Children's Commission

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

February 21, 2020

Meeting Notebook

State Bar of Texas

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701

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

February 21, 2020
Meeting Notebook

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State Bar of Texas
Austin, Texas
February 21, 2020
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Agenda

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

First Order of Business – The Honorable Eva Guzman
- Adopt Minutes from September 27, 2019, Tab 2

9:45 Remarks by Dr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau and Mr. David Kelly, Special Assistant, Office of the Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau

10:15 Executive Director Report and Committee Updates – Children's Commission Staff

10:50 Presentation on Family Reunification by Ms. Karla Baker, Parent Collaboration Group and Ms. Danna Mayhall, Attorney at Law

11:10 Break

11:30 Commissioner Updates

12:15 Lunch

12:45 Commissioner Updates, continued

1:30 Presentation by Félix Herrera, Office of the Consulate General of Mexico, Austin

1:45 Collaborative Council Member Input

2:00 DFPS / CPS Update

2:15 Office of Court Administration Update

2:30 Jurist in Residence Report

2:45 New Business / Adjourn

Meeting Schedule: May 22, 2020, State Bar of Texas
September 18, 2020, Supreme Court of Texas

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
Hon. Piper McCraw, Vice Chair
Col. Sonya Batchelor
Corey Benbow
Paula Bibbs-Samuels
Kristene Blackstone
Dr. Gary Blau
Hon. Susan Brown
Hon. Darlene Byrne
Hon. Gary Coley
Hon. Julie Countiss
Sheila Sturgis Craig
Elizabeth Farley
Hon. Randall Hufstetler
Rep. Stephanie Klick
Hon. Selina Mireles
Katie Olse
Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness
Cindy Patrick
Hon. Frank Rynd
Hon. Michael Schneider
Hon. Randy Shelton
Luanne Southern
Vicki Spriggs
Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE
Hon. Eva Guzman, *Chair*
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, *Chair Emeritus*
Hon. Piper McCraw *Vice Chair*
Hon. Rob Hofmann
Hon. Dean Rucker
Hon. Michael Schneider

Staff:
Tina Amberboy
Tiffany Edwards

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
Hon. Rob Hofmann, *Chair*
Dr. Gary Blau
Hon. Julie Countiss
Sarah Crockett
Andy Homer
Mary Christine Reed
Carolyne Rodriguez
Tanya Rollins
Hon. Peter Sakai
Hon. Ian Spechler

Staff:
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz
Jocelyn Fowler
Tiffany Edwards
Chelsea Martinez

LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS
Hon. Dean Rucker, *Chair*
Mark Briggs
Hon. Anne Darring
Lori Duke
Hon. Angela Ellis
Anna Saldaña Ford
Hon. Delia Gonzales
Monique Gonzalez
Hon. Randall Hufstetler
Crystal Leff-Piñon
Hon. Thomas Stuckey
Janet VanderZanden

Staff:
Dylan Moench
Chelsea Martinez

DATA
Hon. Michael Schneider, *Chair*
Jesse Booher
Dr. Jane Burstain
Katie Elseth
Dr. Monica Faulkner
Hon. Delia Gonzales
Elizabeth Kromrei
Hon. Robin Sage
Vicki Spriggs
Hon. Carlos Villalon

Staff:
Dylan Moench
Chelsea Martinez

OCA Advisory:
Darrell Childers
Anissa Johnson
Casey Kennedy
David Slayton
Charlotte Velasco

TRAINING
Hon. Piper McCraw, *Chair*
Hon. Mark Atkinson
Tymothy Belseth
Denise Campbell
Cathy Cockerham
Teal de la Garza
Barbara Elias-Perciful
Debra Emerson
Hon. Richard Garcia
Tracy Harting
Pam Kemp
Tanya Rollins
Fairy Davenport Rutland
Elizabeth Watkins

Staff:
Milbrey Raney
Andrea Vicencio

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Tymothy Belseth
M. Lynn Chamberlin
Irene Clements
Bill Connolly
Sarah Crockett
De Shaun Ealoms
Barbara Elias-Perciful
Debra Emerson
Mike Foster
Will Francis
Sadie Funk
Teal de la Garza
Christine Gendron
Sandra Hachem
David Halpern
Lisa Harst
Félix Herrera
Alex Hunt
Bruce Kendrick
Knox Kimberly
Norman Ladd
Tracy Levins
Gabriella McDonald
Kate Murphy
Judy Powell
Mary Christine Reed
Carolyne Rodriguez
Tanya Rollins
Johana Scot
Janet Sharkis
Andrea Sparks
Hon. Ian Spechler
Jeanne Stamp
Gloria Terry
Kenneth Thompson

STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director
Jamie Bernstein, Assistant Director
Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Jocelyn Fowler, Staff Attorney
Monica Mahoney, Program Specialist
Chelsea Martinez, Executive Assistant
Dylan Moench, Staff Attorney
Patrick Passmore, Grant Administrator
Milbrey Raney, Training Director
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist
Hon. Michael Massengale, Senior Judicial Advisor
Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Jurist in Residence
Office of Court Administration

Last Updated: February 13, 2020

INSERT - TAB 2

PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 27, 2019
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
State Bar of Texas
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. Piper McCraw, Judge, 469th Judicial District Court, McKinney	✓	
Col. Sonya Batchelor, General Counsel, Texas Military Department, Austin	✓	
Corey Benbow, Chief Executive Officer, The Tax Box, Austin		✓
Erin Bennett, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Paula Bibbs-Samuels, Parent Representative, Slaton	✓	
Kristene Blackstone, Associate Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Hon. Susan Brown, Presiding Judge, 11th Administrative Judicial Region, Houston	✓	
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin	✓	
Hon. Gary Coley, Judge, 74th District Court, Waco	✓	
Hon. Julie Countiss, Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Sheila Craig, Director, Substance Use Disorder Services, Policy, Prevention, and Planning, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin		✓
Hon. Randall Hufstetler, Judge, 300th District Court, Brazoria	✓	
Dr. Andrew Keller, President & CEO, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas		✓
Hon. Stephanie Klick, District 91, Texas House of Representatives, North Richland Hills	✓	
Hon. Selina Mireles, Associate Judge, 4th and 5th Administrative Regions Child Protection, Laredo	✓	
Katie Olse (by Proxy Katie Elseth), Executive Director, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness, Justice, Fifth District Court of Appeals, Dallas	✓	
Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer, Meadows Foundation, Dallas		✓
Hon. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese Galveston-Houston, Houston	✓	
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Hon. Michael Schneider, former Judge, 315th District Court, Houston	✓	
Hon. Randy Shelton, Judge, 279th Civil District Court, Beaumont	✓	
Luanne Southern, Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin		✓
Vicki Spriggs, (by Proxy Andy Homer) Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin	✓	
Hon. Carlos Villalon, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg	✓	
Hon. Royce West, (by Proxy Graham Keever) Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
Senior Judicial Advisor		
Hon. Michael Massengale, former Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	

Collaborative Council	Attended	Did Not Attend
Tymothy Belseth, Research Coordinator, Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing, The University of Texas, Austin	✓	
M. Lynn Chamberlin, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston		✓
Irene Clements, President, National Foster Family Association, and Consultant, Butterfly Marketing, L.L.C., Pflugerville		✓
William B. Connolly, Attorney, Connolly & Shireman, L.L.P., Houston		✓
Sarah Crockett, Public Policy Coordinator, Texas CASA, Austin	✓	
De Shaun Ealoms, Parent Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Lawyers for Children, Dallas		✓
Debra Emerson, CPS Director of Youth Transitional Living Services, Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Mike Foster, Administrator, Central Texas Table of Grace, Austin	✓	
Will Francis, Government Relations Director, National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter, Austin	✓	
Sadie Funk, Executive Director, Texas Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Austin		✓
Teal de la Garza, Attorney at Law, Bill De La Garza & Associates, P.C., Houston		✓
Christine Gendron, Executive Director, Texas Network of Youth Services, Austin		✓
Sandra Hachem, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston	✓	
David Halpern, Director, Promise Mentor Program, Seedling Foundation, Austin		✓
Lisa Harst, Strategic Partnerships Associate, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin		✓
Félix Herrera, Secretary of Relations, Consul for Protection and Legal Affairs, Austin		✓
Alex Hunt, Attorney, Hunt Law Firm, Katy		✓
Bruce Kendrick, Director of Outreach, Embrace Texas, McKinney		✓
Knox Kimberly, Vice President for Advocacy and Education, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Austin		✓
Tracy Levins, State Development Specialist, Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health, The University of Texas, Austin		✓
Gabriella McDonald, Pro Bono and New Projects Director, Texas Appleseed, Austin	✓	
Pamela McPeters, Director of Public Policy, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Austin		✓
Kate Murphy, Senior Policy Associate, Texans Care for Children, Austin	✓	
Judy Powell, Communications Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Mary Christine Reed, Director, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin	✓	
Carolyne Rodriguez, Independent Consultant, Austin	✓	
Tanya Rollins, State Disproportionality Manager, Department of Family and Protective Services, 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 Team Director, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Hon. Ian Spechler, State Office of Administrative Hearings, Austin		✓
Jeanne Stamp, Texas Homeless Education Network, Austin		✓
Gloria Terry, Coalition President, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin	✓	
Kenneth Thompson, Fatherhood Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓

Attending Committee Members and Guests

Barbara Ball, Senior Research Associate, University of Texas TX Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing, Austin

Justice Jane Bland, Supreme Court or Texas, Austin

Katie Elseth, Continuous Quality Improvement Analyst, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin

Hon. Delia Gonzales, Associate Judge, Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court, Dallas

Barbara Grimmer, CPS Policy Coordinator, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin

Graham Keever, Legislative Director, Texas Senate, Office of Hon. Royce West, Austin

Andrew Homer, Director of Public Affairs, Texas CASA, Austin

Geron Landon, Intern, Texas CASA, Austin

Joey Orduna Hastings, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Reno, Nevada

Wanda Peña, Senior Director, Casey Family Programs, San Antonio

Crystal Leff-Pinon, Managing Attorney, The Family Helpline, Austin

Lulu Portillo, Paralegal/Youth Specialist, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Austin

Barbara Schafer, Children's Court Administrator, 225th District Court, San Antonio

Maggie Trungale, Judicial Intern, 126th District Court, Austin

Elizabeth Watkins, Family Justice Director, Williamson County Attorney's Office, Williamson County

Trevor Woodruff, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin

Attending Staff

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Children's Commission

Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission

Jamie Bernstein, Assistant Director, Children's Commission

Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission

Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant, Children's Commission

Jocelyn Fowler, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission

Anissa Johnson, Program Specialist, Office of Court Administration

Monica Mahoney, Program Specialist, 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

Milbrey Raney, Training Director, Children's Commission

Andrea Vicencio, Executive Assistant, Children's Commission

Charlotte Velasco, Project Manager – Information Services, Office of Court Administration

Hon. Dean Rucker, Presiding Judge, Seventh Administrative Judicial Region, Jurist in Residence, Midland

Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452nd District Court, Jurist in Residence, Mason

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Justice Eva Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and welcomed Commissioners and guests to the final Commission meeting of 2019.

