Foster Care Review Board 2019-2020 Annual Report and Recommendations

Advocating permanent families for children

2019 DATA SNAPSHOT

STATS AT-A-GLANCE

- 3,987 CHILDREN ENTERED FOSTER CARE
- 37% OF CHILDREN ENTERING CARE HAD PREVIOUS OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS
- 4,092 CHILDREN LEFT FOSTER CARE
- 38% OF CHILDREN RETURNED HOME
- 12% OF CHILDREN REVIEWED WERE ADOPTED

REVIEWS

- 10,560 CHILDREN REVIEWED
- 8,048 CASES REVIEWED
- 452 REVIEW BOARD MEETINGS

AREAS OF CONCERN

- 29% AGENCY POLICY VIOLATIONS
- 32% LEGAL BARRIERS
- 28% CASE PLAN BARRIERS
- 4% ADOPTION SERVICE DELAYS
- 5% LEGAL HEARINGS NOT HELD TIMELY
- 1% LEGAL HEARINGS NOT HELD

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE 17 MONTHS OR LONGER

- 1,699 CHILDREN
- 24 % LEGALLY FREE FOR ADOPTION
- 17% IN CARE FIVE OR MORE YEARS

SC HEART GALLERY

- 3,310 INQUIRIES
- 119 ADOPTION EXHIBITS
- 86 CHILDREN PHOTOGRAPHED AND 82 VIDEOTAPED
- 38 VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS
- 80 CHILDREN MATCHED WITH FAMILIES

ADOPTIONS

- 515 FINALIZED ADOPTIONS
- 24% WITHIN 24 MONTHS
- 18% AGE 13 AND OLDER

PEOPLE POWER

- 182 VOLUNTEERS
- 8,268 CASE REVIEW HOURS
- 12,155 TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

2019 REVIEW BOARD OF THE YEAR

- REVIEW BOARD 9D, CHARLESTON COUNTY

2019 REVIEW BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR

- LUCY BROWN, REVIEW BOARD 4B, DARLINGTON/ CHESTERFIELD

Data contained in this annual report represents children reported by the South Carolina Department of Social Services who remain in foster care at least four consecutive months and are reviewed by the South Carolina Foster Care Review Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The South Carolina Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) is supported by the South Carolina State Board of Directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The State Board meets quarterly and is responsible for reviewing and coordinating the activities of local review boards. The Foster Care Review Board's State Board also makes recommendations in an annual report to the Governor and the South Carolina General Assembly.

State Board 2019 Recommendations

I. The Board of Directors is concerned about continuing delays in holding merits hearings in abuse and neglect cases for children who enter foster care. The Board recommends that child welfare partners work collaboratively to promote timely merits hearings in furtherance of achieving permanence in an expeditious manner.

II. The Board of Directors remains concerned about safety at Foster Care Review Board meeting sites; however, during 2019, the Board was able to establish a system for providing free personal identification badges for all volunteers.

MEET THE STATE BOARD

Monica Githens Hill, Chairwoman, State Board of Directors, AA (Finlandia University): Monica was born in Mt. Holly, New Jersey, but grew up in Spartanburg, and now resides in Inman, South Carolina. Monica worked professionally in the real estate industry for many years and has always been drawn to volunteer activities. She has served as President of the Finlandia University Alumni Board and the Congregational Nursing Program. In 2006, Monica joined the Foster Care Review Board in Spartanburg County and she was elected Chairperson of the State Board in 2017, serving from the 4th Congressional District. Monica also serves as a non-voting member of the South Carolina Heart Gallery Foundation Board of Directors. Monica is an active member of her Devenger Road ARP Church in Greenville. Monica is widowed and the proud new mother of an adult child, Priscilla Helen Hill, a 2019 Converse College Graduate whom she recently adopted. Monica loves to travel and uses her foreign language abilities whenever she can pursue her passion to explore new places around the world.

Jo Breeden Hecker, BA (Lander University), M.Ed. (University of South Carolina): Jo is a life-long South Carolinian and retired educator and school administrator. She served in various capacities within the public school system of the Midlands area, ranging from school teacher to assistant principal, and later principal. Jo's commitment to children and education has been life-long and continued after her retirement in 1999 when she became an educational consultant and served as a guest lecturer on middle school Initiatives. Jo's volunteer service is extensive and includes work on behalf of education, medical care, race and cultural appreciation as well as service as a Sunday school volunteer. Jo has received numerous awards and honorariums including a 1999 key to her city, Blythewood. Jo has served on the Review Board since 2000, a member of the State Board since 2005, and served as Chairperson of the State Board from 2014-2017. Jo is a parishioner at Transfiguration Catholic Church. She is married to Robert P. Hecker and has one son, Robert P. Hecker, Jr.

Andrea McCoy, BS (University of South Carolina), certification in non-profit management (Winthrop University): Andrea is a life-long South Carolinian who was born and raised in Florence, and moved to Columbia for college where she met her husband, Stephfon. Andrea has been a member of the Foster Care Review Board since 2015 and a member of the State Board since 2017. For 18 years, Andrea worked as Executive Assistant and Public Relations Director for Bible Way Church of Atlas Road, which serves as a church home to more than 14,000 members. Andrea is now a Project Manager with a major corporation and is active in numerous community service activities, including as a State Board member with Affordable Housing Resources and Sistercare, and as an Advisory Board Member with S.C. Mentor. Andrea has repeatedly been recognized for her volunteer service with awards and honorariums; however, the experiences that she is most proud of are having served on the planning committee for S.C. Dental Access Days, where more than 1,500 patients received over $500,000 worth of dental care in two days, and managing the We Are The Village project, resulting in Christmas gifts for nearly 400 kinship care and homeless families in the Midlands area. Andrea enjoys gardening, travel, solving puzzles and visiting museums. Andrea and Stephfon are the proud parents of one child, a daughter, Dr. Alexis McCoy of Dallas, Texas.

