2022
SOUTH CAROLINA
CHILDREN’S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE

REPORT & APPLICATION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
CHILDREN’S LAW CENTER

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Children’s Justice Act Coordinator
### South Carolina

Children’s Justice Act Task Force

Report and Application

May 2022

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I. Grantee Identifying Information

- **Grantee agency contact:**
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- **SC Department of Social Services EIN number:** 57-1040290
  UEI number: YPHCPMULMCD5

- **Responsible person for the CJA grant program:**
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II. CJA Task Force Membership and Function

South Carolina has maintained an active Children’s Justice Act Task Force since 1994. The purpose and activities of the Task Force, as defined by its bylaws and federal statute, are as follows:

- To conduct an assessment of the state’s systems responding to abused and neglected children at three-year intervals;
- To adopt recommendations in each of the CJA categories;
- To work towards implementation of these recommendations;
- To recommend to the state’s grantee (S.C. Department of Social Services) projects to be supported by the CJA grant funds; and
- To express positions on legislation or state policy issues, consistent with its mission and recommendations.

The Task Force is governed by bylaws which were adopted in 1998. They were most recently revised on February 13, 2020, to include the newly established State Child Advocate as a designated member of the Task Force. In accordance with the bylaws, the Task Force meets at least quarterly. Standing committees are formed every three years to coincide with adoption of recommendations. Each committee meets at least quarterly, and as needed, to follow through with implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Task Force. All members are assigned to a committee. All Task Force meetings were held virtually during this reporting period.

The Task Force conducted a review and assessment of the state’s systems that respond to abused and neglected children in February 2021, leading to the
formulation of recommendations for the 2021-2024 CJA cycle. As a result of priority topics identified through information gathered prior to the assessment workday, three corresponding committees for the 2021-2024 period were established:

A. Training and Judicial Improvement Committee  
B. Model Programming Committee  
C. Child Protection Reform Committee

The Task Force is self-perpetuating through an election process held every three years. The membership period is three calendar years so that it overlaps accordingly with the CJA three-year cycle. This allows new members to be involved in the three-year assessment process and formulation of recommendations. Current members propose new members when necessary and prepare a slate of nominees, ensuring multidisciplinary and diverse membership. New members are elected for three-year terms by a majority vote of the Task Force. The Chairperson appoints members to fill vacancies that occur between general elections. Officers include a Chair and Vice-Chair who are also elected by the Task Force. Officers are limited to serving one three-year term. It is possible to elect someone to serve a second term in the same position, but not consecutively. This by-law was instituted to allow fresh leadership for every three-year cycle. Members for the 2021-2024 period were elected in October 2020 for the three-year term that began in January 2021. The Task Force currently has 29 members, reflecting all required disciplines, two of which are new members to the Task Force, joining in February 2022 to fill unexpected vacancies. The elected chair for this term is Tom Knapp, the Executive Director of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers. The vice-chair is Trista Baird who is a Lieutenant with the SC Law Enforcement Division.

The Children’s Law Center provides staff support to the Task Force, including logistical arrangements for meetings and research activities. In addition to the CJA Coordinator who assists with implementation of recommendations, an additional staff person is assigned to each committee to facilitate the meetings and act as a liaison between the Task Force groups and the CJA Coordinator. The Children’s Law Center also carries out training recommendations of the Task Force.

Attachment 1 includes a list of Task Force members with their titles, professional categories, and brief profiles. Attachment 2 contains minutes of the four meetings held during the past year. Current recommendations are in Attachment 3, Task Force bylaws are in Attachment 4, Training Evaluations are in Attachment 5, 6, 7 and Protocol Training documents are in Attachment 8.

III. Annual Performance Report: May 2021 - May 2022

The South Carolina Department of Social Services is the state’s designated grantee for Children’s Justice Act funds. In accordance with one of the Task Force’s recommendations, the Department of Social Services contracted with the University of South Carolina’s Children’s Law Center to provide staff support for meetings and assist the Task Force in implementing its recommendations. This performance report
Evaluation efforts: The Children’s Law Center is fortunate to have a Research Scientist on our Team. She is tasked with implementing periodic and longitudinal evaluations and developing and adjusting curriculum accordingly. She serves as a resource to the trainers on curriculum development, presentation methods, and adult learning principles. The evaluation process includes the assessment of impact on the knowledge, skills, and practices of training participants. Every training evaluation collects prior knowledge and post knowledge of the learning objectives; ratings of presenter dynamics and engagement; ratings of visuals and handouts; and solicited recommendations for improvement. The Research Scientist provides guidance on how to analyze training evaluations to utilize findings which will improve instructional design and delivery.

