



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

**Texas Court Improvement Program (CIP)
2021 Annual Self-Assessment Report**

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Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
Court Improvement Program
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State Court Improvement Program 2021 Annual Self-Assessment Report

This self-assessment is intended as an opportunity for Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) to review progress on CIP projects, joint program planning and improvement efforts with the child welfare agency, and the ability to integrate CQI successfully into practice. The self-assessment process is designed to help shape and inform ongoing strategic planning and should include meaningful discussion with the multi-disciplinary task force and candid reflection of key CIP staff. The self-assessment primarily focused on assessing efforts undertaken to date while the strategic plan maps out efforts going forward in more detail. Questions are designed to solicit candid responses that help CIPs apply CQI and identify support that may be helpful.

I. CQI Analyses of Required Projects *It is ok to cut and paste responses from last year, updating according to where you currently are in the process, and, if you do so, highlight text to show anything that is new.*

Joint Project with the Child Welfare Agency:

Provide a concise description of the joint project selected in your jurisdiction.

- To improve permanency outcomes for children within 12 months of entering foster care.

Identify the specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome(s) this project is intended to address.

- Permanency.

Approximate date that the project began:

- Fall 2016.

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

- Implementation and evaluation.

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

- Achieving permanency outcomes for children within 12 months of entering foster care is an ongoing problem in Texas.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.

- By examining statewide trends and region-level data analysis, courts will better understand and be able to address factors contributing to children and youth not obtaining permanency within 12 months.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

- The project consists of a child welfare data plenary presentation by the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS) to members of the judiciary at an annual conference designed specifically for judges hearing child welfare cases. The project also includes breakout sessions between judges and DFPS regional directors to discuss region-specific data elements and permanency outcomes. This was achieved in person at the annual judicial conferences through 2019. However, due to COVID-19 concerns, the CIP and DFPS offered a "Day with DFPS" in 2020 as a stand-alone judicial education opportunity which focused on educating the judiciary with data and updates from the Department. The conference and data presentations will be in person in October 2021.

- Due to the expansion of Community Based Care (CBC), Single Source Continuum Contractors responsible for case management and placement are also included in the regional breakout presentations with judges serving CBC catchment areas, beginning in 2020.
- In April 2019, the CIP executed an agreement with the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (Center) to analyze 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 Center also participates in the data presentation at the annual judicial conference.
- As part of the PIP, DFPS annually provides aggregate data to the CIP and judiciary with identified trends impacting courts. (PIP Item 5.1.6)

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

- DFPS continues to participate in the Children's Commission's annual judicial conference and provide data which will be reviewed by DFPS regional directors. Due to COVID concerns, in 2020 DFPS and the Children's Commission partnered to provide a separate judicial education offering focused exclusively on updates from DFPS to the judiciary (including data and meetings between the judiciary and their DFPS regional directors to review and discuss region-specific data elements and permanency outcomes). (PIP Items 5.5.1 and 5.5.2)
- Permanency was a focus both at the pre-conference and at the annual statewide judicial conference held in October 2019. The pre-conference provided an in-depth analysis of permanency for older youth in foster care. At the conference, judges and DFPS regional directors discussed each positive permanency outcome, examined the factors that lead to delays, and identified possible solutions. As a follow up to the permanency breakout sessions at the 2019 judicial conference, the CIP distributed a short tip sheet to judges about best practices and identified solutions to promote positive permanency.
- The goals of the CIP partnership with the Center include consulting with judges on methods for capturing and utilizing court-specific data, staying current on emerging child welfare and legal trends and best practices, and communicating information that empowers judges to improve their court operations and practices. Through this partnership and collaboration, the three major components of the child welfare system (the state child welfare agency, the foster care provider network, and the courts) will apply their experience with internal CQI processes in a collective manner that will help Texas further improve outcomes for children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?

- All CIP projects and progress are tracked quarterly and reported to the Children's Commission and Systems Improvement, Legal Practice and Process, Training, and Data Committees in February, May, and September. Judges are provided with pre-event and post-event surveys following each annual judicial conference. Feedback from the surveys is used to inform the project. For example, when the breakouts were organized by permanency outcome rather than by region, participating judges provided feedback that they preferred time with the regional director in their area and that several courts wanted to move beyond regional data to county-specific information.

Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?

- In response to COVID-19, the Supreme Court of Texas issued multiple orders modifying or suspending deadlines and procedures in child welfare cases. There is now a staggered timeline to

return to statutory deadlines and procedures, but many cases have been extended beyond 12 months without a final order. The Children's Commission and DFPS will continue to track the impact of COVID-19 on permanency outcomes in Texas and will present related information to the judiciary at the annual conference in the Fall.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

- None identified at this time.

