

**South Carolina
Children’s Justice Act Task Force
Member Bios 2021-2023**

Trista Baird

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lieutenant

South Carolina Law Enforcement Division
Special Victims Unit – Department of Child Fatalities

Trista Baird has been with the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) since 2013. She is assigned to the Special Victims Unit – Department of Child Fatalities and is the Lieutenant over the Low Country and Pee Dee regions. Her unit investigates all child deaths in South Carolina (under the age of 18), excluding traffic accidents and disease related deaths. Prior to joining SLED, Lt. Baird worked for Rock Hill Police Department for six years where she served on patrol, the Street Crimes Unit, the Professional Standards Unit, and the Criminal Investigations Division where she investigated child and vulnerable adult abuse. Lt. Baird holds a bachelor’s degree from Winthrop University in Psychology and Sociology with a concentration in Criminology and a master’s degree from the University of Cincinnati in Criminal Justice. She is also an adjunct instructor at Winthrop University and York Technical College where she teaches sociology and criminal justice courses. Lt. Baird has previously served as a foster parent for children in South Carolina.

Deborah C. Boone

EXPERIENCED IN WORKING WITH HOMELESS CHILDREN

McKinney-Vento Coordinator

Richland County School District One

Deborah Boone has served as the McKinney-Vento Coordinator in Richland County School District One for over 20 years. The Parents and Students Succeed (PASS) Project is Richland One’s homeless initiative. PASS is a comprehensive program that utilizes district and community resources to help students succeed. Under her capable leadership, the needs of students and families experiencing homelessness are being met on a daily basis. The PASS Project is considered a “model” program in the state. Ms. Boone collaborated with the University of South Carolina and developed a graduate level course entitled, “*Promoting School Success in Homeless and Other High-Risk Students: Concepts and Strategies.*” District educators are able to take this graduate class for free and to date, over 800 educators have completed this course. Ms. Boone has served on numerous state, community, and district-wide committees/advisory boards. Ms. Boone recently completed a six year stint (3 – 2 year terms) on the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) Board of Directors. Deborah is the past co-chair of the Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH), which is one of four Continuum of Cares (CoC) in the state. She also serves on the Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Coordinating Council as well as the Advisory Board for the University of South Carolina Trio Programs. In addition, Ms. Boone serves on the Board of Directors for two area homeless shelters.

Megan Branham, LMSW
Vice President Policy & Advocacy Programs
North Public Relations

AT-LARGE MEMBER

Megan has 15 years of experience in nonprofit program and policy implementation with South Carolina child and family serving organizations. Leading North's Columbia, South Carolina office, Megan works closely with North clients to manage strategic communications efforts, advance advocacy strategies, engage in public speaking opportunities, develop comprehensive digital marketing and social media branding, and assist with event planning. Prior to this position, Megan has served as the Director of Policy and Research at the Palmetto Association of Children and Families as well as the Director of Policy at the Children's Trust of South Carolina. Megan has a Masters in Social Work from the University of South Carolina and is a Licensed Master Social Worker. She completed The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Leadership Institute for State-based Advocates with thirteen policy colleagues from across the country.

Kelley Perkins Brown
Deputy Public Defender
Aiken County, 2nd Judicial Circuit – Juvenile Division

ADULT WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN CHILD WELFARE

Kelley Perkins Brown is the Deputy Public Defender for the Second Judicial Circuit in Aiken, South Carolina, where she represents juvenile defendants for the counties of Aiken, Bamberg, and Barnwell. Kelley grew up at the Thornwell Children's Home in Clinton, South Carolina, then went on to receive her B.A. from Presbyterian College in 1994. After receiving her J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1997, Kelley joined the Aiken County Public Defender's Office in April of 1998 and represented both adult and juvenile defendants until the formation of the Second Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office in 2008 when she chose to focus exclusively on juvenile defense for the Circuit. Kelley serves on the SC Bar Children's Law Committee and is currently a member of the board of the South Carolina Public Defender's Association. Kelley lives in the country outside of Aiken along with her husband, Trey Brown. She is very active in the First Presbyterian Church of Aiken as well as with the PTO of Mead Hall Episcopal School.