Linkage with CFSP: In 2021, the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) focus areas included promotion of a safety culture while shifting to a child well-being system; improving staff knowledge and expertise; infrastructure improvement; and safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes that involve a safety intervention model. DSS staff have kept the Task Force Coordinator apprised of Program Improvement Plan progress, especially as it has pertained to safety and assessment. Part of the quality safety model is demonstrating their GPS Practice Model core skills – comprehensive assessment. The Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST) is a comprehensive assessment that includes safety, risk, and service need components. The FAST was implemented in all 46 counties in 2021. This included training all case managers, supervisors, and leaders specifically on this assessment, but also more broadly on engaging families to complete the assessment and then developing a Family Permanency Plan (also implemented in 2021) as part of the child and family team. The agency hosted weekly calls as the FAST rolled out to engage frontline case managers and supervisors to troubleshoot any practice issues that came up during implementation. These calls continue to occur into 2022. Task Force Members continue to be willing and available to join stakeholder meetings as opportunities arise.

Category A. Activities undertaken to improve the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect:

• Provide Multidisciplinary Trainings regarding the unique aspects involved in the recognition, investigation, and prosecution of maltreatment of children with disabilities, to include recognition within virtual settings. (Recommendation 1.A)

Key members of the Task Force are reviewing the past curriculum from the two-part webinar that was provided in 2020: Communication Challenges with Special Populations of Children. For the planned Recommendation expansion, polling questions are being developed to gather most needed topics for multiple disciplines. In the meantime, the 2020 recorded webinar continues to be available for interested participants in 2021 and 2022 on the Children’s Law
Center training portal, in addition to the training resources. The sessions include topical experts on IDEA and ADA/IEP and 504 planning; autism; speech impairments and intellectual disabilities; visual impairments; deaf and hard of hearing; and trauma-induced communication barriers.

- **Continue to build upon trainings regarding multidisciplinary child death investigations, including the identification of barriers to effectively implementing the Child Death Investigation Task Forces (CDITF).** (Recommendation 2.A)

  A Simulation Training is being developed and will be offered to DSS Investigators and Treatment workers. This will be a two-day child reenactment training utilizing case scenarios and dolls. The setting will be small groups in the Children’s Law Center’s Mock crime scene apartment.

  In addition, the Children’s Law Center continues to offer our Child Death Investigations training to Law Enforcement, Coroners, and DSS Investigators. During this contract year, seven trainings were provided to include three-parts. A total of 212 professionals participated.

- **Provide multidisciplinary training events, to include the faith community, on family violence, utilizing leading experts on research in this area.** (Recommendation 3.A)

  Efforts have been made to identify programs or local experts in this area. One such curriculum is called “No Hit Zone.” A “no hit zone” is defined as “an environment in which no adult shall hit another adult, no adult shall hit a child, no child shall hit an adult, and no child shall hit another child.” The goal is to educate adults. These no hit zones also have resources to show the negative impact that hitting children has on them. Some examples of the negative impact on children include:
  - Increased likelihood for abuse in the home
  - Increase in mental health concerns
  - Increased likelihood in those children becoming more violent
  The committee continues to discuss approaches for this recommendation.

- **Provide multidisciplinary training to include volunteer guardians ad litem and community stakeholders (providers, school counselors, DSS, etc.) on working with cases involving crossover youth with DSS and DJJ.** (Recommendation 4.A.)

  A specialized workgroup of Task Force Members was developed to assess past and current training available; collaborate with DSS and DJJ to determine what modifications may be needed; and create a curriculum to provide
multidisciplinary training. Two agency personnel were identified and contacted (1 DSS and 1 DJJ) to review the draft curriculum. We have received some feedback and await additional information. Leadership from DSS and a member of the task force will explore what DSS and DJJ training is currently in-place so we can better plan and support those efforts.

- Continue to provide, and expand upon, trainings focused on reducing stress and trauma to children who must testify in either, or both, family court and general sessions court. This includes coordination with SC Court Administration to provide training opportunities to the judiciary regarding developmentally appropriate, and legally defensible, courtrooms for child victims and/or witnesses appearing in court. (Recommendation5.A)

In conjunction with the Task Force, the Children’s Law Center created a curriculum for DSS and GAL attorneys on child testimony in family court during our last cycle. The training includes pretrial motion procedures, including the use of closed-circuit television or presentation of child hearsay through S.C. Code § 19-1-180, and the process of effective child witness preparation. The training provides techniques and strategies focused on reducing the stress and trauma endured by children having to appear in the courtroom setting and on reducing the risk of possible recantation. This training continues to be available in a two-part recorded webinar format.

Expansion efforts are underway to include prosecutors and judges in the next version of this training. The Children’s Law Center’s Senior Resource Attorney is in communication with the South Carolina Commission on Prosecution Coordination regarding providing a presentation at the annual solicitor’s conference related to “Questioning Children.” The request will be reviewed as they make determinations about the content of this year’s conference, to be held at the end of September 2022.

