



South Carolina Department of

**CHILDREN'S
ADVOCACY**

Advocacy. Accountability. Service.

FY 2023-24 Budget Hearing



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Agency Attendees

- **Amanda F. Whittle**
Director, Department of Children's Advocacy

- **Jason Epting**
Agency Budget Director, Department of
Administration



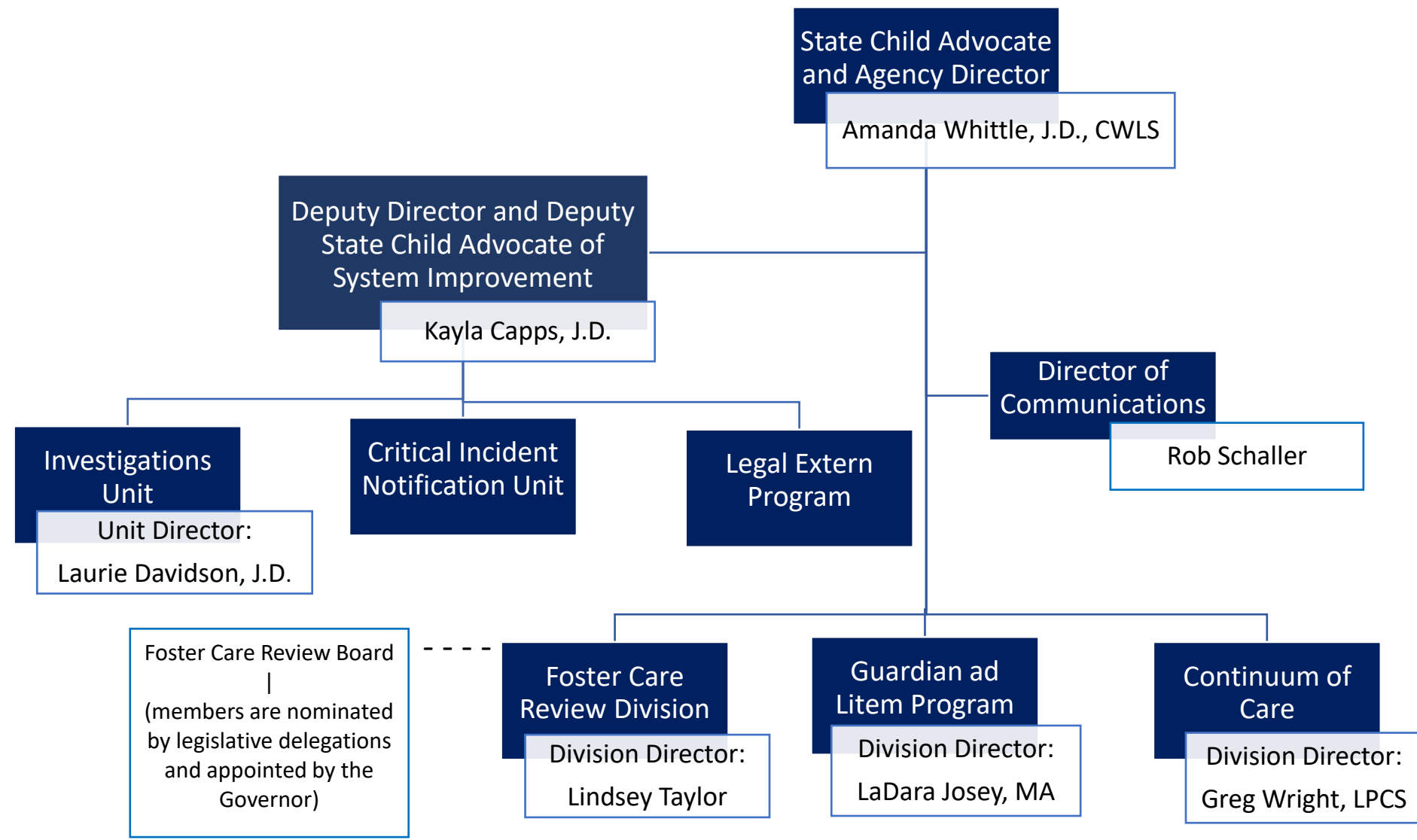
Agency Overview

The Department of Children's Advocacy administers the:

- **Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program** which provides Guardians ad Litem to serve as court-appointed special advocates for abused and neglected children in foster care;
- **Foster Care Review Division** which supports the local and state Foster Care Review Boards in reviewing the cases of children who are in foster care;
- **S.C. Continuum of Care** which provides High Fidelity Wraparound care coordination to youth with challenging emotional and behavioral issues to help maintain them in their homes, schools and communities;
- **Investigations Unit** which receives, refers, monitors and investigates complaints regarding services to children by nine specific child-serving agencies; and
- **Critical Incident Notifications** and responses regarding child-serving agencies.

We have approximately **200 employees** and **2000 volunteers/board members** with offices throughout the state and a central office located in the Edgar Brown building.

Organizational Chart





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FTE Breakdown

Dept Of Children's Advocacy - L080 FTE Count by Office and Funding January 2023

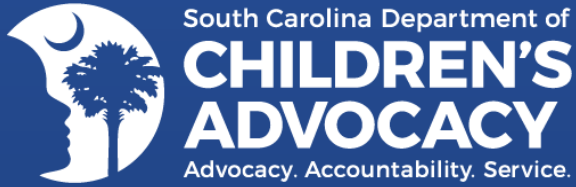
Division	Filled FTEs				Vacant FTEs				Grand Total
	State	Other	Federal	Total	State	Other	Federal	Total	
Department of Children's Advocacy	110.4540	68.5460	0.0000	179.0000	28.4250	16.5750	0.0000	45.0000	224.0000
Total	110.4540	68.5460	0.0000	179.0000	28.4250	16.5750	0.0000	45.0000	224.0000
Percentage	61.71%	38.29%	0.00%		63.17%	36.83%	0.00%		



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Funding Streams

Source	Percentage
State Allocations	58%
Earmarked Appropriations	22%
Restricted Funding	19%
Federal Funding	1%
TOTAL	100%



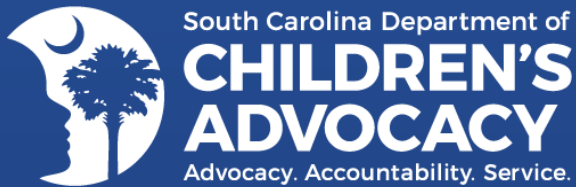
FY24 Budget Requests

Recurring Funding: \$ 1,969,312.00
Non-Recurring Funding: \$ 315,900.00

Recurring funding is needed to create and strengthen staff capacity, specifically within Guardian ad Litem Program and Investigations Unit.

Non-recurring funding and part of the recurring funding is for operational costs associated with Foster Care Review Division and Continuum of Care, including leasing 10 additional cars, replacing computer equipment, and ensuring sufficient allocations to support staff.

All requests align with goals and targets outlined in the agency's Annual Accountability Report, which are tied to the agency's mission, vision, and statutory mandates.



Budget Requests

Agency Priority 1 – Recurring Funds

IT Consultant/Liaison

\$185,750

This position will increase agency efficiency by centralizing technical leadership and support for all DCA employees, managing all technological inventory duties, and handling all staff's technology onboarding and offboarding needs. They will also serve as the DCA liaison with Admin IT, Admin DTO, Security, and Privacy.

Agency Priority 2 – Recurring Funds

Investigations Unit Advocacy/Accountability

\$285,000

Additional funding is necessary to fully staff the DCA's Investigations Unit to support the response to complaints and critical incident notifications regarding children who are served by state agencies.



