



September 13, 2023  
Contact: Tracy LaPointe  
(803) 898-8582  
[Tracy.LaPointe@scdmh.org](mailto:Tracy.LaPointe@scdmh.org)

## SCDMH Launches Online Mental Health Screener for Kids

Columbia, SC – The South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) and the South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy (SCDCA) have partnered with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to launch a new, online, interactive mental health screener for kids under the age of 18, *Hope Connects SC Kids*, located at <https://hope.connectssckids.org/>.

Following the success of the [Hope Connects You](#) adult screener introduced in 2020 by SCDMH and the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services, SCDMH began work on a voluntary, confidential, secure tool to support the mental health and well-being of South Carolina children. This safe and convenient free service allows parents and guardians to anonymously take a self-check questionnaire on behalf of their child and connect with a caring professional, who will provide guidance, support, and resources to help them access mental and behavioral health services for youth.

“If your child is feeling overwhelmed, overly stressed, anxious, or depressed and you don't know where to turn, we're here to help,” said SCDMH Suicide Prevention Program Director Jessica Barnes. “With this safe and easy service, we can navigate these challenges and ensure the well-being of our children together. You don't have to face these challenges alone; we're here for you.

State Child Advocate and Department of Children's Advocacy Director Amanda Whittle shared, “We are excited that South Carolina is the first state in the country to launch this type of online screener which is focused on children's mental and behavioral health. Our team works closely with other agencies to improve outcomes for children, and we are excited about this unique opportunity to partner with SCDMH to increase access to resources for children and families.”

This service is not for crises or emergencies. SCDMH urges anyone experiencing in crisis or contemplating suicide to call or text 988, call SCDMH's 24/7/365 Mobile Crisis line at (833) 364-2274, or reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting Hope4SC to 741741.

The SCDMH's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses. The Department provides clinical services to approximately 100,000 patients each year, about 30,000 of whom are children. As South Carolina's public mental health system, SCDMH provides outpatient mental health care through a network of 16 community mental health centers and associated clinics serving all 46 counties and inpatient psychiatric treatment in three state hospitals. In addition to mental health services, SCDMH provides nursing care to eligible veterans through a network of state veterans nursing homes.

The Department of Children's Advocacy's mission is to champion advocacy, accountability, and service to improve outcomes for children served by state agencies in South Carolina. The DCA is an independent state agency which administers the Cass Elias McCarter Guardian ad Litem Program, Foster Care Review Division, Continuum of Care, and Investigations Units. The DCA's leadership also serves on state committees and councils including the Suicide Prevention Coalition, the 988 Advisory Board, and the State Child Fatality Advisory Committee.

###