



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

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

May 12, 2017
Meeting Notebook

The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center
1414 Colorado Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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

**May 12, 2017
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
May 12, 2017
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 February 10, 2017, Tab 2
- 10:00 Commissioner Updates
- 10:50 Break
- 11:05 Commissioner Updates cont'd
- 12:00 Working Lunch / Executive Director Report
- 12:30 Presentation: Texas Board of Legal Specialization of Child Welfare Law
- 1:00 Collaborative Council Input
- 1:30 Jurist In Residence Report / Legislative Update
- 2:00 DFPS / CPS Update
- 2:30 Office of Court Administration
- 3:00 New Business

2017 Meeting Schedule
September 22, 2017 at State Bar of Texas
Adjourn

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Rob Hofmann, Vice Chair
 Paula Bibbs-Samuels
 Allison Billodeau
 Kristene Blackstone
 Hon. Gary Coley

Sheila Sturgis Craig
 Rep. Helen Giddings
 Dr. Andy Keller
 Hon. Lawrence Lujan
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Piper McCraw
 Hon. Mary Murphy

Cindy Patrick
 Hon. Ronald Pope
 Hon. Frank Rynd
 Hon. Peter Sakai
 Hon. Michael Schneider
 Luanne Southern
 Vicki Spriggs

Terry Tottenham
 Hon. Carlos Villalon
 Lt. Col. Travis Walters
 Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE

Hon. Eva Guzman,
Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill,
Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Rob Hofmann
Vice Chair
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Michael Schneider
 Vicki Spriggs

*Staff: Tina Amberboy
 Monica Mahoney*

BASIC PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Schneider
Chair
 Sarah Crockett
 Mary Christine Reed
 Carolyne Rodriguez
 Tanya Rollins
 Hon. Peter Sakai
 Hon. Cynthia Wheless

*Staff: Kristi Taylor
 Dylan Moench
 Monica Mahoney*

TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Vicki Spriggs, *Chair*
 Jason Hassay
 Hon. Gilford Jones
 Elizabeth Kromrei
 Robert Nolen
 Hon. Virginia Schnarr
 Hon. Carlos Villalon

*Staff: Patrick Passmore
 Monica Mahoney*

*OCA Advisory:
 Darrell Childers
 Anissa Johnson
 Casey Kennedy
 Tim Kennedy
 Mena Ramon
 David Slayton*

TRAINING PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Massengale, *Chair*
 Hon. Mark Atkinson
 Timothy Belseth
 Cathy Cockerham
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Debra Emerson
 Hon. Richard Garcia
 Tracy Harting
 Pam Kemp
 Tanya Rollins
 Fairy Davenport Rutland
 Hon. Ellen Smith
 Elizabeth Watkins

*Staff: Milbrey Raney
 Dylan Moench
 Andrea Vicencio*

FOSTER CARE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Rob Hofmann, *Chair*
 Joy Baskin
 Hon. Alyce Bondurant
 Briana Dovi
 Lori Duke
 Dr. Monica Faulkner
 Maya Guerra Gamble
 Dr. David Gardner
 Dr. Deena Hill
 Andy Homer
 Kelly Kravitz
 Kristine Mohajer
 Hon. Cathy Morris
 Jon Olson
 Wanda Peña
 Shannon Ramsey
 Michael Redden
 Carol Self
 Ian Spechler
 Julie Wayman
*Staff: Jamie Bernstein
 Andrea Vicencio*

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

M. Lynn Chamberlin
 Irene Clements
 Bill Connolly
 De Shaun Ealoms
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Debra Emerson
 Laura Figueroa
 Mike Foster
 Will Francis
 Mara Friesen

Sadie Funk
 Helen Gaebler
 Teal de la Garza
 Christina Green
 Sandra Hachem
 David Halpern
 Ashley Harris
 Bruce Kendrick
 Knox Kimberly
 Kelly Kravitz

Richard Lavallo
 Tracy Levins
 Madeline McClure
 Hon. F. Scott McCown, ret.
 Gabriella McDonald
 Susan McDowell
 Pamela McPeters
 Katie Olse
 Anu Partap
 Judy Powell

Mary Christine Reed
 Carolyne Rodriguez
 Johana Scot
 Janet Sharkis
 Andrea Sparks
 Jeanne Stamp
 Gloria Terry
 Kenneth Thompson
 Arabia Vargas
 Kelly White

STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director
 Kristi Taylor, Assistant Director
 Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
 Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney
 Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant
 Dylan Moench, Staff Attorney
 Patrick Passmore, Grant Administrator
 Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney
 Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant
 Hon. Darlene Byrne, Senior Judicial Advisor
 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 10, 2017
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 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. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452nd District Court, Mason	✓	
Paula Bibbs-Samuel, Parent Representative, Slaton		✓
Allison Billodeau, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Kristene Blackstone, Associate Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Gary Coley, Judge, 74th District Court, Waco		✓
Sheila Craig, Associate Commissioner, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Hon. Helen Giddings, Texas House of Representatives, District 109, Dallas		✓
Dr. Andrew Keller, President and Chief Executive Officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Lawrence Lujan, Chief Judge, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, El Paso	✓	
Hon. Michael Massengale, Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Hon. Piper McCraw, Judge, 469th Judicial District Court, McKinney	✓	
Hon. Mary Murphy, Presiding Judge, First Administrative Judicial Region, Dallas		✓
Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer, Meadows Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Ronald Pope, Judge, 328th District Court, Richmond	✓	
Hon. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese Galveston-Houston		✓
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio		✓
Hon. Michael Schneider, Judge, 315th District Court, Houston	✓	
Luanne Southern, Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin		✓
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin	✓	
Terry Tottenham, Of Counsel, Norton Rose Fulbright US L.L.P., Austin	✓	
Hon. Carlos Villalon, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande, Edinburg	✓	
Lt. Col. Travis Walters, State Public Affairs Officer (FTUS), United States Air Force, Fort Worth		✓
Hon. Royce West (by proxy Graham Keverer), Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
Senior Judicial Advisor		
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin		✓
Collaborative Council		
M. Lynn Chamberlin, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office	✓	
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	✓	

	Attended	Did Not Attend
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, Administrator, Central Texas Table of Grace		✓
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		✓
Helen Gaebler, Senior Research Attorney, William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin	✓	
Teal De La Garza, Attorney, Bill De La Garza & Associates, P.C.	✓	
Christina Green, Director of Public Affairs, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin		✓
Sandra Hachem, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston	✓	
David Halpern, Director, Promise Mentor Program, Seedling Foundation, Austin		✓
Ashley Harris, Program Specialist VI, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin		✓
Bruce Kendrick, Director of Outreach, Embrace Texas, McKinney		✓
Knox Kimberly, 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		✓
Tracy Levins, State Development Specialist, Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health, The University of Texas, 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	✓	
Susan McDowell, Executive Director, Life works, Austin		✓
Pamela McPeters (by proxy Dimple Patel), Director of Public Policy, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Austin	✓	
Katie Olse, Executive Director, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin	✓	
Dr. Anu Partap, Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, Southwest Medical Center, Dallas		✓
Judy Powell, Communications Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Mary Christine Reed, Director, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin	✓	
Carolyn Rodriguez, Independent Consultant, Austin		✓
Johana Scot, Executive Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin		
Janet Sharkis, Executive Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin	✓	
Andrea Sparks, Child Sex Trafficking Unit Administrator, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Charles A. Dana Center, 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		✓
Kelly White, Executive Director, LIFT Alliance		✓
Attending Committee Members and Guests		
Candace Aylor, Co-Lead, Texas Family Voice Network, Austin		
Cathy Cockerham, Program Operations Director, Texas CASA, Austin		
Scott Constantine, Managing Attorney, The Family Helpline, Texas Legal Services Center, Austin		

Leah Davies, CHOICES Project Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin
Krista De Gallo, Policy Manager, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin
Cara Fox, Director of Partnership Implementation, Upbring, Austin
Hon. Richard Garcia, Associate Judge, Bexar County Children's Court, San Antonio
Michelle Harper, Vice President of Child and Family Policy, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas
Christopher (Austin) Habecker, Mason High School, Mason
Ayanna Hill, Houston
Beth Hutton
Danielle Kalil-McLane, Staff Attorney, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin
Graham Keever, Legislative Director, Office of Hon. Royce West, Austin
Hon. Ryan Larson, Judge, 395th District Court, Georgetown
Crystal Leff-Piñon, Attorney, The Family Helpline, Texas Legal Services Center, Austin
Brandon Logan, Director, Center for Families and Children, Austin
Lourdes Portillo, Youth Specialist Paralegal, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin
Hon. Robin Sage, Judge (ret.), Judicial Engagement Team, Casey Family Programs, Longview
Ian Spechler, Staff Attorney, Disability Rights Texas, Austin
Anita Stuckey, Grant Specialist, Texas Legal Services Center, Austin
Henry Whitman, Commissioner, Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Sarah Worthington, Staff Attorney, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin

Attending Staff

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Children's Commission
Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission
Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission
Anissa Johnson, Program Specialist VI, Office of Court Administration
Tim Kennedy, TexDECK Project Manager, Office of Court Administration
Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission
Dylan Moench, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission
Patrick Passmore, Grant Manager, Children's Commission
Mena Ramon, General Counsel, Office of Court Administration
Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence, Children's Commission
Kristi Taylor, Assistant Director, Children's Commission
Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS, Justice Eva Guzman

Justice Eva Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Judge Ryan Larson, District Judge of the 395th District Court in Williamson County; Michelle Harper, Vice President for Child and Family Policy at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute in Dallas; from the Texas Legal Services Center in Austin: Karen Miller, Associate Director, Anita Stuckey, Grant Specialist, Scott Constantine, Managing Attorney of the Family Helpline,

and Crystal Leff-Piñon, Staff Attorney of the Family Helpline; Graham Keever, Legislative Director for Senator Royce West; and Judge Richard Garcia of the Bexar County Children's Court.

Commissioner Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced that two Commissioners have transitioned off: Judge Jean Boyd of the 323rd district court in Tarrant County and Chairperson Jo Ann Battise of the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas in Livingston.

Justice Guzman announced that two Commissioners have joined the Commission: Chief Judge Lawrence Lujan of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in El Paso, who also serves as a Sargent for the El Paso Police Department, and Judge Piper McCraw of the 469th District Court in Collin County.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced that Katie Olse, now the Executive Director of the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, has joined the Collaborative Council.

Justice Guzman reminded attendees that the Collaborative Council Report will now occur earlier on the meeting agenda. This change reflects the Commission's desire to better engage with the council and hear from council members present at today's meeting. Justice Guzman noted that the Commission staff continues to plan an in-person Collaborative Council Meeting in 2017.

Committee Member Changes

Justice Guzman announced three new members to the Basic Committee: Judge Michael Schneider of the 315th District Court, who will serve as Chair for the committee, Sarah Crockett with Texas CASA, and Judge Cyndi Wheless of the 417th Judicial District Court in Collin County.

Justice Guzman also announced some changes to the Foster Care and Education Committee: Carol Self, now the CPS Division Administrator for Permanency at DFPS, will serve on the committee in place of Jenny Hinson, and Loretta Edelen and Edna Ramón Butts have transitioned off the committee.

Staff Member Changes

Justice Guzman announced that Judge Robin Sage has taken a full-time position with Casey Family Programs and has resigned as Jurist in Residence with the Commission. Justice Guzman noted that the Commission will work with Judge Sage in her capacity as a Casey Judicial Engagement Team member on an initiative recently started in Dallas, Texas.

Justice Guzman and Tina Amberboy gave an update on the funding of the Court Improvement Program (CIP). Ms. Amberboy reminded members that the CIP expired in October 2016 and was not fully reauthorized by the Congress. Justice Guzman announced that the Supreme Court of Texas has included funding for the Children's Commission as an exceptional item in the Court's budget. Both Chief Justice Hecht and Justice Guzman testified at the Senate Finance Committee hearing regarding the Commission. Justice Guzman and Ms. Amberboy have attended several preliminary meetings with members of the

Senate regarding the funding for the Commission. Ms. Amberboy explained that due to the unknown status of Commission funding, the Commission staff will proceed with caution regarding use of current funds and projects. Ms. Amberboy noted that a better update is expected at the next Commission meeting.

