

**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

MINUTES OF MEETING

June 27, 2008
10 a.m.

Supreme Court Courtroom
201 W. 14th St.
Austin, Texas

COMMENCEMENT

Justice Harriet O'Neill called the meeting of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families to order on June 27, 2008 at 10:10 a.m. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized the following persons:

ATTENDANCE

Members present:

Chair, Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Justice, The Supreme Court of Texas, Austin
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin
Hon. Camile Glasscock DuBose, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of South Texas, Uvalde
Bruce Esterline, Vice President for Grants, The Meadows Foundation, Dallas
Albert Hawkins, Executive Commissioner, Texas Health & Human Services Commission, Austin
Bonnie Hellums, Judge, 247th District Court, Houston
Stewart W. Gagnon, Partner, Fulbright & Jaworski, Houston
Kristi Jordan, Governor's Advisor, Office of Budget, Planning & Policy, Austin
Hon. Patricia A. Macias, Judge, 388th District Court, El Paso
Carolyne Rodriguez, Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin
Fairy Davenport Rutland, Director, Appeals Division, Texas Health & Human Services Commission, Austin
Hon. Cheryl Lee Shannon, Judge, 305th District Court, Dallas
Hon. John Specia, Senior District Judge (Ret.), Plunkett & Gibson, San Antonio
G. Allan Van Fleet, Shareholder, Greenburg Traurig, LLP, Houston
David M. Williams, San Saba County Attorney, San Saba

Members absent:

Joyce M. James, Assistant Commissioner, Child Protective Services, Texas Dept. of Family & Protective Svcs., Austin
Eduardo Roberto Rodriguez, Senior Partner, Rodriquez, Colvin, Chaney & Saenz, LLP, Brownsville
Hon. Dean Rucker, Presiding Judge, 7th Region, 318th District Court, Midland

Staff in attendance:

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Jacque Barclay, Financial Analyst, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Katie Fillmore, Legal Intern, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Sylvia Griego, Executive Assistant, Supreme Court of Texas
Bruce Hermes, Director/Information Resource Manager, Division of Information Servicest, Office of Court Administration
Megan Jones, Legal Intern, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families

Scott Jones, Manager, Software Development & Support Section, Office of Court Administration
Mena Ramon, Deputy General Counsel, Office of Court Administration
Carl Reynolds, Administrative Director, Office of Court Administration
Bryan Wilson, Grant Administrator, Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families

Collaborative Council members in attendance:

Emy Lou Baldridge, Co-Founder, Greater Texas Community Partners, Dallas
Conni Barker, Director/Government Affairs, DePelchin Children's Center, Houston
Carolyn Bivens, Executive Director, Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, Austin
Roy Block, Executive Director, Texas Foster Family Association, San Antonio
Penny Cook, Co-Founder, The Faith Connection, Dallas
Cathy Crabtree, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin
Susan Hopkins Craven, Executive Director, Texans Care for Children, Austin
De Shaun Ealoms, Parent Program Specialist, TX Dept. of Family & Protective Svcs, Austin
Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Loves Children, Dallas
Debra D. Emerson, CPS Director of Policy and Program, Texas Dept. of Family & Protective Svcs, Austin
Benigno F. Fernandez, M.D., President, Texas Society of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, San Antonio
Paul E. Furrh, Jr., Chief Executive Officer, Lone Star Legal Aid, Houston
Alicia Key, Deputy Attorney General for Child Support, Office of the Attorney General, Austin
Richard LaVallo, Senior Attorney, Advocacy, Inc., Austin
Tracey Levins, Director, Administrative Svcs. and Community Relations, Texas Youth Commission, Austin
Rebecca Lightsey, Executive Director, Texas Appleseed, Austin
Trista Miller, Region 07 Youth Specialist, Child Protective Services, Austin
Gloria Terry, Coalition President, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin
Gina Van Osselaer, Executive Director, Austin Children's Shelter, Austin

Collaborative Council not in attendance:

Judy Brow, Specialized Female Svcs. Coordinator, TX Dept. of State Health Services, Austin
Salvador Cavazos, Asst. Superintendent, Brownsville Independent School District, Brownsville
Tomas Esparza, Jr., Attorney at Law, The Law Office of Tomas Esparza, Jr., Austin
Joe Gagen, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin
Eileen Garcia-Matthews, Executive Director of Texans Care for Children
Donald Lee, Executive Director, Texas Conference on Urban Counties, Austin
Hon. F. Scott McCown, Executive Director, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Austin
Bryan Sperry, President, Children's Hospital Association of Texas, Austin
Vicki Spriggs, Executive Director, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Austin
Gene Terry, Operations Director, Texas Association of Counties, Austin
Arabia Vargas, Chair, Bexar County Child Welfare Board, San Antonio
Henrietta Wright, Vice President, Board of Directors, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Dallas

OPENING REMARKS, Justice Harriet O'Neill

Welcome ex-officio members

- Kristi Jordan, Governor's Advisor, Office of Budget, Planning & Policy, who advises the governor on human services issues.
- Texas Representative Yvonne Gonzalez Toureilles (D-Alice), who serves on the House Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues.

- Although he could not attend the meeting, Justice O'Neill recognized Senator Jeff Wentworth (R-San Antonio), who serves on several Senate Committees including the Senate Jurisprudence Committee

Commissioner membership changes

- New member G. Allan Van Fleet is a prominent litigator and antitrust attorney with Greenburg Traurig, LLP, in Houston, and former member of Access to Justice Commission. He is a former Board Chair of Texas Appleseed, one of this Commission's most active collaborative partners. He is appointed for a three year term.
- New member The Honorable Bonnie Hellums, Judge, 247th District Court in Houston, has presided over a Family Drug Court since 2004 and over a child protective services docket for more than 10 years. She is appointed for a two year term.
- The Honorable John Specia is resigning as a member and as Vice Chair of the Commission. On behalf of the Commission, Justice O'Neill lauded Judge Specia's service to the Commission.
- The Honorable Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court in Travis County, is the Commission's new Vice Chair. Judge Byrne has established a Family Drug Court, applied to become an NCJFCJ Model Court, and will oversee establishing two public defender offices – one for children and one for parents by the end of this year.

Committee membership changes

- The Honorable Robin Sage, Judge, 307th District Court in Gregg County (Longview), is our new Basic Projects Committee Chair. She has presided over CPS cases for many years and was a longtime member of the CIP Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care.
- The Honorable Karin Bonicoro, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of Central Texas, is our new Technology Committee Chair. Judge Bonicoro is a Specialty Court Judge who hears the CPS docket in seven counties throughout Central Texas.
- The Honorable Oscar Gabaldon, Judge, 65th District Court in El Paso, who presides over the only NCJFCJ Model Court in Texas, will serve as a member of the Technology Committee.
- Judge Peter Sakai, of the 225th District Court in Bexar County, has been added to our Basic Projects Committee. Judge Sakai was an associate judge hearing child protection cases for 11 years before being elected to succeed John Specia in 2006.

New Collaborative Council Members

- Paul E. Furrh, Jr., Chief Executive Officer of Lone Star Legal Aid, is newly appointed to the Access to Justice Commission, and has been a foster parent and operated a therapeutic foster home. Mr. Furrh introduced himself and stated that he looked forward to serving on the Commission's Collaborative Council.
- Benigno F. Fernandez, M.D., a child psychiatrist from San Antonio, has counseled foster children since 1994 and is President of the Texas Society of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Dr. Fernandez also introduced himself and mentioned his service to foster kids in San Antonio for many years and his long-standing relationship with Judge Specia as well.

UPDATES FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

At Justice O'Neill's invitation, Commission members introduced themselves and briefly commented on relevant issues in their locales.

Rep. Gonzales-Tourelles introduced herself and stated that she has a background in Family Law and practices family law in Alice. She stated that she is interested in working with the Commission prior to the upcoming legislative session

Judge Camile DuBose updated the court on training committee matters and informed everyone that she would provide an in depth report later in the day.

Stewart Gagnon mentioned that the Legislative Committee would meet in San Antonio in August during the Advanced Family Law CLE.

Carolyne Rodriguez reported that she would update the Commission later in the meeting on her efforts supporting the CPS/TYC project approved by the Commission at a previous meeting.

Judge Patricia Macias updated the group on some events in El Paso including the opening of a PRIDE center July 30th that will provide services to youth who are aging out of the system. Also, about 56 Texas judges will attend the July 2008 Annual NCJFCJ conference (where Judge Macias will be installed as president).