Justice Guzman introduced Justice Bland who was recently appointed to the Supreme Court and who previously served on the First Court of Appeals in Houston.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed special guest Ms. Joey Orduna Hastings, Chief Executive Officer of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, an organization that serves 30,000 professionals nationwide.

Commissioner Membership Changes
Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 1 of the Commission Notebook and introduced three new members of the Commission: Justice Robbie Partida-Kipness, justice on the Fifth District Court of Appeals as of November 2018; Judge Randy Shelton, judge of the 279th District Court in Beaumont, Texas; and Ms. Katie Olse, Chief Executive Officer of the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services.

Justice Guzman also announced the departure of two commissioners: Judge Peter Sakai, judge of the 225th District Court in San Antonio, and Judge Carlos Villalon, associate judge of the Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West. Justice Guzman invited both judges to stay involved with the Children's Commission in a different capacity.

Committee Membership Changes
No committee member changes were reported.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes
Justice Guzman announced Collaborative Council changes and stated that Susan McDowell, Judge Scott McCown, Mara Friesen, Richard Lavallo, Jon Olson, Kelly Kravitz, Ashley Harris, and Helen Gaebler all transitioned off the Collaborative Council. No new members were added to the Collaborative Council. Justice Guzman asked those attending for recommendations to fill vacancies.

Staff Member Changes
The Children's Commission added a new staff attorney, Ms. Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, who most recently was employed as a prosecutor handling the CPS docket in Caldwell County.

Adoption of May 31, 2019 Meeting Minutes
Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2 of the Meeting Notebook and noted that members were provided the opportunity to review the May 31, 2019 minutes prior to the meeting. Justice Guzman asked if there were any corrections, and none were noted.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to adopt the meeting minutes of the May 31, 2019 meeting. A motion was made to adopt the minutes by Judge Darlene Byrne and seconded by Judge Piper McCraw. The minutes were adopted unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT
Ms. Tina Amberboy briefly updated the Commission Members on a National Judicial Leadership Summit in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Judge Dean Rucker, Judge Rob Hofmann, Ms. Jamie Bernstein, Ms. Kristene Blackstone, Mr. Jeffrey Tsunekawa, and Ms. Teal de la Garza joined Ms. Amberboy to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Court Improvement Program, which funds the Children's Commission.

Ms. Amberboy also updated the Commission on the new suggested committee structure, noting that this change is authorized by Paragraph 9 of the 2007 Supreme Court Order establishing the Children's Commission. Paragraph 9 states that the Commission can disband or form new committees as the Commission deems appropriate. Ms. Amberboy proposed disbanding the Basic Committee, moving the

Foster Care and Education Committee, and creating two new committees for a total of four standing committees, and one ad hoc, as follows:

- Systems Improvement - Staff: Jocelyn Fowler, Renee Castillo-De La Cruz
- Legal Policy and Practice - Staff: Dylan Moench
- Data - Staff: Dylan Moench
- Training - Staff: Milbrey Raney
- Dual Status Task Force (ad hoc) - Staff: Jamie Bernstein

Ms. Amberboy continued to report to the Commission about upcoming projects slated for the 2020 fiscal year, referring to the Report to the Commission under Tab 3 as well as a review of the operating budget under Tab 4 of the notebook. Ms. Amberboy's PowerPoint presentation can be found here: http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/commission-meetings/meeting-notebooks-and-reports/.

ACTION: Justice Guzman announced a vote on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2020 as described under Tab 4 to approve and fund the slate of projects and associated expenses for the 2020 budget. A motion was made by Judge Carlos Villalon to adopt the budget; the motion was seconded by Judge Darlene Byrne. With a quorum present, Commission members voted to approve and adopt the fiscal year 2020 budget and projects unanimously.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Darlene Byrne of Austin announced the Travis County Collaborative Council meeting took place October 17, 2019 at Safe Alliance and featured speakers from the Texas Council on Family Violence.

Also, Judge Byrne reported that she recently attended a statewide meeting of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) implementation sites in San Antonio, and concluded her report with an announcement that she would be joining Ms. Jocelyn Fowler at the Alabama Coushatta Indian Child Welfare meeting November 1, 2019 to present on domestic violence and how it relates to Native American youth and families.

Hon. Selina Mireles of Laredo reported a fifth annual foster care graduation took place for students transitioning from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school graduates. This event was held at the courthouse and gave student participants the opportunity to be recognized for their accomplishments.

Judge Mireles also reported that during the summer her drug court transitioned from meeting twice per month to meeting just one time per month. As part of her drug court, children, parents and case workers can participate in activities outside the courtroom, including shopping at HEB with fake money to show the children how to shop for their food and make good purchasing decisions. Another activity was a fitness work out involving CPS case workers and parents to provide additional opportunities for interaction outside of the CPS environment and court.

Hon. Frank Rynd from Houston reported that he is working with Texas CASA on a project to collaborate with more faith-based communities with the goal of recruiting CASA volunteers from the faith community.

Judge Rynd reported that Judge Sakai and Judge Bonnie Hellums (both former Children's Commissioners) have also been assisting in these efforts by participating in several committees.

Hon. Julie Countiss from Houston shared that there are 10 new appellate justices in Houston and that many of their cases are parental termination cases. Justice Countiss stated that she is appreciative of her connection with the Children's Commission as it allows her to hear about what is happening in other jurisdictions around the state. Justice Countiss reported she is gratified that the Children's Commission places such emphasis on improving legal representation for parents and children.

Hon. Judge Randy Shelton from Beaumont requested assistance with prom dresses for the upcoming prom season due to floods in his area. The Rainbow Room, along with over 15 foster family and case worker's homes, was flooded. Judge Shelton also reported that for the first time, a child that is aging out of foster care that had the opportunity to participate in the local Debutant ball. Judge Shelton announced that the local women's shelter was also affected by the flooding and that 50-60 women and children were displaced.

Ms. Katie Elseth proxy for Ms. Katie Olse from Austin reported the Texas Child Care Administrator's Conference took place September 30th in San Antonio with over 1,000 participants. Ms. Tina Amberboy and Judge Sakai presented together on Normalcy for Children and Youth in Foster Care.

Ms. Elseth also reported about the ongoing partnership with Casey Family Programs and the Department of Family and Protective Services to evaluate readiness for the Family First Prevention Services Act. Ms. Elseth announced that as the initiative moves forward, the judicial community will be invited to help. She expressed that she was looking forward to presenting on data trends and analysis at the Child Welfare Judges Conference taking place in October.

Hon. Susan Brown of Houston reported that seven of the nine CPC courts authorized by the 86th Legislature are up and running. Also, a new judge hired to handle cases in the 11th region now covers three of her six counties. Judge Charles Griffin has been hired to handle dockets in Harris County and team with Brazoria County to start a children's court.

Judge Brown reported that she is also hiring judges for counties that do not have a Child Protection Court. Also, that she recently evaluated her IV-D child support and child protection court judges. She intends to promote trauma training among the judges in her region and would like to also create a training for attorneys practicing in the courts for which she is the Presiding Judge.

Mr. Graham Keever proxy for Senator Royce West reported an ad litem bill was filed for children to have legal representation while they are in care, however it did not get a hearing. Senate Bill 355, which Representative Klick's office assisted with, was passed. The Fatherhood Task Force, Bill 1130, did not pass, nor did the PEI Bill.

Hon. Randall Hufstetler of Brazoria County shared his appreciation of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals with regard to child welfare and family law issues, comparing parental termination cases to death

penalty cases, and stated he would like to see more qualified attorneys taking parental termination cases. Judge Hufstetler encouraged all attorneys to take The National Family Law Trial Institute.

Judge Hufstetler announced the creation of a domestic violence court in his region, after seeing the same clients in his CPS courts were also dealing with family violence as well.

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels of Slaton reminded meeting attendees that the Statewide Parent Collaboration Group still meets monthly. With the help of Casey Family Programs, they are working on a plan to move forward as a group, professionally. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels reported the workgroup also has a landing page on the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services website where meeting dates in the different regions are posted. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also reported that parents from the workgroup speak to new hires for CPS. This allows new case workers to ask questions of parents that have experienced CPS and the proceedings.

Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also shared information for two upcoming conferences she and the Parent Collaboration Group would participate: The Dare to Change Conference on October 23, 2019, in El Paso and Partners in Prevention Conference on November 5-7, 2019.

Col. Sonya Batchelor from Austin reported to the Commission that she has been in communication with judges across the State of Texas and is trying to figure out how to best assist in the child welfare realm. Ms. Batchelor is open to anyone with ideas on best collaborations going forward. Col. Batchelor attended the second annual Summit of Military Connected Families at Fort Knox in September 2019.

Justice Michael Massengale from Houston identified a theme from the Commission's September report related to quality representation for children and parents and advised attorneys to attend the Trial Skills Training (TST) held annually by the Children's Commission noting that TST participants learn how to advocate for their clients, among other skills. Justice Massengale encouraged trial court judges to hold attorneys in their respective courts accountable, as they are the ones who appoint them.

Hon. Gary Coley from Waco shared an update about the Baylor Trial Advocacy Clinic which allows third year law students who hold a third-year bar card to represent children in juvenile detention at their initial detention hearing, giving them an opportunity to be in a courtroom setting for the first time. From September 1 to August 31, there were 115 children represented by the Trial Advocacy Clinic attorneys.

Judge Coley also updated the Commission about the human trafficking program in his county, Unbound, which held a training event in August. Participants from Colorado and Connecticut traveled to learn McLennan County's approach to human trafficking. Unbound received a grant for $200,000 intended to help Texas schools with preventing human trafficking.

Hon. Michael Schneider from Houston reported about The Way Home nonprofit that assists children ages 11-17 transitioning from foster care to permanent placement. They have had a 54% percent success rate at finding permanent placements for children they assist who are aging out of foster care. Judge Schneider would like to make this a statewide effort, with the help of child advocates, and/or DFPS. Judge Schneider

invited anyone interested in training for their region to take part in the three-pillar program. This program allows neighbors, former teachers, and biological families to be a part of activities and possibly match with a child in care.

Judge Schneider also reported about Houston's 9th annual CPS CLE, noting one presentation in particular called Lost in Translation, which focused on the difficulties associated with interpreting a case without a legal background. Many interpreters are unfamiliar with terms used in social work, leading to a misunderstanding of the terms and acronyms being used. Judge Schneider explained the time and complexity of legal issues, and that interpreters may not always feel comfortable asking the court to slow down. Language barriers also hinder law enforcement and DFPS from better understanding the need of parents. This CLE is scheduled for February 2020, and possibly will be added to the Child Protection Law CLE occurring in March 2020. Judge Schneider concluded his report adding that he can connect anyone interested in having Bill Connally presenting on this topic.

Hon. Carlos Villalon from the Rio Grande Valley reflected on how rapidly the past 6 years went by and his appreciation for the Commission in helping him improve his court practices. Judge Villalon spoke about Trauma Informed Care and his local requirement that attorneys who take court appointed cases attend the Empower to Connect two-day training offered by the TCU Karyn Purvis Institute.

Judge Villalon also mentioned his recent collaboration with Mr. Tym Belseth and Ms. Barbara Ball on the Texas Youth Permanency Study which partnered with University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to study case outcomes for youth who are ages 14-18 over the next five years.