Hearing Quality Project:

Provide a concise description of the hearing quality project selected in your jurisdiction.

- A retrospective and prospective data analysis of the practices employed by the Permanent Managing Conservatorship Court as well as other resources and tools to encourage youth engagement in court hearings.

Approximate date that the project began:

- Winter 2019.

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

- Evaluation.

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

- The Texas Family Code requires that youth attend permanency review hearings, and places additional duties on attorneys ad litem, judges, and DFPS to meet with children in advance of court hearings. Despite having statutes in place, the practice of involving youth in the court process continues to be a challenge, and meaningful participation by youth remains the exception and not the norm. This lack of involvement results in youth feeling disconnected from the process and judges not reaping the benefits of the input from youth.
- There have been many studies on the issue of youth voice and youth involvement. There is consensus that youth in foster care repeatedly express the desire to be involved in decisions about their lives because it gives youth a sense of control, helps them understand the process, and promotes healing. Direct contact between the court and the youth also benefits judges. Simply put, youth involvement in court proceedings results in better quality hearings.
- In January 2019, the CIP began funding a specialty court in Dallas County to serve youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) of the state. The Dallas County PMC Court is modeled after the Harris County PMC Court, which has been very successful. Both the Harris County and Dallas County PMC Courts use the Office of Court Administration (OCA) Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) to manage cases. CIP funding for the Dallas PMC Court ended in August 2019 and the court is now funded through a General Appropriation from the Texas Legislature. (PIP Item 5.6.1)

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.

- By increasing youth participation in court proceedings and service planning, youth will feel more engaged, well-being will be a greater area of focus, and the quality of review hearings and legal representation in general will be enhanced.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

- The CIP collaborates with child welfare partners to facilitate and elevate youth input into policy, legislation, and practice.
- The Dallas PMC court completed Years One and Two of hearing cases and the initial permanency and well-being outcomes are promising. (PIP Item 5.6.2)
- A team comprised of the Dallas PMC Court Judge, regional and state DFPS leadership, CIP staff, and the CIP data analyst attended the Capacity Building Center for Courts Permanency Workshop in February 2020. The Texas team agreed to evaluate the Dallas PMC Court, including the development of a practice model for the court. The study will include a retrospective analysis of the Harris County PMC Court data and a prospective evaluation of the Dallas PMC Court.
- The CIP also provides training and judicial tools such as bench cards and communiques regarding statutory and practice changes so that youth will experience high-quality hearings and court proceedings, and hopefully improved permanency outcomes, including exiting foster care sooner.
- The CIP will continue to increase awareness about the law, the importance of youth voice, reducing barriers to participation, and encourage child welfare stakeholders to adopt and implement appropriate policy, legislative, and practice changes that ensure youth voice is regularly included and considered.

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

- The Capacity Building Center for Courts developed a work plan and logic model for the Texas team following the February 2020 Permanency Workshop. The recommendation was for a fidelity assessment, measurement of outputs, and summative evaluation. The Texas team includes the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies, The University of Texas at Arlington, DFPS, and the Dallas and Harris County PMC Court judges.
- The Children’s Commission’s Child Protection Law Bench Book (Bench Book) includes a topical chapter on the importance of youth voice and youth appearance and participation in court proceedings.
- The Bench Book also includes ABA Bench Cards on interviewing children as well as bench cards with specific inquiries about the child’s attendance and the attorney ad litem and other parties’ obligations to communicate with the child and help ensure the child’s voice is heard.
- The CIP supports a video conferencing project, which enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency review hearings without being physically present in the courtroom. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OCA provided Zoom licenses for all Texas courts. It is anticipated that Zoom will be the technology utilized for video conferencing moving forward. Judges report increased youth and family engagement due to the ability to participate in virtual hearings and utilize breakout rooms for confidential conversations. Judges anticipate these benefits can continue even when in-person proceedings resume.
- In June 2020, Commission staff produced a 60-minute webcast entitled “Benefits of Utilizing Technology in Child Welfare Cases.” The live panel discussion was facilitated by the Jurist in Residence and included five judges who shared their experiences with virtual child welfare hearings and related silver linings. Topics included greater child and parent engagement and how technological benefits can be used to advance permanency for children in care.
- In January 2021, Commission staff coordinated a District Judge who presented at Texas Center for the Judiciary’s Family Justice Conference on the topic of “Promoting Positive Permanency Through

All Stages of a CPS Case.” Youth voice and youth involvement was emphasized at every stage of the CPS case, along with the importance of judicial leadership in promoting high-quality hearings and court proceedings, and hopefully improved permanency outcomes, including exiting foster care sooner.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?