Judge Bonnie Hellums introduced herself and stated her excitement about serving on the Commission

Allan Van Fleet introduced himself and also stated that he was very excited to serve the Commission

Judge John Specia stated that he was honored to serve as Vice Chair of the Commission and would be updating the Commission members later in the meeting on the activities of the Basic Projects and Legislative Committees.

Judge Darlene Byrne provided the group with an update of her drug court and several of the clients she dealt with during the week and the rewarding nature of the drug court. She encouraged anyone interested to attend as her guest. She also thanked Justice O'Neill for appointing her as the Vice Chair and stated that she had utmost confidence in Judge Bonicoro's leadership on the Technology Committee.

HIGHLIGHTED ISSUES AND COMMISSION PROJECTS, Justice Harriet O'Neill

Justice O'Neill recognized Judge Patricia Macias as the incoming President of the National Judicial Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and congratulated her. Justice O'Neill invited Commissioners to join NCJFCJ at CIP expense and encouraged them to attend the annual NCJFCJ conference in Norfolk, VA, July 27-30, 2008, also at CIP expense.

Justice O'Neill recognized Cynthia Bryant, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, for her outstanding leadership in her committee's formulating the Strategic Plan. The Commission will vote on adopting the Strategic Plan during this meeting. Although the Strategic Planning Committee will be dissolved, Justice O'Neill said a workgroup would be formed to implement a road map for the Commission's goals through 2010, when another strategic plan will be created. Justice O'Neill recognized the members of the Strategic Planning Committee and gave those in attendance a Supreme Court certificate of appreciation.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT, Tina Amberboy

Ms. Amberboy reported on recent staff activities and Commission projects. Improvements to the **Commission website** have recently been made; most noticeably the "About" page that includes Commissioner biographies. Ms. Amberboy recently attended Casey's 2008 **National Convening on Youth Permanency** in DC and noted that Staff is working on two projects, Long-term Care and CARE for Kids to help advance permanency for youth in care. She also attended a class called **Undoing Racism** at Joyce James' invitation that highlights how institutional infrastructures, including child welfare systems, have contributed to a disproportionate number of African American children in care. Commission staff will work with DFPS on projects to address disproportionality and bring updates to the Commission at our regular meetings.

Commission staff, along with Office of Court Administration, DFPS and DSHS staff, is involved in a partnership called **Texas Partnership for Family Recovery** that is working to integrate child welfare,

judicial, and substance abuse/mental health systems to address the needs of families in the system that have substance abuse issues. Partnership members have been visiting **drug courts** around the state, compiling information about their procedures, forms used, and funding sources to create a library of information for other jurisdictions to use as they consider establishing drug courts. Ms. Amberboy reported that next year, we hope to fund a judicial conference focused on establishing, funding, and sustaining drug courts. Judge Byrne gave an overview of drug courts in general and hers in particular, adding that while the courts hold parents accountable, they also proved a valuable network of support. Judge Specia added that it's critical for drug courts to maintain close relationships with drug treatment facilities. He added that increased focus on the issue is important because 80 to 85 percent of families involved with CPS have substance abuse problems.

The question of whether Texas should **extend court jurisdiction past the age 18 for children in out-of-home care** is another Commission project. The Texas House Human Services Committee Interim Charge #4 addresses how to improve preparation for adult living for youth transitioning out of care. One of our summer legal interns, Megan Jones, is working on a report that explores the issues including costs and benefits.

As a requirement to receive CIP grant funding, we must assess the effectiveness of the **Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC)** in Texas, identifying legal and institutional barriers, and suggest improvements. Our other summer intern, Katie Fillmore, produced a comprehensive and well-written report on the complexities of the ICPC and the procedural nature of this compact and how it meshes with uniform laws concerning child custody and jurisdiction. It discusses common misperceptions about what is allowed under the ICPC, how much authority it provides a judge in a sending state, remedies available to sending and receiving states, and provides suggestions for the child welfare agency, courts, and hopefully, to the federal government on how each system might do their part to improve their understanding, and their use of the ICPC to facilitate placement across state lines. The report will be available soon on our website.

