

**2018
SOUTH CAROLINA
CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE
ANNUAL REPORT**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER**



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Law

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I. CJA Task Force

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 and most recently revised on July 28, 2017. 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. The groups for the 2015-2018 cycle were:

1. Reporting and Responding Team
2. System Interaction Team
3. System Improvement Team
4. Permanency & Solutions Team

Several members volunteered to serve on a temporary CJA Operations Committee, which was facilitated by the CJA Coordinator. The purpose of the committee was to examine the Task Force bylaws and make any amendment recommendations, to examine the three-year assessment processes of the past, and to propose a plan for the 2018 assessment process. The committee recommended some amendments to the bylaws, and they were approved in July 2017. The Task Force is self-perpetuating through an election process held every three years. The bylaws were amended to clarify that 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.

There was discussion by the Operations Committee to consider incorporating some kind of term limits for members, but in the end, implementation options for this were not favorable. Instead, the committee agreed upon some alternate solutions for revitalization including offering an exit option, more purposeful commitment by new and renewing

members, more involvement in member assignments to groups and recommendation work, and term limits for officers. The bylaws were amended to limit the terms of the Task Force Chair and Vice-Chair to one three-year term. It is possible to elect for a second term but not consecutively. This allows fresh leadership for every three-year cycle.

In years past, there was not much discussion surrounding renewal, and members were automatically placed on the ballot and renewed unless there was a resignation. With the Task Force revitalization and recruiting effort, members were specifically asked to carefully consider their membership status and availability before renewing their memberships for another three-year term. This seemed to provide an acceptable exit for many members who were not fully participating and/or had too many schedule conflicts. Members for the 2018-2021 period were elected in October 2017. There were 12 outgoing Task Force members who did not renew their membership and 14 new members joined the Task Force. All members were asked to read, sign, and submit a new Position Description and Commitment form to acknowledge the expectations and make a commitment to them. Dr. Elizabeth Ralston, a long-standing Task Force member as a mental health professional, was elected Task Force Chair, and Candice Lively, a prosecuting attorney, was elected Vice-Chair. The Task Force currently has 29 members, reflecting all required disciplines.

After the election and first of the year, the Task Force started transitioning to the assessment period and onto new groups and recommendations. The Task Force conducted a review and assessment of the state's systems that respond to abused and neglected children on February 23, 2018, leading to the formulation of recommendations for the 2018-2021 CJA cycle. As a result of priority topics identified through information gathered prior to the work day, three corresponding committees for the 2018-2021 period were established. Members were asked to choose which of the three committees they preferred to work in or to indicate if they did not have a preference and were willing to be placed where most needed. Based on their preferences, members were assigned to the following committees:

- A. Assessment and Safety Committee
- B. Collaboration Committee
- C. Courts and Special Populations Committee

Committee assignments were made prior to the work day so that recommendations could be developed by the committee where the work will be executed.

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 liaison between the Task Force groups and 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, and current recommendations are in Attachment 3. Attachment 4 includes the updated Task Force bylaws, and the Position Description and Commitment form can be found in Attachment 5.

II. Annual Performance Report: May 2017 - April 2018

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 covers Task Force activities from May 2017 –April 2018.

Evaluation efforts: With input from the Task Force, the Children's Law Center has been making strides to implement innovative ways to evaluate and measure training objectives. In an effort to enhance and track the effectiveness of trainings provided by and hosted by the Children's Law Center, a Research Scientist joined the staff. 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 of Children's Law Center's training programs will include 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 is providing guidance on how to analyze training evaluations in order to utilize findings which will improve instructional design and delivery. Evaluation summaries are available upon request for all noted training programs. There are also plans to conduct follow-up surveys of training attendees three to six months following trainings to assess on-the-job utilization.

Linkage with CFSR, CIP, and anti-trafficking efforts: As part of the Task Force's assessment process in 2015, South Carolina's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) was a major component of aligning recommendations and statewide efforts. Some crossover areas that the Task Force focused on from the CFSP strategic goals were trauma-informed practice and screenings, as well as support and tracking of kinship caregivers. Many Task Force members are active in various stakeholder collaborations such as the DSS led Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Implementation Team that is addressing the requirements of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, as well as the CAPTA Program Improvement Plan Team that is addressing new requirements related to the needs of infants that are born affected by substance abuse. Members will continue active participation in such processes and be mindful of Annual Progress and Services Reports. Other linkages to anti-trafficking efforts are reported in recommendation B.4. The Task Force works closely with the state's Court Improvement Program (CIP), as well as SC Court

Administration. This creates opportunities for collaboration and information sharing concerning court issues.