- The PMC Court evaluation will include an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and may include individual interview tools or surveys as well as agency and stakeholder interviews, focus groups, or surveys.
- CIP will collect information through reports from partners, by monitoring the number of attorneys viewing CLE offerings, and by monitoring how frequently the related pages and sections of the Bench Book are being accessed, and by which stakeholders.
- CIP will continue to monitor use of remote hearings through video conferencing as one measure of youth involvement in court proceedings.
- CIP will continue monitoring youth involvement through activities of the Children’s Commission, Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care, Legal Representation Committee, Foster Care & Education Committee, and other workgroups and projects that are ongoing through the CIP.

Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?

- Retrospective data on the Houston PMC Court was provided to the evaluation team earlier than anticipated. Startup funds were also provided by Casey Family Programs to clearly outline the evaluation plan for the Dallas and Houston PMC Courts in early 2020. These factors accelerated the progress of the PMC Court evaluation.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children’s Bureau to help move the project forward?

- None identified at this time.

Quality Legal Representation Project:

Provide a concise description of the quality legal representation project selected in your jurisdiction.

- The Children’s Commission currently has several projects related to quality legal representation, including the following areas of focus:
 - The creation and adoption of Texas specific standards of representation;
 - The implementation of model representation pilots;
 - Tool kits for attorneys representing parents and children and attorneys representing DFPS; and
 - Creation of materials for parents and children explaining the attorney-client relationship.

Approximate date that the project began:

- The tool kits and the materials explaining the attorney-client relationship began in Fall 2018 in response to the Children’s Commission 2018 Study on Legal Representation. The creation and adoption of standards of representation and the implementation of model representation were recommendations of the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation Final Report released in May 2021.

Which stage of the CQI process best describes the current status of project work?

- The creation and adoption of Texas specific standards of representation is in the development stage.
- The implementation of model representation pilots is also in the development stage.
- Tool kits for attorneys representing parents and children and attorneys representing DFPS are in the evaluation stage. Workgroups to review and update each tool kit are being assembled.
- Creation of materials for parents and children explaining the attorney-client relationship are in various stages depending on the material and the audience. Pamphlets for parents and foster parents are in the implementation stage. A coloring book for children is in the implementation stage, and videos for parents and youth are in the development stage.

How was the need for this project identified? (Phase I)

- The Children's Commission 2018 Study on Legal Representation identified several deficiencies in representation including inconsistencies in accountability and compensation for attorneys, inconsistencies in compliance and performance by attorneys, and a lack of understanding by parents and children on the role of the attorney.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II) If you do not yet have a theory of change and/or would like assistance, please indicate such in the space below.

- Creation of standards of representation - standards will establish a consistent, objective, and measurable definition of quality representation in Texas that will provide guidance to attorneys, judges, and stakeholders for implementing quality representation.
- Model representation pilots - implementing pilot programs that utilize different methods of delivering quality representation will allow stakeholders to determine which programs are the best fit for different jurisdictions in Texas.
- Tool kits - providing essential information necessary for providing quality representation in an easy to access and peer reviewed format will increase the consistency of representation across the state.
- Materials regarding the attorney client relationship - increasing the understanding of the attorney's role for parents, children, and foster parents will result in improved and more equitable attorney-client relationships.

Have you identified a solution/intervention that you will implement? If yes, what is it? (Phase III)

- The Legal Representation Committee will identify a strategy for developing standards of representation in FY 2022.
- For model representation pilots, the commission will work with stakeholders during the interim session on proposed legislation and to prepare for alternatives if the legislature does not address the issue during the 88th Legislative Session.
- For tool kits, the intervention is the creation of standing tool kit work groups and development of a regular schedule for updating and publication after each legislative biennium.
- The solution/intervention for the attorney materials projects is restructuring the Children's Commission grant with the Texas Network of Youth Services to facilitate more collaboration and contributions from youth with lived experience.

What has been done to implement the project? (Phase IV)

- The Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation was created in the Fall of 2019 to examine barriers to quality legal representation, study potential solutions, and make recommendations for improvement. The Task Force examined the connection between standards of representation, the structure of the appointment system, and oversight and accountability. The Task also examined different models of providing quality representation and analyzed data on the impact of quality representation and the effects of implementing it in Texas. The Task Force release its Final Report in May 2021, including recommendations for the creation of standards of representation and the implementation of model representation pilot programs.
- The Children’s Commission is working with various stakeholders to obtain an interim charge from the Texas Legislature to address the Task Force’s recommendation for the creation of model representation pilot programs.
- Workgroups to review and update each tool kit with changes from the 87th Texas Legislative Session are being assembled and will hold their initial meetings in August 2021.
- Pamphlets for parents and foster parents are complete and are available on the Children’s Commission webpage, an attorney workgroup is working with a writer and illustrator on coloring book for children, and the attorney workgroup will begin working in the fall with the Texas Network of Youth Services to develop videos that include youth with lived experience.

