

2024-2025

BIENNIAL REPORT



South Carolina

Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council

SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL (GJJAC)



scdps.sc.gov/ohsjp/jjgp/gjjacs

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the activities conducted by the South Carolina Governor’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (2024-2025) in support of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (34 U.S.C. § 11101 *et seq.*, as amended), last reauthorized by Congress as the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018. Our report responds to the Act’s requirement that the Council submit recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the state’s progress toward the goals of the Act and compliance with its core requirements. The information on programs funded represents the FFY 2024 (October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024) and the FFY 2025 (October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025) grant cycles.

Special thanks to Council members, staff, and all others involved, who continue to work together to help improve South Carolina’s Juvenile Justice System.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

July 21, 2026

The Honorable Henry McMaster
Governor
South Carolina State House 1100
Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor McMaster,

As Chair of your Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, it is a pleasure to present to you the Council's Biennial Report. This letter serves as a general introduction to specific information about your Council, recommendations from the GJJAC, and as an introduction to a new Three-Year Plan that will be submitted later this year.

I did want to take a moment to acknowledge contributions of our former Chair and my friend, John E. Holler, Jr. Reverend Holler served this Council, and the children and families of South Carolina, with distinction for many years. His unwavering commitment to improving the lives of our state's most vulnerable will not be forgotten, and his legacy continues to guide and inspire the work of this Council.

A portion of the work of the GJJAC has continued to be devoted to review and reorganization. We are especially grateful for the strong leadership of OJJ Director Eden Hendricks and her staff, whose partnership with the Council has been invaluable. Along with new leadership across other state agencies, this fresh energy and collaborative spirit have been highly visible. We are also encouraged by the energy and excitement that new Council members and committee chairs have brought to the work of the GJJAC, and we look forward to the progress their engagement will continue to bring.

South Carolina continues to make positive strides in the area of child and family well-being. The directors of the Department of Juvenile Justice, social services, child advocacy, and representatives from mental health are working in concert as it becomes clearer that working in silos is less effective than working together.

The Council has been supportive and encouraging in the movement of South Carolina away from a punitive juvenile justice system and toward a rehabilitative system. One of the Council's efforts has been to support educational efforts that highlight information that demonstrates systems based on rehabilitation are significantly more successful in the long run than are systems that are punishment based. A portion of a continuing need is to demonstrate to the general public that public safety does not need to be compromised in a rehabilitative system.

There is positive news in the fact that the move toward early intervention in juvenile justice, as

well as in other child and youth serving arenas, is increasing rapidly. The realization that the cost, both financially and socially, is much less with early intervention methodology than there is with devoting funds primarily to remediation.

The GJJAC is charged with assisting South Carolina to comply with four "Core Protections". South Carolina meets the minimum standards for three of the four "Core Protections". These "Core Protections" are: Racial and Ethnic Disparities, Adult Jail and Lock-up Removal, Sight and Sound Separation. The fourth "Core Protection", Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenses, has not yet been met. It is important to not only meet these minimum standards, but to exceed them. Part of the solution is to discover what is behind the statistical data related to the "Core Protections". Many factors may influence "Core Protections" outcomes data such as economics, educational and employment opportunities, family structure, racial prejudice and stereotypes, regional and county facilities and resources. Listed above are a few of the elements that can affect "Core Protection" data and positive outcomes for individuals who interact or potentially interact with child and family service systems.

On behalf of the Council, I respectfully ask for the Governor's continued support of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), the Title II Formula Grant program, the GJJAC, and our Designated State Agency, the Department of Public Safety. We would also welcome your support of any legislation that would help South Carolina achieve full compliance with the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core protection. As we continue to impact the youth we serve, protect them, help improve their lives, while improving the juvenile justice system here in South Carolina, your continued partnership is essential to this work.

It is an honor to serve as Chair of a group of dedicated individuals who work diligently in order to make life better for others who may be experiencing difficult times. The challenges are great, yet the resources and people we have in South Carolina are greater.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Allred", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jerry L. Allred, Jr. LISW-CP S
Chair, GJJAC

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION (JJDP) ACT

The United States Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act in 1974. Since its inception, the Act has been the subject of several amendments and reauthorizations over the years. The most recent reauthorization occurred after bipartisan legislation in 2018, which created the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018, 34 U.S.C. § 11101 *et seq.*, as amended. The Act serves as a major juvenile justice reform measure in the United States and directs resources toward innovative approaches emphasizing prevention and early intervention rather than detention of juvenile delinquents. The four core requirements of the Act are the deinstitutionalization of status offenders (known by its acronym DSO), removal of youth from adult jails and lock-ups (Jail Removal), separation of youth in detention from adults by sight and sound (Separation), and reduction of racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system (R/ED).

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act provide for:

- A nationwide juvenile justice planning and advisory system spanning all states, territories, and the District of Columbia;
- Federal funding for delinquency prevention and improvements in state and local juvenile justice programs and practices; and
- The operation of a federal agency, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, or OJJDP, which is dedicated to training, technical assistance, model programs, and research and evaluation, to support state and local efforts.

The core requirements of the Act seek to:

- (1) Avoid the secure detention or incarceration of status offenders (youth who commit or are alleged to have committed offenses that would not be criminal if they were adults, such as running away from home, truancy, incorrigible behavior, or violations of curfew)
- (2) Separate juveniles from adult offenders in all placements, whether being treated as juveniles or as adults if transferred to the criminal courts
- (3) Remove all juveniles from adult detention facilities
- (4) Reduce or eliminate disparities in the juvenile justice system for racial and ethnic minorities.

To be eligible for grant funding under the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, South Carolina must establish and maintain an effective system of monitoring and compliance with each of the four core requirements of the Act. The Formula Grant Program under the Act is authorized pursuant to Title II, Part B, Section 222 of the JJDP Act (34 U.S.C. §§ 11131–11133), amended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA), *Public Law No. 115-385*, signed into law on December 21, 2018.

The new Act maintains the requirement that each participating state assemble a state advisory group to establish priorities for funding under the Act, and for other juvenile justice purposes. The Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council serves as the state advisory group for South Carolina. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice assembles the State Advisory Groups in a national cooperative effort to exchange knowledge, innovations, and data; develop consensus for national juvenile justice policy; and promote advocacy for youth in the juvenile justice system. Members of South Carolina's Council have been active and engaged with the Coalition of Juvenile Justice for many years.