In addition, on February 25, 2022, a training was provided by the Senior Resource Attorney and a statewide CAC expert (Ph.D. Chief Psychologist) on Best Practices - Questioning Children: Preparing and Presenting in Court. The training objectives are below:

- Identify appropriate techniques and tools to prepare child for the courtroom
- Describe the evidentiary rules and requirements for competency
- Identify a child-friendly task to establish competency
- Identify a child-friendly oath to be administered
- Recognize developmentally appropriate questions for children
- Identify child-friendly strategies to present child testimony
- Identify how to use testimonial aids such as dolls, diagrams, and photographs during a child’s testimony
In another effort to help reduce trauma for children who must testify, the Children’s Law Center created children’s court coloring notebooks for both family court and general sessions (criminal) court. These continue to be distributed to attorneys, DSS staff, guardians ad litem, and CACs throughout the state. The family court version was also translated in Spanish and these notebooks are available upon request.

- **Support the Court Improvement Program to improve the quality of child abuse and neglect hearings by ensuring all necessary parties are served with notice of the hearing and that they are engaged and participate meaningfully in the proceedings; and by looking at causes for continuances and ways to alleviate those that are unavoidable.** (Recommendation 6.A).

A small group met to explore ways to improve the already standardized statute for the SC court docket process as all counties are not consistent, and many do not meet timeframes in place. Ideas to be further researched:

- Develop and deliver a consistent statewide training for staff and paralegals
- Utilize a senior paralegal to assist with new hire orientation, refresher, training to include a checklist and the Tickler System.
- Judicial Training = Judicial Advocacy: how can judges take a more active role during court hearings? Ask the child more questions. Safety is typically covered, but not always afterwards regarding permanency.
- Work closely with our Court Improvement Program (CIP) Director and utilize the comprehensive data report which includes: TPR rates, Continuance Rates, the Foster Care Merits Completion Report, and the Quality Hearing Report. The CIP Director presented details at our May 6, 2022, quarterly Task Force meeting.

**Category B. Steps taken to establish experimental, model, or demonstration programs:**

- **Develop and deliver a training curriculum for local multidisciplinary teams on the SC Child Abuse Response Protocol, modify the trainings for each county, and include schools in the MDTs.** (Recommendation 7.B)

The Task Force continues to work with the staff of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers on creating the curriculum. Nine separate segments of the curriculum were identified, a powerpoint template created discussion of the structure of each segment to ensure consistency throughout the training, the curriculum was drafted, possible presenters were identified (experts in the topics), and selected presenters were given the curriculum drafts to review in order to conduct the recordings and launch the training in May 2022. The initial training will be an online, pre-recorded, self-paced training.

The purpose of the protocol is to ensure a multidisciplinary response to child abuse and neglect that utilizes Children’s Advocacy Centers and
multidisciplinary teams. The legislation requires the use of the protocol as developed by the SCNCAC and the Task Force. These groups are also tasked with developing and providing training on the protocol. The law also requires the protocol to be publicly available and reviewed annually by a Governor appointed review committee. The latter portion of the bill amended the current CAC statute to strike language that states: “Nothing in this section requires the exclusive use of a Children’s Advocacy Center.” It also adds the requirement for CACs to be fully accredited with the National Children’s Alliance (NCA) or to be an associate/developing or affiliate member of the SCNCAC and be actively pursuing full accreditation with the NCA within the next two years. The enacted legislation can be viewed here: https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/bills/229.htm

- Collaborate with the statewide Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force to develop and implement tools that will expand and improve resources to handle the preliminary investigation of child sexual abuse. (Recommendation 8.B).

Task Force members met with the Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE) Task Force to discuss collaboration opportunities. The possibility of covering the cost of FNE Pediatric training was ruled out as this was cost prohibitive (over $20K).

Members also met with forensic nurses about their development of a training and ways to support them. This would provide agencies with specialized training and a trauma informed response to care for sexual assault victims, along with providing care that not only meets but exceeds national standards. SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Excellence) Accredited facilities will be able to raise public awareness and promote their care to the communities they serve. One suggestion was for the Task Force to prepare a letter of support for the SAFE designation program.

- Collaborate with the statewide Human Trafficking Task Force to identify and address gaps in resources that are needed to support suspected victims of sex trafficking along the process from identification to court. (Recommendation 9.B).

A meeting was conducted with the SC Human Trafficking Task Force Director and specifically identified Task Force Members. Suggestions included:

- Review the current DSS Human Trafficking Screening Tool with DJJ and DMH for needed edits, provide the feedback to DSS Director of Safety Management
- Incorporate Human Trafficking topics into the Children’s Law Center statewide conference (i.e., HTTF initiatives and activities, the DSS Screening Tool, assessment & identification, next steps once confirmed, and resources available)
- Reinforce Human Trafficking procedures during the Child Abuse and Neglect Response Protocol training
• **Support the expansion of the CAC involvement in the Safe Babies Court initiative in South Carolina and monitor the project to determine additional ways to support growth and success of Safe Babies Courts.**  

The Safe Babies Courts initiative has successfully expanded across four counties and is currently running four comprehensive programs. The Task Force will continue to monitor these programs. The Safe Babies Court approach applies the science of early childhood development in meeting the urgent needs of infants and toddlers and strengthening their families. The approach is guided by a strategic framework to produce best outcomes while focusing on concrete strategies that allow the professionals who interact most directly with families to improve experiences of infants and toddlers under court jurisdiction who are in foster care and at risk of removal, and their families.

