



**Children's
Commission**

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



Children's Commission

Virtual Meeting

Notebook

September 18, 2020

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

September 18, 2020

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

Virtual Meeting

Zoom

September 18, 2020

9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

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

First Order of Business – The Honorable Eva Guzman

- Adopt Minutes from February 21, 2020, Tab 2

9:45 Commissioner Updates

11:00 Executive Director Report – Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Projects and Budget

11:30 Presentation on Evidence-Based Treatment for Substance Use Disorders by
Lisa Ramirez, Texas Health and Human Services Commission

11:45 Collaborative Council Member Input

12:00 DFPS Update

12:30 Office of Court Administration Update

12:45 Jurist in Residence Report

1:00 New Business and Adjourn

2021 Meeting Schedule: February 26, May 14, September TBD

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
Hon. Piper McCraw, Vice Chair
Hon. Rosie Alvarado
Col. Sonya Batchelor
Corey Benbow
Paula Bibbs-Samuels

Dr. Gary Blau
Hon. Susan Brown
Hon. Darlene Byrne
Hon. Gary Coley
Hon. Julie Countiss
Deneen Dryden
Elizabeth Farley

Anne Heiligenstein
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:
Jamie Bernstein
Tiffany Edwards

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

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

Staff:
Jocelyn Fowler
Aimee Corbin
Tiffany Edwards

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
Charlotte Velasco

Staff:
Dylan Moench
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz
Chelsea Martinez

DATA

Hon. Michael Schneider, *Chair*
Jesse Booher
Dr. Jane Burstain
Jeff Cox
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
Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington
Tracy Harting
Tanya Rollins
Fairy Davenport Rutland
Elizabeth Watkins

Staff:
Milbrey Raney
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz
Andrea Vicencio
Chelsea Martinez

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Tymothy Belseth
M. Lynn Chamberlin
Irene Clements
Bill Connolly
Sarah Crockett
Teal De La Garza
De Shaun Ealoms
Barbara Elias-Perciful
Debra Emerson
Mike Foster

Will Francis
Sadie Funk
Fedora Galasso
Sandra Hachem
David Halpern
Lisa Harst
Félix Herrera
Alex Hunt
Kerri Judice

Bruce Kendrick
Knox Kimberly
Norman Ladd
Tracy Levins
Gabriella McDonald
Dr. Jill McLeigh
Kate Murphy
Judy Powell
Mary Christine Reed

Carolynne Rodriguez
Tanya Rollins
Johana Scot
Janet Sharkis
Andrea Sparks
Hon. Ian Spechler
Jeanne Stamp
Gloria Terry
Kenneth Thompson

STAFF

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

INSERT - TAB 2

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

**Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2020**

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 first Commission meeting of 2020.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Dr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner for the Children's Bureau, and Mr. David Kelly, Special Assistant to the Office of the Associate Commissioner at the Children's Bureau. Ms. Sasha Rasco was introduced as the Associate Commissioner for Prevention and Early Intervention at the Department of Family and Protective Services. Justice Guzman welcomed Child Protective Services Associate Commissioner Kristene Blackstone and thanked her for her long service to the Commission as this meeting marked Ms. Blackstone's last meeting as a Commissioner.

Justice Guzman announced an after-lunch presentation from Mr. Felix Herrera from the Consulate General of Mexico and introduced Judge Delia Gonzalez from the Dallas County Permanency Court, Judge Robin Sage and Anne Heiligenstein from Casey Family Programs, and Mr. Graham Keever who was in attendance on behalf of Senator Royce West.

Presentation from Dr. Jerry Milner and Mr. David Kelly

Dr. Jerry Milner shared the vision of promoting primary prevention and strengthening families through community-based programs. Dr. Milner also reflected on his time spent with young adults with lived experience and noted that many of them experience extreme adversity, a lack of education or employment opportunities, or homelessness and may be victims of human trafficking. He underscored that each placement move induces more trauma to the child. Dr. Milner expressed his desire to use the funds allocated to child welfare to help families provide for their children's needs as opposed paying for foster care. Dr. Milner concluded by emphasizing the critical importance of legal representation and meaningful use of the reasonable efforts requirements.

Mr. David Kelly began his remarks with the premise that child welfare is the intersection of public health, poverty, and civil rights, and until this is understood, child welfare outcomes will not differ. Mr. Kelly underscored that attorneys should be trauma-informed, have knowledge around family separation and child development, as well as the importance of child and youth voice. Mr. Kelly stressed the impact of legal protection for vulnerable community members, from events that would cause further hardship, including eviction and immigration issues, as well as natural disasters and crisis. He noted that training funds are available from Title IV-E to aid the judicial community in providing legal services. Mr. Kelly concluded his presentation by sharing that there is a proposal to

double the CIP budget nationally and thanked Ms. Amberboy for her leadership of the Texas Court Improvement Program.

Commissioner Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced the Commissioner changes starting with Dr. Gary Blau, the Executive Director of The Hackett Center for Mental Health, who replaced Dr. Andy Keller as a Commissioner. Dr. Blau provided a brief introduction to meeting attendees, highlighting his extensive background working for the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families and as the Chief of the Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Justice Guzman introduced Ms. Elizabeth Farley from Governor Greg Abbott's office, who replaced Ms. Erin Bennett as the Commission's *ex officio* member from the Governor's Office. Ms. Luanne Southern transitioned from being the Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting at Casey Family Programs to the Executive Director of the Texas Mental Health Consortium and will continue to serve on the Children's Commission. Ms. Anne Heiligenstein assumed the role of Director of Texas Strategic Consulting with Casey Family Programs and will be appointed to the Children's Commission in May.

Committee Membership Changes

Justice Guzman deferred the announcement of committee member updates to Executive Director Tina Amberboy.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced Mr. Norman Ladd from Ladd & Thigpen, P.C. as a new member of the Collaborative Council.

Staff Member Changes

Justice Guzman welcomed Ms. Chelsea Martinez, who previously worked for the Texas Education Agency. Ms. Martinez is the newest Executive Assistant for the Children's Commission.

Adoption of September 27, 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 September 27, 2019 minutes prior to the meeting. Justice Guzman asked if there were any corrections, and none were noted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Tina Amberboy directed meeting attendees to Tab 3 of the meeting notebook. At the September 2019 meeting, Ms. Amberboy proposed to Commission members a vote to restructure the standing committees. The Basic Committee was disbanded, and the Systems Improvement and Legal Practices and Processes Committees were created.

Ms. Amberboy announced that Dr. Blau and Justice Julie Countiss joined the Systems Improvement Committee, Judge Randall Hufstetler joined the Legal Practices and Process Committee, and Judge Robin Sage joined the Data Committee. Ms. Amberboy expressed her gratitude to the new committee members. Ms. Amberboy noted that there were no membership changes to the Training Committee and Dual Status Task Force.

Ms. Amberboy continued her update directing members' attention to Tab 4 of the meeting notebook to review the budget, noting that there was a slight amendment to the TCJ education grant, reminding members that in September the grant was still in negotiations. The final grant award was \$575.00 more than the amount presented in September. Please see the February 2020 meeting notebook for details.

Ms. Amberboy also updated the meeting attendees on the Adoption and Permanency Workshop she, Ms. Jamie Bernstein, and Ms. Renee Castillo attended earlier in the week which focused on Judge Delia Gonzales' Permanency Court in Dallas. The Commission received technical assistance from the Capacity Building Center for Courts to help study the court and evaluate the court's processes.

Ms. Amberboy then directed meeting attendees to the Children's Commission 2019 Annual Report which was distributed to the Supreme Court and via the Commission's distribution lists in January.

Committee, workgroup, and project updates were provided by Ms. Renee Castillo, Ms. Jocelyn Fowler, Ms. Milbrey Raney, Mr. Dylan Moench, and Ms. Jamie Bernstein and can be found in its entirety here: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/84475/final-report-to-commission-2-21-20.pdf>.

Presentation from Ms. Carla Baker and Danna Mayhall

Ms. Carla Baker shared her road to reunification with her children when they were removed from her care by Child Protective Services. Ms. Baker explained that the process was not a simple one, but with peer support and determination, reunification was possible for her family. When appointed to her case, Ms. Mayhall shared a pamphlet she created in 2010 entitled "How to Conquer Your Service Plan and Get Your Kids Home Sooner," which was critical to Ms. Baker's success. Ms. Baker asked child welfare advocates attending the meeting to please remember their clients are real people with real life problems and are often afraid of an unknown process and system.

Ms. Danna Mayhall shared that she has represented parents with CPS cases since 2001. While she has many success stories, she added the collaboration with her clients is a critical ingredient for success. Ms. Mayhall also shared that the process can be more difficult for clients experiencing severe drug addiction. While not all are successful in family reunification, Ms. Mayhall offers support to her clients, ranging from providing transportation to having conversations with clients late into the night. She concluded by emphasizing that her primary goal as an attorney is always family reunification.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Randy Shelton from Beaumont shared that reading the article about Judge Sakai's early childhood court influenced him to look at the increase of family violence in his region. When taking a closer look, he discovered that nearly 50 percent of cases involved domestic violence. Judge Shelton

decided to take the approach of treating the parents like victims instead of perpetrators and placing additional focus on domestic violence in CPS cases in his court. Judge Shelton partnered with a family services organization to create a Victims Anonymous program. One challenge is finding sponsors, but the local sheriff is joining the cause and establishing a similar program at the local jail. The goal of the program is to approach domestic violence from a mental health perspective.

Judge Shelton concluded his report informing meeting attendees 2,000 prom dresses were collected to replace the prom dresses lost in the flood last year.

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels from Slayton announced the Parent Collaboration Group continues to meet quarterly. The last meeting held addressed the topic of parental input related to services provided to children when the child is in substitute care.

Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also requested of judges and commissioners that when addressing parents in CPS cases, that their names be used rather than “bio mom” or “mom” or a case number as that type of reference diminishes the role of the parent.

Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also asked attendee to consider when mothers or fathers seek assistance at domestic violence shelters and a case is opened with CPS whether a decision can be made more quickly regarding the allegations. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels expressed concern that parents experiencing domestic violence may not seek assistance for fear of CPS involvement with their families. She advised that the fear of CPS involvement could hinder parents from gaining help and safety.

Hon. Selina Mireles from Laredo shared that she is working on a video presentation to explain the process of CPS to parents. Judge Mireles observed that when parents arrive at court, they are very anxious and when given the pamphlet from CPS, they either don’t read it or don’t fully understand it. Her video will explain the purpose of the hearing, legal terminology, and the process. The Parent Collaboration Group is assisting with this process.

Judge Mireles has also started an incentive called Wings of Hope for her Drug Court Committee. Anyone who goes beyond the call of duty, will be given wings. Lastly, Judge Mireles reported about the Supervised Independent Living Program, where students had an opportunity to tour the dormitories at Texas A&M International University.

Hon. Julie Countiss from Houston announced that she is still familiarizing herself with her new judges and is sharing what she learns from the Children’s Commission with the Houston judges. She plans to hold Brown Bag lunch sessions to offer support, training, and to be available to answer questions for her colleagues.

Representative Stephanie Klick from North Richland Hills informed meeting attendees that legislative committee hearings and conferences would start in the coming weeks.

Hon. Gary Coley from Waco announced the grand opening of the CASA headquarters in Waco in March. Also, that *Unbound*, a book authored with the help of local children to highlight the need for collaboration to prevent human trafficking is now available for purchase. Judge Coley also shared that Waco and Seattle’s model for Human Trafficking was recently used as a model in Colorado.