A. Activities undertaken to improve the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, in a manner which reduces additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused.

- **A.2. Medicaid eligibility waiver** (Group 2, rank 7)
Recommendation outcome: Parents involved with SCDSS who lose custody of their children will have increased access to and participation in services related to a permanency plan by maintaining their eligibility for that period of time.

The Task Force did not spend a lot of time on this recommendation as it was deemed to be mostly outside the scope of CJA. Members did invite a representative from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) to a group meeting to present information on Medicaid eligibility relating to DSS involved children and parents. Task Force staff followed up with additional questions raised via phone conference with a Deputy Director at SCDHHS and summarized and shared the information received with group members. It was discovered there was a prior waiver in existence that covered 90 days of drug treatment for parents within 6 months of losing eligibility for removal of children but this has not been in effect since 2003. It was unclear if such a program could even be approved under current governing rules. Research for other state waiver examples that may address the issue did not yield any findings. One alternative that was brought up by SCDHHS is the ability to have a parent covered for Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). If it is billed as “family therapy” then Medicaid covers it (a daily 75-minute “encounter”) and a waiver is not needed. This may not be the preferred term but may still be the current coding term that will trigger coverage. This information was passed along to the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers to share with any centers that may be offering and billing for this service.

- **A.3. Training for coroners** (Group 3, rank 1)
Recommendation outcome: Increased compliance of South Carolina coroners with the statutory requirements for reporting child deaths resulting from abuse and neglect.

The Task Force has examined state coroner training requirements and what current training is available to them on investigating child deaths. Data was previously obtained and reviewed regarding the number of SC coroners certified as the preferred American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI), and the majority were not. The Task Force coordinated with the Coroner’s Training Advisory Committee and submitted a survey to all coroners and deputy coroners in the state to assess what barriers are faced in

receiving additional training and ultimately becoming ABMDI certified. The survey response rate was very low but revealed that a more local intensive child death training would be desirable but funding and time away from their county would be barriers. The Task Force identified a model intensive, interactive, week-long training in St. Louis. The updated curriculum and faculty bios were obtained from St. Louis University and reviewed. The Children's Law Center, with input from local coroners, drafted a redacted three-day curriculum that specifically addresses child deaths and covers topics such as introduction to key roles of forensic investigation team members, mock infant death scene, caregiver video reenactment, autopsy findings, and courtroom techniques. The Children's Law Center would like to add this class to be offered yearly to coroners. The first training will be scheduled for September or October of this year.

- **A.4. Timely processing of DSS court cases** (Group 4, rank 1)
Recommendation outcome: Increased timeliness of permanency for children in SCDSS custody by reducing delays in court proceedings.

The Task Force members have been working closely with our state Court Improvement Program to address this recommendation. Ongoing family court data provided by the South Carolina Court Liaison Project, including a "reasons for continuances" report, was reviewed at each meeting. One reason identified was parents not having attorneys or requesting attorneys in an untimely manner. The Task Force wanted to examine the language contained in each circuit's court orders for self-represented defendant parents to assess for continuity. It was discovered that the same format is used statewide so no adjustments were needed. Alternative docket management programs such as the "rocket docket" and "ABC docket," currently being utilized in certain counties, were reviewed to determine if they would be suitable models for recommended use in other areas. The implementation of the programs is still relatively new and will need more time to reveal what the benefits and challenges were and if the pilots are worth expanding.

- **A.8. Training for clergy/faith leaders** (Group 1, Rank 2)
Recommendation Outcome: Increase adherence by clergy/faith leaders to mandated reporting requirements.

Clergy are specifically included in the new outreach plan of the Children's Law Center to be implemented by the Lead Mandated Reporter Trainer. Included in this mandated reporter training is an expanded presentation on the clergy-penitent privilege which provides an in-depth understanding of how the privilege applies to mandated reporting. The lack of information and understanding of the law relating to this privilege often creates confusion for clergy members, which deters the reporting of abuse and neglect. The training provides the proper guidance to assist clergy members in determining when and how to report in accordance with the law to avoid any liability. Outreach will continue to be provided to the different faith denomination organizations in an effort to offer the training to a wide variety of church groups. In addition, an information sheet specific to clergy was created and is now available (see Attachment 6).

