

# Supreme Court Children’s Commission Strategic Plan

(2012 – 2016)

## Mission:

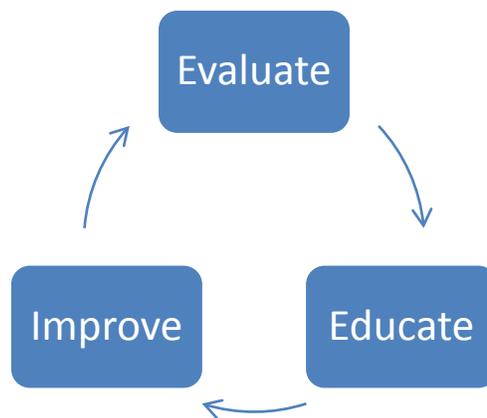
The mission of the Children's Commission is to strengthen courts for children, youth and families in the Texas child-protection system and thereby improve the safety, permanency and well being of children and youth.

## Goals applicable to all strategies:

- Judicial Leadership
- Collaboration
- Eliminate Disproportionality

## Strategies

The Children’s Commission’s 2012 – 2016 Strategic Plan is built on a collaborative model in place since 2007 when the Children’s Commission was established, and that has evolved over time to include a standard of continuous quality improvement applicable to all Commission supported projects. The overall strategy can be summarized in three words: *Evaluate, Educate and Improve*. It is aimed at implementing an ongoing, cyclical process that constantly informs efforts and ensures that projects address ever-changing needs, resources, and issues.



## Evaluate

**Collect, assess, and analyze data, practices, law and policy with the goal of improving court functioning, building capacity, and reforming systems**

- Evaluate the judicial processes that directly impact Disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system and make recommendations for improvement

- Evaluate judicial processes to ensure they provide due process of law, timely and thorough court hearings, and high quality legal representation to children, parents and the child welfare agency
- Identify and evaluate data collection, reporting, and sharing for projects receiving CIP support
- Evaluate timeliness and quality indicators of legal proceedings and hearings and quality legal representation through data collection and onsite observation
- Evaluate judicial practices to ensure families are engaged in court proceedings, the depth of court hearings, and the timeliness of permanency
- Evaluate Commission’s feedback mechanism to elicit input from stakeholders regarding the need for and effectiveness of CIP interventions and activities
- Evaluate methods available to analyze projects receiving CIP support throughout the project to implement midcourse adjustments and modifications to the activities and interventions

## **Educate**

### **Inform, train and raise awareness of best practices and areas requiring improvement, including efforts to improve court functioning, build capacity, and reform systems**

- Educate the judiciary on Disproportionality and disparities and the adverse effects on children, youth and families in the child welfare system
- Educate judges and child welfare stakeholders on the importance and methods of providing due process of law, timely and thorough court hearings, high quality legal representation for children, parents, and child welfare agency, and the need for participant accountability in order to ensure timely permanency
- Educate judges and other legal system stakeholders on the meaning, importance, and standards of review of the federal Child and Family Services Review and Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews
- Educate the judiciary and child welfare stakeholders on the importance of permanency for families and methods for achieving better and timelier outcomes (including notice and engagement efforts), and the need for adequate and consistent education resources for children and youth
- Provide high quality, multidisciplinary training opportunities for all child welfare stakeholders and community partners
- Educate the judiciary and child welfare stakeholders on importance of collecting data and providing feedback to make midcourse adjustments and modifications to the activities and interventions funded by CIP
- Provide information and resources to parents, relatives, youth, and other individuals to assist with their understanding of the child-welfare system, the legal process, and their rights

## **Improve**

### **Support innovative projects, policy and procedural changes that promote improving court functioning, capacity building, and systems reform**

- Support strategies to eliminate Disproportionality and disparity of outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system

- Support reform efforts regarding allocation and funding of resources for courts, court systems and legal representation resources
- Improve communications with the public and serve as a resource in the development of policy, including educating officials on the requirements of federal law and current system issues
- Strengthen partnership with the State Bar of Texas and seek its assistance in ensuring the availability of quality legal representation across the state
- Encourage, support, and educate judges in the area of ethical judicial leadership in child welfare matters and encourage judicial leadership at local levels to address local issues and implement systems reform
- Assist judges in leading local and statewide efforts to ensure due process of law, timely and thorough court hearings, and high quality legal representation for children, parents, and child welfare agency to help ensure timely permanency
- Assist judges with monitoring compliance with legal representation standards and ensuring accountability
- Promote the inclusion of children, youth, families, and caregivers in the judicial process and ensure their voices are heard
- Support statewide implementation of a computerized case management system for CPS cases to monitor case status, timeliness, and quality of legal representation
- Assist judges in their understanding and the importance of participating in the federal Child and Family Services Review and Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review processes
- Assist with ongoing monitoring and data collection to evaluate Commission and CIP supported interventions, activities, resources gaps, and system redundancies and make recommendations for improvements
- Ensure each CIP supported activity includes a method for collecting data to evaluate the success of each project supported, and for soliciting feedback from stakeholders in order to implement midcourse adjustments, as necessary
- Increase collaboration with Tribes, and train judges, attorneys and other stakeholders on the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act
- Improve outcomes for foster youth by reforming relevant systems to ensure educational readiness, stability, experience, advocacy, and post secondary education and employment opportunities