Judge Coley reported that Senate Bill 2737, which focuses on restraints used on juveniles for court proceedings, and the attire of the child, is being evaluated for implementation. The goal is to have consistency and clarity around how to handle restraints, clothing, and procedural justice matters affecting the juvenile population. A round table for further discussion is scheduled for April.

Ms. Vicky Spriggs from Austin reminded meeting attendees the 2020 CASA calendar is available, with artwork contributed by a CASA staff member and cases that reflect actual cases. Judge Sakai was featured for April. Ms. Spriggs also invited members to view Texas CASA's 2019 Annual Report. CASA is conducting focus groups to examine how it can serve local communities and the state in the most effective manner. A judicial focus group was hosted in January and facilitated by Judge Rob Hofmann.

Ms. Spriggs reported that the normalcy guide work is ongoing, which is a publication on how child welfare advocates can promote normalcy amongst youth, such as dating, social media, and liability concerns.

Ms. Spriggs reported that CASA participates in a few of the Children's Commission workgroups including the Foster Care & Education Committee, Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care, Legal Representation Committee, and the Dual Status Task force. Ms. Spriggs introduced Mr. Andy Homer and Ms. Sarah Crockett as a part of CASA's public policy team. She expressed her gratitude to Mr. Homer for carrying on her duties while she was out of the office. Ms. Spriggs completed her report announcing the CASA Primer would take place March 9, in Austin, and there is now a learning center offered on TexasCASA.org.

Hon. Piper McCraw from McKinney reported about a successful National Adoption Day that took place in Collin County in November. Judge McCraw had the opportunity to participate in the adoption of a child, who had his whole kindergarten class, the high school band, and the drill team in matching t-shirts cheering him on. Judge McCraw expressed her appreciation of all involved in the successful event.

Judge McCraw shared that the CASA Collaborative Family Engagement has begun in Collin County. For the children that were not able to be immediately placed with family, this tool has allowed them to be reunited with their siblings, which allows family to remain in the child's life.

Judge McCraw has started offering Brown Bag lunches, inspired by Judge Darlene Byrne. Judge McCraw also spoke of a parent who received extraordinary support from the community which donated a car, assistance with obtaining a driver's license, and funding for one year of car insurance. Judge McCraw relayed her optimism that this parent has a strong foundation to maintain a safe home for her children.

Judge McCraw announced that the Texas CASA office in McKinney that was undergoing renovations in February had a grand reopening on March 26. Judge McCraw concluded her update by expressing her appreciation to Ms. Kristene Blackstone for enabling a child to be placed with family a few days before Christmas rather than waiting an additional 30 days for approval.

Hon. Susan Brown from Houston reported attending the Child Welfare Judges Conference that took place in October and was able to see a presentation on data by Ms. Kristene Blackstone and Ms. Katie

Elseth. When data was presented, Judge Brown was disappointed in the low numbers of permanency placement in her region. With the assistance of Mr. Dylan Moench and Katie Elseth, Judge Brown was able to take a closer look at the statistics and data in her area from associate judges and district court judges. Judge Brown hopes that by analyzing the data, judges in her region can explore permanency more quickly, while also keeping in mind the best outcome for all family members involved.

Judge Brown also holds Brown Bag lunches where judges discuss three cases and explore why those children remain in care, and the next steps to assist with exiting from care. Judge Brown announced that, with assistance from DFPS, service providers in Matagorda and Wharton Counties had a gathering to bring together families to increase access to meetings, drug treatment, and other services encourage continued progress. Judge Brown announced plans to expand this model to all six counties in her area, thus encouraging volunteerism in different areas of service and giving providers an opportunity to meet the judge and case worker.

Judge Brown also announced that a third CPC in her area was established in October 2019. Currently, the court hears cases from Harris County, but she anticipates that Matagorda County will join the docket soon. Judge Brown noticed a lack of communication between criminal courts, DFPS, and children's court, and she is encouraging collaboration between the courts to better assist dual status youth. Judge Brown noted that with these changes, courts can better assist parents with services and that similar practices can be implemented in other counties to serve the same purpose.

Hon. Darlene Byrne from Austin addressed meeting attendees about an ongoing issue related to children in foster care whose parents are not U.S. citizens. She has observed there is not the same sense of urgency to obtain permanency for these children and she is interested in data regarding how long the adoption process takes for children whose parents are not citizens of the United States.

Ms. Cindy Patrick from Austin sent a survey to philanthropists across the state to gauge their interest on learning more about child welfare. Fifty responses were received from across the state. Ms. Patrick plans to convene this group to discuss Community Based Care basics and the Family First Prevention Services Act. DFPS Commissioner Jaime Masters will welcome the new group and speak at the first meeting. The goal is to provide opportunities for coordination and advance practices in the child welfare system with philanthropic support.

Ms. Katie Olse from Austin thanked the Commission and for the acknowledgement of Ms. Katie Elseth. Ms. Olse shared that Ms. Elseth is available to assist with data analysis and interpretation. She also commented on TACFS' collaboration with the Children's Commission on the SCTIC, working with Ms. Jocelyn Fowler and Judge Darlene Byrne.

Ms. Olse shared that collaboration with Texas Permanency Outcomes Project was awarded a \$7 Million-dollar, five-year grant to the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing. The grant focuses on how foster care agencies can serve in a more supportive role for families. A two-year, pilot program will be rolled out to three areas of the state: Harris County, Region 2 (Corpus Christi), and the Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Olse shared that the projects are slated to start in the fall of 2020. Multiple trainings are also being offered around the state with a focus on community organizations that have

direct care of children, youth, and families, to support prevention and early intervention, with a focus on clinical work.

Ms. Olse expressed her gratitude to Judge Hofmann for his assistance to help educate judicial leaders, attorneys, youth, families, providers, and healthcare professionals about Community Based Care.

Ms. Olse also shared an update on the collaborative work with DFPS and Casey Family Programs, on the Families First Prevention Services Act, which has potential for significant change in Texas. Ms. Olse concluded her update with a request for meeting attendees to support the National Trauma Campaign urging Congress to adopt more trauma-informed policy.

Dr. Gary Blau from Houston expressed his gratitude to meeting attendees for incorporating youth voice, and the engagement of young people with lived experience in the child welfare reform process. Dr. Blau reported that primary care providers make up 75% of referrals for children who are referred to mental health services. he noted that at present pediatricians are primarily concerned with child mental health. As part of his job at the Hackett Center, Dr. Blau is exploring ways to broaden evidence-based practices and making use of the provisions of the federal FFPSA.

Dr. Blau also commented on the Building Bridges Initiative which started over 10 years ago in Nebraska, and is now in 17 states, including Texas. Dr. Blau expressed the importance of tracking young adults who have aged out of care and has conducted trainings with both DePelchin and Upbring focusing on necessary and timely supports for youth who have experienced residential treatment.

Dr. Blau concluded his report announcing a grant that was awarded to the City of Houston in partnership with the Baylor School of Medicine.

Ms. Elizabeth Farley from Austin introduced herself to meeting attendees. Ms. Farley represents Governor Abbott's office, noting her most recent position with Representative Four Price. Ms. Farley also works closely with DFPS focusing on the implementation of bills and the budget for the next legislative session. Ms. Farley offered her assistance to anyone she could be helpful to, concluding her report to the Commission.

Presentation from Mr. Felix Herrera

Mr. Felix Herrera from Austin gave a presentation on the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin. Mr. Herrera shared in-depth information on the Consulate and how it can assist with community affairs. The Consulate offers programs in education, culture, health, economic development, leadership training, and community engagement.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Ms.Carolyn Rodriguez of Austin, updated Commission meeting attendees on the nonprofit ChangeOne. She announced that they will be holding a fundraiser on Saturday and all proceeds will be going to the organization. Ms. Rodriguez will chronicle the story of ChangeOne once her service on the board concludes. She announced that she may be reaching out to a few judges to answer interview questions and requested that anyone interested in submitting a quote for the chronicle to

contact her. The Community Based Care Program in Austin has reached out to the youth of ChangeOne for feedback, she thinks it would be great if all regions did this. Ms. Rodriguez closed out her update by speaking on the challenges of helping a small nonprofit with no staff and no funding. She asked that anyone interested in meeting or sitting at a roundtable to discuss how to sustain funding contact her.

Ms. Barbara Elias-Perciful of Dallas expressed her gratitude to Governor Abbott for awarding the grant for two-day, 15-hour trainings on trauma for judges, attorneys, and stakeholders for the second year in a row. She announced that Dr. Bruce Perry will be the keynote speaker for the Child Protection Law Conference on March 26-27, 2020 in Houston. Ms. Elias-Perciful ended her update by requesting that the Children's Commission put together a task force or workgroup that focuses on the issue of misdiagnosis of foster children.

DFPS / CPS UPDATE

Ms. Sasha Rasco of Austin opened her update by speaking about the departure of Kristene Blackstone and how much she will be missed. She announced how excited the Department is about the new Family Connects Initiative, which allows nurses to visit new moms after birth. The Department has formed a framework group to figure out how to ensure that families have access to and are getting the necessary services under Family First. She announced to the group that they currently have an application out for their Texas Service Member Veteran Families Services and this year they opened it up statewide. Lastly, she announced they are planning a spring listening tour to get feedback on how things are going across the state.

Ms. Kristene Blackstone of Austin announced that the Child Protection Investigation held a Domestic Violence Conference to help strengthen our knowledge on the issue. CPI was awarded a grant that gives them the opportunity to seek out leadership coaching to assist with decision making and management. The Office of the Governor and DFPS have been working together on strategies to address child sex trafficking in Texas. DFPS has been setting up response teams when children are recovered from sex trafficking situations. She was very proud to announce that DFPS has cut down call wait times to seven minutes, which is a significant improvement and has raised the efficiency within the department.

Ms. Blackstone began her update on Child Protective Services by talking about the work they have been doing on Family First. They held a hearing on January 31 to talk about the intent of the bill, required conditions, and the work the department is doing. They were able to hear from stakeholders about services that the public would like to see. She was also able to meet with the Parent Collaborative Group and hear from parents with lived experience about services they feel could have helped them in their time of need. The Department is trying to partner with PEI and help them with evidence-based programs. They will give their recommendations to the legislature on September 1, 2020.

Ms. Blackstone gave an update about the progress of Community Based Care by announcing they will be going live with Stage 2 on March 1, 2020 in the Fort Worth area. Stage 2 means that conservatorship management services will be turned over to the local SSCC which in this area is Our

Community Our Kids and referred attendees to the Department's website for additional information, including the Department's implementation plan.

Ms. Blackstone closed her update by expressing how excited she is to meet with the new group of judges in Houston.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Ms. Anissa Johnson of Austin, on behalf of Mr. David Slayton, provided the update for Office of Court Administration. Ms. Johnson announced that they received funding to create new child protection courts across the state. The presiding judges will be meeting at their retreat next month to discuss the child protection courts across Texas.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE UPDATE

Hon. Rob Hofmann of Mason County announced that he and Judge Sage spoke at the Judicial Conference in Wyoming in October 2019. There is a lot of work being done with Community Based Care, when the program moves to your area there will be a program administrator that will serve as a liaison for that area.

Judge Hofmann announced that the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges is aware of the recommendation to double the current CIP budget. Judge Martinez-Jones will be going to Washington to discuss this request next week.

Judge Hofmann stated that the 10th Annual Hill Country Ad Litem will be held next Thursday, February 27, 2020.

Judge Hofmann commended Renee Castillo on the great work she has done transitioning into the new role of chair of the Foster Care and Education Committee.

Judge Hofmann ended his update by announcing how proud he was of the work of Texas A&M University and their implementation of Supervised Independent Living Programs at five new campuses. Lastly, Judge Hofmann announced that the Education Reach Conference would be held June 3-5, 2020 and encouraged all judges to attend.

