

2025 Annual Report to Congregations



**Rebecca
Kiesow-Knudsen**
President and CEO
LSS of South Dakota

YOUR IMPACT IN 2025

- 603 kinship and foster care home studies were completed.
- 257 older adults and caregivers were connected with resources in Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Douglas and Hutchinson counties.
- 1,000+ people were served through the LSS Center for New Americans' education program.
- 133 clients were helped through a Debt Management Program.

MEET AVERY, the impact of a healthier, safer and more accepting South Dakota

When I think about the important work LSS is doing across the state, I think about Avery*, a client at Arise Youth Center. For her, every day was focused on just making it to the next. Alone, mistreated and rejected, far from home and trapped in circumstances beyond her control, she found a sense of safety in our 24/7 shelter care, where young people move beyond the justice system and toward a brighter future. Arise became a space for her to heal and rediscover the joy and stability that's possible when you rest in your first safe space.

We are so grateful to be entrusted with this sacred work. As I reflect on 2025, I am reminded of both overwhelming joys and tremendous challenges. Our organization has shown great resilience as we have adapted to funding changes beyond our control. These external forces have resulted in reductions in the scope of services at the Center for New Americans, Behavioral Health and our Family Stabilization services. These changes have been hard but necessary decisions as we look to maintain the health and sustainability of the agency as a whole.

In spite of all these challenges, I feel certain that together we can continue the important work of meeting the growing needs of South Dakota's families.

- In September, LSS entered into a new contract with the State of South Dakota to provide enhanced kinship and foster care licensing services. The new contract means more families will be equipped to care for children across the state, creating stability and improving quality of life.
- In Lake Andes, a new program called Preserve & Prosper began this spring as a way to address food insecurity. LSS's Older Adult Resource Network and other community partners are teaching residents how to garden and can the produce they've grown, and we know the seeds planted through this program will reach far beyond the pantry.

Whether it's children in foster care who are safer statewide, older adults and caregivers connected to resources in the southeast or Avery who feels safe and accepted once again, with your support, LSS is making a difference across our state.

Thank you for your partnership with us.



*Arise client's name changed to protect her identity.



LSS Center for New Americans Update

Due to the suspension of the refugee resettlement program and various changes in national-level programming and funding, LSS has resettled very few people since January 2025. However, the LSS Center for New Americans continues to provide ongoing support to refugees who are already here for up to five years post-arrival, helping individuals and families build stability, find employment and move toward self-sufficiency.



That work continues in earnest, as people seek services such as English language classes, citizenship classes, immigration legal services, employment services, drivers' education and workforce training. In the past year, the Center for New Americans' education program has served more than 1,000 people, ranging in age from 18 to 97 years and from 71 different countries. These educational opportunities are vital to ensuring refugees and immigrants currently living in South Dakota have the support they need to navigate this uncertain time and be able to succeed. LSS helps refugees support themselves and their families, by keeping their legal status current and finding employment.

In fiscal year 2025, LSS helped 184 people apply for citizenship, 202 apply for their permanent residency and 181 apply for work permits. We also helped 415 new arrivals to find employment at their first job in the United States.

LSS of South Dakota's vision is that all people in South Dakota will be healthy, safe and accepted. LSS remains committed to providing support and welcome for our refugee populations to ensure their successful start in South Dakota.

To learn more about your impact in the community when you support LSS, contact us:

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HOW YOUR CONGREGATION CAN SUPPORT CHRIST'S WORK AT LSS

- ✓ **Invite a representative from LSS to speak to your congregation about our mission.**
- ✓ **Pray for the sacred work LSS is devoted to across the state.**
- ✓ **Take a special offering in support of our service organization.**
- ✓ **Include LSS in your budgeted missions contributions.**
- ✓ **Save the date for the LSS Week of Giving (formerly South Dakota CARES) on April 19–26, 2026.**

