

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2023

Organization:	Houston PEARLS Foundation
Project:	Mentorship program for teen girls in foster care
Strategic Category:	Legal Practice and Process
Grant Amount:	\$25,000.00
Project Description:	<p>PEARLS (Preparation, Esteem, Achievement, Resiliency, Learning, Strength & Stamina) will enroll 20-25 girls (ages 14-18) for the duration of the academic year (August-May). This includes developing, supporting, and facilitating the curriculum twice a month with a multi-team approach. Each young person is provided a mentor within the community as a role model. The youth take an active role in participation by giving back to the community in a Day-of-Service and by enhancing their own self-esteem and goals in a Day-of-Opportunity.</p> <p>PEARLS has partnered with other community service organizations which allow the program to take the girls on special programming days like sailing and a beach picnic. Lastly, the program will take the girls on service projects. PEARLS will teach the girls to serve others as they are being served by their mentors. Giving back to the community and making the world a better place will help the girls focus on good things around them and help them remain positive.</p>
Project Activities:	<p>The program offers bimonthly programming which consists of meetings, regular programming nights, and service projects. During meetings, the girls will be provided dinner and listen to a presentation on success.</p> <p>Regular programming nights will include activities like healing circles, how to choose better friends, career advice including resume writing and social media presence, how to dress for success, healthy living habits, attend community events like a baseball game or symphony performance, etc. Every programming night will be attended by the girls, their two mentors, and ambassadors (women in the community). There will be game nights, a Thanksgiving dinner, and a Christmas event where the girls will receive gifts and “shop” for people in their lives. During regular programming nights, the girls will be presented “gems” where they are recognized for the successes in the last two weeks: excelling at school, community engagement, meeting a goal, etc.</p>
Use of Funds:	Personnel Supplies

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2023

Organization:	Office of Court Administration (OCA)
Project:	OCA/CIP Partnership Grant, Senior Data Analyst, Visiting Judge Support
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement, Data, Legal Practice & Process
Grant Amount:	\$250,000
Project Description:	<p>Continue maintaining and enhancing the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) and the hearings Notice and Engagement system. This includes the continuance of the established governance structure and work to enhance the system based on governance committee assessment and decisions.</p> <p>Data Analyst will provide best practice recommendations to improve data quality, and continuous quality improvement recommendations. Quantitative data will include, but is not limited to: Hearing types, hearing outcomes, hearings status (virtual/hybrid/in-person), children's length of time in the system, children's permanency outcomes, legal status of cases. Qualitative data will include, but is not limited to: hearing type, parties in attendance, parties' participation, interpreters present, parental representation/advocacy, child representation/advocacy, children's participation.</p> <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>
Project Activities:	<p>Conduct a minimum of two CPCMS governance meetings in FY2023 to establish priorities for CPCMS enhancements and report status of governance activities. Provide at least two CPCMS software releases during the grant period. Provide timely CPCMS user support.</p> <p>Perform in-depth data analysis and research related to child welfare data and court data, including quantitative and qualitative analyses.</p> <p>OCA will contract with former/retired child protection court associate judges to receive \$494.00 for a full day of service, or \$247.00 for a half day of service and former/district court and county court at law judges, experienced in CPS matters, to receive \$620.00 for a full day of service, or \$310 for a half day of service. Travel expenses incurred in performance of these services are reimbursable in accordance with the State of Texas guidelines for state employees. The grant budget will allow for approximately 30 days of service and \$2,250.00 in travel expenses.</p>
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits Supplies (Web Cameras, Cellular Hotspot Devices, Programmer Software) Travel