Jennifer R. Buster, M.Ed.
BabyNet Director
SC Department of Health and Human Services

EXPERIENCED IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Jennifer Buster is the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), Part C Director at The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The BabyNet program is South Carolina's interagency early intervention system for children birth to three with developmental delays or conditions associated with developmental delays. Prior to that she was the Director of Children's Services at the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs for more than fifteen years and was the agency representative on The State Child Fatality Advisory Committee. She has over 26 years of experience in the developmental disabilities field at both the local and state level and has conducted numerous trainings statewide. She earned her bachelor's and her M.Ed. from the University of South Carolina. She is the mother of two adult sons, one of which has special healthcare needs.

Erik Drylie*Assistant Solicitor*

Eleventh Circuit Solicitor's Office

Saluda, Edgefield, and McCormick Counties

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Erik Drylie graduated from the University of Miami School of Law in 2011. He began his legal career working as a clerk for the Capital Trials Division of the South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense. He was an assistant public defender from 2012 to 2018 in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. At the public defender's office he handled magistrate, juvenile, and general sessions cases. From 2018 to 2020 he worked as the juvenile justice resource attorney at the Children's Law Center. At the Children's Law Center he conducted trainings for the Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Social Services, Guardian Ad Litem, and other professionals involved in the juvenile justice system. He also worked on a grant aiming to improve outcomes for children involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems in South Carolina. In May of 2020, he began work as an assistant solicitor for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. He primarily handles the majority of violent and serious cases, including those with child victims, in Saluda, Edgefield, and McCormick. Additionally, he and his wife Melinda have been foster parents since 2017. They have had a total of 13 children in their home and currently foster three elementary school aged siblings.

Cheryl Fitts*Education Associate*

SC Department of Education, Office of Special Education Services

EXPERIENCED IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Cheryl Fitts, Education Associate at the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Office of Special Education Services (OSES) has over 25 years of experience within the field of special education. She currently serves on the OSES Social Emotional Learning team fostering the development of policies and practices that meet the social emotional developmental needs of students with disabilities, particularly those experiencing or that have experienced traumatic events. Prior to this, she served as the OSES Ombudsman, focusing on informal dispute resolution. While in this capacity she worked with local and state agencies, government officials and various community organizations to address student needs. She coordinated a state-wide effort to assist families and schools reach individual student programming consensus and move toward regaining effective working relationships. Ms. Fitts also sat as the SCDE liaison for the state Advisory Council on the Education of Students with Disabilities. Her career within the local public education sector centered on serving as a special education teacher primarily for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. She served on the district team establishing an alternative education setting for students with disabilities and implemented a pilot program enabling students who struggle with acquiring a high school diploma due to disability related behaviors, to do so. Having obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina and master's degree from Columbia International University, Ms. Fitts is actively pursuing a doctorate in special education from the University of South Carolina. As an educator, she aims to promote success for every student understanding that this requires open communication and a collaborative effort among all stakeholders.

Lisa B. Franklin
Program Administrator
SC Foster Parent Association

PARENT GROUP REPRESENTATIVE

Lisa Franklin serves as the Program Administrator for the South Carolina Foster Parent Association where she manages programs such as Teen Recognition, Striving for Excellence, Independent Living/College Showers, Scholarship Program, On the Road Again, and Pack-a-SACK (Sponsor a College Kid). These programs have helped hundreds of foster youth transition into successful adulthood. Lisa personally sees to it that each foster youth is provided with items in their “shower” that are suited to the youth’s personal taste and preference. Lisa also currently serves as President of her local Foster Parent Association in Kershaw County and works with the United Way and others to secure funding to assist the foster parents in her local chapter. Lisa and her husband have two sons and a daughter as well as a number of foster children who have come through the Franklin home over the last seven years. She has been a mentor and counselor to hundreds of foster youth she has served over the years. It is only natural and fitting that Lisa is a foster parent and also works for the State Foster Parent Association as she is the daughter of Carl and Mary Brown, who founded the South Carolina Foster Parent Association in 1975 and are still active foster parents today. Lisa’s parents began fostering when she was a young child and she has witnessed over 200 children come into the Brown home, six of whom became permanent members of the Brown family.

The Honorable Rosalyn Frierson-Smith
Family Court Judge

CIVIL COURT JUDGE

Judge Rosalyn W. Frierson-Smith has served as a Family Court Judge since July 2017. She is a graduate of the University of South Carolina, School of Law. Prior to her election on the bench, she served as State Court Administrator and Director of South Carolina Court Administration. She previously served as a S.C. Supreme Court Staff Attorney, Law Clerk to former Chief Justice Ernest A. Finney, Jr. and Research/Budget Analyst for the Ways and Means Committee of the S.C. House of Representatives. She also served as a substitute Municipal Court Judge for the City of Columbia.