• **Obtain and/or enhance protections in SC for recordings of forensic interviews of child abuse victims.**  

A forensic interview evidence management system has been implemented by CACs with DSS to eliminate hard copies of recordings. In addition, SCNCAC will propose legislation in an effort to continue and strengthen protection during the next CJA cycle.

• **Continue to support the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources.**  
(Recommendation 12.B)

The Task Force promotes growth of children’s advocacy centers in South Carolina by supporting the South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC), the accredited state chapter of the National Children’s Alliance. CJA funds are used in part to provide office space, equipment, supplies, and limited administrative support to the Network’s staff. The Network’s Executive Director, the Chair of the Task Force, is appointed by the Network’s Board of Directors. Children’s advocacy centers (CACs) are identified in South Carolina law (S.C. Code § 63-11-310). The CAC model is proven to significantly improve the investigative handling of child abuse cases and is considered best practice in the response to child abuse cases. The Task Force continues to provide assistance and support as CACs and their programs continue to progress. South Carolina has 17 primary and 10 satellite CACs. There are 3 additional satellite CACs in development which includes the possibility of a mobile unit. As a result of the 5-year development plan project, a full-time CAC/MDT Development Coordinator oversees development and provides support for new satellite CACs and MDT development in underserved areas of South Carolina. In addition, SCNCAC staff consist of an Executive Director, General Counsel, Program Director, and an Administrative Coordinator.
The year 2021 was one of unprecedented collaboration in the response to child abuse in South Carolina. Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) were faced with numerous challenges related to the pandemic during 2020. As a result, the number of children served at CACs in 2020 was down 6% from the prior year. A primary reason for the decrease was the pandemic-related social distancing which resulted in children not interacting with adults who would normally make a report of child abuse. Through education and collaboration with multidisciplinary team (MDT) partners, CACs were able to engage local communities to reach children and families impacted by child abuse during the pandemic. As a result of those efforts, 11,117 children were helped at CACs in South Carolina during 2021, which was an 11% increase over 2020.

**CAC Development Plan:** During 2021, SCNCAC conducted 55 events which were attended by 1,085 CAC, MDT, and other professionals. These events ranged from large training sessions to smaller technical assistance, peer review, and information sessions. Due to the ongoing pandemic, most of these events were conducted in a virtual format. CAC staff and MDT partners from across the state attended these events, in order to meet licensing, professional development, accreditation, or other requirements for the work they do. SCNCAC completed thousands of technical assistance requests related to the CAC database, VidaNyx system, CAC development, accreditation, and many others - all to support CACs and MDTs in the work they do in the statewide response to child abuse and neglect.

**Statewide CAC Database:** In 2019, SCNCAC launched a statewide CAC database to help prevent duplication of services; better allocate mental health, medical, and other resources; and provide necessary data to monitor the implementation of recommendations in the CAC Development Plan. In 2020 a project began to integrate the SCNCAC statewide CAC database with the DSS CAPSS System to automate DSS referrals to CACs for services. This work continues in 2021 to ensure the most efficient, protected platform and this is close to completion.

**Forensic Interview Peer Review Program:** The South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Center's (SCNCAC) statewide forensic interview peer review program is designed to provide forensic interviewers with an opportunity to review forensic interviews, discuss specific interview techniques, provide feedback regarding the quality of the interview, ensure consistent documentation, and review relevant research. SCNCAC facilitates a number of regional forensic interview peer review sessions each year across South Carolina and one statewide session with training in Columbia. The most recent session occurred on November 4, 2022.

**Victim Advocate Training Program:** The South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Center's (SCNCAC) statewide victim & family advocate training program is designed for victim and family advocates who are working with children and families within a South Carolina Children's Advocacy Center. The victim advocate training program includes multiple regional
sessions and one statewide session in Columbia. In 2019, the SCNCAC finalized the initial Victim Service Provider (VSP) curriculum which is a blended learning course for CAC/MDT Victim Advocates in South Carolina. The program has been approved for core VSP certification in SC and meets training requirements for Victim Advocates in the National Children’s Alliance CAC accreditation standards. There were two sessions conducted – October 2021 and January 2022 which were hosted in a live virtual format.

**TF-CBT and Telehealth Delivery Training Program:** SCNCAC collaborated with the Children’s Advocacy Centers of North Carolina (CACNC) to enhance mental health services for child abuse victims in rural and economically disadvantaged areas of the Carolinas. This involved training for CAC therapists in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and telehealth delivery of the TF-CBT model.