NEW BUSINESS

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

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3



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

Report to Commission

September 18, 2020

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: The 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, to 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.

The Children’s Commission is collaborating closely with the Department of Family and Protective Services (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 Children’s Commission 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.

09/18/20 Update: Commission staff now participates on the DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention Prevention Framework Workgroup which has a goal of developing a prevention framework to guide communities throughout Texas. The workgroup met on June 22, 2020 and will meet again on September 29, 2020.

On August 4, 2020 the Commission staff partnered with DFPS to solicit input from a small group of judges in various regions of Texas related to the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) provisions in FFPSA. The meeting focused on judicial review of QRTP placements and the potential impact on various court processes including notice of the hearing, docketing, required evidence, and timing of review. Currently, there are no QRTP placements available in Texas and no state statutory framework for judicial review, but the discussion highlighted how these provisions could impact the judiciary and legal system in the future.

On September 1, 2020, the Commission, in partnership with PEI and Casey Family Programs, hosted a judicial discussion on prevention. After a brief overview of FFPSA and a public health approach to prevention, Judge Robin Sage of Casey Family Programs engaged approximately 40 judicial leaders from around the state in a dialogue about what prevention means and how judges can shift the paradigm from a reactive to a preventative child welfare system. Topics covered included encouraging high-quality legal representation, developing parent mentoring opportunities, collaborating with judges overseeing other civil matters, reducing repeat maltreatment, and fostering judicial leadership in communities throughout Texas. A session at the upcoming October 27, 2020 virtual Child Welfare Judges Conference will synthesize the ideas generated at the meeting and provide additional judicial education and practical insights into how judges can become more involved in prevention.

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.

09/18/20 Update: The FC&Ed Committee met on August 21, 2020 and received updates on the progress committee workgroups have made on projects this year and discussed potential projects for FY2021. The FC&Ed Committee identified the following as requiring attention in the next fiscal year:

- Credit recovery and compensatory education;
- School normalcy activities;
- Completion of an Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) tool kit; and
- Topics as identified in the 87th Texas Legislative Session.

The Education in Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) Workgroup drafted a series of color-coded, one-page resources for legal professionals, providers, and educators. The one-pager addressed to legal professionals is in the design phase and an online version will be made available soon with a hardcopy to follow. The workgroup is nearing completion of the provider and education one-pagers and anticipates all three resources will be ready for online publishing by the end of September 2020.

The Resources for Higher Education Professionals Workgroup created a PowerPoint slide deck 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. During the latest meeting on August 28, 2020, the workgroup determined that it would focus on creating a series of webinars utilizing the PowerPoint deck to provide relevant information to students, administrators, and support staff in the Fall of 2020.

The [Non-traditional Post-Secondary Education Workgroup](#) initially set out to provide guidance to students seeking non-traditional higher education pathways on what programs qualified for and how to access the Tuition and Fee Waiver, ETV funding, and other available funds for schooling and/or training programs. The workgroup completed a Tuition and Fee Waiver Q&A, ETV funds Q&A, and is nearing completion on eligibility determination tools for both sources as well as a high-level infographic highlighting important funding information for students. The workgroup has a target completion date of September 30, 2020.

The [Records & Information Sharing Workgroup](#) completed a records transfer and information sharing flow chart. The flow chart highlights how members of the child welfare and education systems should coordinate to ensure a smooth transition for students in foster care when a school transfer occurs. The finalized flow chart will receive some design prior to being released online.

The [Every Student Succeeds Act Workgroup](#) reconvened in May 2020 to re-prioritize their workgroup deliverables and discuss changes to the timeline. The workgroup decided to focus on drafting charts and one-pagers on school of origin, best interest decisions, transportation, and cross-system collaboration in order to provide much needed guidance to the child welfare and education communities this fall. The workgroup also determined that the completion of an ESSA tool kit should be the focus of the workgroup in the next fiscal year. The workgroup anticipates it will have their deliverables completed on a rolling basis, with the first being ready to be released online by October 2020. The workgroup also plans to incorporate these deliverables into the tool kit planned for FY2021.

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 SCTIC 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 entitled 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.

09/18/20 Update: Chaired by Judge Darlene Byrne of the 126th District Court in Travis County, the SCTIC Implementation Task Force has met twice since the last Commission report, on June 12, 2020 and September 11, 2020.

The [Policy and Practice Workgroup](#) is currently compiling a database of Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessments (TIOA) with the help of two research assistants from the Rees-Jones Center for Foster Care Excellence. Workgroup members received a presentation from the research assistants on their findings during the last meeting. Members will continue reviewing the database to determine the best way to utilize the information gathered. In March, the SCTIC sent proposed definitions for “trauma” and “trauma-informed” for DFPS to consider as it entered formal rule-making to adopt definitions by rule. DFPS is in the final stages of this rule-making process.

The [Training Workgroup](#) is nearing completion on a trauma-informed training database created in partnership with staff from the South Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC). Workgroup members identified their top priorities for creating targeted pdfs of training resources by audience. These audiences are: Caregivers; Child Welfare Professionals and Advocates; Juvenile Justice Professionals; Legal Professionals; Mental and Behavioral Health Professionals; School Professionals; and Victim Services Professionals. The Training Workgroup also continues to serve as the curriculum advisory group for the Children’s Commission staff in developing the Judicial Trauma Institute which was postponed in March 2020 due to COVID-19. The postponed Judicial Trauma Institute is currently being planned for February 2021 in a virtual format.

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 in the final stages of drafting the website concept paper which outlines the ideal characteristics for a host organization that would develop the Texas-specific site. The primary site audience will be family and caregivers, child welfare professionals, direct and non-direct service providers, and community collaboratives. In the interim, the Commission will create a landing page on its website for resources created or utilized by the SCTIC to begin building the components of a Texas-specific website.

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.

09/18/20 Update: The Commission will continue to work with child welfare and court stakeholders to build capacity to address trafficking throughout the state. Commission staff participates in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region VI Human Trafficking Workgroup to share 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.

09/18/20 Update: The Children’s Commission had to postpone the Round Table on Shackling in Juvenile Court scheduled for April 13, 2020 in Austin due to COVID-19. The discussion was re-scheduled for August 6, 2020 and followed an abbreviated two-hour format to best engage participants through a virtual meeting. The discussion was moderated by Judge Gary Coley of the 74th District Court in McLennan County and included judges, legislators, attorneys, Probation Chiefs, the Office of Court Administration, advocates, and researchers. The focus of the conversation centered on how wrist and/or ankle restraints are used when youth appear in juvenile courts throughout Texas. Commission staff is currently developing a report that summarizes the discussion and next steps.

No other Round Table discussions are scheduled at this time.

II.B. Objective: Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support and JIR correspondence and communicate 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 annual updates to the Commission’s Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book; and attends and participates in events on behalf of the Children’s Commission, including Round Tables, other conferences, and Trial Skills Trainings.

09/18/20 Update: The Supreme Court has two Jurists in Residence: Judge Dean Rucker, Presiding Judge of the Seventh Administrative Judicial Region of Texas and Judge Rob Hofmann of the 452nd District Court in Mason County. The JIR activities include continued 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. Since late February 2020, both JIRs have assisted the Children’s Commission in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on courts and judicial processes across the state.

Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters and Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) issued between May 2020 and September 2020 include:

- 09/02/2020: [Registration Now Open: 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference](#)
- 08/31/2020: [Now Available: Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Protection Cases](#)
- 08/21/2020: [Recordings Now Available from Ensuring Justice in Child Welfare Summit](#)
- 08/07/2020: [NCSC Free Virtual Child Welfare Summit on August 10-11, 2020](#)
- 07/29/2020: [Announcing Attorney Scholarships for Webcast Replays of TexasBarCLE's Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop](#)
- 07/20/2020: [Announcing Scholarship Opportunity for Child Welfare Judges and Attorneys to NACC 43rd National Child Welfare Law Virtual Conference](#)
- 07/14/2020: [Updated Save the Date for 2020 Annual Child Welfare Conference](#)
- 07/06/2020: [Reminder: Applications Due Tomorrow for Scholarships to NCJFCJ 83rd Annual Virtual Conference](#)
- 06/29/2020: [Announcing Judicial Scholarship Opportunity to NCJFCJ 83rd Annual Virtual Conference](#)
- 06/25/2020: [Health Insurance for Aged Out Foster Youth: Former Foster Care Children's Medicaid](#)
- 06/17/2020: [New Texas CASA Resources and Upcoming Training](#)
- 06/11/2020: [Upcoming Webinar on June 17th: Domestic Violence and Race Equity: TWAIS](#)
- 06/03/2020: [Webcast on June 5, 2020 and Job Opening at Commission](#)
- 05/29/2020: [Register Now: Webcast on Benefits of Using Technology in Child Welfare Cases on June 5, 2020](#)
- 05/21/2020: [Benefits of Utilizing Technology in Child Welfare Cases](#)
- 05/13/2020: [Announcement regarding the Children's Commission website, COVID-19 webpage and resource links](#)
- 05/08/2020: [Register Now: Webcast on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom on May 22nd](#)
- 05/01/2020: [Save the Date! Upcoming Webcast on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom](#)

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 to judges 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.

09/18/20 Update: The Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book was last 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, as well as new topical chapters on children with disabilities, Mexican Consular relations, and substance use disorders were added. The Bench Book is currently undergoing updates for publication in late October 2020. The current version of the Children's Commission'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 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 Child Protective Services (CPS) cases. All letters are posted on the Children’s Commission’s website.

09/18/20 Update: The Children’s Commission’s distribution list has grown to more than 4,100 Texas attorneys, judges, court staff, and stakeholders. See Strategy II.B.1 for a listing of Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) distributed between May and September 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 JARL communiques are announced once they are published.

09/18/20 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. A webpage dedicated to COVID-19 resources and announcements including emergency court orders related to child protection cases was created in March 2020. 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.

09/18/20 Update: On September 3, 2020, Judge Rob Hofmann moderated a multidisciplinary discussion related to the impact of parental substance use in Taylor County. Commission staff provided virtual meeting support to host approximately 30 participants including judges, attorneys, DFPS, the Community Based Care Single Source Continuum Contractor, law enforcement, substance use treatment and mental health service providers, and CASA. During the meeting, stakeholders discussed how to maintain child safety and support parents through recovery.

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).

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

09/18/20 Update: The CPC Advisory Council met on August 21, 2020, to discuss planned updates for CPCMS. The council reviewed the implementation of the customizable “Data Dashboard” as well as other enhancements and fixes included in the July 23, 2020 CPCMS update. The dashboard feature was noted as especially helpful along with other enhancements such as the ability to edit a child’s placement and enter the type of emergency extension when those are granted. The council identified further improvements to the dashboard as well as other improvements such as the ability to flag cases with jury demands and UCCJEA issues. The target date for the next CPCMS update is January 2021 and the next meeting of the CPCMS Advisory Council will be scheduled prior to the next update. The council also received an update on the dual status pilot project that will include an evaluation by the University of Texas at San Antonio, and the expectation that juvenile justice-related fields will be identified that need to be included into CPCMS for dual-status cases.

II.F.2. Strategy: Support increased child and family engagement through the use of video conferencing.

Background: 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 RTCs).

