

SC Children’s Justice Act Task Force
RECOMMENDATIONS
2015-2018

Following a 2015 assessment of the state’s systems responding to abused and neglected children, the CJA Task Force has identified target areas for improvement in three recommendation categories. The Task Force aims to achieve the following outcomes:

Category A. Recommendations for investigative, administrative and judicial improvements, including training:

- A.1. Alternative placement/caregivers:** Children in alternative placements remain safe and stable while maintaining and/or increasing their well-being by improving accountability and tracking of those placements.
- A.2. Medicaid eligibility waiver:** Parents involved with SCDSS who lose custody of their children will have increased access to and participation in services related to a permanency plan by maintaining their eligibility for that period of time.
- A.3. Training for Coroners:** Increased compliance of South Carolina coroners to the reporting of child deaths resulting from abuse and neglect.
- A.4. Timely processing of DSS court cases:** Increased timeliness for permanence of children in SCDSS custody by reducing delays in court proceedings.
- A.5. Attorneys for Parents:** Improve legal representation of (defendant) parents in support of increasing positive permanency for children.
- A.6. Impact of trauma training:** Increase the knowledge of law enforcement and family court regarding the impact of trauma on children.
- A.7. Referrals to SC Children’s Advocacy Medical Response System (SCCAMRS):** Increase the number of children who receive evidence based medical services through the SC Children’s Advocacy Medical Response System (SCCAMRS).
- A.8. Training for clergy/faith leaders:** Increase adherence by clergy/faith leaders to mandated reporting requirements.
- A.9. Drug Endangered Children (DEC):** Increase knowledge regarding Drug Endangered Children (DEC) guidelines.

- A.10. Child death investigations:** Improve the coordinated and multidisciplinary approach to child deaths.
- A.11. MDT Training:** Increase the coordination and collaboration between multidisciplinary teams in the comprehensive investigation of child abuse cases.
- A.12. Abusive head trauma:** Increase the recognition of cases involving abusive head trauma by law enforcement, SCDSS, coroners and solicitors.
- A.13. Mandated reporter training:** Increase compliance with the mandated reporter requirements in South Carolina including newest reporters added to the mandated reporter legislation.
- A.14. Children and caregivers with disabilities:** Improve the response to children with disabilities and caregivers with disabilities. Increase the services that caregivers with disabilities need to support their ability to care for their children safely.
- A.15. Law enforcement receipt of child abuse reports:** Improve the law enforcement response of initial reports of child abuse and reduce the responsibility of the caller/reporter by routing them to the appropriate agency.

Category B. Recommendations for experimental, demonstration and model programs:

- B.1. Child forensic interviews:** Increase the evidentiary use of forensic interviews in court proceedings.
- B.2. Specialized hearing officers:** Increase the timeliness of successful resolution of child abuse cases through the family court by exploring and possibly implementing usage of specialized hearing officers.
- B.3. Court Coordination Protocol:** Successful implementation of the Court Coordination Protocol in two or more jurisdictions.
- B.4. Human trafficking of minors:** Increase the identification of human trafficking of minors, also referred to as commercial sexual exploitation of children, to allow for increased prosecutions and services to victims.
- B.5. Mentorship program for forensic interviewers:** Improve adherence to the Child First SC forensic interviewing protocol within the peer review system and increase opportunities for support and development for forensic interviewers through a statewide mentorship program.

- B.6. SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC):** Support the Children’s Advocacy Centers in South Carolina by providing organizational capacity and infrastructural resources to SCNCAC.
- B.7. SC Children’s Law Center:** Successful delivery of coordinated and effective training and information for professionals involved in the response to child abuse allegations, investigations and prosecutions.

Category C: Recommendations for reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, procedures, or protocols:

- C.1. Tracking of community based prevention services (formerly known as Appropriate Response):** Improve safety and well-being outcomes of children and families referred by DSS to community based prevention services.
- C.2. Trauma informed screening:** All children and their families receiving services from SCDSS will have access to trauma specific evidence based treatment if needed.
- C.3. Pregnant women/newborns and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS):** Increase identification of drug endangered babies.
- C.4. Release of medical information without parental consent:** Increase the availability of medical information about children who are subjects of child abuse or neglect reports to SC Children’s Advocacy Medical Response System providers.
- C.5. Sexting legislation:** Improve implementation of sexting laws to more appropriately address juvenile use of social media.
- C.6. South Carolina child abuse legislation:** CJA Task Force will endorse legislation that will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children and child service professionals will be made aware of the passage of any applicable legislation during the CJA cycle.
- C.7. Child abuse reports from the school system:** Increase the number of reports of child abuse and neglect to the mandated investigative agency when those reports are received from within the school system.