <https://www.zerotothree.org/our-work/the-national-infant-toddler-court-program>.



Learn more about Infant-Toddler (Safe Babies) Courts [here](https://www.zerotothree.org/our-work/the-national-infant-toddler-court-program).



APD concluded with a screening of the documentary Resilience, presented by Michael Shirley of the SC Children's Trust. Participants asked great questions as Mr. Shirley shared how the research and studies into childhood trauma impact outcomes in the work we do as advocates. Foster Care Review Board Awards were announced during this year's virtual Annual Professional Development Day.

DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS

Director of the South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy



Thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the work the Department of Children's Advocacy is doing regarding the Foster Care Review Board.

Suicide Prevention

The Department of Children's Advocacy is committed to suicide prevention. The Children's Committee's [2021 Data Reference Book](#) indicates that suicide has risen to the #1 position as the leading cause of death for children ages 10-17. In 2020, all Department of Children's Advocacy staff completed an online suicide prevention training which was made possible through the Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention. Thereafter, Foster Care Review Board members were invited to complete the training. Now, more than ever, suicide prevention is a priority for child advocates. We are grateful to the board members who have already successfully completed the interactive training and encourage any board members who have not

completed to contact suicideprevention@childadvocate.sc.gov for assistance.

Collaborating to Improve Outcomes for Children

The Department of Children's Advocacy recognizes the need for child-serving agencies to work together even when child advocates disagree about the permanent plan. In the Spring of 2021, the Department of Children's Advocacy and Department of Social Services hosted joint collaborative training sessions in the PeeDee, Midlands, Lowcountry and Upstate regions of the state. During the four regional sessions, the Guardian ad Litem Program, Richland County CASA, DSS, and Foster Care Review staff planned collaborative meetings with introductions about the work each of them does as well as a panel discussion to showcase how collaboration helps children and families. The goal of these joint collaborative and training sessions was to provide clarity regarding the important work we each do; to demonstrate how our work is interconnected; and to encourage engagement and communication across agencies and divisions. We offer special appreciation to Foster Care Review staff Corlette Minor and Amanda Blackmon and former Foster Care Director Lisa Armstrong for their leadership during these sessions.

Board Vacancies

The Department of Children's Advocacy recognizes the importance of having as few board vacancies as possible, so that review boards have the quorums necessary to engage families and to make recommendations to the Court. During 2021, the Department of Children's Advocacy issued social media posts and newsletter articles to raise awareness regarding FCRB vacancies and the state's need for committed individuals to serve on the local and state review boards. The Department of Children's Advocacy also communicated with legislative delegations and with the Governor's office to assist with filling vacancies. DCA leadership will continue to work with communities to reduce board vacancies.



Quality Assurance | Continuous Quality Improvement

In August of 2021, I asked the Office of Inspector General to conduct an efficiency study to assist with improving processes, workflows, workloads, and outcomes and to provide insight as we recruited a new Foster Care Review Division Director. Some of the Inspector General's recommendations are being implemented now including: (1) Efforts to replace the current data system; (2) Updating policies with Executive Director review and approval; (3) Improving communication with external partners; and (4) Assisting with filling vacancies. In addition, the Office of Inspector General observed that the name "Division of Review of Foster Care Children" was established by statute, but no reference to this statutory name was identified during interviews, in Foster Care Review documents, in the DCA Agency Accountability Reports, or the agency and division's websites. This division has been known as and referred to as the "Foster Care Review Board," such that both the division and the board are described interchangeably as "the Foster Care Review Board." Efforts are underway to distinguish the division from the board while not creating additional confusion.

FCRB Survey

After gaining the perspective of an external review, the Department of Children's Advocacy surveyed local board members in October 2021 to assist the State Board with issuing its annual recommendations and to gain the local board members' perspective to DCA. As the State Board, the Department of Children's Advocacy will continue to invite board members' recommendations.

Legislative Audit Council's Audit

Finally, during 2021, members of the House Legislative Oversight Committee requested the S.C. Legislative Audit Council to conduct an audit of South Carolina boards, commissions, councils, and committees. The LAC requested data and other information to improve the process of filling vacancies on boards. The Department of Children's Advocacy worked with FCR staff to gather and provide historical and current data and process information pertaining to the state and local Foster Care Review Boards to the Legislative Audit Council.