THE GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL SUMMARY

Created by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1975, the South Carolina Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (GJJAC) is responsible for advising policymakers on the state level about the needs of children and the juvenile justice system. The GJJAC consists of volunteer private citizens with an abiding interest and training in children's issues, and representatives from state and local governmental agencies involved in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, as well as system-involved youth and young adults. The Juvenile Justice Reform Act defines *System-Involved Youth* as members under the age of twenty-eight, who have been or are currently under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system, encouraging their participation in GJJAC activities. Although the GJJAC has made strides in achieving compliance with the membership requirement, recently the GJJAC has had several key members to submit resignations due to career changes, and other personal circumstances. Additionally, the recruitment and retention of youth membership have also been challenging. However, we are hopeful with the assistance from the Governor's Office, South Carolina will continue to maintain a robust council and compliance with the required membership set by the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act).

The GJJAC promotes the welfare of all youth by supporting efforts to build safe communities, recommending improvements in juvenile justice services, and offering technical assistance to state and local agencies for planning and implementing programs to improve the juvenile justice system. The GJJAC believes that keeping children out of the juvenile justice system through delinquency prevention and early intervention programs is critical to improving both the juvenile justice system and the quality of life for all of South Carolina's citizens.

The GJJAC continues to support programs that educate all stakeholders involved in key juvenile justice decision points while eliminating racial inequities within the juvenile justice system. The GJJAC specifically supports direct service programs, which require youth to recognize and accept the consequences of their actions, including any sanctions imposed upon them, and obey the law. The GJJAC sustains collaboration with all statewide partners and attempts to marshal all available resources to ensure that the youth in South Carolina maintain a high level of accountability while equipping them to live crime-free, productive lives.

The updated requirements of the federal Juvenile Justice Act, coupled with our state's systemic inability to comply with its previous version, pose pressing challenges for South Carolina's juvenile justice system. Members of the GJJAC strive to address these challenges by promoting evidence-based programs, policies for reform, and national best practices, in addition to information for state and local policymakers. By increasing public awareness of prominent issues in juvenile justice through its communications and publications, the GJJAC seeks to develop and implement innovative strategies to prevent and reduce delinquency.

In 1996, the state enacted legislation that allows secure confinement of status offenders, status contemnors, and status probation violators and for them to be committed to the custody of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ) or to a secure evaluation center operated by the SCDJJ for a determinate period not to exceed 90 days. Efforts to deinstitutionalize status offenders have been and continue to be made by the SCDJJ and include implementing non-secure alternative programs throughout the state and providing a risk and needs assessment instrument to judges, solicitors, public defenders, and SCDJJ staff for use at the pre-adjudicatory detention, intake disposition, and commitment stages of the juvenile justice system. The pre-trial detention of status offenders is one of several practices permitted by state statutes, which conflicts with the JJDP Act reauthorization of 2018.

The JJRA imposed additional requirements for the use of the valid court order (VCO) exception to the DSO requirement. Specifically, within 48 hours of the juvenile being taken into custody for violation of the VCO exception, if the court determines that placement in a secure detention or secure correctional facility is warranted, the court must issue a written order setting out the specific factual circumstances surrounding the violation of the VCO exception. The written order also must include findings of fact to support a determination that there is no appropriate less restrictive alternative available to placing the status offender in such a facility, with due consideration to the best interest of the juvenile.

Placement may not exceed seven days, and the court's order may not be renewed or extended. A second or subsequent order is not permitted with respect to violation of a particular VCO. The JJRA also added a requirement that there must be procedures in place to ensure that a status offender is not detained longer than seven days or the length of time directed by the court (whichever is shorter). (Section 223(a)(23))

Additionally, the JJRA includes an amendment that enhances protections for youth awaiting trial as adults. This protection currently falls under the DSO core requirement, known as (Section 223(a)(11)(B)). This requirement provides that juveniles who are being charged and prosecuted as adults (1) may not be detained in a jail or lockup for adults (except as provided under the jail removal requirement, (2) may not have sight or sound contact with adult inmates-unless determined by a court, after a hearing and in writing, that it is in the interest of justice to do so. In determining whether such detention would be in the interest of justice must take into consideration several criteria (e.g., the juvenile's age, physical and mental maturity, present mental state, nature and circumstance of the alleged offense, and history of delinquency). When the court finds such detention to be in the interest of justice, additional requirements must be met. This requirement was added to Section 223(a)(11), which is one of the core requirements with which failure to comply will result in a reduction in funding. (Section 223(a)(11)(B)) The GJJAC is urging state and local officials to lend their support to the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) in the monitoring of local courts and detention facilities for compliance data. This will help ensure that the requirements are met. One way to achieve this is by encouraging local court and jail administrators to work with SCDPS in compliance with JJDP's requirements.

Unless covered under the exception, the JJRA now calls for the removal of all juveniles from adult facilities. Compliance with the JJRA's separation and removal core requirements would alleviate overcrowding in detention facilities across South Carolina, protect juveniles from the dangers of interacting with adult inmates, and allow adequate space for essential detentions. The GJJAC's recommendations (starting on page 33) align with the JJRA's mandate to seek additional community-based alternative options in lieu of pre-trial detention for juveniles. Failure to comply with the JJDPA Act core requirements will result in a reduction or a determination of ineligibility for Title II Formula Grant funding.

GJJAC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Jerry Allred, Chairman

Deborah Cohn, Vice Chair

Dionne Carroll, Esq.

Eden Hendrick, Director - South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ)

The Honorable David Guyton

Christopher Ross

Roderick Pam

Sara Goldsby, Director – BHDD-Office of Substance Use Services (OSUS)

The Honorable Cornelius Huff

Delores Robinson

Rev. Robert Reid

Antiwan Tate

Kathy Gray

Adrian Goodman

Laura Hudson

Kenneth Parlier

Gwendolyn Bright

Blake E. Taylor, Jr.

Susan Shope Thomas, Ph.D.