MEET THE STATE BOARD

Chuck Koches, **BS (Michigan Tech.), M.B.A. (University of Virginia):** As a resident of South Carolina for 45 years, Chuck has been a member of the Foster Care Review Board for 15 years, with eight of those years as a member of the State Board of Directors. Now retired, Chuck has more than 40 years of experience in manufacturing and administration as well as employment and organizational development in the paper-making industry. Chuck served as a volunteer with Junior Achievement, Boy Scouts of America, Meals on Wheels, Hands of Christ and Darkness to Light as well as an elder and adult Sunday school teacher at Yeamans Park Presbyterian Church. Married to Mary Mena Koches for 54 years, the couple has four adult children and 10 grandchildren. He enjoys volunteer work, gardening and family get-togethers.

Dan Bracken, BA (University of South Carolina): Dan is a life-long resident of South Carolina. Born in Easley, SC, Dan currently resides in Powdersville. Dan is employed in the real estate field and was appointed to the Foster Care Review Board in 2012, serving the 3rd Congressional District, and later appointed to serve on the State Board in 2016. Dan also finds time to participate in numerous community service activities, but he has a special interest in child welfare issues. Dan and his wife Nicole previously served as foster parents and are the parents of five children, three of whom were adopted. Dan attends Grace Church and in his free time, he enjoys running, exercising at the YMCA, reading and watching Clemson football.

SUMMARY OF REVIEWS

10,560

FCRB analyzes ongoing, comparative data of children in foster care in order to gain a better understanding of the trends impacting the system, as well as future implications related to permanency for each child reviewed.

During calendar year 2019, 44 local review boards held 452 local review board meetings, completing 10,560 children reviewed for 8,048 children cases in foster care. Data regarding entry into foster care for 3,987 children was received from DSS and entered in the FCRB data-management system during calendar year 2019. Local review boards held reviews for 1,465 of these children and 1,796 children either left foster care prior to a case review or had not been reviewed as of Dec. 31, 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
CASES REVIEWED	4,032	4,175	5,533	6,812	8,048
TOTAL CHILDREN REVIEWED	6,711	6,892	9,639	9,795	10,560
REVIEW BOARD MEETINGS	424	427	425	420	452
CHILDREN ENTERING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	1,838	1,927	1,933	1,899	1,465
CHILDREN RE-ENTERING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	915	970	1,269	1,087	868
CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE AND REVIEWED	1,704	1,824-	1,995	2,304	2,179

Areas of Concern

13,147

The monthly review process allows local review boards to identify systemic concerns that are barriers to permanence for children in foster care. These system deficiencies, or areas of concern, are items that are not in compliance with federal law, state law or DSS agency policy. Areas of Concern detailed: *(http://fcrb.sc.gov)*

In 2019, there were 13,147 areas of concern, which fall into 1 of 6 categories:

- Legal Barriers 4,317
- Policy Violations 3,808
- Case Plan Barriers 3,798
- Hearings Not Held Timely 634
- Adoption Services Delayed 502
- Hearings Not Held 88

SUMMARY OF REVIEWS

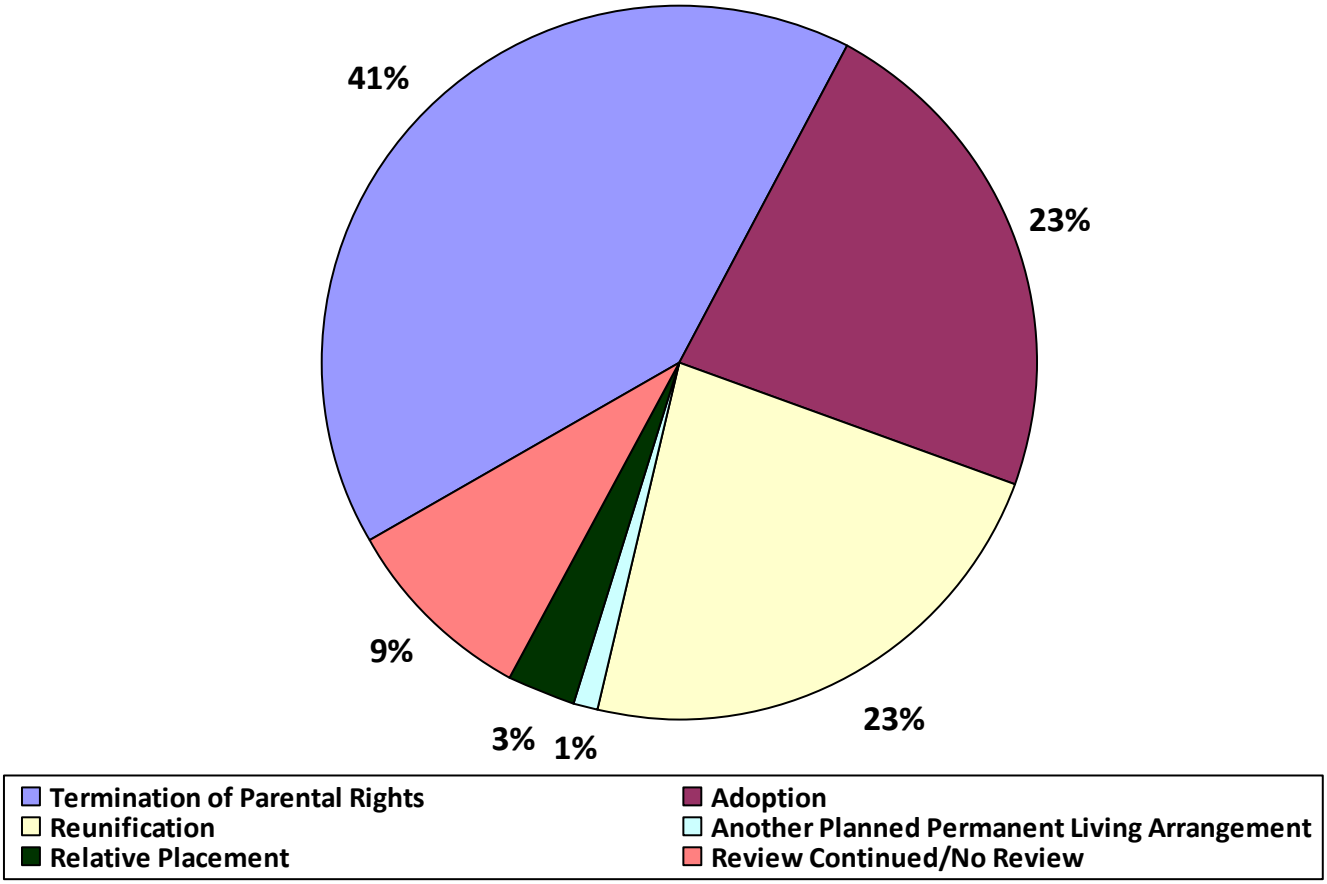
Case Decisions and Recommendations

Local review boards carefully consider input from interested parties prior to issuing a recommendation for each child's case. Interested parties are invited by DSS to attend FCRB hearings. Recommendations are sent to the Family Court, DSS and Guardians ad Litem.