Judge Villalon also attended the Statewide Collaborative of Trauma Informed Care Task Force meeting on July 26, in Austin as well as the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges conference. Judge Villalon also plans to collaborate with UTRGV to offer internships for social work students attending the university.

Judge Villalon also reported that with a grant from the Judicial Commission on Mental Health that Dr. Sandra Hansmann and Dr. Cynthia Jones, from the UTRGV School of Rehabilitation Services, collaborated with the Office of Victim's Advocacy to provide substance abuse training to local stakeholders.

Concluding his report, Judge Villalon announced the first pro bono mediation taking place in his region.

Hon. Piper McCraw of McKinney reported a new Family Law Court has been established to handle CPS cases. Of 13 courts in Collin County, only 5 hear CPS cases. Also, in July several attorneys attended a trauma-based training in her locale.

Judge McCraw also reported that she has started monthly meetings for CPS employees, CASA advocates, and other child welfare advocates in her community.

Recently, Judge McCraw introduced the Moral Reasoning Therapy (MRT) Program which uses a cognitive behavioral, peer-based approach. Participants are encouraged to analyze their choices and accept

responsibility for their actions and decisions and help each other be more accountable for future decisions. This program started with the criminal courts and is new to the CPS docket. Private donations are helping fund the course materials.

Mr. Andy Homer on behalf of Ms. Vicky Spriggs of Austin shared statistics from the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) Program, which is expanding statewide. In 2019, 31 programs served more than 48 counties, including 1,400 children and 800 families. In 2020, the program will be expanded to 10 additional counties. Mr. Homer spoke about CFE expanding to Bexar County and Panhandle and other areas of the state with the goal of being statewide by 2025. Mr. Homer reported in 2019, CASA had 11,000 volunteers statewide. Finalizing his report, Mr. Homer expressed his appreciation for the Commission and the work collaborations with Texas CASA, including education and trauma.

Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness from Dallas introduced herself to meeting attendees. Justice Partida-Kipness announced she was elected to the Fifth Court of Appeals in November 2018 and presides over six counties, including Dallas, Collin, Rockwell, Hunt, Kaufman, and Grayson. Justice Partida-Kipness expressed her interest in serving on a committee and assisting where needed.

Commissioner Certificate Presentation from Justice Guzman

Justice Guzman presented Judge Peter Sakai and Judge Carlos Villalon certificates of appreciation, on behalf of the Commission, for their dedication and service. Judge Sakai and Judge Villalon completed their terms on the Commission in November 2019.

Presentation from Judge Peter Sakai and Ms. Barbara Schafer

Hon. Peter Sakai, District Judge for Bexar County, and Ms. Barbara Schafer presented during lunch on recent developments in Bexar County with the Children's Court initiative, providing statistics and updates for the program.

Presentation from Ms. Joey Orduna Hastings

Ms. Joey Orduna Hastings of Las Vegas, Nevada is the CEO of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). Ms. Hastings spoke about the importance of collaboration with parents, human trafficking education, working with tribes, and other child welfare issues. Ms. Hastings shared statistics and partnership plans, as well as the history of NCJFCJ.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Kate Murphy of Austin reported about a new collaboration for TexansCare for Children in the Houston area. TexansCare primarily focuses on pregnant youth in foster care and on pregnancy prevention and supporting young families in care. Their efforts are supported by the Texas Network of Youth Services and the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Three core areas of this program target research, advocacy, and workforce development. With the help of the Harris County Youth Collaborative, there are also opportunities to build skills and gain certifications.

Ms. Carolyne Rodriguez of Austin, updated Commission meeting attendees on the nonprofit ChangeOne, an organization focused on children exiting foster care, started in 2012 by Ms. Courtney Jones. Teaming with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, college preparation is being provided with the assistance of private funding, including opportunities for child and family service internships at the University of Texas School of Social Work. A workshop about this will be offered at the Texas Alliance Conference in October. Ms. Rodriguez requested stakeholders to consider investing in the initiative by assisting with projects, operations, or other needs.

Ms. Rodriguez concluded her report announcing the ChangeOne Thanksgiving event on November 23, 2019 at Fiesta Gardens in Austin.

DFPS / CPS UPDATE

Mr. Trevor Woodruff proxy for Ms. Kristene Blackstone of Austin, followed up on the flooding in Beaumont. While many were affected, Mr. Woodruff reported all were assisted, with the help of Family-Based Safety Services, faith-based partnerships, and the assistance of the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS).

Mr. Woodruff reported Prevention and Early Intervention efforts and services are being offered to military families. DFPS has new Memorandums of Understanding with military bases in San Antonio, to help families better understand the process of CPS. Mr. Woodruff expressed his intent to expand those efforts to Bell County.

Mr. Woodruff updated the Commission about the federal lawsuit, stating that after two rounds of appeals, approximately 80% of the original court order was struck, and that several changes are also ongoing. Mr. Woodruff also reported that Community Based Care is going well across the state.

Concluding his report, Mr. Woodruff addressed concerns regarding children facing immigration challenges. He clarified that only children who have suffered abuse or neglect are taken into the state foster care system. The ongoing situation at the border is being monitored by DFPS.

In response to an issue raised by Judge Villalon, Mr. Woodruff addressed the issue of children not having access to organ donation lists due to their foster care status. After some investigation, DFPS concluded that each hospital's rules vary, and he has recruited Dr. Rodriguez, DFPS staff doctor, to reach out to health care providers to establish a better line of communication about this issue.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Ms. Mena Ramon of Austin, on behalf of Mr. David Slayton, provided the update for Office of Court Administration. Ms. Ramon advised that going forward updates to the Commission will be provided by Mr. Jeffrey Tsunekawa. Ms. Ramon updated the Commission about funding for the additional nine child protection courts. Ms. Ramon announced changes in judicial regions 10, as well as Dallas, North Texas, Harris County and two southern counties, and in Fort Worth.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE UPDATE

Hon. Rob Hofmann of Mason County announced that he and Ms. Jamie Bernstein presented on education in Residential Treatment Centers at the State Bar Special Education CLE, as well as at the NACC Conference in Anaheim, California.

Judge Hofmann also encouraged meeting attendees to participate in any Community Based Care efforts in their locale. He offered himself as a resource along with Judge Melissa DeGerolami or Ms. Tina Amberboy for anyone seeking additional information.

Judge Hofmann reported that he presented at the Hill Country Texas CASA 30 Year Anniversary celebration on behalf of Ms. Vicki Spriggs.

Finally, Judge Hofmann announced that he and Judge Robin Sage would be traveling to Wyoming Supreme Court to speak at their annual Judicial Conference in October.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Guzman announced the next Commission Meeting date: February 21, 2020, at the State Bar of Texas.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3

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

Report to Commission

February 21, 2020

State Bar of Texas

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701

Goal I: 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: Support statewide efforts to ensure and improve child safety.

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

Background: Family First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA) became effective on February 9, 2018. FFPSA restructures federal child welfare funding, particularly Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, which Texas uses to pay for services for children in foster care and their families. FFPSA seeks to reduce entry in foster care, limit the use of congregate care, and to increase access to substance abuse and mental health services. There are certain training provisions directly impacting the courts and Court Improvement Programs, but beyond that, FFPSA also mandates that states seeking Title IV-E funding create and provide more robust prevention services for families in the state's child welfare system. Also, with the FFPSA and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), it will be necessary for the Children's Commission to engage with stakeholders more deeply on prevention efforts. The CARA amendments to CAPTA require more focus on what are known as Plans of Safe Care, and although there is no specific court oversight of Plans of Safe Care, the judiciary is being asked to become familiar with the CARA amendments and partner with child welfare in a manner that makes existing and new Plans of Safe Care more meaningful.

02/21/20 Update: The Children's Commission is collaborating closely with DFPS on the implementation of FFPSA, as is required by the federal Administration for Children and Families. Texas has elected to delay implementation of certain provisions related the use of congregate care, which mandate that Court Improvement Programs provide training and education to judges and other legal system stakeholders on the limitations on funding for use of non-foster family home placements. The Texas CIP is collaborating with Casey Family Programs and other national workgroups on best practices for implementation of all FFPSA provisions, including the development of IV-E prevention programs, court oversight of congregate care placements, and court involvement in encouraging a primary prevention approach. Congress recently enacted the Family First Transition Act to provide $500 million in one-time, flexible transition funding to help jurisdictions with FFPSA implementation. This funding is intended to help offset costs associated with program startup, IV-E waiver transition, and improvements to foster care safety and quality. The legislation also offers grants to jurisdictions with expiring IV-E waivers if they face significant funding losses, ensuring stability and continuity of care for the children in care as the transition continues to new models under FFPSA. In addition to these new funding resources, the bill creates a two-year delayed phase-in for FFPSA's "well-supported" requirement for prevention services, which sets the evidence threshold prevention services must meet under FFPSA to be eligible for funding reimbursement. The delay offers states and counties greater flexibility to proceed with existing, evidence-based foster care prevention programs.

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.

I.B.1. Strategy: Implement the Texas Education Blueprint.

Background: Since the inception of the Education Committee in 2010 and the release of the Texas Blueprint in 2012, the Children's Commission has convened a multi-disciplinary, statewide effort aimed at improving education outcomes for children and youth in foster care. The Foster Care and Education (FC&Ed) Committee was established in 2015 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations. In FY2019, the structure of the FC&Ed collaboration shifted from a workgroup model to a project-centered model. The FC&Ed Committee will continue to develop priorities and provide oversight for the statewide effort. As projects are identified, small groups will each meet periodically with a defined scope, deliverables, and a timeline. Although the structure will change, the core principles of strengthening collaboration between education, courts, and child welfare systems, developing cross-training opportunities, and encouraging data-driven decision-making remain fundamental to the FC&Ed committee model.

02/21/20 Update: The Foster Care and Education Committee met on January 10, 2020 and received updates on the progress committee workgroups have made on projects identified at the June 2019 Convening. The next Foster Care and Education Committee meeting will occur on May 1, 2020 at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

- The Education in RTCs workgroup is developing a series of color coded one-page resources for legal professionals, providers, and educators. Each resource will include the top 10 things the audience needs to know about education in RTCs. The workgroup anticipates that the first one-pager, directed at legal professionals, will be ready for distribution around April 1, 2020 and has set a goal for completion of the provider and education one-pagers for August 1, 2020.
- The Resources for Higher Education Professionals workgroup is creating a PowerPoint slide deck with accompanying one-pagers and reference documents (e.g. Higher Education Resources Chart, Education & Training Voucher (ETV) information, Tuition and Fee Waiver process map) aimed at providing high level training, tools, and resources for professionals in higher education including, but not limited to administrators, financial aid officers, admissions, foster care liaisons, and others who may assist or provide services to foster care alumni on campus. The workgroup has a target completion deadline of May 2020 in anticipation of presenting at the Education Reach for Texans Conference June 4-5 at Angelo State University.
- The Non-traditional Post-Secondary Education workgroup initially set out to create an inventory of existing certificate and other non-traditional opportunities and entrance requirements for students seeking non-traditional post-secondary education pathways. At the December meeting, the workgroup identified a larger need to clarify the types of funding that are available for and how to determine which non-traditional higher education programs qualify for the available funding streams. In order to clearly illustrate this information, the workgroup will create flowcharts, a glossary of terms, and a one-pager highlighting important information for students.
- The Records & Information Sharing workgroup will focus on the sharing of information and records between sending and receiving schools. The project will include guidance across systems including provider, kinship, DFPS, and education networks. The workgroup is currently working on identifying common issues experienced during the records and information sharing process so that best practice recommendations can be made for a more fluid transition of records to ensure students are not delayed in receiving essential services and/or classes upon transferring schools.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act workgroup will develop a Toolkit with information on school of origin, best interest decisions, dispute resolution, transportation, and cross-system collaboration. The target deadline for the Toolkit is July 1, 2020 in the hopes of release coinciding with the updated Foster Care and Student Success Guidebook release.