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Organization:	Texas Center for Child and Family Studies
Project:	Data-Informed Court Improvement
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement , Data
Grant Amount:	\$71,731.90
Project Description:	<p>Continue the Trauma-Informed Courts Project launched in 2022 which studies the impact of trauma-responsive practices in six Texas court teams. Each court team has been working to increase their understanding of trauma and expand the use of trauma-informed tools and practices. While each project is different, all have elements that focus on increasing speed to permanency, reducing recidivism, and increasing the voice and engagement of families engaged with the CPS system.</p> <p>Continue the evaluation of Harris and Dallas Counties Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) court model designed to improve permanency outcomes of children in their jurisdiction. In FY 2022, the Center examined court practices and well-being of children through the perspectives of two stakeholder groups who work with children and youth in PMC and who regularly spend time in the courts that oversee PMC cases: attorneys ad litem and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) supervisor. Looking to FY 2023, in coordination with the PMC court project steering committee, there is additional work that needs to be done to complete and potentially expand the research objectives to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the courts.</p>
Project Activities:	<p><u>Trauma-Informed Courts Project</u></p> <p>The Center will continue to conduct frequent meetings to provide strategic guidance to the six courts and provide them specific project plans which include tracking components, recording successes, challenges, and next steps. A final report that can be used to expand trauma-informed and trauma-responsive court practices across the state will be produced.</p> <p><u>PMC Court Project Evaluation</u></p> <p>The Center will continue the PMC court project evaluations and provide a summary of findings related to the PMC court projects effectiveness in Harris and Dallas Counties. To expand the research and produce causal evidence of the effectiveness of the PMC court, the Center will need approval from the Department of Family and Protective Services to collect original data from children in care. The center will continue to pursue approval of the request.</p>
Use of Funds:	<p>Personnel & Benefits</p> <p>Travel</p>

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Organization:	Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ)
Project:	Judicial Training
Strategic Category:	Training
Grant Amount:	\$254,571.00
Project Description:	<p>TCJ will conduct the 2022 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC). This is a 2.5-day conference, which includes a half day training for Child Protection Court judges and a day and a half training for their coordinators. The conference will be held October 24-26, 2022, at the Sheraton Hotel in Georgetown, TX. The conference is estimated to train around 90 judges and 50 child protection court coordinators.</p> <p>TCJ will include two hours of continuing education, developed by the Children's Commission, at the 2023 Annual Judicial Education Conference. This conference typically reaches about 625 judges and specifically targets general jurisdiction judges as well as judges sitting by assignment. The 2023 Annual Judicial Education Conference will be held September 6-8 at the Marriott Marquis in Houston.</p> <p>TCJ will also begin the planning process for the 2023 Child Welfare Judges Conference.</p>
Project Activities:	TCJ will participate in periodic planning calls with the Children's Commission and OCA. They will communicate with attendees about reservations, reimbursements, work directly with speakers to facilitate travel, develop program descriptions, prepare materials including conference programs, signage, and conference app., and apply for, track, and reconcile MCLE and family violence hours for conference participants. At the conclusion of the conference, TCJ will prepare and distributing conference evaluations, tabulating and providing results to the Children's Commission.
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits Travel Supplies Speaker Fees Other

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Organization:	Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
Project:	2023 DFPS Annual Legal Conference
Strategic Category:	Training
Grant Amount:	\$12,000
Project Description:	The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) legal division offers over 15 hours a year of free MCLE to any attorney who represents the Department, whether as a DFPS employee or in a district or county attorney's office. The conference will provide approximately 8-10 hours of MCLE credit and an additional 4 hours of training for DFPS legal support staff and hands-on skills practice for new attorneys. Those sessions that are accredited for MCLE will be recorded and made available for DFPS attorneys who cannot attend live and district and county attorneys.
Project Activities:	Sessions that are rated highly for quality and relevance to practice, DFPS will attempt to replicate in future years by inviting a similar speaker or related (but not repetitive) topic. Sessions that are not highly rated will be analyzed to see why it didn't work and what can be improved. Invited speakers are stakeholders in the child welfare (and adult protective services) system, including providers, law enforcement, and legal practitioners.
Use of Funds:	Travel Other (Venue, Audio/Visual)