She is a member of the S.C. Bar Association, American Bar Association, Richland County Bar Association, S.C. Black Lawyers Association and S. C. Women Lawyers Association, having served as President of SCWLA in 2007. She formerly served on the House of Delegates for both the S.C. Bar Association and American Bar Association. She served as President of the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and Vice-Chair of the National Center for State Courts in 2011. Judge Frierson Smith currently is a member of the Commission on Judicial Conduct, Family Court Bench Bar Committee, S.C. Children’s Justice Act Task Force, Supreme Court Committee on Private Guardian ad Litem Issues and Pro Bono Board of the South Carolina Bar. Judge Frierson-Smith completed the three year Executive Session for State Court Leaders in the 21st Century at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She is a graduate of the Furman Diversity Leadership Institute and the S.C. Executive Institute. Judge Frierson-Smith received the Richland County Bar Association Civic Star Award in 2002. In 2014 she was inducted into the National Center for State Courts Warren E. Burger Society and in 2015 was selected as a South Carolina Lawyers Weekly Leadership in Law Honoree. She was selected as a recipient of the 2016 Gold Compleat Lawyer Award given by the USC School of Law Alumni Council. She was the 2017 COSCA Kenneth R. Palmer Distinguished Service Award recipient.

Carissa Gainey
Director, Office of Safety Management
SC Department of Social Services

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE AGENCY

Carissa Gainey began serving as the Director of Safety Management at DSS in February of 2020. Carissa has a Bachelor's in Psychology from the College of Charleston and will graduate in May 2020 with a Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of South Carolina. Carissa brings a background in working with DSS (investigations, intake, performance coach, and interim director for Calhoun County) as well as working with minor survivors of sex trafficking. Carissa has also interned at DJJ's Coastal Evaluation Center and the University of South Carolina Children's Law Center. She and her husband, Wes, have had the wonderful experience of fostering seven children. Carissa has a vision to establish and maintain an organizational culture where we constantly ask what we can do better by striving for excellence, and where accountability leads to safe children with safe families.

Vicky Gaskins
Lieutenant
Aiken County Sheriff's Office, Juvenile Division

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mrs. Gaskins is a Lieutenant with the Aiken County Sheriff's Office. As the Juvenile Division Lieutenant, she is responsible for supervising all investigations of child abuse or neglect, all child fatalities, and all juvenile offender crimes. Previously Mrs. Gaskins served as an intern at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigations, Patrol Deputy, School Resource Officer, Investigator (Juvenile Division), and Senior Investigator (Juvenile Division). She received her B.S. degree in Criminal Justice from the University of South Carolina.

Ellen C. Hamilton
Executive Director
Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Assault

AT-LARGE MEMBER

Ms. Hamilton is the Executive Director of the Pee Dee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Assault, a community based organization founded in 1986 whose focus is the prevention and victim services related to sexual assault, family violence, and child abuse. The Coalition operates the Elizabeth Pettigrew Durant Children's Center established in 1994 located in both the 12th and 4th Judicial Circuits. The Coalition and the Durant Center have been the recipient of both national and state recognition and provide services to a seven county area of the Pee Dee. Ms. Hamilton has worked 36 years in victim advocacy at the local, state, and national level and has a B.A. in Psychology and a Master's in Public Administration.

Portia Hawkins
Program Unit Manager
South Carolina Department of Social Services

DSS REPRESENTATIVE

Portia Taylor Hawkins is currently employed as a Program Unit Manager in the Safety Management Division of the South Carolina Department of Social Services. She has worked in the field of social work in South Carolina for over 20 years. Prior to going into human services she worked as a Personnel

Specialist and Account Executive for a Temporary Staffing and Head Hunting firm. Her previous experience includes providing technical assistance to county Department of Social Services workers for the Title IV-E Program. The Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program reimburses states for expenditures in three categories: (1) adoption assistance payments to eligible families; (2) adoption placement services and administrative costs related to adoptions from foster care; and (3) expenses related to training for staff and adoptive parents. Eligibility determinations for Title IV-E determines a State Agency's "penetration" rate, e.g. the amount the Federal Government will reimburse a State for adoptions and special needs costs. Portia's duties in this position included approving final eligibility for children who were placed in the care, custody and control of the Department of Social Services; and ensuring county workers applied correct policy to each case. She has also held positions in Foster Care in Group Home and Child Placing Agency Licensing & Regulatory Services and served as a Training Supervisor for Child Welfare. Portia has worked in private adoptions since 2005 while counseling birth parents and volunteering in crisis pregnancy centers. Additionally, she is a certified adoption investigator in South Carolina as well as a Lay Guardian Ad Litem and Notary Public. She received the "Angel in Adoption" award in 2015 which is a National award through the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) in Washington, DC.