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.

I.C.1. Strategy: Partner with trauma and mental health advocates and agencies to implement and apply principles of Trauma-Informed Care in the respective disciplines.

Background: In July 2017, the Children's Commission launched the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care (SCTIC), to elevate trauma informed policy and practices in the Texas child welfare system by creating a statewide strategy to support system reform, organizational leadership, cross-systems collaboration, and community-led efforts with data-informed initiatives. The SCTIC adopted four broad goals with specific strategies and definitions for its year one plan. The SCTIC endeavors to raise awareness about Trauma-Informed Care through training and educational opportunities; lead a Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-informed Care to create a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive child welfare system that better meets the needs of children who have experienced trauma; and partner with other Texas and national trauma-informed workgroups and collaboratives. Based on the work of the SCTIC, the Children's Commission published a final report in February 2019: Building a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System: A Blueprint. The Blueprint provides a framework for the state to advance trauma-informed care practices in the child welfare system. The SCTIC continues under the guidance of an Implementation Task Force and utilizes the Blueprint to direct the SCTIC's work.

02/21/20 Update: Chaired by Judge Darlene Byrne, the SCTIC Implementation Task Force last met on November 8, 2019 and will meet again on February 28, 2020. On November 8, Task Force members heard updates from its three workgroups and determined next steps.

Policy & Practice Workgroup: The Policy and Practice Workgroup's first priority has been to address Blueprint Strategy 1.1 calling for the adoption of definitions to create a common language among stakeholders. The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) intends to adopt definitions of "trauma" and "trauma-informed: by rule. DFPS has requested that the SCTIC to serve as a stakeholder feedback group. The definitions developed by the Policy and Practice Workgroup took into consideration existing and commonly used definitions and agreed on draft language taken primarily from SAMHSA but with additional language from NCTSN to more fully round out the concept of trauma-informed. The workgroup will submit their recommendations to the SCTIC Task Force ahead of the February 28th meeting and the Task Force will vote on February 28th whether to submit the workgroup's recommendations to DFPS. Upon receipt of the SCTIC recommendations, DFPS will commence the official rulemaking process to adopt definitions which could take nine months to one year.

Training Workgroup: At the July Task Force meeting, the Training Workgroup was directed to create a messaging document about the importance of trauma-informed care and the SCTIC. The Training Workgroup is drafting a document to serve as an "elevator speech" for SCTIC stakeholders and will bring it to the Task Force for review at the February 28th meeting. The Training Workgroup is also conducting an updated environmental scan of current trauma-informed training available in Texas. The scan will be categorized by intended audience and could be a useful tool for various stakeholders to use when assisting families, caregivers, and professionals to obtain training. The scan might also help identify gaps in training across the state and drive the workgroup's tasks. Lastly, the workgroup has been serving as a curriculum advisory group for the Children's Commission staff in developing the Judicial Trauma Institute being held March 29-31, 2020 in Georgetown.

Information Sharing, Data, & Funding Workgroup: The Information Sharing, Data, and Funding Workgroup is focused on Strategy 7.2 of the Trauma Blueprint which calls for a statewide website to serve as a primary source of relevant information and training on trauma-informed care and practices. The workgroup is drafting a concept paper for the Task Force's review which will identify the process to secure a host organization to develop the Texas-specific site. A goal is for the host organization to also secure funding to maintain the day-to-day operations of the site. The primary site audience will be family and caregivers, child welfare professionals, direct and non-direct service providers, and community collaboratives. The workgroup is also developing a "Return on Investment" document to illustrate the potential long-term benefits for investing in trauma-informed policies and practices.

I.D. Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources, and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically domestic child sex trafficking so that the judicial system can assist in preventing and responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS' conservatorship.

I.D.1. Strategy: Collaborate with state and local partners to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of youth in foster care.

Background: The Children's Commission partners with many key stakeholders with a goal of preventing and addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care. In addition to serving on the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the Children's Commission also works with the Office of the Texas Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team, the DFPS Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation 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. The Children's Commission is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness about human trafficking as it impacts children involved with the child welfare system. The Children's Commission also participates in the state and national trainings on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to judges and attorneys as needed.

02/21/20 Update: The Commission will continue to work with child welfare and court stakeholders to build capacity to address trafficking throughout the state. Commission staff participated in a meeting of the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force on February 5, 2020 where updates were given about the development of a five-year strategic plan and the release of a statewide survey on human trafficking. Commission staff participates in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region VI Human Trafficking Workgroup to spread best practices and better coordinate with other states on combatting human trafficking.

Goal II: Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.

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.

II.A.1. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other stakeholders to identify topics for Round Table discussions.

Background: Round Table discussions are designed to address key, urgent issues affecting the Texas child welfare system through a half-day program that is facilitated by a subject-matter and legal expert. The topics vary year to year and the number of Round Tables hosted each year also varies according to the interest of stakeholders and issues demanding attention. The Children's Commission's role usually consists of forming a small workgroup to discuss the overall purpose, creating an invitation and distribution list, securing a venue, handling all invitations, RSVPs, and travel reimbursements, and producing a written report or paper within about 4 to 6 months following the event.

02/21/20 Update: The Children's Commission held a Round Table meetings on Normalcy and Mediation in FY2019. The Children's Commission will host a Round Table on Shackling on April 13, 2020 in Austin.

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.

II.B.1. Strategy: Provide JIR support to the judiciary and the legal and child welfare systems.

Background: The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR develops relationships with retired and sitting judges, 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, and publishes informational letters and electronic communiques ("e-blasts") concerning items of interest, such as changes in policy, law, practice, and training events. Additionally, the JIR assists with the development of curriculum for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference, and moderates and presents at the conference, as needed; reviews updates to the Child Protection Law Bench Book; and attends and participates in events on behalf of the CC, including Round Tables, other conferences, and Trial Skills Trainings.

02/21/20 Update: The Supreme Court has two Jurists in Residence: Judge Rob Hofmann and Judge Dean Rucker. The JIR activities will remain much the same for FY2020, with additional emphasis on elevating judicial leaders with expertise and interests related to prevention of removal to foster care, child and family well-being and improving child and family voice in child welfare system reform. Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters and Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) issued between September 2019 and February 2020:

- 02/07/20: JIR: Save the Date: 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference + 2019 Child Protection Law Bench Book Now Available
- 02/04/20: JARL: Hands-on Trial Skills Training Opportunity
- 01/30/20: JARL: Child Welfare Presentation Series: CIP Talks
- 01/23/20: JARL: Resources Related to Preventing and Addressing Domestic Child Sex Trafficking
- 01/17/20: JIR: Judicial Practices to Improve Permanency Outcomes

II.B.2. Strategy: Maintain, update, and support a high-quality Child Protection Law Bench Book for CPS Judges (Bench Book).

Background: The Children's Commission maintains a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists. The Bench Book also includes tips and best and promising practices. It is updated annually with new information, as needed, and is disseminated at training events and upon request. The Bench Book is also hosted on the Children's Commission website and through LawBox, which can both be accessed through the Commission website.

02/21/20 Update: The Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book was recently updated in October 2019 to incorporate statutory changes resulting from the 86th Texas Legislative Session and to include updates to all topical chapters. New sections on de novo hearings and joint managing conservatorship have been added, as well as new topical chapters on children with disabilities, Mexican Consular relations, and substance use disorders. The current version of the CC's Bench Book is maintained online here: http://benchbook.texaschildrenscommission.gov/. The Bench Book is also hosted by LawBox online services for FY2020.

II.C. Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the Children's Commission website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.

II.C.1. Strategy: Develop and distribute information to attorneys that communicate or announce changes in law, policy, or practice and inform attorneys of training and other events.

Background: Since May 2016, the Children's Commission has maintained a distribution list of approximately 4,000 attorneys to help inform legal practitioners of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay pertinent child welfare-related information. The Children's Commission publishes attorney resource letters about emerging, relevant, and changing policy, laws, practice, and training opportunities that are of interest to attorneys handling CPS cases. All ARLs are posted on the Children's Commission's website.

02/21/20 Update: The CC's distribution list has grown to more than 4,000 Texas attorneys, judges, court staff, and stakeholders. See Strategy II.B.1 for a listing of Judicial / Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) distributed between September 2019 and February 2020.

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.

II.D.1. Strategy: Maintain and enhance usability and function of the Children's Commission website.

Background: The Children's Commission maintains a website that features published reports, guides, announcements, and training opportunities. CIP grant applications and grant recipient information are also included on the website. The website links to a Twitter account, @TXChildrensComm through which JIR and ARL communiques are announced once they are published.

02/21/20 Update: The Commission website was updated in February 2020 to reflect recent Children's Commission Committee structure changes and is routinely updated for content and newly released reports and resources. While the website is specific to judges and attorneys, website visitors have full access to these online tools and can subscribe to join Children's Commission electronic mailing lists to receive announcements.

II.E. Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders and organizations to enhance knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with and throughout Texas.

II.E.1. Strategy: Provide assistance to and collaborate with local jurisdictions, DFPS, and state and national partners and organizations.

Background: The Children's Commission provides various types of support for child welfare partners and stakeholders including meeting facilitation and support, travel reimbursement for meeting and training event attendees, presentations by Children's Commission staff as requested, and assistance securing speakers for local, regional, or national events, as appropriate.

02/21/20 Update: In November 2019, the Supreme Court of Arkansas, led by Justice Rhonda Wood, brought a team of court, legislative, private sector, court improvement, and court administration professionals to Austin to learn about the Children's Commission. The day-long meeting focused on why the Commission was formed; how the Commission is organized; its critical partnerships; judicial leadership; the importance of external relationships; and the role a statewide, multi-disciplinary judicial commission can play in facilitating dialogue among child welfare stakeholders.

In March 2020, the Children's Commission will provide a scholarship for one attorney who staffs the Travis County Drug Court (Parenting in Recovery) to attend the annual national drug court conference in Anaheim California. Topics at the conference include drug testing, substance abuse, parental engagement, treatment planning, incentives, sanctions, and best practices gleaned through research on drug court programs.

II.F. Objective: Support the use of best practices in court case management.

II.F.1. Strategy: Partner with Office of Court Administration (OCA) to support the maintenance, enhancements, impact, and usability of the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS), as well as efforts to enhance child and family engagement in court proceedings.

Background: CPCMS is a case management system that is unique to Child Protection Courts (CPC). It has been in use since 2009. OCA staffs a CPCMS Advisory Council of CPC judges, OCA staff, and Children's Commission staff to identify and discuss various enhancements and issues. CPCMS is in its ninth year of service and is currently in maintenance mode. User-generated problems and enhancements are routed through an Advisory Council, which also advices on data collection and reporting features of CPCMS. The Children's Commission staff serves on the Advisory Committee and collaborates with OCA regularly on the statue of CPCMS' functioning, problems, and enhancements.