If a required interested party is not invited or if additional information is needed for the board members to make a permanency recommendation, no recommendation is made and the review is continued. Reviews that are continued or not held are rescheduled, usually within three months of the original review date.

The graph below illustrates the percentage and type for each recommendation issued by local review boards at the most recent child-specific review in 2019.

Review Board Recommendations



ENTERING FOSTER CARE

3,987

The number of children who entered Foster care between January and December 2019 is 3,987. This is a slight decrease from 2018.

Twenty-five percent of children entering foster care in 2019 entered due to physical neglect, while 19 percent entered care due to abuse. Thirty-one percent for neglect (threat neglect, threat medical neglect, physical neglect, medical neglect and educational neglect), 20 percent entered foster care due to drug exposure/testing positive for drugs by either the parent or child, and 4 percent due to abandonment or voluntary placement.

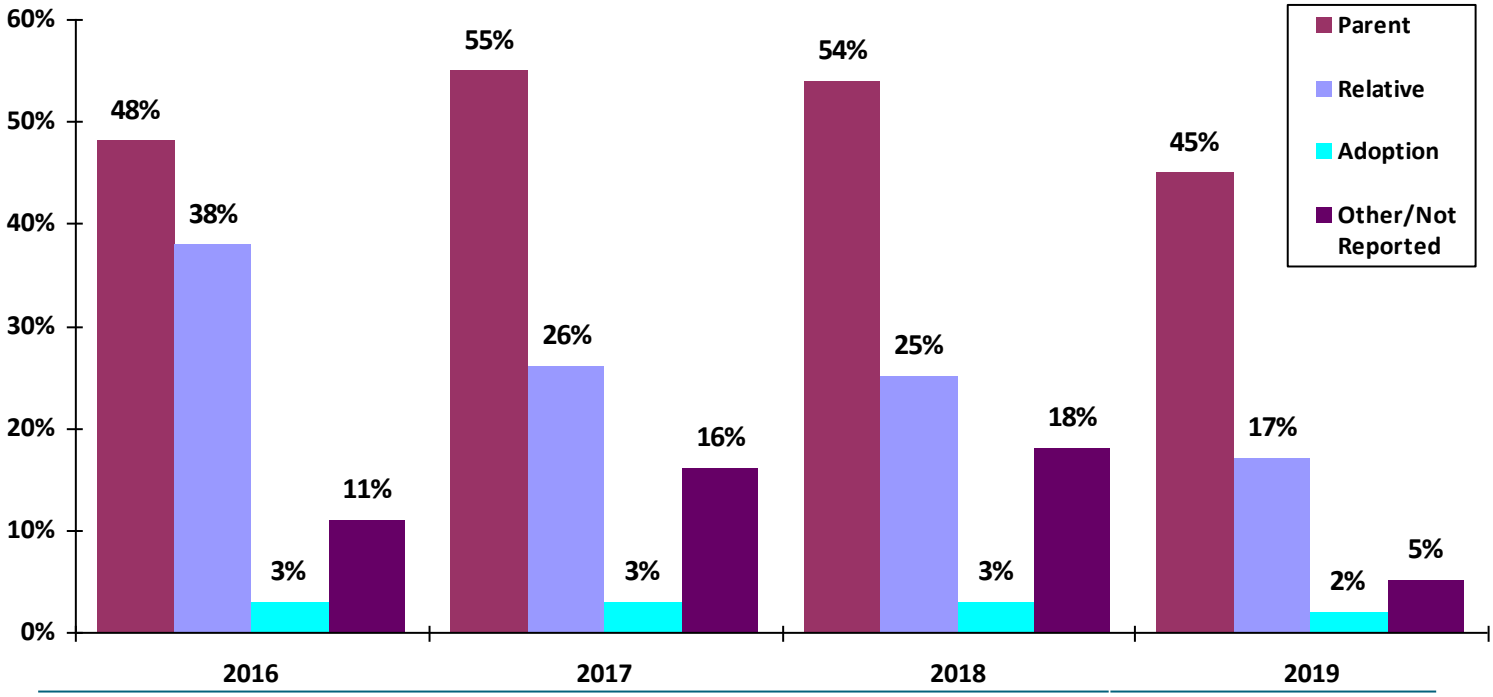
Previous Out-of-Home Placements

1,085

Of the 3,987 children reported to have entered foster care in 2019, 27 percent had at least one reported previous out-of-home placement. Of the 1,085, 45 percent entering foster care came from the home of a parent, 17 percent from the home of a relative, and two percent from an adoptive home.

FCRB reports on all out-of-home placements for children who enter foster care because moving from home to home or going in and out of foster care creates additional trauma for a child. The chart below displays prior placement data for the most recent entry to foster care by calendar year.