- **A.9. Drug Endangered Children (DEC)** (Group 3, rank 3)
Recommended outcome: Increase knowledge regarding SC Drug Endangered Children (DEC) guidelines.

The Children's Law Center continues to have a law enforcement trainer travelling the state to administer DEC trainings for law enforcement agencies as well as child welfare investigators. Each three-hour training provides an introduction to the South Carolina Drug Endangered Children's guidelines. These guidelines offer the best practice multi-disciplinary response to children who are found to live in or be exposed to environments where drugs are used, possessed, trafficked, diverted, and/or manufactured illegally. During this reporting period, there were 344 investigators trained in their respective departments.

- **A.10. Child death investigations** (Group 3, rank 1)
Recommendation outcome: Improve the coordinated and multidisciplinary approach to child deaths.

This recommendation is being addressed in conjunction with Recommendation A.3. (Training for Coroners). In addition, the Children's Law Center provides a Child Death/Homicide Investigation training course for law enforcement officers who investigate these cases. This training includes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome versus Suffocation, Abusive Head Trauma, Neglect/Failure to Thrive, Battered Child Syndrome, and other types of child deaths. This course is designed to help participants identify the complexity of child death investigations to include crime scene documentation and corroboration of statements, the importance of timelines, comparison of caretaker's statements to the medical and forensic evidence, interview techniques, checklist for investigators, and the importance of court preparation. Additional trainings were added this year on child death for case workers and nursing students. A total of 492 trainees were in attendance for these sessions during this reporting period.

- **A.11. MDT training** (Group 1, rank 3)
Recommendation outcome: Increase the coordination and collaboration between multidisciplinary teams in the comprehensive investigation of child abuse cases.

In 2016 an MDT training survey assessment was sent out to all children's advocacy centers to share with their MDT partners. The survey was administered via Survey Monkey and yielded very useful responses regarding their training needs. Participants were asked to rate a list of possible advanced training topics. Sexual Behavior Problems was the most requested training which was administered last reporting cycle. The second most requested training topic from the assessment survey was the Impact of Domestic Violence on Children so that was this year's training focus. *Multi-disciplinary Training: Children and Domestic Violence* was held at the National Advocacy Center in Columbia on June 14, 2017 for multi-disciplinary child abuse investigative teams including members from child protection, law enforcement, solicitors offices, and CACs. Individuals were required to be part of a functioning MDT in order to register and 45 professionals attended. The training

featured consultant and former Tennessee Assistant District Attorney General, Brian Holmgren from the Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center. Two local professionals, an assistant solicitor and an executive director of a CAC, also presented.

The goal of this training was to promote more effective investigations of child maltreatment, particularly when interconnected with domestic violence. Attendees learned the special dynamics surrounding children exposed to family violence and the importance of a coordinated response from all team members. The current status of SC laws dealing with children's exposure to domestic violence was examined along with strategies to upgrade charges when children are present or able to perceive the abuse. This training examined the nexus between domestic violence and child abuse and proposed that children's exposure to domestic violence is a distinct form of child maltreatment. Information on the cross-prevalence of the different forms of family violence (DV, child physical and sexual abuse) was provided. The impact of domestic violence on child victims was highlighted, including psychological trauma, health consequences, and the prevalence of concurrent physical and sexual abuse and neglect by the child's caretakers. Strategies for treating the child as a second victim in domestic violence cases in support of legal intervention was addressed.

Having an advanced topic for the past two years of MDT training, the Task Force recommended producing a recorded MDT basic orientation training that could be available throughout the state for new team members as they join a multi-disciplinary child abuse investigation team (MDT). In order to work together most effectively, one must have a basic understanding of the coordinating partners' responsibilities and how they work together in the best interest of a child. This training introduces the importance of the MDT and explains the basic roles of the different partners. Speakers from the different disciplines describe their basic role in the system in the context of how they utilize their MDT to more effectively do their job, and in return, how their role can assist other members more effectively do their part. Presenters representing CACs, DSS, law enforcement, prosecutors, and medical providers were given speaking points to create a power point to coincide with a presentation of up to 30 minutes each. Presentation segments were recorded during the month of February at the USC School of Law and combined by the media department for the finished product. The recorded basic training was added to the online trainings available for law enforcement at the Criminal Justice Academy. It will also be available for MDT members to view via a training portal link on the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers website. An overview of this basic orientation training can be found in Attachment 7. MDT coordinators will be apprised of the orientation release and advertised to DSS staff, law enforcement, solicitors, medical providers, CAC staff, and other professionals tasked with participating on an MDT for the purpose of staffing cases of child abuse.

