



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

TEXAS COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

**SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT
FY 2023**

June 30, 2022

By

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

**201 W. 14th Street
Austin, Texas 78701**

State Court Improvement Program 2022 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 (Continuous Quality Improvement) 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. 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. Complete the descriptions for CQI stages you have progressed through or are in. Though some upcoming stages will be inapplicable, consider whether your team may have preliminary thoughts that are relevant to those questions. Please also indicate if you need assistance from your federal or Capacity Building partners in a particular phase.*

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. If this effort is linked to any agency measures, e.g. CFSR measures, please note those.

- 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)

- 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 staff to discuss region-specific data elements and permanency outcomes. DFPS also provides court or county-specific information upon request. The data presentation was achieved in person at the annual judicial conferences through 2019. However, due to COVID-19 concerns, the CIP and DFPS offered virtual training opportunities in October 2020 and October 2021. It is anticipated that the training will return to an in-person event in 2022.
- 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.

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 and regional systems improvement leads.
- Permanency was a focus both at the pre-conference and at the annual statewide judicial conference held in October 2021. The pre-conference provided an in-depth analysis of how courts can focus on positive permanency from the outset of the case through extended 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.

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, September, and November. 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 return to statutory deadlines and procedures, but many cases were previously extended beyond 12 months without a final order. The Children’s Commission and DFPS will continue to track the impact of these delays 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 County PMC Court ended in August 2019 and the court is now funded through a General Appropriation from the Texas Legislature.

What is the theory of change for the project? (Phase II)

- 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)

- A team comprised of the Dallas County 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 County 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 County 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. In FY 22, Texas CIP developed a lived experience compensation policy to outline how youth will be compensated for their time in CIP-related events and meetings. Also, a webcast focused on the importance of youth voice is planned for July 2022.
- In Fiscal Year 2022, Texas CIP entered into a contract with the Texas Office of Court Administration to hire a Senior Data Analyst to collect and analyze available court data and observe virtual and hybrid court proceedings for hearing quality.

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

- There continues to be a delay in obtaining the retrospective data set regarding the Harris County PMC Court. In light of that delay, the workgroup determined that the best course of action was to continue to seek data from other relevant stakeholders and developed a plan to use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to obtain data regarding the PMC Court from the CASA programs in Harris and Dallas Counties and attorneys practicing in the PMC courts in both jurisdictions.

- The surveys, focus groups, and interviews were conducted in October and early November 2021 and the Final Report, *Raising the Bar: Examining Court Practices and Well-being amongst Children and Youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of the State*, was released on December 29, 2021. The evaluation sought to answer how stakeholders define and conceptualize well-being among children and youth in PMC and how they perceive differences between the PMC courts and traditional courts.
- Stakeholders were aligned on how they conceptualize well-being for children and youth in PMC and the PMC courts currently operating in Texas are using approaches and practices that target the dimensions of well-being articulated by stakeholders. The findings from the study suggest that PMC courts are a promising approach for improving well-being among the subset of children and youth in PMC.
- 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.
- The Senior Data Analyst reviewed the Child Protection Case Management System to identify optional and mandatory fields as well as available reports. The Senior Data Analyst also developed a court observation tool to assist with assessing virtual and hybrid court hearings, with particular emphasis on child and family engagement.

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?

- Startup funds were provided by Casey Family Programs to clearly outline the evaluation plan for the Harris and Dallas County 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 established a regular schedule to review and update each tool kit.

- Creation of materials for parents and children explaining the attorney-client relationship are in various stages depending on the material and the audience. Materials specific to fathers and incarcerated parents are in the development stage. Videos for parents and youth are in the development stage. Pamphlets for parents and foster parents are in the implementation stage. A coloring book for children is in the implementation 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)

- 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 implement a strategy for developing standards of representation in FY 2023.
- 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 workgroups 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 Force 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 address the Task Force’s recommendation for the creation of model representation pilot programs. The Children’s Commission is partnering with Casey Family Programs to roll out a pre-petition legal representation pilot with a multi-disciplinary model in McLennan County (Waco). The Children’s Commission is funding an evaluation of the pilot with Baylor University to assess its effectiveness.
- Workgroups provided integral input to review and update each tool kit with changes from the 87th Texas Legislative Session.
- Pamphlets for parents and foster parents are complete and are available on the Children’s Commission webpage, an attorney workgroup developed a coloring book for children, and the attorney workgroup is coordinating 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 provide input into 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 attorney-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. However, 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.
- Both tool kits were timely published and are available online, the tool kit for attorneys representing parents and children was updated and released in print in March 2022. The tool kit for attorneys representing DFPS is slated to be updated and printed in July 2022.