09/18/20 Update: The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced a monumental change in youth participation in court. In March 2020, the Office of Court Administration (OCA) provided licenses for the Zoom video conferencing tool to all Texas Courts to allow courts to conduct hearings over the platform. The necessity of virtual hearings and universal court access to the video conferencing technology has allowed more courts and youth to attend hearings virtually and for courts and youth to engage together and determine how to make best use of the virtual environment. In the third and fourth quarter of FY2020, all video conferencing hearings used Zoom and the Child Protection Courts have provided feedback supporting Zoom as the preferred video conferencing application. With the LifeSize video conference system nearing the end of its product life-cycle, the LifeSize platform will be retired in favor of Zoom licenses.

The Children’s Commission is committed to finding ways to maintain the benefits of this level of access and engagement of child and youth voice in court as courts transition back to more in-person hearings. OCA is developing an online scheduling tool to make scheduling hearings more convenient for the court, placement facilities, and DFPS caseworkers. This tool will accommodate any video platform, including Zoom. The online scheduler tool remains in development phase, with a pilot to be planned in FY2021.

II.F.3. 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 specialized 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 DFPS. Since March 2019, the Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court has assisted youth in the long-term care of DFPS. Participating courts include the 254th, 256th, 301st, and 303rd District Courts.

09/18/20 Update: There are no new specialty court partnerships or funding requests to consider currently, but efforts are underway for an evaluation of the Dallas Permanency Court model to examine the permanency and well-being outcomes in the court and identify which practices promote positive outcomes for children and youth. The Dallas Permanency Court was also highlighted on the Administration for Children and Families “All-in” Challenge website.

II.F.4. 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 dual status youth, and make other recommendations as may be necessary to improve outcomes for dual status youth. The task force was 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 Dual Status Task Force (DSTF) meeting. The DSTF 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.

09/18/20 Update: The DSTF initially created five workgroups to study and make recommendations on several aspects of serving dual status youth. The Task Force approved two definitions presented by the Definitions Workgroup, one for dual status youth who are concurrently involved in both systems and another for dual system 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 Texas Legislative 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 defining the role of a guardian ad litem in a dual status case. 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. At the March 3, 2020 meeting, the Task Force dissolved the Definitions Workgroup and approved the creation of a Data Workgroup to assess what data currently exists to get a better understanding of both the population size and the outcomes for dual system and dual status youth in Texas.

The Data Workgroup met on July 23, 2020 and August 26, 2020 to inventory what information and data are currently available and identify feasible solutions to better understand the dual status population both in serving youth directly and at an aggregate level. The final Task Force meeting will occur on December 4, 2020 and a report with Task Force recommendations will be completed in December 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.

09/18/20 Update: The last in-person Commission meeting was held on February 21, 2020, where the Commission welcomed Dr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Children’s Bureau and his Special Assistant David Kelly, to discuss federal perspectives on improving the child welfare system. Collaborative Council Member Felix Herrera made a special presentation about the services available through the Office of the Consulate General of Mexico. Ms. Karla Baker and her attorney, Ms. Danna Mayhall also presented on the importance of parent engagement and high-quality legal representation. The Children’s Commission organized a team of stakeholders, including CPS, PEI, and the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services to attend the State Team Planning meeting in Washington, DC from March 11-13, 2020. Since the beginning of March, the Children’s Commission canceled or postponed many events, including the May 22, 2020 Commission meeting, due to the COVID-19.

Despite the pandemic, many meetings, trainings, and events transitioned from in-person to virtual formats over time. The Children’s Commission has continued its partnerships with its many collaborators, with most events taking place online via Zoom or conference calls. All partnerships and stakeholder relationships are intact 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, which occurred weekly from March until May 13, 2020, and includes the executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, the Children’s Commission’s Collaborative Council, and other child welfare stakeholders.

On August 10-11, 2020, Commission Chair Justice Eva Guzman, JIRs Judge Dean Rucker and Judge Rob Hofmann, Commission staff, DFPS leadership, Office of Court Administration staff, and an attorney ad litem attended the Ensuring Justice in Child Welfare Virtual Summit. The Summit was a follow up on a 2019 Judicial Leadership

Summit in Minnesota. The Ensuring Justice Summit brought together over 500 participants from across the nation to address the issue of race equity in the child welfare system. Themes included empowering individuals with lived experience, distinguishing between poverty and neglect, providing early, high-quality legal representation, and using data to better understand disproportionality in the child welfare system. The Texas team will confer in September 2020 to refine the action plan submitted after the 2019 Judicial Leadership Summit and national partners will facilitate additional follow-up in October 2020.

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 staff serves on and advises the State PIP Team.

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 Round Table 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 DFPS 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.

09/18/20 Update: The Children’s Commission submitted the FY2021 Strategic Plan and Self-Assessment in July 2020 which contained multiple elements related to collaboration with DFPS. Commission staff continues to partner with DFPS on a regular basis and with regard to various projects including, but not limited to, training, trauma-informed care, education, legal representation, dual status youth, human trafficking, prevention, normalcy, child and family engagement, and statutory deadlines impacted by COVID-19. Currently, Commission staff is coordinating with DFPS to produce a judicial training that would complement the October 27, 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC). This additional opportunity for the judges to hear from the Department would include breakouts with their Regional Attorneys to discuss data, gaps, and processes, as well as relevant topics that would normally have been presented during our second day of the full, in-person CWJC. Additionally, the Commission is planning to partner with OCA to design and host a CPC Convening in July 2021 to provide judicial education to CPC judges and their court coordinators on issues specific to their data collection and case management system as well as best practices related to child protection cases.

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.

09/18/20 Update:

Legal Representation Committee: The projects discussed at the January 30, 2020 LRC meeting continued to advance despite COVID-19 and the Legal Representation Committee held its first virtual meeting August 28, 2020 to discuss existing projects as well as new projects for FY2021. The cancelation of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section Advanced CLE on March 26, 2020 and the transition of the August 5, 2020 Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect workshop to a virtual event forced an adjustment to the timeline for publishing the Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Protection Cases. Commission staff continued to refine the tool kit in response to the feedback from the LRC Committee and the Tool Kit Workgroup and the decision was made to publish an online version of the tool kit

while developing a strategy to publish and distribute a printed version. The final version of the tool kit was published on the Children’s Commission website and presented to the Legal Representation Committee on August 28, 2020 and announced in an Attorney Resource letter on August 31, 2020 along with a survey regarding logistics of distribution of printed tool kits.

Following up on the LRC’s request for materials assisting children youth and caregivers in understanding the role of the child’s attorney ad litem, the Children’s Commission has created a workgroup to oversee the design, creation, and the distribution of these materials. The workgroup held meetings on August 3 and August 24, 2020 and has identified potential projects such as a coloring book and animated video as materials for children ages 6-12, a comic book and youth voice video for youth ages 12-18, and an informational pamphlet for relatives and foster parents. The workgroup is working on identifying illustrators and animators, developing scripts, and working with youth organizations to ensure youth are able to make contributions to both the art and content of the materials. The next meeting of the workgroup will be September 21, 2020.

The Committee also discussed potential new projects for FY2021, many of which focused on developing resources to assist attorneys with the transition to virtual proceedings. The Commission is taking steps to refine the project list and develop action plans for creating resources. The next meeting of the Legal Representation Committee will be in the second quarter of FY2021.

Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation had six meetings of the full Task Force, two meetings of the Models of Representation Subcommittee, two meetings of the Quality, Standards, and Accountability Subcommittee, and one meeting of the Data Subcommittee. The meetings have been conducted virtually which resulted in some unexpected benefits to the Task Force. The Models of Representation Subcommittee was able to bring in representatives of organizations providing different models of representation from California, Massachusetts, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Washington over the course of three virtual question and answer sessions. Task Force members were able to obtain direct feedback about how each of the models worked and how they might be applied to Texas.

After analyzing the various models of representation, the Task Force did not reach consensus to recommend a specific model of representation to be the right fit for Texas. Instead, the Task Force concluded that its report should recommend the development of a representation pilot that includes attributes that the Task Force determined were essential elements of a quality representation model. The Task Force members began drafting the essential elements of a model pilot representation program and the recommendations for creating standards of representation and Commission staff has integrated them into a draft of the Task Force report. The Task Force will have one additional meeting of the Data Subcommittee on October 5, 2020 and one additional meeting of the full Task Force on October 30, 2020 before issuing its report in November 2020.

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.

09/18/20 Update: The Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation’s subcommittee on quality, standards, and accountability for attorneys met on April 3, 2020 to discuss what role standards of representation will play in the Task Force’s Report to the Texas Legislature in November 2020. The subcommittee is working to identify Texas-specific requirements that any standards must include to ensure quality legal representation.

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. JIR 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. The Children’s Commission partners with TBLS to provide reimbursement scholarships to cover Application and Exam fees for TBLS exam applicants who successfully pass the 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 (NACC) Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) Exam. The scholarship includes the NACC Red Book Training to help applicants prepare for the exam and a copy of the Red Book. Additionally, financial assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking re-certification of their CWLS every five years by way of a partial reimbursement for their exam fees upon request. As of June 2017, the CWLS 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 and judges.

09/18/20 Update: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Texas Board of Legal Specialization October 2020 Child Welfare Exam has been postponed to an online and remotely proctored exam in the Spring of 2021. A date for the exam has not been set, but 2020 applicants will receive full credit on their application and exam fees. The Children’s Commission will continue to partner with TBLS to provide scholarships to cover application and exam fees for applicants who successfully pass the Spring 2021 exam. TBLS will be accepting new applications for certification in 2021 and plans to hold a Child Welfare Exam in the Fall of 2021.

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 of parent mentors, parent advocates, parent attorneys, DFPS staff, 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.

09/18/20 Update: The Parent Resource Workgroup held meetings on March 6, 2020 and May 19, 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. The group has also discussed new projects for FY2021 including a Family Based Safety Services version of the Parent Resource Guide, a statewide round table to discuss reasonable efforts as well as identifying other supports parents need due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Parent Resource Workgroup held its last meeting on September 8, 2020.

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: Since 2017, the Children’s Commission has partnered with Access to Justice and the Children’s Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation (TLSC) to establish the Family Helpline for Strong Families and Safe Children (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.

09/18/20 Update: The Family Helpline was in the midst of transitioning to allow staff attorneys to work remotely when the COVID-19 pandemic began and was able to avoid any interruption of services. The Helpline noticed a significant dip in total call volume in March 2020 as the pandemic spread and shutdowns began. However, the calls to the Helpline increased each month in April, May, and June 2020. Due to a hiring freeze at TLSC, the Helpline has not been able to fill its open staff attorney position. Despite staff shortages and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Helpline has been able to maintain its traditional call volume. In the third quarter of FY2020, the Helpline completed 509 calls and provided assistance to over 474 individual callers about child-welfare legal issues across the state of Texas. The calls involved 498 adults and 855 children and originated from 92 counties across Texas.

The top three referral sources to the Helpline remain CPS, the TLSC Access and Visitation Hotline, and internet searches. The Helpline continues to fill the niche of providing legal information at the stage of cases where court-appointed attorneys are not available. The highest number of calls received this quarter concern the investigative stage of a CPS case, the second highest number of calls concern child safety issues without CPS involvement, and more calls were received about closed CPS cases than cases in the Temporary Managing Conservatorship stage.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Family Helpline suspended travel and in-person outreach efforts until conditions allow those activities to be conducted safely. However, access to virtual hearings across the state via the OCA YouTube feeds has allowed Helpline staff to observe hearings across 25 jurisdictions to gain a better understanding of local practices which allow staff to better inform callers. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Family Helpline was able to provide a virtual statewide CLE in collaboration with attorneys at TLSC which focused on the intersection of family violence, child custody, and mental health as well as a virtual CLE for the San Antonio Black Lawyers Association regarding information about the Family Helpline and tips for practitioners. Additionally, the Helpline is working on creating content to better assist callers, including a tool kit regarding interventions, guidance regarding safety issues between parents who are not in a relationship, and working with the Parent Resource Group on creating a Family Based Safety Services version of the Parent Resource Guide.