Whitney Payne

Oscar Douglas

Jerome Smalls

Christie Wright

Rachel (Youth)

Randy (Youth)

Samantha (Youth)

Gordan (Youth)

Zaria (Youth)

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GJJAC MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEES

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee functions as the planning committee for the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (the Council). The committee oversees and monitors the Council's activities and budget, acts on behalf of the Council in a management capacity, and performs other duties and responsibilities, as the Council deems proper.

Subcommittees

Emerging Leaders Subcommittee

The Emerging Leaders Subcommittee allows youth members and other system-involved youth the opportunity to advise the Council on juvenile justice from their various personal experiences. These members offer invaluable perspectives on juvenile justice to the Council on the state level and partner with their counterpart committee of youth leaders empaneled by Coalition of Juvenile Justice on the national level. The Council's youth members shape the overall program and policy agenda for juvenile justice through the viewpoint of youth affected by the juvenile justice system. Our young members collaborate to articulate ideas, issues and initiatives influencing juvenile justice reforms and system enhancement for all youth locally and nationally.

Grants Review Subcommittee

The Grants Review Subcommittee is responsible for reviewing, commenting, and scoring federal juvenile justice formula grant applications annually. Upon receipt of those applications, staff from the South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs collate and forward the grant applications to the members of the committee. The committee employs an objective and transparent review process, which takes into account among other factors, the priorities established by Council and the quality of the applications. Together with the program staff, the grants review subcommittee provides recommendations to the Council for those grants, which best serve the Council's priorities for consideration and approval by the entire Council. The GJJAC-approved grant recommendations are then presented to the SC Public Safety Coordinating Council for final approval.

Government Relations Subcommittee

The Government Relations Subcommittee ensures the Council is informed of current legislation, the status of proposed legislation, and developing ideas for engaging with state and local government officials on juvenile justice system matters. Additionally, this group should grow to understand the implications of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (JJRA) and propose legislation to be supported by the Council.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) and Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) Subcommittee

This Subcommittee shall collect, analyze, and monitor R/ED and DSO data for South Carolina, promote awareness of all related issues, identify innovative programs and approaches to addressing these two

requirements, and assist with related program and project activities. Members of this subcommittee will work closely with the Compliance Monitor creating a strategic plan to help South Carolina achieve compliance with the DSO requirement, while ensuring that the state maintains compliance with the R/ED requirement of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act as reauthorized by the JJRA.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM ACT (CORE REQUIREMENTS)

Each year the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention sets quantitative standards to determine compliance with the four core requirements of the Act. These standards were applied to compliance monitoring reports submitted by each participating state and used to calculate determinations of state compliance with Section 223(a)(11), (12), and (13) of the JJDP Act, as amended, to provide the following:

JJDP Act Core Requirements

Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders: Status offenses are offenses that only apply to minors whose actions would not be considered offenses if they were adults. The most common status offenses are skipping school/truancy, running away, breaking curfew, and possession or use of alcohol. Under the JJDP Act, status offenders may not be held in secure detention or confinement.

There are, however, several exceptions to this rule, including allowing some status offenders to be detained for up to 24 hours. The DSO provision seeks to ensure that status offenders who have not committed a criminal offense are not held in secure juvenile facilities for extended periods of time or in secure adult facilities for any length of time. These children, instead, should receive community-based services, such as day treatment or residential home treatment, counseling, mentoring, family support, and alternative education.

- Section 223(a)(11)(B) of the JJDP Act (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(11)(B)) provides that juveniles who are charged and prosecuted as adults (1) **may not be detained or confined in an adult jail or lockup** (except as provided under the jail removal requirement at section 223(a)(13) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(13))), and (2) **may not have sight or sound contact with adult inmates**—unless determined by a court, after a hearing and in writing, that it is in the interest of justice to do so.

Adult Jail and Lock-up Jail Removal: Under the JJDP Act, youth may not be detained in adult jails and lockups except for limited times before or after a court hearing (six hours), in rural areas (24 hours plus weekends and holidays), or in unsafe travel conditions. This provision is designed to protect children from psychological abuse, physical assault, and isolation. Children housed in adult jails and lockups have been found to be eight times more likely to commit suicide, two times more likely to be assaulted by staff, and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon than children housed in juvenile facilities.

Sight and Sound Separation: When children are placed in an adult jail or lock-up, "sight and sound" contact with adults is prohibited under the JJDP Act. This provision seeks to prevent children from threats, intimidation, or other forms of psychological abuse and physical assault. Under "sight and

sound," children cannot be housed next to adult cells, share dining halls, recreation areas, or any other common spaces with adults, or be placed in any circumstance that could expose them to threats or abuse from adult offenders.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities: Under the JJDP, states are required to assess and address racial and ethnic disparities at key points in the juvenile justice system – from arrest to detention to confinement. Studies indicate that youth of color receive tougher sentences and are more likely to be incarcerated than white youth for the same offenses. With youth of color comprising one-third of the youth population but two-thirds of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system, this provision requires states and local jurisdictions to create action plans to address disparities within their systems.

The following link provides more information regarding the JJDP Act and the core requirements:

[Core Requirements | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)

Each year, the OJJDP creates a Determination of State Compliance report for each participating state and territory. The OJJDP formulates this report by compiling data submitted from each participating state and territory to create uniform compliance determination standards for all participating states and territories. The compliance standards from the previous reporting year are used, in part, to establish formula grant program funding level allocations for each state and territory for the upcoming funding year.

Pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 31.303(f)(6), the OJJDP calculated FY 2024 compliance standards by taking the average of States' FY 2022 and FY 2023 compliance monitoring rates for the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO), separation, and jail removal core requirements (removing, when applicable, one negative outlier^[1] for each requirement) and applying a standard deviation factor of not less than one. The process of establishing the compliance determination standards rests solely with the OJJDP.

Based on the data reported for both FY 2022 and FY 2023, the OJJDP determined South Carolina was not in compliance with the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core requirement, and the sub-requirement Section 223(a)(11)(B), thus South Carolina had a 20% reduction in its FY 2024 allocation. States must comply with all core requirements for full eligibility in the Title II Formula Grant program.

For the FY 2025 compliance determination, the OJJDP initially determined that South Carolina was noncompliant with 3 of the 4 core requirements and would receive a 60% reduction in its FY2025 federal award. However, the Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs submitted an appeal along with additional compliance data, which was ultimately successful. The appeal proved that the state is in compliance with 3 of the 4 core requirements and remains out of compliance with the DSO core requirement. Therefore, South Carolina will receive back 40% of its FY2025 award.