At the last meeting, the Commission approved a project to study the effects on children of being in **long term care, or permanent managing conservatorship (PMC)**; specifically, how children in PMC rarely have an advocate and are unlikely to be prepared for adult living. Rebecca Lightsey, the Executive Director of Texas Appleseed who leads this Commission workgroup, will report on this issue later in the meeting. The workgroup revised its mission and charge, shown in the meeting notebook under tab 6. Commission and Collaborative members discussed this issue, including the fact that the number of children in the system who have disabilities is unknown. Also, retrieving such data from DFPS systems is complicated by the unclear definition of disabilities itself, which should be defined, according to Richard Lavallo.

Presentation from Carlyne Rodriguez on issues about CPS youth who are incarcerated at TYC

Ms. Rodriguez summarized and highlighted a Casey report on how five jurisdictions around the country serve their youth who are dually managed by CPS and the TYC. Ms. Rodriguez asked for the Commission's direction for next steps such as whether we should visit various programs around the country, bring back practice recommendations and or presenters, and whether in the 2009 session there are any applicable interim charges. Members discussed ways to encourage collaboration between the agencies and other stakeholders and a workgroup was formed comprised of Steve Spencer, Tracey Levins, Judge Shannon, Debra Emerson, Tina Amberboy, Richard Lavallo, Carlyne Rodriguez, Rebecca Lightsey and Tiffany Roper.

Ms. Amberboy continued her report, saying that the \$25,000 **grant from the Texas Bar Foundation** to produce an information video had been received, and that work on that project will proceed.

Ms. Amberboy explained the **CARE for Kids project**, which will be a team of consultants (including judges and DFPS specialists) who will visit courts at the courts' invitation, and help them apply nationally recognized best practices in their location. The team would use data specific to the location. Judge Shannon, from Dallas County, has expressed interest in being one of the first CARE for Kids sites.

Three Texas counties, Bexar, Harris, and Travis, have submitted to **NCJFCJ model court applications** and have asked for Commission support. Included in the meeting notebook is a sample Commission support letter from Justice O'Neill, and the Commission will be asked later in the meeting to officially approve supporting each jurisdiction that applies for NCJFCJ's model court designation. Also, we may be able to use CIP funds to support such efforts and staff may have a funding request in October 2008

Ms. Amberboy said part of the Commission's job is to develop a thorough understanding of the **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)**, a federal audit that can result in federal penalties to a state. Liz Kromrei will give a report late in the meeting. Commission staff and probably one or two workgroups will work on possible judicial responses to the recent CFSR, collaborating with DFPS on the state's Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Commissioners have been provided with a separate notebook that holds the three **CIP grant applications** staff prepared that are due to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families June 30, and the meeting notebook includes a list of current projects. The goals and projects outlined in the applications are tied to the strategic plan. Each grant application was submitted to its respective committee for comments and those were incorporated into the final product. The most important changes made were to take the Commission's Strategic Plan and continue and develop CIP projects for those strategies. Using the Commission's Strategic Plan gives us more flexibility in the types of projects we can undertake or consider for funding. Ms. Amberboy reported that we will receive two grant distributions this year, which provides an excellent opportunity for investment in some innovative projects that we hope will have more of a statewide impact.

Under tab seven in the meeting notebook is the list of projects currently funded: Texas CASA, OCA, Drug Court initiatives (Tarrant County, Texas Partnership for Family Recovery, and Austin Recovery), Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid / Foster Youth Justice Project.

On page three under tab seven are some projects for which we will fund, or seek to fund, including public defender-type offices. We are moving forward with our CARE for Kids Project, Children in Long-term Care Study, CPS/TYC population, Model Drug Court Projects, and Videoconferencing.

We will fund a substantial amount of judicial and attorney training and will continue to make significant investments in improving the technology available to courts that hear CPS cases as well as for tracking outcome data and improving case management.

A high level budget summary shows we have received \$3.2 million in CIP grants, obligated \$1.7 million, and have approximately \$848,000 available for funding projects. This \$848,000 must be spent no later than September 2009. Our administrative costs / overhead is roughly \$295,000, and our objective is to keep our administrative and overhead to 10% or less of our total grant funds.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Strategic Planning Committee Report, by Cynthia Bryant, Chair

Ms. Bryant commended committee members and staff for their work on the strategic plan, which is

included in the notebook. The plan outlines broad goals and objectives, allowing committees and staff to implement them. Justice O’Neill added that committees should routinely review the strategic plan as they consider projects.

