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**South Carolina
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and Special Needs**

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Executive Memo

TO: Executive Directors of DSN Boards and Chief Executive Officers of Contracted Service Providers, Chief Financial Officers, and Case Management Supervisors

FROM: Lori Manos, Associate State Director of Policy 

DATE: April 28, 2025

RE: FY2026 *ThinkFirst* Injury Funding Available

As part of duties outlined in Title 44, Chapter 38, Section(s) 330 and 340(8)(9), the Head and Spinal Cord Injury (HASCI) Division of South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN) is announcing anticipated state funding for projects that will increase evidence-based *ThinkFirst* injury prevention efforts in our state. State and local non-profit organizations, consumer groups, and/or local DSN Boards are eligible and encouraged to apply. **Projects must be implemented between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026. A clear and concise Final Project Report must be submitted by email to the HASCI Division by July 15, 2026.**

The *ThinkFirst* National Injury Prevention Foundation, formally known as the National Head and Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Program, was first implemented nationally in 1986. *ThinkFirst* programs are aimed at helping young children, youth, and teens learn about personal vulnerability and the importance of making safe choices. In recent years, the *ThinkFirst* mission has expanded to include falls prevention in senior adults. *ThinkFirst* curricula and supplementary materials are research-validated and have received national and international recognition. More detailed information about the *ThinkFirst* program and establishing a chapter can be found at www.thinkfirst.org.

Contingent upon available funding, projects will be funded through a selection process. Newly formed *ThinkFirst* chapters may apply for up to \$2,500, however they must include at least one Letter of Support from the school or community organization with which the chapter intends to collaborate. Existing chapters may apply for up to \$1,700. Funding must include initial or renewal fees to *ThinkFirst* National Injury Prevention Foundation. Up to \$3,000 may be awarded for one statewide project to recruit, train, and support Chapter leaders, Health Educators, and VIP Speakers.

Applications must focus on prevention of traumatic brain injury and/or spinal cord injury using *ThinkFirst* approaches. Leading causes of death and disability from such injuries in South Carolina include motor vehicle crashes, firearms, suffocation, falls, sports injuries, and violence. Examples of injury prevention initiatives are attached as Appendix B. ***ThinkFirst* chapter applications must include at least two presentations during the contract year utilizing a trained VIP (person who has incurred a TBI or SCI).**

The Injury Project Selection Committee will consider the following criteria when evaluating applications:

- Focus on implementing *ThinkFirst* efforts with youth and teens (4th - 12th grade) or older adults (falls prevention).
- Utilization of trained Health Educators and VIP Speakers (people with TBI/SCI).
- Inclusion/integration of injury prevention activities in local service delivery.
- Linkages with local health education programs and/or local prevention initiatives.
- Geographical dispersion of newly formed *ThinkFirst* chapters and partnering entities.
- Appropriate project budget, implementation (accounting for the possibility of delivery by virtual or non-traditional means), and evaluation; and
- Feasibility of project activities to continue.

Completed applications **must be emailed** with subject line of “*ThinkFirst* Application” to: **Matthew Walker**, SCDDSN Head and Spinal Cord Injury Program Coordinator at mwalker@ddsn.sc.gov. **Applications must be received by May 31, 2025**. Notification will be made before July 1, 2025, and SCDDSN will subsequently execute a contract with the selected organizations. All products produced, training provided, or interactions occurring as a result of awarded contracts shall clearly and appropriately identify SCDDSN as the sponsor of the product, training, or interaction.

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
Head and Spinal Cord Injury Division
FY-2026 *ThinkFirst* Injury Prevention Project Application

Project Title: _____

Total Funds Requested from DDSN: _____

Applicant Agency/Organization: _____

Project Coordinator: _____

Work Address (include zip code): _____

Work Phone (include area code): _____ FAX Number (include area code): _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Supervisor of Project Coordinator: _____

Work Address (include zip code): _____

Work Phone (include area code): _____ FAX Number (include area code): _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Agency/Organization to administer or serve as fiscal agent for the project contract:

Name: _____

Federal or Tax Identification Number: _____

Fiscal Administrator:

Name and Title: _____

Work Address (include zip code): _____

Work Phone (include area code): _____ FAX Number (include area code): _____

E-Mail Address: _____

ThinkFirst Injury Prevention Project Narrative

All five (5) sections of the Project Narrative indicated below must be addressed:

I. Problem to be Addressed/Magnitude of Problem

Summarize the injury problem you propose to address in your statewide or local project.

Data concerning injury-related deaths and non-fatal injuries are available on the following two websites:

<https://dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/health-safety/injury-and-violence-prevention/injury-data-dashboard>

https://scdps.sc.gov/ohsjp/stat_services

II. Proposed Project Description

- 1) Project Goal: A broad statement of purpose of the proposed project.
- 2) Target Population: The target population for the project, including estimated number of individuals to be involved with or reached by the project.
- 3) Objectives: Discreet objectives to reduce the incidence or risk of injury. Each objective must be related to the goal of the project.
- 4) Approach: General strategies and activities to accomplish each objective. This can include partnerships with local schools, community centers, churches, etc. to deliver the ThinkFirst message.

III. Collaboration/Partnerships

Identify the organization(s), agency/agencies, or program(s) that will be involved in the proposed project.

For each identified entity, specify the type of involvement, such as sharing resources, conducting joint activities, collaboration with training, or additional funding source.

IV. Project Implementation Plan

Complete the form provided as Appendix A for each objective listed above in Section II.

Specific activities to accomplish each objective must include responsible person(s), target group/number to be served, target dates, and a measure of documentation/evaluation.

V. Continuation Plan

Describe plans to continue or expand project activities after SCDDSN funding expires. Include other organizations, agencies, or programs to be involved in continuation, as well as possible sources of future funding.

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
Head and Spinal Cord Injury Division

***ThinkFirst* Injury Prevention Project Budget**

A. Estimated Expenditures

Salaries and equipment purchases are **not** funded within the scope of this contract.
Funds must be expended as proposed unless prior approval is given by the HASCI Division.

Supplies and Materials:

_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____

Other Expenses:

_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____
_____	\$	_____

Total Expenditures:	\$	_____
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B. Estimated Revenue

Total funds requested from SCDDSN	\$	_____
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Funds from other sources available to this project	\$	_____
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Note source and designate use below:

Total Revenue:	\$	_____
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South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
Head and Spinal Cord Injury Division

***ThinkFirst* Injury Prevention Project Certification**

Agency/Organization Officials Authorizing this Application:

Name and Title (*typed or printed*): _____

Signature of Executive Director (*or Designee*)

Date: _____

Name and Title (*typed or printed*): _____

Signature of Fiscal Administrator

Date: _____

Appendix A

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
Head and Spinal Cord Injury Division

***ThinkFirst* Injury Prevention Project Implementation Plan**

Complete a separate form for each objective included in the proposed project description.

Goal: _____

Objective: _____

Activity	Person(s) Responsible for Activity	Target Group/ Number To be Served	Target Dates	Evaluation Methods (Examples: attendance logs, survey, pre and post-tests)

Appendix B

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs Head and Spinal Cord Injury Division

Examples of *ThinkFirst* Injury Prevention Projects

Develop a new *ThinkFirst* chapter, partner to expand area of an existing chapter, or strengthen effectiveness of an existing chapter to:

1. Conduct statewide and/or local activities to raise awareness of traumatic brain injury / spinal cord injury and their common causes. Encourage community agencies and organizations to educate young children, youth, and teens about prevention of these lifelong disabilities.
2. Collaborate with schools and community organizations to offer *ThinkFirst* curricula to educate children, parents and teachers about prevention of unintentional injuries.
3. Expand on previous local prevention projects and offer programs statewide. Collaborate with school districts, community organizations, and HASCI Resource/Drop-In Centers.
4. Recruit and conduct training workshops for V.I.P. (Voices for Injury Prevention) speakers who are survivors of traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury.

Recommended Community Organizations/Agencies for Collaboration:

After-School Programs
Brain Injury Support Groups
Child Development Centers
Colleges/Universities
Hospitals
Local DDSN Boards – HASCI Divisions
Motorcycle Clubs
South Carolina SAFE KIDS Coalitions
Spinal Cord Injury Support Groups

American Red Cross
Bicycle Clubs
Churches
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
Law Enforcement
Local Health Departments
Recreation Departments
School Districts