How are you or how do you intend to monitor the progress of the project? (Phase V). Be specific in terms of what type of evaluation (e.g., fidelity or outcome, comparison group, etc.) and what results you have, if any. If you have already evaluated your effort, how did you use these data to modify or expand the project?

- The Children’s Commission Legal Representation Committee will assess how standards should be developed in Texas. Monitoring the implementation of the standards once adopted will need to be integrated in the implementation of model pilot projects, as well as collaboration with the Office of Court Administration and the Texas Indigent Defense Commission to analyze data on court-appointed legal representation in child welfare cases as required by Chapter 71 of the Texas Government Code.
- The Children’s Commission will work with various stakeholders on model representation pilots during the legislative interim to ensure the issue of evaluation and monitoring of the programs is addressed.
- The Children’s Commission will monitor the review, update, and publication of the tool kits by facilitating workgroup meetings, consolidating workgroup drafts, and finalizing the tool kits for publication.
- The Children’s Commission will monitor attorneys-client materials by seeking feedback from attorneys, judges, and parents and children with lived experience.

Have there been notable factors that delayed or accelerated this effort?

- The creation of standards of representation has been delayed due a perception that without the ability to enforce standards or measure attorney behavior, the impact of standards would be minimal. The Task Force Report, along with the increased ability to collect data regarding court-appointed attorney appointments accelerated the effort to create standards as a way to create shared understanding of quality representation, assess current attorney practice, and guide the implementation of model pilot programs.
- The creation of model representation pilots has been delayed by the budget uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and an uncertain legislative environment for new appropriations.

- Though both tool kits were timely published and are available online, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the printing and distribution of new and updated tool kits.
- The attorney materials projects have been delayed by finding appropriate creative professionals to collaborate with and adjusting grants to enable their compensation.
- Identifying an illustrator and partnering with the Texas Network of Youth Services for youth voice videos accelerated progress for the project.

What assistance or support would be helpful from the CBCC or the Children's Bureau to help move the project forward?

- Connection with other jurisdictions who have created and implemented standards of representation.
- Support in designing evaluations and finding evaluation partners for model representation pilot projects.

II. Trainings, Projects, and Activities

For questions 1-12, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2021 (October 2020-June 2021) in the below topical subcategories. For question 1, focus on significant training events or initiatives held or developed in FY 2021.

1. Trainings

Topical Area	Did you hold or develop a training on this topic?	Who was the target audience?	How many persons attended?	What type of training is it?	What were the intended training outcomes?	What type of training evaluation did you do? S=Satisfaction, L=Learning, B=Behavior, O=Outcomes
Data	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2020 Annual Judicial Conference)	219	Conferences	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges (Dec 2020 Day with DFPS Training)	49			
		Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders			
Hearing quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, Attorneys, CW stakeholders, tribal members (Jan 2021 ICWA Summit)	995	Webcast	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges, court teams, related stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders	Conference		
Improving timeliness/permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Dec 2020 Day with DFPS Training)	49	Conferences	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges (Jan 2021 Family Justice Conference)	95			
		Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders			
Quality legal representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Attorneys (Feb 2021 Trial Skills Training)	18	Training curriculum	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Engagement & participation of parties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Well-being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2020 Annual Judicial Conference)	219	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders			
Disparity/Disproportionality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2020 Annual Judicial Conference)	219	Conferences	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute)	95 judges + 165 stakeholders			
ICWA/Tribal collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, Attorneys, CW stakeholders, tribal members (Jan 2021 ICWA Summit)	995	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Sex Trafficking	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Normalcy/R+ Prudent Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Prevention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2020 Annual Judicial Conference)	219	Conferences	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
		Judges (Jan 2021 Family Justice Conference)	95			
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No					<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Dual Status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, court teams, CW stakeholders (Apr 2021 Dual Status Child Protection Court Pilot Training)	150	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Reasonable Efforts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Jan 2021 Family Justice Conference)	95	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> O <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

On average, how many training events do you hold per year?