Justice Guzman reminded the Commission on voting procedures and quorum requirements, noting that Ex Officio commissioners, those members who are appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House, are much-appreciated and valued on the Commission, but are not voting members and are not counted in the number for quorum. Justice Guzman also reminded the Commission that a proxy who attends a meeting on behalf of a Commissioner does not need to vote. Additionally, a proxy will not be counted in the number for quorum.

Adoption of September 23, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2, noted that members had the opportunity to review the minutes. Justice Guzman asked if there were any other 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 23, 2016 meeting. Justice Michael Massengale motioned to adopt the minutes; the motion was seconded. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the meeting minutes unanimously.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Rob Hofmann reported that CPS has created the new position of Deputy Regional Director for Region 9 and hired Ms. Myrna Baquero to fill the position. Judge Hofmann reported that the One27 Foundation is planning to create and build a transitional living program in Mason County. Judge Hofmann introduced his guest, Austin Habecker, a high school senior from Mason High School.

Judge Hofmann reported that the Foster Care and Education Committee last met in December 2016, and that members voted to add a workgroup on school discipline in 2017. The Local Collaboration Workgroup distributed a survey to over 540 attorneys, judges, foster care liaisons, CPS staff, CASA volunteers, and caregivers throughout Texas. Judge Hofmann shared some preliminary results from the survey, including:

- 60% of respondents regularly collaborate with their child to meet the child's educational needs. 25% report they are regularly collaborating with their judge about education.
- 94% of the judges who responded said they learn about a school move after the fact, not before. About half of the CASA and child placing agencies who responded reported learning about a school move after the fact.
- Several survey respondents noted that the courts and education consortiums act as community strengths for children and youth in foster care.
- About 70% of the judges who responded reported a preference for appointing surrogate parents for students with disabilities in lieu of the school district appointment.

Hon. Michael Schneider reported on some of the Basic Committee projects, including a forthcoming analysis of the new Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Guidelines released by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in January 2017, an update to the ICWA chapter of the Child Protection Law Bench Book to include the new Guidelines, an update to other chapters of the Bench Book following the 85th legislative session, and plans to hold a trauma consortium for child welfare system stakeholders in the summer of 2017. Ms. Kristi Taylor explained that the Commission and its partners will conduct interviews and research of stakeholders and existing modalities across the state regarding trauma-informed systems. Ms. Taylor also noted that a report will be produced. Judge Schneider reported on the Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC) held in November 2016 and his presentation on Court Barriers to Permanency. For access to the CWJC presentations, please contact the Children's Commission.

Judge Schneider discussed his work with the Ideas Program in Harris County to include children in the foster care system who have been placed in homes or with relatives so those children can benefit from the program's mission to address school and/or educational issues without entering into the probation system. Judge Schneider reported on the Beyond the Bench Summit held in December 2016 in Dallas and noted the positive impacts in Harris County from the Summit, including efforts to reach out to stakeholders of My Brother's Keeper and Team and Police Services (TAPS) with information from the Summit. Judge Schneider reported on the continued collaboration between the juvenile justice and CPS systems in Harris County. Judge Schneider announced that Ms. Jamie Bernstein will visit the 315th Court on March 23, 2017 to attend meetings regarding the juvenile record sealing initiative and the overlap between the GIRLS Court and CPS. Judge Schneider also reported on his collaboration with Dr. Carl Hart of Columbia University regarding drug courts and gathering data on the long-term results of those who complete the drug court program.

Justice Michael Massengale reported that the Training Committee held a meeting on January 31, 2017. Justice Massengale announced that the 2016 version of the Bench Book was released at the CWJC in November. Justice Massengale presented a case law update at CWJC. Justice Massengale discussed the latest Trial Skills Training (TST), held in December 2016 in Austin, and noted that only one TST is scheduled in 2017, to be held in May in San Marcos. The Commission received 79 applications for the 21 vacancies for the May 2017 TST. Justice Massengale announced that the Commission is scheduled to record six hours of CLE at the State Bar of Texas in August 2017 to produce a webinar of the TST materials, in place of a second in-person training. The TST webinar will include presentations by the TST faculty and will focus on a lecture-style program.

Ms. Vicki Spriggs announced the Texas CASA released its annual report, highlighting that in fiscal year 2016 Texas CASA saw a 7.7% increase in the number of volunteers. Ms. Spriggs noted that 57.4% of children in foster care system have a CASA volunteer working with them and that Texas CASA will continue volunteer recruitment efforts. Ms. Spriggs reported on the Child Outcomes & Volunteer Effectiveness (COVE) Project and explained that the first component of the study, the selection bias study that examines which cases are more likely to receive a CASA volunteer, has completed and the results will be published soon. Some initial results revealed the cases more likely to receive a CASA volunteer include cases which are complex and cases that involve siblings. Counter to this, the study

showed that Latino children are underrepresented in those children assigned a CASA volunteer. Ms. Spriggs reported that the second phase of the study surrounding outcomes of having a CASA volunteer is currently in progress. Ms. Spriggs reported on Texas CASA's Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE), noting that consulates of Mexico and Texas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 2016 to institute collaboration in an effort to find families of and arrange visitations with children in CPS. Ms. Spriggs announced that the Texas CASA Primer and Capitol Day are scheduled for February 15 and 16, 2017, and that the Texas CASA Champions Luncheon on April 6, 2017 will honor Justice Eva Guzman. Ms. Spriggs also announced that Texas CASA recognized the work of Judge John Specia at the CASA reception during the 2016 CWJC.

Hon. Carlos Villalon reported on a mandatory training for attorneys regarding the Texas CASA CFE pilot, held in September 2016, and on his participation on the Beyond the Bench Summit planning committee and during the Summit as a facilitator during the breakout session. Judge Villalon announced that efforts are underway to start the Coalition for Empowering Children and Families with various stakeholders, including DFPS, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and child placement agencies in the area. Judge Villalon noted his collaboration with Judge Byrne and Texas Christian University to implement a trust-based model in Hidalgo and Starr counties that is similar to the Travis County model. Judge Villalon announced a crossover court project in Hidalgo County in collaboration with Judge Renee Rodriguez-Betancourt of the 449th District Court.

Hon. Lawrence Lujan introduced himself to the Commission, noting that he serves as a Chief Judge at the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in El Paso, holding court once a week, and, primarily, as a Sergeant for the El Paso Police Department. Judge Lujan participated on the Beyond the Bench Summit agenda in December as a panelist during the "Deconstructing Our Decision-Making" portion of the program. Judge Lujan also served on the planning committee for the Summit. Judge Lujan reported that he attended the CWJC in 2015 and serves on the Texas Association of Specialty Courts. Judge Lujan noted that he seeks to promote collaboration and partnerships between the Native American community, local communities, and state agencies, and that he hopes to serve as a resource for the Commission on issues surrounding ICWA and the Native American community. Judge Lujan also reported that he serves as the Second Vice President for the Native American Indian Court Judges Association (NAICJA). Judge Lujan further discussed the BIA Guidelines recently released, which replace the 2015 Guidelines, and are a supplement to the December 2016 BIA Regulations. Judge Lujan explained the new Guidelines are not legally binding but provide further insight from BIA regarding the implementation of ICWA. Judge Lujan reported on the new data elements in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) to include ICWA and on the new AFCARS regulations, which contain numerous new data elements related to the implementation of ICWA that the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) will require from states on a yearly basis.

Judge Lujan provided the Commission with some resources related to ICWA:

- ICWA Guide for Tribal Governments – a brief guide with points related to ICWA cases and insight to Tribal Rights in ICWA cases, available online at:

<https://tribalinformationexchange.org/index.php/component/k2/item/162-icwa-guide-for-tribal-governments-and-leaders>

- Sample Parental Consent Form, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-060068.pdf>
- Sample Withdrawal of Consent Form, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-060069.pdf>
- Sample Notice form, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-060070.pdf>
- Quick Reference Sheet for Voluntary Proceedings, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-041401.pdf>
- Quick Reference Sheet for Tribes, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-041402.pdf>
- Quick Reference Sheet for State Agencies, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-041403.pdf>
- Quick Reference Sheet for State Courts, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-041404.pdf>
- Quick Reference Sheet on Active Efforts, available online at:
<https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xois/documents/document/idc2-041405.pdf>

Dr. Andrew Keller announced the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) has invited Judge Specia to serve as a senior fellow and that MMHPI hopes to gain a greater understanding regarding the overlap between mental health and the child welfare system from this partnership. Dr. Keller reported on MMHPI's work focusing on high needs children and their access to mental health services and efforts to increase access to outpatient care. Dr. Keller announced initiatives in Dallas, Harris, and Bexar counties to work with foundations and providers to develop intensive in-home supports to work with foster parents, biological parents, or adults in the families to develop family supports, behavioral plans for the child, and appropriate use of medication. Dr. Keller reported that MMHPI is looking to expand the initiative to include Travis County. Dr. Keller reported on another initiative to possibly serve other areas in the state, the Engage and Excel Event, which would gather those working on mental health within their community, including some that focus on children. MMHPI hosted an event in December 2016 with 25 different communities to share ideas about coordinating with law enforcement, with the courts, and with others. Dr. Keller noted that MMHPI hopes to hold another event in the summer or fall of 2017, and directed members to contact MMHPI if interested. Dr. Keller reported on the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance (TVFA) grant program established by SB55 in the previous legislative session. Dr. Keller noted that HHSC has directed MMHPI to continue to identify grantees for the TVFA program. Dr. Keller also reported on the Texas Judicial Commission Mental Health Committee's recommendation to establish a standing Mental Health Commission to be overseen by judiciary and serve as resource to judiciary for training around mental health. Dr. Keller noted the work surrounding mental health of children in CPS would remain a focus at the Children's Commission.

Mr. Graham Kever reported on behalf of Senator Royce West. Mr. Kever reported on a bill filed by Senator West to extend the permanency care assistance program at DFPS that would otherwise expire

in August 2017, and noted that the Senator is involved with other relative caregiver bills. Mr. Keever announced that a bill has been filed to require an attorney ad litem (AAL) in CPS cases through Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC), noting the law currently gives the county discretion for the AAL appointment and that the Senator expects to hear from the Texas Association of Counties (TAC) regarding this proposed legislation. Mr. Keever also announced that a bill regarding police and citizen interaction has been filed. The bill would incorporate items into the curricula of both public schools and police training concerning traffic stops.

Ms. Sheila Craig reported on the Beyond the Bench Summit and on her service on the Summit's planning committee. Ms. Craig noted that the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities (Center) received a number of inquiries for support and ways to address disproportionality following the Summit. Ms. Craig reported on a meeting in Toronto, Canada in November 2016 with the Children's Aid Society regarding their interest in replicating the Center's Texas Model in the child welfare system in Canada and replicating the organizational structure of the Center as well. Ms. Craig reported on the Center's work with the City of Waco to provide equity and inclusion training to staff, and with the Houston Health Department to examine their policies, programs, and services through a race equity lens to ensure the best outcomes for those they serve. The Center received a \$1 million federal grant from the Office of Minority Health to address obesity, chronic disease, and disparities in Laredo, Beaumont and Port Arthur over the next 5 years. Ms. Craig announced the Center has developed protocols and strategies to implement an equity curriculum with CPS supervisors. Ms. Craig also discussed the Center's technical assistance to various systems, including Austin Community College and the City of Austin to develop equity offices that focus on issues such as success rates of students and City policies and services, respectively.

Ms. Craig noted the Center was recognized by the National Office of Minority Health as one of two jurisdictions out of 21 total for providing the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services classroom training to over 2,000 trainees, including doctors, nurses, community health workers, and other health care professionals. Ms. Craig announced recent collaboration with the Women's Health Office to provide services in Hidalgo and Smith counties focused on issues surrounding birth outcomes, preterm births, and children dying within the first year of life. Ms. Craig announced the Center's Statewide Coalition submitted its report to state leadership in December 2016. Ms. Craig reported that the Center reviewed and provided recommendations to twenty one Medicaid managed care organizations on cultural competency plans to improve service delivery, developed a how-to guide to implement the Texas Model and achieve equity in systems, and provided equity training to 500 school social workers at a University of Texas conference.