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.

II. Trainings, Projects, and Activities

For questions 1-12, provide a *concise* description of work completed or underway to date in FY 2022 (October 2021-June 2022) in the topical subcategories below. For question 1, focus on significant training events or initiatives held or developed in FY 2022.

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 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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
Hearing quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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 (Jan 2022 Family Justice Conference)	68	Conference		
		Judges, Attorneys & Advocates (Mar 2022 Webcast)	261	Webcast		
Quality legal representation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Attorneys (Mar/Apr 2022 Trial Skills Training)	21	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
		Attorneys (Oct 2021 District and County Attorney Online MCLE series)	~ 40	On demand training		
Engagement & participation of parties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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 2022 Family Justice Conference)	68			
Well-being	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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 2022 Family Justice Conference)	68			

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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
ICWA/Tribal collab.	<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
Sex Trafficking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges, Attorneys & Advocates (Jan 2022 and June 2022 Webcasts)	125	Webcasts	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
Normalcy/R+ Prudent Parent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Oct 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132			<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 2021 Annual Judicial Conference)	132	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
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
Other: R+ Efforts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Judges (Jan 2022 Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy)	22	Conference	Increase knowledge, change practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L <input checked="" 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 two to three judicial trainings; two hands-on, attorney Trial Skills Trainings; CIP-produced webinars for attorneys and judges as needed; up to six hours of MCLE on CPS-related issues in partnership with the State Bar of Texas; and subject matter trainings as needed (e.g., June 2022 Webcast “Responding to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: Practical Tools and Takeaways for Judges”). 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 providing reimbursement for approved travel-related expenses to those events.
- In FY 2022 to date, the CIP produced, sponsored, or partnered with another entity to develop these major, statewide training events: (1) October 2021 Annual Child Welfare Conference; (2) January 2022 Family Justice Conference child welfare track; (3) January 2022 Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy; (4) February 2022 Webcast “Building Better Youth Outcomes: The Importance of Being Trauma Informed;” (5) March/April 2022 Trial Skills Training Virtual CLE; and (6) May 2022 Webcast “Overview of Qualified Residential Treatment Program Legal Requirements.” Also, the CIP provides funding to DFPS for its annual legal training. However, in 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DFPS Regional Attorney Conference was cancelled.

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 may 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 Conferences; (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 Crimes Against Children Conference.

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.

¹ 42 U.S.C § 629h(b); Social Security Act §438(b)

- The CIP Director meets with Child Welfare Director periodically.
- 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 implementing 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.
- Texas CIP convened a workgroup and subgroups to develop QRTP and Residential Treatment Center court processes from September 2021 to July 2022. A report will be submitted to the Texas legislature with recommendations in October 2022.

Have you developed/been developing your Family First judicial training plan? Yes No

If yes, please describe what you have done.

- In partnership with DFPS, the CIP hosted an “Overview of Qualified Residential Treatment Program Legal Requirements” webcast on Tuesday, May 17, 2022. The purpose of the webcast is to explain the court requirements for QRTP placements and to provide an opportunity for judges, attorneys, and guardians ad litem to explore the legal process prior to implementation of QRTP placements in Texas. Approximately 200 judges, attorneys, and advocates from areas throughout Texas participated. The video is also archived on the CIP website.

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	Selecting Solution

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

(b) How are these reports used to support your work? Identifying trends and priority areas of focus

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

Project Description	How would you categorize this project?	Work Stage (if applicable)
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
Family Helpline	Caregiver Engagement	Implementation
	Choose an item.	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)
Trauma Informed Courts Project	Trauma	Selecting Solution
Foster Care & Education Committee	Education	Implementation
	Choose an item.	Choose an item.

- 7. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA).** These projects include any efforts related to improving equity in child welfare systems around race, sexual orientation or gender identity, national origin or immigration status, religion, persons with disabilities, geographic or otherwise.

