



SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

**Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for
Children, Youth and Families**

**June 12, 2015
MEETING NOTEBOOK**

The State Bar of Texas - Texas Law Center
1414 Colorado St.
Austin, Texas 78701

**Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families**

**June 12, 2015
Meeting Notebook**

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Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center
Austin, Texas
June 12, 2015
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Commencement / Opening Remarks – The Honorable Eva Guzman

- 9:45 First order of business – The Honorable Eva Guzman
 - 1. Adopt Minutes from September 19, 2014, Tab 2

- 9:50 Commissioner Updates

- 11:00 Break

- 11:15 Executive Director Report – Tina Amberboy/Commission Staff, Tab 3

- 11:35 Basic Committee Report – Judge Bonnie Hellums, Tab 3

- 11:50 Training Committee Report – Justice Michael Massengale, Tab 3

- 12:05 Technology / Data Committee Report – Vicki Spriggs, Tab 3

- 12:20 Lunch – Served on-site

- 12:45 Foster Care and Education Committee Report – Judge Rob Hofmann, Tab 3

- 1:00 Legislative Report – Judge Dean Rucker, Tab 4

- 1:20 Jurist in Residence – Judge Robin Sage, Judge Dean Rucker

- 1:45 DFPS Update – Judge John Specia

- 2:15 Office of Court Administration – David Slayton

- 2:30 New Business/Comments from Collaborative Council

- 2015 Meeting Schedule: September 18, 2015

- 2:45 Adjourn

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Darlene Byrne, Vice Chair
 Hon. Jo Ann Battise
 Lisa Black
 Hon. Jean Boyd
 Sheila Sturgis Craig
 Bruce Esterline

Gabriela Fuentes
 Hon. Helen Giddings
 Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums
 Hon. Rob Hofmann
 Dr. Octavio Martinez
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Mary Murphy

Hon. Peter Sakai
 Luanne Southern
 Vicki Spriggs
 Sharayah Stiggers
 Terry Tottenham
 Hon. Carlos Villalon
 Hon. Judy Warne

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE

Hon. Eva Guzman,
Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill,
Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Darlene Byrne
Vice Chair
 Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Dean Rucker
 Vicki Spriggs

BASIC PROJECTS

Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums
Chair
 Gabriela 'Gaby' Fuentes
 Colleen McCall
 Hon. Peter Sakai
 Hon. Olen Underwood
Staff: Kristi Taylor

TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Vicki Spriggs, *Chair*
 Dan Capouch
 Jason Hassay
 Hon. Gilford Jones
 Octavio Martinez
 Robert Nolen
 Hon. Virginia Schnarr
 Hon. Carlos Villalon
Staff: Tina Amberboy

OCA Advisory
 Darrell Childers
 Simi Denson
 Casey Kennedy
 Tim Kennedy
 David Slayton

TRAINING PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Massengale, *Chair*
 Hon. Mark Atkinson
 Tymothy Belseth
 Cathy Cockerham
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Alice Emerson
 Debra Emerson
 Hon. Richard Garcia
 Tracy Harting
 Hon. Lamar McCorkle
 Pam Parker
 Tanya Rollins
 Fairy Davenport Rutland
 Hon. Ellen Smith
 Elizabeth Watkins
Staff: Tiffany Roper
 Milbrey Raney

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Irene Clements
 William B. Connolly
 De Shaun Ealoms
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Debra Emerson
 Laura Figueroa
 Mike Foster
 Mara Friesen
 Sadie Funk
 Paul E. Furrh, Jr.
 Helen Gaebler
 Christina Green

Diane Guariglia
 Sandra Hachem
 David Halpern
 Ashley Harris
 Robert Hartman
 Leslie Hill
 Bruce Kendrick
 Lori Kennedy
 Knox Kimberly
 Kelly Kravitz
 Richard Lavallo
 Stephanie Ledesma

Tracy Levins
 Madeline McClure
 Hon. F. Scott McCown, ret.
 Gabriella McDonald
 Pamela McPeters
 Anu Partap
 Judy Powell
 Lisa Ramirez
 Johana Scot
 Janet Sharkis
 Andrea Sparks
 Jeanne Stamp

Gloria Terry
 Kenneth Thompson
 Arabia Vargas
 Kelly White
 Larry Williams

STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director
 Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director
 Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney
 Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney
 Kristi Taylor, Project Attorney
 Rashonda Thomas, Grants & Finance Specialist
 Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant
 Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant
 Hon. Robin Sage, Jurist in Residence
Office of Court Administration
 Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence
Office of Court Administration

INSERT - TAB 2

PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

MINUTES OF MEETING

February 27, 2015

9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center

Austin, Texas

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners	Attended	Did Not Attend
Chair, Hon. Eva Guzman, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Chair Emeritus, Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Justice, retired, Law Office of Harriet O'Neill, Austin		✓
Vice Chair, Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin	✓	
Hon. Jo Ann Battise, Senior Peacemaker, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Livingston	✓	
Lisa Black, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Jean Boyd, Judge, 323rd District Court, Fort Worth		✓
Sheila Craig, Associate Commissioner, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Bruce Esterline, by proxy (Cindy Patrick), Vice President for Grants, The Meadows Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Gabriela Fuentes, Appointments Manager, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Hon. Helen Giddings, by proxy (Elaina Fowler), Texas House of Representatives, District 109, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Bonnie Hellums, Judge, 247th District Court, Houston		✓
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452nd District Court, Mason	✓	
Dr. Octavio Martinez, Executive Director, The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin		✓
Hon. Michael Massengale, Justice, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Hon. Mary Murphy, Presiding Judge, First Administrative Judicial Region, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Luanne Southern, Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin		✓
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin	✓	
Sharayah Stiggers Williams, Parent Liaison, Department of Family and Protective Services, Region 8, San Antonio		✓
Terry Tottenham, Of Counsel, Fulbright and Jaworski, L.L.P., Austin	✓	
Hon. Carlos Villalon, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande, Edinburg	✓	
Hon. Judy Warne, Judge, 257th Family Court, Houston	✓	
Collaborative Council Members		
Irene Clements, President, National Foster Family Association, and Consultant, Butterfly Marketing, LLC, Pflugerville	✓	
William B. Connolly, Attorney, Connolly & Shireman, L.L.P., Houston		✓
De Shaun Ealoms, Parent Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Lawyers for Children, Dallas	✓	
Debra Emerson, CPS Director of Permanency, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Laura Figueroa, The Arbitrage Group, Inc., Katy		✓
Mike Foster, Program Specialist, Pathways, Austin		✓
Mara Friesen, Deputy Director for Child Support, Office of the Texas Attorney General, Austin	✓	
Sadie Funk, Executive Director, Texas Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Austin		✓

	Attended	Did Not Attend
Paul E. Furrh, Jr., Chief Executive Officer, Lone Star Legal Aid, Houston		✓
Helen Gaebler, Senior Research Attorney, William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin	✓	
Christina Green, Director of Public Affairs, Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin	✓	
Mike Griffiths, Executive Director, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Austin		✓
Hon. Diane Guariglia, Guariglia & Placzek, PLLC, Houston		✓
Sandra Hachem, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney’s Office, Houston	✓	
David Halpern, Director, Promise Mentor Program, Seedling Foundation, Austin	✓	
Ashley Harris, Child Welfare Policy Associate, Texans Care for Children, Austin	✓	
Robert Hartman, Executive Director, Providence Service Corporation, Abilene		✓
Leslie Hill, Managing Attorney, Travis County Office of Child Representation, Austin		✓
Bruce Kendrick, Director of Outreach, Embrace Texas, McKinney		✓
Lori Kennedy, Managing Attorney, Travis County Office of Parent Representation, Austin		✓
Knox Kimberly, by proxy (Cheryl Philip), Vice President for Advocacy and Education, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Austin	✓	
Kelly Kravitz, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Texas Education Agency, Austin	✓	
Richard Lavallo, Legal Director, Disability Rights Texas, Austin		✓
Stephanie Ledesma, Assistant Professor, Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Houston		✓
Tracy Levins, Manager, Prevention/Early Intervention, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Austin		✓
Madeline McClure, Executive Director, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Dallas		✓
Hon. F. Scott McCown, Clinical Professor and Director of the Children’s Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin		✓
Gabriela McDonald, Pro Bono and New Projects Director, Texas Appleseed, Austin	✓	
Pamela McPeters, Director of Public Policy, TexProtects, Austin		✓
Dr. Sandeep Narang, Director, Child Abuse Fellowship, Division of Child Protection Department of Pediatrics, C.A.R.E. Center, The University of Texas Health Science Center, Houston		✓
Dr. Anu Partap, Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, Southwest Medical Center, Dallas		✓
Judy Powell, Communications Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Lisa Ramirez, Women’s Substance Abuse Services Coordinator, Department of State Health Services, Austin		✓
Johana Scot, Executive Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Janet Sharkis, Executive Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin		✓
Andrea Sparks, Executive Director, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Austin	✓	
Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Charles A. Dana Center, Austin	✓	
Armin Steege, Vice President of Programs, Austin Children’s Shelter, Austin		✓
Gloria Terry, Coalition President, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin		✓
Kenneth Thompson, Fatherhood Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Arabia Vargas, Chair, Bexar County Child Welfare Board, San Antonio		✓
Larry Williams, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Livingston		✓
Staff		
Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Children’s Commission	✓	
Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant, Children’s Commission	✓	
Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney, Children’s Commission	✓	

	Attended	Did Not Attend
Simi Denson, Child Protection Courts Attorney, Office of Court Administration		✓
Casey Kennedy, Director of Information Service, Office of Court Administration	✓	
Tim Kennedy, TexDECK Project Manager, Office of Court Administration	✓	
Mena Ramon, General Counsel, Office of Court Administration	✓	
Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission	✓	
Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director, Children's Commission	✓	
Honorable Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence, Children's Commission		✓
Honorable Robin Sage, Jurist in Residence, Children's Commission	✓	
David Slayton, Administrative Director, Office of Court Administration	✓	
Kristi Taylor, Project Manager, Children's Commission	✓	
Rashonda Thomas, Grant Account Specialist, Children's Commission	✓	

Guests

Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer for the Meadows Foundation	✓
Honorable John Specia, Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓
Sarah Bryant, Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aide, Austin	✓
M. Lynn Chamberlin, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston	✓
Maggy McGiffert, Policy Consultant, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin	✓
John Odam, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston	✓
Mary Christine Reed, Director, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin	✓
Barbara Schafer, Program Director, Bexar County Family Drug Court, Houston	✓
Jenny Hinson, CPS Division Administrator for Permanency, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓
Wanda Pena, Senior Director, Casey Family Programs, San Antonio	✓
Ian Spechler, Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Texas, Austin	✓
Honorable John Delaney, Senior District Judge, Bryan	✓

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS, Justice Eva Guzman

Due to inclement weather, the meeting start time was delayed. Justice Guzman called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed attendees and guests and thanked members of the Blueprint Implementation Task Force and the Judicial Disproportionality Workgroup for their work with the commission. Justice Guzman welcomed special guest, Cindy Patrick, attending on behalf of Bruce Esterline. Cindy is a Senior Program Officer for the Meadows Foundation and works on many of the organization's child victim grants and projects.

Commissioner Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced that there were no Commission membership changes to report.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced that Pamela McPeters, the new director of public policy with TexProtects, is joining the Collaborative Council.