- **A.12. Abusive head trauma** (Group 2, rank 2)
Recommendation outcome: Increase the recognition of cases involving abusive head trauma by law enforcement, SCDSS, coroners and solicitors.

This recommendation is being addressed in conjunction with Recommendation A.10 (Child death investigations). The Child Death/Homicide Investigation training mentioned in that section specifically addresses Abusive Head Trauma. Additionally, the Task Force, in conjunction with the Children’s Law Center, hosted a national consultant/expert for a training that was offered to law enforcement and prosecutors in June of 2017 with 46 attendees. Brian Holmgren, consultant from the Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center, presented the full-day training titled “Critical Issues in the Investigation and Prosecution of Child Homicide and Serious Physical Abuse Cases.” The training focused on the requirements for successful investigation and prosecution of child homicide and serious physical abuse cases, specifically those resulting from abusive head trauma including shaken baby syndrome, blunt force abdominal trauma, burns, and neglect. The presentation highlighted the types of defenses frequently encountered in these cases and how use of medical research findings and key investigative strategies can overcome them. Emphasis was placed on crime scene and background investigation techniques to discover physical evidence and evidence of prior offenses. The training also addressed the use of video demonstrations by suspects of the mechanism producing the injuries and the forces involved, as well as crime scene reconstruction as a foundation for expert medical opinion testimony.

- **A.13. Mandated reporter training** (Group 1, rank 1)
Recommendation outcome: Increase compliance with the mandated reporter requirements in South Carolina including newest reporters added to the mandated reporter legislation.

A Lead Mandated Reporter Trainer was hired at the Children’s Law Center in June 2017 and is expanding upon the current outreach plan. Phase one of the outreach plan has been implemented by attending conferences of mandated reporter disciplines with training outreach materials and solicitations. The second phase will include distributing a mandated reporter bulletin, drafted in conjunction with Task Force members (see Attachment 8), to associations of all disciplinary groups of mandated reporters. Tailored information sheets have been created and will be attached specifically for certain reporters such as clergy, computer technicians, and film processors. In addition, an updated Mandated Reporter Guide is distributed at trainings and now available on the Children’s Law Center’s website: <http://childlaw.sc.edu/frmPublications/MandatedReporterGuide.pdf>. The series of abuse reporting images previously released by the Task Force have been added to training curriculums and posters printed for participants.

Currently, the Children’s Law Center, with guidance from Task Force members, is providing extensive training to professionals statutorily required to report child abuse or neglect. Training topics include indicators of maltreatment, legal requirements related to reporting, the handling of reports, interface with SCDSS intake, documentation, brief summaries of the child protection and criminal justice systems, and reasons professionals may fail to report. Specialized sessions are offered to law enforcement officers, clergy, teachers, and other specific disciplines. Mandated reporter trainings are offered as an in-service training to school districts, medical facilities, and other groups of mandated reporters. Training is also offered to USC students who work with children in internships or who are in a field of

study rendering them likely to become mandated reporters. During this reporting period, approximately 2,325 participants were trained. Other trainees on the extensive list include in-home therapists, church members and volunteers, EMS and fire personnel, Department of Juvenile Justice staff, Head Start workers, magistrate and municipal judges, school administrators, social workers, guidance counselors, nurses, and volunteer guardians ad litem. In an effort to reach even more mandated reporters, the Children's Law Center's Mandated Reporting Training Team is developing a training of the trainer for the mandated reporter training. This training program would equip trainees with the knowledge and skills to conduct in-house mandated reporter training for their agencies. The first pilot will be conducted in the summer of 2018.

- **A.14. Children and caregivers with disabilities** (Group 3, rank 4)
Recommendation outcome: Improve the response to children with disabilities and caregivers with disabilities. Increase the availability and provision of services that caregivers with disabilities need to support their ability to care for their children safely.