02/21/20 Update: The CPC Advisory Council met on October 18, 2019 to discuss planned updates for CPCMS including improved tracking of trial independence, adding relevant information from CPCMS to posting dockets, and improving case-merge functionality. The next update for CPCMS will be released on February 13, 2020 and will include updates allowing users to import CPCMS events into Microsoft Outlook calendars, adding a tracking flag if a person has been identified as a registered sex offender, and a tracking flag for a child's page to indicate Juvenile Court involvement. OCA hopes to include a customizable "Data Dashboard" for judges in the next CPCMS update targeted for June 2020 and will be holding a focus group of judicial CPCMS users to gather input on how best to implement the dashboard. The next meeting of the CPCMS Advisory Committee is scheduled for March 6, 2020.

II.F.2. Strategy: Collaborate with and provide support for specialty courts, dockets, or programs.

Background: The Children's Commission partners with or supports individual court efforts seeking to adopt specializes practices or programs. For example, in FY2019, the Children's Commission provided seed money through OCA to employ an Associate Judge and Court Coordinator to assist in handling child abuse and neglect cases filed in Dallas County Family Courts to promote achieving permanency for children in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

02/21/20 Update: There are no new specialty court partnerships or funding requests to consider currently, but since March 2019, the Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court has assisted youth in the long-term care of CPS. Participating courts include the 254th, 256th, 301st, 303rd District Courts. Permanency outcomes include: one child returned to parents; 41 children placed permanently with relatives; 17 children adopted. There were 849 hearings conducted which covered: 52 hearings for youth placed either in psychiatric hospitals, sleeping at CPS offices, or on runaway status; 43 psychotropic medication reviews; 25 specialized dockets designed to assist youth aging out of foster care to help plan for the future; 15 specialized dockets designed to assist youth who have a permanent physical or intellectual disability obtain benefits as an adult; and 14 specialized dockets that utilize Video Conferencing to visit with youth who are placed outside Dallas County. Key well-being successes include providing private tutoring for youth struggling with educational progress, counseling for youth who are victims of human trafficking, backpacks of information about post-adoption services to each youth adopted, and original birth certificate and social security cards to all relatives taking permanent custody of youth in care.

II.F.3. Strategy: Convene a Task Force to examine the issues related to youth involved both in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

Background: The Children's Commission has worked since its inception to strengthen courts for children and families in the Texas child protection system. Federal Court Improvement funds require a focus on children who are abused and neglected but children involved in the juvenile justice system present with many of the same challenges and needs. The Texas Judicial Council recommended to the Supreme Court in 2018 that the Children's Commission should convene a task force to study and report on issues relating to youth with involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The task force was formed to establish a common, statewide definition(s) for the population, identify resources needed to meet the needs of youth who are dually involved, and make other recommendations as may be necessary to improve outcomes for dually involved youth. The Task Force is directed also to address training needs for judges and other necessary parties on handling cases involving youth involved in both systems. The Task Force is co-chaired by Judge Gary Coley of the 74th District Court in Waco and Judge Lisa Jarrett of the 436th District Court in San Antonio. On July 24, 2019, the Children's Commission convened the first Task Force meeting at the State Bar of Texas in Austin. The Task Force plans to meet 4-6 times over an 18-month time period to develop definitions of dual status youth and recommendations for improved handling of dual status cases.

02/21/20 Update: The Task Force created five workgroups to study and make recommendations on several aspects of serving dual status youth. The Definitions Workgroup will focus on defining the population, including youth who are concurrently involved in both systems and youth who have a history of involvement in either or both systems. The Judicial Practices Workgroup will explore issues ranging from documenting what works in jurisdictions that already have crossover dockets to exploring the implications of SB 1887 (86th Leg Session). The Training Workgroup will identify training needs for judges, lawyers, and advocates as well as other interested stakeholders. The Legal Representation & Advocacy Workgroup will focus on addressing ethical issues in representing dual status youth, raising awareness about the dual status population among prosecutors, and engaging local CASA programs. The Transition Planning & Local Coordination will address how to strengthen support for dual status youth during transitions between systems (e.g. re-entry) and identifying other opportunities for collaboration at the local level. The Task Force Last met on October 29, 2019 and will convene again on March 3, 2020.

Goal III: Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.

III.A. Objective: Participate in and promote institutional collaboration among high-level state and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders to ensure open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners aimed at improving the child welfare system functionality, promoting equitable services, and ensuring justice for all parties.

III.A.1. Strategy: Participate in and provide a forum and opportunity for child welfare stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs, and strengths.

Background: The Children's Commission helps institutionalize collaboration by maintaining a statewide multi-disciplinary judicial commission, holding regular meetings that include child welfare stakeholders, partnering with the state child welfare agency, and partnering with other state and national level executives, partners, and organizations. The Children's Commission creates an environment and the space for stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information on an ongoing basis.

02/21/20 Update: The Children's Commission held its first meeting of FY2020 on September 27, 2019 and the Children's Commission approved several funding and project strategies. The second meeting of the fiscal year is will be held February 21, 2020. Since September, the Children's Commission has held numerous committee, workgroup, and subcommittee calls and meetings, which are detailed throughout this report. The Children's Commission will host a Round Table on Shackling in Juvenile Court on Friday, April 13, 2020 and will continue to participate on various external boards, workgroups, and committees, including but not limited to the Public-Private Partnership for Community Based Care, the DFPS Child and Family Services Program Improvement Plan Workgroup, Education Reach for Texans, Texas Board of Legal Specialization Exam Committee, the TBLS Board of Directors, the Family Justice Initiative, and the Casey Family Program Legal and Judicial FFPSA Collaborative as well as the Executive Advisory Team of the Texas Permanency Outcomes Project (TXPOP). The Children's Commission also continues its partnership with stakeholder and advocacy groups, including but not limited to the Office of the Governor, Office of the Attorney General, the Judicial Commission on Mental Health, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, The University of Texas School of Social Work, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and the Child Protection Reform Round Table. Also, DFPS leadership has a standing position on the Children's Commission and at least one state-level DFPS staff member is on every Children's Commission committee. DFPS participates in a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child welfare stakeholders, including executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, the Children's Commission's Collaborative Council, and other child welfare stakeholders. DFPS leadership presents at each Children's Commission meeting to provide information regarding DFPS initiatives and efforts. DFPS and CIP jointly attend the CIP Annual Conferences. DFPS state and regional leadership attends the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference. Pursuant to other strategies outlined in this report, the Commission will convene meetings as requested, manage projects, produce reports, and make appropriate recommendations related to judicial policy and practice.

III.B. Objective: Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services on the Child and Family Service Reviews, Program Improvement Plans, Child and Family State Plans, and the Court Improvement Program Strategic Plans.

III.B.1. Strategy: Confer with DFPS on federal plans, audits, and requirements as mandated by federal program instructions.

Background: Federal Law mandates that states receiving Title IV-E funds must collaborate with the state's Court Improvement Program (CIP). The Children's Commission administers the CIP for Texas. As such, the Children's Commission is required to collaborate and partner closely with the Department of Family and Protective Services. Specifically, the entities are required to collaborate on the State's five-year Child and Family State Plan (CFSP), periodic Child and Family Service Reviews and ensuing Program

Improvement Plans (PIP), and the annual Court Improvement Program Strategic Plan and Self-Assessment. The Children's Commission ED and Staff serve on and advise the State PIP Team.

02/21/20 Update: The Executive and Assistant Directors of the Children's Commission regularly confer with DFPS to discuss certain elements of the CFSP and PIP. Specific areas of collaboration, some of which are included in the approved PIP include:

- Participation in the Commission's annual child welfare judges conference by joining regional directors and judges to discuss data, gaps, and processes. This PIP element was completed in October 2019. (5.1; 5.5).
- Collaboration on improving notice and engagement of parties beyond the CPC Courts and the CPCMS system.
- Collaboration on Roundtable discussions about systemic and specialized topics.
- Consideration of legal and judicial input regarding:
    - Working with court stakeholders to ensure effective and appropriate use of court involvement in cases with court-ordered services (3.6.6);
    - Determining barriers and possible strategies to strengthen DPFS policy and practice related to incarcerated parents (4.1.5; 4.1.6);
    - Sharing practice guidance regarding how to best engage and support parent victims of family violence (4.5);
    - Continuing to raise awareness and improve practices regarding the importance of family engagement with staff and child and parent representatives who have direct contact with parents and children served by DFPS (4.6);
    - Consulting with attorneys who represent parents to determine barriers and strategies to strengthen DFPS policy and practice related to Family Group Decision-Making 5.4.3; 5.4.4);
    - Polling judges (through Children's Commission process) about the challenges and suggestions for improvements to enhance and speed permanency in cases involving the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (the ICPC) (5.9.4);
    - Sharing information about Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) and any evaluations and next steps related to expanding CFE (5.10.4).
    - Utilizing the Children's Commission Legal Representation Committee to obtain legal and court stakeholder feedback (4.6.11)
    - DFPS will partner with legal and child welfare system stakeholders, including representatives of the court system on Trauma Informed Care practices and reform (6.4.4)

In addition to the items in the PIP, the Children's Commission, at the suggestion of ACF and request of DFPS, formed an Attorney Advisory Group (AAG) comprised of seasoned, experienced child welfare attorneys from across the state who have agreed to offer input and perspective on an ad hoc basis via email or conference call on matters of DFPS policy changes when requested by DFPS, gauging the impact of a legislative proposal, or providing feedback on trends or practice issues and concerns.

In January, Children's Commission staff attended an Adoption Summit sponsored by the federal Children's Bureau to continue momentum from the first Adoption Call to Action summit held in August 2019 and focused on achieving permanency for children in care without a permanent family. The Children's Commission will participate on a follow up call for Region 6 hosted by the Children's Bureau on March 9, 2020 from 11 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The Children's Commission, in partnership with DFPS, will also participate in an Adoption / Permanency Workshop sponsored by the Capacity Building Center for Courts. The Children's Commission submitted a project focused on the permanency goals and achievements of the Dallas PMC Court which was launched in December 2018. The CBCC workshop elements include: understanding the project and setting intentions/goals for the next 12 months; exploring data and how to use it effectively; conducting a root cause analysis and developing a theory of change; implementation successes; identifying appropriate program/practice change and implementation plans; fidelity and outcome assessments; and project evaluation.

Goal IV: Promote high quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, ensure child and family involvement, and support 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.

IV.A.1 Strategy: Convene and maintain a Legal Representation Committee to support efforts to ensure high quality legal representation for parties.

Background: When a family is involved in a child protection proceeding, quality legal counsel is essential for all parties to ensure that the court strikes the appropriate balance between the rights and duties of all parties involved. The Children's Commission has maintained a Legal Representation Committee (LRC) since its inception. The Committee exists to identify training needs, advise child welfare system stakeholders on best legal and judicial system practices, evaluate proposed statutory amendments, assess the quality of legal representation throughout the state, and help ensure that court proceedings safeguard due process, promote child and family engagement, and produce quality legal representation outcomes for the children and families involved.