Hon. Piper McCraw attended the CWJC in November 2016 and reported that the Collin County district courts have consolidated the CPS cases to be heard by four district judges. Judge McCraw noted the consolidation of CPS cases to a fewer number of courts has increased collaboration between all parties. Judge McCraw reported that Collin County has taken other steps to modify their handling of CPS cases, including scheduling monthly roundtable-style meetings with the district attorneys who handle the cases and the CASA volunteers. Judge McCraw noted her plans to reach out to other Commission

members for ideas and solutions to other issues affecting children and families in the CPS system, such as lack of public transportation and teens in CPS who are pregnant.

Mr. Terry Tottenham updated the Commission on the Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans program, which received help from Access to Justice (ATJ) when it effectively raised the eligibility requirement to serve veterans to 200% of the poverty level. Mr. Tottenham noted the increase in eligibility requirements expands opportunities to serve veterans and families. Mr. Tottenham announced that the American Bar Association (ABA) has taken on the program as a national project in an effort to create a nationwide network of local and state bar associations that focus on pro bono activities for veterans and their families. Mr. Tottenham also reported on the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA) educational efforts for children and passed around materials on a few of the programs, including those on bicycle safety tips, educating youth on police stops, divorce guides for teens and children, and a summary sheet of all the TYLA programs. Mr. Tottenham directed members to contact TYLA if interested in learning more.

Ms. Cindy Patrick reported that the Meadows Foundation continues to fund two agencies that work with foster children and with services for foster children, including a grant to continue to support the Reese Jones Center for Excellence. Ms. Patrick noted the Reese Jones Center works with foster children and foster parents in the North Texas region to provide basic health care, mental health care, and is starting to look at some case management aspects, working with CPS and CASA workers on site. Ms. Patrick reported that the group of philanthropic foundations from North Texas will meet with United Ways of Texas and the DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division in March 2017 to discuss PEI's programs and budgetary issues.

Hon. Ronald Pope announced the 2017 Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) Conference is scheduled for June 22-23 at the United Way in Fort Bend County. Judge Pope announced that Fort Bend County is currently working on a continuum of relationship-based interventions for children and families in the Infant Toddler Court program and is working to secure funding through the State of Texas' victims assistance fund. Judge Pope reported on the importance of CASA volunteers in Fort Bend County and announced that 25 new volunteers were sworn in on February 9 during the CPS docket. Judge Pope reported on his work with the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPPD) collaborative workgroup on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

Hon. Ryan Larson reported on his service with the DFPS Prevention Advisory Committee. Judge Larson noted that he handles CPS cases, family cases, and civil cases in Williamson County.

Adoption of Texas Court Improvement Program Five Year Strategic Plan

Commissioners were directed to Tab 4 to review the proposed CIP Strategic Plan to cover October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to approve the Strategic Plan to cover October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021. Judge Rob Hofmann motioned to adopt the Strategic Plan; Mr. Terry Tottenham

seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the Strategic Plan to cover October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021 unanimously.

Presentation by Texas Legal Services Center

Mr. Dylan Moench announced the Spanish version of the Parent Resource Guide is now available on Lawbox and as a pdf on the Commission's website at: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/basic-projects/parent-resource-group.aspx>. Mr. Moench also announced the Family Helpline, a new resource that answers questions from parents and caregivers about CPS issues. More information is available at: <http://texaslawhelp.org/resource/helpline?ref=WetB4>

Ms. Anita Stuckey, a Grant Specialist at TLSC reported on the Family Helpline, noting that the Helpline became operational on January 31, 2017 and took its first phone call within the first thirty seconds of opening. Ms. Stuckey reported the Helpline staff reference the Parent Resource Guide frequently as a companion resource.

Mr. Scott Constantine, the Managing Attorney for the Helpline, formerly of the Bronx Defenders in New York, updated the Commission on the Helpline's data since becoming operational, noting that the Helpline has received calls from across the state and has received inquiries from various family members, including mothers, fathers, grandparents, and other family members, as well as adult children. Mr. Constantine noted that although outreach is currently minimal, call volume has exceeded estimates.

Ms. Crystal Leff-Piñon, the Staff Attorney for the Helpline, formerly representing CPS with the Travis County District Attorney's Office, reported on the staff's meeting with DFPS acting General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner about plans to print out business cards for caseworkers to hand out to families and parents who have questions. Ms. Leff-Piñon also reported on plans to include information about the Helpline in the next update to the Parent Resource Guide.

DFPS UPDATE, Commissioner Hank Whitman reported on the Department's work with legislators on bills related to CPS. Mr. Whitman announced that the faith-based initiative has grown to over 2,000 attendees and plans to meet in June 2017. Mr. Whitman discussed the concerns about children who age out of the system and face homelessness, and the CPS initiatives in place to provide services to those children. Mr. Whitman announced that DFPS staff will meet today to discuss issues surrounding children in the child welfare system who are victims of sex exploitation and sex trafficking, including expanding child care licensing and other solutions to help children when they exit this danger. Mr. Whitman noted that capacity issues have improved over the past few weeks. Mr. Whitman reported on foster care redesign and efforts to increase payments to families in kinship care. Mr. Whitman reported on DFPS efforts to improve training for supervisor staff and caseworkers.

Presentation by Children's Commission

Ms. Kristi Taylor and Ms. Jamie Bernstein presented on the Beyond the Bench: Law, Justice, and Communities Summit that took place on December 14, 2016 at Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas. The

Summit toolkit is available at the following link: <http://www.txcourts.gov/publications-training/training-materials/beyond-the-bench-law-justice-and-communities-summit/>.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Mary Christine Reed, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project announced that 1,300 new copies of the 5th edition Aging Out Guide are now available for distribution to CASAs, Preparation for Adult Living programs, judges, and others working with foster youth. The Guide is also available online at: <http://texasfosteryouth.org/the-fifth-edition-of-a-guide-for-those-aging-out-of-foster-care-in-texas-is-now-available-online/>. Ms. Reed explained that the Project provides legal help to current and aged-out foster youth, including services ranging from advice to representation on a wide range of cases. The Project also offers help to those who work with youth. Ms. Reed introduced other attending staff from the Project: Lourdes Portillo, youth specialist paralegal in Austin; Sarah Worthington, staff attorney and legal assistant for survivors of sexual assault in Austin; and Danielle Kalil-McLane, staff attorney in the San Antonio office. Ms. Reed also noted the Project partners with ATJ to offer support for victims of sexual assault.

Gabriella McDonald, Texas Appleseed announced the publication of the Homeless Youth Handbook in partnership with Baker McKenzie and Weatherford. The handbook covers the legal rights and responsibilities of homeless youth in Texas and is available online at: <http://homelessyouthtexas.bakermckenzie.com/>.

Barbara Elias-Perciful, Texas Lawyers for Children discussed Senate Bill 11, reporting that a hearing was held with the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and that a companion bill has been introduced in the House by Representative Thompson.

Jeanne Stamp, Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) presented a one-page info-graphic with statistics on homeless youth, available online at: <http://www.theotx.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Infographic-Annual-Report-2015-16.pdf>. Ms. Stamp confirmed the data is available by race ethnicity in THEO's full annual report, available at: http://www.theotx.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2015-16_TXEHYCY_Annual_Report-Rev-Nov29-FINAL.pdf. Ms. Stamp announced a series of videos documenting children in doubled up situations available on YouTube entitled *Worn Out Welcome Mat*.

Ms. Gabriella McDonald announced that Travis County has received a \$5.2 million grant to end youth homelessness by the year 2020 and is helping homeless youth find permanent housing.

Ms. Kristi Taylor reported on behalf of council member Ms.Carolyn Rodriguez, announcing an article from the Austin American Statesman in January 2017 about preserving the Black Cultural District in Austin and the upcoming Change 1 annual fundraiser led by Courtney Jones, a former foster youth.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE REPORT

Hon. Dean Rucker updated members on the progress surrounding child welfare legal specialization in Texas, noting that the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) approved the proposed standards at

its meeting on December 2, 2016 and has submitted the standards to the Supreme Court of Texas for its approval. Judge Rucker reported that upon approval from the Supreme Court, TBSL anticipates to begin accepting applications in early 2018 and to administer the first exam in October 2018.

Judge Rucker reported on the Legal Representation Committee (LRC), which met on January 27, 2017 to discuss committee member updates on attorney training, child welfare law specialization, and the representation of DFPS. Judge Rucker announced that committee member Ms. Elizabeth Watkins presented a sample of a toolkit she created for use by CPS prosecutors. Judge Rucker noted the toolkit would serve as a resource for CPS prosecutors and elected county and district attorneys to take to court, and will include helpful guides regarding each type of hearing and a quick reference sheet on the rules of evidence. Judge Rucker reported the committee anticipates approving a final version at its next meeting in August 2017.

Judge Rucker gave a legislative update on bills the Commission's Legislative Committee is currently tracking. For more information on this update, please contact the Commission at children@txcourts.gov.

DFPS UPDATE continued, Associate Commissioner for CPS Kristene Blackstone announced the DFPS Data Book for 2016 has posted online at https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Book/default.asp. Ms. Blackstone reported that DFPS is currently filling over 800 positions in a staggered hiring method expected to extend until April 2017. Ms. Blackstone announced that DFPS will split Region 3 into two regions for the east and west portion of the area, with Fort Worth and Denton in one region and Dallas and Plano in another. Ms. Blackstone reported on a DFPS initiative in the Dallas area to provide medical exams for children within 72 hours of removal. Ms. Blackstone announced that DFPS plans to start a similar initiative in Lubbock on March 1, 2017 and noted that the exams will not replace the Texas Health Step exam. Ms. Blackstone reported on the Department's work to increase capacity contracts, as well as the implementation of a needs assessment, which will serve as a follow up to the occupancy analysis to detail which children are being placed and which are not in communities across the state. Ms. Blackstone noted the needs assessment is currently under review by Commissioner Whitman. Ms. Blackstone reported on the current legislative session, noting that Senate Bill 11 contains several initiatives that DFPS has been working on for some time including the Family Based Safety Service (FBSS) pilot in the El Paso area, the integrated care coordination pilot to serve high needs kids, and the expansion of foster care redesign to include case management.

Mr. Ian Spechler inquired about the children placed in psychiatric hospitals beyond the time covered by Medicaid. Ms. Blackstone reported that the funds to pay for the extended placement in a psychiatric unit is covered by the Department's general revenue and that DFPS has developed targeted efforts to address the needs of these children, through the integrated care coordination pilot and a grant received from Governor's office that will allow children to move more quickly into less restrictive placements.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, Ms. Tina Amberboy

Ms. Amberboy reported on the Commission staff's work on Senate Bill 11 regarding issues and concerns about its effect on court proceedings and role of the judiciary in CPS cases. Judge Rob Hofmann reported

on his concerns about the bill's effect on rural areas. Ms. Blackstone noted that DFPS plans to continue collaboration for the best outcomes for children.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE, Ms. Mena Ramon

Ms. Ramon updated the Commission on the Office of Court Administration's (OCA) legislative appropriation request for implementation and funding of four additional Child Protection Courts, four associate judges, and four court coordinators. Ms. Ramon noted that the Senate Finance hearing heard the appropriation on February 9. A House appropriation hearing has not yet been set for the OCA request.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Guzman announced the dates of the remaining 2017 Commission Meeting: May 12 and September 22.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 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 Commission

May 12, 2017

The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701

I. Goal: Encourage judicial leadership, accountability, and appropriate oversight of child protection cases to improve safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.

I.A. Objective: Participate and provide resources to statewide collaborative efforts to improve child safety.

I.A.1. Strategy: Collaborate and support agency and partner efforts to examine, secure, assess and improve child safety.

Progress Report

Activities:

- Serve on the DFPS Prevention Advisory Committee
- Support implementation of the recommendations issued by the Protect Our Kids Commission

The Prevention Advisory Committee convened by the Prevention and Early Intervention Division of DFPS was a key recommendation from the Protects our Kids Commission (POK). The POK Commission was established by Senate Bill 66 during the 83rd Legislative Session and was 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 PAC includes representatives such as pediatricians, judges, child welfare agency representatives, prosecutors, medical examiners, provider groups, and policy experts in prevention and community advocacy.

5/12/17 Update:

CC staff conferred with Houston-based faith community effort in February and provided information about DFPS “28 Ways to Help a Child” (link here: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/CHILD/Ways_Every_Church_Can_Help.pdf). CC staff also attended the March PAC meeting in Houston.

Several of the Protect Our Kids Commission recommendations have been filed by members of the Texas Legislature, including HB1549 by Representative Burkett. Highlights from the bill include requirements that DFPS designate tenured caseworkers to conduct investigations involving fatalities; enhance in-home visitation pilots and guidelines re monthly contact with families; instruct DSHS to include near fatality cases in the child fatality database and define “near fatality”; allow counties to join an existing child fatality review team; require a strategic plan for PEI including a growth strategy; improve delivery of PEI services; provide secondary trauma training for caseworkers; and establish in statute the Dept’s Prevention Advisory Committee.

	<p>This bill was heard in House Human Services on 3/20/17, voted out of committee on 4/18/17, placed on General Calendars for 5/05/17.</p>
<p>I.B. Objective: Support the improvement of education outcomes for children in the conservatorship of DFPS to increase opportunities for educational progress, leading to a more productive and stable adult life.</p>	
<p><i>I.B.1. Strategy: Implement the Texas Blueprint.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff the standing Foster Care and Education (FC&E) Committee - Ensure the committee meets periodically to assess progress of implementation of the Texas Blueprint - Promote continued collaboration between education, child welfare, and the courts - Seek guidance of top-level judicial, education, and child welfare leadership, as necessary - Develop and promote cross-system training opportunities to increase awareness about the educational needs of students in DFPS conservatorship and develop capacity to respond to those needs - Facilitate use of data to inform systems improvements in both education and child welfare systems, including data related to higher education - Create and monitor workgroups or subcommittees to carry out charge or purpose of the FC&E Committee 	<p>The Foster Care and Education (FC&Ed) Committee was established in 2015 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations, issued in 2012.</p> <p>There are four FC&Ed subcommittees: Data, Postsecondary, Special Education, and Local Collaboration. The Data Workgroup focuses on improved information-sharing and data collection between DFPS and the Texas Education Agency. The Postsecondary Workgroup focuses on issues of college or career readiness, identification of students currently or formerly in care, supports to encourage better outcomes beyond high school, developing resources to assist new foster care liaisons at institutions of higher education, and data exchange between DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The Special Education Workgroup focuses on the over and underrepresentation of students in foster care in special education as well as transition planning in the child welfare and special education contexts, training and designation of surrogate parents, and best practices surrounding confidentiality. The Local Collaboration Workgroup focuses on strategies to promote collaboration at the local level.</p> <p>The CPS Bench Book also includes a chapter and checklist on education issues which have been updated for the 2016 version.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The Foster Care & Education Committee met on March 20, 2017 to review workgroup progress. The Postsecondary, Local Collaboration, Special Education, and Data Workgroups met on February 23rd, February 28th, March 10th, and March 17th respectively.</p>

	<p>On March 9, 2017, DFPS, TEA, the Children’s Commission, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) gave a joint presentation entitled <i>Education of Students in Substitute Care: Child Welfare, Education, and Legal Perspectives</i> at the TWC Foster Youth Conference.</p> <p>In April 2017, DFPS, TEA, and the Children’s Commission released two new resources to support professionals serving students in foster care. The first guide entitled <i>Information Sharing Between Child Welfare and Schools: Maintaining Privacy and Promoting Educational Success</i> clarifies complicated confidentiality laws and encourages appropriate information sharing between child welfare and education partners. The second resource, a <i>Transition Planning Guide for Students in Foster Care Receiving Special Education Services</i>, lays out the similarities and differences in the transition planning processes in the child welfare and special education systems. The guide also includes best practices and recommendations for improved coordination between systems to better support students with disabilities who are in the foster care system during the transition to adulthood. Both resources are available on the Children’s Commission website on the JIR and ARL pages.</p> <p>The new Discipline Workgroup meets for the first time on June 1st. The Workgroup membership will include experts in the areas of trauma, behavioral and mental health, and school discipline.</p> <p>Children’s Commission staff is involved in planning the 8th Annual Education Reach for Texans Convening June 12-13th, 2017 in Commerce, TX. Education Reach has a mission of empowering Texans to champion postsecondary success for foster youth and alumni. A comprehensive <i>Information and Reference Guide for Foster Care Liaisons at Texas Institutions of Higher Education</i>, developed by the Foster Care & Education Postsecondary Workgroup, will be distributed at the Convening.</p>
<p>I.C. Objective: Promote awareness of and embed a culture and practice among the judiciary and legal community around Trauma Informed Care so that the legal and judicial community is aware, educated and supportive of the concept and application.</p>	
<p><i>I.C.1. Strategy: Partner with Trauma and Mental Health advocates and agencies to ensure the legal and judicial community is aware, educated, supportive of, and implementing and applying principles of Trauma Informed Care in the respective disciplines.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>

Activities:

- Highlight importance of child well-being among judiciary and other stakeholders
- Liaise with and participate as a partner in the various trauma-informed workgroups and collaborative groups
- Monitor the trauma-informed care trainings, workgroups, meetings, strategies, timelines and provide reports to the CC and other stakeholders as appropriate

The 2016 Child Protection Law Bench Book includes an updated chapter on trauma.

Pursuant to SB125 from the 84th Legislature, DFPS launched a comprehensive assessment that includes a trauma screening on September 1, 2016. The CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment) is used in conjunction with a Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to provide a comprehensive assessment for family service planning.

The CC also continues to support DFPS's shift to a trauma-informed care system and in addition to developing and promoting an attorney training about trauma-informed care, will include a session on Trauma Informed Courts at the annual judicial conference in November 2016.

The Child Protection Law Bench Book also includes an updated chapter on trauma. Pursuant to SB125 from the 84th Legislature, DFPS launched a comprehensive assessment that called the CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment) that is used in conjunction with a Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to provide a comprehensive assessment for family service planning.

5/12/17 Update:

Representative Miller has been consulting with the Children's Commission on HB2335 which would require trauma-informed care training for attorneys, caseworkers, residential staff and CASAs. This bill has been voted out of committee and debated on the House Floor, although as on 5/02/17, it had not been voted out of the House.

If HB2335 passes, the one-hour trauma training created by the CC and Texas CASA last year should meet this requirement for attorneys and advocates. This training has received MCLE and is available for free on the CC website.

I.D. Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically Child Sexual Exploitation so that the judicial system can assist in preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS' conservatorship.

<p><i>I.D.1. Strategy: Collaborate with state and local partners to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of foster youth.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate with Office of Attorney General and Statewide Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force as well as the Office of the Texas Governor - Work with Child Welfare Agency on identification and assessment of children from child welfare system who are victims or at high risk of becoming victims of human trafficking - Gain understanding of existing data collection efforts and identify additional or new data collection elements or efforts needed - Coordinate and collaborate with child welfare agency and other child welfare partners on various programs and efforts to combat HT - Understand, participate and help identify HT placements and services available to foster children who are trafficked or at risk of being trafficked - Identify training needs for judges, attorneys, and other stakeholders - Collaborate on prevention efforts at state, regional, and local levels, as appropriate - Examine the connection between HT and crossover youth population 	<p>The CC is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness of human trafficking as it impacts children involved with the child welfare system.</p> <p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored trainings and updated the Child Protection Law Bench Book to include recent legislation regarding human trafficking and a one-page checklist on human trafficking added to the Bench Book as an additional resource for judges. Through JIR correspondence, the CC also relayed important information to judges hearing child welfare cases about the intersection of child welfare and human trafficking.</p> <p>The CC also participates in the nationwide Capacity Building Center for Courts PL 113-183 Constituency Group to learn about best and current practices to prevent and respond to trafficking of children and youth in foster care and attends local, state, and national training events, including the Family Focused Treatment Association conference sessions on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to judges and attorneys as needed.</p> <p>In addition to serving on the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the CC also works with the Office of the Texas Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team and the Office of Court Administration to develop strategies to improve judicial handling of child welfare cases where children or youth are at high risk of becoming trafficking victims.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>On March 23, 2017, Commission staff observed the GIRL (Growing Independence Restoring Lives) Court in Houston. During the staffing and court proceedings, staff collected ideas and insights into the issue of human trafficking among children and youth in the foster care system. The CC will continue to work with child welfare and court stakeholders to build capacity to address trafficking throughout the state.</p>

I.E. Objective: Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may, in turn, help children and families exit the child welfare system more quickly.	
I.E.1. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability, quality, support, cost, training, and usefulness of mediation in CPS cases.	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the University of Texas at Austin to understand recent data analyses related to cost-effectiveness of mediation and outcomes for Travis County and how those outcomes can be applied statewide - Assess mediator training availability and needs - Assess potential costs, resources spent by counties, and funding sources for CPS mediation 	<p>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 aimed to develop a cost formula that could be applied to other counties in the state and to provide a research framework and questions that can be used by other counties.</p> <p>Due to data delays associated with the SACWIS / child welfare system, the project was unable to be completed. UT produced a cost benefit report, however (linked here: http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/54517/Model-Court-Cost-Analysis-Memo-FINAL.pdf)</p> <p>In April 2016, the CC surveyed 85 judges about the availability, frequency, usefulness, funding options and benefits of mediation in CPS cases. That survey was analyzed by UT and the results were presented at the Child Welfare Judicial conference in November 2016.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>After the 85th Legislative Session finishes, the Children’s Commission will begin the process of establishing the Mediation Workgroup.</p>
I.F. Objective: Collaborate with the full continuum of providers, including health and mental health providers, to identify ways to enhance effective and efficient services and supports for children in foster care and their caregivers.	
I.F.1. Strategy: Partner and collaborate with the residential provider community.	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CC Staff will serve on the Public-Private Partnership for Foster Care Redesign - Confer and attend meetings of the Texas Chapter of the Family Focused Treatment Association and other child placing collaboratives 	<p>CC Executive Director continues to serve on the DFPS Public Private Partnership, which is the DFPS committee that provides advice and input into the state’s Foster Care Redesign effort.</p> <p>CC staff will also attend the 2017 Family Focused Treatment Association meetings and annual conference to stay informed about provider concerns and look for</p>

	<p>opportunities to connect the provider community to the judiciary and legal communities to help improve placement stability and capacity concerns.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>E.D. attended the April 2017 PPP meeting and has conferred extensively with the legislature, providers and other stakeholders on HB6 and SB11 dealing with Community-Based Care and Foster Care Redesign.</p>
<p><i>I.F.2. Strategy: Lead a Child Welfare Trauma Consortium to create a trauma-informed child welfare system that better meets the needs of children who have experienced trauma.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify best practices in TIC both in Texas and nationally - Identify key TIC players in Texas and catalog their efforts and activities to provide a more comprehensive picture of what organizations are already doing to address TIC training and services, including an analysis of how Texas can leverage existing models - Assess the need for a statewide coordination plan regarding TIC - Examine payment and coordination barriers to serving foster care children who have experienced trauma - Assess data regarding how TIC practices affect systems with respect to costs and level of care - Partner with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to create a report reflecting the TIC research - Assemble a multi-disciplinary Consortium to develop an implementation plan for creating a TIC child welfare system - Facilitate collaboration to implement plan to create a TIC child welfare system - Evaluate and apply findings 	<p>The CC has established a small working group with Texas CASA, DFPS, MMHPI, Hogg Foundation and others to develop a comprehensive trauma-informed care state strategy and practice model for all of child welfare system stakeholders.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>On July 28th in Austin, the Children’s Commission will host a collaborative meeting of child welfare stakeholders interested in developing a comprehensive trauma-informed care state strategy and practice model. Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute will present their findings from the key informant interviews. Over 20 individuals or agencies have participated in the interviews, including judges, attorneys, CASA, child placing agencies, juvenile probation, and leading researchers.</p>