Placement prior to most recent entry



LEAVING FOSTER CARE

4,092

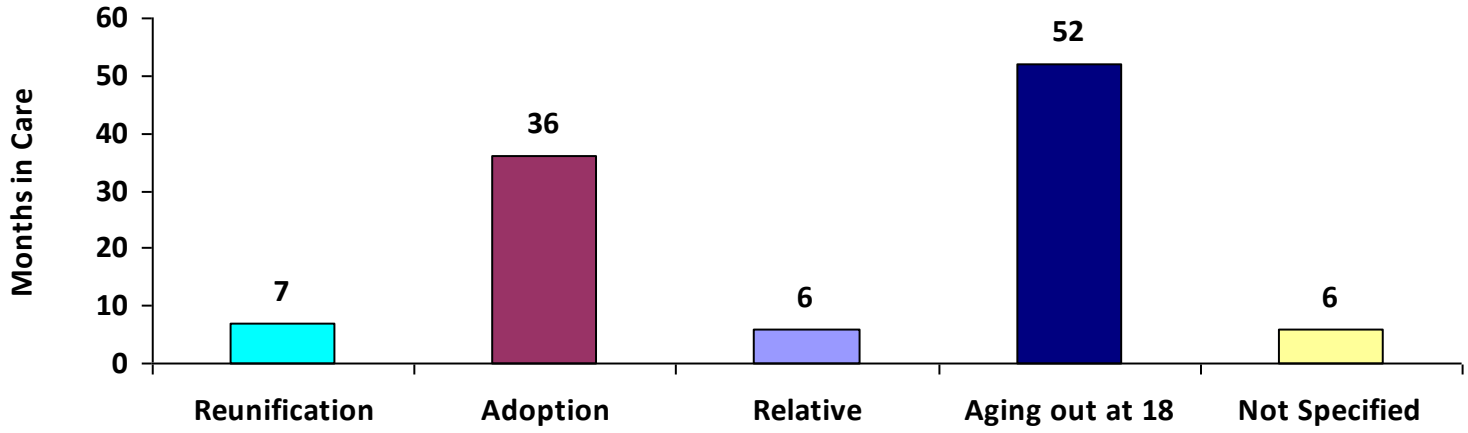
DSS reported that 4,092 children left the foster care system in 2019. Local review boards reviewed 2,179 of these children prior to them leaving foster care. The remaining 1,913 children left DSS custody before local review boards conducted a review.

Pursuant to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), returning a child to a parent or finalizing an adoption are the most permanent options for children who leave foster care. In 2019, 36 percent of children reviewed were returned to a parent or had a finalized adoption. The following table summarizes data for all children leaving foster care in 2019.

INDICATOR	ALL CHILDREN	CHILDREN REVIEWED	CHILDREN NOT REVIEWED
CHILDREN LEAVING FOSTER CARE	4,092	2,179	1,913
PERMANENCY OUTCOMES			
REUNIFICATION	2,055	988	1,067
FINALIZED ADOPTION	515	472	43
OTHER OUTCOMES			
RELATIVE CUSTODY	1,120	412	708
EMANCIPATED OR TURNED 18	300	262	38
OTHER /NOT REPORTED	396	309	87

The graph below provides the average number of months a child remains in foster care based on the indicator for leaving foster care in 2019.

Number of Months in Care by Reason Left Care



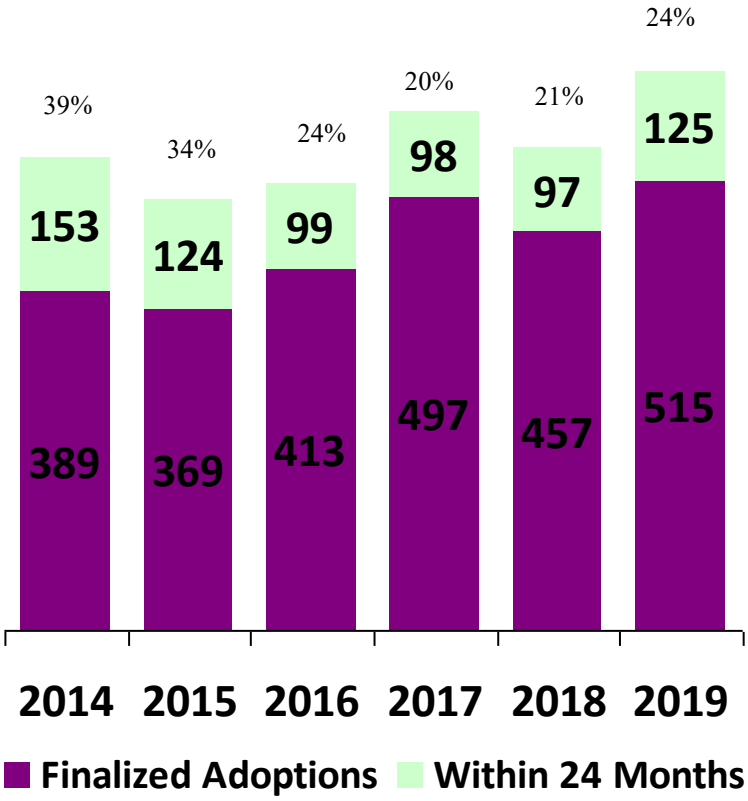
ADOPTIONS

515

Of all children who left foster care in 2019, 515 had finalized adoptions; 125 of these adoptions were completed within the federal standard of 24 months. The average length of time a child spends in foster care before a finalized adoption is 36 months.

The average age at adoption was 6.7 years. In 2019, adoptions were finalized for 93 children age 13 and older.