^[1] FY 2022 and FY 2023 data will be used to establish a baseline rate for determinations of compliance with section 223(a)(11)(B) in FY 2025.

The following link provides more information regarding OJJDP's State Compliance Determinations:
<https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/states/state-compliance-jjdp-act-core-requirements>

TITLE II FORMULA GRANT PROGRAM

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, headquartered in the U.S. Department of Justice, provides federal funding to the states through formula funding under Title II of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974, as reauthorized by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA) of 2018. Congress allocates funds annually to support states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve juvenile justice systems that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable, and provide treatment and rehabilitative services to meet the needs of juveniles and their families.

Grant recipients may include private not-for-profit agencies, units of local government, tribal governments, school districts with an elected board, and state agencies. The Title II Formula Grant program supports projects involved with alternatives to secure confinement, the deinstitutionalization of status offenders, and reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in the state's juvenile justice system. Funds from the Title II Formula Grant Program also support the administration of subgrants, the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, and monitoring South Carolina's compliance with the federal core requirements of the JJRA of 2018.

The JJDP Act of 1974 as reauthorized by the JJRA of 2018 establishes Program and Budget Areas to provide specific governance of how states must expend Title II funds. The OJJDP sets Program and Budget Areas annually, but the priority areas may change periodically to reflect the OJJDP's juvenile justice and delinquency prevention mission. Currently, there are 34 priority areas for states to expend Title II funds. Each state must list its Program and Budget areas in its Three-Year State Plan to receive a Title II allocation. States can only expend Title II funds on Program and Budget Areas as designated by the OJJDP. The Council sets the Program and Budget Areas for South Carolina, based on the juvenile justice needs of the state.

South Carolina's Program and Budget Areas (as identified by the Council for the Three-Year State Plan covering FY 2024– FY 2026):

- Community-based alternatives to detention
- Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders
- Section 223(a)(11)(b)
- Community-based programs and services
- Compliance Monitoring
- Racial and Ethnic Disparities
- Indian Tribe Programs

The Council is currently working to create the new Three-Year State Plan covering FY 2027 – FY 2029. The new plan will update the state’s existing priority areas to ensure South Carolina meets the requirements of the JJDP Act and to guarantee the state provides funding for programs that effectively address its current juvenile justice challenges.

FFY 2024 TITLE II FORMULA GRANTS

The South Carolina Department of Public Safety's Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs (OHSJP) administers the formula funds under the Juvenile Justice Reform Act. In December 2022, the OHSJP announced the availability of federal funding for juvenile justice grant projects in FFY 2024 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024). The OHSJP convened an in person statewide grant solicitation workshop in January 2023 inviting interested applicants to attend and learn about the availability of juvenile justice formula grants and their criteria. The OHSJP then opened its Grants Management Information System for the receipt of applications and received 20 applications before the solicitation closed on March 24, 2023. The 20 applications collectively requested \$2,549,331 in federal funds. The OHSJP staff collated and forwarded all applications to the Council's Grants Review Subcommittee. The subcommittee scored the applications and made recommendations to the Council. The full Council approved the recommendations during its August 18, 2023, quarterly meeting.

The South Carolina Public Safety Coordinating Council must approve all criminal and juvenile justice grant projects. The Coordinating Council met in September 2023, to vote on the GJJAC recommendations. The Coordinating Council approved \$690,822 in grants recommended by the GJJAC for six awards: one to the Fourth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office, one to the Columbia Urban League, one to the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, one to the University of South Carolina's Children's Law Center, one to the Fifth Circuit Solicitor's Office, and one to the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office. Those projects addressed the DSO core requirement, alternatives to detention, and reduction in racial and ethnic disparities or R/ED.

FFY 2025 TITLE II FORMULA GRANTS

The OHSJP issued an announcement regarding the availability of federal funding for juvenile justice grant projects for FFY 2025 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025) in December 2023 and convened a statewide grant solicitation workshop for interested applicants in January 2024. The OHSJP then opened its Grants Management System for the receipt of applications and received eight applications before the solicitation closed on April 2, 2024. The eight applications collectively requested \$1,921,115 in federal funds. The staff forwarded the applications to the Council’s Grants Review Subcommittee. The subcommittee evaluated the applications and made recommendations to the Council. The full Council approved the recommendations during its September 2024 quarterly meeting.

The South Carolina Public Safety Coordinating Council met on September 26, 2024, to vote on the GJJAC recommendations and approved applications for a total of \$415,112. These included four awards – one for the Fifth Circuit Solicitor’s Office, one for the Fifteenth Circuit Solicitor’s Office, one for the Columbia Urban League, and one for the University of South Carolina Children’s Law Center. Those projects address the DSO core requirement, alternatives to detention, racial and ethnic disparities, aftercare, and reentry of youth released from confinement, in addition to other priority program areas.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE (DJJ)

From Eden Hendrick, Executive Director
5/15/2026

To: Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ). SCDJJ administers South Carolina's juvenile justice system at both the state and county level and is statutorily mandated to provide rehabilitation, supervision, and custodial care for youth placed on probation, parole, or committed to secure custody. The agency operates in collaboration with law enforcement, solicitors, family court judges, the Juvenile Parole Board, schools, behavioral health providers, and other child-serving agencies across the state.

SCDJJ's responsibilities extend across the full continuum of juvenile justice services, including prevention and diversion efforts, court involvement, secure detention, rehabilitation, treatment, reentry, and parole supervision. In addition to operating five secure facilities, the agency oversees 10 alternative placements and 43 county offices statewide. SCDJJ is responsible for approximately 1,551 acres, 156 buildings, and 1,491 allocated full-time equivalent positions (FTEs).

During Fiscal Year 2024, SCDJJ received more than 10,500 referrals, followed by more than 9,500 referrals in Fiscal Year 2025. At any given time, approximately 500 youth may be placed in SCDJJ secure facilities or community-based placements. Throughout this biennial period, the agency expanded several established initiatives while also developing innovative solutions to longstanding operational and systemic challenges.