<p>II. Goal: Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.</p>	
<p>II.A. Objective: Create opportunities to bring together subject matter experts, judicial and executive branch leaders, and key policy makers so that important and urgent issues are examined and recommendations and solutions are identified.</p>	
<p>II.A.1. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other stakeholders to identify topics for Round Table discussions.</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Form workgroup to define the purpose and goal of each Round Table and solicit participation from experts to promote substantive discussion - Develop meeting materials and agendas - Secure facilitator and location - Handle RSVPs and travel reimbursements - Produce a written report within 4-6 months - Consider implementation strategies based on the report and recommendations 	<p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>CC staff has conferred with DFPS on convening a potential RT in August 2017 focusing on implementation of SB11/HB6, if passed.</p>
<p>II.B. Objective: Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support and JIR correspondence and communique to ensure judges are equipped to make informed, educated decisions, and use best practices in conducting hearings that will contribute to better outcomes for children and families.</p>	
<p>II.B.1. Strategy: Maintain, update, and support a high-quality Child Protection Law Bench Book for CPS Judges (Bench Book).</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists - Include tips and best and promising practices throughout Bench Book - Annually update Bench Book with new information, as needed - Disseminate updated Bench Book at annual child welfare judicial conference, annual college for new judges, and upon request - Maintain an updated Bench Book on the CC's website - Ensure all statutory citations are maintained and connected to an online resource 	<p>The CC staff finalized updates in October 2016 and uploaded the new version in November 2016.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Bench Book updates are underway. Topical updates are due by June 30, 2017 and statutory updates will be added as soon as the Legislative Session ends. Additional edits and updates will be completed by October 1, 2017. Updated Bench Books will be distributed in November 2017 at the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track distribution of Bench Book 	
<p><i>II.B.2. Strategy: Provide JIR support to the judiciary and child welfare system.</i></p>	<p align="center">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with retired judges with child welfare experience to serve as JIRs - JIRs will participate in conference calls, meetings, and conferences as requested/needed - JIRs will release communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to judges hearing CPS cases - JIRs will market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities - Publish JIR letters with CC drafting and research assistance - With CC assistance, distribute to CPS judge listserv, and post JIR letters on the CC website - JIRs will provide judicial technical assistance to Children’s Commission, as needed - JIRs will help recruit, retain, and advance judicial leaders 	<p>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 letters and “blasts” concerning items of interests, such as training events, are routinely issued.</p> <p>Additionally, the JIRs assist with the development of curriculum for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and moderate several sessions of the conference. The JIRs also review updates to the Child Protection Law Bench Book and attend and participate in events on behalf of the CC, including Round Tables and Trial Skills Trainings.</p> <p>The JIR activities will remain much the same for FY2017, but additional emphasis will be placed on recruiting judges to serve on subcommittees and workgroups that oversee short-term and long-term projects, and elevating judicial leaders with particular expertise and interests related to child and family well-being and improving the child welfare system.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Judge Dean Rucker continues to serve as JIR and regularly consults on amendments and additions to the CPS Judge’s Bench Book as well as other pressing or emergent issues brought to the CC’s attention by DFPS or other stakeholders. JIR and CC staff have started meeting regularly to discuss legislative issues and bills that potentially affect the Texas Family Code or other statutes closely related to the judicial handling of child protection cases.</p> <p>JIR Letters and Announcements issued between February 2017 and May 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Capacity and Community Engagement</u> - <u>Beyond the Bench: Law, Justice, and Communities Summit</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of Home for Purposes of Removal to Foster Care - New ICWA Quick Reference Tools for State Courts - Transition Planning in CPS and Special Education – Encouraging Coordination and Collaboration to Promote Better Outcomes - Clarifying Confidentiality: New Guidance on Sharing Information about the Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care - Scholarship Opportunity for Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Conference 1-Day Track and Video Replays - Texas Health Steps - The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Abduction in Cases Involving Battered Respondents: A Texas Bench Guide for State and Federal Court Judges
<p>II.C. Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the CC website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.</p>	
<p><i>II.C.1. Strategy: Develop and distribute Attorney Resource Letters (ARLs) that communicate or announce changes in law, policy or practice and inform attorneys of training and other events.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and maintain a distribution list of any / all attorneys known to the CC to work on child protection dockets throughout the State of Texas - Publish communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to attorneys handling CPS cases - Post ALRs on the CC website - Provide shorter communications (Attorney Blasts) with attorneys regarding specific training opportunities and other matters of interest 	<p>In May 2016, the CC created a distribution list of more than 3,000 attorneys to inform legal practitioners of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay information about issues related to child welfare.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The following ARLs were distributed between February and May 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homeless Youth Handbook - Beyond the Bench: Law, Justice, and Communities Summit - ABA Teleconference Series: Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reminder: MCLE Video on Trauma-Informed Advocacy for Attorneys - Save the Date! Upcoming MCLE Opportunities - New ICWA Quick Reference Tools for State Courts - Transition Planning in CPS and Special Education – Encouraging Coordination and Collaboration to Promote Better Outcomes - Clarifying Confidentiality: New Guidance on Sharing Information about the Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care - Scholarship Opportunity for Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) Conference 1-Day Track and Video Replays - Texas Health Steps
<p><i>II.C.2. Strategy: Create and maintain an Attorney Resource webpage.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an Attorney Resource page and link from CC homepage - Post relevant links, pages, reports, resources on the page - Maintain and update the page periodically 	<p>In FY2017, the CC will establish an attorney resource page that can be linked to from the CC home page.</p> <p>5/12/2017 Update:</p> <p>A webpage has been created to feature the Attorney Resource Letters and timely announcements. To view this webpage, link here:</p> <p>http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/training/attorney-education/attorney-resource-letter.aspx</p>
<p>II.D. Objective: Maintain and enhance the Children’s Commission website to provide an easily accessible, user-friendly resources for the judiciary, attorneys and the child welfare community to obtain information and best practices in their interactions with children and families.</p>	
<p><i>II.D.1. Strategy: Maintain and enhance usability and function of the Children’s Commission website.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On a regular basis, update the website with recent, up-to-date, and pertinent content and work with OCA for website support - Provide links and resources related to each of the projects outlined in the Strategic Plan - Provide a portal for website visitors to submit inquiries or sign up for CC mailing lists and notification features - Use technology, such as Twitter, to communicate important news announcements and spread awareness about key events - Provide CIP grant application information and updated applications and forms 	<p>In FY2017, the CC will update features of its website to improve its look as well as to reconfigure certain features to improve functionality and usefulness.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>In May 2017, the CC completed a thorough review and launched an updated and restructured website. This change includes updating the site to the most recent online platform, and is mobile user friendly.</p> <p>The refreshed layout includes the addition of two focus areas to direct the CC’s target audience to areas of interest: For Judges and For Attorneys. The redesign includes additional features found on the home page to highlight CC announcements such as JIR and ARL letters, and other items that are currently in focus.</p>
<p>II.E. Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders and organizations to enhance the opportunity to gain knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with and throughout Texas.</p>	
<p><i>II.E.1. Strategy: Provide assistance to local jurisdictions, DFPS, and other state and national partners.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secure speakers and/or provide funds for meeting support and facilitation - Make presentations at training events, as requested - Evaluate the effectiveness of the assistance 	<p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored the keynote speaker for the Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop, provided funding for the 2016 Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) conference, and made presentations about the Indian Child Welfare Act and Foster Care and Education at the Williamson County Bar Association annual attorney ad litem training.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>There has been no request for assistance to date.</p>
<p>II.F. Objective: Support the use of best practices in court case management.</p>	
<p><i>II.F.1. Strategy: Evaluate the quality, impact and usability of the Office of Court (OCA) Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS).</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with OCA on the management, programming, and testing services for CPCMS - Monitor bug fixes or enhancements required based on input from CPCMS users - Participate in the CPCMS Advisory Group to determine the nature and priority of CPCMS enhances and bug fixes - Monitor equipment and software purchases required for proper and efficient operation and maintenance 	<p>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 CC staff to evaluate bug fixes or enhancements. CPCMS underwent a major upgrade of the CPCMS infrastructure and primary judge page in FY2015. Overall, these changes have made CPCMS more efficient and easier for judges and court coordinators to use. CPCMS is currently in maintenance mode, but OCA continually works on the architecture to streamline how CPCMS functions and serves the needs of the CPC judges and court staff who it. Part of CPCMS management includes staffing an Advisory Committee that oversees the governance structure and works to continue enhancing the system as needed by the governance committee. OCA will conduct semi-annual governance meetings to establish priorities for CPCMS enhancements and to report the status of governance activities and will provide at least four software releases during the fiscal year.</p> <p>Another feature of CPCMS is data collection, which may be useful in monitoring outcome measures which in turn provide judges with meaningful feedback regarding court practices that affect safety, permanency, and well-being.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The next CPCMS upgrade (Release 8) is scheduled for April 27, 2017. Release 8 will include seven enhancements/bug fixes.</p> <p>CPCMS is in its eighth year of service. User-generated bug reporting has significantly decreased. No CPCMS Advisory Group Meetings have been have been scheduled yet for FY17.</p>
<p><i>II.F.2. Strategy: Explore feasibility of providing support for specialty courts such as family treatment, crossover youth, and permanency dockets.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with judges who handle specialty court dockets - Develop and provide resources and tools helpful to specialty court judges - Assess the effectiveness of the assistance, resources, and tools 	<p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>There is no activity to report at this time.</p>

III. Goal: Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.	
III.A. Objective: Promote and support institutional collaboration among high-level state, legislative, and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders so there is open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners.	
<i>III.A.1. Strategy: Provide a forum and opportunity for child welfare stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs, and strengths.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain a statewide multidisciplinary judicial commission - Hold regular CC meetings that will include child welfare stakeholders - Promote active participation by judges, the CC Executive Director, and DFPS in the federal review process - Ensure the visible and joint involvement of a Supreme Court of Texas Justice and the DFPS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner of CPS, and Deputy Assistant Commissioner of CPS - Maintain a collaborative council of child welfare advocates, stakeholders, and state agencies to promote collaboration in development and implementation of CIP initiatives - Conduct bi-weekly collaborative calls involving a variety of stakeholders and participants - Share information through CC website, judge and attorney distribution lists, and commission meetings and commission-sponsored events 	<p>The CC will work to develop and achieve shared goals and activities detailed in the CC Strategic Plan. CC partnerships over the past nine years has resulted in institutional changes that have led to improved outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>Current collaboration efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DFPS leadership has a standing position on the Children’s Commission. - At least one state-level DFPS staff member is on every CC committee. - Participation in a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child-welfare stakeholders, including executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, and other child welfare stakeholders. - DFPS and the CC will renew efforts to collaborate on the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP and CIP-SP. - DFPS members have the opportunity to present at each CC meeting to provide information regarding DFPS initiatives and efforts. - The CC ED and CC Staff serve on the State PIP Team, the statewide Foster Care Redesign Public Private Partnership Committee, the Prevention Advisory Council and many other DFPS-sponsored workgroups and subcommittees. - Joint Court/DFPS attendance at the CIP Annual Conferences. - DFPS leadership attends the annual child welfare judicial conference.