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Budget Requests

Agency Priority 3 – Recurring Funds

Foster Care Review Division Operations

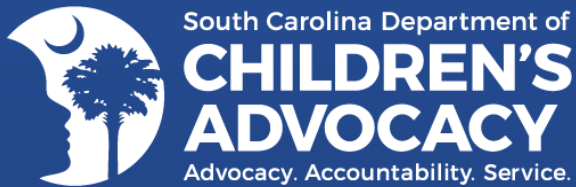
\$200,000

Almost half of the FTE positions are currently vacant, and this budget request is based on filling the vacancies and avoiding deficit spending. Spending was reduced during FY22 to end the year in the black, but maintaining salary lapses and eliminating travel expenses are not sustainable for this program.

Agency Priority 4 – Recurring Funds

Continuum of Care Transfer Alignment \$400,000

DCA seeks a budget alignment in the event DMH is no longer required to transfer \$400,000 to Continuum of Care pursuant to Proviso 35.1, which has been in effect for approximately 20 years.



Budget Requests

Agency Priority 5 – Recurring Funds

Guardian ad Litem Advocacy/Quality Assurance

\$792,062

GAL currently has an 18% vacancy rate (24 positions) but is actively working to increase retention/recruitment to fill 16 of these slots, including four Quality Assurance Coordinators and 12 Program Assistants. The addition of these positions will improve direct child advocacy, quality assurance and satisfaction, and data integrity.

Agency Priority 6 – Non-Recurring Funds

Agency 5-Year Workstation Replacement

\$315,900

This figure was determined by DTO Endpoint Operation Team to replace DCA's active devices as they approach end of warranty, based on the schedule developed by DCA agency director and IT liaison, Admin Agency Relations Manager, and Admin DTO Endpoint Operation Team.



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Budget Requests

Agency Priority 7 – Recurring Funds

Continuum of Care Service Delivery

\$106,500

This funding is to provide COC with 10 additional fleet vehicles. COC currently has five Fleet vehicles in four regions. On average, four employees per regional office share one state vehicle. There are six employees assigned to six different outpost offices who have no access to state vehicles. This provides a serious challenge to their ability to meet with children and families to provide necessary intensive care coordination.



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Proviso Requests

No Proviso Requests *with Note Regarding Budget Request Priority 4*

Agency Priority 4 – Recurring Funds

Continuum of Care Transfer Alignment \$400,000

DCA seeks a budget alignment in the event DMH is no longer required to transfer \$400,000 to Continuum of Care pursuant to **Proviso 35.1**, which has been in effect for approximately 20 years.



COVID-19 Expenditures

DCA received **\$0** COVID-19 related federal funds during FY22 and does not anticipate receiving any in FY23.

In FY21, the agency received **\$219,664.10** in federal reimbursement funds related to COVID-19 as follows:

Computers..... <i>(laptops, keyboards, monitors, setup costs)</i>	\$154,607.75
Cellphones.....	\$44,847.71
Emergency Sick Leave + Fringe.....	\$10,240.12
Software..... <i>(WebEx, Secure VPN)</i>	\$9,968.52

Department of Children's Advocacy Federal Relief Funds Summary as of 12/29/22						
Relief Funds Received						
Amount	Date Received	Date Required to be Spent	Relief Bill or Fed Grant Title	Summary of Need/Use	Spent	Remaining
\$ 219,664.09	9/16/2020	12/31/2021	COVID-19 CARES ACT	Expenditures Related to COVID-19	\$ 219,664.09	\$ -

Cost Savings Plan

- A general fund reduction would be achieved by maintaining five (5) vacancies within the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Program.
- DCA has committed to filling additional vacancies within the GAL Program as outlined in the Annual Accountability Report.
- DCA is taking measures to prevent a deficit due to mid-year reductions or reduced revenues.
- In FY21, a proviso modification was granted to allow DCA greater flexibility with GAL Trust funds.
- Additionally, the GAL Program applies for a VOCA grant each year and offsets state allocation requests through federal funding for contract attorneys and training. The Agency applied for and received a Title II grant during the federal year 2022-2023 also.
- DCA will continue to explore ways to reduce costs and reinvest those savings within the agency to better serve the citizens of South Carolina.



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