**Safe Babies Courts:** SCNCAC collaborated with the SC Infant Mental Health Association to bring the Safe Babies Court (SBC) model to four CACs. The project connects very young children and their families with needed supports and services to advance health and well-being to help prevent future abuse and neglect.

**Ongoing Training and Technical Assistance:** During 2021, SCNCAC conducted 55 events which were attended by 1,085 CAC, MDT, and other professionals. These events ranged from large training sessions to smaller technical assistance, peer review, and information sessions. Due to the ongoing pandemic, most of these events were conducted in a virtual format. CAC staff and MDT partners from across the state attended these events, in order to meet licensing, professional development, accreditation, or other requirements for the work they do. SCNCAC completed thousands of technical assistance requests related to the CAC database, VidaNyx system, CAC development, accreditation, and many others - all to support CACs and MDTs in the work they do in the statewide response to child abuse and neglect.

- **Continue to support the operation of the Children’s Law Center which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force.** (Recommendation 13.B)

Task Force Recommendation 13.B calls for the operation of the Children’s Law Center, a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. The Children’s Law Center was originally established upon the recommendation of the Task Force and continues to function as its staff support and training arm. The University of South Carolina School of Law administers the Children’s Law Center as a model program to enhance the knowledge and skills of all professionals.
involved in child abuse and neglect proceedings, leading to better outcomes for children. The mission and functions of the Children’s Law Center reflect the CJA goals of improving investigative and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases and enhancing the effectiveness of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem. The Children’s Law Center is able to access other funding sources to complement CJA funds, thus providing a comprehensive array of services. The Children’s Law Center offers a variety of training programs on child maltreatment to child protection caseworkers, family court staff, guardians ad litem, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other child-serving professionals. The Children’s Law Center also trains professionals who are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

**Website and resource materials:** The Children’s Law Center maintains a website containing online publications, training information, additional resources, and links to related organizations. Staff develop and distribute resource materials on child protection and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. The Children’s Law Center also responds to individual requests for information and technical assistance from professionals in the field. The online training portal for mandated reporters is offered to anyone at no cost. In response to the pandemic, additional information materials related to child abuse reporting during virtual schooling and quarantining were created. The website also has a designated page with tools and resources for law enforcement for identifying and investigating child sex trafficking. The website address is http://childlaw.sc.edu.

**ChildFirst training:** CJA funds are used to assist with the delivery of ChildFirst, a comprehensive training program on forensic interviewing of children. This is an intensive five-day course in which students learn the necessary skills to conduct an investigative interview—also known as a forensic interview—of a suspected child abuse victim. This interactive course combines lectures and demonstrations and is supplemented with homework assignments and a written examination at the end of the course. Participants also must conduct a 30-minute interview of a professional actor playing the role of a sexually abused child after which the interviewer is critiqued by a professional forensic interviewer and a group of fellow students. End of course and follow-up evaluations, along with feedback from prosecutors, indicate this training is significantly improving the quality of forensic interviews. Four ChildFirst trainings were conducted during this reporting period in July 2021, October 2021, January 2022, and April 2022.

**Child Death Investigation Training:** Investigating Child Death training for law enforcement and child welfare investigators was provided by our Children’s Law Center content expert. These trainings were offered through a virtual platform and each course was broken into three segments over the course of three days. During this reporting period, this two-part course was offered 7 times, with 212 participants in attendance.
Category C: Activities undertaken to reform state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, or procedures:

- Provide support for any child abuse legislation that the Children’s Justice Act Task Force deems will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children, including the commercial sex trafficking of children. (Recommendation 14.C)

The Task Force tracked the following bills during the course of the year that were related to CJA topics. Members provided input about such legislation when appropriate.

The following bills have passed:

Family First Implementation – H.3567 / S.441
Brings South Carolina into conformity with the federal Family First Act passed in 2018. It adds a definition in the Children’s Code for "Qualified Residential Treatment Program;" amends sections relating to investigations of institutional abuse and restrictions on foster care placements; requires assessment, case planning, and judicial review for children placed in qualified residential treatment programs; and amends sections relating to permanency planning.

Extension of Foster Care to 21 – H.3509 / S.221
Establishes an extended foster care program and related procedures to enable certain children in the custody of DSS on their eighteenth birthday to continue to receive services and supports from the department until age twenty-one.

Kinship/Fictive Kin – H.3214 / S.222
Defines "fictive kin" and provides that fictive kin are eligible to be foster parents under the kinship foster care program.

The following bills have crossed over but are pending:

Sex Buyer Penalties – H.3224 / S.224
Increases the penalties for solicitation of prostitution, establishing or keeping a brothel or house of prostitution, or causing or inducing another to participate in prostitution. Establishes the affirmative defense of being a victim of human trafficking.