2/21/20 Update: The LRC met on January 30, 2020 to discuss various projects designed to improve the quality of legal representation for children, parents and DFPS. Most of the meeting was dedicated to reviewing a draft of a Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in CPS Cases. The draft was created by the Tool Kit Workgroup made up of attorneys, judges, parent advocates, and parents and youth with lived experience in the CPS system and was based on the Commission's Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing CPS. LRC members had a robust discussion about edits and additions to the tool kit and Commission staff is working on incorporating those changes. The final version of the tool kit will be distributed at the Child Protection Law Section Advanced CLE on March 26, 2020. The LRC also discussed the progress of the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation and reviewed the "What does a Parent's Attorney do?" one paged pamphlet designed to help parents understand what to expect from an attorney. The LRC discussed strategies for making the most effective use of the parent pamphlet, established a workgroup to finalize a children's version of the pamphlet and discussed alternative mediums for conveying the information to increase understanding of the attorney's role by youth and parents.

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.

IV.B.1. Strategy: Support development and adoption of Standards of Representation for attorneys representing children and parents in child protection cases.

Background: Though attorneys for parents and children are required by the Family Code to become familiar with the ABA standards of practice for attorneys who represent parents and children in abuse and neglect cases, Texas does not require compliance with the ABA standards as a condition of appointment, nor has Texas adopted its own standards of practice for court-appointed attorneys. The 2018 Legal Representation Study surveyed stakeholders regarding the effect that the lack of enforceable standards of practice has on the legal representation of parents and children. Across stakeholder groups, participants demonstrated a high level of confidence that the creation and enforcement of standards would improve the quality of representation, including 70% of responding court-appointed attorneys indicating that standards would have a positive effect.

02/21/20 Update: The Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation has created a subcommittee on quality, standards, and accountability for attorneys, that will make a recommendation regarding the creation, adoption, and enforcement of standards as a part of the Task Force's Report to the Texas Legislature in November 2020.

IV.C. Objective: Encourage attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise to pursue child welfare specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization to provide a higher caliber of legal representation.

IV.C.1. Strategy: Support the Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advisory and Exam Committees and the National Association of Counsel for Children in efforts to certify Texas attorneys as specialists in Texas and national child welfare law.

Background: On February 14, 2017, the Texas Supreme Court officially recognized Child Welfare Law as the 20th area of certified legal specialization. Judge Dean Rucker serves as the chair of the Advisory Commission which considers applications to become board certified in child welfare law and has the authority to review and suggest changes in standards. Children's Commission staff serve as the chair of Exam Commission, which is responsible for drafting and grading the certification exam. Also, for several years the Children's Commission has offered reimbursement of either the Application Fee or the Certification Exam Fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the National Association of Counsel for Children's Child Welfare Law Specialist Exam. The scholarship includes the NACC Red Book Training to help applicants prepare for the exam and a copy of the Red Book. Additionally, assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking re-certification of their CWLS every five years. As of June 2017, the program is open in 43 states and there are over 600 CWLS across the country. Texas is currently in the top five states for number of certified attorneys/judges.

02/21/20 Update: The second annual Child Welfare Law Specialization exam was held on October 14, 2019 in Austin and thirty-five applicants sat for the exam. Sixteen attorneys passed the exam and eleven attorneys qualified for certification without taking the exam. The Children's Commission will partner with TBLS to provide scholarships to cover application and exam fees in FY2020 for applicants who successfully pass the exam. The application process for 2020 certification is open now, and the exam will be held October 12, 2020. The Exam Commission will continue to meet throughout the year to revise existing questions and draft new questions in preparation for the October 2020 Exam.

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.

IV.D.1. Strategy: Maintain a Parent Resource Workgroup and the Parent Resource Guide.

Background: The Children's Commission supports a Parent Resource Group which is made up on parent mentors, parent advocates, parent attorneys, DFPS personnel, and other interested stakeholders. Prior to establishing the Family Helpline, the Children's Commission partnered with the University of Texas and other stakeholders to produce the Parent Resource Guide, which is available in print and online on the Children's Commission website as well as many on other Children's Commission partner and advocate websites, in English and Spanish.

02/21/20 Update: The Parent Resource Group did not meet during most of 2019 due to the legislative session, but the group continues to work on incorporating updates to the Parent Resource Guide submitted by the Family Helpline, the Texas Council on Family Violence, and other stakeholders as well as changes to relevant laws made by the

86th Texas Legislature. The Parent Resource Workgroup will hold its next meeting on March 6, 2020 to discuss how to continue to make best use of the guide and collaborate on other efforts to support parents experiencing a CPS case.

IV.D.2. Strategy: Support efforts to provide access to information and resources for Texas families through the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline.

Background: In FY2017, the Children's Commission partnered with Access to Justice and the Children's Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation to establish the Family Helpline, which provides easy, statewide access for parents and family members to basic information, education, and resources addressing 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, right to legal counsel, non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other variations of these situations.

02/21/20 Update: In the first quarter of FY2020, the Helpline aided over 558 individual callers about child welfare legal issues across the state of Texas. The calls involved 535 adults and 879 children, and covered questions regarding 119 different issues related to CPS. The Family Helpline saw a reduction in staff in FY2020 as one staff attorney returned to private practice and another staff transitioned from a full-time position to a part-time position. Despite the reduction in their available workforce, the Helpline was able to maintain similar call volume to the first quarter of FY2019. During the first quarter of FY2019, the Family Helpline completed 557 calls. During the same time period in FY2020, the Family Helpline completed 558 calls. Unfortunately, to maintain that level of call volume with reduced staff, the Family Helpline, was not able to focus on other areas such as outreach and Texas Law Help projects. The Helpline hopes to hire additional staff in the second quarter of FY2020 so that it can maintain the level of service it provides to Texas families.

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.

IV.E.1. Strategy: Promote and improve availability and use of the OCA Notice and Engagement tool.

Background: All parties involved in CPS cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from the Texas 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. The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. OCA will market the resource and periodically re-issue announcements, survey users on the usefulness and effectiveness of the system and monitor the system login and search information. Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data is populating according to search criteria. Reports/data will be produced and provided to the Children's Commission.

02/21/20 Update: The number of Notice and Engagement system users continues to increase. Since October 1, 2019, an additional 93 users have registered bringing the total to 1,401. The numbers of users signing up for notification via text message has also increased. Since the option was added in 2018, 187 users have used the text feature. OCA created an application programming interface (API) that will allow Courts other than those using CPCMS to upload their hearing data into the system. The goal is to expand the hearing notification tool to all courts hearing child protection cases in order to provide parties with up-to-date hearing information and to provide courts with an alternate means of notification free of charge. OCA and Commission staff continue to search for non-CPCMS courts to pilot the program in their court.

IV.F. Objective: Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may, in turn, help children and families exit the child welfare system more quickly.

IV.F.1. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability, quality, support, cost, training, and usefulness of mediation in CPS cases.

Background: Mediation is used in CPS cases throughout Texas and can be an effective and financially prudent method of resolving cases. One benefit of mediation is that it can enhance participants' sense they were treated fairly. Studies show that an enhanced sense of fair treatment increases both acceptance and compliance with court decisions. Though the use of mediation to resolve CPS cases prior to trial has become widely accepted, the Children's Commission is interested in exploring whether mediation is being under-utilized in CPS cases because it often occurs too late for the benefits of increased compliance to be realized.

02/21/20 Update: The Commission hosted a roundtable on Mediation in CPS cases on February 22, 2019 at the University of Texas at Austin. The roundtable brought together 45 mediators, attorneys, judicial leaders, subject matter experts, and policymakers from across Texas to discuss issues affecting mediation in child protection cases. Participants exchanged experiences and ideas regarding how to create conditions for successful mediation, when and how to use mediation as an effective tool, as well as the challenges facing diverse jurisdictions in establishing effective mediation programs. The Commission is forming a workgroup to analyze the issues that arose from the roundtable and develop action items that can be implemented to raise the quality of mediation in CPS cases across the state of Texas. The first meeting of the workgroup will be in April 2020.

IV.G. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings and related decision-making so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.

IV.G.1. Strategy: Elevate the importance of youth voice, youth presence, and youth input in the outcome of their case, including the use of video conferencing services to facilitate youth participation in court hearings, and support normalcy strategies and activities.

Background: In FY2018, the Children's Commission helped Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) establish a Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) designed to elevate and incorporate youth voice in statewide policy and administrative procedure discussions, particularly in the area of the child welfare system. The Children's Commission also granted TNOYS funding to assist with Physical and Environmental Activities for Knowledge and Skills (PEAKS) Adventure Program which helps transform the lives of participants, which include youth care workers and young people from shelters, halfway houses, and juvenile justice agencies to help youth build resiliency skills through structured experiential learning and positive interactions with adults and youth peers. The Children's Commission also continues to support a video conferencing project which enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without being physically present in the courtroom. The Children's Commission provides funding to OCA via a grant to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements (primarily Residential Treatment Centers). Additionally, and in the furtherance of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P. L. 113–183), the Children's Commission held a Round Table in February 2019 and provided funding to Texas CASA to expand understanding, availability, and implementation of Normalcy culture and activities throughout the child welfare system. The Commission also provides funding each year to print the Foster Youth Aging Out Guide published by Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid.

02/21/20 Update: PEAKS: The Children's Commission provided $20K in grant funding to TNOYS to support the participation of youth and young adults at its FY2020 PEAKS camp.

Videoconferencing: In FY2019, there were 160 hearings conducting using the video conferencing system supported by OCA. In the first quarter of FY2020, there were 53 video hearings conducted. Video conferencing activities for FY2020 are focused on user support and efforts to increase awareness of and how to use the program. OCA is developing an online scheduling tool to make scheduling hearings more convenient for the court, placement facilities, and DFPS caseworkers. To facilitate development of this tool, OCA is forming a Focus Group of Child Protection Associate Judges and Court Coordinators to provide input on functional requirements and will meet via teleconference in March.

Normalcy: In October 2019, Children's Commission staff presented on normalcy at the annual Child and Family Administrators Conference in San Antonio. The Commission provided $26K in FY2020 for Texas CASA to create a role-based guide regarding normalcy in FY2020. The goal of the guide is to inform the child welfare system participants - attorneys, judges, CASAs, foster parents, congregate care staff, kinship caregivers, community partners, agency employees, education partners, and others - about normalcy and about best practices for each role in promoting and attaining normalcy for children and youth in foster care. Another goal of the guide is to address challenging topics related to normalcy, including liability concerns, transportation, social media, unsupervised activities, dating, etc. Texas CASA convened a workgroup of child welfare system participants to help draft sections for each participant role. The workgroup's first meeting was held on January 31, 2020 and a second meeting is anticipated for late March.

Foster Youth Aging Out Guide: The Children's Commission provided funding to Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid to redesign and print the 7th Edition Foster Youth Aging Out Guide, which is scheduled to be completed by the end of February 2020.

Goal V: 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: Use child welfare agency, court system and/or other data to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

V.A.1. Strategy: Utilize Data Analyst to assist the Children's Commission with data projects to identify, track, and measure outcomes, identify best practices, and address areas in need of improvement.

Background: In April 2019, the Texas Alliance for Child and Family Services (TACFS), through its Research and Policy Division and with funding from the Children Commission, hired a data analyst who will have the responsibilities to access publicly available data from DFPS, court-specific data, data from the TACFS, and analyze them in a manner that provides information to the judiciary.