The Task Force examined intake documents from various entities to see if questions were asked about whether or not a disability was present so that it could be documented. The Department of Social Services' intake form was found to have a clearly designated area prompting documentation of a disability for the child or parent. Law enforcement incident reports were found to be less clear. However, every jurisdiction's report template is slightly different, with some more definitive than others.

The Task Force has also been following a bill (S. 220) which provides that hearing impaired children who are interviewed during the course of a child abuse allegation investigation, shall be interviewed using a sign language interpreter not related to the child. If this bill does not pass this year, the Task Force will continue to seek input from Children's Advocacy Centers and forensic interviewers to bring any guidance to this issue.

- **A.15. Law enforcement receipt of child abuse reports** (Group 1, rank 7)
Recommendation outcome: Improve the law enforcement response of initial reports of child abuse and reduce the responsibility of the caller/reporter by routing them to the appropriate agency.

South Carolina currently does not have a statewide toll-free number for reporting suspected child abuse. Reporters are directed to call their local law enforcement agency where the abuse occurred or regional Department of Social Services intake hubs. Therefore, callers often need to be redirected to another jurisdiction or agency to make the report. The Task Force group that was addressing this topic conferred with the SC Sheriff's Association and a representative from the South Carolina Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association in an effort to identify any best practice for handling reports that need to be re-routed to another jurisdiction or agency. Unfortunately, it was discovered that this practice varies widely across the state and there is no statewide protocol or instruction. One recent improvement was made where law enforcement

coordinated with the Department of Social Services to utilize an online sheriff's directory/database for re-routing calls. All conversations about how to make reporting abuse easier on the caller point to the overwhelming need for a statewide hotline. The Department of Social Services has initiated planning for the implementation of an all-hours central number to be introduced by the end of 2018. There are also several pieces of introduced legislation that would mandate the operation and posting of this number. The Task Force continues to monitor this progress and opportunities for support.

B. Support of experimental, model, or demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and child neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused

- **B.1. Child forensic interviews** (Group 2, rank 4)
Increase the evidentiary use of forensic interviews in court proceedings.

The SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers continues to update "Expert Witnesses in Child Abuse Dynamics" list so that it is accurate and complete. The list is distributed to CACs, their MDT partners, judges, and at multiple trainings throughout the year. The Network annually seeks input and updates the standardized Forensic Interview Report Form that was officially released for use to all 17 South Carolina children's advocacy centers in 2016. The form helps to streamline the process of documenting forensic interviews and helps to facilitate a legally defensible report that encourages readers to not rely solely on the report but to also view the video of the interview.

- **B.3. Court Coordination Protocol** (Group 4, rank 5)
Recommendation outcome: Successful implementation of the Court Coordination Protocol in two or more jurisdictions.

In 2009, SC Chief Justice Toal approved the use of a court coordination protocol in those child abuse and neglect cases where there are corresponding actions in family court and general sessions court so that they may be processed in a coordinated manner. This model administrative order/protocol was utilized in some counties when it was first available but the frequency and successfulness of its usage is unclear. An informal inquiry was made to county DSS offices about their use of the protocol. The results indicated that very few counties are actively or successfully using the protocol. An appropriate trainer on the topic from the Department of Social Services was referred to the Prosecution Commission as a recommended presenter for prosecutors at some scheduled trainings.

- **B.4. Human trafficking of minors** (Group 1, rank 5 and Group 3, rank 6)
Recommendation outcome: Increase the identification of human trafficking of minors, also referred to as commercial sexual exploitation of children, to allow for increased prosecutions and services to victims.

In an effort to collect much needed data on the presence and prevalence of human trafficking of children in SC, the Children’s Law Center partnered with the SC Attorney General’s Office to administer a child sex trafficking case review/data project. The project entailed obtaining runaway and incorrigible incident reports from a county’s law enforcement agency over a one-year period and identifying risk factors that suggest the presence of trafficking activity. A risk factor checklist and data program were created with assistance from a Research Scientist on staff at the Children’s Law Center. Training was provided to several staffers to be “coders” tasked with extracting the information from the reports. A total of 561 reports were coded and data was summarized in a report that was presented to the participating law enforcement agency. There were 17 reports that were flagged as high risk for trafficking activity to have occurred. Results of the case review/data project urged further investigation of the high-risk reports of child sex trafficking and encouraged the use of findings in training and practice for law enforcement. Training scenarios were created from these reports and given to the Human Trafficking trainers for integration into their training materials for law enforcement and child welfare case workers. Data from additional counties, for the same year, are being collected. Data from additional years may be collected in the future. Law enforcement agencies from two other counties have submitted runaway reports for the same time period. Those reports are also being coded and a summary of findings is pending.

