

South Carolina Children's Justice Act Task Force
RECOMMENDATIONS
2024-2027

Following a 2024 assessment of the state's systems responding to abused and neglected children, the CJA Task Force has identified target areas for improvement in three categories. The Task Force will collaborate with partnering agencies in an effort to implement these recommendations over a three-year period.

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

1.A Support the development of an exploratory committee to investigate **attorney representation of children** in abuse and neglect cases.

2.A Support the Attorney General's Office education coordinator related to training on **technology related offenses**, including but not limited to sexting and sextortion.

3.A Continue to provide education on, and promote the use of, the **Truth-Lie Task Tool** to DSS attorneys, prosecutors, GALs, and the judiciary.

4.A Provide training to child welfare professionals related to **substance use disorders** and state law related to the possession and use of illegal and controlled substances; and the Drug-Endangered Child Protocol regarding safety concerns for families.

5.A Improve the response to **children with special needs, especially children with autism**, related to abuse or neglect. Trainings developed would focus on forensic interviewers, law enforcement, judges, and GALs.

6.A Continue to build upon trainings regarding **multidisciplinary child death investigations**, including identifying and addressing barriers to effectively implementing the Child Death Investigation Task Forces (CDITF) rapid response.

7.A Provide **education to parents about the family court** and DSS process.

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

8.B Support the training of professionals on the **co-occurrence, or nexus, of child maltreatment and domestic violence**.

9.B Support the improvement of the **multidisciplinary team response to human trafficking** cases through training. Continue Team response via CAC services, with modifications when necessary to meet child trafficking victim's needs.

10.B Support the **assessment and reduction of overreporting** by medical and child professionals with education and training.

11.B Support **quality improvements across SCNCACs** by forming a joint SCNCAC/CJA work group to provide input on potential SC accreditation standards.

12.B Support SCNCAC in continuing efforts to **secure protections for forensic interview recordings** in South Carolina through education, forensic interview evidence management system improvements, and legislation, if needed.

13.B Continue to provide support in the outreach and distribution of the virtual training of the **SC Child Abuse Response Protocol Act**.

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

14.C Develop a multi-disciplinary protocol for improved access to services or enhanced response to youth (status offenders and trafficking victims) with **co-involvement in child protective services (DSS) and DJJ** or other agencies, with a focus on appropriate placements.

15.C Encourage and support child serving agency **examination of racial disparities of children** involved with the child welfare system through representation on the state's Racial Justice Action Team; and other forums.

16.C Explore the **CACs and DSS tracking system's ability/functionality** to include interventions with pre-post assessments.

17.C Review the following **state statutes for possible reform**, to then provide education in an impartial, objective manner. *Supporting or endorsing pending legislation is not an allowable activity for the Task Force.

- S.C. Code Ann. § 19-1-180. Out-of-court statements by certain children.
(Hearsay Exceptions for abuse and neglect cases)
Amend language; Add an exception for statements alleging abuse or neglect made to child forensic interviewers and mental health professionals
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-11-550. Confidentiality of records and information.
(GAL Confidentiality Statute)
Amend for clarity and to alleviate conflict with more recently enacted legislation
- S.C. Code Ann. § 63-7-310. Persons required to report.
(Mandated Reporter Statutes (§ 63-7-310 through -440)
General statutory review for consistency across the children's code

Standard Carryover Recommendations

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

19. Continue to support the operation of the **Children's Law Center**, a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support.