Basic Committee Report, by Judge Specia

Judge Specia’s reported that the Basic Committee has funded a grant to help establish the state’s first public defender’s offices – one for parents and one for children – in Travis County. He reviewed other projects, including Dallas County’s grant application for funds to purchase video conferencing equipment, and Smith County’s application for funding to set up E-filing. The **PMC Project headed by Appleseed expanded its mission** to include studying what courts can do to improve outcomes in addition to or instead of simply appointing an advocate for the duration of a case.

Data/Technology Committee Report, by the Honorable Darlene Byrne, Chair

Judge Byrne commended Scott Jones for his leadership in TexDECK and lauded her committee members for their time-consuming work reviewing the Functional Requirements. She also recognized her replacement as chair, Judge Bonicoro. She highlighted projects including the nearly complete Judicial Web Page.

Training Committee Report, by The Honorable Camile DuBose, Chair

Judge DuBose reported on work with the Texas Center for the Judiciary’s Curriculum Committee and the upcoming conferences – Associate Judges in July and CPS Judges in August. Evaluation applicants for Attorney Ad Litem training grant RFP will be the Committee’s next large project. Future plans also include a statewide child welfare law conference for attorneys. She thanked her committee members for their excellent work.

Legislative Committee Report, by Judge Specia for Chair Dean Rucker

Judge Specia listed the committee’s issues, some of which had been discussed in the meeting, including the interim charges of the House Health and Human Services Committee and Senate Jurisprudence Committee. The committee will review sections of the Family Code, including 263.405 – Appeal of Final Order.

LUNCH

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:06 p.m., and resumed at 1:16 p.m.

DFPS UPDATE ON CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)

Liz Kromrei reviewed the history of the CFSR and highlighted Texas issues from the recent review that was completed this March. ACF provided a preliminary report of its findings and will issue its final report in a few months.

The federal Child and Family Services Review evaluates the domains of safety, permanency and well-being using seven outcome measures and seven systemic measures. The review process begins with a statewide self-assessment, then an on-site review, and if all of the measures are not substantially achieved, the third stage is a program improvement plan (PIP).

All of the following is from a very preliminary exit interview from the federal reviewers. Texas achieved its highest (97%) in a measure called Well-being 2 that has to do educational needs and services. Another strength was in Well-being 3 that has to do with medical and dental health. Safety outcome 2 that measures whether children are safely maintained in homes whenever possible and appropriate was also noted as a positive.

Areas of concern in Texas, upon which the PIP will be built, include Permanency Outcome 1, which measures only children in foster care and whether they have permanency and stability in their living situation. The review suggests that PMC kids without parental rights terminated could perhaps be moved out of PMC and become eligible for adoption if parent rights were terminated. The review showed a lack of stability among placements – that Texas moves children too often according to the standards.

The review found Texas has strengths that include the family focused approach, the disproportionality initiative, and family group decision making. The final report from the federal reviewers is due 60 days after the review, but can take as long as six months. Then, CPS has 90 days to send its PIP plan for federal review and approval.

Of the two outstanding Permanency and Well-being outcomes from the first review, Texas reached one and did not reach the other by the end of its PIP. Officials are still negotiating the state's fines, which are approximately \$4 million and which must be paid back to the federal government with state, not federal funds.

Ms. Kromrei reported that she hopes the PIP will be completed by December 2008, and that it will address areas that impacted multiple parts of the review. Part of that effort will involve addressing cross-cutting concerns including increasing placement capacity. Committee members discussed the issues, including ways to improve permanency and how, unlike Texas, some states pay for kinship care.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE, by Carl Reynolds

Carl reported that the weighted caseload study will be officially released June 30. Study results reinforce the belief that CPS cases are time intensive, showing that CPS judges spend approximately 323 minutes per case. By comparison, judges spend about 180 minutes for a Felony A case. Carl reviewed the functional requirements study, which has been vetted by the Technology Committee and will soon be released. OCA staff has begun sharing the functional requirements document with software vendors in the hopes they will incorporate its essential components into case management software products.

ACTION ITEMS/MOTION AGENDAS, Justice Harriet O'Neill and staff

- **Adopt minutes**

The meeting minutes of the April 11, 2008 Children's Commission meeting minutes were approved by general consent.