- On average every year, the CIP produces three to four judicial trainings (three general and one specialized for Child Protection Court judges and their court coordinators); two hands-on, attorney Trial Skills Trainings; one to two Round Table Discussions as needed; CIP-produced webinars for attorneys and judges as needed; six hours of MCLE on CPS-related issues in partnership with the State Bar of Texas; and subject matter trainings as needed (e.g., April 2021 Dual Status Child Protection Court Training). The CIP also supports the annual legal training produced by the DFPS and supports other state and national judicial and attorney conferences throughout the year by providing registration scholarships and occasionally provided travel-related expenses to those events.
- In FY 2021 to date, the CIP produced or sponsored these major, statewide training events: (1) October 2020 Annual Child Welfare Conference; (2) a stand-alone December 2020 judicial training entitled “Day with DFPS;” (3) January 2021 ICWA Summit, and three CPS-related CLE sessions delivered by judges and presented at the January 2021 Family Justice Conference; (4) February 2021 Trial Skills Training Virtual CLE; and (4) April 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute as well as April 2021 Dual Status Child Protection Court Pilot Training. Also, the CIP provides funding to DFPS for its annual legal training. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DFPS Regional Attorney Conference was divided into two virtual events in October 2020. A half-day virtual training for legal support professionals was presented on October 7, 2020, and two half-day virtual training sessions for DFPS attorneys were presented on October 27-28, 2020.
- After two postponements due to COVID-19 and Winter Storm Uri, the JTI took place on April 22-23, 2021. The two-day event focused on training court teams but was also open to SCTIC members, some Children’s Commission workgroup members, and other judges. The first day of JTI provided a session from trauma expert Dr. David Cross, Rees-Jones Director of the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development, on “Understanding Relational Trauma and its Generational Impact;” a panel discussion with Judges and the DFPS Disproportionality Manager on “Equity as a Foundation for a Trauma-Informed Court;” a multi-disciplinary panel on “Starting the Case with Family Strengths in Mind;” and a multi-disciplinary panel discussion on “Addressing Behavioral Health Needs with a Trauma-Informed Lens.” The second day of JTI included a session on the “Effects of Secondary Trauma and Tools for Addressing the Everyday and the Crisis Moments” presented by Becky Morales, LCSW-S of the UT Steve Hicks School of Social Work; a panel entitled “Learning from the Experts: A Panel Discussion on Lived Experience” moderated by Senior Jurist in Residence Judge Rob Hofmann and including a parent and two young adults with experience in the child welfare system; a session entitled “Judicial Panel on Developing a Trauma-Informed Court;” and a final session with experienced judges and a senior data analyst on “Implementation and Sustaining the Effort.” A total of 240 individuals from across the state attended the live event and it will be archived with free access on the Children’s Commission website.

What is your best prediction for the number of attorneys and judges that will participate in a training annually?

- Between 100 – 200 judges
- Between 100 – 600 attorneys
- 300+ judges and 3000+ attorneys receive regular educational communiques from the Commission, and access free CIP online training materials each fiscal year.
- In addition to the development and hosting of the above events, the CIP provides scholarships to state and national conferences and sponsors child welfare department training events as well. Events

include: (1) State Bar of Texas Family Law Section's Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop; (2) DFPS Regional Attorney Training Conference; (3) State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section CLE; (4) National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Juvenile Justice and Annual Conference; (5) National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference; (6) Biennial ABA Parent and Child Legal Representation Conferences; and (7) Biennial Texas District and County Attorney Association Conference (this was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 concerns).

The Family First Prevention Services Act amended the Social Security Act adding an eligibility criterion for the training of judges and attorneys on the congregate care provisions of the Act. See the highlighted portion below.

(1)¹ IN GENERAL. — In order to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, a highest State court . . . shall provide for the training of judges, attorneys, and other legal personnel in child welfare cases on Federal child welfare policies and payment limitations with respect to children in foster care who are placed in settings that are not a foster family home...–

Have you been involved in planning with the agency on implementing Family First? Yes No
If yes, please describe how the CIP has been involved.

- The CIP Director meets with Child Welfare Director periodically. Texas will implement FFPSA beginning in 2021.
- In August 2020, CIP and DFPS leadership partnered to facilitate a small group discussion with judges about the judicial determinations required under FFPSA.
- In September 2020, CIP and DFPS CBCAP Leadership facilitated a listening session with judges with a focus on FFPSA and prevention.
- In October 2020, CIP partnered with DFPS speakers to present a session on FFPSA at the virtual Family Justice Conference.
- In December 2020, CIP partnered with the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section and DFPS leadership on a prevention discussion with over 400 attorneys practicing child welfare law in Texas.
- The CIP Director also participates on the Prevention and Early Intervention Prevention Framework Workgroup and the Thriving Families, Safer Children Learning Collaborative.
- CIP, OCA, and DFPS are currently planning a prevention court liaison pilot to enhance capacity to provide support upstream and utilize opportunities under FFPSA.
- DFPS and CIP are also partnering to outline court requirements and procedures for placements in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs. The first QRTP court meeting took place in June 2021.

