



State Support for the First Thousand Days After Birth

State Spotlight: South Carolina

Information current as of December 2025.

1. Care Coordination and Pregnancy Support

1.1 *Pregnancy Support*

Alternatives to Abortion Program

South Carolina's alternatives to abortion program funds pregnancy centers throughout the state and is funded by statutory allocation.

1.2 *Care Coordination*

First 5 South Carolina

This website connects South Carolina parents of children up to five years old with public programs and services for their children. It is a result of a partnership between private organizations and state agencies. The website [provides links](#) to programs related to childcare and early education, health and safety, special needs and early intervention, food and nutrition, and parenting and family support.

Care Line

This is a free hotline that provides women and their families with information on prenatal care, infant health care, family planning, and other services related to pregnancy and parenting that are available in the state.

2. Women's Health

2.1 Prenatal and Postpartum Medical Care

Family Planning Services

The state funds public clinics that provide family planning services on a sliding fee scale according to patients' income. Clinics providing these services are available in all 46 counties. Services available at these clinics include education and counseling services, pap smear exams, lab and pregnancy testing, and HIV testing and counseling.

2.2 Prenatal and Postpartum Support

S474 (2023)

This legislation, signed by Governor McMaster in May 2023, requires that biological fathers pay 50% of the mother's pregnancy-related expenses and child support (when applicable) from the date of conception. This legislation also mandates that all state sponsored insurance plans include coverage for contraceptives. The legislation explicitly states that no contraception provided and covered by the state can be provided with the intent of causing an abortion.

Postpartum Newborn Home Visits

This program provides eligible, participating new mothers and their babies with free postpartum home visits. Local health departments coordinate these home visits but interested mothers must get a referral from a doctor or nurse. Visits to teen mothers, low birth weight babies, and premature babies are prioritized. During visits, a nurse will examine and weigh the baby, check the mother's blood pressure, partially examine the mother, coordinate health care appointments if needed, help with breastfeeding, offer birth control, refer mothers to social services, and educate the mother on best practices for her health and her baby's health.

- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Pre-Discharge Home Visit- This program provides free visits by a public health nurse to eligible infants who are ready to go home after a NICU stay. The visits take place prior to discharge from the hospital.

Breastfeeding Laws

South Carolina's [Lactation Support Act](#) requires South Carolina employers to provide breastfeeding employers with reasonable unpaid break time to pump as well as a location, other than a bathroom, for the employee to pump.

MIECHV

[Children's Trust](#), a governor-appointed team, administers the federal Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program funds the state receives for its home visiting services. Home visiting services are available in 39 of the 46 South Carolina counties. South Carolina's MIECHV funds support three home visiting models:

- Healthy Families America- This model is available prenatally or within the first two weeks after the birth of the baby. Parents' eligibility is determined by using a systematic screening tool or assessment.
- Nurse-Family Partnership- This model promotes the mother's health during pregnancy, child development, and a healthy mother-child relationship. Mothers must enroll in the program before 28 weeks' gestation and families must meet low-income criteria.
- Parents as Teachers- This model focuses on promoting a child's health, development, and learning and encouraging healthy parenting practices. Pregnant mothers and children from birth through age three are served through this program.

WIC Breastfeeding Education

South Carolina's WIC program provides breastfeeding mothers with counseling, peer support, and pumping supplies. WIC breastfeeding participants can receive WIC benefits longer than non-breastfeeding mothers and receive enhanced food packages.

2.3 General Medical Care for Women

Medically Indigent Assistance Program

The Medically Indigent Assistance Program is a Medicaid program that covers inpatient hospital services for eligible members. South Carolina citizens are eligible if they don't qualify for traditional Medicaid or do not have another sufficient form of health insurance and the resources to pay for inpatient hospital services.

Adult Vaccine Program

This program reimburses providers who offer free or reduced-cost vaccines to adults that can't afford to pay for vaccines because they are uninsured or underinsured. Some of the vaccines covered by this program include MenB, MMR, Varicella, and MMRV.

Best Chance Network

This is South Carolina's Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCSP). It provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings to eligible South Carolina women. Screenings provided by this program include clinical breast exams, mammograms, pap smears, pelvic exams, HPV tests, diagnostic testing for women with abnormal results (ex. MRIs), and follow-up information and support services. Women may qualify if they:

- Are a female South Carolina resident between the ages of 21 and 64
- Have high-deductible insurance, insurance that does not cover diagnostic services, no health insurance, or be underinsured
- Have a high family risk for breast or cervical cancer
- Meet [income limits](#)

18 and Older-Sickle Cell Disease Program

This program pays for medical services, prescriptions, and durable medical equipment related to the treatment of sickle cell disease in adults. This program also provides care coordination services and nursing and social work services as available. Those with other congenital hemoglobinopathies

can receive this program's services as well. Eligibility requirements include meeting all the following criteria:

- Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
- Be a South Carolina resident
- Have a household income at or below 250% of FPL
- Have a physician diagnosis of sickle cell disease or another congenital hemoglobinopathy

Medicaid

Medicaid in South Carolina provides health coverage to eligible South Carolina residents who meet the income guidelines and are U.S. citizens or have satisfactory immigration status. There are various Medicaid programs available in South Carolina for individuals and families, each with their own additional requirements. Below are several groups that are eligible for South Carolina Medicaid ([Section 204](#)). Information on income limits can be found here ([Chapter 103](#)).

- Pregnant women- Pregnant women are eligible for full-coverage Medicaid if they meet certain family size and income limits (at or below 199% of the FPL, South Carolina's Medicaid income limit for this eligibility category includes the 5% federal disregard). The federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services [approved](#) South Carolina's change to their Medicaid State Plan in 2022 which extended postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months.
- Parents and caretakers- Parents with children (under the age of 19) living in their home who also meet resident, citizenship, and income requirements (at or below 67% of the FPL; South Carolina's Medicaid income limit for this eligibility category includes the 5% federal disregard) are Medicaid-eligible.
- BCCSP enrollees- Those who received cancer diagnoses through the South Carolina BCCSP receive full coverage Medicaid if their income is at or below 200% of the FPL.
- Family planning program- South Carolina's Medicaid family planning program provides coverage for family planning services only. Examples of covered services include biennial physical exams and some preventative screenings. Men and women of any age are eligible for this program if they are not enrolled in another Medicaid eligibility category and have an income at or below 199% of the FPL. South Carolina's Medicaid income limit for this eligibility category includes the 5% federal disregard.

For more information, see section 6.1 for disability-specific Medicaid programs, section 7.2 for child-specific Medicaid programs, section 7.4 for adoption-specific Medicaid programs, and 7.5 for foster care-specific programs.

3. Finances, Work, and Education

3.1 Help Paying Bills

Family Independence

This is South Carolina's TANF program. It provides financial assistance to needy South Carolina families with children. Benefits come in the form of an EBT card loaded on the first of every month. TANF participants can also receive childcare assistance and assistance related to transportation and work-related expenses. Eligibility requirements include meeting all the following criteria:

- Be a South Carolina resident with a dependent child
- Cooperate with child support enforcement if applicable
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified immigrant
- Meet income limits

3.2 Employment Support

TANF Work Program

This is South Carolina's jobs program for their TANF benefit program. Medically eligible TANF participants must participate in this jobs program. This program pairs benefit recipients with Family Success Coaches to remove barriers to employment and help them find jobs.

SNAP Employment and Training (E&T)

SNAP2Work is South Carolina's employment program that satisfies the SNAP work requirement for SNAP participating able-bodied adults, those between the ages of 18-52, without dependents. The program provides work, education, and vocational training services as well as job retention services.

3.3 Education and Training

No applicable and/or known programs.

3.4 Financial Advice or Education

No applicable and/or known programs.

4. Material or Legal Support

4.1 Transportation

Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

South Carolina's Medicaid program provides non-emergency medical transportation to its members for doctors' appointments, dialysis, lab work, diagnostic tests, or drug store visits. The state Medicaid program's transportation broker is ModivCare.

4.2 Food and Nutrition

WIC

This program is funded by the federal government but run by the state. It provides healthy foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and their children (up to age 5) who are at nutritional risk. Dads and grandparents of children under the age of five can also sign up for South Carolina's WIC program. Families already on Medicaid, TANF, or SNAP are automatically income eligible for WIC.

SNAP

This program is funded by the federal government but run by the state. It provides supplemental assistance to low-income families' monthly food budgets. Eligibility requirements include meeting all the following requirements:

- Be a South Carolina resident
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified noncitizen
- Meet household income limits
- Work or participate in the Employment and Training Program (there are exceptions)

Healthy Bucks SNAP Program is a component of South Carolina's SNAP program that allows SNAP recipients to purchase twice as many fruits and vegetables when they use their SNAP benefits at participating Healthy Bucks vendors. When SNAP members buy at least \$5 at Healthy Bucks vendors they receive \$15 in Healthy Bucks tokens to purchase fruits and vegetables. There are participating Healthy Bucks vendors in 35 of the 46 South Carolina counties.

Special Nutrition Programs

National School Breakfast and Lunch Program

This federally funded program is run by the state and provides needy children with free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunches at participating schools.

After School Snack Program

This is a federally funded program that provides public and private schools as well as childcare institutions with subsidized snacks for after school programs. The snacks are provided for free or at a reduced cost for eligible children.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

This is a federally funded program that provides elementary schools with a wider variety of produce than the National School Lunch Program provides.

Special Milk Program

This is a federally funded program run by the state and provides milk to low-income or very low-income children in public and private schools, childcare institutions, and camps that do not participate in other federal child nutrition meal service programs.

[Summer Meals Program](#)

This federally funded program is run by the state and includes two subprograms - the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option. Both subprograms provide free meals to children 18 years or younger in participating communities and day camps.

[Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)

This federally funded program is run by the state and provides reimbursable meals to childcare centers who take care of children under 13 years of age or to adults with disabilities.

[Emergency Shelter Food Program](#)

This program provides reimbursable meals for emergency and homeless shelters that care for children under the age of 18.

[The Emergency Food Assistance Program \(TEFAP\)](#)

TEFAP is a federally funded program that provides states with 100% American grown foods which are allocated to participating food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens. Low-income individuals and families can then go and receive supplemental food boxes from these entities. These supplemental food boxes contain three to five days' worth of food. Monthly income limits apply.

4.3 Clothing, Household Goods, and Baby Supplies

No applicable and/or known programs.

4.4 Housing, Shelters, and Maternity Homes

[Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#)

LIHEAP is a federally funded program run by the South Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity that helps low-income South Carolina families with utility bill payments, weatherization repairs, or energy crisis situations. Local LIHEAP offices throughout the state determine household eligibility based on their income and/or other criteria.

[Weatherization Assistance Program](#)

This federally funded program run by the South Carolina Office of Economic Opportunity weatherizes low-income families' homes to reduce their energy bills. Families must meet income limits to be eligible, and preference is given to the elderly (age 60 and older) and families who have a member with a disability or children under age 18. Families receiving SSI or Aid to Families with Dependent Children are automatically income eligible.

SC Safe Home Mitigation Grant Program

This program, administered by the South Carolina Department of Insurance, provides matching and non-matching grants to coastal property owners to make their single-family homes more resistant to hurricanes. Grant amounts are determined by the family's annual household income in relation to the county area median income or state median family income.

Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program

This program helps the state's Section 8 families transition from renting to owning a home. A family must currently be a Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) participant to be eligible for the homeownership program. As of January 2026, the HCVP is closed to new applicants due to a long waitlist. The homeownership program's other eligibility requirements can be found [here](#). Eligibility does not guarantee applicants' home ownership.

SC Housing Homebuyer Program

This program assists low-to-moderate income homebuyers by offering fixed interest rate mortgage loans and down payment assistance. All assistance recipients must complete a homebuyer training course to be eligible for a loan. Additional eligibility requirements for individuals in targeted and non-targeted counties differs slightly. The breakdown of counties and eligibility requirements can be found [here](#).

County First Initiative

This is a South Carolina Department of Housing program that helps low-income families in rural areas of the state buy single-family homes, condos, or town homes by providing them with forgivable down payment assistance and special fixed rate financing. The list of counties served by this program can be found [here](#).

Community Services Block Grant

This federal grant, administered by the state, funds two South Carolina-specific projects- Local Initiative Projects and General Emergency Assistance Program. Local Initiative Projects are services covering various areas of need such as employment, education, housing, and nutrition with the goal of reducing poverty. The General Emergency Assistance Program provides financial assistance to eligible households for emergency expenses related to rent, mortgage, food, and medical services.

4.5 Legal Support

No applicable and/or known programs.

4.6 Miscellaneous

No applicable and/or known programs.

5. Recovery and Mental Health

5.1 Addiction Recovery

No applicable and/or known programs.

5.2 Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Trafficking Recovery

No applicable and/or known programs.

5.3 Mental Health

Highway to Hope

This is a mobile crisis response program that offers mental and primary health services to adults and children in rural communities. Services are performed by public health psychiatric nurses and counselors in state-provided mobile clinic vans.

5.4 Abortion Recovery and Healing

No applicable and/or known programs.

6. Disability Assistance

BabyNet

This is South Carolina's interagency early intervention system for children with developmental disabilities who are under three years old. Anyone can refer a child to this program. The program provides participating families with care coordination services, stipends for specialized medical equipment, and respite services. Baby Net [partners](#) with the University of South Carolina's Team for Early Childhood Solutions to provide BabyNet families with physical, occupational, and speech therapy as well as care coordination services.

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs Early Intervention

This program provides in-home services by an early interventionist for children (birth to age 6) experiencing developmental delays. This program provides care coordination services, physical or occupational therapy, speech therapy, and assistive technology. Children ages three and under are often referred to this program through the Baby Net program (see above).

Disability-Specific Medicaid Programs

South Carolina Medicaid offers Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers to individuals who require comprehensive coverage and additional long-term support services that allow disabled individuals to live at home instead of in a long-term care facility. South Carolina HCBS waivers [include](#):

- SC Community Choices Waiver- This waiver is for individuals ages 65 and older and those with physical disabilities ages 18-64 who need a nursing facility level of care. Examples of covered services include adult day health care, case management, and pest control.
- SC Community Supports (CS) Waiver- This waiver is for individuals of any age with an intellectual disability who need an ICF/IID level of care. Examples of covered services include behavior support services, career preparation services, and in-home support services.
- SC Head and Spinal Cord Injury (HSCI) Waiver- This waiver is for individuals of any age with brain injuries or physical disabilities who need an ICF/IDD level of care. Examples of covered services include respite care, home modifications, and vehicle modifications.
- SC HIV/AIDS Waiver- This waiver is for individuals with HIV/AIDS of any age who need a hospital level of care. Examples of covered services include attendant care, home modifications, and home delivered meals.
- SC Intellectual Disability and Related Disabilities (ID/RD) Waiver- This waiver is for individuals of any age with an intellectual disability who needs an ICF/IID level of care. Examples of covered services include adult day health care services, pest control, and vehicle modifications.
- SC Mechanical Ventilator Dependent Waiver- This waiver is for technology independent individuals ages 21 and older who need a nursing facility level of care. Examples of covered services include home accessibility modifications, home delivered meals, and nursing services.
- SC Medically Complex Children Waiver- This waiver is for medically fragile youth, ages 0-21, who need a hospital level of care. Examples of covered services include nurse care coordination, pediatric medical day care services, and respite care.
- SC Palmetto Coordinated System of Care for Children (PCSC) Home and Community Based Waiver- This waiver is for youth, ages 0-21, with serious emotional disturbances who need a hospital level of care. This waiver provides a wraparound model of care with individualized services to help address the enrolled child's emotional disturbance.

[Aged, blind, and disabled adults](#) (Chapter 303) not enrolled in these waivers can also receive full Medicaid coverage through the state's Medicaid program if their income is at or below 100% of the FPL. Those who are employed but disabled and have an income at or below 250% of the FPL can receive full-coverage Medicaid as well (Chapter 307).

Another disability-specific Medicaid program covered by South Carolina's Medicaid program is the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act ([TEFRA](#)) program, otherwise known as the Katie Beckett program (Chapter 305). This program is for children 18 years old and younger with disabilities who want to live at home but qualify for institutional placement in a hospital or intermediate care facility. This program provides full Medicaid coverage and additional program-specific services. The income limit for this program is three times the current federal benefits rate, and there are additional resource limits. Some services covered by this program include physical, occupational, and speech therapy, outpatient behavioral health counseling, nursing services, etc.

Lastly, the [Home Again program](#) helps Medicaid members living in nursing facilities or hospitals transition back to their communities. Examples of covered services include the assignment of a Transition Coordination Provider to each member and a Case Manager that helps members enroll in HCBS waivers.

7. Care for Children

7.1 Childcare

SC Expansion & Operating Grant

The South Carolina Department of Social Services is providing childcare providers with a grant to expand their businesses to increase their current enrollment and increase the number of childcare facilities for families in the state. This grant is available to childcare centers, group childcare homes, and family childcare homes. The amount of grant money that a childcare facility receives depends on the number of children enrolled at the facility.

Working Families Child Care Scholarship Program

The Department of Social Services supports and runs this program. The program provides childcare scholarships to working families. Parental eligibility requirements include meeting all the following criteria:

- Having a child under 13 years old (or a child up to age 18 if the child has a disability or is in foster care)
- Working at least 15 hours per week or attending school or a training program
- Having a gross income at or below 85% of the state medium income level

South Carolina First Steps

This is both a state agency and a 501 (c)(3) organization that was first established by legislative mandate in 1999. The agency focuses on helping children transition from preschool to kindergarten. The program also helps educate families on how to help their children succeed academically.

- [Countdown to Kindergarten](#)- This is a program included in the South Carolina First Steps initiative that helps children most at risk for school failure transition from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten. It connects families with the children's teachers during the summer in six one-hour sessions (five in the home and one at the child's school). Teachers focus on preparing parents to help their child succeed in school and focus on language and literacy development. This program is available in over 25 South Carolina counties.

First Steps 4K

This program funds prekindergarten at childcare centers or private schools for four-year-olds in the "most-at-risk" category, whose family's income is 100% below the FPL, or whose family is eligible for Head Start, state-funded literacy programs, SNAP, Medicaid, or TANF. Children can also qualify for state funded pre-K if they have a documented developmental disability, an IEP, or an incarcerated parent. Foster and homeless children are also eligible for this program as well as

children who participate in free or reduced-cost meal programs. Children must be South Carolina residents to be eligible for this program. [Care](#) is provided five days a week, in-person, and operates year-round.

- [First Steps 4K+](#)- This state-run, state-funded program provides First Steps 4K students with free extended after-school care (and care before school) as well as their siblings. Siblings must enroll at a licensed childcare center or an afterschool program that participates in the state's voluntary quality rating and improvement system.

Students who are eligible for First Steps 4K, as well as their siblings, are automatically eligible for childcare scholarships (see above) administered by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Social Services.

7.2 Children's Health Care

Medicaid for Children/CHIP

South Carolina's CHIP program is combined with the state's Medicaid program for children. The income limit is at or below 213 % of the FPL. South Carolina residents under age 19 can qualify for full-coverage Medicaid if they meet citizenship or immigration [requirements](#). South Carolina's Early Period Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit provides health coverage for well-child visits and diagnostic screenings for all children with actual or potential health issues, from birth to age 21 who are enrolled in Medicaid. This mandated Medicaid benefit screens children with actual or potential health problems to treat them before they become permanent disabilities. Preventive health services are also available to Medicaid-eligible children under age 21.

Vaccines for Children

This is a federal program run at the state level, and it provides participating doctors' offices with free vaccines to freely administer to residents under the age of 19 whose families could otherwise not afford to vaccinate their children. To be eligible to receive free vaccines from this program, children must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Be American Indian or Alaska Native
- Be Medicaid-eligible
- Be uninsured
- Be underinsured

South Carolina State Vaccine Program

This is a state funded and run program that provides participating doctors' offices with free vaccines to administer to qualifying children and adults. For children (birth through age 18) to be eligible, they must be underinsured or have insurance with a deductible that has not been met and whose family cannot afford to pay for vaccines for them. For adults (ages 19 and older) to be eligible, they must be uninsured or underinsured.

South Carolina Newborn Screening Program

All babies born at South Carolina hospitals are tested for over 50 genetic conditions before being discharged. It is important to note that while this program is required, parents pay for these services

as a part of the cost to deliver their child. Religious exemptions are available for this requirement. Unlike most other states, South Carolina's Newborn Screening program does not include screening for hearing loss or Critical Congenital Heart Defects. Hearing screen services are provided through the state's First Sound Program (see below).

First Sound

This is South Carolina's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program. South Carolina requires hospitals that birth 100 or more babies a year to screen each newborn for hearing loss. This program coordinates the treatment and rescreening of infants who don't pass the initial hearing test and refers infants who are confirmed to be deaf or hard of hearing to the state's BabyNet early intervention program (see section 6.1).

Continuum of Care

This program helps children with serious emotional or behavioral disorders to stay in their family's home and in their school. To be [eligible](#) for this program, children must meet all the following requirements:

- Be a South Carolina resident
- Be under the age of 18 unless they are enrolled in a special education program
- Have a professionally diagnosed severe emotional or behavioral health disorder
- Be unable to treat the disorder with existing services available to them
- Be in the custody of their parents, other legal guardians, or the state and live in the community, with relatives in a foster home, or in a group home.
- Have parental consent unless they are over age 18 and competent to sign for themselves

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

This program provides children with chronic health conditions, medically complex health issues, behavioral health disorders and/or developmental disabilities with health services as well as case management and care coordination services. The program may pay for certain treatment services for participating children. There are a few subprograms under this program:

- [Children's Rehabilitative Services](#): This program is a financial assistance program for families with children (under the age of 18) with chronic illnesses. The financial assistance can pay for medical services, durable medical equipment, and prescriptions related to the child's chronic condition. This program also provides care coordination services to families and helps them develop a care plan. To be eligible for this program, children must meet all the following requirements:
 - o Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
 - o Be a South Carolina resident
 - o Have a household income at or below 250% of the FPL
 - o Have a covered diagnosis (most congenital defects and chronic illnesses)
- [Hearing Program](#): This program provides low-income children and young adults suffering from hearing loss with hearing aids and cochlear implants. This program also provides care coordination services. To be eligible for this program, children must meet all the following requirements:
 - o Be a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident

- Be a South Carolina resident
- Be under the age of 18 (or over age 18 with certain types of Medicaid)
- Have a household income at or below 250% of FPL or Medicaid eligible
- **Special Formula Program:** This program provides babies with select medical conditions with specialized formula recommended by dieticians as well as care coordination services. To be eligible for this program, children must meet all the following requirements:
 - Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
 - Be a South Carolina resident
 - Be under 18 years old
 - Have a household income at or below 250% FPL
 - Have a determination of need for special formula related to diagnosed condition covered by the Children's Rehabilitative Services
- **Orthodontic Program:** This program provides braces and other dental services to children with craniofacial anomalies that cause impairments of their face, jaw, mouth, or teeth. This program is limited to children with severe functional impairments that will cause a worsening of their related health condition if not corrected by braces. To be eligible, children must meet all the following requirements:
 - Be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident
 - Be a South Carolina resident
 - Be under 18 years old
 - Have a household income at or below 250% FPL
 - Have a documented craniofacial anomaly (list can be found [here](#))

7.3 Family and Parenting Education

Strengthening Families Program

This program helps families with children ages seven to 17 develop positive discipline methods, reduce familial conflicts, and help children develop socially and academically. Services are delivered at partnering community centers, schools, and churches and are provided in 11 weekly sessions. The program is a public-private partnership between the South Carolina Department of Social Services and Children's Trust and The Duke Endowment.

South Carolina Head Start and Early Head Start

This is a federally funded program that coordinates with services sites to educate low-income parents of children from birth to age five on child development and school readiness. Head Start typically serves children between ages three and five, and Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. The program is free to low-income families at or below federal [poverty guidelines](#). Children whose families receive public assistance, are in foster care, or are experiencing homelessness are also eligible regardless of income. The state's Head Start program is administered by the federally funded South Carolina Head Start Collaboration Office.

7.4 Adoption

Adoption Income Deduction

South Carolina provides adoptive families of special needs children (if they claim their adopted child as a dependent on their tax return) with a \$2,000 income deduction. [According to the Department](#), special needs children are children who meet any of the following criteria:

- Children who are members of a sibling group
- Children of marginalized backgrounds
- Children age six or older
- Children with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities.

Adoption Assistance Benefits

This program is run by the South Carolina Department of Social Services. All families receiving adoption benefits from the state for either public or private adoptions must have adopted a special needs child. Funds either come from federal adoption subsidies or state funds. See the above description for the definition of special needs in the context of adoption assistance.

- Benefits for families adopting from South Carolina foster care (public adoptions) include:
 - o Monthly adoption subsidy payments until the child turns 21 if they are completing high school, enrolled in a post-secondary or vocational school, employed 80 hours a month, participating in a job search program, or incapable of participating in these programs because of a disability
 - o Up to a \$1,500 non-recurring benefit per child after the adoption is finalized
 - o Continued Medicaid eligibility
 - o Supplemental benefit for medical assistance
 - o Child care vouchers for 12 months after the adoption is finalized
- Benefits for families who adopt children from a private, domestic organization include:
 - o Up to \$1,500 non-recurring benefit per child after the adoption is finalized
 - o Federal Title IV-E monthly payments if the child is receiving SSI or the child has previously received federal Title IV-E adoption assistance
 - o Medicaid coverage if the child qualifies for federal Title IV-E assistance

Medicaid

Those who [receive](#) Title IV-E foster care or adoption assistance are automatically eligible for South Carolina Medicaid. Similarly, those who were on Medicaid when they aged out of foster care as South Carolina residents are eligible for full-coverage South Carolina Medicaid. No income limits apply for former foster youth.

South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA) Adoption Assistance Program

This program provides eligible state employees with financial assistance to help pay for the expenses related to adopting a child. Funds are limited and only available to full or part-time state employees that are enrolled in PEBA insurance benefits at the time they apply to this program. The

amount of assistance given to eligible employees depends on whether the adopted child has special needs or not. Five thousand dollars is the maximum amount given to families of adopted non-special needs children and \$10,000 is the maximum amount given to families of adopted special needs children. Assistance can be put towards licensed adoption agency fees, legal fees, fees related to the child's guardian ad litem, etc.

7.5 Foster, Kinship, and Short-term Care

Chafee Foster Care Program

This is a transition program for foster care youth (ages 14 and older) who are aging out of the foster care system into adulthood. The program provides youth with counseling regarding their future goals, health care, living on their own, etc.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)

This federally funded program is a part of the Chafee Foster Care Program that provides college tuition waivers to those who are in foster care when they turn 18. Youth can receive up to \$5,000 a year for tuition or other qualified school-related expenses. ETV funds can be accessed for a maximum of five years until the youth's 26th birthday. Other eligibility requirements include:

- Be enrolled in an accredited college or vocational/technical training program and make progress toward completion of their degree
- Apply annually for the voucher

Foster Care Board Payments

Kinship caregivers that provide children with formal kinship care with oversight from the South Carolina Department of Social Services can receive monthly board payments to cover kinship-related expenses from the Department.

TANF Child-Only Grants

South Carolina's TANF program provides kinship caregivers caring for children under the age of 18 with cash assistance using federal funds. If the cash assistance is only going towards the child, the caregiver's household income will not impact how much assistance the caregiver receives for the child. If the caregiver chooses to also receive assistance from the TANF program, their income will be counted when determining how much assistance they and the child receive. However, they will receive care coordination services as well as employment and training opportunities. Children who are receiving kinship care payments, adoption assistance, foster care board payments or SSI benefits cannot also receive this TANF benefit. The maximum monthly amount given for one child is \$228, \$308 for two children, and \$388 for three children.

7.6 Safe Haven and/or Baby Boxes

Safe Haven Law

South Carolina's Safe Haven for Abandoned Babies Act, otherwise known as Daniel's Law, allows parents or a person acting on behalf of a parent to surrender their newborn baby up to 60 days old to an employee at a designated location without fear of prosecution. Designated locations include

hospitals, hospital outpatient facilities, law enforcement agencies, fire stations, EMS stations, or houses of worship when they are staffed.

Miscellaneous

Choose Life License Plates

South Carolina drivers can purchase “Choose Life” vanity plates from South Carolina DMV locations. Part of the fees from the sale of the plates go to the organization “Choose Life South Carolina” to support pregnancy centers.

H4832 (2024)

This legislation, signed into law by Governor McMaster in May 2024, allows private insurance companies licensed in the state to sell policies that cover paid family leave in the state.

H3908 (2023)

This legislation, signed into law by Governor McMaster in May 2023, expands the state’s paid leave benefit to public school employees.

S0011 (2022)

This legislation, signed by Governor McMaster in May 2022, introduced a six-week maternal leave policy for state employees and two weeks of paid leave for dads and adoptive parents.

This is a non-exhaustive list of programs, current as of January 2026, intended to make information easily accessible to moms and families. Program details are subject to change. Readers should always consult with the appropriate state agency for the most accurate and recent information. The information in this summary is for educational purposes only. CLI does not take a position on the merits of any specific program.

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