Safe Harbor for Minor Victims – S.230
Provides that minors engaged in commercial sexual activity or trafficking are presumed to be doing so under coercion or as the result of a reasonable fear of a threat. Provides an affirmative defense for these victims and for expungement of criminal records for these victims.
Birth Certificate Access – S. 1025
Expands definition of “other legal representative” to make it easier for unaccompanied homeless youth and kinship caregivers to obtain a child’s birth certificate.

- Investigate the feasibility of integrating data systems that would allow for a comprehensive collaborative database that would track child abuse cases from initial referral through closure of services. In addition, investigate data sets that are already available in order to measure positive outcomes into adulthood. (Recommendation 15.C).

An Advisory Work Group of multidisciplinary agency leadership was convened to discuss the feasibility of developing this integrated database. Following statewide and national research of this issue by Task Force members and an in-depth meeting of the work group, it was determined that the integration of database systems across the state to track child abuse cases is not feasible at this time. A smaller group of Task Force members will continue to look into the possibility of collecting/analyzing data on a smaller scale to measure outcomes.

- Encourage child serving agency examination of racial disparities of children involved with the child welfare system. (Recommendation 16.C).

The Children’s Law Center hosted their annual conference November 19, 2021. The Keynote Speaker presented on Recognizing and Responding to Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems. CLC has also revised its Mandated Reporter Training to include stronger messaging around racial disparities.

IV. Prior Year Budget Expenditure

- **Trainings addressing children with disabilities** - $6,894
  Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

- **Child death investigations training/outreach** - $4,309
  Staff collaboration, materials, training expenses

- **Training events on family violence** - $6,032
  Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

- **Training on crossover youth** - $8,617
  Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

- **Child Testimony Training** - $6,237
  Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses, printing of resources
Statewide protocol training  - $40,604  
Staff collaboration, curriculum development, outreach, materials, training expenses

Collaboration with the Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force - $6,032  
Staff collaboration, resource/tool printing or ordering

Collaboration with the SC Human Trafficking Task Force - $8,617  
Staff collaboration, resource/tool printing or ordering

Monitor the Safe Babies Court project - $1,723  
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Monitor efforts to obtain protections for forensic interview recordings - $1,723  
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Convene data system advisory group – $3,447  
Meeting support costs, staff collaboration and research

Confer with other agencies re: examination of racial disparities - $3,447  
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Support of the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers/ Peer review program for forensic interviewers – $28,428  
Office space, telephone, computer, office supplies, use of general office equipment, administrative support, printing, staff time for collaborative events, speaker fees, training costs

Operation of the Children’s Law Center - $63,073  
Personnel, project supplies, training, information, and assistance related to CJA; training and information for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, supplemental funding for trainings related to CJA topics.

Direct Task Force Support- $17,234  
Meeting supplies, refreshments, printing, staff time for logistical support of the Task Force, support for committee meetings, mileage, other collaborations

CJA Grantees Meeting- $5,170 (this was held virtually – so only” time” expense)  
Travel for two/three CJA representatives to attend the federal grantees meeting

USC Facilities & Administrative Cost - $50,311  
Facilities, utilities, administrative overhead; Federal negotiated rate of 26% of modified total direct costs

Total  
$261,898
V. Application for Proposed Activities

*During the grant period, the Task Force will work toward accomplishing the recommendations developed in 2021. The Children’s Law Center will assist the Task Force in its efforts. All of these objectives relate directly to specific recommendations of the Task Force.*

1. Provide multidisciplinary trainings regarding the unique aspects involved in the recognition, investigation, and prosecution of maltreatment of children with disabilities, to include recognition within virtual settings. The Task Force would like to continue to make efforts to increase understanding of different aspects of disabilities and provide resources so that lack of knowledge and understanding of disabilities are not a barrier to recognition, investigation, and prosecution for disabled children. The subcommittee will determine how to best meet everyone’s training needs at once. They will look at conducting an introductory training that would give general information to reach the various audiences and then provide more focused trainings specifically geared toward DSS child death investigators, and educators, etc. They may survey all members of the Task Force to see if academic thoughts align with the task force i.e. “What is emerging or things on the horizon?” (Recommendation 1.A)

2. Continue to build upon trainings regarding multidisciplinary child death investigations, including the identification of barriers to effectively implementing the Child Death Investigation Task Forces (CDITF) rapid response. The Task Force will strive to increase the consistent use of a CDITF and increase the number of partners who are specially trained in child death investigations. In addition, the Task Force will provide education and awareness regarding the coroner’s duty to conduct child death reviews and the benefits of the CDITF. Finally, a simulation training is being developed and will be offered to DSS investigators and treatment workers. This will be a two-day child reenactment training utilizing case scenarios and dolls. The setting will be in the Children’s Law Center’s Mock crime scene apartment. (Recommendation 2.A)