Have you developed/been developing your Family First judicial training plan? Yes No
If yes, please describe what you have done.

- The Child Protection Court Convening in July 2021 will include a session on QRTP placement review. Information on QRTP placements will also be included at the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference in October 2021. Standalone webcasts and other training opportunities will be identified as Texas rolls out the QRTP pilot.

¹ Sec. 50741(c) of P.L. 115-123 revised sec. 438(b)(1) to add language regarding training. Effective as if enacted on 1/1/18 (sec. 50746(a)(1) of P.L. 115-123).

2. Data Projects. Data projects include any work with administrative data sets (e.g., AFCARS, CCWIS), data dashboards, data reports, fostering court improvement data, case management systems, and data sharing efforts.

Do you have a data project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Support for CPCMS	Case management systems	Evaluation/Assessment
Data Integration between CPCMS + SACWIS	Agency Data Sharing Efforts	Selecting Solution
Virtual Hearings Study	Fostering Court Improvement data projects	Develop Theory of Change

(a) Do you have data reports that you consistently view? Yes No

(b) How are these reports used to support your work?

3. Hearing Quality. Hearing quality projects include any efforts you have made to improve the quality of dependency hearings, including court observation/assessment projects, process improvements, specialty/pilot court projects, projects related to court orders or title IV-E determinations, mediation, or appeals.

Do you have a hearing quality project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
PMC Court Evaluation – see above	Specialty/Pilot Courts	Evaluation/Assessment
Dual Status Child Protection Court Evaluation	Specialty/Pilot Courts	Evaluation/Assessment
Mediation Workgroup	Mediation	Implementation

4. Improving Timeliness of Hearings or Permanency Outcomes. Timeliness and permanency projects include any activities or projects meant to improve the timeliness of case processing or achievement of timely permanency. This could include general timeliness, focus on continuances or appeals, working on improvement in specific outcomes such as around reunification, guardianship, adoption or a focus on APPLA and older youth.

Do you have a timeliness or permanency project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Joint Agency Project - see above	Continuances/Delays	Implementation
Child Protection Law Bench Book	General/ASFA	Evaluation/Assessment
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

5. Engagement & Participation of Parties. Engagement and participation of parties includes any efforts centered around youth, parent, foster family, or caregiver engagement, as well as projects related to notice to relatives, limited English proficiency, or other efforts to increase presence and engagement at the hearing.

Do you have an engagement or participation of parties project/activity? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Notice & Engagement	Notice to Relatives	Implementation
Video Conferencing for Permanency Reviews	Youth Engagement	Implementation
Family Helpline	Caregiver Engagement	Implementation

6. Well-Being. Well-being projects include any efforts related to improving the well-being of children and youth. Projects could focus on education, early childhood development, psychotropic medication, trauma, social network support, cultural connections, or other well-being related topics.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on well-being? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care	Trauma	Implementation
Foster Care & Education Committee	Education	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

7. Disparities/Disproportionalities. These projects include any efforts related to improving equity in child welfare systems whether around race, sexual orientation or gender identity, national origin or immigration status, persons with disabilities, geographic or otherwise.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on disparities/disproportionalities? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Equity Workgroup	Race	Selecting Solution
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

8. ICWA/Tribal collaboration. These projects could include any efforts to enhance state and tribal collaboration, state and tribal court agreements, data collection and analysis including of ICWA practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on ICWA or tribal collaboration? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Participation in DFPS Tribal/State Collaborative	Tribal Collaboration	Implementation
ICWA Summit	Case planning/outcomes	Evaluation/Assessment
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

9. Preventing Sex Trafficking. These projects could include work around domestic child sex trafficking, a focus on runaway youth, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on preventing sex trafficking/runaways? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Human Trafficking Judicial Workgroup	Sex Trafficking	Selecting Solution
Participation on Statewide Task Force of State Attorney General	Collaboration with other agencies	Implementation
Participation of Office of Governor Child Sex Trafficking Team	Collaboration with other agencies	Implementation

10. Normalcy/Reasonable and Prudent Parent. These projects could include any work around normalcy or the reasonable and prudent parent standard or practices, collaboration with other agencies around this topic, data collection and analysis, data sharing, or other efforts to fully implement these sections of the Preventing Sex and Strengthening Families Act into practice.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on normalcy/reasonable prudent parenting? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Developing a Role-Based Guide to Normalcy for Children in Care, in partnership with Texas CASA	Collaboration with other agencies	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

11. Prevention. Prevention projects include work around preventing child maltreatment including primary prevention (preventing maltreatment from occurring in the first place), secondary, and tertiary prevention.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on prevention? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
Participation in Prevention and Early Intervention Prevention Framework Workgroup	Collaboration with other agencies	Identifying/Assessing Needs
Judicial Court Liaison Project	Secondary or tertiary prevention	Selecting Solution
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

12. Safety. Safety projects are those that focus on decision-making around safety including decision-making practices in substantiation, removal, family time/visitation, and decisions about safety in out of home placements.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on safety? Yes No

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

III. CIP Collaboration in Child Welfare Program Planning and Improvement Efforts

13. Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state’s CFSP due June 30, 2021.