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Fiscal Year 2023

Summary	
Organization:	Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC)
Project:	Family Helpline
Strategic Category:	System Improvement, Data
Grant Amount:	\$125,000
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 10,000 calls, affecting more than 16,000 children. 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>
Project Activities:	<p>Provide direct legal information and education to callers with Texas CPS questions by providing easy and efficient telephonic access to experienced child welfare attorneys (on-going for duration of project).</p> <p>Collect data regarding the child welfare system, trends, and areas where additional supports are needed; a thorough data report will be provided to relevant stakeholders with a goal of informing policy and influencing systemic change.</p> <p>Distribute at least 600 outreach materials to entities across the state to make Texans aware of Helpline services. Outreach activities will take place periodically throughout the year and upon request from any agency or group.</p> <p>Observe court in 50 counties and track observations; this information will be shared with Family Helpline staff and a summary of observations will be included in the reports that are submitted to the Commission 2x per year.</p> <p>Conduct legal trainings on topics related to child welfare law twice per fiscal year with a goal of reaching at least 10 attorneys or professionals per presentation.</p> <p>Continue to provide content for Texas Law Help with information regarding CPS matters (this will occur on at least 2x per year).</p>
Use of Funds:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel & Benefits Travel Supplies Contractual Other

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2023

Organization:	Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS)
Project:	Centering Youth and Survivors in Texas Courts' Prevention, Identification, and Response to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth in Foster Care
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement
Grant Amount:	\$25,579.66
Project Description:	Building on previous Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth (CSEY) projects with the Office of the Texas Governor, which were efforts that were exclusively focused on youth service providers, TNOYS will address the challenges of providing appropriate and coordinated supports to victims of CSEY by designing and delivering training specifically for the legal community such that judges and lawyers can better assist in preventing and responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care.
Project Activities:	<p>Gather input about the needs of the legal community through interviews with CIP staff or 1-2 interviews with selected judges/lawyers. Develop training in collaboration with Commission guidance and priorities.</p> <p>Conduct one virtual or in person training to judges and lawyers across Texas on understanding, identifying, and responding to CSEY and one training and networking opportunity at TNOYS' 40th Annual Conference in May/June 2023.</p> <p>Training activities will include developing and providing training content focused on understanding and identifying CSEY that is specific to the legal community. As part of developing the training, TNOYS will engage with youth and young adults involved in youth programming who have experience with child welfare and CSEY to ensure the training is well informed. TNOYS will incorporate the experiences of youth and young adults as it relates to prevention, identification, and response to CSEY to inform the legal community about opportunities and challenges.</p>
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits Supplies

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Fiscal Year 2023

Organization:	Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid
Project:	Foster Youth Justice Project – Hotline Data Collection
Strategic Category:	Data
Grant Amount:	\$26,328
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. A significant component of the Project's service delivery includes maintaining a statewide hotline, email address, and website through which the Project receive inquiries for information, referrals, and legal representation. The Project will track specific data points for each inquiry.
Project Activities:	<p>Conduct outreach to entities and organizations that work with current and former foster youth to inform them of the Project's hotline and services. Outreach may be conducted by community presentations, dissemination of informational materials (including "A Guide to Aging Out of Foster Care in Texas"), and directly contacting the entities or organizations by email and/or phone. Outreach will be conducted by the Project paralegal and Project attorneys.</p> <p>Track each call, email, and website inquiry it receives. The hotline will be staffed by a paralegal who will be trained to provide basic legal information and referrals and to conduct intake interviews for direct representation. The Project paralegal will be under close and direct supervision of the Project director.</p> <p>Examine, evaluate, and analyze data gathered from inquiries. A summary of the data will be provided to the Children's Commission and other stakeholders. Data will be reviewed internally to inform the Project's service delivery and advocacy efforts and guide the Project to develop and disseminate informational materials to the target population.</p>
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits