

September 29, 2016

The Honorable Richard M. Gergel
United States District Judge
Post Office Box 835
Charleston, SC 29402

Via electronic mail

Re: **Michelle H. v. Haley, et al.**
2:15-cv-00134-RMG

Dear Judge Gergel:

As court-appointed Co-Monitors in the above-referenced action, we are writing to provide an update to the Court in advance of the hearing scheduled for October 4, 2016. Below is a summary of the South Carolina Department of Social Services' ("DSS" or "the Department's") progress with respect to the requirements of the Consent Interim Relief Order (the "Interim Order") entered on September 28, 2015, as well some information about steps taken by DSS leadership in anticipation of final settlement approval.

Interim Order Requirements

The Interim Order required immediate action by DSS in a number of key areas. DSS was ordered to study and implement findings with respect to both workload limits and placement needs; to cease using hotels, offices and juvenile justice placements; and to reduce the placement of children ages six and under in congregate care. As outlined below, DSS has made diligent efforts to comply with the Interim Order requirements.

Given the myriad of interrelated problems within the DSS foster care system, sustained and focused effort is required to fully address the areas identified in the Interim Order. This has proven challenging for DSS leadership, given that it has had to focus in the months since entry of the Interim Order not only on its Interim Order commitments, but also on negotiating the Proposed Settlement (submitted on June 2, 2016) and on putting in place a leadership team capable of taking on the work of a broad reform effort. In addition, as discussed in more detail below, as Co-Monitors who have had considerable experience with other child welfare systems undertaking major reform, we have supported, and in some areas encouraged, DSS leadership to take the time necessary to engage in meaningful and thoughtful processes in its fulfillment of Interim Order requirements, laying the groundwork for longer term sustainable change. For these reasons, progress on the Interim Order requirements has been steady, but slow.

1. Workload Study and Workload Limits as to Foster Care

The Interim Order required that DSS design, conduct and complete a workload study and adopt one or more workload limits for foster care by March 28, 2016 (within 180 days of the entry of the Order). *Interim Order* §II.1(a). It further required that the workload study be approved by the Co-Monitors before it was conducted, and that we also approve the workload limits that result from the study. *Id.* at §II.1(c).

Between October 2015 and January 2016, DSS engaged with the Co-Monitors in an effort to reach agreement on the methodology for a workload study in accordance with the Interim Order requirements. In the weeks after the entry of the Interim order, DSS sent a study proposal and related documents, and worked to provide us with data and meeting access that allowed for a better understanding of the DSS proposal. We rejected DSS' early proposal that it adopt the foster care worker to child ratio recommended by a DSS Internal Study Group convened during the summer of 2015 and suggested they develop an alternative methodology. While we did not recommend a time-consuming and expensive time study as the basis for setting workload standards, we suggested a multi-step process that included a review of national and selected state standards as well as a process that tied the recommended standards to an assessment of the work expected of DSS case-carrying workers. DSS obtained our approval of its workload study design on February 22, 2016. *See Exhibit A.* The approved design was responsive to our feedback. In March 2016, DSS indicated that it was working with Casey Family Programs—a national foundation that provides support to state and local child welfare systems—to carry out the study.

Since March, DSS has made progress towards completion of the workload study - leadership attended a presentation by Casey Family Programs, met and talked with representatives from other jurisdictions, compiled and shared data and convened a new Workload Estimation Workgroup charged with carrying out a seven step process to estimate current workload and workforce needs across DSS program areas. According to DSS leadership, the workgroup was expected to share its findings with Casey Family Programs by September 15, 2016, at which point workload limits could be calculated and submitted to us for approval. We received a progress update from DSS on August 31, 2016, and are awaiting documents reflecting study findings and the submission of a final workload limits proposal so that our approval and subsequent work towards the development of an implementation plan can begin. As we have shared with DSS and Plaintiffs, however, moving from current caseloads to meeting established standards is expected to be a multi-year process. Workload adjustment will ultimately need to be part of a more comprehensive reform strategy that addresses other systemic issues that so crucially impact the time it takes for workers to do necessary tasks, including the proximity of children's placements to their home communities.

2. Placement Needs Assessment

The Interim Order required that DSS, subject to Co-Monitor approval, perform a statewide and regional foster care needs assessment by January 27, 2016 (within 120 days of the entry of the Interim Order). *Interim Order* §II.2. The assessment was to include specific recommendations for addressing findings, “including but not limited to recommendations that address the capacity to place [children] close to their home community, placing [children] in the least restrictive, most family-like placement, the number and array of therapeutic foster care placements, a system of tracking availability of beds in family foster homes, and matching of [children] to placements that can meet their needs.” *Id.* The Interim Order further required that, with our approval, DSS develop a plan by March 27, 2016 (within 60 days of assessment) to implement these recommendations within 18 months of completion of the assessment. *Id.* at §II.2(a).

DSS provided the Co-Monitors with a draft placement needs assessment methodology on January 28, 2016. We determined that the proposal was not sufficient, and urged DSS leadership to develop a thorough needs assessment process that utilizes more nuanced data analysis than had been initially proposed in addition to qualitative review of children’s needs. We also communicated—to both DSS and Plaintiffs—our concerns that the Interim Order timeline was inadequate for conducting a meaningful review of this kind and recommended extending the timelines in order to get a high quality assessment.

DSS leadership has also turned to Casey Family Programs for support with the placement needs assessment and has been in communication with them since February 26, 2016 in regard to this work. DSS leadership has been meeting regularly both internally and with Casey Family Programs since the end of March to develop an assessment methodology. On August 1, 2016, DSS provided the Co-Monitors with a copy of its Placement Needs Assessment Planning document, which reflected consistent effort in this regard. We have, however, yet to receive a final proposed methodology, which is essential to carrying out the needs assessment. In August, we communicated with DSS about our concerns that agreement on the methodology was eight months overdue.

In our most recent call on August 31, 2016, DSS reported that it had engaged the Center for Child and Family Studies at the University of South Carolina to help carry out the placement needs assessment, and that the Department hoped to complete the assessment by October 15, 2016. We plan on meeting directly with the Center for Child and Family Studies and DSS staff during the first week of October to discuss their progress. We hope that the result of the October meeting will be an approved methodology and work plan for carrying out the placement needs assessment. We do not think that an October 15, 2016 completion date is realistic and will work with DSS and its contractor to develop an expedited but realistic timeframe for completion and share the plan and timelines with Plaintiffs. We are hopeful

that the Center for Child and Family Studies will be helpful in moving the placement needs assessment process forward given its familiarity with the state's child welfare system from its prior work with the Department on the Child and Family Service Reviews.

3. Reduction of Placement of Children Ages 6 and Under in Congregate Care and Phasing out Use of Offices and Hotels

The Interim Order required that by November 30, 2015 (within 60 days of entry of the order), DSS create a plan for preventing the placement of any child ages six and under in a "non-family group placement." *Interim Order* §II.3(a). Both the plan, and any exceptions contained therein, were to be approved by the Co-Monitors. *Id.* DSS provided us with a draft plan for meeting this Interim Order requirement on October 15, 2016. The plan included immediate actions to review and, where appropriate, transition children ages six and under from congregate placements (with the support of clinical staff), and to amend existing contracts with therapeutic foster care providers who could help develop additional family placements for young children. At the same time, DSS has been taking steps to ramp up and improve its family foster care recruitment and approval processes. The Co-Monitors have not yet looked in depth at the foster care recruitment and retention efforts. After much discussion about appropriate exceptions to the requirement that children ages six and under should not be placed in congregate care settings, we approved a final plan on March 12, 2016. According to the Interim Order, DSS then had 60 days to fully implement the plan. *Id.* DSS immediately issued a directive to local and regional offices outlining the procedures to be used for the appropriate placement of children ages 6 and under consistent with the plan. *See* Exhibit B.

