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

Happy New Year!

We began publishing internal newsletters in 2020 and monthly partner updates in 2021 to share our work at the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy. Here at the beginning of 2022, I am grateful to continue sharing with you what we have accomplished and what opportunities exist for our ongoing commitment to improve outcomes for children and families in South Carolina.

From safe sleep to suicide prevention; from infant mental health to psychiatric residential treatment facility access for seriously mentally ill, justice-involved youth; and from status offenders and run-aways to human trafficking victims - our children are facing serious issues, and they need us to advocate for them with urgency and empathy. We encourage you to review our 2020-2021 Annual Report and to contact us if you would like more information about our mission, our broad vision for reform, or how to become an advocate for children in our state.

Thank you,

Amanda F. Whittle

State Child Advocate and Director of the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy

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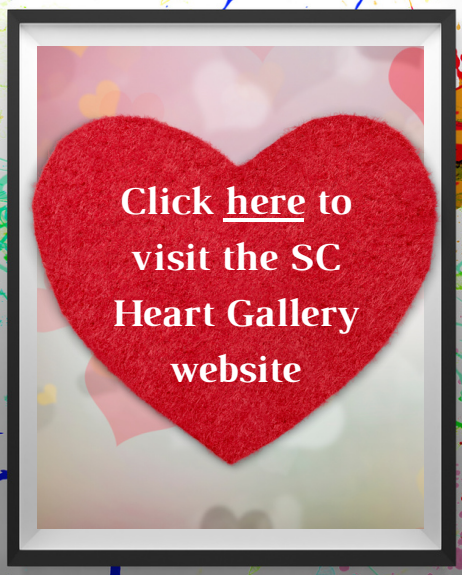
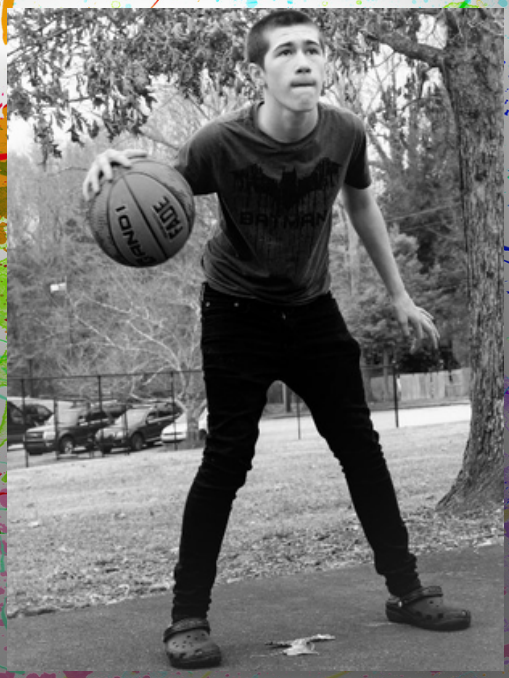
S.C. Heart Gallery

MEET S.C.'S HEART GALLERY CHILDREN

Heart Gallery South Carolina

Meet Octavia J.
Photographer:
Robert Clay ©2021





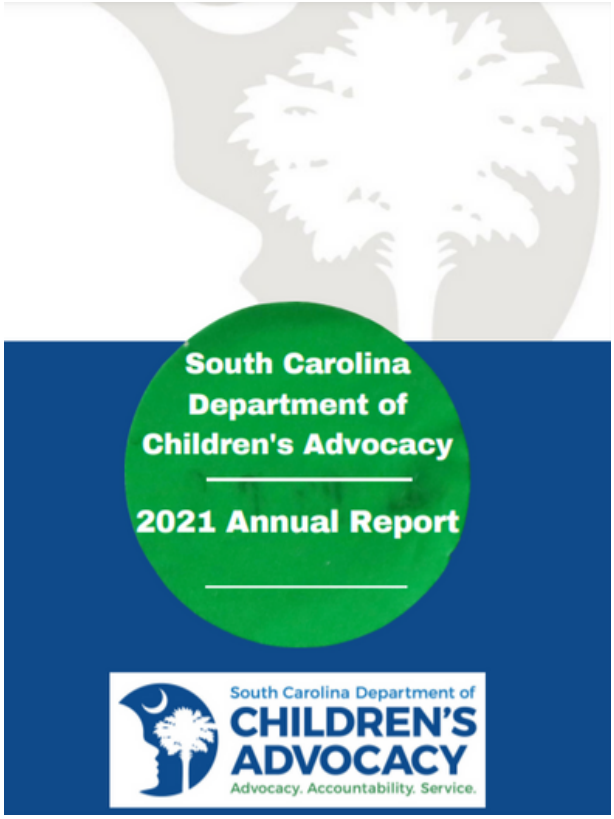
Meet Kyle B.
Photographer:
Kristin Mosley ©2021

Meet Amber J.
Photographer:
Jen Williams ©2020

Meet Elijah H.
Photographer:
Leah Daugherty ©2020

Meet Dreama C.
Photographer:
Mike Baker ©2021

Department of Children's Advocacy Publishes 2021 Annual Report



S.C. Code of Laws Ann. Section 63-11-2270(7) requires that the State Child Advocate submit an annual report to the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children detailing the State Child Advocate's activities.