Deborah Herring-Lash

Assistant Solicitor

Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office

Charleston County

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Debbie Herring-Lash is an Assistant Solicitor with the Ninth Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office. Ms. Herring-Lash graduated with a B.S. from East Carolina University in 1974 and received a M.S.W. from the University of South Carolina in 1981. After working as a social worker for nine years at Charleston County DSS, she began her career at the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office as a child abuse investigator. After graduating from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1990, she became an Assistant Solicitor for the Ninth Circuit where she prosecutes crimes against children. She is a regular speaker on sexual assaults against children and other related topics at training programs for prosecutors, law enforcement, social workers, and others. In 2013, Ms. Herring-Lash received the Ernest F. Hollings Award for excellence in state prosecution.

Amy Holbert

Executive Director

Family Connection of SC

PARENT GROUP REPRESENTATIVE

Amy Holbert is a licensed, clinical social worker (LISW-CP) with over twenty years of experience working in the maternal, child health field. Currently, She is the Executive Director of Family Connection of SC. Family Connection is a statewide, nonprofit connecting families that have a child with a disability or chronic health need to resources, services, and other families. Family Connection is SC's Parent Training Information Center, a grant award by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and SC's Family-to-Family: Health Information Center. Amy is passionate about improving the lives of children and their families has been recognized as a "Hero in the Field" for her work around reducing infant mortality in the state of SC, as well as the "Catalyst Award" presented by PASOs, for her "initiative, advocacy and support to Latino families in SC". Amy has two wonderful sons, both are diagnosed with asthma and ADHD. The life lessons of being a parent to two children with special medical and behavioral needs, has shaped her career path and choices.

LaDara Josey
Director
SC Guardian ad Litem Program

GAL REPRESENTATIVE

LaDara Josey began as the Director of the Guardian ad litem Program in March 2020. LaDara has a diverse background in project management, leadership and child welfare services. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a dual master's degree in Leadership/Management and Human Resource Development. As an independent contractor, she worked with the Department of Social Services as a family engagement coordinator and directly with foster teenagers in the DSS Independent Living program. LaDara has worked as an Operations/Training Manager (BCBS), Instructional Designer, Project Manager (ReadySC's Volvo Cars Project) and Executive Director for her non-profit organization (Inspire Us). Her passion for the well-being of children along with her wealth of experience has equipped her for this new role.

Tom Knapp
Executive Director
SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers

SCNCAC REPRESENTATIVE

Tom Knapp is the Executive Director for the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC). Prior to his role at SCNCAC, he served as the Executive Director of the Michigan Chapter of the National Children's Alliance (NCA). He also works with the National Children's Alliance as a Children's Advocacy Center Accreditation site reviewer. Tom's work with Children's Advocacy Centers started during his career in law enforcement where he was a detective with the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department in Michigan. As a detective, he was assigned to major cases and to the local Children's Advocacy Center, investigating crimes against children. During his years serving on the CAC multidisciplinary team, he was trained as a forensic interviewer and received specialized training related to investigating crimes against children. He became the executive director for the Michigan Chapter after retiring from the sheriff's department. In addition to his experience in the CAC movement, Tom has experience with non-profit management, serving as the executive director for the Society of Michigan EMS Instructor Coordinators and serving on many non-profit boards during his career. He has served as adjunct faculty at Grand Valley State University criminal justice program and has been an educator both at police academies and in the emergency medical services field.