- **B.5. Mentorship program for forensic interviewers** (Group 2, rank 5)
Recommendation outcome: Improve adherence to the Child First SC forensic interviewing protocol within the peer review system and increase opportunities for support and development for forensic interviewers through a statewide mentorship program.

The SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers continues to administer peer review sessions in an effort to improve adherence to the interviewing protocol. These reviews allow the forensic interviewers the benefit of both verbal and written feedback from their peers. The program was expanded in 2017 to offer research article review and targeted training for forensic interviewers during peer review sessions. Written feedback is provided through the use of a Forensic Interview Peer Review Feedback Form completed by attendees at the end of each regional and statewide session.

- **B.6. SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC)**
Recommendation outcome: Support the children’s advocacy centers in South Carolina by providing organizational capacity and infrastructural resources to SCNCAC.

The Task Force promotes growth of children's advocacy centers in South Carolina by supporting the South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, 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, an active participant on 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 widely believed 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's 17 CACs served over 8,551 children in calendar year 2017 which is an approximate 6% increase over 2016. Currently, there are 15 CACs which are fully accredited through the National Children's Alliance. In addition, there is one associate/developing and one affiliate CAC in South Carolina. In August of 2017, a new full time Executive Director was hired. In December 2017, a new full time Program Director for SCNCAC was also hired to coordinate the Forensic Interview Peer Review and Victim Advocate training programs.

In November of 2017, SCNCAC co-sponsored a statewide training on "the Evolution of the Role of the Victim Advocate in the CAC/MDT model with the Southern Regional Children's Advocacy Center." The training focused on the duties of Victim Advocates in the CAC/MDT model and best practices for Victim Advocates in the field. SCNCAC will be expanding the Victim Advocate training program in 2018 to include multiple regional sessions and one statewide session in Columbia.

The South Carolina Attorney General, Silent Tears, and Children's Trust of South Carolina partnered with the Network to sponsor the 7th Annual Children's Advocacy Center Day held on April 10, 2018 at the South Carolina State House. This annual event takes place in April to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month. A press conference was held at the State House with the Attorney General, and representatives from children's advocacy centers, partner agencies, key members from the General Assembly, and the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children were present.

In October of 2017, SCNCAC issued its first Statewide Outcomes Measurement System (OMS) Report for CACs in South Carolina. This report was an analysis of the 2016 OMS data collected by all CACs in South Carolina. South Carolina CACs participate in the OMS to help them to evaluate their programs, to increase the quality of services provided to children and families, and to improve the collaborative efforts of multidisciplinary team (MDT) members. Through OMS, CACs ask caregivers of children served by CACs and their MDT members standard survey questions to measure how well they are providing three things to children and families in South Carolina:

- Healing - Restoring the lives of children and families after abuse;
- Justice - Striving toward just outcomes for victims of abuse and protecting all kids from abusers; and
- Trust - Ensuring children, families, and MDT members can trust their center and the CAC model.

SCNCAC also used the OMS reports to analyze training needs for CAC staff and MDT members and improve the services provided to CACs. In April of 2018, SCNCAC released the 2017 OMS report for all data collected in 2017. A prior analysis of the OMS data from 2016 and 2017 gave SCNCAC valuable information which has already resulted in improvements to the peer review and victim advocate training programs.

Based in part on OMS data and CAC member surveys, the following new training programs were developed in late 2017 and early 2018 for CAC/MDT members across South Carolina:

- “Building Resiliency in CACs & MDTs” - The roll out of the new NCA accreditation standards during 2016 put a focus on providing resiliency training for CAC staff. In order to assist CACs with this new standard and to recognize that building resiliency is important for CAC staff and MDT members, SCNCAC has written a private foundation grant and worked with the Office for Victims of Crime to develop this training for use in South Carolina. The purpose of this training is to strengthen the capacity of South Carolina’s CACs by educating CAC staff and MDT members about the impact of working in this field and by promoting resilience-building on a team level. This training will be offered by SCNCAC staff at individual CACs across the state. In April 2018, SCNCAC conducted two pilot trainings and the feedback has been very positive.
- “Board Member Boot Camp Training” - With the growth of the CAC movement in South Carolina over the past few years, many CACs have focused additional attention on giving new board members the tools to be successful partners in their non-profit growth. In late 2017, SCNCAC received a number of requests to assist member CACs with training for new and existing board members. The new Board Boot Camp Training, which was developed and then finalized in December of 2017, will be provided by SCNCAC staff at individual CACs who request it. The purpose of the training is to strengthen the capacity of South Carolina’s CACs by promoting excellence in nonprofit board governance.
- **B.7. SC Children’s Law Center**
Recommendation outcome: Successful delivery of coordinated and effective training and information for professionals involved in the response to child abuse allegations, investigations and prosecutions.

Task Force Recommendation B.7 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.

Annual conference: The 19th annual Children's Law Conference was held on November 17, 2016. Approximately 200 professionals attended the conference in Columbia, SC. Victor Vieth, presented the morning keynote address on *Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Boys*. A legislative update and a personal account presentation on experiences in the South Carolina foster care system were other highlights of the day. Participants selected from a variety of workshop topics including police and youth interactions, critical race theory, Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, suicide, immigration issues in child welfare, LGBT youth, technology and social media, and special education/educational rights.

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 website address is <http://childlaw.sc.edu>. The Children's Law Center is in the process of updating and converting its website to the University's new content management system. The new site is expected to be live by July 2018.

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 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. There were four ChildFirst trainings held during this reporting period, in May, July, and October of 2017 and January of 2018, with 65 total students trained.

Emergency Protective Custody Training for First Responders: This course is presented by the Law Enforcement Trainer for law enforcement and social services investigators. EPC for First Responders provides students with an overview of the law in South Carolina allowing an EPC; the legal standard for seeking EPC based on imminent danger; best practices in coordination between law enforcement and DSS once an EPC is initiated, and the system in place to provide for the child once he or she has been removed from the home. During this reporting period, 352 investigators and other responders were trained in EPC training sessions.

Human Trafficking Training: This is another course presented by the Law Enforcement Trainer that is offered to law enforcement investigators. The training assists law enforcement officers with identifying and responding to children who are potential victims of human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking. The focus is on children at risk, children who have run away, the warning signs of an exploited child, medical treatment and follow up, gathering evidence and corroboration for the case, working with these children as victims, and dealing with the non-compliant victim. There were 290 investigators trained in these sessions held during this reporting period. The Child Welfare Team at the Children's Law Center has an additional Human Trafficking Trainer who trains child welfare workers.

C. Reform state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, or procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children, which may include those children involved in reports of child abuse or neglect with a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, from child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.

- **C.3. Pregnant women/newborns and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)**
(Group 1, rank 8)
Recommendation outcome: Increase identification of drug endangered babies.

South Carolina's Department of Social Services continues to work on a Program Improvement Plan to comply with CAPTA eligibility requirements related to the state's response to the needs of infants born with and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Legislation was introduced to propose amendments to the state's mandated reporting statute regarding drug exposed infants. The bill would require reporting when an infant or fetus is exposed to alcohol or controlled substances. The Task Force planned to coordinate with the Children's Law Center to provide education about the new law if it passes and coordinate materials outlining mandated reporter duties to medical professionals.

- **C.5. Sexting legislation** (Group 4, Rank 3)
Recommendation outcome: Improve implementation of sexting laws to more appropriately address juvenile use of social media.

The Task Force had been monitoring a sexting bill that was introduced in January of 2015. Senate Bill 190 created the offense of sexting for children under the age of 18 and provided a penalty. It also prohibited a child convicted of this offense to be placed on the sex offender registry and vested jurisdiction over the crime exclusively in municipal and magistrate courts. The bill did not progress and there was no subsequent sexting bill introduced in the 2017-2018 session.