3. Provide multidisciplinary training events, to include the faith community, on family violence, utilizing leading experts on research in this area. The Task Force would like to increase education and awareness among multidisciplinary professionals as well as the community regarding family violence and child-related trauma. Leading experts on corporal punishment/physical abuse research will be utilized for these events. Alternate tools for discipline and redirection may be shared. The CLC Senior Resource Attorney will reach out to SCCADVASA (South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) to explore what trainings they have, gather available agendas, and offer to support this organization with the advertisement of resources. (Recommendation 3.A)

4. Provide multidisciplinary training to include volunteer guardians ad litem and community stakeholders (providers, school counselors, DSS, etc.) on working with cases involving crossover youth with DSS and DJJ. The Task Force will continue to ensure that the individuals who serve dually-involved youth are aware of DJJ processes and alternatives and will encourage that trainings include an
overview and flowchart of the DJJ system, resource options for alternative placement, and trauma-informed presentations. In addition, we will continue efforts with the specialized workgroup of Task Force members developed to assess past and current training available, collaborate with DSS and DJJ to determine what modifications may be needed and create a curriculum to provide multidisciplinary training. Agency personnel from DSS and DJJ were identified and have been contacted to review the Recommended Practices document. We have received some feedback and await additional information. The Task force will continue to work with DSS and DJJ leadership to determine what training is being created and delivered currently, and to see how the Task Force can provide support. (Recommendation 4.A)

5. Continue to provide, and expand upon, trainings focused on reducing stress and trauma to children who must testify in either, or both, Family Court and General Sessions Court. This includes coordination with SC Court Administration to provide training opportunities to the judiciary regarding developmentally appropriate, and legally defensible, courtrooms for child victims and/or witnesses appearing in court. The Task Force will expand the training audience of the already established child testimony trainings that took place during the last CJA cycle to include prosecutors and judges. The goals of these trainings will be to increase knowledge and understanding of how to seek remote/closed-circuit testimony; reduce stress and trauma for children who must testify, whether remotely or in the courtroom; and improve the preparation of the child for the courtroom experience. Finally, we hope to have our Senior Resource Attorney provide a presentation at the annual solicitor’s conference related to “Questioning Children.” Our request is being reviewed as they make determinations about the content of this year’s conference, to be held at the end of September 2022. (Recommendation 5.A)

6. Support the Court Improvement Program to improve the quality of child abuse and neglect hearings by ensuring all necessary parties are served with notice of the hearing and that they are engaged and participate meaningfully in the proceedings; and by looking at causes for continuances and ways to alleviate those that are avoidable. The Task Force will collaborate with the Court Improvement Program to assist with any training needs that arise from their data collection. The Task Force will also request and review data from the Court Liaison Program and continue to explore ways to utilize the information that is collected to assist with system improvement. (Recommendation 6.A)

7. Develop and deliver a training curriculum for local multidisciplinary teams on the SC Child Abuse Response Protocol, modify the trainings for each county, and include schools in the MDTs. In response to enacted legislation that mandates the use of this protocol, the Task Force collaborated with the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers to develop a curriculum that will be used to train all multidisciplinary partners on this best practice response to child abuse cases. The training link and resource list was provided statewide to all appropriate professionals the middle of May 2022. This is a 5-hour virtual, self-paced curriculum that specifically follows the SC Child Abuse and Response Protocol steps and process. Presenters were selected based on their professional expertise in each module.
8. Collaborate with the statewide Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force to develop and implement tools that will expand and improve resources to handle the preliminary investigation of child sexual abuse. Members of the Task Force have reached out to the leadership of the Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force (FNETF) to determine how they can support their efforts with a pediatric focus. One effort being discussed by the Task Force is writing a letter of support for their Sexual Assault Forensic Excellence (SAFE) designation program (Recommendation 8.B).

9. Collaborate with the statewide Human Trafficking Task Force to identify and address gaps in resources that are needed to support suspected victims of sex trafficking along the process from identification to court. Members of the Task Force have reached out to the leadership of the SC Human Trafficking Task Force to determine how they can support their efforts with a focus on child victims and placement resources. The Task Force will also confer with DSS regarding service gaps for this population of children. These conversations will continue. Several options are being considered: Review the current DSS Screening Tool with DJJ and DMH for needed edits; Incorporate Human Trafficking topics into the Children's Law Center statewide conference; Reinforce Human Trafficking procedures during The Child Abuse and Neglect Response Protocol training. (Recommendation 9.B)

10. Support the expansion of CAC involvement in the Safe Babies Court initiative in South Carolina and monitor the project to determine additional ways to support growth and success of Safe Babies Courts. The Safe Babies Court initiative is up and fully running in the four identified counties. Another site is being considered in Charleston County. The Task Force will monitor this progress for continued program success. (Recommendation 10.B)

11. Obtain and/or enhance protections in SC for recordings of forensic interviews of child abuse victims. A forensic interview evidence management system has been implemented by the SCNCAC with DSS to eliminate hard copies of recordings. The Task Force will collaborate with the SCNCAC to remain apprised of developments in the use of technology systems by CACs that ensure confidentiality. SCNCAC will file proposed legislation during the next CJA cycle. (Recommendation 11.B)