DSS' effort to reduce the use of congregate care placements for children ages six and under has been notable, particularly given that it has meant significant culture and practice changes for the Department and its provider community. Though it still has a ways to go, recently produced DSS data indicate that there has been a steady reduction in the number of children age six and under residing in congregate care since DSS began implementing practice changes in November 2015, and that the total number of children ages six and under in congregate care was down by nearly 50 percent from 142 children as of November 1, 2015 to 72 children as of June 30, 2016. *See* Exhibit C.

Further, DSS has reported that a total of 34 children ages six and under have been newly placed in congregate care between May 15, 2016 and August 1, 2016 and we are awaiting additional documentation of any approved exceptions that were relied upon in the placement of these children. As we have discussed with DSS leadership, we will be working with the Department to develop and implement data collection and monitoring activities to track the ongoing placement of children ages six and under, and assess the appropriate application and use of the exception provisions. As DSS understands, full compliance with the

implementation plan will ultimately depend upon the development of a richer and more extensive placement array throughout the state. While DSS reports that it has been taking steps to improve its recruitment, training and licensure of foster family placements through its Regional Resource Teams, this is expected to be an essential part of the work that comes out of the placement needs assessment and more comprehensive reform consistent with the Settlement Agreement.

The Interim Order required that DSS cease using DSS offices and hotels, motels and other commercial non-foster care establishments for placements by November 30, 2015, and that it refrain from recommending a juvenile justice placement for any youth without a pending charge. *Interim Order* §§II.3(b)-(c). On August 1, 2016, DSS reported that it was aware of only one instance in which an office or hotel was used since the entry of the Interim Order. As of September 11, 2015, DSS reported three instances in which a juvenile justice placement was used. These data were collected by surveying staff around the state. Going forward, DSS has reported that it is in the process of developing consistent, real time protocols that will ensure timely notification to state leadership of any such placements when and if they occur so that corrective actions can be taken.

Preparation for Implementation of Settlement Agreement Requirements

As discussed above, DSS has been working over recent months not only on Interim Order requirements, but on developing a leadership infrastructure that will enable it to work effectively towards compliance with the more comprehensive Settlement Agreement, should it be approved by the Court. DSS has made significant progress in this regard that will hopefully enable it to effectively address the larger systemic issues that impact its work. It has reported recent leadership changes, including the appointment of a new Child Welfare Director (Taron Davis), Director of Child Welfare Operations (Sandy Hart) and Director of Policy and Practice (Julie Mong). In addition, DSS reported that it received authorization in its recent budget to add three new positions, allowing for a more robust leadership team to focus on the requirements of the lawsuit. These include an Internal Monitor (Holly Pisarik), a Program Coordinator with extensive data experience (Diana Tester) and funds to support the future hiring of one other Program Coordinator with child welfare practice experience. Professional biographies are attached. *See* Exhibit D.

DSS has also engaged with us in preliminary discussions about our role and expectations as Co-Monitors, and about the contours of the monitoring relationship. DSS leadership has been responsive to our requests, and has consistently expressed a willingness to open their processes to us.

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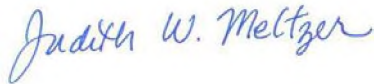
Letter from Co-Monitors to Court

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Please let us know if you have any questions, or would like to discuss any of these items further. We look forward to seeing you at the upcoming hearing, and to our continued work with the parties and the Court.

Sincerely,



Judith Meltzer
Deputy Director
Center for the Study of Social Policy



Paul Vincent
Director
Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group

- c: The Honorable Patrick Michael Duffy
Ira Lustbader, Esq., Children's Rights
Christina Wilson Remlin, Esq., Children's Rights
Matthew Richardson, Esq., Wyche P.A.
Susan Berkowitz, Esq., South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Stephen Suggs, Esq., South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Monty Todd, Esq., Sowell Gray, LLP
Becky Laffitte, Esq., Sowell Gray, LLP
Holly Pisarik, Esq., Office of General Counsel, SCDSS
Tony Catone, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, SCDSS

PROPOSED METHOD FOR FOSTER CARE WORK LOAD STUDY

A. DSS seeks the approval by the Co-Monitors of the proposed Workload Study method. This method would include review and consideration of:

- 1. Caseload and workload provisions, standards and best practices from organizational publications including the Council on Accreditation and Child Welfare League of America**
- 2. Data concerning current South Carolina Department of Social Services workloads and placement locations and other factors affecting workloads and time to conduct work in South Carolina**
- 3. Data and case load limits in other areas, specifically including Tennessee, New Jersey, Washington, D.C. and Mississippi.**
- 4. Workload study completed by Casey Family Programs in 2015**
- 5. The workload study will include focus on the time needed and time available for workers to manage and complete current work and work anticipated as a result of the Michelle H. v. Haley Settlement Agreement but will not be a “time study.” Rather, the time needed and time available portions will be considered based upon data regarding caseloads, current system performance, out-of-county placements and other trends; conclusions from other time studies and best practices; ancillary data from the placement study; input from workers, supervisors and administrators; comparison of worker tasks from other states; and specific conclusions concerning time needed/time available for South Carolina Department of Social Services as analyzed by Casey Family Programs**
- 6. Casey Family Programs to conduct evaluation and enhanced analysis of information and data of sections 1-5 above specific to South Carolina.**

B. The caseload study proposed would be followed with submission to the co-monitors of specific caseload/workload limits based upon the findings of the study to be completed by Casey Family Programs.

South Carolina Department of Social Services

DIRECTIVE MEMO

March 14, 2016

To: County Directors
Division Directors
Regional Directors
All Human Services Staff

From: Taron Brown Davis, J.D.
Deputy Director
Child Welfare Services

Subject: **Placement Policy and Procedure for Children 6 and Under**

The SCDSS is committed to ensuring that all children in the SCDSS custody are afforded a safe placement in the least restrictive and most family-like setting possible, and that it is in close proximity to their home and community when reunification is the goal. When through comprehensive and well documented case planning and assessment, it is determined a child/youth in the SCDSS custody has specialized behavioral and mental health needs and is in need of a level of support that exceeds the capacity of a caregiver in a family-like setting, then other placement options in the available array of services may be considered. More restrictive levels of placement can be used for the purpose of stabilizing the child or youth, so he/she can return to a family-like setting.

Given this commitment to placing children in the least restrictive, most family-like setting and in order to be compliant with the Consent for Immediate Interim Relief ordered by Judge Richard M. Gergel, no child ages 6 and under can be placed in a congregate care setting (Group Care I, Group Care II, Group Care III and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility). **Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Deputy Director for Child Welfare Services.

The following procedures have been established to provide family like placements for children ages 6 and under and any siblings who are currently in Group Care Placements or have the potential to be placed in Group Care Placements upon entering care.

Children Ages 6 and Under Placement Procedures:

- 1) All efforts to secure placement must be documented with specificity.
- 2) When a child ages 6 and under comes into care, county staff are to contact their Regional Foster Family and Licensing Support (RFFALS) to locate a foster home placement. The RFFALS staff can be reached at the following numbers:

Region	Office Phone #	Cell Phone Number
1	(864)642-8432	864-760-9044
2	(803)898-8157	803-622-0631
3	(843)953-9586	843-259-0205
4	(843)413-6477 and (843)413-6471	843-616-2003 and 843-729-6279
5	(803)761-2868	803-522-6580

- 3) When all potential foster home placement searches have been *exhausted, then the RFFALS staff will coordinate placement for a child age 6 or under with the Treatment Foster Home Services (TFHS) Level I providers that signed onto Change Order #7. The RFFALS will request available TFHS I placements within proximity of the county of origin, and if not located, will pursue TFHS placements within the Region, and as a last resort TFHS placements outside of the Region. Concerted efforts will be made to place siblings together who are coming into care, with the Treatment Foster Home Services Level 1 providers, unless it is documented by a supervisor, that a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings per *Chapter 8, Foster Care Policy Manual Section 810, item #12.

*An exhaustive search means:

- No regular foster home placement can be found within the proximity of the county of origin and within region.
- When applicable, no foster home placement was available when concerted efforts had been made to place siblings together who were coming into care, that joint placement was not documented to be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings
- The child does not meet the *Exception Rules requiring prior approval from the Deputy Director for Office of Child Welfare Services.

