



## TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

COMMISSIONER

H. L. Whitman, Jr.

### Clergy in the Court for Kids

#### Overview

The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Faith-based Division has developed Clergy in the Court for Kids. This initiative is designed to increase awareness of Clergy and faith communities to the growing needs of families that come to the attention of Child Protective Services (CPS) by attending court proceedings. With this awareness, we hope the Clergy and faith community will provide community resources to help the families regardless of their stage of service. The faith community can help – from prevention and family preservation to permanency – by finding foster/adopt families and support services.

#### Process

DFPS is partnering with judges statewide to invite Clergy and faith community members to attend court proceedings. The goal is to introduce the faith community to families in their community and provide opportunities to help these families. The judge will send a letter requesting a faith leader to attend the court proceeding. The judge will give a 10-15 minute introduction in their chamber before hearings begin, outlining the cases the faith community member can expect to see. After the hearings, the judge will debrief the faith community, along with a DFPS staff member and Court-Appointed Special Advocate, to answer questions about the process and discuss ways they can help families. We would like judges to provide this opportunity at least once a quarter.

#### Importance of Family Resources

This initiative also allows judges to learn about the breath of community resources available for the faith community to help families. DFPS wants to re-engage the judges and the faith community and replicate this initiative statewide. We know faith community members take action when they are aware of community needs. Several faith leaders have created recovery-oriented programs and parenting classes, which families have attended as part of their CPS service plan requirement. We also are hopeful the faith community will continue to assist families beyond their time in the child welfare system. This will give families much-needed support and mentorship to decrease chances of being involved with CPS and other systems in the future.

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