Facility Modernization and Detention Expansion

The implementation of "Raise the Age" legislation, combined with the closure of several local detention centers, has significantly increased the number of youth and length of stay in pretrial detention. In response, SCDJJ has continued efforts to modernize facilities, expand detention capacity, and improve conditions of confinement.

In June 2025, initial renovations to the Midlands Evaluation Center were completed, allowing the agency to dedicate both facilities located on Shivers Road to detention operations. This expansion significantly improved detained youths' access to education, recreation, programming, medical care, and clinical services within upgraded and more secure living environments. SCDJJ also plans to enhance operational safety by connecting the Main and Annex buildings to allow for safer and more efficient movement between facilities.

As part of these broader operational changes, SCDJJ established the Juvenile Detention Complex (JDC), allowing evaluation and committed youth to be housed separately at the agency's remaining secure facilities. To better reflect each facility's function and mission, SCDJJ updated facility names while maintaining compliance with state law:

- The Upstate Evaluation Center is now the **Upstate Evaluation and Development Center (UEDC)** and serves male youth from the Upstate, Pee Dee, and Lowcountry regions for secure evaluations and short-term commitments.
- The Coastal Evaluation Center is now the **Coastal Evaluation and Development Center (CEDC)** and continues to serve female youth statewide for both evaluation and commitment services.
- The Broad River Road Complex is now the **Midlands Evaluation and Development Center (MEDC)** and houses male youth with long-term commitments, along with youth requiring secure evaluations from the Midlands, Pee Dee, and Lowcountry regions.

To further address detention overcrowding and improve regional access, the South Carolina General Assembly allocated funding for SCDJJ to lease and operate the Greenville Youth Center through a contracted private provider. The facility has a maximum capacity of 40 youth and opened in July 2025. Youth from the 13th Judicial Circuit will receive placement priority; however, available space may also be utilized for youth from other Upstate jurisdictions.

Community-Based Programs and Alternatives to Placement

SCDJJ continues to prioritize evidence-based, community-centered alternatives to secure confinement. The Pines Daily Reporting Center serves youth in Richland and Lexington counties as an alternative to detention, placement, or commitment. Youth attend the program Monday through Friday and receive educational support, life skills instruction, experiential learning opportunities, community service programming, and transportation assistance. To date, The Pines has served 32 youth, with approximately 81 percent not reoffending before age 18.

The agency also continues to expand Project Leveraging Effective Alternatives to Placement (LEAP), which incorporates nationally recognized evidence-based interventions, including Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). MST recently became a Medicaid-reimbursable service in South Carolina, allowing SCDJJ to expand access to services for additional youth and families statewide. Additionally, the agency received increased funding to expand Youth Arbitration Programs and Teen After School Centers, both of which provide early intervention and prevention services designed to reduce deeper involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Interagency Collaboration and Behavioral Health Initiatives

SCDJJ continues to strengthen partnerships with other child-serving agencies to improve service coordination and treatment access for justice-involved youth.

The agency collaborated with the South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (BHDD) and other state partners to support the opening of the Byars Treatment Center, a

psychiatric residential treatment facility specifically designed to serve justice-involved youth with significant behavioral and mental health needs.

SCDJJ is also partnering with the Department of Social Services (DSS) on Family First Prevention Services initiatives aimed at supporting status offenders and at-risk youth before they enter either juvenile justice or foster care systems. These collaborative efforts focus on strengthening families, increasing access to community-based services, and reducing unnecessary system involvement.

Strategic Assessment and Agency Modernization

SCDJJ has also initiated a comprehensive Strategic Assessment and Modernization Project designed to improve agency operations, data utilization, and long-term decision-making.

The project includes an agency-wide assessment of existing systems, workflows, processes, and data sources to identify operational inefficiencies and modernization opportunities. While the long-term goal is to procure a customized commercial-off-the-shelf platform capable of integrating agency operations and improving data-driven decision-making, the assessment itself will provide recommendations that can guide modernization efforts regardless of future funding availability.

As part of this initiative, SCDJJ is also digitizing and securely destroying more than 40,000 banker boxes of historical paper records while developing a modernized electronic records management system to support future operational and technological improvements.

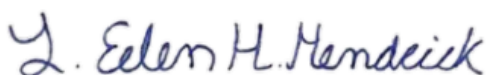
Legislative Engagement and System Reform

During this biennial period, SCDJJ actively participated in the Juvenile Crime Assessment and Strategic Reform Ad Hoc House Committee. Agency leadership provided information and recommendations regarding opportunities to modernize South Carolina's juvenile justice system, improve front-end community-based services, and better align resources with rehabilitation and prevention efforts.

Although the committee did not ultimately result in legislative changes or new funding streams, the process provided an important opportunity to educate legislators and stakeholders about the challenges facing the juvenile justice system and the continued need for strategic reform and investment.

SCDJJ remains committed to improving public safety by impacting and transforming young lives, strengthening families, and supporting safer communities through rehabilitation, accountability, and evidence-based services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "L. Eden H. Hendrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

L. Eden Hendrick
Executive Director

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)

From Tony Catone, Executive Director
5/15/2026

To Whom it May Concern,

Across the country, child welfare systems continue to see a rise in the number of teenagers entering foster care. This increase is driven less by maltreatment and more by complex behavioral challenges such as parent-child conflict, self-regulation difficulties, running away, truancy, and other high-risk behaviors that attract attention from schools, law enforcement, and the courts. Recognizing these emerging trends, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) has prioritized a proactive, prevention-focused approach to addressing the needs of youth and families before crises escalate or arise.

Since the 2023 biannual report to the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (GJJAC), SCDSS has made significant strides in deepening its partnership with the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (SCDJJ). Together, the agencies have expanded shared prevention strategies and strengthened early-intervention pathways designed to stabilize families and reduce both foster care entry and deeper penetration into the SCDJJ and SCDSS systems.

To support this work, SCDSS broadened its network of evidence-based, community-based providers, so that families have access to high-quality supports regardless of geography, needs, or level of agency involvement. SCDSS also invested in multiple cycles of capacity-building grants designed to strengthen local service providers who were supporting families already involved with the agency. These grants specifically enhanced providers' ability to address maladaptive or escalating youth behaviors that, if unaddressed, could have led to deeper system involvement or potential entry into SCDJJ. By expanding provider capacity in this targeted way, SCDSS worked to stabilize youth behavior, reduce the likelihood of juvenile justice involvement, and maintain family stability.