	<p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The CC continues to hold bi-weekly calls with stakeholders, and continues to conduct regular subcommittee and workgroup meetings to help advance CC strategies.</p> <p>The E.D. and A.D. met on 2/9/17 with DFPS and the Administration of Children and Families to discuss the results of the 2016 Child and Family Services Review and resulting Program Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The CC provided input to the draft PIP on March 28, 2017. The CC agreed to work with DFPS to survey judges regarding the practice of pleading in the alternative, and to expand the online notice and engagement service for CPC courts.</p>
<p>III.B. Engage in policy and procedural improvements that advance child welfare system functionality, promote effective and equitable services, and ensure justice for all parties.</p>	
<p><i>III.B.1. Strategy: conduct the following activities and perform CQI evaluations of the same</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serve as facilitator and convener of substantive discussions related to child welfare matters, and produce related reports with recommended changes to judicial, attorney, child welfare, and advocate practice, as well as state policy and statute - Monitor, evaluate, and consult on proposed legislation for impact to the judiciary and the child welfare system, and provide research and testimony to the Texas Legislature, as requested - Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services, federal Administration of Children and Families officials, other CIPs, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, National Center for State Courts, National Association of Counsel for Children, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law on issues affecting child welfare policy and practice in Texas and nationally - Speak and present publicly in a variety of settings to audiences including congressional staff, national organizations, private foundations, state leadership, state legislators and staff, attorneys and advocates, and all levels of the Texas Judiciary, including the Supreme Court of Texas 	<p>The CC will serve as facilitator and convener of Round Table discussions, CIP committee and subcommittee meetings, and conference calls related to the short and long term projects in the strategic plan.</p> <p>In Legislative years, including 2017, the CC will monitor and evaluate legislation filed, and provide testimony and resources papers to the Legislature upon request. At all times, the CC will collaborate regularly with the welfare agency as well as national and state judicial and advocacy organizations.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The CC has continued its bi-weekly calls with stakeholders, and continues to conduct regular committee and subcommittee meetings related to all strategies underway.</p> <p>The CC staff has provided testimony and resource papers on numerous bills this Legislative Session, and is creating a 85th Session Legislative Update that will finalize once the Session has ended. CC staff will provide a live legislative update through the State Bar of Texas on 7/24/17.</p>

IV. Goal: Promote high quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, child and family involvement, and effective legal representation of parties.	
IV.A. Objective: Improve legal representation so that parents, children, and the State of Texas experience high-quality court hearings.	
<i>IV.A.1 Strategy: Work locally and nationally to improve all aspects of legal representation for parties.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate with Casey Family Program, ABA, and other CIPs to reform Texas legal representation system - Maintain a Legal Representation Committee and relevant, pertinent subcommittees, as appropriate 	<p>The CC will serve on the advisory committee of the Family Justice Initiative, which is a national group of key legal experts focused on improving legal representation nationwide. At a meeting in Denver in July, the group identified action steps to positively impact permanency through improved representation, how to build consensus on how to define permanence, removal avoidance, reunification, and strengthening families, and to identify what professionals in the legal system do that impacts permanency and strengthening families.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Three workgroups have been formed: Research and Data, Quality Representation, and Communications. Although Texas volunteered to work on the State Focus Workgroup, we have the option to volunteer for one of the first three committees to launch.</p> <p>CC staff met with the ABA and other states participating in the project on April 27, 2017 at the ABA Parent/Child Attorney conference and will attend a national conference call on May 10, 2017.</p>
<i>IV.A.2 Strategy: Work through the Legal Representation Committee and Training Committee to identify training needs, develop and host training events, and support efforts to ensure high quality legal representation for parties.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please see activities under Section III.A for training activities 	<p>The CC will maintain a Legal Representation Committee for FY2017. The LRC last met in July to discuss AAL Training, the new Attorney distribution list and Attorney Resource Letters, as well as the work of its two subcommittees: DFPS Representation and County Commissioners Court Relationships. The DFPS subcommittee focuses on</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LRC will convene at least twice each year to examine issues related to legal representation, due process, local community relationships, financial impact of legal representation, and legislative and policy considerations - Target subjects and opportunities for additional training focused on improving legal representation - Support the efforts of the TBLS Advisory Committee as described in IV.B.1 - Oversee the development of Standards of Representation as described in IV.C.1 	<p>improving the relationship between prosecutors and regional attorneys and collaboration on training for all attorneys representing the state and the County Commissioner subcommittee focuses on strengthening relationships with county organizations.</p> <p>The DFPS subcommittee created a practice guide for new prosecutors, and the CC-CR subcommittee published a guide in May to help judges in gathering information, assembling data, and presenting case to commissioner’s courts regarding what is a sufficient budget to pay for court appointed attorneys as well as what data would be useful and persuasive to underscore the need for and the importance of legal representation with particular emphasis on early appointment.</p> <p>On June 3rd, 2016 the CC sent a survey related to compensation rates, timing of, and duration of appointments to over 3000 attorneys. The survey closed on July 6th, 2016 with 299 responses. Attorneys representing children and parents made up the vast majority of respondents, 87 percent, and attorneys representing the Department made up about 13 percent. The results of the survey are available from the Children’s Commission.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The LRC is pleased to announce the creation of a Legal Representation Study subcommittee that will oversee the design, implementation, review, and publication of the Legal Representation Study. All proposed subcommittee members accepted membership invitations and the subcommittee will consist of ten members and three auxiliary members from diverse occupational and geographic areas. The first subcommittee meeting will be in July of 2017.</p> <p>The next full meetings of the Legal Representation Committee will be 8/25/17 and 10/19/17.</p>
<p>IV.B. Objective: Develop, adopt and promote standards of practice for attorneys representing parties in child protection cases so that attorneys are encouraged to gain a higher level of expertise and provide high-quality legal representation.</p>	
<p><i>IV.B.1. Strategy: Work with the Legal Representation Committee to develop, adopt and promote Standards of Practice.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work within the Legal Representation Committee to consider the development of Standards - Draft Standards of Practice for consideration - Determine appropriate avenue for adoption - Develop a plan for promoting Standards 	<p>The LRC discussed Standards of Representation at its July 29, 2016 meeting, and the committee discussed the many practice, competency, compensation and accountability issues that beg the question of whether there are other issues that must be addressed before Standards are adopted. Before moving forward, the CC will place additional emphasis on judicial and attorney training and awareness. Towards that end, the Children’s Commission has worked with the Texas Center for the Judiciary in 2016/2017 to ensure the Family Justice Conference agenda included sessions on the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys in CPS cases, the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do, how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding, and the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p> <p>No update for 5/12/17.</p>
<p>IV.C. Objective: Establish a specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization so that attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise can provide higher caliber of legal representation.</p>	
<p><i>IV.C.1. Strategy: Staff and support a Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advisory Committee.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and support TBLS Advisory Committee meetings and activities - Draft a TBLS exam for child welfare specialization, if requested - Work with TBLS Staff to offer the board specialization exam, if appropriate - Work with TBLS Staff to administer exam, if appropriate 	<p>The CC submitted a full application for legal specialization in child welfare law to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) in April 2015 and a revised application in September 2015. As directed by the TBLS staff, the CC identified and then named an Advisory Committee to oversee the development of testing standards and to assist in writing the exam. TBLS circulated the proposed standards for comment by the advisory commissions of other legal specializations and other stakeholders, with the public comment period in March 2016 with a closing date of May 31, 2016.</p> <p>On July 8, 2016, the TBLS Board met to discuss the proposed standards and the comments received. On July 11, 2016, TBLS forwarded all comments received to Judge Rucker and the CC. Most comments were positive and in favor of establishing a specialization. However, there were several worthy comments pointing out that the standards, as written, would preclude many experienced and dedicated attorneys from qualifying.</p>

	<p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>On February 14, 2017 the Texas Supreme Court officially recognized Child Welfare Law as the 20th area of certified legal specialization in Texas. TBLS staff at the SBOT will format the online application and the process of writing the exam and administering the applications has now begun with the support of the CC.</p> <p>TBLS has approved the membership for both the Child Welfare Law Advisory Commission and the Child Welfare Law Exam Commission. Convened by the CC, the Advisory Commission will consider applications to become board certified in child welfare law and will have authority to review and suggest changes in standards going forward, and the Exam Commission will write and grade the exam.</p> <p>Members of each commission will serve three year terms. The initial terms will be staggered for one, two and three years in length so that as members enter and exit each commission, a core of experienced members will always be present.</p> <p>The Exam Commission held its first meeting March 27, 2017 and began finalizing the exam specifications and creating the exam, with the goal of administering the first exam in October 2018. CC staff will provide ongoing support to both commissions.</p>
<p>IV.D. Objective: Create, distribute, maintain, support, and evaluate resources for parents involved in CPS cases so that parents can gain more equal footing and support for their rights once they become involved with CPS.</p>	
<p>IV.D.1. Strategy: Support a Parent Resource Hotline and Parent Resource Guide.</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and update the Parent Resource Guide on the CC website and online (LawBox, Reprints) - Establish, support, and evaluate a Parent Resource Hotline through a partnership with the Texas Legal Services Corporation - Staff a committee focused on improving Parent Representation in CPS cases 	<p>The Parent Resource Guide was completed in May 2015 and is accessible in print and online on the CC website as well as many on other CC partner and advocate websites. The PRG is currently being translated from English to Spanish and this should be completed by the end of September.</p> <p>For FY2017, the CC will partner with Access to Justice and the Children’s Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation to establish a helpline for parents. The helpline will provide easy, statewide access for parents to basic information, education, and resources addressing the following issues, which may extend to family members under certain circumstances:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parental rights as they relate to CPS Investigations, the provision of Family Based Services, Parental Child Safety Placements, Chapter 34 non-parent agreements, termination of parental rights, custody, access, visitation, service plans, the court’s role in conducting hearings and oversight, permanency planning, mediation, and final trials on the merits. - CPS process and working with CPS, service plans, paternity establishment, voluntary relinquishment, and other options at court. - How to gain access to a court-appointed lawyer (free, court-appointed counsel, cooperation). - Special topics (non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other variations). <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The Parent Resource Group held its first meeting of 2017 on April 4, and received an update from the Family Helpline Staff on the first three months of the Helpline. Texas Legal Services Center updated the group on the Helpline’s call volume and outreach efforts, and identified patterns in caller questions and needs. Additionally, the group discussed the strategy for expanding the Helpline and action items for the PRG members to assist the Helpline.</p> <p>The group also discussed new projects for 2017, including a parent representation tool kit, a pilot project of representation of parents prior to filing a petition, attorney training focused on how changes to immigration enforcement are affecting parents, and attorney training focused on ethics and effective representation in rural or small county practice.</p>
<p>IV.E. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of families and caregivers in court hearings so that court hearings are higher quality and more meaningful for the families and children involved.</p>	
<p><i>IV.E.1. Strategy: Promote and improve availability and use of the CPCMS Notice and Engagement tool.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p>	<p>The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. All parties involved in CP cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from the Texas</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market OCA web tool that allows establishing a user ID, searching for a child / case, and setting timely email alerts - Periodically re-issue announcement to various audiences - Develop a survey tool to assess the usefulness, effectiveness and accuracy of the system - Monitor the number of users and hearings included in alerts sent by the system 	<p>Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This issue includes the foster placements and DFPS service provider facilities where the children/youth are in placement and results in many parties not being able to attend scheduled court hearings. OCA will monitor the system login and search information, Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data is populating according to search criteria, and reports/data will be produced and provided to the CC.</p> <p>5/12/2017 Update:</p> <p>The number of registered users continues to increase. Since advertising the availability, the number of registered users has increased by 99% - an additional 295 users registered – bringing the total to 594. A survey to gauge the usability and features of the tool will be sent to all registered users in May 2017.</p>
<p>IV.F. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.</p>	
<p><i>IV.F.1. Strategy: Elevate the importance of youth voice, youth presence and youth input in the outcome of their case.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize the importance of youth voice and youth presence in court - Provide training about the importance of youth voice - Include foster youth and former foster youth as part of judicial training events - Promote bench cards and other resources and tools that judges can use to appropriately involve youth in court hearings and permanency planning 	<p>On May 20, 2016, the CC hosted a Round Table to discuss how to improve involvement and consideration of our youths’ voices and views in court hearing. The discussion focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Texas law governing the child’s appearance at and participation in hearings, - the pros and cons of the child being present in court, - the physical and cultural barriers, attitudes, and practices that affect how well courts accommodate the child’s presence <p>At the conclusion of the Round Table, most participants expressed that generally every child should appear at every permanency hearing. The group also supported the expectation that the court will excuse a child on a case-by-case basis and not operate under a blanket order or rule.</p> <p>The final report includes recommendations regarding: Training Issues, Practice and Court Changes, Using Technology, Development of New Resources and Tools, Possible Legislative Changes. Pertinent recommendations included training to ensure judges, attorneys, guardians, caseworkers, foster parents, parents, and caregivers understand</p>