12. Continue support of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers, including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources: The CJA Task Force supports Children's Advocacy Centers and, together with the Children’s Law Center, will assist their network, which is a state chapter of the National Children’s Alliance. The Children’s Law Center will continue to provide furnished office space for the Executive Director of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers and three staff members, along with telephone, computer, office supplies, and use of equipment and meeting rooms. Additionally, the Children’s Law Center will provide administrative support and will co-sponsor selected SCNCAC training events. Trainings will seek to improve adherence to the ChildFirst SC forensic interviewing protocol within the peer review system and increase opportunities for support and
development for forensic interviewers. The Executive Director of the Network is the current chair of the Task Force and will report regularly on the status and needs of the state’s Children’s Advocacy Centers. The Children’s Law Center will also assist individual Children’s Advocacy Centers by providing legal information and training as requested. This support will promote the expansion of the Children’s Advocacy Center approach throughout the state. (Recommendation 12.B)

13. Continue support of the operation of the Children’s Law Center which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force: DSS contracts with the Children’s Law Center to support the functions of the Task Force and to operate a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. The Children’s Law Center is responsible for implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force, preparing resource materials as directed by the Task Force, and assisting with accomplishment of policy recommendations. The Children’s Law Center provides research and logistical support for all meetings of the Task Force and its committees. Supporting the operation of the SC Children’s Law Center promotes successful delivery of coordinated and effective training and information for professionals involved in the response to child abuse allegations, investigations, and prosecutions. Measurable outcome goals of training will be identified and tracked to assess and modify any trainings. (Recommendation 13.B)

14. Provide support for any child abuse legislation that the Task Force deems will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children including the commercial sex trafficking of children: The Task Force will continue to monitor and support legislation that will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children and that is related to CJA topics. Particular attention will be paid to efforts to further protect child sex trafficking victims. Members will provide input about such legislation when there is appropriate opportunity. The Task Force will also assist in efforts to educate child serving professionals to make them aware of the passage of any applicable legislation during the CJA cycle. (Recommendation 14.C)

15. Investigate the feasibility of integrating data systems that would allow for a comprehensive collaborative database that would track child abuse cases from initial referral through closure of services. In addition, investigate data sets that are already available in order to measure positive outcomes into adulthood: The committee will explore this by requesting a meeting with the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office for a summary of services (RFA). The RFA is a neutral service entity in SC state government, and a central setting to house the data to link persons across multiple service providers. (Recommendation 15.C)

16. Encourage child serving agency examination of racial disparities of children involved with the child welfare system. The Task Force will continue to examine current efforts in the state that are addressing this issue. It will also promote further
identified practices that remove correlations between a child's racial identity and their contact/experience with the child welfare system. This may include addressing biases in making reports of abuse. Resources made available during the CJA Annual Grantees meeting will be shared with other professionals to encourage this effort as well. (Recommendation 16.C)

VI. Proposed Budget

Projected Budget Summary:

Trainings addressing children with disabilities - $3,000
Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

Child death investigations training/outreach - $7,500
Staff collaboration, materials, evaluation, training expenses

Training events on family violence - $2,500
Staff / Organization collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

Training on crossover youth - $3,000
Staff / Organization collaboration, evaluation, training expenses

Child Testimony Training - $9,000
Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses, printing of resources

Statewide protocol training - $2,000
Staff collaboration, curriculum updates, outreach, materials, training expenses

Collaboration with the Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force - $1,000
Staff collaboration, organization support

Collaboration with the SC Human Trafficking Task Force - $1,000
Staff collaboration, resource/tool printing or ordering

Monitor the Safe Babies Court project - $500
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Monitor efforts to obtain protections for forensic interview recordings - $500
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Convene data system advisory group - $1,000
Meeting support costs, staff collaboration and research

Confer with other agencies re: examination of racial disparities - $500
Staff time for research and/or meetings

Support of the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers/ Peer
**review program for forensic interviewers - $35,000**
Office space, telephone, computer, office supplies, use of general office equipment, administrative support, printing, staff time for collaborative events, speaker fees, training costs

**Operation of the Children’s Law Center - $88,630**
Personnel, project supplies, training, information, and assistance related to CJA; training and information for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, supplemental funding for trainings related to CJA topics

**Direct Task Force Support- $55,500**
Meeting supplies, refreshments, printing, staff time for logistical support of the Task Force, support for committee meetings, mileage, other collaborations

**CJA Grantees Meeting- $3,000**
Travel for two/three CJA representatives to attend the federal grantees meeting in D.C.

**USC Facilities & Administrative Cost - $50,311**
Facilities, utilities, administrative overhead; Federal negotiated rate of 26% of modified total direct costs

**Total Tentative Allocation**

$263,941