Over the past year, SCDSS has also worked closely with SCDJJ to identify innovative fiscal strategies that leverage additional federal financial participation. One such strategy is the development of a community pathway for services, a mechanism that would allow at-risk or system-involved youth to access key evidence-based services *without* requiring a formal child protective services (CPS) report, subsequent investigation, or ongoing SCDSS involvement. By creating a safe and voluntary access point for families in need of support that does not require child protective interventions, the Community Pathway would expand early-intervention opportunities, reduce the likelihood of crisis escalation, and draw down new federal resources to strengthen South Carolina's prevention infrastructure. SCDSS plans to submit this pathway for federal consideration in the fall of 2026.

In alignment with this upstream focus, since the last reporting period SCDSS launched the Teen Alternative Pathway Pilot (TAPP) in several upstate counties to provide timely responses for

families with children who are experiencing maladaptive behaviors and who are at risk or currently experiencing involvement with SCDJJ, law enforcement, or the courts. TAPP works to stabilize youth through referrals to clinical services, concrete goods assistance, and respite care interventions tailored to prevent unnecessary removals and further system involvement. Building on the success of the Upstate model, SCDSS expanded this approach to Richland County in late 2025.

As with TAPP in the Upstate, the Richland model is anchored in pre-removal work and incorporates a tailored service array which strengthens removal-prevention pathways and provides a structured mechanism for SCDJJ, law enforcement, and judicial partners to engage child and family teams early. Accessing care in this proactive manner allows for meaningful interventions before situations escalate to the point of foster care entry or deeper system involvement.

Additionally, since the previous report, SCDSS' investment in prevention services-particularly the Family Resource Connection and Preservation Services (FRCPS) model-has continued to expand. Launched in October 2024, FRCPS quickly became an essential statewide service, with availability extending across South Carolina shortly after implementation. To date, FRCPS has provided services to over 3,281 families through SCDSS' network of 17 community providers. Grounded in Motivational Interviewing, FRCPS delivers flexible, rapid-response interventions to address mental health, parenting, and substance use concerns.

These efforts also complement other evidence-based programs in the state's continuum, including Homebuilders, Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), Intercept, Intensive In-Home Services (IIHS), Thompson Placement Stabilization Services, Parents as Teachers (PAT), the Strengthening Families Program (SFP), and Family Centered Therapy (FCT) which are available to all children and families with an open investigation or family preservation case.

In 2024 and 2025, SCDSS served thousands of families through high quality evidence-based and supportive services, including:

- 3,281 families receiving FRCPS
- 802 families receiving Homebuilders
- 581 families receiving BSFT
- 334 families receiving Intercept
- 660 families receiving Thompson Placement Stabilization Services

Lastly, SCDSS continues to expand therapeutic service availability and deepen cross-system partnerships including exploratory work with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to identify additional community pathways to make Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) and other critical evidence-based practices more available to South Carolina's children and families. These efforts will enhance the safety, permanency, and well-being of South Carolina's children and support the development of a more adaptive continuum of prevention services. This continuum will promote children and families receiving the right supports at the right time, while enabling system partners to intervene earlier and reduce avoidable involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.

Through sustained collaboration with GJJAC and other key stakeholders, SCDSS remains committed to meeting families where they are, strengthening statewide service access, and promoting safety, permanency, and well-being for South Carolina's children and families.

SCDSS is encouraged by the significant progress achieved and the growing alignment across systems to better support South Carolina's youth and families. We look forward to continuing these partnerships and building on the momentum of these collective efforts will have in the lives of those we serve.

My best,

Tony Catone

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'TC' or 'TCatone', written in a cursive style.

State Director

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY (DCA)

From Margeret F. Bodman, JD, State Child Advocate and Director
5/18/2026

Dear Members of the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to share the work that the Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) has been engaged in for the past year. Both staff and volunteers exhibited resilience and focus as they navigated agency leadership transition. The former director, Honorable Amanda Whittle, stepped down from this role in April 2025 to serve as a Family Court Judge. I stepped into the role in July 2025 as the interim director and was confirmed by the Senate in April 2026. It is my honor to serve as the State Child Advocate and Director of the Department of Children's Advocacy until July 2031. The DCA consists of four separate divisions, each with their own mission, vision, and statutory responsibilities. All divisions and agency staff are united in a single vision of growing a community where children thrive. I will take this opportunity to summarize the activities and accomplishments of each individual division as follows:

Continuum of Care Division (COC)

This year has been a year of seeking new opportunities for our COC staff. For approximately 40 years, the COC has been engaged in work focused on preventing youth with severe emotional and behavioral issues from going into institutional care. After beginning as a pilot program in 1983, the General Assembly codified their work under S.C. Code of Laws § 63-11-1310, et. seq. In 2018, SCDHHS contracted with the COC for the purchase and provision of Medicaid Targeted Case Management Services under Title XIX, of the Social Security Act. This would become known as the Palmetto Coordinated System of Care waiver, creating a new array of home and community-based services to help children live in the community, stay in school, and when possible, to live in their home. This waiver was based upon research that showed effective home and community-based services are less costly and provide better outcomes for children, youth, and their families. This waiver allowed COC to bill Medicaid at a higher sustainable rate, which was necessary to support COCs work. This waiver contract program with SCDHHS terminated June 30, 2025. COC immediately engaged in discovering new opportunities to apply their skills in work that remains focused on keeping our youth out of institutional and state care. This search led to a partnership with SCDSS and SCDJJ that is focused on working with youth who are juvenile justice involved and are at risk of coming into the care of the child welfare system. COC staff have begun training on a model of *Family Engagement* work which is focused on intervening early with youth who are at risk of SCDSS involvement while under SCDJJ supervision. This work applies a child and family-centered teaming approach that engages youth and families in safety and placement decisions, thus preventing entry into SCDSS custody and reducing deeper system involvement. COC is enthusiastic about this new opportunity,

the potential for growth, and the positive outcomes that will result for youth and their families from this meaningful work.