John Melville, M.D.
Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Medical University of South Carolina, Children's Hospital

MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL

Dr. John Melville is the Division Chief for the Child Abuse Pediatrics unit and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Medical University of South Carolina. His passion is ensuring that the very best information is available to parents, courts, and other authorities making difficult decisions about keeping children safe. Dr. Melville attended medical school at the University of California, San Diego, and completed a combined internal medicine and pediatrics residency in Akron, Ohio. After residency, Dr. Melville achieved his first "dream job" as a rural physician 30 miles north of the Arctic Circle in the Alaskan bush. When family concerns made continued rural life untenable, Dr. Melville moved to San Antonio, Texas for a fellowship in child abuse pediatrics. Prior to joining MUSC, Dr. Melville was also an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Northeast Ohio Medical University as well as Medical and Site

Directors for Children’s Advocacy Centers in Ohio. Dr. Melville developed PhotoDoc — a computer program that allows child abuse pediatricians to organize, analyze, and present forensic information. PhotoDoc helps physicians to find and use all the information known about a child abuse allegation, regardless of its source or format. Dr. Melville designed the Online Bibliography of Child Abuse Pediatrics, or (OBCAP) and Expert Witness Database, which are online resources summarizing current literature and expert testimony for child abuse pediatricians.

Emily Miller

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Executive Director

Children’s Advocacy Center of Spartanburg, Cherokee, & Union

Emily Miller, MSW, LISW-CP, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and Spanish from Davidson College, a Master of Arts Degree in Theological Studies from Columbia Theological Seminary, and a Master of Social Work Degree from the University of South Carolina. She has been licensed by the state since June 2013. She has worked at the Children's Advocacy Center of Spartanburg, Cherokee, & Union (CAC) since 2011 in various roles and has served as Executive Director since February 2019. In her experience at CAC, she has coordinated the multidisciplinary Child Abuse Response Team (CART), the victim and family advocacy program, and CAC's caregiver support and education groups. Emily also provides trainings, including Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children training, to local groups and organizations.

Thomas Neal

CHILD ADVOCATE (ATTORNEY FOR CHILDREN)

Contract Attorney

SC Guardian ad Litem

Thomas M. Neal, III, graduated from Baptist College at Charleston in 1980 with a B.S. in Political Science. He graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1984, and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in the same year. He clerked for the late George T. Gregory, Associate Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Thereafter, he served as an assistant solicitor for the Fifth Judicial Circuit, primarily prosecuting child abuse and neglect actions in Family Court. He entered private practice in 1988 with the Law Firm of Oxner & Oxner in Columbia, South Carolina, and opened his own office in 1997. His practice is limited to Family Court and appellate matters. Much of his practice is devoted to representing children in private custody actions, and also representing guardians ad litem in DSS abuse & neglect actions. He is a former member of the Children’s Committee of the South Carolina Bar. Thom is married to the former Betsy Couch of Lynchburg, Virginia. They have two (2) adult daughters.

Jocelyn Newman

CRIMINAL COURT JUDGE

Circuit Court Judge

Fifth Judicial Circuit, Richland County

Judge Jocelyn Newman has served as a Circuit Court judge since 2016. Prior to her election to the bench, Judge Newman completed a federal judicial internship and a judicial clerkship at the South Carolina Circuit Court. She has also worked as an Assistant Solicitor and in private practice handling both criminal and civil matters. Judge Newman has served on the Board of Directors of the South Carolina Bar Foundation, as a Member of the Friends Advisory Board of the Ronald McDonald House, as an Associate

Member of the South Carolina Board of Law Examiners, and as a member and treasurer for the John Belton O’Neill Inn of Court. She is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and American Mensa.

The Honorable Kimaka Nichols-Graham

CIVIL COURT JUDGE

Family Court Judge
Greenville, SC

Judge Nichols-Graham is a native of Mullins, South Carolina. She graduated from Mullins High School with honors; from Winthrop University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science; and, from the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University with a Master of Science in Public Policy. Judge Nichols-Graham returned to South Carolina and earned a Juris Doctor from The University of South Carolina School of Law. Judge Nichols-Graham demonstrated an interest in children’s law by interning, clerking or volunteering at the domestic violence shelter in Rock Hill, South Carolina, at the Education Law Center of New Jersey, at the Richland County CASA Office, at the SC Department of Education and the SC Association of School Administrators before seeking a position at a legal services program that would allow her to represent students and families in matters related to public school.

The Legal Services Agency of Western Carolina, Inc., gave Judge Nichols-Graham the opportunity to develop a children’s law program that included education law. Judge Nichols-Graham worked as a staff attorney, a children’s law attorney, the education unit head, a supervising attorney for the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, and as a managing attorney of a large office at South Carolina Legal Services. She worked with SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center to create an education task force that later became a unit at legal services. Judge Nichols-Graham primarily practiced family and education law but she also practiced housing, consumer, social security, and in a few other areas of law to assist with stabilizing families.