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 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 Notice and Engagement project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. OCA will market the Notice and Engagement 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 are populating according to search criteria. Reports/data will be produced by OCA and provided to the Children’s Commission.

09/18/20 Update: The number of Notice and Engagement system users continues to increase. Since February 21, 2020, an additional 114 users have registered bringing the total to 1,515. The numbers of users signing up for notification via text message has also increased. Since this notification option was added in 2018, 217 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 tool 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 in the case timeline for the benefits of increased compliance to be realized.

09/18/20 Update: In response to COVID-19, the Children’s Commission has compiled a list of experienced CPS mediators who are able to conduct mediation remotely, and has shared that information with courts who have requested assistance in identifying experienced mediators willing to practice in underserved jurisdictions as well as courts looking to expand how they utilize mediation. Following up on the Round Table on Mediation in CPS cases held on February 22, 2019, the Children’s Commission has formed a workgroup to analyze the issues that arose from the round table, address the challenges and opportunities of virtual mediation, and to 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 on October 16, 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, facilitate youth participation in court hearings, and support normalcy strategies and activities.

Background: In FY2018, the Children’s Commission helped the 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 and young adults living in shelters, halfway houses, and juvenile justice facilities to help youth build resiliency skills through structured experiential learning and positive interactions with adults and youth peers. In furtherance of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P. L. 113–183), the Children’s Commission held a Round Table on Normalcy 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 RioGrande Legal Aid.

09/18/20 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. Due to COVID-19, TNOYS will be unable to host PEAKS as planned in FY2020. Due to this timing, TNOYS incurred \$5,000 in costs for staff and contractor time in preparation for PEAKS which the Commission reimbursed. TNOYS reallocated the remaining grant funds to support integration of the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) programming into TNOYS’ June 2020 annual conference and to begin updating the DFPS Independent Living Guide.

Normalcy: The Commission provided \$26,000 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. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other events, the guide is still in progress with a goal for completion in December 2020.

Foster Youth Aging Out Guide: The Children’s Commission provided funding to Texas RioGrande Legal Aid to re-design and print the 7th Edition Foster Youth Aging Out Guide. The Guide has been printed and the online version can be found on the Texas Foster Youth Project website and is shared on the Children’s Commission website as a resource for youth voice and normalcy.

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.

09/18/20 Update: The Data Committee was re-organized in FY2020 to focus on using data to better understand the relationship between outcomes and practices and to develop ways to best utilize the data analyst position at TACFS. 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 met on May 14, 2020 to discuss how to evaluate and prioritize data committee projects in response to COVID-19. Some projects such as providing assistance to jurisdictions participating in the Judicial Trauma Institute and the Child Welfare Judges Conference data presentation had to be placed on hold until the primary projects could be adapted to pandemic conditions. Other projects were able to move forward, and the Children’s Commission facilitated a meeting on May 27, 2020 with the Texas Alliance for Child and Family Services (TACFS) and Casey Family Programs and other stakeholders to discuss the evaluation the PMC Specialty Court in Dallas. The Commission also facilitated a meeting on June 5, 2020 between OCA, DFPS, and Data Committee members to discuss data sharing and integration between the CPCMS and IMPACT systems.

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.

09/18/20 Update:

Child Welfare Judges Conference: The 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC), hosted in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary, is scheduled to convene virtually on October 27. The curriculum is based in large part on feedback from the Commission’s Curriculum Committee both by an annual conference call and this year, due to the need for a virtual roll out, by a follow-up survey, as well as specific judicial requests for further education in the 2019 CWJC post-event survey results collected by TCJ and the Commission. The Curriculum Committee is comprised of 19 judges from across the state, including Child Protection Court judges, Associate Judges, District Judges,

and a Presiding Judge, and their guidance was especially helpful as this annual event was modified and shortened in response to COVID-19. Topics which are on the 2020 CWJC agenda include the following: Welcoming Remarks by Justice Eva Guzman; a Keynote Address on the impact of COVID-19 on the court and child welfare systems; equity issues in child welfare proceedings; prevention and the role of judges; a panel discussion on Community Based Care; addressing educational needs for students in foster care during COVID-19; and substance use issues in CPS cases. All speakers are confirmed, and speaker preparation sessions are underway. Registration for this conference opened on September 2, 2020.

Judicial Trauma Institute: Based on a strong, ongoing interest in trauma-informed training indicated by judges, Commission staff designed and planned to host a Judicial Trauma Institute in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary to meet this need. The conference was originally structured to follow a “Beyond the Bench” format, track the flow of a CPS case, and involve participation with court teams. Judicial teams were composed by judges who invited the following members from their jurisdictions: 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. The conference was rescheduled from March 2020 to February 17-18, 2021 and will be offered virtually. The content is being developed by the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care (SCITC) Training Workgroup in partnership with Commission Staff. At this time, the modified JTI will likely be comprised of lectures and panels, with judges convening their court teams outside of the conference, at their convenience. The goal of the conference remains the same: that the judicial teams gain information and learn about practical tools and resources about what it means to be a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive court in CPS cases in order to implement these gains in knowledge in their jurisdiction. While the “Beyond the Bench” format will be modified for this virtual offering, the virtual format will allow the Commission to offer the JTI to more attendees than would be possible at an in-person training, and to archive the content in a way that allows it to be shared more widely and over a longer period of time.

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

Background: Child Protection Courts, also known as CPCs, 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 30 child protection courts operate in 143 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.

09/18/20 Update: Based on the success of the July 2019 CPC Convening at which CPC Judges and their court coordinators were trained on court management and data collection by the Commission in partnership with OCA, the Commission plans to host a similar CPC convening in July 2021.

Also, for the first time, Commission staff produced an in-house, judicially-led webcast designed for judges who preside over child protection cases. Moderated by JIR Judge Rob Hofmann, a live panel of five jurists addressed the many benefits of utilizing technology in child welfare cases. The webcast included tips on efficient docket practices in CPS cases as well as silver linings and success stories regarding child and parent engagement, virtual mediations, access to interpreters (which included a step-by-step demonstration of how a judge can invite a pre-arranged interpreter to join certain kinds of child protection hearings on Zoom), attorney preparedness and advocacy, and increased frequency of family time, to encourage judges to expand their use of technology to continue hearing CPS cases while hearings are conducted remotely. The webcast

was hosted on June 5, 2020 and viewed by 230 attendees. It was paired with a JIR communique that set forth all of the positive implications for continuing to use technology in CPS cases and is archived and available for free on the Children’s Commission website.

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

Background: 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. Eleven 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 broadcast 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.

09/18/20 Update:

Trial Skills Training: Due to continued health and safety concerns and restrictions on gatherings amid COVID-19, this year’s full in-person Trial Skills Training scheduled for late June 2020 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in San Marcos, Texas was postponed. However, TST Faculty successfully collaborated to present eight hours of Trial Skills Training CLE via Zoom webinar and Zoom meetings to this year’s TST students on June 24-25, 2020. Eighteen students attended three of the most critical lectures on case strategy, lay witnesses, and laying evidentiary foundation in remote hearings and participated in discussion groups per their practice area (prosecutors, parent attorneys, or ad litem), guided by TST Faculty members. This modified, virtual TST concluded with a 2-hour panel presentation by TST Faculty on the Future of Remote Hearings in Child Welfare Cases and virtual trial skills were incorporated into the TST presentations and discussions. Commission Staff and TST faculty planned on providing the June 2020 TST students with an in-person TST experience in February 2021 to complete their training; however, continued concerns and restrictions on gatherings make it necessary to provide the remainder of the June 2020 TST virtually. Commission staff will continue to work with TST faculty to translate the in-person design elements of the TST curriculum to create the best virtual training experience possible for the students. At this time, the Children’s Commission hopes to provide an in-person TST for a new cohort of attorneys in September 2021.

SBOT Annual One-Day Webcast with TexasBarCLE: Due to scheduling conflicts exacerbated by the unexpected conversion of in-person trainings to virtual trainings, as well as the closure of the Bar building itself, Commission staff and the TexasBarCLE staff have been unable to identify a day on which to coordinate this year’s day of taping in the

Bar's studio in which to produce 6 hours of live MCLE for child protection attorneys. Commission staff is hoping to partner with the Bar for a day in 2021 to coordinate this MCLE taping and in the meantime is considering providing a series of relevant and timely webcasts produced by Commission staff before the end of 2020. Topics will be selected in part from the feedback which the Commission received from the 2019 and 2020 post-event surveys of scholarship awardees. All prior years' webcasts produced by the Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE have been archived and made 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.

Online Classroom: Through TexasBarCLE, the SBOT currently offers a number of online continuing legal education (CLE) courses in the CPS Practice Area related to representation of all parties on the CPS docket. A total of 24 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 issues of interest to attorneys who work in the area of child welfare, including legal representation, statutory duties, and best practices. 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 by TexasBarCLE. It is anticipated that the 2020 Advanced Family Law's Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day CLE Track will also be added to the Online Classroom by the end of 2020 following the end of the video replays of that curriculum in October 2020. In the CPS Practice Area of their Online Classroom, TexasBarCLE provides discounts to court-appointed attorneys and scholarships to other viewers, while the Children's Commission provides scholarships to attorneys representing DFPS.

In-House Webcasts: Commission staff have 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 films in partnership with the State Bar in TexasBarCLE's studio. In response to current circumstances and the need for virtual training, Commission staff is developing more regular webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. In addition to the judicial panel webcast described above, the Commission hosted a 90-minute webcast on Zoom on May 22, 2020 for attorneys, on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom. Moderated by JIR Judge Rob Hofmann, a panel consisting of a prosecutor, an AAL, and a parent attorney discussed best practices and pitfalls to watch out for when preparing their cases and clients for a virtual hearing. This included how to facilitate the client's meaningful participation in a virtual hearing; how to properly elicit testimony on Zoom; how to properly enter evidence on Zoom; and how to review orders in a virtual setting. The live taping was viewed by over 230 participants, and this webcast has been archived on the Commission's website and is available for free to all viewers. This webcast was highlighted on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website as part of their All-In Courts Challenge. The Commission 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: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 DFPS Regional Attorney Conference will be divided into two virtual events in October of 2020 and two in-person conferences scheduled for the Spring of 2021. A half-day virtual training for legal support professionals will be presented on October 7, 2020 and two half-day virtual training sessions for DFPS attorneys will be presented October 27-28, 2020. The Legal Support Professionals Conference has been scheduled for May 6, 2021 in Corpus Christi and the Attorney Trial Skills and Conference has been scheduled for April 28-30, 2021 in New Braunfels. Agendas and presenters for all four conferences are still being finalized.

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 TexasBarCLE 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 SBOT 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.

09/18/20 Update: Due to health and travel concerns associated with COVID-19, many 2020 events were cancelled or converted to virtual events. Subsequently, many of the Commission’s scholarship processes were delayed. However, the Commission was able to offer judicial and attorney scholarships for several summer conferences.

The 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Conference: The Commission allocated \$10,000 to cover conference costs and scholarships for attendees for the Section’s 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course, which was scheduled for March 26-27, 2020 in Houston. Due to COVID-19, the 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Conference was cancelled. This conference will not be rescheduled.

Texas District and County Attorney Association Training: The Texas District and County Attorneys’ Association (TDCAA) had invited the Commission to again provide 12 hours of CPS-related MCLE for their CPS Track at their biennial Crimes Against Children four-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 planned to 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 had contracted with TDCAA to register up to 28 Regional Attorneys on Commission scholarships. COVID-19 concerns led the TDCAA to cancel their conference. This conference might be rescheduled by TDCAA for April 2021. If it is rescheduled, the Commission plans to partner with TDCAA to provide speakers and scholarships for DFPS Regional Attorneys as described above.

Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop: This year’s Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop was converted to a virtual event, and the live broadcast of the Workshop was held on August 5, 2020. The Commission allocated \$7,500 to cover 75 attorneys at \$100 each for registration to the live one-day workshop or any of the subsequent replays. Due to timing associated with editing the contract to reflect the many unanticipated changes this year, the Commission was unable to offer scholarships to the live virtual event on August 5th but was able to offer 75 registration scholarships to both video replays of the live virtual event in October 2020. The attorney scholarship application process closed on August 19, 2020, and 71 applications were received. The Commission will announce awardees no later than September 14, 2020.

NACC Annual Conference: The NACC’s 43rd National Child Welfare Law Virtual Conference was held on August 24-28, 2020. The Commission allocated \$10,000 to provide scholarships to 33 qualified Texas judges and attorneys for registration costs. The announcement received a huge response and a total of 61 applications were received. The Commission was able to reallocate a portion of the unused NCJFCJ scholarship funds in order to offer more scholarships to the NACC annual conference and awarded

registration scholarships to 52 attorneys and 4 judges for the 2020 NACC virtual conference. All scholarship awardees agreed to participate in either the live conference broadcast or to view the session replay videos no later than September 28, 2020 and to complete the post-event survey after completing their participation.

NCJFCJ Annual Conference: The NCJFCJ's 83rd Annual Conference transitioned to a virtual event this year and was held on July 19-22, 2020. The Commission allocated \$50,000 to 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 per person. However, since the event was converted into a virtual event, the Commission was able to offer judicial scholarships to cover the registration cost to attend the conference online. The Commission awarded 14 scholarships to Texas judges hearing child welfare cases. All scholarship awardees agreed to participate in either the live conference broadcast or to view the conference session replay videos no later than September 18, 2020 and to complete the post-event survey thereafter.

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.

09/18/20 Update: Commission staff have recently attended multiple trainings focused on equity including Courageous Conversations, American Bar Association sponsored trainings, and others. Staff have also been developing a session on equity for the upcoming Child Welfare Judges Conference on October 27, 2020. Additionally, staff have recently joined an effort of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section (CPLS) Multicultural Workgroup and the Travis County Child Welfare Racial Equity Collaborative (CWREC) to develop a mandated reporter training with a race equity focus. The training will also provide an overview of what happens once a reporter calls the Statewide Intake to provide a better understanding of the entire CPS process. The joint workgroup is currently reviewing existing mandated reporter trainings and evaluating current requirements by the largest reporter populations (educators, medical professionals, and police) to determine gaps and the best approach for this training.

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.

09/18/20 Update: Commission staff continue to monitor the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of ICWA, *Brackeen v. Bernhardt* (formerly *Brackeen v. Zinke*). The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments *en banc* on January 22, 2020 and Commission staff will make an announcement once the opinion is issued. The Commission continues to be a regular participant in the CIP ICWA Constituency Group monthly calls organized by the Capacity Building Center for Courts. Commission staff maintain contact with the three federally recognized Tribes in Texas during the COVID-19 pandemic and communicate any resources that may be helpful during this time.

Commission staff actively recruit tribal members to participate in Commission initiatives. A behavioral health staff from the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo serves on the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care.

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. 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.

09/18/20 Update: In FY2020, the Children’s Commission received approximately \$1.8 million in federal CIP funds for the 2020-2021 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, SBOT, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others. DFPS staff participate on the following workgroups and committees: Collaborative Council, Systems Improvement Committee, Data Committee, Training Committee, Legal Process and Practice, Dual Status Task Force, Foster Care & Education committee and workgroups, Parent Resource Workgroup, and on 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 of Texas in December of each year.

INSERT - TAB 4

Children's Commission Financial Report

FY 2020 BUDGET

FY 2019 Carry Forward	\$	1,668,768
FY 2020 State General Revenue	\$	7,500
FY 2020 Federal Distribution	\$	1,808,594 *
FY 2020 Available Funds	\$	3,484,862

FY 2020 OBLIGATIONS

	Budget	Expenses To-date	Budgeted Obligations
Operating	\$ 1,217,715	\$ (1,031,070)	\$ 186,645
Staff Directed Projects	\$ 147,500	\$ (37,582)	\$ 109,918
Grants	\$ 1,021,569	\$ (613,176)	\$ 408,393
Scholarships	\$ 96,500	\$ (23,628)	\$ 10,012
	\$ 2,483,284	\$ (1,705,455)	\$ 714,969 *
Funds Available at 9/10/20	\$	1,779,407	
FY 2020 Estimated Encumbrances	\$	178,731 *	
Estimated FY 2020 Carry Forward	\$	1,600,676	

FY 2021 PROJECTED BUDGET

Estimated FY 2020 Carry Forward	\$	1,600,676
FY 2021 Projected Federal Distribution	\$	1,826,680
FY 2021 State Appropriation	\$	7,500
Projected Funds Available for FY 2021	\$	3,434,856

FY 2021 PROPOSED OBLIGATIONS

Operating	\$	1,300,187
Staff Directed Projects	\$	129,500
Grants	\$	749,978
Scholarships	\$	97,000
Total FY 2021 Budgeted Obligations	\$	2,276,665
Projected Funds Available for FY 2021	\$	3,434,856
Total FY 2021 Budgeted Obligations	\$	2,276,665
Estimated Carry Forward FY2022	\$	1,158,191

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Collaborative Council Updates

Andrea Sparks, Director, Child Sex Trafficking Team, Office of Governor Greg Abbott submitted the following documents:

- Ending Child Sexual Exploitation in Texas: Progress and Hope
- Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocates Overview
- BE THE O.N.E. in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

Ending Child Sexual Exploitation in Texas: Progress and Hope

The Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT), created by the 84th Legislature, is a division within the Governor’s Public Safety Office. CSTT’s mission is to build sustainable capacity, enhance expertise, promote policies, and create new and leverage existing collaborations to:

- **Protect** children and youth from sexual exploitation by building their awareness of and resilience to child exploitation and by curbing demand for child sex trafficking.
- **Recognize** sexual exploitation by raising public awareness and by implementing screening tools to identify potential victims.
- **Recover** victims with protective and empowering collaborative responses.
- Support the **healing** of survivors through a variety of trauma-informed and responsive services and supports.
- **Bring justice** for survivors by holding exploiters (traffickers, buyers, and those who profit from exploitation) accountable.



PROTECT: Child sex trafficking is not limited to any race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or zip code. Traffickers prey upon vulnerability, and children and youth are inherently vulnerable. Sadly, these exploiters can often be the very people our children trust – friends, romantic partners, family members, teachers, and others. CSTT is implementing the following key prevention strategies: providing age appropriate, research-based prevention education to high-risk youth in the child protection and juvenile justice systems; partnering with the Texas Education Association and Texas Association of School Boards to develop and implement new policies that require school-based prevention education for educators and children; enhancing existing child abuse and sexual violence training and prevention programs to include age-appropriate education on sexual exploitation; funding programs that provide healthy connections and other protective factors for vulnerable youth, like Court Appointed Special Advocates and Boys and Girls’ Clubs; and reducing demand for exploitation by increasing efforts to deter and prosecute buyers, as well as by educating youth and young men about the harms of commercial sex so that they do not become consumers.



CEASE Texas (Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation) is engaging male volunteers in Austin, DFW, Houston, Galveston, Midland, and San Antonio to raise awareness in their communities about exploitation, educate young men about the harms of commercial sex, and to deter and interdict buyers online. For more information, visit ceasetexas.org

CSTT’s website for more resources: www.gov.texas.gov/cstt

RECOGNIZE: Victims of sexual exploitation generally do not outcry, and exploitation often continues for a significant time before victims are identified by others. To identify victims sooner, CSTT is raising public awareness through the Can You See Me? campaign, a partnership with A21, Outdoor Advertising Association of Texas, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, local anti-trafficking coalitions and taskforces, and First Lady Cecilia Abbott. Billboards in 70 Texas markets, radio PSAs, short educational videos, and social media posts educate the public about the subtle signs of trafficking and urge reporting to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, at 1-888-3737-888.

#CanYouSeeMe #TexasSeesYou



The Commercial Sexual Exploitation – Identification Tool (CSE-IT) is being used by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, and hundreds of county probation offices and child-serving agencies to identify likely victims. Once youth are screened as likely victims with a score of “Clear Concern,” they are assessed for victimization and provided services to start the healing process. As of 12/31/2019, 19,471 Texas youth have been screened. Most of these are high risk youth. 2,556 (13.13%) of youth screened scored “Clear Concern,” which means they had high levels of research-based indicators of exploitation and have likely been exploited.

RECOVER: CSEY (Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth) advocates are trained to respond to calls from first responders and others to provide crisis intervention, ongoing case management, and a healthy, supportive long-term relationship for survivors up to age 22. They work under a set of minimum standards and best practices developed by CSTT and Praesidium. As of December 2019, CSEY advocates have served over 1,369 youth, two-thirds of which had been recovered from crisis by law enforcement or other first responders.

CSEY Advocacy Agencies Providing Crisis Response, Long-Term Supportive Relationships & Case Management

NORTH

1. **For the Silent** (Smith & Gregg)
2. **Traffick911** (Collin, Dallas, Denton & Tarrant)
3. **Unbound Fort Worth** (Tarrant)

SOUTH

1. **BCFS Common Thread** (RGV)
2. **Refugee Services of Texas** (Cameron & nearby counties)

EAST

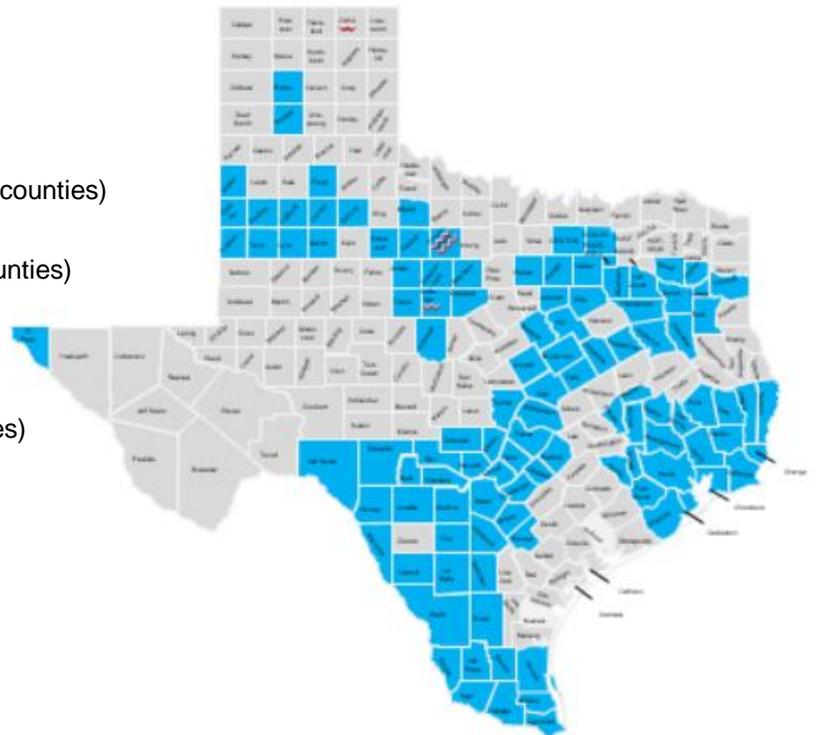
1. **BCFS Common Thread** (Harris & contiguous counties)
2. **Harvest House** (Jefferson)
3. **Refugee Services of Texas** (Harris)
4. **The Landing** (Harris & 5 nearby counties)
5. **Unbound Houston** (Brazoria & Galveston)
6. **YMCA International** (Harris & contiguous counties)

WEST

1. **Family Support Services** (Potter & Randall)
2. **Paso del Norte Center of Hope** (El Paso)
3. **Regional Crime Victim Crisis Center** (Taylor)
4. **Voice of Hope** (Lubbock & 11 nearby counties)

CENTRAL

1. **Alamo Area Rape Crisis Center** (Bexar)
2. **AWARE Central Texas** (Bell)
3. **BCFS Common Thread** (I-35 Corridor: San Antonio to Killeen)
4. **Refugee Services of Texas** (Travis)
5. **SAFE** (Travis)
6. **Unbound Waco** (McLennan & 5 nearby counties)



RECOVER : CSTT and the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas partner to develop Care Coordination processes for multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) to develop recommendations for, and facilitate access to, services for child victims. As of February 2020, 523 child victims were provided care coordination in Harris*, Dallas, Tarrant, and Comal counties. In 2020, care coordination will be available in Bell, Bexar, Collin, Denton, Jefferson, Kerr, McLennan, Montgomery, and Travis counties. (*Although the Children’s Assessment Center is part of the MDT, Harris County Protective Services serves as the Care Coordinator in Harris County.)