Justice Guzman also welcomed Gabriella McDonald, who will be representing Texas Appleseed and replacing Rebecca Lightsey.

Justice Guzman reminded the Collaborative Council that members should complete speaker cards if they wished to be added to the agenda.

CIP Committee Member Changes

Justice Guzman announced that Tanya Rollins, the DFPS State Disproportionality Manager, joined the Training Committee.

Staff Member Changes

Justice Guzman announced that there were no staff member changes to report.

Other Announcements

Justice Guzman announced that an article written by Commission Staff and Judge Dean Rucker will be published in the Texas Bar Journal in April, which is National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Adoption of September 19, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2, noted that members had the opportunity to review the minutes, and asked if there were any corrections or discussion. There were no corrections or discussion points raised.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to adopt the meeting minutes of the September 19, 2014 meeting. Judge Darlene Byrne motioned to adopt the minutes. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the meeting minutes unanimously.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Darlene Byrne reported that she visited Washington, D.C. and had the opportunity to visit with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and legislators. Judge Byrne was also in the Judiciary Committee markup session for Senator John Cornyn regarding the prosecution of consumers of minor sex trafficking victims and services. Judge Byrne noted Travis County's recent training for stakeholders and community leaders on juvenile justice and children in foster care who are at a high risk of being sexually exploited. Judge Byrne also announced that in February, her court and other collaborators published a Court Protocol for missing foster youth. Judge Byrne also laid out an overview of the curriculum for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Annual conference to be held in Austin in July, 2015.

Ms. Vicki Spriggs reported that Texas CASA has been exploring how to increase the growth and recruitment of CASA volunteers, which is receiving legislative support. Texas CASA staff and volunteers continue training on Trauma Informed Care and Trauma Informed Responses. Ms. Spriggs also updated members that on February 4th, Texas CASA hosted a legislative luncheon with a panel of legislators, which was facilitated by Justice Guzman, to discuss issues of interest during the 84th Legislative session. On February 11th, Texas CASA had a legislative primer to update statewide advocates and volunteers on the upcoming legislative session and to continue training on Trauma Informed Care. Ms. Spriggs announced that over 300 volunteers attended Texas CASA Day at the Capitol on February 12th to meet with legislators on the upcoming session. Ms. Spriggs also reported that Texas CASA is working with its family finding unit to provide regional training around the state with CASA volunteers on finding families for children to reduce their time in foster care. Ms. Spriggs announced Texas CASA will sponsor a reception to honor Judge Byrne and her leadership at the NCJFCJ Conference in July.

Senior Peacemaker Jo Ann Battise reported that she is working with Native American tribes to initiate a wellness court. Senior Peacemaker Battise announced that the State/Tribal workgroup has contacted additional Texas tribes to host the annual symposium in Austin in 2015.

Hon. Carlos Villalon updated Commissioners on the NCJFCJ implementation site project. In November, NCJFCJ visited his court and conducted an assessment over three days, including interviews and court observations, and held an orientation meeting for stakeholders. Tina Amberboy, Simi Denson with the Office of Court Administration, Vicki Spriggs with Texas CASA, and Dan Capouch from the Department of Family and Protective Services, attended the orientation meeting. Judge Villalon noted findings in the assessment report paralleled the Hearing Observation Project report and findings, including parental/children involvement in hearings, trauma assessments, ICWA, and well-being. Judge Villalon announced that site reviewers were impressed by CPCMS (child protection case management system). His court is in the process of developing a family drug court, so stakeholders are currently observing other drug courts for assistance and guidance, with an anticipated summer state date.

Ms. Cindy Patrick, on behalf of Mr. Bruce Esterline, provided an update on the Texas Veterans Initiative Program. Ms. Patrick explained the program is a public-private grant in the amount of \$1 million managed by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Ms. Patrick reported that out of 25 applicants, four or five will be selected by March 1, 2015 to determine who will provide services to veterans and their family members and for the \$1 million match. She also stated that the Meadows Foundation network of behavioral health founders has grown to 65 foundation members, which meets twice a year to discuss legislative policy issues and other specific topics, such as children's behavioral health.

Mr. Terry Tottenham reported that he continues to collaborate with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and the veterans' initiative and mental health issues as this will benefit both veterans and children. Mr. Tottenham announced that the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) released a project on bullying and shared the website www.biggerthanbullies.com. TYLA also produced a series of public service announcements on texting and driving which can be found on the TYLA website. Mr. Tottenham shared materials produced by TYLA on subjects such as: battling substance abuse in schools;

a Guide to Supporting Kids with Special Needs; and Protecting Yourself on Cyberspace, a guide on social media. The State Bar of Texas and Access to Justice Foundation created a multi-disciplinary workforce of attorneys from a variety of practices to increase the pro bono culture in Texas, including child welfare, which Mr. Tottenham co-chairs, and will host a gala to raise funds on April 7, 2015. He welcomed suggestions for areas of need for pro-bono work and for others to attend the gala.

Ms. Gabriella Fuentes reported that she continues work on priorities and initiatives, and to determine Government Office appointments.

Ms. Sheila Craig reported that the Cross-Systems Coalition of systems and community leaders recently met and now consists of 17 statewide members, including the Children's Commission and all agencies under the Department of Health and Human Services, with the largest member representation held by communities. She noted that the coalition lacked representation of Texas' Native American tribes and asked to discuss the opportunity with Senior Peacemaker Battise.

The Coalition plans to first address three core issues, which include mental health services, education, and juvenile justice, as these issues impact assistive and rehabilitative services, state health services, assisted disability services, and the justice system. The Coalition will also look for ways agencies can work to reduce the gap in infant mortality; statistics indicate that African American babies are dying at twice the rate of all Texas children. The Coalition will also review ways to increase access to employment through Health and Human Services for persons with disabilities. The CEDD has completed the curriculum Health and Human Services Curriculum, which is free for systems to use to address racial and ethnic disparities to improve outcomes. Judge Byrne commended the CEDD for the Poverty Simulation Training to which Ms. Craig confirmed that the four hour training will continue to be offered, as well as additional training opportunities.

Hon. Peter Sakai provided an update on Bexar County Redesign that involves development of a Children's Court Division to focus on the specific issues and needs for CPS cases and includes additional court staff, programs to strengthen reunification, deeper collaboration of stakeholders regarding services, and reforms related to the legal representation of parents.

Ms. Lisa Black reported that DFPS continues with its transformation efforts, starting with the statewide implementation of using a structured decision making protocol, which will require a safety assessment with 24 hours rather than seven days. Following the Safety-Assessment roll out, DFPS will continue to implement a revised risk-assessment plan, which serves to identify appropriate service offerings. Bexar County is using the revised plan and providing feedback for the full rollout. Regarding recruitment and retention, DFPS shifted a large portion of its traditional classroom-style training for new caseworkers to the field in order to quickly determine the best fit for employees. Mentors continue to support staff through training, and in March, DFPS management completed strength-based training for statewide staff. DFPS met with Harris County to discuss the Title IV-E Waiver, permanency programs, and the structured decision-making roll out. On February 20, 2015, DFPS hosted a Permanency Summit featuring Amelia Meyers with ANU, a child placing agency in Wisconsin, who presented on building a

culture of permanency through increased awareness of trauma, by balancing urgency and with a sense of healing for children.

Hon. Judy Warne reported for Harris County and the 257th District Court. She announced that last session, Harris County received funding for its first CPS court to solely hear child welfare cases and that previously both pre- and post-judgment, CPS hearings were spread over three juvenile courts and nine family courts. Judge Warne reported that the courts' dockets were organized to send post-judgment cases to Judge Katrina Griffith. She continued to explain that Judge Griffith developed a creative solution to manage cases once the judgment has been entered. Judge Warne further commended Judge Griffith for her dedication to quickly and continuously work to thoroughly evaluate cases for permanency, which has been instrumental to Harris County. She continued to announce that Senator Joan Huffman introduced a bill for a tenth family court to serve as a specialty court and further alleviate the pre-judgment caseload divided between the courts. Further, as a course director for the Advanced Family Law conference, Judge Warne reported that the State Bar of Texas Family Law Foundation is working to participate in additional trainings and will host a Child Welfare Day to further train CPS attorneys on other areas of the work. Judge Warne reported that three new judges have joined the court and she offered to provide a progress report on the transition at the next Children's Commission meeting. Mr. Slayton concurred that OCA did include a request for funding an additional Child Protection Court in Harris County, which has been included in both versions of the House and Senate budgets.

Hon. Mary Murphy updated the Commission for Region 1 and mentioned that the presiding judges are working with OCA and David Slayton to support pay raises for associate judges. Justice Murphy announced that she is currently conducting evaluations for the region and noted the importance of additional feedback in order to thoroughly provide a progress report. Justice Murphy continued to report that she worked with area judges to address the increase of family violence in Dallas County and developed a protocol for gun seizure. Two training dates has been set for March 2015 and will be offered to regional judges.

Hon. Rob Hofmann reported that since the last Children's Commission meeting in September, he attended the Idaho Administrative Office of Courts on behalf of the National Center for State Courts Training for Child Abuse and Neglect cases. Judge Hofmann, along with Judge Robin Sage, presented at the CPS Regional Attorney's Training Conference in Austin, and the Casey Small Jurisdiction Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. He continued to report that his local Texas CASA program, Bluebonnet CASA, is looking to extend services further throughout the region where services are currently not available. Judge Hofmann announced the Child Protection Court of the Hill Country and Child Protection Court of South Texas 5th Annual Regional Ad Litem Training is scheduled for March 27, 2015 and welcomed attendees to join.

Justice Michael Massengale stated that he recently attended Chief Justice Nathan Hecht's State of the Judiciary Address noting that Chief Justice Hecht highlighted the successes of the Children's Commission and spoke to the legislature on the contributions made in proposing legislative amendments to CPS procedures. He commended Ms. Amberboy and the Commission staff for their expeditious work in

response to legislative proposals as a result of the Sunset Report. Justice Massengale also announced that he and Ms. Amberboy recently met with pro bono general counsel and continue to work on the development of a foundation. Justice Massengale also attended the Texas CASA Annual Conference in Galveston and expressed his appreciation to Ms. Spriggs for the opportunity to learn more about Texas CASA programs.

JUDICIAL DISPROPORTIONALITY WORKGROUP REPORT, Ms. Kristi Taylor;

Ms. Taylor noted that the Judicial Disproportionality Workgroup (JDW) most recently met on February 26, 2015 to reflect on their work so far and discuss the group's future goals. She pointed to the list of trainings the workgroup has sponsored over the previous eight years and emphasized that, while training is a main focus of the JDW, the workgroup is interested in moving forward to become a more action-based workgroup. From a presentation by Jon Olson at its February meeting, the JDW learned that county level data has been gathered that shows African American, Hispanic and Native American children are disproportionately represented at varying points in the process, are waiting longer to be adopted, and are being removed at a much higher rate than they are represented in population. The JDW will provide this type of data to judges who request this for their county and are interested in a partnership with CEDD and wish to continue that work. Ms. Taylor also mentioned that the JDW has been compiling Bench Book checklists to assist judges with disproportionality issues at hearings. Ms. Craig noted that the JDW will be taking a vote to change its name to the Judicial Workgroup on Equity in the near future. Ms. Craig mentioned Mr. Olson's presentation as well, noting that since the formation of the JDW it has found that judges are not only attending and sponsoring trainings, but also working in partnerships with various systems to highlight the understanding that children and families are connected to multiple systems. She noted that the judges are staying engaged and thinking of new ways to positively impact the children and families served.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE

Judge Robin Sage highlighted two areas of focus in recent months, the implementation phase of the Hearing Observation Project (HOP) and the current work of the Protect Our Kids Commission (POK). Judge Sage explained that the implementation phase of the HOP began with the Bench Book Checklist project, a pilot project that was surveyed from twenty seven judges who volunteered to implement checklists at hearings over a six month period. HOP surveyed the judges before the use of checklists and twice after to gather feedback. The results were positive as 82% of those surveyed indicated they were very to somewhat likely to use the checklists in the future and 95% said they covered more topics at individual hearings compared to only 58% before using the checklists. HOP plans to continue refining the checklists to incorporate all of the results and suggestions to present to judges at the 2015 CPS Judges Conference. Judge Sage defined the next steps for the project as encouraging and instructing judges on how to ask about well-being issues and indicated that HOP has an action plan in place for implementation. Judge Sage explained that the POK Commission has been charged with examining child fatalities in Texas and providing recommendations on measures for prevention, the data to be collected, and a comprehensive plan for prevention of child fatalities. She went on to explain that the POK has formed four workgroups to manage the requirements of the charge and develop its recommendations.

TEXAS BLUEPRINT IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

Judge Rob Hofmann gave a presentation on the final report of the Texas Blueprint Implementation Task Force, noting the end of the Phase 1 period of the implementation of the Task Force. Judge Hofmann recommended to the Children's Commission to create a standing Foster Care and Education Committee to meet on a quarterly basis and prioritize the remaining topics to be implemented and requested issues to be considered upon committee creation. Please refer to the PowerPoint slides located here: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/31886/Task%20Force%20Final%20Report%20PPT.pdf>.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to form a standing Foster Care and Education Committee. The motion was heard and seconded. The attending members voted to approve a standing committee for a duration to be determined by the Children's Commission to meet on a quarterly basis to approve education related initiatives and monitor progress on collaborative projects.

Recognition of Texas Blueprint Implementation Task Force Members

Judge Hofmann and Justice Guzman presented certificates in recognition of Blueprint Task Force Members Maya Guerra Gamble, Jenny Hinson, Wanda Pena, and Ian Spechler. Justice Guzman then presented a certificate to Judge Hofmann recognizing his contributions to the Task Force.

Legislative and CIP Update, Ms. Tina Amberboy

Ms. Amberboy presented a PowerPoint on the Court Improvement Program Report submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and legislative update. Ms. Amberboy explained that ACF requested a focus on data sharing between child welfare agencies. She explained the importance of SAQWIS as a main resource for data and noted the DFPS/TEA Data sharing MOU on education, recent data on judicial proportionality, and how it can provide for targeted data. Ms. Amberboy also reported on the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) meetings that the Children's Commission hosted with DFPS. She continued to brief on the Sunset Advisory Commission review of DFPS issued in May 2014 which corresponded to the operational review by the Stephen Group and the collaboration by the Children's Commission and DFPS regarding statutory changes. Ms. Amberboy also updated the commission regarding the Commission's work with Representative Thompson on legislation that would allow counties to establish offices of parental or child representation with managed or assigned counsel. Ms. Amberboy reported there is currently one bill filed on Human Trafficking, HB10, to add the matter to Section 22.010 and 22.011. Additionally, adds the Children's Commission to a list of entities to Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force which will establish a Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit under the Governor's Criminal Justice Prevention Division. Please refer to the PowerPoint slides located here: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/31883/Legislative%20CIP%20Update%20TA.pdf>.

Financial Report

Ms. Amberboy noted that, as of the September meeting, funding for fiscal year 2015 had not yet been received and directed attendees to Tab 4 for the outline of the projected budget.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND VOTING MATTERS

Basic Committee Report, Ms. Kristi Taylor, on behalf of Judge Bonnie Hellums

Ms. Taylor reported the Tribal/State Collaboration committee is planning a symposium to include representatives from all three recognized tribes in Texas. Ms. Taylor reported on the success of the Texas Tribal/State Collaboration Round Table in April 2014, noting that the model has been adopted in other states. She also shared that Representative Helen Giddings has filed House Bill 825, which would require judges to inquire about Native American heritage of children at hearings. Ms. Taylor also touched on the work being done in regards to trauma and noted that the partnership between Travis County and the Institute of Child Development at Texas Christian University has become a kind of pilot project to illustrate what can be accomplished when experts are included. Ms. Taylor requested that others share any known trauma-related projects happening in their communities.

Training Committee Report, Honorable Justice Michael Massengale

Justice Massengale reported that the Training Committee met on February 3, 2015. He began the update by reporting on judicial education and announced that the Child Welfare Track at the Texas Center for the Judiciary Family Justice Judicial Conference held January 28-29, 2015 in San Antonio was well attended attended by many general jurisdiction courts. The National Council for Judges Children Annual Conference is scheduled for July 26-29, 2015 in Austin for which 25 scholarships will be offered to judges to attend. The Child Welfare Judges Conference is scheduled for August 17-19, 2015 in Austin and expect approximately 75 judges to attend. Justice Massengale continued to report on attorney education reporting that the American Bar Association semi-annual conferences will be in July 2015 in Washington, D.C. The Training Committee has approved \$25,000 in attorney scholarships for the ABA Conferences, the Parent Attorney Conference on July 22-23 and the Child Attorney Conference on July 24-25. The State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee 1-Day Workshop will be in San Antonio on August 5, 2015 for which the Training Committee has approved \$10,000 in attorney scholarships for the CAN CLE. Additionally, the Training Committee has approved \$10,000 in attorney scholarships for National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference will be in Monterey, California on August 24-26, 2015. The Children's Commission is working to develop a webinar, "Life of a CPS Case/CPS 101" to provide basic training to all attorneys on the CPS docket. Commission staff anticipates submitting an application to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) to create a specialization in child welfare and protection law in April and as accumulated over 100 signatures required for the application. Justice Massengale continued to report on Trial Skills Training (TST) announcing that the October, 2014 was the most successful iteration yet. The next session is scheduled for April 15-17, 2015. He announced that the Training Committee approved a proposal to set aside funding for reimbursement grants for CLE training in response to faculty's expressed desire to further their skills by attending CLEs related to teaching or child welfare law and proposed the following voting matter:

1. Establishing a TST Faculty CLE Scholarship Fund allowing teaching faculty to earn a \$350 credit for each future TST, to be used within two years. TC also approved an allowance for past contributions by faculty, where faculty who taught in April and/or October 2014 would be given a one-time retroactive credit of \$350 per teaching TST, also to be used within 2 years' time.

2. Total amount of funding is 1.6% of the Training Grant: \$350/credit per faculty member at 12 faculty per Trial Skills Training equaling \$4200 per TST, or \$8400 per year. Retroactive credit for fifteen faculty members is a one-time allocation of \$9450. Total amount for FY2015 Scholarship Funds for Trial Skills Faculty is \$17, 850.

Justice Guzman thanked Justice Massengale for the report.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion. Mr. Tottenham made a motion and Judge Byrne seconded. All attending members unanimously approved the budget for FY2015 Scholarship Funds for Trial Skills Faculty. The motion was carried.

Data/Technology Committee Report, Ms. Vicki Spriggs

Ms. Spriggs thanked Justice Guzman and Children’s Commission Staff for outstanding support and directed attendees to Tab 3, page 20 for the update. She announced that initial reports for the Notice and Engagement Web Application Project which shares non-confidential case data to provide notice to parties about upcoming hearings is going well and continues to improve implementation. Ms. Spriggs continued to report on the video conferencing project to enable children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate remotely and is hosted by the Office of Court Administration (OCA). OCA has developed a user guide for use by courts and stakeholders who wish to use video conferencing for a particular hearing. A log is also maintained of all hearings conducted, including the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality or technical difficulties. As of January 31, 2015, there are 24 courts enabled for video conferencing, and 68 facilities. In FY2014, OCA facilitated 137 video hearings. Ms. Spriggs continued to report on the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS). Most recently, OCA undertook a major upgrade of the CPCMS infrastructure and also upgraded the judge’s primary hearing page, which allows the judge more flexibility to stay on the primarily page of CPCMS while also accessing information stored on other pages. Previously, the judge had to move from page to page to accomplish the same task so this is considered a major upgrade by the judges. Ms. Spriggs announced that the Personal Document Storage Project has been deferred as DFPS is developing a personal document storage system for youth.

DFPS Update, Commissioner John Specia

Judge Specia announced that on September 1, 2014 he established a new division of Prevention and Early Intervention, the Office of Child Safety. Staff will analyze data and conduct independent research on root causes of childhood fatalities to provide guidance for prevention. Additionally, DFPS is developing campaigns for safe sleep and “period of purple crying” and is working closely with The Children’s Hospital. Judge Specia reported that DFPS has created a data placement report for all DFPS regions which will allow for specific and localized data. The report also indicates “hot zones” to master investigators for areas in need of greater support. Judge Specia announced that staff are conducting real-time case reviews which apply predictive analytics to identify cases at risk of recidivism and injury. He continued to announce that DFPS will soon release a report with the Department of State Health Services on child fatalities. Judge Specia reported that implementation continues for transformation. DFPS will request additional funding to update computer programming for structured decision making.

Locally, DFPS has created areas for caseworker support services which provides clerical support for field staff. Judge Specia noted that the Department is outsourcing hiring clerical personnel to allow internal staff time for outside focused recruitment. Judge Specia continued to report on items in the Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). The Child Care and Development Block Grant requires DFPS to conduct annual inspections of registered child care homes and the increase of staff and services. Regarding the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act which lowers the age to prepare children in foster care for independent living to 14 years old, Judge Specia has requested additional funding to broaden services.

Office of Court Administration

Justice Guzman welcomed Mr. Scott Griffith, Director of Research Services, and asked him to report on the grant request on behalf of Mr. Slayton for OCA, and directed attendees to Tab 5 of the meeting notebook. Ms. Griffith thanked Justice Guzman and announced that the grant request is to fund a weighted caseload study in follow up to the report issued by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) in 2008. He explained the report is a profile of the development of case weights which recommended to devote additional time and attention to evaluating child protection cases. Mr. Griffith noted that the NCSC is uniquely qualified as a leader in the field of research and consulting on issues related to state courts and has conducted a number of studies in several states. The grant would provide for a contract with NCSC to provide support for the following: to establish a Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) comprised of judges from around the state to provide oversight and guidance for the study; training of child protection court judges and staff on the implementation of the study; a 4-6 week evaluation period of all judges who hear child protection cases to track time to spent on child protection cases, and case filings. Thereafter, NCSC will then assess the number of minutes associated with the work to determine empirical data to determine whether adequate resources are available to ensure the judicial system devotes sufficient time to child protection cases. Mr. Griffith continued to explain the process would begin in October and ultimately provide a report and final model late 2016.

Judge Specia noted that DFPS staff is currently tracking time spent on cases through a phone application and how this data could be useful. Judge Byrne asked for clarification on if the study would track time spent inside and outside hearings. Mr. Griffith confirmed that the tracking element has been included in the project and can be adjusted upon initial evaluation.

The total amount requested is \$93,908.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion. Judge Sakai made a motion and Justice Massengale seconded. All attending members approved the grant request for the Office of Court Administration in the amount of \$93,908.00 unanimously. The motion was carried.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Justice Guzman opened the floor for comment from the Collaborative Council.

Ms. Sandra Hachem, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston

Ms. Hachem shared that she manages and updates weekly a list of legislative bills and summaries that can be found on the Texas Lawyers for Children website. Justice Guzman invited attendees to notify the Children's Commission of concerning issues given the upcoming legislative session.

Ms. Andrea Sparks, Executive Director, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), Austin

Ms. Sparks announced that NCMEC has partnered with stakeholders to provide training for how to identify, address, and prevent the sexual exploitation of children in foster care. She reported that 68% of those that are reported as missing and at risk of sex trafficking are children in foster care. Ms. Sparks commended Texas as the second state to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with NCMEC that CPS workers shall immediately report missing children to law enforcement. Ms. Sparks thanked the Commission for their support and the importance of judicial leadership and provided materials for the 1-day trainings NCMEC is offering stakeholders across the state.

Ms. Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Lawyers for Children (TLC), Dallas

Ms. Elias-Perciful reported that TLC is recruiting and mentoring pro bono attorneys to develop trial skills. She also thanked Mr. Ian Spechler and Ms. Lori Duke as trainers for the TLC Advocate Project. She announced the Education Advocacy Pro Bono Project is now available in Tarrant County and hopes to develop a tool kit for counties and how to implement the project.

Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Austin

Ms. Stamp announced Harris County Homeless Youth Network and University of Houston, School of Social Work conducted a study to identify unaccompanied homeless youth and will soon issue a report. Preliminary findings show that 41% of unaccompanied homeless youth were at one point in foster care, and over one-third involved in the juvenile justice system. She continued to announce that the Department of Housing, Department of Justice, Department of Education, the National True Colors Foundation, and local providers including school districts who work with homeless youth who are LGBTQ have created a federal/local partnership initiative. Ms. Stamp reported that 5% of all youth are LGBTQ but that 40% of homeless unaccompanied youth are LGBTQ and assessed that this is due to family rejection. Harris County was one of two counties selected to participate in a three year project to evaluate the issue according to prevention and develop best practices.

Mary Christine Reed, Director, Project Texas RioGrande Legal Aid Foster Youth Justice Youth Project

Ms. Reed shared a story regarding providing youth access to court and explained the situation of a foster youth who is paraplegic with high needs, but was able to join the final hearing via video conferencing. Ms. Reed commended Tim Kennedy at OCA for his assistance and noted the importance of the event for the youth. Judge Specia thanked Ms. Reed for sharing the story and asked to share it with DFPS staff.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Guzman asked for new business, to which there was none. She announced that the next dates for the Children's Commission meeting will be on May 22, 2015, and September 18, 2015 at the State Bar of Texas, Hatton Sumners Room.

ADJOURNMENT

Justice Guzman adjourned the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3



SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Supreme Court of Texas

Permanent Judicial Commission for

Children, Youth and Families

REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

June 12, 2015

**201 W. 14th Street
Austin, Texas 78701**

Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Report for June 12, 2015

MINUTES - February 27, 2015 (adoption pending), TAB 1

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP CHANGES, TAB 2

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP CHANGES, TAB 2

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP CHANGES, TAB 2

STAFF CHANGES, TAB 2

ONGOING AND NEW FY2015 PROJECTS

- 1. Parent Representation Initiatives**
 - a. Parent Resource Guide**

The workgroup exists to help improve the quality of legal representation for parents in CPS cases. In the last quarter of 2013, Children’s Commission (Children’s Commission or CC) staff organized a workgroup, which began meeting to discuss a Parent Resource Guide and other resources that might be useful to parents navigating the CPS system. The Children’s Commission is also partnering with McLennan County parent representation project that involves the county contracting with private law firms for all legal representation of parents (see item 6).

The Parent Resource Guide was completed in May 2015 and is accessible in print and online on the Children’s Commission website. The Guide may also be posted on other websites including DFPS, Legal Aid providers, local bar association websites, Texas Lawyers for Children, as well as others. The Guide does not provide legal advice, but is designed to help parents be educated about the CPS process, their role and responsibilities, and the responsibilities and duties owed to them by others. It is designed to orient parents to the gravity of their situation, validate emotions they may be feeling, and provide tools that may be helpful in organizing and keep track of progress. The final version will be translated to Spanish by the Office of Court Administration. The workgroup will continue to confer and meet in FY2015 to discuss additional efforts to place the printed guide online, establish an online

resource center through the Texas Legal Services Corporation, and possibly the development of a video or an app for smartphones.

2. Child Protection Bench Book (BB)

The Children's Commission staff is working to update the Child Protection Law Bench Book, which will be released during the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference this August. The updated version will include legislative changes from the 84th Texas Legislature and updates to existing topical chapters. Since October 2014, the Bench Book has been available on the Children's Commission website; hard copies have also been distributed at the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference. The online version allows users to click on links provided by Law Box, an application which direct users to the applicable statute. The new version of the Bench Book will also include judicial checklists that have been updated based on feedback from the judges who participated in the Bench Book checklist pilot from July 1, 2014 through January 1, 2015. Link here: <http://benchbook.texaschildrenscommission.gov/>.

3. Round Table (RT) Series

The Children's Commission is working with DFPS to hold a Roundtable in late August to address policy, practice, training, and outcomes related to Parental Child Safety Placements or PCSPs. When DFPS initiates an investigation of a parent for abuse or neglect of a child, and makes an initial determination that the child may not be safe with the parent, DFPS may allow the parent to place the child with a family member. To formalize the placement, DFPS often enters into a PCSP as provided by Chapter 264 of the Texas Family Code.

Governor Abbott has requested that DFPS examine additional avenues to ensure that children who are left in a PCSP from which DFPS has exited are safe and that risk of harm to the child from the parent has been eliminated.

4. Legal Representation Workgroup (LRS)

Legal Representation Workgroup (LRS) formed two subcommittees in 2015 to work on two broad issues: the feasibility of creating a statutory definition of indigence; factors to consider in determining indigence; standardizing indigence affidavits and unsworn declarations, and the feasibility of creating a limited duration attorney appointment for parent at time CPS suit is filed.

Also, whether the Commission should develop and promote the adoption of standards of representation; the scope of the standards [based on statute, voluntary for the judge/jurisdiction]; inclusion of local practice tips and guidance, and whether attorneys should be encouraged or required to sign annual certification acknowledging compliance with standards and education requirements under the Texas Family Code.

Also, in November, the Children's Commission submitted three issues to the Texas Judicial Council related to Family Code Sections 107.013 and 263.201 to establish guidelines for determining indigence and clarify that parents are entitled to a court appointed attorney when they are indigent and appear in opposition to the state's suit. Also, to add Section 107.0141 to give courts the option to appoint attorneys for a limited period to assist with locating the parents, establishing indigence, and preparing for the adversary hearing. Also, Texas Family Code Chapters 155 and 263 would be amended to place tighter controls on the process used when child protection cases transfer from one county to another to help ensure state mandated deadlines and party appointments are not missed. Finally, Texas Family Code Sections would be added to provide for the creation and oversight of county or regional offices of child or parent representation in CPS cases. The Judicial Council issued resolutions on all three, and each resolution was drafted into a bill filed by Representative Thompson in the House and sponsored by Senator Uresti in the Senate. All bills were sent to the Governor, and the bill providing for the temporary appointment of parent attorney was signed by Governor Abbott on May 23, 2015.

5. Texas Board of Legal Specialization

The Children's Commission submitted a full application for legal specialization in child welfare law to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) on Friday April 24, 2015. The application included the names of over 20 attorneys and judges for TBLS consideration in forming the specialty advisory commission. The application is under consideration by the TBLS board, and if approved, TBLS will publish the proposed standards for comment. A copy of the application packet is available upon request.

6. McLennan County Parent Representation Project

McLennan County, where the city of Waco is located, began a project in the fall of 2013 to provide legal representation to parents involved in child protective services (CPS) cases through contract agreements with local law firms that paid a flat rate per month with a caseload cap of 50 cases per

firm. In July, 2014, the Children’s Commission began an evaluation project to 1) identify strengths and weaknesses of the model; 2) make recommendations for improvements to the McLennan County model; and 3) assess the feasibility of replication in other cities and counties. The evaluation included interview and file reviews using Local Process and Standards of Representation, as well as Indicators of Success for Family Representation, developed in partnership with the American Bar Association, to evaluate the nature and quality of representation provided by firm attorneys in McLennan County.

In summary, the McLennan County Parent Representation Project has improved the quality of representation for parents involved in CPS cases in McLennan County. While this model may be hard to replicate in larger counties, this model could be implemented by an individual judge. The project indicates that some type of pooling structure can reduce and even eliminate continuances and delays making time-certain docketing more feasible. While there are pros and cons to both an hourly and a flat rate system, and it may take time to figure out the rate and case cap combination, the benefits of the flat contract rate seem to outweigh the negatives. Larger firms also seem to be able to endure the financial situation more easily than smaller ones because the firm has more resources available, more private practice to sustain this type of public work, and lower overhead costs. Both of these findings have implications for other jurisdictions: contract rates, as opposed to hourly rates, can actually promote higher quality lawyering in the right context because of the self-selection process of the individuals who are willing to take lower pay to represent individuals in CPS cases, and this type of agreement works particularly well with larger groups of attorneys who can pool other costs and possibly bring in financial support from other places.

7. Jurist in Residence

The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR acts as a consultant, trainer, and speaker to provide expert and seasoned judicial advice on matters affecting courts and legal system handling of child welfare cases and issues. Additionally, informational letter and “blasts” concerning items of interests, such as training events, are routinely issued. Since the last commission meeting, the JIR has published newsletters or news blasts on the following topics: 1) April Trial Skills Training Application: Deadline Extended; 2) 2015 Judicial Conferences; 3) May is National Foster Care Month; 4) 2015 Attorney Scholarships; and 5) Reminder: 2015 Attorney Scholarships. JIRs or blasts that will be issued within the near future may include: DFPS Transformation update regarding legislative changes; new rules

or policies regarding Parental Child Safety Placements; Structured Decisionmaking (SDM) and the effect on courts; new guidelines for implementing the Indian Child Welfare Act; and child wellbeing.

8. Hearing Observation Project (HOP)

The Children's Commission met in November 2014 with Casey Family Programs and other stakeholders to discuss how to implement the well-being recommendations of the HOP report, which included:

- Reviewing Permanency Plans and Concurrent Plans More Often
- More Emphasis on Child Well-Being in Placement Review Hearings
- Address Sibling Visitation when Siblings are not Placed Together
- Consider Alternative Placements More Often
- Require Children to Attend Court Whenever Possible
- Engage Children and Parents During Hearings
- Encourage Caregivers, Particularly Non-Kinship Foster Parents, to Attend Court and Engage Them in Process

After the meeting, the decision was made to broaden the scope to encompass other important well-being issues, so the Well-Being Project will be larger in scope than what was envisioned in the HOP. An implementation action plan for this project has been developed that includes the following activities to be undertaken in FY 2015:

- Obtain input regarding well-being issues from youth formerly in care
 - This will take place during the August Child Welfare Judges Conference
- Update Child Protection Law Bench Book and checklists to include well-being content and distribute to judge at annual Child Welfare Judges Conference
 - This is underway; the updated Bench Book and checklists will be disseminated to judges during the August Child Welfare Judges Conference
- Develop one JIR paper on well-being issues and disseminate to judges
 - Estimated release date in Fall 2015
- Develop and provide judicial training regarding well-being issues at annual Child Welfare Judges Conference
 - On the agenda during the August Child Welfare Judges Conference

- Develop and implement a plan to provide judicial certification regarding well-being issues
 - Initial discussions underway; anticipated completion date in FY 2016

9. Judicial Disproportionality Workgroup (JDW)

The Judicial Disproportionality Workgroup (JDW) is sponsoring a workshop at the Cross-Systems Summit on Collaborating to Achieve Equity this August 21st, featuring the Workgroup's Chairs, Judges Chris Oldner and Meca Walker, and Sheila Craig. Ms. Craig will facilitate a discussion with the judges regarding how to reduce implicit bias in decision making and their experiences with this as child welfare judges.