After the meeting, Teri Moran noticed that her April 11, 2008, meeting minutes required one correction as follows. Commission member Kristi Jordan was listed as absent in the April 11, 2008 meeting minutes when she was present at the meeting.

- **Confirm additions to Technology and Basic Committees**

Judge Byrne, before resigning as Chair of the Technology Committee, added Oscar Gabaldon to the Technology Committee and Judge Specia, before resigning as the Chair of the Basic Committee, elected to add Judge Peter Sakai to the Basic Projects Committee. The Order allows the respective Chairs to add Committee members at their discretion. There being no discussion, the additions stand approved.

- **Confirm updated Collaborative Council** The Executive Committee approved the addition of Paul Furrh, and Dr. Benigno Fernandez to the Collaborative Council. There being no discussion, the additions stand approved.

- **Adoption of Commission's Strategic Plan**

Because this item was referred by the Strategic Planning Committee, no motions were required and the vote to adopt the strategic plan carried unanimously.

Grant Approvals

Travis County submitted two separate applications for grant funds to pay for one attorney and one legal assistant each for two Public Defender Offices – one for parents and one for children. The Basic Committee has recommended funding the start-up program with a large (\$300,000) grant amount to each office the first year, then less in the subsequent two years of the three-year period – \$100,000 to each office the second year, and \$50,000 to each office the third year. CIP grant funds will be paying for a portion of the totals costs while the County will pay the rest.

- **Travis County Public Defender Office for Children**

Because this item was referred by the Basic Projects Committee, no motions were required and the vote to approve the Travis County Public Defender Officer for Children in the amounts stated above was carried unanimously. Judge Byrne abstained from the vote.

- **Travis County Public Defender Office for Parents**

Because this item was referred by the Basic Projects Committee, no motions were required and the vote to approve the Travis County Public Defender Officer for Parents in the amounts stated above was carried unanimously. Judge Byrne abstained from the vote.

- **Adoption of Functional Requirements Study**

This is a two-part item. First, to accept the Functional Requirements Study as a final deliverable that satisfies the grant requirements of the FY2006 Technology Grant. Second, to adopt the study as a reference model and give the Technology Committee the authority to approve version changes as they are needed until the next rewrite. Because the Technology Committee did not have a quorum, a second on the motion to approve was provided by Judge DuBose. The vote carried unanimously.

- **Commission's Support to Texas Courts Seeking NCJFCJ Model Court Designation**

Justice O'Neill referred members to her support letter that was discussed earlier in the meeting and asked for their approval to provide the letter to Texas courts that apply for model court designation. There were no questions or discussions.

COMMENTS/NEW BUSINESS/COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL ISSUES

Justice O'Neill proposed the following dates for next year's meeting calendar as said they would be emailed to members:

January 16, 2009

April 3, 2009

August 21, 2009

November 13, 2009

Justice O'Neill said the Commission typically has a comment period at the end of the meeting for Collaborative Council members to provide input on Commission projects. The Commission was created to improve, systemically, the judicial handling of child-protection cases through technology improvements, attorney and judicial training, and pilot projects, such as the TYC project discussed today – to make the needs of children and families are better met. Justice O'Neill said the Commission has no authority over state agencies or their operational details. The Commission does not discuss or consider specific cases that may be in the legal system. To the extent anyone would like to comment about a specific case, it would be outside the scope of this commission's work and inappropriate for the judges or their staff to consider or hear. The Commission does seek information regarding systemic improvement, so our courts will better serve the needs of children and families. The Collaborative Council was created for this purpose, and we have structured a process at the committee level to allow maximum input from Collaborative Council members and others. The Commission meets only quarterly and has a lot of ground

to cover, Justice O'Neill said, adding that the Commission welcomes input through its committees and through written comments for those who would like to submit them after the meeting. Justice O'Neill said that only one comment card had been filled out by a Collaborative Council member, Conni Barker, whom Justice O'Neill invited to speak.

Ms. Barker reported that the DePelchin Children's Center is trying with the Houston Alumni Youth Center (HAY) to develop a comprehensive program for Harris County youth who are aging out of foster care.

ADJOURNMENT

Justice O'Neill thanked everyone for attending and reminded everyone that the next meeting will be held on Friday, October 17, 2008.