- 4) Upon location of the appropriate TFHS 1 level of placement, the RFFALS staff will complete the Non-Medicaid Therapeutic Placement Approval Form and email document to Tandekah Ellerbe at Tandekah.ellerbe@dss.sc.gov at the Program Management Business Office at the SCDSS State Office and copy the TFHS provider who has accepted the child age 6 and under and any applicable siblings. If any placement change occurs under the Change Order #7, RFFALS staff will complete a new Non-Medicaid Therapeutic Placement Approval Form and e-mail to Tandekah Ellerbe.

- 5) The TFHS 1 provider will receive the daily room and board rate for Treatment Foster Home Services Level 1 with no additional Rehabilitative Behavioral Health Services (RBHS) reimbursement for the child age 6 and under and all siblings of any age if applicable for the duration of the placement. The TFHS will also be reimbursed for the room and board rate for TFHS I with no additional RBHS reimbursement for all child age 6 and under with any sibling(s) for the duration of the placements in the following situations:

- TFHS provider accepts a sibling group along with the child 6 and under and places them into two separate TFHS placements with intent to keep sibling and parental connections when indicated.

- TFHS provider moves child age 6 and under and all siblings to another TFS level I placement and/or transitions with child age 6 and under and siblings to another TFHS provider on the Change Order #7
- The TFHS provider has accepted child age 6 and under along with any age siblings and one or more siblings are transitioned to a higher level of care placement for therapeutic reasons but returns to TFHS provider and siblings at any point and time.
- The originating child and/or children ages 6 and under that triggered the placement under the Change Order #7 reach age of 7 and older.

Also, The TFHS I provider can request an Interagency System of Caring for Emotionally Disturbed Children (ISCEDC) staffing for any child age 6 and under and siblings if applicable, that is being served under Change Order #7 and has been assessed to have a need for RBHS support. If the child is deemed to be eligible for TFHS services through assessment and approval by the ISCEDC Staffing Team, then the approved Treatment Foster Home Service Level with corresponding RBHS rates will be applied to the contract and the reimbursement rate for the Change Order #7 will be terminated.

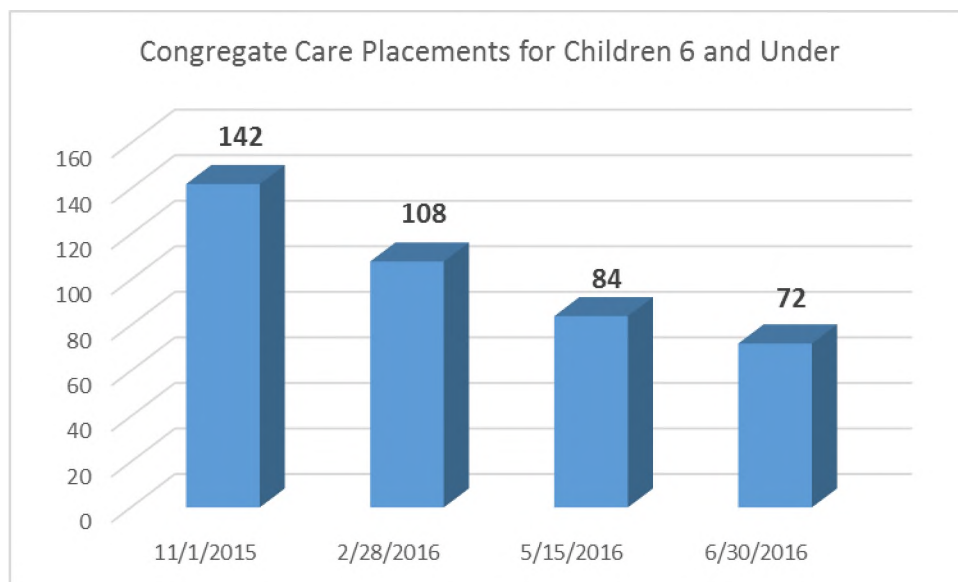
The following licensed Therapeutic Foster Homes have signed on to the contract Change Order #7. These providers are available for children and siblings ages 6 and under and siblings of any age when applicable, who come into care or are in an existing Group Care facility.