02/21/20 Update: The data analyst is supporting the Commission's Data Committee by analyzing publicly available child welfare data in a manner that facilitates discussions between DFPS and judges about data, judicial processes and practices, and potential systemic improvements. The Data Committee has been reorganized to focus on using data to better understand the relationship between outcomes and practices and how to best utilize the data analyst position. The first project resulting from this reorganization was partnering with the data analyst to reorient how data was presented at the October 2019 Child Welfare Judges Conference to better engage with courts about utilizing data to improve permanency outcomes. The data was used to guide focus group conversations amongst judges regarding legal and CPS practices that effect five separate permanency outcomes. Commission staff compiled the focus group results into a Jurist in Residence letter listing the top 10 identified practices for improving permanency. The Commission is working on collaborating with jurisdictions who want to implement these practices and utilize data to measure their impact. Additional possible data committee projects for FY2020 include collaborating with Casey Family Programs to evaluate the PMC Specialty Courts in Houston and Dallas, working with the Office of Court Administration to create a "data dashboard" for CPC judges utilizing CPCMS and a condensed and user friendly guide for understanding required data entry, and supporting jurisdictions participating in the Judicial Trauma Institute to track the implementation and outcomes of their action plans.

Goal VI: Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.

VI.A. Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training resources for judges and attorneys.

VI.A.1. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate judicial training conferences and events.

Background: The Children's Commission collaborates with the Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ) to design 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 TCJ. Each year TCJ plans at least one annual Child Welfare Judges Conference in partnership with the Children's Commission. The Children's Commission also provides partial funding for a half-day CPS Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) track at TCJ's annual Family Justice Conference. Additionally, the Children's Commission usually plans and funds at least one multidisciplinary conference or summit during the fiscal year with TCJ. Planning and funding activities include designing curriculum and agenda for conferences, determining the budget and number of attendees, participating in planning calls, vetting judicial scholarship applicants, surveying participants, and evaluating the process and event for future planning.

02/21/20 Update: This year's Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC) was held in October 2019 at the Sheraton Austin at the Capitol. Fifty-seven judges from across the state attended a first of its kind Pre-Conference event on the Judicial Impact on Well-Being of Children in Care, and then were joined by more colleagues for a total of 93 judicial attendees at the full conference. The curricula were based in part on specific judicial requests for further education in the 2018 CWJC post-event survey. Using both plenary and break-out sessions, the conference content included a State Keynote on Judicial Awareness of Mental Health Issues in our Courts; an 86th Legislative Session Update; a Case Law Update; two panels on Tools for a Trauma-Responsive Child Welfare System which included updates from the Commission, DFPS, and Superior Health as well as staff from STAR Health; a Federal Keynote with an update from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families; a presentation on Community Based Care and the Texas response to the Family First Prevention Services Act; a DFPS Statewide Update; Effects of ICWA and Human Trafficking in Tribal Communities; a Reunified Parents Panel; and a panel honoring retiring judges. Additionally, following a presentation on DFPS Data Sharing, judges and DFPS Regional Directors participated in breakout sessions which examined judicial and agency policies and practices related to improving children's timely exits to permanency. This new approach to partnering judicial and agency efforts to identify best practices was very productive and well-received by attendees. All told, 15.75 hours of CJE were offered (including the Pre-Conference), and 12.25 Family Violence credits were offered in the above curricula. The 2020 CWJC, hosted as always in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary, will convene over October 26-28 at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center.

Family Justice Conference: The Commission provided funding and speakers for an afternoon track on child welfare issues to an audience of general jurisdiction judges at the Texas Center for the Judiciary's 2019 Family Justice Conference on January 23, 2019, at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in San Marcos, Texas. This year's three CPS-related CLE speakers and topics were presented by Commission staff and included the history and status of the M. D. versus Abbott federal lawsuit; the issue of privatization and the status of the Community Based Care roll out in Texas; and Dual Status Youth. All topics were well-attended and well received. Attendees received judicially required Family Violence credits for each of these three presentations.

Judicial Trauma Institute: Based on a strong, ongoing interest in trauma-informed training indicated by judges, Commission staff has designed and will host a Judicial Trauma Institute in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary to meet this need. Attorneys will be trained as well, since the conference will follow a "Beyond the Bench" format and involve participation with court teams. Twelve judicially led teams of six people each will attend the Judicial Trauma Institute over March 29-31, 2020, at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center. Each judicial team is typically comprised of a judge; a court coordinator; a prosecutor; an attorney who takes appointments for parents and for children in CPS cases); a Senior-level Caseworker or Supervisor at DFPS; and a CASA Executive Director or Program Director. A "Beyond the Bench" conference is structured with a topical lecture, followed by a large panel discussion comprised of numerous panelists who speak to how they would handle a particular case scenario (in this case, what is the most-trauma informed way to facilitate a removal, for example). There will be required preparation for court team members before the conference convenes; a Keynote presentation; and four topical presentations during the conference, each of which will be followed by a judicially moderated panel. The Institute will track the flow of a CPS case, starting from pre-removal, through the various stages of a case, to all possible exits to permanency (secondary trauma will be addressed as well). Following each panel discussion, each judicial team will meet to make a jurisdictionally appropriate action plan based on the information from the preceding lecture and panel. The goal of the conference is for each of the 12 teams to leave with more information and resources about what it means to be a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive court on CPS cases, and to have a fully developed action plan about how to implement these gains in knowledge in their jurisdiction.

VI.A.2. Strategy: Support specialized training for Child Protection Court program, judges, and support staff.

Background: Child Protection Courts, also known as CPCs in Texas, were created to assist trial courts in rural areas with managing their child abuse and neglect dockets. Like the child support court associate judges, these associate judges are appointed by their regional presiding judges and are OCA employees. At the discretion of the presiding judge, visiting judges are sometimes appointed to hear these cases instead of associate judges. The judges assigned to these dockets hear child abuse and neglect cases exclusively. With this exclusive focus, children on CPC dockets can achieve permanency more quickly and the quality of placement decisions should be higher. The 25 child protection courts operate in over half of Texas counties. The Children's Commission provides funding to support CPCMS as well as other goods and services required by CPC judges and coordinators to conduct hearings and manage cases.

02/21/20 Update: Based on the success of the July 2019 CPC Convening at which CPC Judges and their court coordinators were trained by the Commission in partnership with OCA on court management and data collection, the Commission plans to host a similar convening in the summer of 2021. In the meantime, CPC judges and their court coordinators will receive training from OCA at a Pre-Conference just prior to the opening of the full conference at the upcoming October 26-28, 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference.

VI.A.3. Strategy: Produce high-quality training and evaluate delivery and content.

Background: There are several projects which fit under this strategy. Trial Skills Training (TST) is a 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 and families in child protection cases. Developed and initially spearheaded by Justice Michael Massengale, the TST is now led by Judge Piper McCraw. Trial Skills Training is held once a year and offers approximately 17-18 MCLE hours, including ethics hours. Ten TSTs have been hosted by the Children's Commission since its inception in October 2013. Each TST program has a competitive application process and is limited to 21 less-experienced attorneys. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. TST provides parent, child, and state attorneys numerous 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 Parent Therapists serve as live witnesses. 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. Also, in partnership with TexasBarCLE, the Children's Commission makes several online courses available to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys. Once each year the Children's Commission works with the CLE branch of the SBOT, TexasBarCLE, 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. TexasBarCLE'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. The Children's Commission collaborates with the Training Committee Chair on the conference agenda and develops the content based on CQI from recent conferences and feedback from post-event surveys where scholarship awardees indicate what additional education would assist them in their work on the CPS docket. The Commission also collaborates with TexasBarCLE regarding audience, budget, marketing, and evaluation; helps ensure notice of the event to judges and attorneys; ensures CLE is available; analyzes survey results from evaluations distributed by the organizers; and conducts CQI of the process and training content.

02/21/20 Update: Trial Skills Training: This year's Trial Skills Training (TST) will be held over June 24-26, 2020 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in San Marcos, Texas. The opening of the TST application process was announced earlier this month, and faculty and curriculum preparations are already underway. As always, twenty-one training spots will be available for 7 parent attorneys, 7 attorneys for children, and 7 attorneys who represent DFPS with an eye towards admitting similar levels

of experience, as well as geographic diversity and judicial approval of each candidate. The upcoming TST will be the eleventh iteration of this unique, effective, and robust hand-on litigation training. Children's Commission staff has secured 2021 dates with the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in San Marcos.

SBOT Annual One-Day Webcast with TexasBarCLE: Commission staff coordinated with TexasBarCLE staff for the annual partnership between the Children's Commission and the continuing legal education branch of the State Bar of Texas, to produce a total of 6 hours of live webcasts on basic and advanced topics for attorneys providing legal representation in CPS cases. The yearly live webcast, entitled "Essentials of Family Representation in CPS Cases," was held on September 26, 2019 and was hosted by Judge Piper McCraw, 469th District Court of Collin County and Chair of the Children's Commission's Training Committee. The CLE presentation was broken down into four panel discussions which were seen live by 585 registered viewers:

- Essentials of Child Representation in CPS Cases: Ethics and Best Practices for AALs (2 hours of CLE)
- Mediation as a Tool for Family Reunification (1 hour of CLE)
- Essentials of Parent Representation in CPS Cases: Ethics and Best Practices for Attorneys Representing Parents (2 hours of CLE)
- Avoiding Burnout: Essentials of Self Care in CPS Cases (1 hour of CLE)

As in all prior years, webcasts have been archived and are available as webinars for viewing at the same discounted rates provided for the live webcasts in the CPS Practice Area of the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom. The Bar provided discounts to court-appointed attorneys and scholarships to other viewers, while the Children's Commission provided scholarships to attorneys representing the Department of Family and Protective Services. All prior years' webcasts produced in partnership between the Commission and TexasBarCLE have been archived and are available as webinars for viewing at the same discounted rates provided for the live webcasts in the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom.

Online Classroom: Through its CLE arm, TexasBarCLE, the State Bar of Texas currently offers a number of online continuing legal education (CLE) courses in the CPS Practice Area of TexasBarCLE related to representation of all parties on the CPS docket. A total of 25 webcasts have been archived in the CPS practice area of the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom, the vast majority of which were produced by the Children's Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE. The topics cover relevant and timely issues of interest to attorneys who work in the area of child welfare. Some or all 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. All of the courses can be found at the following link: http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/OCSearch2.asp. At the request of the Commission, several courses from the 2019 Advanced Family Law's Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day CLE Track have been added to this roster by TexasBarCLE. Commission staff is coordinating with TexasBarCLE to find a date for this year's day of taping in their studio. Topics will be selected in part from the feedback which the Commission received from our 2019 post-event surveys of scholarship awardees.

In- House Webcasts: Commission staff has developed the capacity to host a regular series of webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. This will supplement the 6 hours a year described above which the Commission is grateful to film in partnership with the State Bar in TexasBarCLE's studio. The Commission hosted its inaugural webcast on CPS-related updates from this year's 86th Legislative Session on July 23, 2019. Approximately 350 people have viewed the live and replay webcast. The webcast is archived on the Commission's website and is available for free to all viewers. The CC will continue to plan and host webcasts as the opportunity and need arise and has established a YouTube Channel for additional educational videos.

