SC Children's Justice Act Task Force
RECOMMENDATIONS
2021-2024

Following a 2021 assessment of the state's systems responding to abused and neglected children, the CJA Task Force has identified target areas for improvement in three recommendation categories. The Task Force will collaborate with partnering agencies in an effort to implement these recommendations over a three-year period.

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

1.A 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.

2.A 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.

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

4.A 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**.

5.A 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**.

6.A 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.

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

7.B 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.

8.B 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.

9.B 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.

10.B 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.

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

12.B Continue to support the **SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers** including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources.

13.B 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 for providing research and logistical support to the Task Force.

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

14.C 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.**

15.C 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.

16.C Encourage child serving agency examination of **racial disparities** of children involved with the child welfare system.