	Provider	Director	E-Mail Address for Placement	Mailing Address	Service Availability	Telephone and Fax
1	Alston Wilkes	Anne Walker sannewalker@alstonwilkessociety.org	LaQuista Peterson lpeterson@aws1962.org 771-4610 (New Office)	3518 Medical Park Drive Columbia, SC 29203	Statewide	803-799-2490 F 803-540-7223
2	Family Preservation Community Services, Inc.	Cathy Freeman cfreeman@fpcscorp.com	Melissa Bourroughs (x14) mburroughs@fpcscorp.com (803) 269-5854 cell	3710 Landmark Drive, Suite 307 Columbia, SC 29204-4034	Statewide	803-782-3424 F 803-782-3426
3	Growing Home Southeast	Gayle Ricks, CEO gricks@growinghomese.com	Kelli Kelly, Prog. Quality Improvement kkelly@growinghomese.com	440 Knox Abbott Drive, Suite 250 Cayce, SC 29033-4353	Statewide	803-791-5513 F 803-739-0301
4	LifeShare Management Group, Inc. 1735 St. Julian Place, Suite 300 Columbia, SC 29204	Terrasel Jones t.jones@lifeshareinc.org	Kiara Harris k.harris@lifeshareusa.com	155 Dow Street Suite 300 Manchester, NH 03101	Statewide	803-708-5081 F 803-708-2937
5	Lutheran Services Carolinas 1118 Union Street Columbia, SC 29201	Bethany Vause bvause@lscarolinas.net (803) 513-2794 cell	Myra Griffie myra.griffie@lfscarolinas.org (919) 832-2620	616 Hutton Street Suite 103 Raleigh, NC 27606	Statewide	803-750-9917 F 803-750-9920
6	South Carolina Mentor, Inc. 3600 Forest Drive Suite 100	Elaine Miller elaine.miller@thementornetwork.com (803) 960-4929 cell	Dr. Stan Butkus, State Director	Same	Statewide	803-799-9025 F 803-931-8962

	Columbia, SC 29204					
7	South Carolina Youth Advocate Program (SCYAP) 140 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 350 Columbia, SC 29210	Lex Cole lcole@scyap.com	Rhonda McCurry rmccurry@scyap.com	Same	Statewide	803-779-5500 F 803-779-8444
8	Specialized Alternative for Families and Youth (SAFY) 800 Dutch Square Blvd. Building C, Suite 205 Columbia, SC 29210-7317	Christi Wright, State Director 4925 Lacross Road Suite 111 N. Charleston, SC 29406 wrightc@safy.org	Rusty Alexander (Corporate) alexanderr@safy.org	10100 Elida Road Delphos, OH 45833 (800) 532-7239 x1037	Statewide	843-552-1220 (x4601) F 843-552-0502
9	The Bair Foundation 115 Atrium Way Suite 118 Columbia, SC 29223	Kim McElroy, State Director (x14) kmcclroy@bair.org (803) 297-6141 cell		241 High Street New Wilmington, PA 16142	Statewide	803-736-2338 F 803-736-1206

****Exception Rule:** Any group care placement for a child that is age 6 and under requires prior approval from the Deputy Director of Child Welfare Services upon the advice of the agency clinical staff that the child meets the following criteria:

- 1) The child requires a degree of clinical and/ or medical support that can only be provided in a group care setting and cannot be provided in a family like setting and the placement is a facility that has the capacity and specialized treatment to meet those needs.
- 2) The child is also the son or daughter of another child placed in a group care setting.
- 3) The children coming into care that are in a sibling group of four (4) or larger and all efforts to secure foster home and Therapeutic Foster home placements that are on the Change Order have been completed and not produced a home. In that instance, placement in a facility that can accommodate the sibling group together and maintain daily contact between siblings is an allowable exception. This exception is time-limited for up to 90 days and can be extended for time-limited increments after considering and documenting the best interests of the children and pursuing and documenting intensive efforts to identify and support an appropriate placement or placements.