Finalized Adoptions by Calendar Year



Percentage Completed within Federal Standard of 24 months

REMAINING IN CARE

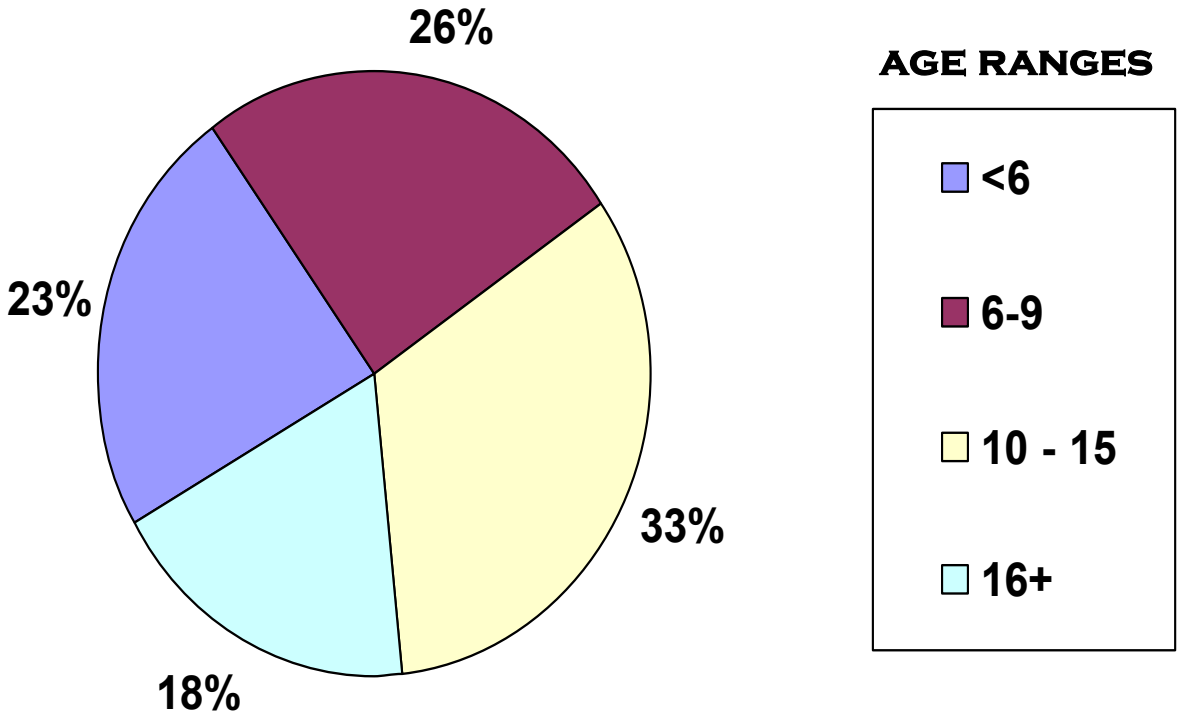
1,699

DSS reported to FCRB that there were 2,239 children in foster care as of Dec 31, 2019. Of these, 1,699 have been in the foster care system since their most recent foster care entry for 17 continuous months or longer.

The average length of time in care for these children is five years. The length of time in foster care ranges from 17 months to 18 years, and 13 percent of children have spent five or more years in foster care. The graph below illustrates the age break-down for children in foster care for 17 months or longer.

Children in Foster Care for 17 Months or Longer

AGE AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019



HEART GALLERY

During 2019, the SC Heart Gallery continued to provide child-specific recruitment via community exhibits featuring framed portraits and biographies of waiting children. Social media highlights and videos produced by the SC Heart Gallery *Foundation* generated the most response in inquiries from families already approved to adopt, as well as new families requesting to initiate the adoption application process. The Heart Gallery model demonstrates consistent success across the United States and Canada in matching waiting children with adoptive families, especially as the program is able to personalize each child's story and give them an individual voice. From 2005 – 2019, 1,787 children attended SC Heart Gallery photo shoots; since 2014, 645 children also had video profiles produced. As of December 31, 2019, the cumulative match rate for children featured by the SC Heart Gallery is 58.5%. It is important to note, however, that the match rate is 72% in the years since the addition of the waiting child videos provided by the Heart Gallery *Foundation*.

Heart Gallery South Carolina™

2019 STATISTICS:

86	CHILDREN PHOTOGRAPHED
82	CHILDREN VIDEOTAPED
21	VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS
119	PUBLIC EXHIBITS/MEDIA FEATURES
3,310	INQUIRIES RECEIVED FROM FAMILIES INTERESTED IN ADOPTING
81	CHILDREN MATCHED WITH FAMILIES
154	NEW SC FAMILIES INITIATED THE ADOPTION PROCESS
40	HOME STUDIES COMPLETED AND ACCEPTED FOR APPROVAL

Heart Gallery exhibits at Cornerstone Church in Orangeburg (left) and Midtown Fellowship Church in Columbia (above).

HEART GALLERY

In South Carolina,

401 *children are legally free for adoption.*

OUTCOMES BY COUNTY

The following table compares 2019 Review Board data in South Carolina's 46 counties for children reviewed, children entering/re-entering care, children leaving care and permanency. *FCRB considers permanency as a child being returned to a parent or having a finalized adoption. For children who left care but did not achieve permanency, 1,059 went to the custody of a relative and 387 turned 18, or the reason they left care was not provided.*

For children entering and leaving care, these numbers reflect all children reported to the FCRB by DSS to include children who were reviewed and children that DSS reported leaving care prior to a review being held.

County	Children Reviewed	Cases Reviewed	# Entered FC	Previous Out-of-Home Placement	# Left FC	Permanency		Other Outcomes	
						% Returned to Parent	% Adopted	% Relative Custody	% Other
State Total	**10,560**	**8,048**	**3,987**	**1,085**	**4,092**	**2,055**	**515**	**1,120**	**396**
Abbeville	47	40	24	5	30	16	0	11	3
Aiken	303	238	118	26	128	43	12	52	20
Allendale	8	6	8	0	5	4	0	0	1
Anderson	541	425	196	37	202	65	44	62	31
Bamberg	26	24	13	0	16	8	0	6	2
Barnwell	35	33	14	3	22	10	3	7	2
Beaufort	165	102	45	5	48	25	6	10	7
Berkeley	295	158	200	83	165	102	11	39	13
Calhoun	15	13	16	0	12	10	1	1	0
Charleston	940	686	234	74	295	133	40	91	31
Cherokee	224	190	99	16	100	57	17	17	9
Chester	38	25	38	2	19	6	0	9	4
Chesterfield	156	126	27	11	82	31	22	16	13
Clarendon	116	78	22	6	26	9	11	2	4
Colleton	79	60	41	13	45	19	7	16	3
Darlington	273	245	78	39	79	36	20	12	11
Dillon	57	37	56	12	45	19	3	20	3
Dorchester	152	107	75	22	78	29	11	24	14
Edgefield	32	28	6	0	12	9	2	0	1

OUTCOMES BY COUNTY

County	Children Reviewed	Cases Reviewed	# Entered FC	Previous Out-of-Home Placement	# Left FC	Permanency		Other Outcomes	
						% Returned to Parent	% Adopted	% Relative Custody	% Other
State Total	**10,560**	**8,048**	**3,987**	**1,085**	**4,092**	**2,055**	**515**	**1,120**	**396**
Fairfield	70	59	15	1	14	4	2	8	0
Florence	212	165	107	23	71	37	4	22	8
Georgetown	48	42	24	10	28	18	4	4	2
Greenville	1,082	841	416	94	405	234	58	84	29
Greenwood	75	66	62	19	64	29	4	30	1
Hampton	**15**	11	8	5	9	2	2	4	1
Horry	584	478	246	71	260	157	32	49	22
Jasper	55	44	13	2	29	21	0	6	2
Kershaw	146	105	61	14	58	35	3	16	4
Lancaster	200	167	55	10	79	48	0	17	14
Laurens	363	259	125	28	88	44	4	35	5
Lee	23	17	14	1	10	2	0	7	1
Lexington	558	379	146	41	161	54	24	71	11
Marion	72	39	46	14	24	17	4	2	1
Marlboro	26	23	22	7	9	6	0	1	2
McCormick	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newberry	71	48	45	4	42	20	1	18	3
Oconee	356	284	89	17	84	43	15	17	9
Orangeburg	164	117	93	19	69	25	6	28	3
Pickens	373	278	101	36	144	53	33	39	19
Richland	860	670	546	100	532	354	33	114	31
Saluda	21	17	13	1	17	8	2	7	0
Spartanburg	1,032	717	198	71	251	98	55	79	19
Sumter	242	169	68	24	79	51	10	12	6
Union	22	19	26	6	25	12	1	11	1
Williamsburg	39	27	10	46	9	2	0	3	4
York	349	276	128		116	52	8	42	14