The 2021 Annual Report includes information about the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program, Foster Care Review Division, S.C. Continuum of Care, Investigations Unit, Juvenile Court Program, and Legal Extern Program. It explains the Department of Children's Advocacy's interaction with other child-serving agencies and highlights the Agency's 2022 priorities. Access the complete report by clicking here.

Suicide Prevention: Hope Lives in SC

South Carolina Department of Mental Health
DMH
Office of Suicide Prevention

#HopeLivesInSC

While I breathe, I hope

At the end of 2021, Dr. Liyun Zhang, Research Scientist with the Children's Law Center, provided an informational briefing regarding the Children's Committee's 2021 Data Reference Book. Suicide rose to the #1 leading cause of death for children ages 10 to 17 in South Carolina. The Department of Children's Advocacy continues to reach out to Foster Care Review Board members and volunteer Guardians ad LItem to assist them with completing the online suicide prevention training which was made available by the Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention. All DCA staff completed online suicide prevention training which was made possible through a grant with DMH's OSP and the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention. To learn more about raising awareness and promoting suicide prevention, contact us the Department of Mental Health's Office of Suicide Prevention or contact us at suicideprevention@childadvocate.sc.gov.

FY 2022-23 Budget Request Presented at Subcommittee Hearing

HWM Healthcare Subcommittee Members from left: Representative Lonnie Hosey, Representative Bill Clyburn, Sarah Hearn (Research/Budget Analyst), Representative Bill Herbkersman (Chair), Representative Todd Rutherford, and Representative Heather Ammons Crawford

Department of Children's Advocacy Director Amanda Whittle testified before the House Ways and Means Healthcare Subcommittee on January 12, 2022 regarding the agency's FY23 budget request. Her testimony included the Department of Children's Advocacy's Annual Accountability Report highlights, efforts to mitigate expenses and maximize funding, and a proviso request summary. The agency is requesting $800,000 in recurring funding and $175,000 in non-recurring funding for FY23. Governor Henry McMaster has included these amounts in his proposed budget to the General Assembly. The following is a summary of the Department of Children's Advocacy's FY23 Budget Request:

Department of Children's Advocacy's FY23 Budget Request Summary

Funding Type (in order of priority)	Funding Amount	Funding Purpose
Recurring: Investigations Unit Infrastructure	$200,000	To fully staff the Department of Children's Advocacy's Administration and System Improvement Unit - Projections for DCA's FY22 Administration budget are (33,432) if positions are filled based on current funding.
Recurring: Continuum of Care Transfer Alignment	$400,000	To offset the elimination of a $400,000 transfer to Continuum of Care by DMH – DMH has requested that the Proviso 35.1 allocation to Continuum of Care be eliminated. This transfer has been in effect for approximately twenty years.
Non-Recurring: Foster Care Review Advocacy Upgrade	$150,000	To replace the current database with a case management system that drives action and advocacy for children in foster care -The current system is a legacy system that has become unreliable and inefficient.
Recurring: Foster Care Review Advocacy Upgrade	$200,000	To support staff capacity and training regarding the reviews of children in foster care - The number of children who are reviewed by FCRB has increased by about 33% since this division's FTEs were allocated.
Non-Recurring: Administration Communications	$ 25,000	To fulfill the mission of educating the public and improving the child-serving system –to include signage, videography, and training for staff, volunteers, other agencies and the public.

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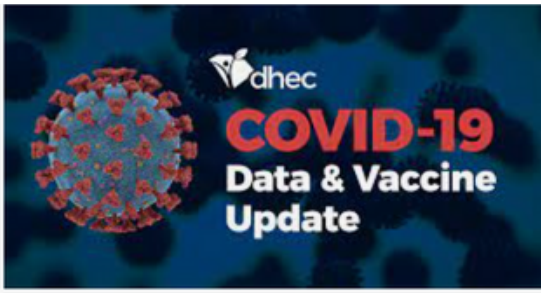
You are Invited to Disability Advocacy Day: Connect and Affect

The South Carolina Partnership of Disability Organizations (SCPDO) will be celebrating their 33rd Annual Disability Advocacy Day event on Wednesday, March 2nd at the South Carolina State House (North grounds). The South Carolina Partnership of Disability Organizations (SCPDO) is a coalition of organizations whose aim is to assure self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with severe lifelong disabilities in all aspects of society. Collectively, they advocate for more than 500,000 people with severe, lifelong disabilities in all aspects of society. Learn more here.

SCDHEC Provides COVID Test Kits to Children's Advocacy

SCDHEC provided COVID-19 self-administered test kits to the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy for distribution to allow staff to quickly be made aware of their COVID-19 status, so staff can act accordingly and protect the health of those we serve from potential spread of illness.



DCA who are symptomatic or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for the virus and who would like to take a self-administered COVID-19 test may contact communications@childadvocate.sc.gov to request a test kit. Learn more about DHEC's distribution of rapid test kits here.

South Carolina Department of
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Growing a Community Where Children Thrive