Source: SCDSS, August 2016

SCDSS PROFESSIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Taron B. Davis, J.D.

Taron Brown Davis is Deputy State Director for the division of Child Welfare Services at the South Carolina Department of Social Services. Previously she was an Assistant General Counsel at the department. Mrs. Davis has also served as a Senior Resource Attorney at the University of South Carolina School of Law Children's Law Center, practiced exclusively in the family court while working with Davis & Davis, LLC, and served as Chief Counsel at Richland County Department of Social Services. Upon completion of a judicial clerkship in the Ninth Judicial Circuit, Mrs. Davis began her career as a juvenile public defender in Richland County in 1995. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of South Carolina in 1991 and her Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1994.

Julie C. Mong

Julie comes to the State of South Carolina DSS with 23 years of Child Welfare experience in a number of areas. After working in both the public and private sector of child welfare in Ohio, Julie spent 4 ½ years as a Program Specialist with the National Resource Center for Youth Development. Subsequently, Julie was a Senior Consultant with ICF International providing technical assistance to the Region VII ACF office regarding the CFSR process. For the past 10 years she has worked with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services as a training manager for the Eastern portion of the state and worked closely with their Quality Improvement System. Julie's current title with South Carolina DSS is Director of Policy, Programs, and Practice. Her areas of expertise include: Foster and Adoptive Recruitment and Licensing, Youth Development, Leadership Development, and Developing Child Welfare Improvement Systems on a local, state, and national level.

Sandy Hart, MSW

Ms. Hart joined the SCDSS team on May 17th, 2016. She received her BSSW degree from the University of Minnesota and her MSW from the University of Washington. Public child welfare is Ms. Hart's expertise as well as her passion.

Prior to moving to South Carolina, Ms. Hart spent 5 years working for Casey Family Programs as the interim Senior Director for the Seattle Field Office. In her role as Senior Director, Sandy had responsibility for managing the Seattle Direct Services Field Office as well as providing consultative services to other public child welfare leadership in various states. Among her priorities while working for Casey Family Services were promoting excellent permanency practices, encouraging best practices, preventing youth from aging out of care, managing foster care licensing, and assisting in developing a Quality and Compliance Review system.

Prior to working for Casey Family Services, Ms. Hart spent 28 years working in Public Child Welfare in the states of Wisconsin and Washington. She spent most of her public child welfare career working for the State of Washington's Children's Administration. Ms. Hart has held positions as CPS Investigative Social Worker, Family Child Care Licensur, Supervisor for Child Welfare services, Program Management for all Child Welfare services as well as Accreditation and CRSR leadership. Her most recent position with Washington State Children's Administration was as Deputy Director for Children's Administration in Region 3 (the region that serves King County and the greater Seattle area). As Deputy Director, Ms. Hart managed Permanency, Safety, Fatality, Fiduciary, Education, Congregate Care, Adolescent, ICW and other public child welfare programs.

Diana M. Tester, MPA

Diana returns to SCDSS with over 25 years of experience in various research and analytic roles with the State of South Carolina. Her career began at the SC Integrated Data Warehouse currently housed with the Office of Revenue Affairs (formerly known as the SC Budget and Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics) where she began as a statistician and rose to become State Data Center manager. While there, she managed teams whose work included using administrative files, developing reports, tracking and measuring indicators and participating in various research projects with the SC Departments of Social Services, Education, First Steps, and Juvenile Justice. Projects also included analyzing Decennial Census and American Community Survey data as well as performing GIS activities. She also provided technical assistance to the SC Council on Homelessness to connect HMIS data to the Data Warehouse.

In 2008, Diana moved to the SCDSS where she served as its Research Director. While there, she interfaced with the university community, served as liaison within the agency to outside entities on research initiatives, worked internally with program managers to ask (and answer) questions regarding program data, wrote grants and reports, and analyzed information.

Her most recent job has been as a Policy Analyst at the University of South Carolina's Child Development Research Center, where she has been using state administrative files and research literature to evaluate program policies. Diana (re)joins the DSS team in October 2016.