The Department of Children's Advocacy is committed to providing advocacy, accountability and service to improve services provided to children by state agencies. We are grateful for the Foster Care Review Board members and Foster Care Review Division staff who use their experience and expertise to improve outcomes for children. Our state's children need our urgency and empathy, and we look forward to continuing our work with you.

Sincerely,

Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS

State Child Advocate and State Director

**Child Welfare Law Specialist certified through the National Association of Counsel for Children*

The South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy Office

1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 471A

Columbia, SC 29201

Phone Number

Main Office Number: 803-734-3176

Toll-free Complaint Line: 1-800-206-1957

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info@childadvocate.sc.gov

HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

On behalf of Child Welfare



The almost daily proliferation of new platforms and technologies that are readily available to the general public has greatly expanded our opportunities to connect and reconnect with family, friends, and loved ones. This same technology allows us to work more efficiently and reach a larger audience. In particular, modern communication platforms afford tremendous opportunities for business and charitable connections to be made and expanded for those who share a common interest or passion. And while nothing will ever replace a live gathering of groups working for a common interest or goal, remote communication can certainly serve as a life-raft when live and in-person communication is not possible. The result of all this expansion is that with enhanced technology comes enhanced opportunity and efficiency, allowing the work that is done to create greater value for greater numbers of people. For child welfare professionals and volunteers pursuing better outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system, modern technological advances offer opportunities to create positive outcomes on a scale that is truly unprecedented.

The child welfare community is greatly benefitting from numerous modern and virtual technologies. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are all easily accessible social media platforms for promoting change and bringing awareness to special causes and initiatives, including child welfare organizations like the Foster Care Review Board. “As a State Board member, I believe we are missing out on the power of social media,” says State Board of Directors member Dan Bracken. “Last year, I made a quick social media post about the need for more board members. In less than one day, my advertisement of need resulted in over 30 inquiries by

The potential for social ‘changemakers’ armed with today’s digital platforms in partnership with large and growing virtual networks can dramatically improve the human condition.

-How Technology Can Help Solve Societal Problems,

<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/technology-can-help-solve-societal-problems/>

members of the public seeking information about becoming a member. In addition to recruitment, Facebook could also be used to educate the public about the role and function of the FCRB. In my opinion, we need to work to ensure that we fully harness the power of this vital resource.”





Likewise, Latrice Williams has relied upon social media to promote permanence for legally free children on behalf of the Heart Gallery. “For several years, the S.C. Heart Gallery and Heart Gallery Foundation have utilized various resources to promote the importance of foster care adoption and highlight legally free children who seek Forever Families,” she says. “Recently, the Heart Gallery sought more opportunities to increase our awareness and engagement with families. The Heart Gallery Foundation confirmed through analytics that Facebook is our most effective social media platform thus far. In addition to our positive engagement through social media, they implemented a successful Search Engine Optimization (SEO) process and Google Ad Grant opportunities that have improved the quality and quantity of our website traffic, thereby helping families throughout South Carolina and the U.S. complete their Forever Homes.”

Technological innovation has also made a huge impact on the day-to-day business of child welfare casework practice. According to FCRB Program Coordinator Coretta Bush-Etheredge, “Data systems allow case managers to keep track of services to families, plan for quality contacts with children and families and effectively manage their individual workflow” and these processes “help supervisors track safety and well-being outcomes connected to health and education.” Ultimately, the data collected and recorded for each case is used to “produce state level data for federal reporting requirements like the CFSR, Child and Family Service Reviews,” and this information is then used to assess and monitor the functioning of the child welfare system and make necessary improvements.

While technology is the root of some profound instances of disconnection between people, it’s worth noting that many positive forms of interaction have also stemmed from the digital age- particularly in the nonprofit world. Charitable organizations have increasingly started to soak up technological innovations and approaches to solving societal problems in recent years.