Do you have any projects/activities focused on DEIA? 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	Tribal Collaboration	Identifying/Assessing Needs
	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
Partnership with 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)
Normalcy Guide for Children in Care, developed in partnership with Texas CASA	Collaboration with other agencies	Evaluation/Assessment
	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 Early Intervention 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.

13. Project materials. From any of the work described above, do you have any documents or other materials that feel would be helpful to share with the national CIP community? For example, rigorous research, innovative approaches, compelling outcome data, etc. Please link here or note and include in your submission.

- [Normalcy Matters: A Guide to Supporting Children & Youth in Texas Foster Care](#)
- [Coloring Book: Sam and the Search for Spots - How Your Lawyer Can Help You](#)
- Top 10 “Things to Know” about Education for Children in Foster Care in Residential Treatment Centers: [providers](#), [educators](#), [legal professionals](#)

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

1. Please describe how the CIP was involved with the state’s CFSP due June 30, 2022.

- Reviewed and provided input.

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 State Plan.
2. 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. However, CIP is willing to participate in any way that would be beneficial to the review process in Texas.
 3. Please describe how the CIP was or will be involved in preparing and completing round 4 of the CFSR and PIP.

Only states that will be participating in round 4 of the CFSR and PIP in your state this reporting year need to complete these questions. However, working to organize meaningful engagement of a broad array of legal and judicial stakeholders and to support collaboration with other system partners is useful for other major CIP projects as well, so others may wish to consider these with your teams. See the PI at page 9 for further explanation.

- a. Regarding engaging the legal and judicial stakeholders with a broad representation of perspectives in CFSR/PIP processes:
 - i) What barriers do you foresee in engaging stakeholders at an appropriate breadth and depth?
 - ii) What do you believe will facilitate engaging stakeholders at an appropriate breadth and depth?
 - b. Are there other leadership structures for legal and judicial stakeholders and how can those facilitate the processes around the CFSR/PIP?
 - c. How will legal stakeholder involvement in the CFSR/PIP be managed? e.g. CIP is the lead, via the Multi-Disciplinary Task force, a sub-committee established by the child welfare agency, etc.
 - d. What court, judicial, or attorney data could be integrated into the CFSR/PIP process?
 - e. How might participation vary in stages of the process?
 - f. What feedback loops will be needed to keep stakeholders informed?
 - g. What supports do you need from the Children’s Bureau or Capacity Building Centers for participating in the CFSR/PIP?
4. 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.
 5. 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.

6. Regarding collaboration on training with the child welfare agency...

a. Regarding training needs across the child welfare system, what is your process to work with the agency to consider how to maximize the impact of complementary resources and ensure there is no undue duplication of efforts?

- CIP and DFPS are in regular communication about ongoing initiatives in both organizations.

b. 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?

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

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?

- Yes. This has been discussed in the past and CIP will continue to inquire about whether the circumstances have changed to make this a viable option.

7. 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. Texas CIP, DFPS, and the Texas Indigent Defense Commission met several times during FY 2022 to identify opportunities to expand reimbursement in conjunction with improving legal representation in Texas.

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.

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

- Attorney Academy
- Judicial Academy
- CIPShare 2.0
- CQI Consult (Topic: _____)
- CQI Workshop
- Constituency Group - Data/Evaluation
- Constituency Group - Family First Prevention Services Act
- Constituency Group - Hearing Quality
- Constituency Group - ICWA
- Constituency Group - Legal Representation
- Constituency Group - New Directors
- Constituency Group - Race Equity
- Constituency Group – Regional CIP Calls
- Constituency Group - Virtual Hearings/Court Processes
- Constituency Group - Other _____
- 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: _____

a. 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. Some courts returned to in person proceedings whereas others have a hybrid approach or continue with virtual proceedings.

b. 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.

- c. 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.
- d. Have you employed any new technology or applications to strengthen your work?
- CIP is partnering with OCA to pilot equipment that enables continued participation in hybrid court proceedings. The OWL camera has been beneficial to allow for virtual participation at the case level and will likely be utilized in CIP-related meetings in the future to allow for increased engagement among participating stakeholders, many of whom live in various parts of the state.
- e. Do any of these systems include an electronic filing system?
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.
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.)
- Not at this time. The CBCC liaison is very responsive to the needs of the entire Texas CIP team.

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