The JDW is committed to supporting projects to promote judicial and attorney training such as assisting judges who would like to bring an Undoing Racism workshop to their communities. The JDW has also begun evaluating county-level data provided by the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionalities and Disparities (CEDD) which help inform upcoming projects. The workgroup is interested in continuing its work with the CEDD through representation on the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities. This Advisory Coalition is focused on working with communities to eliminate root causes of disproportionality within systems and ensure equitable access to needed services throughout Texas.

10. Tribal/State Collaboration

Representative Helen Giddings recently passed the groundbreaking HB825 which will amend the Adversary, Status, and Permanency Hearing statutes to require judges to ask at each hearing whether the child or the child's family has any Native American heritage and identify any Native American tribe with which the child may be associated. The Hearing Observation Project (HOP) revealed that Native American heritage is not being routinely discussed at child protection hearings. In the HOP, Judge Robin Sage observed and collected data from 164 child welfare hearings from around the state, and found that in 60% of the cases observed, ICWA was not addressed in court or indicated in the court's file. Only 4% of hearings addressed ICWA and only 39% of the case files mentioned ICWA.

Nationally there is also much discussion about how to ensure compliance with ICWA. The Bureau of Indian Affairs recently published updated Guidelines and is considering Proposed Regulations. The new Guidelines specifically state that agencies and State courts in every child custody proceeding, must ask whether the child is or could be an Indian child. HB 825 addresses this concern and puts Texas ahead of other states in complying with these federal guidelines and possible new federal rule.

The Children's Commission will continue to collaborate with tribal nations and system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance. Specifically, in 2015 the tribal judges Lawrence Lujan and Senior Peacemaker Battise will attend the Annual Child Welfare Conference for the first time and will be welcomed with a reception in their honor. Simultaneously with the Child Welfare Conference, the Children's Commission is hosting a tribal\state meeting with DFPS and the social services representatives from each of the three federally-recognized tribes.

11. Trauma Informed Care Project

Children's Commission has partnered with Texas CASA on a project to survey child welfare stakeholders about the various types of trauma training and programs being offered and utilized around the state. Texas CASA is developing a survey about trauma education, trauma services, and service gaps and is convening a small group to confer about the survey development and content, distribution and analysis. The Children's Commission also will continue to support DFPS's shift to a trauma-informed care system. Specifically, the Children's Commission will devote efforts to (1) develop and promote judicial and attorney training about trauma-informed care, informed by the work of Dr. Karyn Purvis's Trust-Based Relational Intervention and Dr. Bruce Perry's Trauma Academy and other leading trauma experts, including a session on well-being at the Child Welfare Judges Conference; (2) include information about trauma informed care in the CPS Judicial Bench Book; (3) liaise with and participate as a partner in the various trauma-informed workgroups; and (4) stay informed about various trauma-informed care trainings, workgroups, meetings, and strategies hosted, sponsored or initiated by various groups and provide reports to the Children's Commission and other stakeholders as appropriate.

12. Mediation Project

In September 2014, UT applied for a grant to help determine the best practices and cost-effectiveness of mediation for Travis County, Texas. This project also aims to develop cost formula that can be applied to other counties in the state and that will provide a research framework and questions that can be used by other counties. One goal of the project is to determine the costs of mediation measured by the full costs associated with cases that are resolved prior to mediation, at mediation, and at trial and include all real costs paid by the courts and departments to prepare and service the case, in addition to the cost of mediation, foster care placement, and any other relevant costs. The cost analysis is pending and should be submitted to the Children's Commission in June 2015.

Also, project aims to answer four broad research questions:

1. What types of child protection cases are best suited for resolution through mediation?
2. When in the life-cycle of a case is the optimal time for mediation to occur?
3. How are outcomes affected by mediation, including the legal resolution of the case, child wellbeing, and time to permanency?
4. Is mediation a cost-effective strategy for resolving child protection cases?

The desired result is an evidence-based analysis best practices in mediation and whether mediation in child protection cases is a more cost effective strategy than going to trial without mediation, and whether mediation can be associated with a shorter time to permanency and case resolution.

13. Child & Family Services Review (CFSR)

The federal CFSR is scheduled for June 2016. Part of the process includes a statewide assessment conducted by staff of the child welfare agency, representatives selected by DFPS who are also involved in the development of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and other child welfare stakeholders. Information gathered as part of the statewide assessment is used by the federal government to determine whether the state is in substantial conformity with the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors used to measure conformity with title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Children's Commission facilitated three stakeholder meetings on November 14, 2014, December 19, 2014, and January 23, 2015. Each meeting was attended by approximately 50 stakeholders representing the judiciary, child placing agencies, child advocacy groups, DFPS management, licensing, contracts, and administration, as well as personnel from the Administration of Children and Families. CFSR Stakeholder Group 1 - Case Review System; CFSR Stakeholder Group 2 - the Service Array and Agency Response to Community; and CFSR Stakeholder Group 3 - the Foster/Adoption Licensing, Recruitment and Retention, to include Foster and Adoptive Family Training.

The Department included the following analysis in its Child and Family State Plan that is due to the federal government in June of each year.

- **Case review:** Held on November 14, 2014 and included DFPS staff, parent advocates, community resources representatives, federal ACF staff and legal stakeholders. Concerns noted involved the seemingly generic content of Family Plans of Service that are presented

to the court, a lack of meaningful participation in the development of the plan by the family, the number of meetings and services parents are required to attend, the availability of timely services and the lack of adequate time Judges have to spend on each child welfare case. Positives noted included the utilization of Family Group Team Meetings and Family Group Conferencing, the State's timeliness in holding periodic reviews and permanency hearings and the plan for mandated electronic document filing by 2016.

- **Service Array:** Held on December 19, 2014, and included DFPS staff, parent advocates, former foster care youth and alumni, foster and adoptive parents, Child Placement Agencies, community resource representatives, federal staff, judicial and legal stakeholders. Concerns noted by stakeholders involved the need for more drug treatment providers across the state and discernment that treatment needs to be designed in a way that engages and fits the lives of parents served by the agency. This includes inpatient treatment facilities where children can remain with their parents while receiving services. Concerns also noted a lack of treatment programs for youth with mental health needs and substance abuse issues, challenges to provide services in rural areas and parents who have limited access to health care. Positives noted by stakeholders involved counties that have instituted drug courts into their legal system. Stakeholders indicated higher success rates for treatment and earlier reunifications for many children. The Children's Commission has led efforts to replicate drug courts across the State for CPS. Stakeholders also noted that the behavioral health provider STAR Health has made a meaningful impact in managed care for children including significant reduction in the use of psychotropic medications for children in foster care. Strengths also included the Children's Commission launching of an educational task force where every school district is to have a liaison for foster children and the Starfish Committee where leaders from various agencies collaborate to address needs of children who have been admitted to psychiatric hospitals for treatment but are then unable to return to their prior residential treatment facility.
- **Agency Responsiveness to the Community:** Also held on December 19, 2014, and included DFPS staff, parent advocates, former foster care youth and alumni, foster and adoptive parents, Child Placement Agencies, community resource representatives, federal staff, judicial and legal stakeholders. Overall, stakeholder engagement was found to be a strength for CPS. Positives recognized by stakeholders included notable improvement by CPS in the last several years regarding engagement to include community partners and parents as part of the Transformation process. CPS also involves youth through the Youth Leadership

Council and by employing former foster youth as Youth Specialists in every region to further seek youth input and engagement. Stakeholders from Law Enforcement also reported good working relationships with CPS in their areas. About 75% of the State has Child Advocacy Centers. CPS also has strong working relationships with the Tribal Communities and has regular meetings with all three tribes. Concerns noted by stakeholders involved caseworkers' lack of knowledge around how their local mental health authorities work and a need to strengthen work with the disabled community. It's challenging for caseworkers to be experts on all programs they may be involved with through the community. CPS has implemented a Mentoring Program to aid in this area. Foster parent stakeholders noted a decline in Foster Parent Associations as CPS Agency homes are in decline and more foster parents are now licensed through private Child Placing Agencies. Foster parents felt this affects their ability to communicate directly with the agency.

- **Foster/Adoption Licensing, Recruitment and Retention:** Held on January 23, 2015, and included DFPS staff, parent advocates, former foster care youth and alumni, foster and adoptive parents, Child Placement Agencies, community resource representatives and legal stakeholders. Concerns noted by stakeholders related to licensing standards, foster home capacity, and recruitment. Even though Texas standards go beyond the National Standards, it can be difficult for licensing representatives and staff in the private sector to interpret them the same way across the state. Stakeholders also reported concerns related to the need for more training, support and resources for foster parents and noted foster parents should be viewed part of the treatment team for children. Child Placing Agencies noted their biggest challenge is related to capacity in finding homes for older youth and a need for strong treatment homes. Stakeholders indicated recruitment needs to occur in targeted communities to include African Americans, Spanish speaking families and in military communities. Positives recognized by stakeholders included Texas efforts to address safety of children in foster care as well as the state's proactive steps to approve normalcy standards for children in foster care. DFPS has conducted surveys with foster parents and providers in an effort to determine how standards may be more streamlined. A full review will occur in Fall of 2015 with forums in 11 cities across the state. The input received will further be presented at the DFPS Council meeting and opened for public comment. The Department noted that through Foster Care Redesign, the Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCC) have taken on centralized recruitment campaigns. The Region 3B catchment area has a council exploring ways to recruit in the community. Stakeholders report that Texas leads the

nation in achieving adoptions with DFPS 2014 Data Book indicating 5,175 total adoption consummations for 2014.

14. Protect Our Kids Commission Support

The Protect Our Kids Commission (POK Commission) is a twelve-person commission chaired by Judge Robin Sage. Established by Senate Bill 66 during the 83rd Legislative Session, the POK Commission is charged with identifying promising practices and strategies to address and reduce fatalities from child abuse and neglect, and recommending a comprehensive statewide strategy for reducing those fatalities. The POK Commission is working with members from the House Select Committee on Child Deaths, the State Child Fatality Review Team, the DFPS Office of Child Safety and various stakeholder organizations. The Children's Commission is providing meeting and administrative support to Judge Sage and the POK. The POK Commission has met four times and is dividing its work into the following: Data, Child Fatality Review Team Support, Prevention, and Sustainability. The POK Commission will submit a report to the Legislature by December 31, 2015.

15. Foster Care and Education Committee, formerly *Texas Blueprint* Implementation Task Force and Education Committee

At the February meeting, the Children's Commission approved the creation of a standing Foster Care and Education Committee to address the recommendations in the *Texas Blueprint* and continue to work on improving education outcomes for children and youth in foster care. The first Committee meeting will occur on July 20, 2015 at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Joining the previous members of the Task Force which included 3 judges and stakeholders from DFPS, Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), foster care alumni, Casey Family Programs, Disability Rights Texas, attorneys for parents and children, a district foster care liaison, a child placing agency, and Texas CASA are representatives from two and four year postsecondary institutions, THECB, and the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities. At the meeting in July, the Foster Care and Education Committee will discuss objectives for the next phase of *Texas Blueprint* implementation and address how the work should be structured.

Some things of note which have occurred since the last Commission meeting:

- In May 2015, TEA sent out an agency update to provide information about National Foster Care Month. This correspondence included resources and information about the Education Reach for Texans Convening on June 3, 2015, reminders about the tuition and fee waiver, postsecondary opportunities, Trauma Informed Classrooms presented by the TCU Institute of Child Development August 4-5, 2015, and the upcoming National Dropout Prevention Network Conference which will be hosted in San Antonio October 25-28, 2015.
- On May 27, 2015, Judge Rob Hofmann participated in a panel presentation at a national meeting in Washington DC entitled, “Improving the Outcomes of Students in Foster Care: Spreading Promising Policies and Practice.” The meeting was co-hosted by the National Center for Youth Law, Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality, and the Children’s Defense Fund. Texas was one of three states highlighted for best practices and Judge Hofmann emphasized the importance of statewide collaboration and judicial leadership in the formation and implementation of the *Texas Blueprint*.

Between now and the next Children’s Commission meeting, Commission staff will continue to support the implementation of the *Texas Blueprint*. The Foster Care and Education Committee may focus in the next phase of implementation on postsecondary education, special education, data exchange and information sharing, and supporting school stability and streamlined transitions when necessary.

16. Weighted Caseload Study / Partnership with OCA and National Center for State Courts

In 2007, at the request of the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA), a district court judicial workload assessment was conducted in by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The project resulted in a weighted caseload model used to analyze judicial workload and the need for judges in the district courts. At the time the workload assessment was done it was not possible to distinguish Child Protective Services (CPS) cases from other types of family law cases, and CPS cases were reported in a category titled “Other Family Law,” along with child support cases, protective order applications, and paternity suits. As a result, the model that resulted from the study makes use of a single case weight to account for a variety of case types. Because CPS cases are very different from the types of cases that make up the “Other Family Law” case category, a separate case weight for CPS case was identified as a need. In 2010, the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) implemented new reporting protocols for clerks that now make it possible for OCA to quantify CPS case filings,

which in turn will allow for them to be more precisely weighted. In February 2015, OCA submitted an application to partner with the NCSC to conduct a weighted caseload study for CPS cases. The goals of the project include determining whether adequate resources are available to ensure the judicial system devotes sufficient time to child protection cases. Ensuring courts have adequate resources to handle CPS dockets will, in turn, help promote good outcomes for children and families seeking safety, permanency and wellbeing from the foster care system.

The activities include: forming a Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) to provide project oversight and guidance as well as to review project plans and materials. JNAC's membership will be drawn from rural and urban court judges who handle CPS cases and child protection court judges from across the state and will include a member of the Children's Commission's staff and a Children's Commission Jurist in Residence. The results of this phase of the project will serve as a framework for the overall workload evaluation. This includes defining the way that CPS cases are currently handled and the resources that are devoted to them (e.g., types of hearings and stages where the judge is involved), determining which type of judge is appropriate for the study (e.g., rural, urban, and/or child protection court judges), identifying state and national standards for the handling of child protection services cases that might be useful and appropriate for Texas, and generally ensuring that the project is proceeding as intended. NCSC will design a web-based tool used to collect data; prepare training materials that explain how judicial officers should classify and record work during the study, deliver "Train the Trainer" sessions to judges, court staff and OCA staff who in turn can present training to judicial officers in each jurisdiction or other in-person training opportunities; produce a web-based recorded training that participants may view at their convenience; create printable forms that judicial officers can use to track time on paper during the date; and provide a glossary defining all case-type event categories. NCSC will then conduct an event-based time study of judicial workload over the course of a four- to six-week period in order to gain a reliable and valid snapshot of judicial activity, including all on-bench and off-bench pre-trial, dispositional, and post-disposition activities. NCSC will then compile, verify, and analyze all time study data. The analysis will provide an empirical profile of the amount of time that case events (e.g., hearings) are currently taking. From these events a composite case weight for CPS cases will be developed. Following the time study, judges who handle CPS cases will be asked to complete a Web-based sufficiency of time survey. The survey will assess whether, under the draft workload model, judges would have sufficient time to fulfill all of their judicial responsibilities with reasonable quality given current resource levels. The survey will provide judges with an opportunity to express their views on current case processing practices, including (1) whether there is a need for more or less time related to specific phases of case

processing (e.g., pre-disposition, disposition, post-disposition); (2) challenges to the effective handling of CPS cases; and (3) proven efficient and effective case processing policies and strategies. These data will provide a reference for the quality adjustment process. Finally, the JNAC will reconvene for a meeting to examine and reconcile results from all phases of the study including results from the time study and the sufficiency of time survey and will draft a preliminary report that includes the results of the weighted caseload study.

Training Projects

The Training Committee met by conference call on May 5, 2015.

Attorney Education

1. Attorney Ad Litem Appointment Eligibility and Online Training Webinars on CPS issues

In partnership with Texas Bar CLE, the Commission has scheduled July 21, 2015 for the Commission's yearly full day to tape webinars for the CPS section of the Texas Bar CLE's online library. The webinar taping was scheduled to follow the conclusion of the Legislative Session so that all new CLE will reflect the changes to the Texas Family Code. Confirmed speakers and topics are as follows: Judge F. Scott McCown will present a three-hour webinar which will cover the basic structure of a CPS case (including relevant statutes and timelines) and will include advocacy tips for the beginner and the advanced practitioner. Staff is working with the State Bar to qualify this webinar as sufficient to meet the minimum training for Ad Litem and parent attorneys as recommended by the Texas Family Code. (This training will be relevant for state attorneys as well.) Additionally, Judge Dean Rucker and Children's Commission Assistant Director Tiffany Roper will present a one and a half-hour CLE on important legislative updates. Finally, Justice Michael Massengale will present a one and a half-hour webinar on issues regarding appeals of CPS cases. Concurrently, Staff is pursuing additional means of filming webinars in order to continue to increase the CLE offerings in the CPS section of the Texas Bar CLE library.

Also of note is the article in the April edition of the Texas Bar Journal entitled "For the Kids" which highlighted the increasing availability of affordable attorney training on CPS-related issues. Staff is grateful to Judge Dean Rucker and Judge Jean Boyd, along with attorneys Michele Surratt (Trial Skills

Training faculty member) and Belinda Roberts (Trial Skills Training graduate) for their assistance in providing quotes for this article.

2. Attorney Scholarships

Attorney scholarship applications are now available on the Commission's website to the following state and national summer CLE conferences:

- State Bar of Texas Advanced Family Law CLE 1-Day Workshop on Child Abuse and Neglect: August 5, 2015 in San Antonio (with video replays thereafter in October, 2015):
 - Post-event survey results from the 2014 Child Abuse and Neglect CLE 1-Day were shared with the State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee and with the DFPS. Sharing this information was helpful to them and they used it to create an Agenda for this summer's conference which incorporates some of the most requested topics listed by the Commission's scholarship recipients. (For example, trial preparation and trial skills along with a more practical case law update will be presented.) This is a great example of stakeholders working together to create additional attorney training on CPS cases.
 - The Training Committee approved \$10,000 in registration scholarships for the CAN CLE at \$100 apiece. Up to 100 qualified attorneys can attend the live CLE or one of two video replays in October on Commission scholarship.
- National Association of Counsel for Children's Annual Conference, August 25-27th 2015 in Monterey, California:
 - The Training Committee approved \$10,000 in registration scholarships for the NACC Conference, at \$400 apiece.
 - The Commission is limiting this particular scholarship to up to 25 attorneys and judges who have received their Child Welfare Law Specialization from the NACC between May 2014 and the present.
- American Bar Association's semi-annual conferences, in July 2015 in Washington, DC. The Parent Attorney Conference will be on July 22-23; the Child Attorney Conference will be July 24-25.
 - The Training Committee has approved \$25,000 in reimbursement scholarships for qualified attorneys to attend the ABA Conferences at \$1,250 apiece.
 - Up to 20 qualified attorneys can attend either of the ABA Conferences on Commission scholarship.

Commission staff is currently processing applications to all of the above CLEs.

3. NACC Fee Waivers for Child Welfare Specialist Exam

The Children's Commission works with the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) through a Training Committee Grant which provides for reimbursement of the Certification Exam Fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the Child Welfare Specialist Exam. The cost of the fee to take the Child Welfare Certification Exam is \$350 per attorney. This year, the Training Committee approved that this grant be funded up to \$5,000. Commission Staff is currently working with the NACC on its grant for the certification reimbursement. Additionally, Staff will add a provision to this grant to assist Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking re-certification of their CWLS every five years. The Commission will provide for reimbursement of \$190 worth of the \$350 fee needed for re-certification for Texas CWLS who have been certified for five years and are seeking recertification. The current amount of this grant will be able to cover both the exam fee and the \$190 contribution to the recertification fee.

Currently, there are 35 Texas CWLS. Those who took the specialization exam in December, 2014 will be notified in mid-February, 2015. Commission staff will update the Commission on the number of newly-minted Texas CWLS, if any, if the results are available at the time of the meeting. At this time, there are 28 current Texas applicants who are in the process of preparing for the Certification exam.

4. Trial Skills Training

The April 15-17, 2015 Trial Skills Training went very well. The Commission received 92 applicants for 21 spots; this resulted in our most geographically diverse group of students to date. Lessons learned from the October 2014 program were implemented, which resulted in tweaks to the Agenda and to some of the content. This allowed for the program to flow more smoothly and to be more helpful to the participants (especially in the areas of Evidentiary Foundations and Objections). Four new Trial Skills Training faculty members were trained. Staff is currently working on a debriefing of the April Training in order to further refine the program for future iterations.

By way of a funding update: following a presentation on the Trial Skills Training to the CJA Committee of the Texas Center for the Judiciary, the Center agreed to cover the cost of the Trial Skills Training participants who are state's attorneys through CJA Grant funding. This will allow the 2015 Trial Skills Training budget to stay on track. We are very grateful to partner with the Texas Center on the Judiciary on this funding to train prosecutors.

The next Trial Skills Training will be held in November, 2015 in Austin. Staff is researching a new venue which will better suit the needs of the training.

5. DFPS Attorney Training

The DFPS is currently working with Staff to apply for funding through the Training Committee in order to host their next regional attorney training in Austin in mid-November, 2015.

6. Texas CASA Training

CASA's FY2015 training projects are intended to increase the understanding of the impact of trauma and understanding and awareness of proven strategies and interventions provided in the TBRI (Trust Based Relational Intervention) model of treatment to help CASA volunteers, CPS caseworkers, attorneys, judges, placement providers, therapeutic providers, kinship and families implement strategies that positively impact well-being and permanency outcomes. Texas CASA also will seek to learn how TBRI fits into the broader goal of creating a statewide trauma-informed system. Working closely with the Travis County Collaborative and the TCU Institute for Child Development, continuing the work of the Texas CASA Mental Health Task Force, utilizing the training efforts and outcomes TBRI "educators", and engaging with other state and nationally recognized trauma experts Texas CASA will develop a report of recommendations and information regarding trauma informed practice and the intersections with TBRI that offer greatest opportunity to improve child outcomes.

CASA has already begun working on activities related to the grant, which include the following since the last commission meeting:

- Texas CASA held conference calls with all TBRI educators in January, February, and April, as well as conducted emails and conference calls with individual team members.
- TBRI teams developed training plans.
- Scheduled a TBRI workshop to be held at the Texas CASA conference November 5-7, 2015 in San Marcos. The workshop will include a panel presentation on the work, outreach, training, and impact of the educator training within local communities.
- Texas CASA has met with a large number of multi-disciplinary stakeholders to understand and assist in building capacity for a statewide structure of trauma informed care. Stakeholders include DFPS, the Trauma-Informed Care Consortium, Cenpatico, the Department of State Health Services, the Texas Network of Youth Services, the Children's Commission, the Travis County Collaborative for Children, and the Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health.

The project will yield an increased awareness among child welfare stakeholders, and CASA volunteers specifically, about trauma informed care and TBRI. CASA will gather information about the training effort through evaluation tools developed specifically for this project, through the TBRI team training plans, documented progress against the plans, and information gathered from site visits.

7. KITS Conference

The Commission has approved a request from Harris County for \$7,000.00 to cover the cost of labor to plan, organize and coordinate the annual Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe Conference in Houston. This conference is a multi-disciplinary gathering on child abuse and neglect issues. Commission funding will also go towards travel and per diem for speakers who are not local, the cost of obtaining CLE and CEUs, and marketing the event.

Judicial Education

1. Child Welfare Judicial Conference

This year's annual Child Welfare Judges Conference, the ninth annual conference of its kind held in Texas, will be held August 17-19, 2015 in Austin. Children's Commission staff began engaging in monthly planning meetings with TCJ and the Office of Court Administration in November 2014. An agenda planning call with a group of judges was held in March 2014 to identify topics and speakers for this year's agenda, which includes:

- Creating a Culture of Permanency
- Getting Kids to Permanency
- Legislative Update
- Our Children's Well-Being: Foster Youth Panel and facilitated discussion of well-being issues
- Reasonable Efforts
- 3rd Party Interventions and Court Orders
- DFPS Panel
- NCSC Weighted Caseload Information Session and Training
- Child Fatalities
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status
- Human Trafficking

The expected attendance at the conference is approximately 75 judges; as of May 22, approximately 50 judges had registered. The Child Protection Court judges will hold their annual meeting in conjunction with the conference on the morning of August 17th. Finally, the dates for the 2016 conference have been selected; it will be held November 14-16, 2016 in Austin.

2. Judicial Scholarships to Attend the NCJFCJ Annual Conference

This year, the annual NCJFCJ Conference will be held in Austin from July 26-29, 2015 and the Children's Commission Vice-Chair, Judge Darlene Byrne, will be sworn in as the President of the NCJFCJ. As in previous years, a limited number of scholarships were awarded to approximately 25 judges to attend the conference. To qualify for the scholarship, the judge needed to hear a CPS docket and commit to attending the Texas Child Welfare Judges Conference.

3. Judicial Technical Assistance

Part of the TCJ FY 2015 grant application includes funding for judicial technical assistance that TCJ provides the Children's Commission throughout the year, including facilitation of meetings, developing additional judicial trainings, and speaker and other fees related to conferences not specifically funded.

Technology / Data Committee Projects

The Technology / Data Committee met by conference call on May 27, 2015.

1. Notice & Engagement Web Application

The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide notice to parties and interested persons about upcoming hearings, and is distributed via email. The Children's Commission sent an announcement to one CPC court and three child placing agency partners advising of the Child Protective Services Hearing Notification tool. The notice advised that the service is only available for cases covered by CPC courts, and that each participant must set up a user account within the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) in use by those courts.

Once a profile or user account has been created, the user can search for cases to which they are assigned or interested. The case search page requires at least part of the parent, adoptive parent or guardian's last name, and the exact spelling of the child's first and last name as well as the county where the suit is filed. The search will look for open cases and display a Summary of Upcoming Hearing Dates. The results will also display a Summary of All Open Cases regardless of whether a

hearing has been scheduled or not. The summary can be printed out or can be sent to the user via email. A user can remove a case from their notification profile by simply clicking the “remove” link next to the case information. The user has the option to receive notices 1, 3, 7, 14, and / or 30 days in advance of any hearing scheduled. A user guide was developed by OCA and can be accessed here: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/21074/User%20Guide%20to%20Notifications.pdf>. Users can set up an account by clicking <https://cpshearings.txcourts.gov>.

As of May 25, 2015, there are 228 users: Adoptive Parent 3, CASA Volunteer 10, Case Worker 90, Foster Parent 30, Guardian 3, Guardian Ad Litem 10, Possessory Conservator 1, Relative 1, Sole Managing Conservator 2, Volunteer Advocate 8, Attorney 70. Between October 1, 2014 and May 25, 2015, the system generated 391 notifications related to 366 different hearings.

Going forward, the Children’s Commission will continue to work with OCA to send the announcement again to all CPC judges who use CPCMS, and to work with the Department to access provider d-lists to encourage providers to sign up for the services.

2. Video Conferencing

The video conferencing project enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without them being physically present in the courtroom. OCA hosts and supports the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements. OCA has drafted a “how to” for use by Courts and other stakeholders who wish to use video conferencing for a particular hearing. OCA also maintains a list of Residential Treatment Centers with video conferencing capability as well as a list of courts. OCA developed a user guide, and also maintains a log of all hearings conducted, including the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality or technical difficulties.

For the period of 09/01/14 through 5/31/15, there were 289 videoconference hearings held. During that same period, 216 youth attending a hearing via videoconference. Also, there are 26 courts, and 69 service provider facilities. Still to come, OCA will add 2 more courts to comply with the Grant Award. Also, an additional six facility sites will be set up before 09/30/15.

One judge has starting utilizing the service and has observed that kids are engaged, they are able at times to see their parents and siblings at the hearing, and he also allows attorneys and GALs to use the system to meet with / confer with their client prior to the hearing. Also there are three local CASA programs are set up to use videoconferencing, and there is capacity to add more programs.

OCA plans to upgrade the hardware next fiscal year, which will improve the reporting capability, and may include features to enable use from any hand-held device such as an iPad, iPhone, Android.

3. Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS)

CPCMS is a case management system that is unique to Child Protection Courts. It has been in use since 2009. OCA provides project management, programming and testing services for CPCMS. OCA staffs a CPCMS Advisory Council of CPC judges, OCA staff and Children's Commission staff to evaluate bug fixes or enhancements. The CPCMS Advisory Group continues to meet and provide governance in order to prioritize enhancements and bug fixes.

Recently, OCA undertook a major upgrade of the CPCMS infrastructure and also upgraded the judge's primary hearing page, which allows the judge more flexibility to stay on one page (the primary page) of CPCMS while also accessing information stored on other pages. Previously, the judge had to move from page to page to accomplish the same task. The structural changes made to accommodate hearing page will also allow OCA to make additional enhancements to CPCMS that will apply to additional / other pages. Overall, these changes have made CPCMS more efficient and easier for judges and court coordinators to use.

CPCMS is also still in maintenance mode. Judges and coordinators continue to submit requests to the CPCMS Advisory Committee for review and approval to address bugs, inconveniences, and enhancements. OCA is also working on the architecture to streamline how documents are stored so that document storage can be accomplished outside the CPCMS database. Documents stored outside the database will make the system more responsive and easier to use, and as four new CPC courts are added next year, this change will allow CPCMS to continue to be responsive as users are added.

Another project with CPCMS going forward will involve using data from the State Bar of Texas database to eliminate duplicate entries for attorneys by identifying each attorney by his/her bar number and the name associated with that bar number on the SBOT website.

4. Children's Commission Website

OCA will assist the Children's Commission in upgrading the to the Supreme Court / OCA website template. OCA will establish a private Umbraco site and install the templates from the Supreme Court and CC staff will start adding content from current website. Once all content has been updated and transferred, OCA will make the new site live and the old website will be shut down.

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Program Issue: The Commission has identified Court Function Improvement and Capacity Building as strategic categories to focus on improving. This training results in well-educated stakeholders who can not only assist their children and families in understanding and protecting due process rights, but who can also advocate for appropriate and necessary services while helping courts render clear specific court orders. Better educated stakeholders results in improved quality of legal representation and case work in child protection cases and leads to more timely resolution of child welfare cases, ensuring that children are placed in a permanent home more quickly with improved outcomes. In addition, sessions will incorporate training on trauma-informed services and how to use those practices within the context of child protection law. While this training is designed specifically for attorneys and judges (CLEs will be provided), it is part of a larger multi-disciplinary conference, and as such, attracts case workers, CASA volunteers, drug and alcohol professionals, social workers, and other stakeholders impacting the child protection system. Partners in this program include: Fort Bend Co.; Harris Co. Infant Toddler Court; Council on Alcohol & Drugs Houston, Santa Maria Hostel, DePelchin Children’s Center, Harris County MHMRA, Harris County Children’s Protective Services, DFPS, Harris County and Fort Bend County Child Advocates.

Program Objective: To develop and present an affordable, relevant, multi-track training for attorneys and child welfare workers involved in Child Protective Services Cases. The curriculum will be designed to appeal to and benefit attorneys with varying degrees of experience in the field, with specialized tracks developed for attorneys representing the Department, children, and parents. Plenary sessions and break out sessions of a more general nature will be included, to provide all attendees with information that is pertinent without regard to client base. The program will be marketed to attorneys and child welfare workers state-wide, and will be located in Houston so as to be convenient to the greatest number of attendees.

Outcome: The ITC and the State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee seek to achieve better educated stakeholders, specifically attorneys and child welfare workers, who will be able to better represent their clients, understand concepts of trauma informed care, and improve case outcomes for children and families.

Activities:

- Plan curriculum topics
- Identify and secure speakers
- Collaborate with Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) on logistics, marketing, and other details.
- Present program on June 11 & 12, 2015 at the Council for Alcohol and Drugs in Houston, Texas

Output(s): The Infant Toddler Court and the State Bar of Texas Child Abuse and Neglect Committee expect attendees to be better prepared in working with children and families and in representation of their client in the courtroom, better prepared and more knowledgeable stakeholders will result in higher quality hearings, engagement of families in the court process, improved service delivery and ultimately in better child and family outcomes.

Data Collection: Following consultation with the Commission representatives, an evaluation similar to the evaluation used in 2014 will be prepared. Each participant in the training will be asked to fill out the evaluation. Results will be reviewed for strengths and weaknesses of the training, and will be used in planning future conferences. Results from the 2014 conference indicated 100% of attendees rated this conference as a “useful experience” and would “recommend to a colleague.” Comments from attendees indicated an increase in resources and knowledge of professional contacts in the area of child welfare as a result of attendance. Over the three day KITS training, 687 attendees pre-registered for the event. In regards to audience demographics, 83% of audience members worked in the legal or child welfare field.

Feedback: Results will be shared with the Children’s Commission and the KITS conference organizers. Results will also be offered to any group planning training in order to assist in developing targeted training that achieves better outcomes as for children and families.