As a young lawyer, Judge Nichols-Graham developed a children’s law program that included monitoring the firm’s termination of parental rights and adoption cases and assisting attorneys in ways to efficiently and effectively resolve those cases across several counties in the upstate. She coordinated a program focused on explaining legal rights and responsibilities to parents while their children participated in a Saturday Success Program at the Center for Educational Equity. Judge Nichols-Graham volunteered with the School Carolina Bar’s children law committee and the SC Black Lawyers Association. By 2001 she had worked successfully to add education law to the areas of practice for all legal services programs in South Carolina. She served on the board of SC Protection and Advocacy, on the SC Supreme Court Commission of Continuing Legal Education and Specialization, on the SC Supreme Court Family Court Docket Committee, and on the SC Children’s Justice Act Task Force. She provided numerous legal education sessions to the Bar and the public. In February of 2020, she was elected by the General Assembly to the Family Court Bench.

The South Carolina Bar awarded Judge Nichols-Graham with the Young Lawyer of the Year Award for 2001-2002. The SC Supreme Court’s Access to Justice Commission and the SC Bar Foundation awarded Judge Nichols-Graham the 2014 Ellen Hines Smith Legal Services Attorney of the Year. In 2019 the Greenville Business Magazine included Judge Nichols-Graham as one of the Legal Elite of the Upstate.

Robin Page*Attorney*

SC Guardian Ad Litem

CHILD ADVOCATE/ATTORNEY FOR CHILDREN

Robin Page is an attorney for the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program representing volunteer guardian ad litem in Lexington County. She previously practiced primarily domestic law in private practice, representing private litigants, as well as DSS, parents and children in DSS child abuse and neglect cases. Ms. Page received her B.A. Degree in Political Science from Winthrop College and her Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina School of Law. She is a member of the Richland County Bar Association, the South Carolina Bar, and served on the South Carolina Bar Family Law Task Force.

M. Elizabeth (Libby) Ralston, Ph.D.*Director Emeritus, Dee Norton Child Advocacy Center**Co-Director, Project Best*

MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

M. Elizabeth Ralston, Ph.D. was the founding director of the Dee Norton Child Advocacy Center, an accredited Children's Advocacy Center located in Charleston, SC until December of 2011 and now serves as the Director Emeritus. Dr. Ralston is on the clinical faculty of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the Medical University of South Carolina. She served on the National Children's Alliance (NCA) Board of Directors, on the NCA mental health standard revision committee and participated in the partnership between NCA and NCTSN to develop the CAC Director's Guide to Mental Health services. Dr. Ralston was on the founding board and served as president of the SC Chapter of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children and is a past president of the SC Chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers. She currently serves as the Chair of the SC Children's Justice Act Task Force.

Since 2007 Dr. Ralston has served as the co-director of Project BEST, a Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy dissemination effort funded by The Duke Endowment. Since December of 2013, Dr. Ralston has also served as the Co-Director of the South Carolina Trauma Practice Initiative, also funded by The Duke Endowment. SCTPI is a collaboration between the South Carolina Department of Social Services, the SC Department of Mental Health and Project BEST. Dr. Ralston serves as a consultant to organizations and agencies within South Carolina as well as nationally and internationally in support of child safety and child well-being.

Pamela D. Robinson*Volunteer Guardian ad Litem*

Director, Pro Bono Program, USC Law School

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE REPRESENTATIVE

Pamela DeFanti Robinson is currently the Director of the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program. She is a graduate of Clemson University with a BA in Elementary Education and of the USC School of Law. The Pro Bono Program is a nationally recognized, academic-based volunteer program integral to the professional development of law students. Ms. Robinson is an active member of the S.C. Bar, the Richland County CASA Program, the Clemson University Humanities Advancement Board, the Association for American Law Schools (AALS), the International Journal of Volunteer Administration Board, and the ABA Center for Pro Bono. She is past Chair, and a long-time member of the SC Children's Justice Act Task Force. Ms. Robinson has been a volunteer guardian *ad Litem* for over 30 years and is a frequent

speaker on the topic of effective representation of abused and neglected children as well as law school pro bono program issues. She is the recipient of several awards for her service to children and to the indigent population in South Carolina and in 2007 was presented with the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from the Richland County CASA Program. In 2014 she was awarded *the Martha Dicus Award for Public Interest Law* presented by the SC Women Lawyers Association and in 2016 was named the *SC Lawyer of the Year* by Lawyers Weekly. In 2020 she was recognized for extensive involvement and leadership in a law school pro bono program and was presented with the *Father Robert Drinan Award* from the Association of American Law Schools Section on Pro Bono and Public Service.