DFPS Regional Attorney Training: The 2019 DFPS Trial Skills Training and Attorney Conference was held in October 2019 at TBarM in New Braunfels, Texas. The training and conference educated agency attorneys on current case law, trial strategies, evidentiary issues, forensic developments, administrative law, ethics and other relevant procedural and substantive issues. Presentations included a combination of panels, participatory activities and question and answer sessions. The 2019 DFPS Legal Assistant

Training was held immediately thereafter at the same venue. The legal assistants' training provided substantive training on DFPS litigation, best practices and resources. The training also provided participants an opportunity to network with colleagues throughout Texas. The 2020 DFPS Trial Skills Training and Attorney Conference will be held October 26-28 and the Commission will provide more details about the conference as they become available.

VI.B. Objective: Ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.

VI.B.1. Strategy: Support attendance at state and national judicial and legal conferences and training events.

Background: The Children's Commission administers different judicial and attorney scholarship opportunities throughout the fiscal year, including but not limited to: (1) The biennial ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference held in Washington D.C.; (2) The State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop; (3) the National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference; and (4) the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference. For all scholarships, the Children's Commission determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained and 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. All attorney applicants for Commission scholarships must be currently representing DFPS or taking appointments on the CPS docket, be in good standing with the State Bar of Texas and with their primary judge and commit to completing a post-event survey from the Commission. Judges with applicants from their jurisdiction are notified by the Children's Commission and asked to confirm that the applicant is currently representing DFPS or taking appointments on the CPS docket.

02/21/20 Update:

NACC Red Book Online Training Course: The Children's Commission provided scholarships to ten judges and qualified attorneys in the form of waived registration fees for the Fall 2019 National Association of Council for Children's (NACC) Red Book Online Training Course, which began via webinar on September 18, 2019 and concluded on December 4, 2019. Each session was delivered with opportunities for questions and interaction and was also recorded and available on-demand for viewing at the participant's convenience throughout the course. This online course was designed to cover the fundamentals of NACC's legal treatise, Child Welfare Law and Practice, 3rd Edition (aka the Red Book), in a convenient and accessible format. This course assists with preparations for those seeking certification as a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) as well as providing a useful and practical child welfare law course covering material relevant to child, parent, and agency attorneys. MCLE for this course was approved by the State Bar of Texas.

The 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Conference: The CC is providing $10,000 for the Section's third Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course, which will be held on March 26-27, 2020 in Houston at the Hilton Houston Post Oak by the Galleria. The funds will cover conference costs and scholarships for attendees. The Section will circulate a post-event survey to attendees and share the results with the Commission as required by the grant.

TDCAA Training: Texas District and County Attorneys' Association (TDCAA) has invited the Commission to again provide 12 hours of CPS-related MCLE for their CPS Track at their biennial Crimes Against Children 4-day conference. TDCAA's Crimes Against Children Conference is designed for District and County Attorney Offices across the state. The Commission provided speakers and scholarships for DFPS Regional Attorneys in 2018 and will do so again this April. Working with the TDCAA training director and a planning committee, Commission staff developed curriculum for the 2-day breakout track on CPS issues and has contracted with TDCAA to register up to 28 Regional

Attorneys on Commission scholarships. Topics will include "To Remove or Not to Remove," Dual Status Cases, Trauma Basics for Prosecutors, Drug Testing and related evidentiary issues, and Domestic Violence in CPS Cases.

Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop: This year's Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop will be held on August 5, 2020 and will be hosted by the SBOT Child Protection Law Section. The Commission will support this statewide MCLE effort by following our usual scholarship procedure, to partner with the SBOT to provide registration scholarships to qualified attorneys from across the state. The Commission has allocated $7,500 to cover 75 attorneys at $100 each for registration to the live one-day workshop or any of the subsequent replays. This scholarship application process is scheduled to begin in the early spring of 2020. Post-event survey results were gathered and compiled from all five presentations of this one-day CLE and results were shared with Training Committee Members. Overall, awardees indicated a gain in knowledge across the many topics offered at the one-day Workshop and will incorporate this into a change in their existing practice or develop a new practice accordingly.

NACC Annual Conference: Post-event survey results from Commission scholarship awardees who attended the NACC's Annual Conference in August 2019 were compiled and shared with Training Committee Members. Scholarship recipients indicated that the Red Book Training was particularly helpful and reported gains on knowledge across many topics, with benefits from the conference's national perspective. The NACC's upcoming 43rd annual conference will be held on August 24-26, 2020 in Baltimore, Maryland, with a pre-conference on August 23rd for the NACC's in-person Red Book Training (which is helpful training especially for those attorneys and judges wanting to take the Child Welfare Law Specialization exam). The Commission will provide up to 10 scholarships to qualified Texas judges and attorneys for registration costs and conference-related travel expenses, up to $1,000 total. The scholarship will go toward registration for the one-day pre-conference Red Book Training and/or the three-day 43rd National Child Welfare, Juvenile & Family Law Conference, with any remaining funds available for reimbursement of conference-related travel expenses following the event. In addition to the general qualifications listed above at the start of this section, judges with applicants from their jurisdiction will be notified by the Children's Commission and asked to confirm that the applicant is currently representing DFPS or taking appointments on the CPS docket, and to provide a statement of support for the scholarship for each applicant. Scholarship funding is capped at $10,000 and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to qualified applicants. This scholarship application process is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2020.

NCJFCJ Annual Conference: The NCJFCJ's 83rd Annual Conference will be held on July 19-22, 2020 in Reno, Nevada. The Commission will provide scholarships for qualified judges to cover registration fees and conference-related expenses such as travel, lodging, and meals, up to the amount of $2,000 apiece. This scholarship application process is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2020. Post-event survey results will be gathered from awardees and results will be compiled and shared in the next judicial scholarship update, with an eye toward bringing relevant topics and speakers to Texas.

Goal VII: 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.

VII.A.1. Strategy: Identify and promote data-driven, cross-disciplinary training opportunities to address disproportionality and disparities among children and families involved in child protection cases.

Background: The Children's Commission is committed to the goal of reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system through development and deployment of judicial and attorney resources aimed at increasing awareness, sharing data and information, as well as best practices for dealing with disproportionality and disparities systemically and locally.

02/21/20 Update: Commission staff continue to use an equity lens when developing trainings and new projects. The SCTIC Implementation Task Force emphasizes employing the concepts of equity as vital and necessary to implementing a trauma-informed child welfare system. The Commission continues to identify opportunities to enhance judicial and attorney awareness of disproportionality issues and techniques for reduction of disparate impacts in the child welfare system. In December 2019, Commission staff attended the DFPS webinar "Building an Equitable City: An Austin Perspective," and in January 2020, staff attended a CLE on Advocating for LGBTQ+ Children in Child Welfare Cases. Addressing cultural differences and equitable services will be a focus of the 2020 Judicial Trauma Institute.

Goal VIII: 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.

VIII.A.1. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally-recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.

Background: The Children's Commission supports partnering with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance. The Commission also works with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of the Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines. The Children's Commission also partners with DFPS in supporting tribal/state collaborative meetings and collaborates with the Capacity Building Center for Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group.

02/21/20 Update: On August 21, 2019, the Commission sent a JARL providing an update in the case challenging the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), *Brackeen v. Bernhardt* (formerly *Brackeen v. Zinke*). On August 9, 2019 a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion reversing the lower court's decision and upholding the ICWA as constitutional. On November 7, 2019, all of the Fifth Circuit's judges met and vacated the August 9 decision *sua sponte* and agreed to rehear the case *en banc.* The full court decided to rehear the case on its own motion before deciding to instead grant the plaintiff's motion for rehearing. Oral arguments took place on January 22, 2020. Commission staff will continue to monitor this case and provide relevant updates. The Commission is a regular participant in the CIP ICWA Constituency Group monthly calls organized by the Capacity Building Center for Courts. The 2019 Child Welfare Judges Conference featured a presentation from Judge Richard Blake of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and Leah Lopez of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribe discussing human trafficking and the importance of the Indian Child Welfare Act. On February 7, 2020, Commission staff attended the State Bar of Texas Native American Law Section CLE.

Goal 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.
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 well-being.
IX.A.1. Strategy: Engage in activities integral to the Children's Commission's functions and operations.
Background: The Children's Commission is a statewide, multi-disciplinary collaborative body that includes high-level membership from the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of Texas government, along with child welfare partners in the private sector. At the foundation of the Children's Commission is a longstanding collaboration with the state child welfare agency, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The Children's Commission receives state appropriated as well as federal grant funds which are used to operate the Commission, fund meeting facilitation and travel reimbursement, training expenses and scholarships, as well as pass-through grants to sub-grantees such as Texas Center for the Judiciary and Office of Court Administration. The Children's Commission adopted its most recent Strategic Plan in 2016. The Children's Commission also confers regularly with national organizations and other CIPs and submits annual reports and CIP strategic plans to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Supreme Court of Texas. The Children's Commission holds Commission meetings every four months throughout each year of the five-year plan and conducts a bi-monthly collaborative call with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders as well as numerous other calls and meetings related to Children's Commission workgroups. Children's Commission Staff serves on the Public Private Partnership, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Education Reach for Texans, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners. The Children's Commission engages in ongoing participation with ACF and DFPS regarding the CFSP, APSR, CFSR and PIP and CIP Strategic Plan. **02/21/20 Update:** In FY2019, the Children's Commission received approximately $1.7 million in federal CIP funds for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. These funds are used for Commission operations as well as being passed through to grant recipients such as the Office of Court Administration, Texas Center for the Judiciary, and Texas Legal Services Corporation, as well as grants for training events to DFPS, State Bar of Texas, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others. DFPS staff participate on the following workgroups and committees: Collaborative Council, Data Committee, Training Committee, Foster Care and Education, Special Education, Post-Secondary Education, School Discipline, House Bill 7 Task Force, Pleading Practice, Legal Representation, Parent Resource Workgroup, and in the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care. The Children's Commission publishes an updated Report to Commission in advance of each Commission meeting as well as JIR and JARL letters, project reports, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and follow up reports for all short-term and long-term projects throughout the fiscal year. The Children's Commission also publishes an annual report to the Supreme Court in December of each year.

INSERT - TAB 4

Children's Commission®

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

Children's Commission
Financial Report

FY 2020 BUDGET

FY 2019 Carry Forward	$	1,668,768
FY 2020 State General Revenue	$	91,924
FY 2020 Federal Distribution	$	1,791,065
FY 2020 Available Funds	**$**	**3,551,757**

FY 2020 OBLIGATIONS

		Budget		Expenses To-date		Outstanding Obligations
Indirect	$	1,273,639	$	359,921	$	913,719
Staff Directed Projects	$	183,500	$	29,303	$	154,197
Grants	$	1,021,569	$	243,464	$	778,105
Scholarships	$	96,500	$	2,728	$	93,772
	$	2,575,208	$	635,415	$	1,939,793

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

State General Revenue Balance 2/13/20	$	88,358
Federal Fund Balance 2/13/20	$	2,827,984
FY 2020 Outstanding Obligations	$	1,939,793
Estimated Unexpended/Carry Forward FY 2020	**$**	**976,549**