	<p>what the current law requires, as well as each person’s role in ensuring the law is followed. Also, training was recommended for courts to encourage courts to make an individual decision, per child, per hearing before excusing a child from a permanency review hearing. Other recommendations deal with docketing, trauma audits, and video conferencing resources, and automated notice for all parties,</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>No activity to report.</p>																				
<p><i>IV.F.2. Strategy: Promote and improve the availability and use of the Video Conferencing (VTC) hosted and maintained by the Office of Court Administration (OCA).</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>																				
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide funding for OCA to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate VTC between courts and residential placements - Work with OCA to refine and publish the procedures and protocol between OCA, DFPS, Courts, and other users - Monitor OCA’s efforts to maintain an updated set of instructions for participation and provide to end-users, a list of Residential Treatment Centers, courts, and other facilities with internet infrastructure and capability - Monitor OCA hearing logs that include the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality or technological barriers - Work with OCA and others to expand capability and feasibility for use beyond court hearing 	<p>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 maintains a list of courts, Residential Treatment Centers and local CASA offices with video conferencing capability. OCA 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.</p> <p>OCA upgraded the video conferencing platform in 2016 and the configuration now provides conferencing capability from mobile devices, multiparty video conferencing, and email and calendar invitation capabilities.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1066 1062 1976 1365"> <thead> <tr> <th>Reporting</th> <th>September 2016 – January 2017</th> <th>February 2017 – April 2017</th> <th>FYTD17</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Video Hearings Conducted</td> <td style="text-align: right;">72</td> <td style="text-align: right;">40</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>112</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Children/Youth Participated</td> <td style="text-align: right;">76</td> <td style="text-align: right;">32</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>108</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Courts Participated</td> <td style="text-align: right;">11</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>12</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Placement Facilities Participated</td> <td style="text-align: right;">36</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>46</u></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Reporting	September 2016 – January 2017	February 2017 – April 2017	FYTD17	Video Hearings Conducted	72	40	<u>112</u>	Children/Youth Participated	76	32	<u>108</u>	Courts Participated	11	1	<u>12</u>	Placement Facilities Participated	36	10	<u>46</u>
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	Courts that are video-enabled	32	12	<u>44</u>
	Placement facilities that are video-enabled	83	6	<u>89</u>
	Local CASA offices that are video-enabled	5	5	<u>10</u>

V. Goal: Collect and analyze court and child welfare-related data to develop solutions to improve outcomes, quality, and sustainability of Children’s Commission strategies.	
V.A. Objective: Ensure data collection, analysis and continuous quality improvement (CQI) is incorporated in each grant and project in order to highlight the success and potential for sustainability of the project or grant.	
V.A.1. Strategy: Incorporate data collection and analysis into a continuous quality improvement process for each project and grant.	Progress Report
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review each grant application and CC project for possible data collection and analysis opportunities - Identify a manner of data collection - Establish a method for analysis - Apply the results to the project 	<p>This strategy articulates the CC’s effort to use data collection and analysis to inform the benefits and sustainability of projects and initiatives.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>No activity to report.</p>
V.B. Objective: Use agency administrative data to improve permanency outcomes for children who achieve permanency.	
V.B.1. Strategy: Examine agency data to improve outcomes for kids who achieve permanency to ensure permanency in less than 12 months	Progress Report
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine data (September 2015 – August 2016) for kids who achieved positive permanency to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reunification data: when did they go home, whether a monitored return was involved, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before reunification - Permanent managing conservatorship data: when was permanent managing conservatorship awarded, to whom (relative or non-relative), child’s placement pattern, and last placement before PMC placement - Adoption data: when was the adoption consummated, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before each child’s adoptive placement - Demographics (age, race, siblings) for each of the above listed permanency exits, - Sort results by region or county, if possible 	<p>Starting in FY2017, CIP programs will be required to be familiar and make use of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. All CIPs and Child Welfare agencies must jointly design and implement one project using available child welfare data that focuses on improving a specific safety, permanency or well-being outcome for children and families. Texas CIP and DFPS will focus on the CFSR Outcome related to permanency within 12 months of entry into foster care.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>CPS will work with the Children's Commission on analyzing agency data to determine trends on when children achieve permanency and which positive permanency goal is achieved. This data will be shared with stakeholders and targeted recommendations will be made for judicial stakeholders.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a plan to share information, conduct focus groups, deploy surveys, as appropriate 	<p>CPS will use Regional Systems Improvement (RSIs) Specialists to work with each region on using data to focus on improving permanency outcomes for children. The RSIs will work with regional leadership to develop Annual Business Plans. Plans will include multiple goals related to permanency achieved and progress will be discussed at the Quarterly Regional Improvement Team meetings and in Quarterly Business Plan reviews.</p> <p>The Regional Systems Improvement (RSIs) Specialists will attend the Judicial Summit convened by the Children’s Commission in which regional leadership teams meet with Judges in their areas to discuss ways to achieve permanency for children in care. The RSIs will prepare data and help the CPS Regional Directors to present the data. The presentation will focus on the current state of the foster care system in the regions, and court-related metrics in the counties of jurisdiction represented.</p>
<p><i>V.C. Objective: Engage in CFSP/APSR/CFSR/CIP partnership with DFPS so that CIP and DFPS can better understand and improve the content, processes and uses of the various reports.</i></p>	
<p>V.C.1. Strategy: CIP/CFSP/CFSR workgroup</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet or hold conference call at least once per quarter - Review and provide input, as appropriate, in the development of the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP, CIP Strategic Plan 	<p>Workgroup made up on CIP staff and child welfare agency staff to confer, evaluate, and inform the development and execution of the Department’s Child and Family State Plan, Annual Progress and Services report, Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan, and Court Improvement Program’s Strategic Plan.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The E.D. and A.D. met on 2/9/17 with DFPS and the Administration of Children and Families to discuss the results of the 2016 Child and Family Services Review and resulting Program Improvement Plan.</p> <p>The CC provided input to the draft PIP on March 28, 2017. The CC agreed to work with DFPS to survey judges regarding the practice of pleading in the alternative, and to expand the online notice and engagement service for CPC courts.</p>
<p>VI. Goal: Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.</p>	

<p>VI.A. Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training resources for judges and attorneys to ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.</p>	
<p>VI.A.1. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate at least one judicial conference.</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with TCJ to design curriculum and agenda for conferences - Determine budget, number of attendees - Conduct periodic planning calls, including creation of workgroup to plan agenda - Determine attendee criteria - Coordinate with OCA about inclusion of Child Protection Court staff, space requirements, and agenda development. - Identify topics and speakers - Develop program agenda - Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend - Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback - Evaluate conference planning process, the actual event, and participant feedback - Use feedback into improve future conference planning, as appropriate 	<p>The CC provides specialized judicial education and training opportunities for active, retired and former Texas appellate, district and county court at law judges, as well as associate judges and court personnel through its grant with the TCJ. Each year TCJ plans at least one child welfare judicial conference. As in years past, the CC and TCJ will conduct pre- and post-conference evaluations as part of CQI.</p> <p>Also, in January 2017, the CC will sponsor a half-day track at the annual Family Justice Conference. Last year, approximately 100 judges attended the Commission-sponsored track. The schedule for 2017 will include a sessions on CPS legal representation to help highlight the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys and the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do. Other topics include how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding for legal representation, the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>CC Staff are regularly meeting with TCJ and the CWJC Planning Committee to prepare for the upcoming Child Welfare Judges Conference, which will be held on November 13-15, 2017, at Hyatt Lost Pines in Bastrop.</p>
<p>VI.A.2. Strategy: Provide judicial scholarships to state and national conferences and training events.</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine budget, number of attendees - Determine attendee criteria - Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend 	<p>The CC, through its grant to TCJ, will provide scholarships to 20-25 judges to attend the 2017 annual NCJFCJ conference in Washington D.C. As with previous NCJFCJ conferences, criteria will be established for the scholarships. The application process for scholarships to the conference will open in March/April 2017. All judges attending the conference on CC scholarship are asked to attend the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and to participate in pre- and post-conference surveys/evaluations.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback - Evaluate scholarship planning process, and participant feedback - Incorporate feedback into subsequent year's planning, as appropriate 	<p>Pre- and post-conference evaluations are reviewed and shared with TCJ and incorporated into subsequent years' planning, funding, and content development.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The next NCJFCJ Annual Conference will be held on July 16-20 In Washington, DC. E.D. plans to attend. The CC will offer a limited number of scholarships.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.3. Strategy: Partner with organizations or independently produce attorney training content and provide scholarships and financial support to attorneys to attend national and state conferences and training events.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>State Bar of Texas (SBOT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with SBOT to develop one day of MCLE content on CPS-related topics for live taping and subsequent archiving in the online CPS classroom - Identify dates, content, speakers for the one-day event - Publicize CLE on CC website and through other methods such as JIR and Attorney Blasts, at Commission meetings, and other events - Provide scholarships based on financial need to attorneys in order to access the SBOT online classroom <p>ABA/Advanced Family Law/NACC and Misc. Attorney Scholarships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine which conference scholarships will be awarded in FY2017, criteria for award, and amount of scholarship - Market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities through the Attorney Blast / Resource Letter system - Determine budget, number of attendees - Determine attendee criteria - Approve attendee list to ensure attorneys with the greatest need and interest attend - Create application process, evaluate each scholarship event and process and makes changes, as appropriate - Award scholarships pursuant to defined process, and collect evaluation data from attendees for increases in knowledge and other feedback - Amend scholarship process, as necessary, and make recommendations regarding the 2017 funding 	<p>In partnership with the State Bar, the CC makes several online courses available to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys, including the one-day Child Abuse and Neglect track from its annual Advanced Family Law conference. Also, once each year the CC works with SBOT to webcast a day-long, 6 MCLE hours' worth of training for attorneys who represent children, parents, and the state of Texas in CPS proceedings. The SBOT's online classroom of CPS-related webinars is available at a reduced rate to attorneys representing children and parents, and there are scholarships available through the Commission and through the Bar for attorneys who represent the State of Texas and need financial assistance to access this online training.</p> <p>The CC also administers three different attorney scholarship opportunities: (1) The State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop; (2) The bi-annual ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference held in Washington D.C.; and (3) the NACC Annual Conference.</p> <p>For all scholarships, the CC determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained, new practices attendees plan to implement and/or a current practice they plan to change. The surveys also inquire about additional topics of interest to help inform planning for future conferences.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p>

Regarding webcasts: CC Staff is working with SBOT and with speakers to produce two live, statewide webcasts this summer with a total of 18 speakers to produce and tape 7.5 total hours of MCLE content at the State Bar studio. On July 24th, 2017, the CC's E.D. and Judge Dean Rucker will present a 1.5 hour MCLE entitled "Child Protection Update: 85th Legislative Session." On August 29th, 2017, the CC's Trial Skills Faculty along with Justice Michael Massengale, Chair of the CC's Training Committee, will present 6 hours of MCLE, entitled "Trial Skills in the CPS Case: Litigation Tips for All Practitioners." Publicity for these webcasts will be coordinated across the SBOT and the CC and will be sent via JIR and ARL. Some or all of the content of these webcasts and archived webinars may be considered in some jurisdictions to satisfy the educational requirements for court-appointed attorneys under Texas Family Code Sections 107.004 and 107.0131. Following the live broadcast, the content of the webcasts will be archived and maintained on the Texas Bar CLE's online classroom and will be available for viewing at a discount to court-appointed attorneys.

Regarding scholarships: The Child Abuse and Neglect Track 1-Day CLE within the Annual Advanced Family Law Course live MCLE will be presented on August 9, 2017 in San Antonio, Texas. Subsequent video replays will be held in Houston on Friday, September 22nd; Dallas on Friday, September 29th; and South Padre Island on Friday, October 13th, 2017. CC will award up to 100 scholarships to qualified attorneys from across the state to attend the live CLE or the video replays. CC Staff will attend as well. The scholarship application period has begun all 100 scholarships are expected to be awarded. CC requires pre- and post-event surveys of awardees to track gains in knowledge as part of the awards process and we will share the results of these following the final video replay in the fall.

The NACC Annual Conference will be held August 10-12, 2017 in New Orleans. Due to budget constraints, the CC will not be offering general scholarships; however, a CC Staff member will attend on behalf of the CC. The NACC's 2018 conference dates are August 22-24, 2018 in San Antonio, and the CC will reach out to the NACC to collaborate wherever possible on training Texas attorneys. The CC anticipates offering scholarships to this 2018 Conference to increase the number of Texas attorneys in attendance.