BARRIERS BY COUNTY

The FCRB is statutorily mandated to report deficiencies in the child welfare system. One tool for measuring deficiencies is areas of concern. These are defined as non-compliance with federal and state law and/or DSS policy and are identified during the review of a child's case.

The following table summarizes data collected during reviews held in calendar year 2019. The data compares areas of concern in individual counties. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Areas of Concern

County	Total Areas of Concern	Areas of Concern per Child	Case Plan Barriers	Agency Policy Violations	Legal Barriers	Hearings Not Held	Hearings Not Held Timely	Adoption Service Delays
State Total	**13,147**	**1.2**	**(28%)3,798**	**(29%)3,808**	**(32%)4,317**	**(1%)88**	**(5%)634**	**(4%)502**
Abbeville	89	2.2	32	23	30	0	2	2
Aiken	521	1.7	207	161	90	0	24	39
Allendale	16	2.0	7	4	4	0	0	1
Anderson	734	1.36	231	248	167	4	69	15
Bamberg	89	3.4	35	32	9	0	5	8
Barnwell	13	.2	4	2	6	0	0	1
Beaufort	107	.6	20	12	60	0	15	0
Berkeley	609	2.1	110	227	200	0	38	34
Calhoun	42	2.8	12	6	14	0	0	10
Charleston	1,278	1.4	363	403	430	9	42	31
Cherokee	175	.8	47	20	88	0	20	0
Chester	93	2.45	24	35	25	0	1	8
Chesterfield	83	.5	9	41	26	0	3	4
Clarendon	85	.7	19	19	34	0	13	0
Colleton	116	1.5	26	37	38	2	7	6
Darlington	324	1.19	47	61	165	0	6	45
Dillon	17	.3	7	4	6	0	0	0
Dorchester	174	1.14	47	39	82	3	1	2
Edgefield	33	1.03	13	2	10	0	8	0

BARRIERS BY COUNTY

Areas of Concern

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State Total	**13,147**	**1.2**	**(28%)3,798**	**(29%)3,808**	**(32%)4,317**	**(1%)88**	**(5%)634**	**(4%)502**
Fairfield	218	3.1	95	28	67	0	14	14
Florence	200	.9	59	50	82	1	6	2
Georgetown	47	1.0	12	19	10	0	6	0
Greenville	1,247	1.16	272	446	379	10	90	50
Greenwood	133	1.8	43	40	45	0	0	5
Hampton	24	1.6	7	9	8	0	0	0
Horry	692	1.18	239	190	242	8	5	8
Jasper	43	.8	2	7	34	0	0	0
Kershaw	150	1.03	54	26	54	2	5	9
Lancaster	426	2.13	143	84	151	3	25	20
Laurens	677	1.9	192	291	163	4	11	16
Lee	47	2.04	2	22	15	0	0	8
Lexington	349	.6	107	61	162	0	19	0
Marion	71	1.0	28	7	30	0	2	4
Marlboro	32	1.23	10	16	4	0	0	2
McCormick	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newberry	54	.7	22	6	26	0	0	0
Oconee	239	.7	72	35	116	2	13	1
Orangeburg	164	1.0	37	36	38	7	29	17
Pickens	512	1.4	135	227	122	0	12	16
Richland	1,703	2.0	581	439	483	33	87	80
Saluda	20	1.0	2	6	10	0	2	0
Spartanburg	1,091	1.1	300	297	418	0	45	31
Sumter	104	.4	10	16	66	0	4	8
Union	25	1.1	11	8	6	0	0	0
Williamsburg	15	.4	0	5	7	0	3	0
York	251	.7	97	57	91	0	1	5

AWARDS

The State Board of Directors selects a Review Board and Review Board Member of the Year. Community partners, staff and Review Board members nominate boards and individual members. The Professional Development and Awards Committee of the State Board reviews all nominations and makes recommendations to the State Board.

Review Board of the Year

Review Board 9D

Charleston County Foster Care Review Board 9D members were recognized as 2019 Board of the Year. Our 9D Board Members are Barbara Acobe, Linda Lucas, and Doris Mines. Board 9D's commitment to Charleston County's youth in foster care is evident from their consistent and long-standing advocacy. Beginning in 2012, volunteers of Board 9D have provided warm lunches and snacks for the legally free children attending the S.C. Heart Gallery photo shoots held in Charleston County. Additionally, Board 9D has actively engaged with their local Legislative Delegation Office and encouraged Charleston County Representatives to attend their review meetings. Likewise, 9D has been active in engaging with our partners in child welfare at the Charleston County Department of Social Services, including meeting with the County Director to strategize and discuss ways to increase the productivity of the review process through our collaboration and mutual goal of promoting safe and permanent outcomes for children in foster care.

Left to Right Barbara *Acobe, Doris Mines and Linda Lucas*

AWARDS

Review Board Member of the Year Lucy Brown

Lucy Brown was named the 2019 Foster Care Review Board Member of the Year. Lucy was appointed to Foster Care Review Board 4B (Darlington/Chesterfield) in 1998, and is now that Board's longest serving member. Lucy is very passionate about her role as a volunteer and is a critical and well-respected member of her Board. Lucy has continuously shown exemplary community service for the foster care youth of Darlington County. Over the past 21 years, Lucy has worked diligently alongside other community agencies to gather resources and arrange for annual winter holiday celebrations for children in foster care, with the singular mission of ensuring that every child in foster care has a joyous holiday season. In addition to her child-focused advocacy, Lucy also has worked alongside and in support of the DSS staff and foster parents in Darlington and Chesterfield counties.