- Reviewed and provided input.
 - a. Does the CFSP include any of the following:
 - the CIP/Agency Joint Project
 - the Hearing Quality Project
 - the Legal Representation Project
 - other judicial strategies
 - other attorney strategies

If yes, please describe.

- Although the relationship between DFPS and the CIP is mentioned several times in the CFSP, it is not apparent that the CFSP includes anything directly responsive to the above categories. However, this Self-Assessment discusses in detail the CIP/Agency Joint Project and the CIP Hearing Quality Project, which may be included in the 700+ page State Plan. The DFPS PIP has several legal/judicial strategies as well; some are mentioned in this Self-Assessment.

14. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in the most recent/upcoming title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review in your state.

- CIP usually attends the kick-off and exit conferences but is not otherwise involved.

15. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in preparing and completing round 3 of the CFRS and PIP, if required, in your state.

The current version of the PIP includes (check all that apply):

- the CIP/Agency Joint Project
- the Hearing Quality Project
- the Legal Representation Project
- other judicial strategies
- other attorney strategies

16. What strategies or processes are in place in your state that you feel are particularly effective in supporting joint child welfare program planning and improvement?

- Regular and ongoing communication and collaboration with the child welfare agency as well as participation on most major child welfare system reform projects.

17. What barriers exist in your state that make effective joint child welfare program planning and improvement challenging?

- There are no significant barriers to joint planning with DFPS.

18. Does the state child welfare agency currently offer professional partner training to judges, attorneys, and court personnel as part of its Title IV-E Training Plan?

If yes, please provide a brief description of what is provided and how.

If no, have you met with child welfare agency leadership to discuss and explore utilizing professional partner training for judges, attorneys and court personnel?

- No. Texas uses CIP funds to pay for judge, attorney, and court personnel training.

19. Have you talked with your agency about accessing Title IV-E funding for legal representation for parents or for children? Is your state currently planning to seek or currently receiving reimbursement? If yes, describe any plans, approaches, or models that are under consideration or underway.

- Yes. Generally, the agency will modify existing MOUs with counties to accommodate reimbursement requests, but there are questions about whether the agency can impose quality representation measures on counties in return for the reimbursement assistance. In May 2021, the Task Force Report on Court Appointed Legal Representation included a recommendation that Texas adopt a bottom-up approach to utilizing Title IV-E funds for legal representation for parents and children that allows jurisdictions to tailor plans for how to improve the quality of legal representation.

IV. CQI Current Capacity Assessment

1. Has your ability to integrate CQI into practice changed this year? If yes, what do you attribute the change to?

- Yes. There are quarterly meetings with the Children’s Commission where the slate of projects and activities are presented to the multidisciplinary task force. Committees and workgroups also regularly assess, modify, and review CIP projects. Annually, CIP staff review every project and deliverable to identify status in the change management process and ensure that the program is responsive to the identified priority areas.
- Every training-related project, including scholarships, involves a pre-event and post-event survey, which are used to modify the curriculum and format for future events. In addition to receiving valuable CQI-related information from trainees, CIP staff also conduct extensive internal CQI on each training project to review our internal planning process and our training outcomes.
- Partnership with the Center, as mentioned above, greatly increased CIP capacity to utilize CQI principles in project design, implementation, and evaluation.
- In FY 2020, the Texas liaison from the Capacity Building Center for Courts provided a two-part training on CQI and each member of Texas CIP participated. This training benefitted both new staff and more experienced staff.

2. Which of the following CBCC Events/Services have you/your staff engaged in this past year?

- Judicial Academy
- CQI Consult (*Topic:* _____)
- Virtual Evidence-Building Workshop
- Constituency Group - Data/Evaluation
- Constituency Group - Family First Prevention Services Act
- Constituency Group - Hearing Quality
- Constituency Group - ICWA
- Constituency Group - New Directors
- Constituency Group - Virtual Hearings/Court Processes
- Constituency Group - Other Equity

CIP All Call -- What % of All Calls does your CIP participate in? 95%

3. Do you have any of the following resources to help you integrate CQI into practice?

- CIP staff with data expertise
- CIP staff with evaluation expertise
- Consultants with CQI expertise
- a University partnership
- a statewide court case management system
- Contracts with external individuals or organizations to assist with CQI efforts
- Other resources: _____

3a. Do you record your child welfare court hearings? Yes No

If yes, are they audio video

- In general, some courts utilize audio recordings for hearings. However, in March 2020, the Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) purchased Zoom licenses for all Texas courts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Court hearings are recorded and livestreamed on YouTube to comply with the Open Courts Doctrine. Courts are instructed to delete recordings on YouTube after the conclusion of the hearing to protect confidentiality. There may also be instances where sensitive information is discussed in court and the livestream is temporarily disabled. Courts are working toward a return to in person proceedings and hybrid hearings in some instances.

3b. Can you remotely access your court case management system? For example, Odyssey systems often allow remote access to case files. Yes No

- Texas does not have a uniform or statewide case management system.

3c. What court case management software does your state use? If multiple, please indicate the most common:

- Although there is great variance throughout the state, the Child Protection Courts utilize CPCMS. The CIP funds CPCMS and OCA operates and maintains the software.

3d. Have you employed any new technology or applications to strengthen your work?

- During COVID-19, all-in person meetings, events, and trainings have been cancelled beginning in March 2020. All CIP activities currently occur through the use of Zoom meetings and the Zoom webinar feature. The 2020 annual judicial conference mentioned above was presented virtually in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary who employed a Learning Management System to do so. CIP will partner with OCA to determine what technology solutions are needed to encourage continued virtual or hybrid proceedings. Beginning in Fall 2021, CIP meetings and conferences will resume in person.

4. Please describe any continuity planning the CIP has led or has been involved in if not noted above. Continuity planning includes prevention and recovery planning for threats such as public health crises, natural disasters, or cyber-attacks. This may include, for example, technology support for remote hearings

or legal representation, developing guidance, coordinating with other agencies, or otherwise ensuring back-up approaches are in place to ensure needed services are able to continue.

- Texas CIP participated in the federal Disaster Planning and Response Workgroup organized by the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for States. A Virtual Hearing Bench Book is currently under development that will complement the Child Protection Law Bench Book. CIP also produced various training opportunities and resources such as webinars and Judge and Attorney Resource Letters.
5. Considering the phases of change management and how you integrate these into practice, are there phases of the process (e.g., Phase I-need assessment, Phase II-theory of change) that you struggle with integrating more than others?
- No.
6. Is there a topic or practice area that you would find useful from the Capacity Building Center for Courts? Be as specific as possible (e.g., data analysis, how to evaluate trainings, more information on research about quality legal representation, how to facilitate group meetings, etc.)
- Development of a Texas-specific Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy and potentially a similar training for attorneys.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions of Evidence

Evidence-based practice – evidence-based practices are practice that have been empirically tested in a rigorous way (involving random assignment to groups), have demonstrated effectiveness related to specific outcomes, have been replicated in practice at least one, and have findings published in peer reviewed journal articles.

Empirically-supported- less rigorous than evidence-based practices are empirically-supported practices. To be empirically supported, a program must have been evaluated in some way and have demonstrated some relationship to a positive outcome. This may not meet the rigor of evidence-base, but still has some support for effectiveness.

Best-practices – best practices are often those widely accepted in the field as good practice. They may or may not have empirical support as to effectiveness, but are often derived from teams of experts in the field.

Definitions for CQI Phases

Identifying and Assessing Needs – This phase is the earliest phase in the process, where you are identifying a need to be addressed. The assessing needs phase includes identifying the need, determining if there is available data demonstrating that this a problem, forming teams to address the issue.

Develop theory of change—This phase focuses on the theorizing the causes of a problem. In this phase you would identify what you think might be causing the problem and develop a “theory of change”. The theory of change is essentially how you think your activities (or intervention) will improve outcomes.

Develop/select solution—This phase includes developing or selecting a solution. In this phase, you might be exploring potential best-practices or evidence-based practices that you may want to implement as a solution to the identified need. You might also be developing a specific training, program, or practice that you want to implement.

Implementation – the implementation phase of work is when an intervention is being piloted or tested. This includes adapting programs or practices to meet your needs, and developing implementation supports.

Evaluation/assessment – the evaluation and assessment phase includes any efforts to collect data about the fidelity (process measures: was it implemented as planned?) or effectiveness (outcome measures: is the intervention making a difference?) of the project. The evaluation assessment phase also includes post-evaluation efforts to apply findings, such as making changes to the program/practice and using the data to inform next steps.

Paperwork Reduction Act

Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0307 and it expires 11/30/2022. The estimated time to complete the CIP Complete Application is 92 hours