The ABA biannual conferences for Parent Attorneys and Child Attorneys was held April 25-26 and April 27-28, respectively, in Tyson's Corner, VA. CC staff attended and the CC awarded scholarships to two attorneys who have served the CC in various capacities and who will bring the conference content to their jurisdictions and to bear in their

	ongoing engagement with the CC. Due to budget constraints, the CC did not offer general scholarships for these conferences.
<i>VI.A.4. Strategy: Reimburse exam and recertification fees for attorneys and judges who pass the NACC CWLS exam or qualify for recertification.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CC will enter into a grant agreement with NACC to provide reimbursement - NACC will collect the \$300.00 application or \$350.00 examination fee from the applicant - NACC will administer the exam and report to the CC a list of Texas examinees who have passed the certification exam - CC will reimburse NACC funds on a first-come, first-serve basis to applicants that pass the exam through the end of the grant period - NACC will provide the names of the Texas attorneys and judges who are awarded certification or recertified and the total number of Texas attorneys and judges who applied to be certified during the calendar year - NACC will share any information or feedback it receives or solicits about the quality, subject matter, and process of giving the exam - NACC will also provide the passage rate of Texas applicants 	<p>The CC offers 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.</p> <p>Additionally, assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking recertification of their CWLS every five years, which is reimbursed at \$190. Currently, there are 38 Texas CWLS.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Commission staff is currently working with NACC to complete the FY17 grant application.</p>
<i>VI.A.5. Strategy: Support regional and local training events throughout the state, as needed and upon request.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with local sponsor/convenor on the conference agenda, audience, budget, marketing, and evaluation - Help ensure notice of the event to judges and attorneys - Ensure the sponsor applies for CLE, if appropriate - Analyze survey results from evaluations distributed by the organizers - Conduct CQI of the process and training content 	<p>There are no activities planned at this time. In the past, the CC has funded the Harris County Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe Conference.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>No request has been made by KITS for assistance with funding the conference. The 2017 KITS Conference will be held in Houston, June 22-23, 2017.</p>
<i>VI.A.6. Strategy: Develop and support Trauma Informed Care and Practice training for attorneys representing children and families in CPS cases.</i>	Progress Report

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support efforts to identify and survey trauma knowledge, training available, training accessed, and results or impact of training - Identify training needs for judges and attorneys and develop and promote training and tools for trauma-informed care - Sponsor and support additional training events for stakeholders with particular focus on attorneys ad litem - Collaborate with interested partners on training content, speakers, budget, marketing and evaluation - Provide notice of any training developed to judges and attorneys - Analyze any survey results obtained - Conduct CQI of the process and training content - 	<p>CASA collaborated throughout much of FY2016 with the CC to develop a trauma training for attorneys. Also, the Annual Texas CASA conference on November 3-5, 2016 was developed to include a 3-hour trauma institute. CASA will use a portion of its CIP funds for attorney scholarships to enable more attorneys to attend the event. Judges can attend the event at no charge.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Texas CASA will continue focusing on trauma-informed training in FY17 with the following goals: (1) Provide a CLE-approved training at the 2017 Texas CASA annual Conference through an all-day institute and other workshop sessions for attorneys, judges, guardian ad litem and CASA advocates. The conference will be held in Galveston, Texas on October 19-21, 2017. (2) Create an online Learning Management System (LMS) training on the Texas CASA website for attorneys, judges, guardian ad litem and CASA advocates that furthers an understanding of trauma and a trauma-informed approach for working with children and their families that supports enhanced child well-being and permanency. (3) Continue evaluation of training impacts and collaborative engagement in promoting a trauma informed system of care.</p>
<p>VI.A.7. Strategy: Help sponsor the DFPS Regional Attorney Training.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with DFPS on the budget, location and event evaluation - Provide notice to judges of the DFPS training event, if appropriate - Analyze any survey results obtained by the organizer - Conduct CQI of the supporting role and process used in deploying the training 	<p>With the CC’s help, DFPS has been able to hold regular, annual regional attorney training events for its approximately 100 attorneys and staff who provide legal representation to the State of Texas.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>No activity to report at this time. The CC expects that DFPS will be in contact in the near future regarding planning and funding for this event.</p>
<p>VI.A.8. Strategy: Host two Trial Skills Training (TST) events each fiscal year.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p>	<p>TST is an 18.75 MCLE hour, hands-on training designed to improve the litigation skills of child welfare law attorneys in order to raise the caliber of legal services to children</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convene two, 3-day TST events that include lectures, demonstrations, and practice sessions with live witnesses - Include hands-on practice of trial skills with the assistance of professional, live witnesses, videography, and coaching by trained faculty - Allow faculty review of individual attorney's filmed practice session for additional feedback - Evaluate each TST event - Edit and update TST curriculum and materials, as necessary 	<p>and families in child protection cases. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. It provides parent, child, and state attorneys litigation exercises in the CPS context, including lectures and demonstrations from trained faculty comprised of senior attorneys and judges, followed by personal critiques and coaching. Caseworkers, Pediatricians, and a Parent Therapist serve as live witnesses.</p> <p>Materials are updated and new faculty is recruited and trained with each event. Extensive internal and external CQI is involved with each event. The Children's Justice Act covers the cost of participants who represent the state in CPS proceedings.</p> <p>To measure long-term effectiveness and impact, judicial evaluations of the TST graduates was developed.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>The CC's eighth Trial Skills Training was held on May 8-10 2017, with a revised curriculum and in a new venue (Embassy Suites in San Marcos). Out of 79 applicants, 21 less experienced attorneys from across the state were selected to be trained, along with two new faculty members, bringing the total number of TST Faculty to 19.</p> <p>Regarding funding: December 2016's TST came in under budget, in part due to the changes implemented by CC and the generous financial support from the CJA Task Force which partners with the CC to cover the cost of training prosecutors at the TST. May's TST venue was less expensive than prior venues. Also, Instead of a second TST, CC staff is planning 6 hours of MCLE content on Trial Skills in CPS Cases which will be presented by TST faculty and taped live in the SBOT studio on August 29, 2017. (Please see the above update for more details.) Finally, TST faculty are being encouraged to use their earned credits towards MCLE programs to further their own training and thereby benefit the TST program.</p> <p>Regarding CQI: In order to measure the effectiveness and long-term impact of TST, Judge Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence, will conduct a judicial evaluation of the May TST graduates. Judges for the 21 trainees completed a pre-TST survey and will complete a 6-month post-TST survey about the students' courtroom skills to see how they may have changed their practices based on the skills they learned at TST.</p>
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VII. Goal: Reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.	
VII.A. Objective: Support efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in the Texas child welfare system so that children of color do not experience disparate effects and outcomes that prolong their stay in foster care.	
<i>VII.A.1. Strategy: Educate judges and consider data in helping address disproportionality and disparities among children and families involved in child protection cases.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and promote judicial and attorney training on how to apply training and tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias - Partner with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups, including one Poverty Simulation Workshop - Help connect judges and lawyers to data about their communities and to experts who can help develop disproportionality efforts at the local level - Liaise with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities - Staff and monitor the Judicial Workgroup Addressing Disproportionality Workgroup (JWD) including conducting quarterly strategy meetings with the JWD Co-Chairs - Include information about Disproportionality and bias in the CC CPS Judicial Bench Book 	<p>The CC’s disproportionality and disparities work is overseen by its Judicial Workgroup to Address Disproportionality (JWD), which works on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and promoting judicial and attorney training on how to apply tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias - Partnering with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups - Helping connect judges and lawyers to their communities to develop disproportionality efforts at the local level - Liaising with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities - Staffing JWD meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product - Updating the CPS judicial Bench Book. <p>In 2016, the CC added to the CPS Bench Book bench card three questions related to making culturally aware decisions during child welfare hearings.</p> <p>For FY2017, the CC will offer to sponsor one Poverty Simulation in a jurisdiction and the JWD will meet in November under the leadership of new co-chairs Judge Cyndi Wheless from Collin County and Judge David Canales from Bexar County. Judge Wheless and Judge Canales will co-chair with Sheila Craig.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p>

	<p>The JWD was instrumental in the success of the Supreme Court's Beyond the Bench: Law, Justice and Communities Summit. A recording of the Summit and the Summit Toolkit can now be found on the Supreme Court's website. Articles about the event and the Summit content are currently being published in the Texas Bar Journal, the newsletter of the NCSC, and submitted to others.</p> <p>The JWD will hold a call-in meeting this summer and an in-person meeting in November 2017 at the Child Welfare Judicial Conference.</p>
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VIII. Goal: Recognize and respect tribal sovereignty, protect the best interests of Native American children and promote stability of Native American children and families.	
VIII.A. Objective: Establish, strengthen and support meaningful and respectful relationships with tribal nations and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act so that Indian children and families experience equitable and respectful treatment in keeping with their customs and beliefs.	
<i>VIII.A.1. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance - Work with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of new Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines - Continue to support the role of Peacemaker or Tribal Judge as Children's Commission member - Staff and monitor the Tribal/State Workgroup meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product for FY2017, including monthly strategy meetings with tribal partners and DFPS - Partner with DFPS to support the biannual tribal/state collaborative meetings - Assist with any CIP grant application, as requested and appropriate - Further connections with Alabama-Coushatta, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, and Kickapoo tribes through the DFPS tribal/state meetings, Annual Conference of the Native American Section of the State Bar, and other networking opportunities - Continue to collaborate with the National Center for State Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group 	<p>The Tribal/State Collaborative Workgroup meets monthly via conference call continue to develop new trainings to educate judges and attorneys about amendments to the Texas Family Code that requires judges to ask all parties present at each Adversary, Status, and Permanency 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.</p> <p>CC staff is currently participating in a national consortium of state leaders who work with tribes through their Court Improvement Programs.</p> <p>5/12/17 Update:</p> <p>Judge Lawrence Lujan shared Quick Reference Sheets developed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which were published in a Jurist in Residence Letter and an Attorney Resource Letter. These quick reference tools will assist the user with the most important parts of the ICWA as defined by the new Federal Regulations and Guidelines.</p> <p>On May 31st, the State/Tribal Collaborative will meet at the home of the Alabama-Coushatta in Livingston, Texas. Tanya Rollins of DFPS is organizing this meeting with former Commissioner Chairperson Jo Ann Battise.</p>

<p>IX. Oversee and administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, endeavor to increase funding available to the Children’s Commission and leverage funds with strategic and statewide partners.</p>	
<p>IX.A. Objective: Execute strategies of the Supreme Court Children’s Commission to help strengthen courts and the child welfare system to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and wellbeing.</p>	
<p><i>IX.A.1. Strategy: Engage in activities integral to the Children’s Commission’s functions and operations.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop annual strategic plan for Texas - Submit the required application to the Administration of Children and Families for CIP funds - Coordinate pass-through grants to sub-recipients - Oversee project management of short and long-term projects and initiatives - Publish reports, newsletters, judicial directives, policy and data analysis, and Commission website content - Plan and conduct quarterly Commission meetings with detailed progress reports, agendas, presentations, and budgets - Submit regular reports to the federal Administration of Children and Families and to the Supreme Court of Texas 	<p>In September, the Children’s Commission (CC) developed a five-year Strategic Plan for both the CC and the Court Improvement Program (CIP).</p> <p>In 2017, the CC will pass through grants to Texas CASA, Office of Court Administration, Texas Center for the Judiciary, Texas Legal Services Corporation, as well as grants for training events to DFPS, Harris County, State Bar of Texas, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others.</p> <p>The CC will continue to hold a Commission meeting every four months throughout each year of the five-year plan, and will continue its bi-weekly collaborative call with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders. CC Staff will continue to serve on the Public Private Partnership, Prevention Advisory Council, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Texas Reach, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners.</p> <p>The CC will publish an updated Report to Commission in advance of each Commission meeting and will continue to publish JIR and ARL letters, project reports, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and follow up reports for all short-term and long-term projects.</p> <p>CC will participate in quarterly calls with ACF, and will conduct quarterly calls with DFPS to discuss the Child and Family State Plan (CFSP), Annual Progress Services Report (APSR), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), related Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and the CIP Strategic Plan.</p> <p>CC will confer regularly with national organizations and other CIPs, and will submit annual reports to the ACF and to the Supreme Court of Texas.</p>

5/12/17 Update:

The CC adopted the 2017-2021 strategic plan on February 10, 2017. Staff has held bi-weekly calls and has conducted numerous committee and subcommittee meetings between February 10 and May 12th. Also, see JIR and ARL categories regarding publications issued.