Lucy Brown, 2019 Foster Care Review Board Member of the Year.

DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Amanda F. Whittle, J.D., CWLS
Director of the South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy

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 was born and reared in Aiken, South Carolina. She graduated *magna cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of South Carolina at Aiken in May of 1992 and earned her Juris Doctorate degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law in December of 1994. She is married to her former law partner, James Whittle, and they have three adult children and a daughter-in-law.

The Whittles' first child was born two days after Director Whittle graduated from law school in December of 1994, so she waited until the following July to take the Bar exam. After being admitted to the S.C. Bar, she practiced law from 1995 until 2005 with the law firm of Johnson, Johnson, Whittle and Snelgrove, Attorneys, P.A. where she worked as a family court practitioner, handling appeals, finalizing adoptions, representing litigants in divorce, custody and DSS cases, and serving as the Attorney for volunteer Guardians ad Litem with the Guardian ad Litem Program. In October of 2001, she was awarded the DSS-Managed Treatment Services Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Service and Dedication to the Children of South Carolina.

In 2005, she became a county trial attorney for the Department of Social Services in Aiken, Bamberg, and Barnwell counties. Between 2005 and 2015, she was an active member of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and managed legal operations for the 2nd Judicial Circuit in addition to handling hundreds of abuse and neglect court cases. In 2015, she became an Assistant General Counsel with the Dept of Social Services in Columbia, South Carolina. Shortly after joining the Office of General Counsel, she became the Interim Internal Monitor for the Michelle H., et.al. v. SCDSS, et.al. class action lawsuit which was settled through a Consent Decree on October 4, 2016, the terms of which continue to be implemented and monitored through the U.S. District Court. While with DSS, she was awarded the "Together Forever for Kids" Team Award (March, 2013); "A Hero for Children" award (2013); the Keith Frazier Team Award (May, 2017); and SCDSS Employee of the Month (November, 2018).

Director Whittle has been providing training for more than 15 years to Guardians ad Litem, attorneys, DSS staff and other professionals on a variety of topics including Safe Haven for Abandoned Infants Act (Daniel's Law); trial skills; court coordination; Legal Case Management System (LCMS); engagement of non-custodial parents; confidentiality; improving outcomes for children; preparing children to testify in court; and other subjects. She has served as a Mentor through the S.C. Bar's Mentor Program, and, in October, 2018, she became certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) through the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC).

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, S.C. Bar Children's Law Committee, Joint Council of Children and Adolescents (Chair), DSS Advisory Council, and Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council.

Director Whittle's work in the private and public sectors, along with her passion for serving and advocating for others, have prepared her to work with the great team at the S.C. Department of Children's Advocacy and with many partners throughout the state to improve outcomes for children who are served by South Carolina state agencies. Her broad vision for reform includes:

- Joint trainings and meetings to promote access and awareness of an array of services that allow children to safely remain in their homes and communities or in the least restrictive, most family-like setting based upon their needs;

- Coordination of services and efforts for a system of care grounded in urgency, empathy and sustainability; and

- Continued collaboration with child welfare partners regarding communication, service coordination and planning strategies to improve the timeliness of court hearings and outcomes for children.

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HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

On behalf of Child Welfare

The almost daily proliferation of new platforms and technologies that are readily available to the general public has greatly expanded our opportunities to connect and reconnect with family, friends, and loved ones. This same technology allows us to work more efficiently and reach a larger audience. In particular, modern communication platforms afford tremendous opportunities for business and charitable connections to be made and expanded for those who share a common interest or passion. And while nothing will ever replace a live gathering of groups working for a common interest or goal, remote communication can certainly serve as a life-raft when live and in-person communication is not possible. The result of all this expansion is that with enhanced technology comes enhanced opportunity and efficiency, allowing the work that is done to create greater value for greater numbers of people. For child welfare professionals and volunteers pursuing better outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system, modern technological advances offer opportunities to create positive outcomes on a scale that is truly unprecedented.

The potential for social 'changemakers' armed with today's digital platforms in partnership with large and growing virtual networks can dramatically improve the human condition.
-How Technology Can Help Solve Societal Problems, https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/technology-can-help-solve-societal-problems/

The child welfare community is greatly benefitting from numerous modern and virtual technologies. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are all easily accessible social media platforms for promoting change and bringing awareness to special causes and initiatives, including child welfare organizations like the Foster Care Review Board. "As a State Board member, I believe we are missing out on the power of social media," says State Board of Directors member Dan Bracken. "Last year, I made a quick social media post about the need for more board members. In less than one day, my advertisement of need resulted in over 30 inquiries by members of the public seeking information about becoming a member. In addition to recruitment, Facebook could also be used to educate the public about the role and function of the FCRB. In my opinion, we need to work to ensure that we fully harness the power of this vital resource."

Likewise, Latrice Williams has relied upon social media to promote permanence for legally free children on behalf of the Heart Gallery. "For several years, the S.C. Heart Gallery and Heart Gallery Foundation have utilized various resources to promote the importance of foster care adoption and highlight legally free children who seek Forever Families," she says. "Recently, the Heart Gallery sought more opportunities to increase our awareness and engagement with families. The Heart Gallery Foundation confirmed through analytics that Facebook is our most effective social media platform thus far. In addition to our positive engagement through social media, they implemented a successful Search Engine Optimization (SEO) process and Google Ad Grant opportunities that have improved the quality and quantity of our website traffic, thereby helping families throughout South Carolina and the U.S. complete their Forever Homes."

Technological innovation has also made a huge impact on the day-to-day business of child welfare casework practice. According to FCRB Program Coordinator Coretta Bush-Etheredge, "Data systems allow case managers to keep track of services to families, plan for quality contacts with children and families and effectively manage their individual workflow" and these processes "help supervisors track safety and well-being outcomes connected to health and education." Ultimately, the data collected and recorded for each case is used to "produce state level data for federal reporting requirements like the CFSR, Child and Family Service Reviews," and this information is then used to assess and monitor the functioning of the child welfare system and make necessary improvements.

