

Children's Commission

Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Recipients

Organization:	Foster Care Advocacy Center (FCAC)
Project:	Texas Parent Partner Program Manual
Strategic Category:	Legal Practice and Process
Grant Amount:	\$48,268.86
Project Description:	<p>FCAC will develop a comprehensive manual that will guide attorneys ad litem, including solo practitioners and attorneys working for nonprofit legal aid or government organizations, and courts in incorporating a Parent Partner into their services. The manual will enable professionals to offer comprehensive support, guidance, and advocacy to parents, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are addressed. While the availability of a Parent Partner in all of these different programs depends on the availability of funds to support the position, FCAC's manual will enable any entity able to procure funds for a Parent Partner with a blueprint on how to incorporate the Parent Partner's support.</p> <p>The manual will draw from best practices, research, and experience developed by FCAC over four years of implementing practice with a Parent Partner. FCAC will also engage parents with lived experience with the child welfare system and legal practitioners across the state to incorporate feedback and expertise on how a Parent Partner could be beneficial in different parts of the state and with different models of representation.</p>

Organization:	Houston PEARLS Foundation
Project:	Youth Mentorship Program
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement
Grant Amount:	\$65,000.00
Project Description:	<p>PEARLS (Preparation, Esteem, Achievement, Resiliency, Learning, Strength & Stamina) and EAGLES (Esteem, Achievement, Grit, Learning & Leadership, Empowerment, and Strength) enrolled 40-45 females and 15-20 males for the 2023-2024 term. (August-May). The program offers bi-monthly meetings and mentors for each child in the program.</p> <p>PEARLS also offers wrap-around case management for the youth where needs will be identified and either handled internally (i.e., assisting in completing a college application or finding a job), or referred to a coalition partner (i.e., housing placement, vocational training, etc.). In partnership with the University of Houston General College of Social Work, there are six master's degree student interns also supporting the program.</p>

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Organization:	Office of Court Administration (OCA)
Project:	OCA/CIP Partnership Grant
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement, Data
Grant Amount:	\$201,007.00
Project Description:	<p>Enhance, maintain, and support the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) and the hearings Notice and Engagement system. This includes continuance of the established governance structure and work to enhance technology solutions in accordance with governance committee assessment and decisions.</p> <p>Facilitate communication between youth and their judge, and youth participation in their Review and Permanency Hearings, through case management system functionality and availability of video conferencing. Remote hearing availability improves contact with the children/youth in placement facilities and impacts child safety, well-being and due process.</p>

Organization:	Office of Court Administration (OCA)
Project:	Visiting Judge Support
Strategic Category:	Legal Practice & Process
Grant Amount:	\$22,000.00
Project Description:	<p>The visiting judge grant would allow OCA to continue the established mechanism of payment for the appointment of former/Retired Child Protection Court associate judges and former/retired district and county court at-law judges experienced in hearing Child Protective Services (CPS) cases to cover Child Protection Court dockets in absence of the active associate judge.</p>

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Organization:	TechShare Local Government Corporation
Project:	Indigent Defense System Enhancements for CPS Cases
Strategic Category:	Data, Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process
Grant Amount:	\$222,672
Project Description:	TechShare previously worked with the Texas Indigent Defense Commission and counties to develop TechShare.Indigent Defense. That application permits the electronic appointment and payment of counsel in both adult and juvenile criminal cases. The system captures data required to be reported to TIDC, including data that reveals compliance with statutory mandates applicable to timeliness of appointments and attorney-client activities. TechShare seeks to build upon the application to address appointments made in child welfare cases.