Guardian ad Litem Division (GAL)

The GAL Division continues to be the largest division of the DCA, with approximately 158 staff and over 900 volunteers working across the state advocating for the best interest of children. They continue to face rising caseloads that threaten their ability to meet statutory obligations and ensure that children have their best interests represented in court. Pre-COVID, our volunteers numbered over 2,000. Since then, we have been unable to return to those numbers. In FY25, 10,660 children were served, averaging 6,000 children per month. Less than half of these children were served by a volunteer, which required GAL staff to serve the other 53%. Caseloads for the staff averaged more than 30 per staff member. Efforts are focused on recruiting volunteers along with seeking additional funding for more staff positions in order to help reduce caseloads and stabilize staffing all while improving outcomes for children. In recognizing the size of the division and the expanse of their work, DCA created an assistant director position serving under Estelle Stevenson, GAL Director. Krystal Jennings, a former regional director, was selected to serve in this role and began in December 2025. Also, in recognition of the increased workload of the GAL General Counsel, DCA created an attorney position to assist GALs throughout the state to fill a gap in legal representation when contract attorneys are unavailable or unable to assist. This position was filled with Justin Montgomery, a previous contract attorney with DCA. The GAL Division is constantly looking for ways to recruit, support, and retain volunteer GALs. In the Spring of 2025, the GAL Division began a pilot program to reimburse volunteers for gas mileage accumulated as a result of their work visiting children and completing their assigned investigations. We are excited about the many volunteers who are participating in the program and taking advantage of this financial support. The expectation of DCA is to collect data on the demand and projected financial impact of this program and to seek recurring funding from the legislature to be able to continue to provide this support.

Foster Care Review Division (FCRD)

The Foster Care Review Division (FCRD) has made significant changes over the last several years and FY25 has brought about opportunities to see the impact of those changes. In previous years, the implementation of a new case management system and the official shift to a virtual review process didn't allow us to see the outcomes in data reporting, processes, and system improvement recommendations. However, in FY25 we were able to see that we conducted 5309 reviews for 3558 children, and we maintained a goal of 99% of children in care being scheduled for a timely review throughout the full fiscal year. Along with the new case management system, FCRD implemented a new tool that allowed us to identify case delays and the causes behind those delays – known as Barriers to Permanency (BPs). Together, these items resulted in improvements to our internal processes, enhanced our data reporting, and improved our ability to identify areas where system improvements could be helpful to improve permanency outcomes for children in care. For the first time, we were able to begin reporting on BPs both to SCDSS and to board members to inform the work we do to improve the foster care system and

decrease the amount of time children remain out of their homes. Another project undertaken this year was updating the state regulations that govern the Foster Care Review Board's operations. This is something that has not been done in over 20 years. This initiative was spearheaded by the division's general counsel. Drafts of the revisions were presented to the State Board of Directors and the Bench Bar Committee for feedback and identification of concerns. Legislative Committee hearings on the regulations were held this Spring, with the regulations receiving favorable support. In January 2026, the State Foster Care Review Board voted to decommission six local review boards, reducing the total number of local boards from 43 to 37 and reducing the total number of board seats from 215 to 185. These decisions were made after an in-depth study of the number of children served in each county and statewide trends, along with an assessment of the ideal maximum caseload to avoid unintended negative consequences of any changes to the board structure. Finally, as a result of Senate Legislative Oversight Committee report on the DCA, Senator Tom Young sponsored Senate Bill S.0858, which will bring the appointment authority of members to the local foster care review boards under the Department of Children's Advocacy. The Senate Legislative Oversight Committee recommended this change in the appointment process in the hope that it may streamline the appointment process and ensure that volunteer member seats are filled. Recommendation of the legislative delegation remains the conduit to final appointment. S.0858 was passed by both the House and the Senate, ratified, and sent to the Governor's desk for signature. As of the writing of this letter, his signature is pending.

System Improvement Division (SI)

Our SI Division receives, responds to, and investigates complaints and critical incidents regarding services for children by nine specific child-serving agencies. Unlike the other three divisions within DCA, SI was established after the DCA was created in 2019. It is made up of two units: the Investigations Unit (IU) and the Critical Investigations Unit (CIU). While IU responds to complaints, CIU receives notifications of fatalities, near fatalities, or serious bodily or emotional injury of a child when in the custody of or receiving services from one of the child-serving agencies. During its first year of operation, FY20, CIU received 30 critical incident notifications. As of writing this letter, CIU has received 4,362 critical incident notifications. This number is not necessarily an indication of an actual increase in critical incidents, rather it is a testament to the collaborative work of the SI staff, the tremendous education that they have done throughout the state letting people understand their statutory duties, and the common goal that we all have in making sure that children are safe and appropriately served. The number of investigations conducted by IU have remained consistent over the past few years - 2955, 3484, and 2918. SI expands their work every year, increasing the number of community hours spent educating professionals and citizens about the work that we do, presenting material to other agencies, conducting site visits of facilities and placements where youth are residing, and attending court hearings to advocate on behalf of youth. The impact of this work is evidenced in the number of ways we can advocate for the youth, and the many times youth express their gratitude for the help that they received. This year we launched a Direct Representation Pilot Program bringing direct representation to DSS involved youth in three counties within our state. While S.C. Code § 63-7-1620(2) authorizes family court judges to appoint an attorney for children in abuse and neglect proceedings, in addition to the GAL for the children, it is not

required and is rarely ordered. “Recognizing the potential for significant advancements for abuse and neglected children in our state,” Chief Justice Kittredge signed an order requiring the appointment of an attorney for all youth age 13 and older who enters foster care in Berkeley, Clarendon, and Sumter counties. The pilot is underway, and data collection has begun. The Children’s Law Center at the Joseph F. Rice School of Law recently learned that they have received an impressive grant from the Duke Endowment totaling \$587,398 to fund the evaluation piece of this pilot program. This evaluation will measure the program’s impact on court timelines, how often youth move between placements, how long they spend in foster care, and overall cost savings to the state. Data collected will be both qualitative and quantitative – including interviews with involved judges, caseworkers, attorneys, GALs, and the represented youth. The expectation is that the data which is collected and analyzed will assist lawmakers on future decisions about whether to support a system change to bring direct representation to South Carolina on a statewide and permanent scale.