While technology is the root of some profound instances of disconnection between people, it's worth noting that many positive forms of interaction have also stemmed from the digital age- particularly in the nonprofit world. Charitable organizations have increasingly started to soak up technological innovations and approaches to solving societal problems in recent years.
— 4 Innovations that Use Technology to Solve Social Issues, https://www.goodnet.org/articles/4-innovations-that-use-technology-to-solve-social-issues

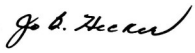
With the continuing development and expansion of technologies that allow for rapid communication and bring attention to social causes, there is no limit to what can be accomplished on behalf of the children we serve. This Board is committed to embracing new technologies that will augment the work we do on behalf of children in care. We are looking forward to the year ahead and thank all the statewide volunteer members for their dedicated service.

The power of a group of individuals and their network over social causes cannot be underestimated. Social media and technology, by their pervasiveness and capability of linking the world beyond borders, can effectively bring about constructive change to the world, be it on a worldwide scale or by assisting a single individual in need. The process of social cause is changing, and social media technology are undoubtedly helping to change the rules.
— Social Media in Social Causes, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-media-in-social-causes

State Board

State Board Chairperson, Monica Githens Hill

State Baard Member, Dan Bracken



State Board Member, Jo Hecker

State Board Member, Charles F. Koches

State Board Member, Andrea McCoy

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

Volunteer Hours

In 2019, 182 volunteers contributed 12,155 hours to serve the state of South Carolina. The hours were spent reviewing cases and providing additional services to board members' individual communities.

FCRB volunteers are objective, independent reviewers of cases of children in foster care. Local review boards held 452 meetings and spent hours 8,268 reviewing cases for 8,048 children in foster care. The review boards issued Advisory Recommendations to DSS and the Family Court for permanent case plans for each child reviewed and identified areas of non-compliance with DSS policy or statutes in each case. Local review boards contributed the following in 2019:

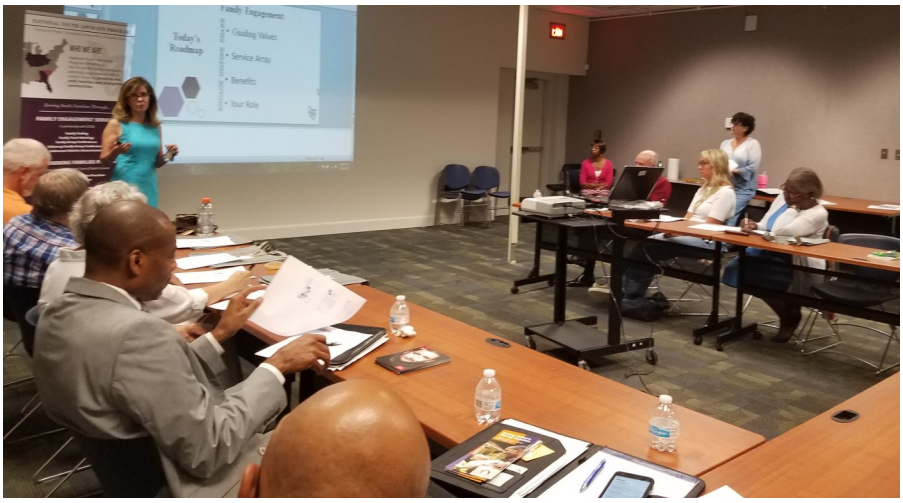
- **25** review boards completed service projects to support programs and events for children in foster care and those who serve them.
- **17** review boards sponsored Heart Gallery exhibits or donated refreshments and assisted at photo shoots where children who are legally free for adoption had professional photographs taken for adoptive recruitment.
- **3** review boards participated in quarterly meetings with child-welfare partners to discuss trends and issues impacting children in foster care.
- **3** review boards provided quarterly reports or presented the Annual Report to legislators on local review board activities and trends impacting children in foster care.
- **4** review boards attended meetings with the administrate court judged or attended court hearing to advocacy for permanency for children in foster care.

Local Review Board member Ann Nichols and Jack McCall volunteered during a Heart Gallery photo shoot at Falls Park.

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS

Thank you to all of our volunteers !

Local Boards • State Board • Heart Gallery Foundation Board • Heart Gallery photographers



STATE BOARD AND STAFF

STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2nd Congressional District, Richland County	Jo Hecker
1st Congressional District, Berkeley County	Charles (Chuck) Koches
3rd Congressional District, Greenville County	Dan Bracken
4th Congressional District, Spartanburg County	Monica Hill, Chairperson
5th Congressional District, Cherokee County	Vacant
6th Congressional District, Richland County	Andrea McCoy
7th Congressional District	Vacant

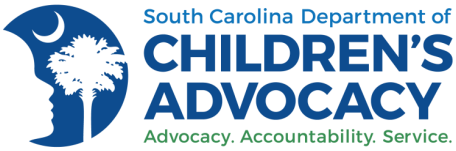
STATE OFFICE STAFF

Director	Lisa Armstrong
Program Director	Stephanie Spink
Program Supervisors	Christina Grant
	Doretta Crosson-Irby
Review Board Coordinators	Shallia Belton
	Amanda Blackmon
	Coretta Bush-Etheredge
	Jessica Haygood
	Kristin McGill
	Corlette Minor
	Ashlee Patterson
	Chloe Taylor
	Latavial Williams
	Vacant
	Vacant
Heart Gallery Program Director	Millie Qualls
Heart Gallery Program Coordinator	Latrice Williams
Staff Attorney	Caitlin Lee
Statistical/Research Analyst	Lola Robertson
Administrative Coordinator	Joy Manning
Administrative Assistants	Heather Valentine
	Ashley Wilson

This report was prepared by the Foster Care Review Board, South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy. For additional information, please contact Lola Robertson at the address listed on the back cover, telephone 803-734-0480; email: lola.robertson@ChildAdvocate.sc.gov; or visit http://fcrb.sc.gov. The cost of printing 150 copies was $4.74 per copy, totaling $711.00.

FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD

Advocating Permanent Families for Children



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Fax: 803-734-1223

Website: http://fcrb.sc.gov

VISION

South Carolina will make child well being a top priority by assuring safe, permanent families for all children in foster care.

MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Foster Care Review Board is to provide external accountability for the foster care system and to advocate on behalf of children in foster care.