Olga C. Rosa, MD FAAP

MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL

Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Director
USC School of Medicine, Division of Forensic Pediatrics
SC Children's Advocacy Medical Response System

Dr. Olga Rosa is a graduate of the University of Puerto Rico, School of Medicine where she also completed her Internship and Residency in Pediatrics at the affiliated Children's Hospital. After her training, she worked as a pediatrician in the academic setting. Later, she followed her interest in the practice of health care in rural communities of the United States as she provided Primary Care Pediatrics in Florida. During this time, she developed an interest in child abuse and neglect and became the consultant physician to the regional Child Protection Team.

In 1999, Dr. Rosa decided to make this interest a full time venture and completed a Fellowship in Forensic Pediatrics (Child Abuse Pediatrics) at Hasbro Children's Hospital through Brown University, School of Medicine in Providence, RI. She returned to Florida in 2001 as the Medical Director for the District 15 Child Protection Team, located in Stuart, where she remained for 3 years.

Since October 2004, she has served as the Medical Director for the South Carolina Children's Advocacy Medical Response System (SCCAMRS). It is in this capacity that she has developed a comprehensive statewide resource system to assist the state's children's hospitals and the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers with the implementation of a consistent quality standard of care and practice for the delivery of medical services to children victims of abuse and neglect. She is also an Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Division Chief of Forensic Pediatrics at the University of South Carolina, School of Medicine in Columbia, SC. She directs the Palmetto Health pediatric forensic nurse examiner program as well as provides direct medical services to the Children's Hospital for the assessment of child maltreatment.

Sarah Darbee Smith

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Assistant Public Defender
Richland County Public Defender's Office

Sarah Darbee Smith received her undergraduate degree in History from the College of Charleston. She attended law school at the University of South Carolina, receiving her J.D. in 2001. As an attorney, Sarah has focused on juvenile justice matters, working as a juvenile public defender, a juvenile justice resource attorney for the Children's Law Center at the University of South Carolina School of Law, and as assistant counsel at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. Currently, Sarah works with juveniles as an assistant public defender at the Richland County Public Defender's Office.

Amy Wessinger
Family Court Representative
SC Court Administration

COURT ADMINISTRATION REPRESENTATIVE

Amy was born and raised in West Columbia where she graduated from Airport High School. From there she went on to graduate from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. After completing her Bachelor's degree, Amy received her Paralegal Certification from Midland's Technical College. Amy worked for a private Family Law attorney in Columbia for 10 years. In 2020 she joined Court Administration as the Family Court Representative with Court Services.

Amanda F. Whittle
State Child Advocate and Director
South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY REPRESENTATIVE

Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS, was appointed as South Carolina's State Child Advocate (SCA) and Director of the South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA) by Governor Henry D. McMaster on June 3, 2019. Director Whittle has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of South Carolina at Aiken and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law. She is admitted to the South Carolina Bar and United States District Court. She is certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) through the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC). Prior to her appointment, she was a law partner with Johnson, Johnson, Whittle & Snelgrove, Attorneys, P.A. for ten years; was a county attorney with the Department of Social Services for ten years; and was an Assistant General Counsel with the Department of Social Services for four years, during which time she served as the interim internal monitor for the Michelle H., et.al. v. SCDSS, et.al. class action lawsuit. During her years in private practice, she was a family court practitioner and also served as the attorney for volunteer Guardians *ad Litem* (GAL) through the GAL Program in the Second Judicial Circuit. She currently serves on the Suicide Prevention Coalition, Child Fatality Advisory Committee, Children's Justice Act Task Force, Medical Care Advisory Board, Children's Law Committee of the South Carolina Bar, South Carolina Behavioral Health Coalition, Bench-Bar Committee, Joint Council of Children and Adolescents (immediate past-Chair), DSS Advisory Council, Juvenile Justice System Improvement Committee; and Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council.