Both the staff and the volunteers of the Department of Children’s Advocacy are the heart and soul of the work that we do to improve outcomes for children served by state agencies. Their dedication to the DCA’s mission of advocacy, accountability, and service remains strong and unwavering.

Margaret Fent Bodman
Margaret Fent Bodman, J.D.
State Child Advocate and Director
South Carolina Department of Children’s Advocacy
1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 471A
Columbia, SC 29201
Margaret.Bodman@childadvocate.sc.gov

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (BHDD)

From Robert Bank, M.D., State Director
5/14/2026

To: Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council

The South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Office of Mental Health (OMH) appreciates the opportunity to serve on the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council aimed at improving the trajectory of South Carolina's youth interfacing with the justice system. OMH is committed to improving early access to care as well as participating and initiating opportunities to divert youth from the complex systems through the provision of timely, age appropriate and culturally relevant services and supports.

OMH has partnered with the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to provide ongoing clinical support at the South Carolina DJJ Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) in Columbia. Through this collaboration, the OMH/DJJ Liaison offers direct support to both staff and detained youth by delivering consistent counseling services to OMH clients while they are in custody as well as other identified youth needing therapeutic support. The liaison also conducts Diagnostic Assessments to determine needed youth's appropriate level of care, ensuring timely linkage to community based or residential services upon release. This partnership strengthens continuity of care for DJJ involved youth and enhances the mental health support available within the detention environment.

In 2026 OMH received a 3-year grant from Duke Endowment to expand Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT). OMH was awarded a three-year Duke Endowment grant in 2025 to support the statewide expansion of Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT). This funding allows OMH to bring the evidence-based model to additional regions across the state, including areas with high concentrations of justice involved youth, to improve access to intensive family centered treatment. As part of the expansion, OMH is in the process of hiring another part-time MDFT trainer who will support onboarding, model fidelity, and ongoing coaching for new clinicians. To date, three new MDFT staff have been hired to serve the Greater Greenville area, and OMH anticipates beginning implementation in additional priority counties by the end of the year. OMH has also participated in DJJ training and provided information on MDFT and its supportive role in the community setting with justice involved youth.

William R. Byars Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility opened in March 2026. The program is designed for justice involved youth diagnosed with serious mental illnesses or those requiring intensive treatment in a structured environment. The facility currently serves six youth, with admissions expected to increase steadily as referrals continue. Byars has a total capacity of 24 beds and is equipped to serve

both male and female residents, offering individualized treatment, education, and rehabilitative supports within a safe, trauma informed setting.

OMH hired Youth Peer Support Specialists in Spartanburg, Sumter, and Florence Counties through a TTI grant. Through this TTI grant, OMH successfully onboarded a Youth Peer Support specialist role in Spartanburg County to enhance the ongoing work of The Café. The Roads of Independence Programs in Sumter County (Santee-Wateree) and Florence (Pee Dee) also have Peer Support Specialists. These specialists use their lived experience to engage, mentor, and empower justice involved youth and young adults ages 16–25. Their role includes supporting recovery goals, facilitating peer led activities, strengthening youth voice, and helping young people navigate services and community resources.

OMH has a partnership with the South Carolina after-school Alliance on behalf of the 124 programs and families in Florence, Darlington, and Marion Counties. This partnership provides a jointly funded position to provide consultation, link to services when appropriate, as well as work with teens to become Peer Support Specialists.

OMH assumes a leadership role on the state's Joint Council on Children and Adolescents. State agencies and organizations come together to improve collaborative efforts and integrate care in a way that is beneficial to the children, adolescents, and families in South Carolina.

OMH is of the belief that young people thrive when given the opportunity to remain in their homes, schools, and communities. OMH continues to participate in efforts to offer options to increase access to care for families in a non-stigmatizing environment, and to prevent unnecessary encounters with law enforcement, child welfare, as well as hospital emergency rooms.

Thank you for including this office in efforts to improve the state's system of care for juveniles and families with mental and behavioral health challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Bank MD".

Robert Bank, MD

Director

GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026

The South Carolina Juvenile Justice Advisory Council supports the proposed amendment to Senate Bill H. 3655, along with any subsequent legislation that enhances programs and services for system-involved youth and their families. If such legislation is passed, it will address several critical problems that the juvenile justice system faces and assist South Carolina in fulfilling the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) requirement. Additionally, the council recommends that the state lends their support and encourages court officials, law enforcement and other stakeholders to work with DSA staff in coming into compliance with Section 223(a)(11)(B), which currently falls under the DSO core requirement of the JJDP Act. This will be achieved while simultaneously ensuring compliance with the other three requirements. In addition, the council also supports the following recommendations:

1. The Council recommends a thorough examination of the GJJAC membership roster to ensure the state maintains compliance with the JJDP Act requirements. Also, update the membership roster to include professionals with expertise beyond juvenile justice, but spanning community-based services and resources (Recreation and Youth Services, Education, Prosecutor, and other community partners, etc.).
2. The Council recommends the state continues to allocate adequate funding to child-serving agencies to provide community-based prevention programs, services, and resources for youth and their families to prevent system involvement. This Council is committed to community-based programs and services that divert youth away from further system involvement and incorporate their families as partners in the justice process.
3. The Council recommends the state adopt and promote proactive agenda items that seek to reduce racial and ethnic disparities statewide. Racial and ethnic disparities are not unique to the juvenile justice arena, as inequities are present in social services and child welfare, mental health, education, and other vital areas that intersect with juvenile justice.
4. The Council recommends that the state should continue to examine its Human Resource functions to guarantee that child-serving agencies in South Carolina can attract and retain highly skilled employees to ensure public safety, provide treatment services, and maintain high juvenile justice standards. It will be very beneficial to offer competitive compensation to employees, especially those in critical need areas such as security and clinicians, to ensure that our youth receive proper care.
5. The Council recommends the state continues to increase the availability of wrap-around services to system-involved youth and their families. These services include Behavior Modification, Family and Peer Support Services, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, and Respite Care.
6. The Council recommends that state and local officials continue to support the Council by encouraging Jail Administrators and court officials to work together along with OHSJP staff. This collaboration is vital to helping South Carolina comply with JJDP Act core requirements, specifically section 223(a)(11)(B).

SOUTH CAROLINA

GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL



— South Carolina —
Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council

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