Juvenile Justice Based Programs:

- **Texas Juvenile Justice Department:** Interventions for Victims of Complex Trauma
- **Bexar County:** New Life Expansion Project
- **Dallas County:** Poetic
- **Harris County:** Girls Inspiring Future Triumphs (GIFT)



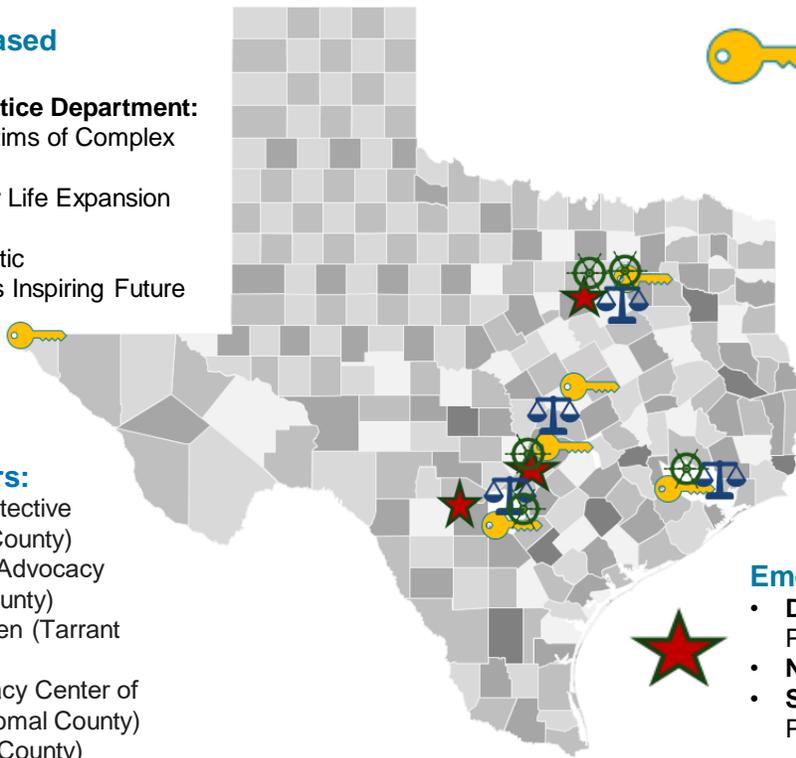
Drop-In Centers:

- **Austin:** SAFE’s Seton House
- **Dallas:** New Friends New Life’s Youth Resource Center
- **El Paso:** El Paso Center for Children
- **Houston:** The Landing
- **Killeen:** CTYS’ Project Hope
- **San Antonio:** Roy Maas’ Centro Seguro



Care Coordinators:

- Harris County Protective Services (Harris County)
- Dallas Children’s Advocacy Center (Dallas County)
- Alliance for Children (Tarrant County)
- Children’s Advocacy Center of Comal County (Comal County)
- ChildSafe (Bexar County)



Emergency Shelters:

- **Dallas/Forth Worth:** Jonathan’s Place RESET Emergency Shelter
- **New Braunfels:** SJRC
- **San Antonio:** Roy Maas’ La Puerta

SUPPORT HEALING: CSTT is partnering with public and private organizations to develop an array of victim-centered, trauma-informed services to meet the immediate and long-term needs of survivors.



Community Case Management and Counseling Programs for Adults:

- **Dallas, Fort Worth:** Valiant Hearts
- **Houston:** Rescue Houston, City of Houston Direct Services for HT Victims, YMCA International Counseling, United Against Human Trafficking
- **Lubbock:** Family Counseling Services of Lubbock
- **Pharr:** City of Pharr HT Liaison



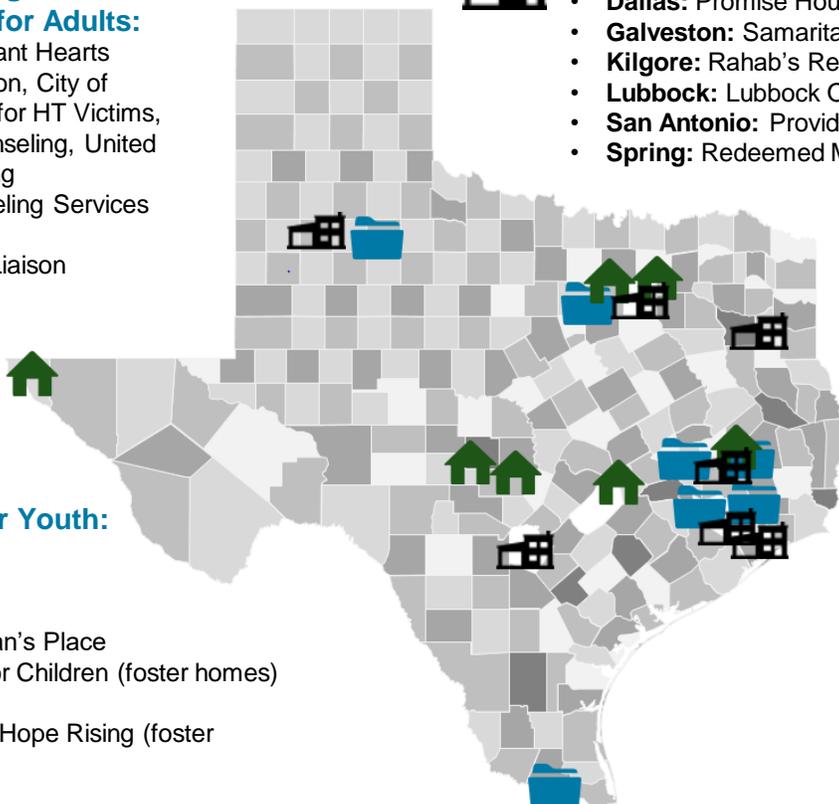
Residential Programs for Adults:

- **Dallas:** Promise House
- **Galveston:** Samaritan Woman at the Well
- **Kilgore:** Rahab’s Retreat and Ranch
- **Lubbock:** Lubbock Open Door
- **San Antonio:** Providence Place
- **Spring:** Redeemed Ministries



Residential Programs for Youth:

- **Bastrop:** The Refuge
- **Bulverde:** SJRC
- **Dallas:** Promise House
- **Dallas/Forth Worth:** Jonathan’s Place
- **El Paso:** El Paso Center for Children (foster homes)
- **New Braunfels:** SJRC
- **Houston:** Freedom Place, Hope Rising (foster homes)



CSTT's 5 Regional Administrators help communities build their continuum of care for survivors and also support prevention, awareness, and justice activities. They provide child sex trafficking training, training on the CSE-IT screening tool, strategy sessions with local stakeholders to identify and fill gaps in the continuum of care, and facilitation of care coordination development in conjunction with Children's Advocacy Centers.

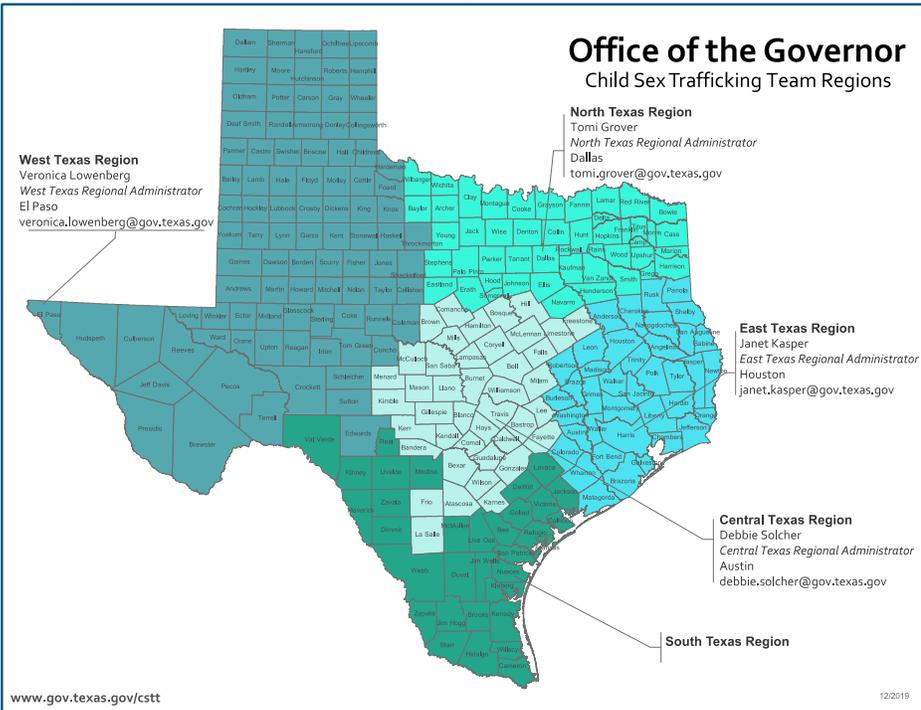
BUILDING EXPERTISE: CSTT helped fund research by the University of Texas on exploited youth in Texas, which resulted in a report titled "To the Public, Nothing Was Wrong with Me': Life Experiences of Minors and Youth in Texas at Risk for Commercial Exploitation."

CSTT curates a document of relevant research articles, complete with summaries from the last three to five years.

The articles are primarily from peer-reviewed journals and are organized by CSTT's five overarching goals: protect, recognize, recover, support healing, and bring justice.

CSTT has launched a monthly webinar series for stakeholders. Interested individuals may sign up for updates about these webinars as well as access archived webinars through the CSTT website: www.gov.texas.gov/csstt.