The Children’s Law Center coordinated with the SC Attorney General’s Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force to present some joint trainings on sexting topics. The training “Social Media, Sexting, and Juvenile Law” was designed to address how children become victims through use of social media, internet, and phones (sexting/texting). The trainings address improving the investigative and judicial handling of related cases particularly by law enforcement, school officials, and prosecutors. It also teaches the attendees how children unknowingly violate criminal laws when they send nude or sexually explicit photos by any means of electronic communication. The law in S.C. and federal law still consider any sexually explicit photo or depiction of sexual activity of a person under 18 to be child pornography. Attendees learn the laws that apply to this activity and how children are technically subjecting themselves to felony charges and lifetime sex offender registry. Presenters were resource attorneys from the USC Children's Law Center and an education outreach coordinator, investigator, and prosecutor from the Attorney General's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. In attendance were educators, counselors, solicitors, law enforcement investigators, school resource officers, juvenile justice personnel, and social services. The full-day training was presented in Georgetown in October 2017 with 44 attendees. A half-day version of the training was presented in Greenwood, at the request of the Solicitor’s Office, in February 2018 with 50 attendees.

In addition, there was continued interest from school personnel in having trainings on this subject. In November of 2017, an abbreviated version of the training was presented at the annual South Carolina Social Workers Conference for about 80 attendees.

- **C.6. South Carolina child abuse legislation**

Recommendation outcome: CJA Task Force will monitor/ support legislation that will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children, and child service professionals will be made aware of the passage of any applicable legislation during the CJA cycle.

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 as appropriate.

Bills that passed:

H 3701 - Child Victims of Human Trafficking

Changes the definition of “child abuse and neglect” to include trafficking of children, even where the parent or caregiver is not the trafficker. Signed into law April 5, 2018.

S 805 - Office of Child's Advocate

Creates the independent Office of Child’s Advocate (OCA) to provide oversight for children’s services across the entire sector of child-serving agencies. Signed into law May 3, 2018.

S 170 - Implementation of Local Child Fatality Review Teams

Provides that the coroner of each county shall schedule a local child fatality review team to perform a review of any case where a child under the age of eighteen dies in the county they serve.

H 4705 - Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

Added “religious counselors” as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. It also clarifies that internal reporting to a supervisor does not meet the individual mandate of reporting to law enforcement or social services.

Bills that did not pass and will have to be reintroduced:

S 220 - Child Abuse Investigation or Forensic Interviews of Children with Hearing Impairments

Would require the use of a sign language interpreter not related to the child for interviews during the course of a child abuse investigation.

H 3125 - Safety Plans/Safe Children Act

Allows temporary placement of a child with a relative or alternative caregiver pursuant to a safety plan but provides requirements and limitations for the duration of those plans.

H 4854 / S 1033 - Creating Child Torture Law

Defines child torture, adds an aggravating circumstance where child torture has occurred, adds a termination ground for child torture, creates the felony of child torture, and amends the homicide by child abuse statute to reflect homicide by child torture.

S 448—Fatality and Near Fatality Reporting

Allows DSS to release information about unfounded allegations of abuse or neglect where surrounding circumstances resulted in a child fatality or near fatality in certain cases; prescribes what information may be released.

S 447 / H 3823 —Drug-Exposed Infants

Mandates that health professionals report when a child, aged birth to one year, is medically affected by exposure to a controlled or illegal substance.

H 3116—Safe Haven

Expands the current safe haven law to define “infant” as a person not more than one year old.

S. 77 - Hearsay Exception for CAC Staff

Would amend Section 9-1-180(G), relating to the admissibility of out-of-court statements made by children, to add an exception for statements made to employees or agents of children’s advocacy centers.

H 3920 - Signs in Schools for Reporting Child Abuse and DSS Toll-free Number

Would require all public schools to post signs that provide reporting information for incidents of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation and would also require DSS to maintain a statewide toll-free number for the referral of incidents of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation

- **C.7. Child abuse reports from the school system** (Group 1, rank 6)
Recommendation outcome: Increase the number of reports of child abuse and neglect to the mandated investigative agency when those reports are received from within the school system.

In coordination with the Task Force and law enforcement trainers, the Children's Law Center implemented a two-day seminar for school resource officers that was offered twice over the summer of 2017. The seminars were very well received and attended by a total of 80 officers. Topics included: recognizing and documenting child sexual abuse and child physical abuse; being a trauma-informed SRO; EPC and minimal facts interviews; social media; human trafficking; responding to runaway and incorrigible youth; dynamics of suicide; recognizing self-harm/injury; and reporting child abuse. Handmade children's thank you cards were solicited and distributed to all officers who attended the training. Another seminar is scheduled for the summer of 2018.

The Task Force plans to continue to focus on bringing school personnel to the table and facilitating, wherever possible, opportunities for collaboration between SROs, child welfare workers, and school personnel.