Budget Narrative: On June 11-12, 2015, the Committee, Harris County (Infant Toddler Court) and Fort Bend County Infant Toddler Court will present a multi-track training for attorneys representing children, parents and DFPS in child protection court, and child welfare professionals. The conference will thus consist of two full days of multidisciplinary training for child abuse professionals, and will be held in partnership with a number of entities supporting the Commission and the Infant Toddler courts in Harris and Fort Bend Counties. By partnering with these entities, expenses, supplies, and equipment over the two-day conference will be shared, thus reducing the cost to the Committee and the program partners. Cost to attendees will be kept to a minimum.

Budget is requested for: \$3,000 for personnel, for the cost of labor to plan, organize, and coordinate administratively for the conference (e.g., speaker slots, vendor contracts and invoices, and other logistics). Travel is estimated to be \$2,000, to cover the various costs of stipend, travel and per diem for speakers who are not local. Supplies and equipment are not requested and will be provided in kind as needed. \$2,000 in contractual will cover the cost of CEUs and marketing. Matching is expected to exceed the 25% minimum. The Houston Council will provide for a portion of the costs for venue space and marketing as well as AV equipment. Other support will be provided by MHMRA (brochures, designed and printed, \$2,200), and other stakeholders (at least \$3,050).

Budget

Texas CIP Grant		Requested			
		Total Program	Amount of CIP Funds Requested	Cash Match	In-Kind Match
a	Personnel	\$3,000	\$3,000		
b	Fringe Benefits				
c	Travel	\$2,000	\$2,000		
d	Equipment				

e	Supplies				
f.	Contractual	\$9,985	\$2,000		\$7,985
g	Construction				
h	Other				
i	Total Direct Charges (sum a-h)	\$14,985	\$7,000		\$7,985
j	Indirect Charges				
k	Totals	\$14,985	\$7,000		\$7,895

Requested Grant Period: The Grant becomes effective 4/1/2015, and ends 9/30/2015 unless terminated or otherwise modified.

Amount Requested: \$7,000

Applicant must initial each of the following:

_____ Applicant understands that CIP grants awarded to a governmental entity are governed by OMB Circular A-87 and that CIP grants awarded to a nonprofit organization are governed by OMB Circular A-110.

_____ Applicant understands that CIP funds expended must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the objectives of the program for which funding is sought.

_____ Applicant understands that CIP funds are paid on a reimbursement basis and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

_____ Applicant understands that funding is subject to approval by the Supreme Court Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families.

_____ Applicant understands that funding must involve meaningful and on-going collaboration of local or statewide stakeholders.

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COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION

Grant Fund Category Requested: New Continued

Applicant: Office of Court Administration/National Center for State Courts			
Authorized Official Name:	OCA: David Slayton; National Center: Daniel J. Hall		
Title:	Administrative Director	Vice President	
Organization:	Texas Office of Court Administration/National Center for State Courts		
Address:	205 W. 14th Street, Suite 600	300 Newport Ave.	
	Austin, Texas 78701 – 1625	Williamsburg, Virginia 23185-4147	
Phone:	(512) 463-1625	(757) 253-2000	
Fax:	(512) 463-1648		
E-mail:	David.Slayton@txcourts.gov		
Financial Officer Name:	Tina Washington;	Financial Officer Title:	Acting Chief Financial Officer;
Program Director Name:	Scott Griffith;	Program Director Title:	Director, Research and Court Services;

Requestor is designated as a(n):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Agency | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unit of Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe): | |

Program Type Requested: Basic Program Data Training

Program Title: Office of Court Administration (OCA)/ National Center for State Courts/ Court Improvement Program (CIP) Partnership Grant

Program Issue:

In 2007, at the request of the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA), a district court judicial workload assessment was conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The project resulted in a weighted caseload model used to analyze judicial workload and the need for judges

in the district courts. At the time the workload assessment was done it was not possible to distinguish Child Protective Services (CPS) cases from other types of family law cases, and CPS cases were reported in a category titled “Other Family Law,” along with child support cases, protective order applications, and paternity suits. As a result, the model that resulted from the study makes use of a single case weight to account for a variety of case types. Because CPS cases are very different from the types of cases that make up the “Other Family Law” case category, a separate case weight for CPS case was identified as a need. In 2010, the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) implemented new reporting protocols for clerks that now make it possible to quantify CPS case filings, which in turn will allow for them to be more precisely weighted.

Program Objective:

To identify the specific and accurate court and judicial system resources required to adequately handle the state’s child protection caseload.

Outcome:

The goals of the project include determining whether adequate resources are available to ensure the judicial system devotes sufficient time to child protection cases. Ensuring courts have adequate resources to handle CPS dockets will, in turn, help promote good outcomes for children and families seeking safety, permanency and wellbeing from the foster care system.

Activities:

1. A Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) will be formed to provide project oversight and guidance as well as to review project plans and materials. The exact size and composition of JNAC will be determined by the OCA in consultation with the NCSC and the Children’s Commission. JNAC’s membership will be drawn from rural and urban court judges who handle CPS cases and child protection court judges from across the state and will include a member of the Children’s Commission’s staff and a Children’s Commission Jurist in Residence. OCA will be responsible for arranging and coordinating the participation of all JNAC members and will coordinate JNAC meetings. OCA will also be responsible for reimbursing the JNAC members for travel expenses incurred to attend JNAC meetings. OCA will also designate a JNAC member to serve as the committee chairperson, as well as an OCA staff member to serve as a single point of contact for the NCSC project team throughout the workload assessment. The results of this phase of the project will serve as a framework for the overall workload evaluation. This includes defining the way that CPS cases are currently handled and the resources that are devoted to them (e.g., types of hearings and stages where the judge is involved), determining which type of judge is appropriate for the study (e.g., rural, urban, and/or child protection court judges), identifying state and national standards and other applicable authorities for the handling of child protection services cases that might be useful and appropriate for Texas, and generally ensuring that the project is proceeding as intended.

2. NCSC will design a web-based tool used to collect data; prepare training materials that explain how judicial officers should classify and record work during the study, deliver “Train the Trainer” sessions to judges, court staff and OCA staff who in turn can present training to judicial officers in each jurisdiction or other in-person training opportunities; produce a web-based recorded training that participants may view at their convenience; create printable forms that judicial officers can use to track time on paper during the study period; and provide a glossary defining all case-type event categories.
3. NCSC will conduct an event-based time study of judicial workload over the course of a four- to six-week period in order to gain a reliable and valid snapshot of judicial activity, including all on-bench and off-bench pre-trial, dispositional, and post-disposition activities.
4. NCSC will compile, verify, and analyze all time study data. The analysis will provide an empirical profile of the amount of time that case events (e.g., hearings) are currently taking. From these events a composite case weight for CPS cases will be developed.
5. Following the time study, judges who handle CPS cases will be asked to complete a Web-based sufficiency of time survey. The survey will assess whether, under the draft workload model, judges would have sufficient time to fulfill all of their judicial responsibilities with reasonable quality given current resource levels. The survey will provide judges with an opportunity to express their views on current case processing practices, including (1) whether there is a need for more or less time related to specific phases of case processing (e.g., pre-disposition, disposition, post-disposition); (2) challenges to the effective handling of CPS cases; and (3) proven efficient and effective case processing policies and strategies. These data will provide a reference for the quality adjustment process.
6. The JNAC will reconvene for a meeting to examine and reconcile results from the time study and the sufficiency of time survey. Using an iterative and consensus-based process, JNAC will engage in a structured review of the preliminary CPS case weight and recommend adjustments based on any recent statutory changes, proven effective and efficient procedures and practices, state and national standards, and real-world experience. The purpose of the adjustments will be to ensure that the final case weights incorporate sufficient time for the efficient and effective performance of all judicial duties in each child protection case.
7. NCSC will draft a preliminary report that includes the project methodology, the results of the weighted caseload study, a digest of the focus groups’ discussions, and an executive summary. OCA will be responsible for coordinating the review process with JNAC and

other stakeholders. Following the receipt of comments on the draft report, NCSC project will incorporate any corrections and suggestions, as appropriate, and finalize the report.

Data Collection and Support:

Judicial officers in the time study sample will track all of their case-related work by event throughout the four- to six-week time study period. During the time study, NCSC staff will be available by telephone and e-mail to answer questions about classifying activities and entering data. NCSC staff will also monitor data submitted throughout the time study and provide the OCA with regular updates on participation. Participation updates may include lists of specific courts or judges with lower than expected rates of participation, enabling the OCA to engage in targeted outreach to increase participation. NCSC has found that this strategy has proven successful in ensuring high participation rates throughout the course of the time study.

Budget Narrative (Include information on match):

NCSC Costs

The cost for this project as proposed in Tasks 1 through 7 above, other than reimbursement for JNAC members’ travel expenses, will be a firm fixed price of \$93,908. This cost includes professional and administrative time, travel, and indirect costs. An example of some of the costs included in NCSC’s indirect cost rates are equipment, supplies, telephone, printing/photocopying, postage, audits, and other items. The indirect costs are based on approved federal rates used for all contracts. The rates used for this proposal by NCSC are the federal government approved rates for its Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services (MOBIS) contract. The Children’s Commission will issue one Award Statement for 93,908.00 to the NCSC for the Activities as well as Data Collection and Support, and will set aside an additional \$10,000.00 for meeting support and travel. NCSC will submit all Requests for Reimbursement to the Children’s Commission. OCA will be primarily responsible for review and approval for payment by the Children’s Commission.

Meeting Support and Travel Costs

The estimated cost for travel to JNAC meetings incurred by JNAC members that will be reimbursed is not to exceed \$10,000.00. JNAC members will submit all travel reimbursement requests to the Children’s Commission. OCA will provide oversight and approval, as needed or requested by the Children’s Commission.

Task	Cost	Total Budgeted Consulting Hours (est)	Total Budgeted Days (est)
Project Preparation and Planning (Task 1)	\$20,675.00	127.5	3 days each / 3 consultants

Time Study and Related Materials and Training (Tasks 2 & 3)	\$19,100.00	172.5	--
Time Study Data Analysis (Task 4)	\$10,483.00	97.5	--
Sufficiency of Time Survey (Task 5)	\$8,898.00	75	--
Final Meeting of JNAC (Task 6)	\$19,826.00	112.5	3 days each / 3 consultants
Final Report (Task 7)	\$14,916.00	127.5	--
JNAC Meeting Support and Travel Expense	\$10,000.00	N/A	OCA
Total	\$103,908.00	712.5	18 days on site

In-Kind Match

In-Kind match will be accrued by OCA and judicial officers who participate in the project. OCA will collect documentation to support the in-kind match during the course of the project.

Requested Grant Period: The Grant becomes effective March 1, 2015, and ends February 28, 2016 unless terminated or otherwise modified by no-cost extension.

Amount Requested: \$103,908.

Applicant must initial each of the following:

Applicant understands that CIP grants awarded to a governmental entity are governed by OMB Circular A-87 and that CIP grants awarded to a nonprofit organization are governed by OMB Circular A-110.

Applicant understands that CIP funds expended must be reasonable and necessary to carry out the objectives of the program for which funding is sought.

Applicant understands that CIP funds are paid on a reimbursement basis and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

Applicant understands that funding is subject to approval by the Supreme Court Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families.

Applicant understands that funding must involve meaningful and on-going collaboration of local or statewide stakeholders.