CSTT developed, in partnership with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, a Roadmap for Texas Communities to Address Child Sex Trafficking. The Roadmap provides research, emerging practices, lessons learned, and resources for communities to effectively engage in the fight against child sex trafficking

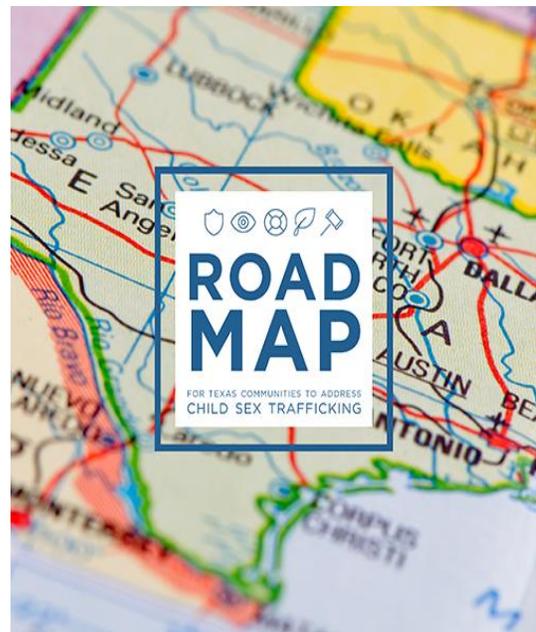


BRING JUSTICE: CSTT grants are funding training for the criminal justice system as a whole and funding dedicated positions in Dallas, Harris, Montgomery, and Jefferson Counties and at the Office of the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute child sex exploitation.

CSTT is partnering with Collective Liberty to provide 4.5-day intensive and hands-on experiential workshops for law enforcement and prosecutors on eradicating human trafficking.

CSTT works closely with the Governor's Budget and Policy Division to ensure that Texas laws and the state budget reflect the governor's goal of eradicating child sexual exploitation. Under Governor Abbott's leadership, new laws have been enacted to increase penalties against exploiters and to streamline processes by which survivors can clear their criminal records to obtain employment and housing. New appropriations have also been established to equip law enforcement, child welfare, and other systems with resources to combat human trafficking.

and align themselves with statewide strategies and goals.



For more information about CSTT and its strategies, contact CSTT via its website: www.gov.texas.gov/csstt.

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CSEY ADVOCATES

Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocacy is an essential part of the Governor's Office Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) Texas Model for addressing child sexual exploitation. CSEY Advocacy programs are nonprofit agencies that engage employed advocates to provide individualized 24/7 crisis response and ongoing long-term trust-based relational support to children and youth survivors.



Serving Youth Under Age 22 Who:

- Are identified as likely exploited by "Clear Concern" score on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification Tool (CSE-IT)
- May be referred by law enforcement, medical providers, child welfare, other first responders, community members, or survivors themselves from identification of circumstances which suggest exploitation
- May be in out-of-home juvenile justice or child welfare placement or at home

CSEY Advocates Provide:



**Crisis
Response**



**Basic
Needs**



**Personal
Support**



**Case
Management**



Advocacy



**Support in
Justice
Activities**

CSEY Advocates are dispatched by first responders immediately upon recovery of a survivor and meet the youth where they are --literally/geographically and figuratively, whether the survivor is or is not yet cognizant of their own victimization and need for help. They also respond immediately to calls from youth in crisis and as soon as possible when a survivor is newly identified but in a safe and stable environment. They commit to continue in a supportive relationship with the survivor throughout their progression through the stages of healing including relapse - without judgment.

These field-based advocates work collaboratively with stakeholders in support of the victim-centered goals for survivors, law enforcement, child welfare, juvenile justice, healthcare, and other partners. They help survivors gain the strength needed to participate in investigation/prosecution of exploiters.

CSEY Advocacy agencies are supported by CSTT with funding, training, and/or technical assistance, and abide by a set of common risk management minimum standards and best practices developed by CSTT in coordination with Praesidium (<https://website.praesidiuminc.com/wp/>).



CSEY Advocates Fill the Gaps in Between Services:

Recovery, Healing, Justice, Thriving

LE Victim Advocate

Drop-In Center / Emergency Shelter

Sexual Assault Advocate

Hospital Social Worker

Prosecutor's Victim Witness Coordinator

DFPS Caseworker

CASA

Juvenile Probation Officer

Residential Placement Caseworker

CSEY Advocates are designed to fill gaps between services and systems and sustain long-term supportive relationships, during and after, any survivor's system engagement. CSEY Advocates give additional support to youth rather than duplicate or interfere with existing protective systems.

CSEY Advocate

CSEY Agencies:

NORTH

1. [Traffick911](#) (Collin, Dallas, Denton & Tarrant) (817.575.9923)
2. [Unbound Fort Worth](#) (Tarrant & Denton) (817.668.6462)

SOUTH

1. [BCFS HHS](#) (RGV) (888.373.7888)
2. [Refugee Services of Texas](#) (Cameron & nearby counties) (888.373.7888)

EAST

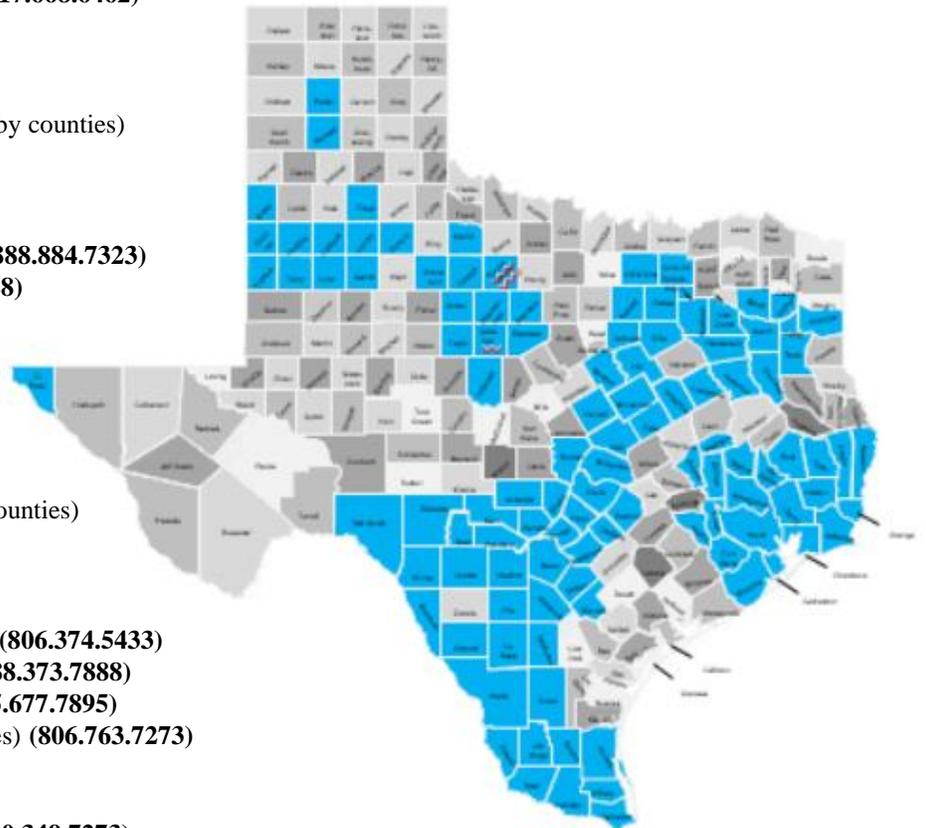
1. [BCFS HHS](#) (Harris & contiguous counties) (888.884.7323)
2. [For the Silent](#) (Smith & Gregg) (888.373.7888)
3. [Harvest House](#) (Jefferson) (888.373.7888)
4. [Refugee Services of Texas](#) (Harris) (888.373.7888)
1. [The Landing](#) (Harris) (888.373.7888)
2. [Unbound Houston](#) (Brazoria & Galveston) (346.202.4299)
7. [YMCA International](#) (Harris & contiguous counties) (888.373.7888)

WEST

1. [Family Support Services](#) (Potter & Randall) (806.374.5433)
2. [Paso del Norte Center of Hope](#) (El Paso) (888.373.7888)
3. [Regional Victim Crisis Center](#) (Taylor) (325.677.7895)
4. [Voice of Hope](#) (Lubbock & 11 nearby counties) (806.763.7273)

CENTRAL

1. [Alamo Area Rape Crisis Center](#) (Bexar) (210.349.7273)
2. [AWARE Central Texas](#) (Bell) (254.813.0968)
3. [BCFS HHS](#) (I-35 Corridor: San Antonio to Killeen) (888-884-7323)
4. [Refugee Services of Texas](#) (Travis) (888.373.7888)
5. [SAFE](#) (Travis) (512.267.7233)
6. [Unbound Waco](#) (McLennan & 5 nearby counties) (254.230.0872)



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BE THE O.N.E. in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act from another person. Under law, children cannot consent to sexual exploitation and therefore, no force, fraud, or coercion is required to meet the definition of child sex trafficking.

What can you do about Human Trafficking?

BE THE O.N.E. – Observe. Notify. Empower.

OBSERVE indicators of trafficking. Note that victims may seem complicit in their exploitation due to the fear they have of their traffickers or the trauma bonds the traffickers create to keep them from finding freedom.



Sex trafficking:

- Changes in school or work attendance, habits, friend groups, vocabulary, demeanor, and attitude
- Use of alcohol or drugs
- Older boyfriends, friends
- Sudden appearance of luxury items — e.g., manicures, designer clothes, purses, gift cards
- Sexually provocative clothing
- Tattoos or branding
- Multiple phones or social media accounts; hiding these
- Provocative pictures posted online or stored on the phone
- Unexplained injuries and health problems
- Social interaction and schedule being strictly controlled by someone else

Labor trafficking:

- Third-party control of schedule and social interaction; works excessively long or unusual hours
- Evidence of violence: bruises, swelling, scarring, etc.
- Living where the individual works
- Housing, food, hygiene products, transportation all being supplied by the employer
- Irregular pay periods
- Recruited through false promises related to citizenship or working conditions
- Inability to speak English
- Identification documents or money are being held by a third-party
- Malnutrition, dehydration, exhaustion; untreated disease or dental and/or vision problems; chronic pain — e.g., back pain, muscle strains, etc.



NOTIFY 911 if an emergency.

Otherwise, contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-888-373-7888**. You can also text "Help" or "Info" to 233733 or email Report@PolarisProject.org. For online exploitation of children, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at **1-800-843-5678** or report it at www.missingkids.org.



EMPOWER yourself and others to prevent trafficking and empower survivors to find freedom

Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware of the signs to look for and ask questions if you have concerns• Monitor social media• Do not blame your child or assume behavior is simply acting out• Establish yourself as a safe person to talk to about anything• Contact NCMEC for help with concerns about in-person or online contacts at www.missingkids.org or 1-800-843-5678
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid unsafe situations• Know who you are talking to online• Learn about how traffickers find and lure their victims• Establish a relationship with a trusted adult to talk to about uncomfortable situations• Contact NCMEC for help with concerns about in-person or online contacts at www.missingkids.org or 1-800-843-5678
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn more by watching Be the One at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/humantrafficking• Give your time or your financial contribution. For a list of organizations helping victims in your area, visit: www.humantraffickinghotline.org• Share information from trusted organizations and raise awareness within your business, church, school, or other circle of influence BY-NC• Support high risk populations such as homeless or foster youth to reduce vulnerability• Become an informed consumer to ensure your clothing, food, and other goods are not produced by child or forced labor
Prevention Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Office on Trafficking in Persons provides resources and guidance on human trafficking prevention and victim assistance: www.acf.hhs.gov/otip• A21 raises awareness through the Can You See Me? Campaign and free student curriculum: www.a21.org• Love146 offers a variety of training and resources for youth, caregivers, and professionals: www.love146.org• Netsmartz provides free online safety resources and age-appropriate lessons: www.netsmartz.org• Unbound offers education and training for students, educators, and parents: www.unboundnow.org/kss

To learn more about how you can Be the One in the Fight Against Human Trafficking, please see: www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/humantrafficking

<https://gov.Texas.gov/cstt>



Office of the Texas Governor
Child Sex Trafficking Team