— *4 Innovations that Use Technology to Solve Social Issues*,
<https://www.goodnet.org/articles/4-innovations-that-use-technology-to-solve-social-issues>



With the continuing development and expansion of technologies that allow for rapid communication and bring attention to social causes, there is no limit to what can be accomplished on behalf of the children we serve. This Board is committed to embracing new technologies that will augment the work we do on behalf of children in care. We are looking forward to the year ahead and thank all the statewide volunteer members for their dedicated service.

The power of a group of individuals and their network over social causes cannot be underestimated. Social media and technology, by their pervasiveness and capability of linking the world beyond borders, can effectively bring about constructive change to the world, be it on a worldwide scale or by assisting a single individual in need. The process of social cause is changing, and social media technology are undoubtedly helping to change the rules.

— *Social Media in Social Causes*,
<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-media-in-social-causes>

State Board

State Board Chairperson, Monica Githens Hill

State Board Member, Jo Hecker

State Board Member, Charles F. Koches

State Board Member, Andrea McCoy

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS



Volunteer Hours

In 2020, 183 volunteers contributed 3,725 hours to serve the state of South Carolina. The hours were spent reviewing cases and providing additional services to board members' individual communities.

FCRB volunteers are objective, independent reviewers of cases of children in foster care. Local review boards held 271 meetings and spent 2,918 hours reviewing cases for 4,475 children in foster care. The review boards issued Advisory Recommendations to DSS and the Family Court for permanent case plans for each child reviewed and identified areas of non-compliance with DSS policy or statutes in each case. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most boards were not able to complete service projects, but the following local review boards contributed the following in 2020:

- 10C -Anderson provided Chick-fil-A gift cards to children during reviews.
- 5E- Kershaw provided birthday cards and completed their annual Christmas Drive to children in foster care in Kershaw County.
- 10A- Oconee provided socks' and gift cards.
- 16B- York purchased pajamas and gift cards to children who were placed in foster care York County.

Additionally,

- The awards committee recognized the Boards 5D and 9D for perfect attendance in 2020.
- The following board members who substituted five or more times across the state: 16B Seanta Clark (6), 16B Mary Evans (6), 9A John Seignious (13), 13C Jane Daniels (5), and 5B Millercin Weeks (9).



STATE BOARD AND STAFF

FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD STATE BOARD MEMBERS

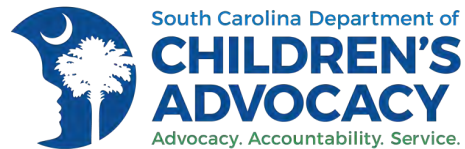
1st Congressional District	Charles (Chuck) Koches
2nd Congressional District	Jo Hecker
3rd Congressional District	Dan Bracken
4th Congressional District	Monica Hill, Chairperson
5th Congressional District	Vacant
6th Congressional District	Andrea McCoy
7th Congressional District	Vacant

FOSTER CARE REVIEW DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY STAFF

Director	Petra Clay-Jones, Interim
Program Director	Stephanie Spink
Program Supervisors	Christina Grant Doretta Crosson-Irby
Review Board Coordinators	Shallia Belton Amanda Blackmon Coretta Bush-Etheredge Shenita Hamilton Jessica Haygood Kristin McGill Corlette Minor Ashlee Patterson Chloe Taylor Latavial Williams Vacant
Heart Gallery Program Coordinator	Latrice Williams
Staff Attorney	Caitlin Lee
Statistical/Research Analyst	Forde Claffy
Administrative Coordinator	Joy Manning
Administrative Assistants	Heather Valentine Ashley Wilson

SOUTH CAROLINA
**FOSTER CARE
REVIEW BOARD**

Advocating permanent families for children



MAILING ADDRESS:

Foster Care Review Board
1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 436
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Email: fcrb@childadvocate.sc.gov

Phone: 803-734-0480

Fax: 803-734-1223

Website: <http://fcrb.sc.gov>

VISION

South Carolina will make child well being a top priority by assuring safe, permanent families for all children in foster care.

MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Foster Care Review Board is to provide external accountability for the foster care system and to advocate on behalf of children in foster care.