Organization:	Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ)
Project:	Judicial Training
Strategic Category:	Training
Grant Amount:	\$259,641.00
Project Description:	<p>TCJ will conduct the 2023 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC). This is a 2.5-day conference, which will include an optional half-day pre-conference training on topical issues relevant based on children's age group. The conference will be held October 23-25, 2023, at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center. The conference typically trains between 85-100 judges from most regions throughout the State.</p> <p>TCJ will include three hours of continuing education, developed by the Children's Commission, at the 2024 Family Justice Conference. This conference typically reaches about 150 judges and specifically targets general jurisdiction judges. The conference will be held January 18-19, 2024 at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center.</p> <p>TCJ will also begin the planning process for the 2024 Child Welfare Judges Conference.</p>

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Organization:	Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
Project:	2024 DFPS Annual Attorney and Legal Support Staff Conference
Strategic Category:	Training; Legal Practice & Process, Systems Improvement
Grant Amount:	\$12,000.00
Project Description:	<p>The attorney and legal assistant training will take place in October 2024 and provide substantive training on DFPS litigation, policy, Texas law, best practices, and resources as well as give participants an opportunity to network with colleagues throughout Texas. The project will also provide hands-on trial skills practice for new attorneys who have joined the agency since October 2022. The project will provide approximately 9 hours of accredited MCLE to DFPS attorneys, the majority of which will be recorded and shared with assistant district and county attorneys who represent the agency. New DFPS attorneys will receive an additional 7 hours of MCLE (3 hours virtual, and 4 in-person).</p> <p>The 2023 conference will include speakers from Casey Family Programs, Family Violence Prevention Services, Harris County Attorney's Office, Tarrant County Attorney's Office, the Bexar County Constable, and other stakeholder groups still to be confirmed. DFPS will endeavor to make similar collaborative efforts for the 2024 conference. Additionally, DFPS will provide recordings of most of the MCLE accredited sessions to assistant district and county attorney offices.</p>

Organization:	Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC)
Project:	Family Helpline
Strategic Category:	System Improvement, Data
Grant Amount:	\$112,500.00
Project Description:	<p>TLSC's Family Helpline was established in 2017. The Family Helpline assists Texans who have legal questions regarding the child welfare system and child safety. Family Helpline attorneys are available Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. CST. When a caller dials the phone number, their call is answered by a child welfare attorney. Since its inception, staff attorneys have completed more than 12,000 calls, affecting more than 18,000 children across Texas. The goal of the helpline is to improve safety and stability for children, and to empower families through education about their legal rights and court processes. The Family Helpline serves all 254 counties in Texas.</p>

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Organization:	Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)
Project:	Centering Youth Voice and Lived Experiences in Courts, Communities and Statewide System Improvement Efforts
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement
Grant Amount:	\$27,995.00
Project Description:	TNOYS will recruit and implement the TNOYS Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) a paid internship and leadership development program where young people with lived experience in foster care and homelessness, work with our team to amplify youth voice to effect systems change. This includes planning state and local events to educate peers, partner organizations, legislators and government officials including DFPS on the medical, mental, behavioral, health and education needs of young people involved in Texas child welfare systems. The YALC is a unique opportunity for young adults to develop professional leadership skills, build community with fellow young leaders and share power among youth and adults to effect positive change in the child welfare system. The program is approximately 12 months long and young people will meet consistently with TNOYS staff and partners to develop life-long skills that will promote their child safety, permanency, well-being. The YALC will be implemented statewide and use virtual methods to ensure young people are engaged and learning. The YALC curriculum will develop skills related self-sufficiency and self-advocacy.

Organization:	Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
Project:	Foster Youth Justice Project – Improving Resource Connection and Outreach for Former Foster Youth in Texas
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement
Grant Amount:	\$55,687.11
Project Description:	The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project serves current and former foster youth across Texas. This population is underserved and often experiences barriers to successfully transitioning to adulthood. In order to bridge the gap between the needs of current and former foster youth and the services offered by the Project, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA) will hire an Outreach Specialist who will lead efforts that will allow us to meaningfully connect individuals who contact the Project with appropriate resources and services and improve our outreach activities to better serve the systemic needs of current and former foster youth.