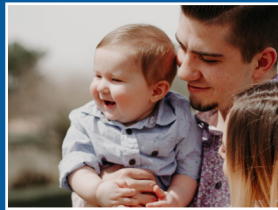




Children's Commission

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



Children's Commission Meeting Notebook

May 13, 2022

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

May 13, 2022

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

May 13, 2022
11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Agenda

- 11:30 Commencement / Opening Remarks
First Order of Business – Adopt Minutes from February 25, 2022
- 11:45 Children's Commission Committee Discussion
- 12:45 Department of Family and Protective Services Update
- 1:15 Office of Court Administration Update
- 1:30 Collaborative Council Input
- 1:45 New Business
- 2:00 Adjourn

Meeting Schedule: September 16, 2022 (in person)
November 4, 2022 (virtual)

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Rosie Alvarado	Hon. Julie Countiss	Rep. Stephanie Klick
Hon. Rebeca Huddle, <i>Deputy Chair</i>	Karla Baker	Deneen Dryden	Hon. Selina Mireles
Hon. Eva Guzman, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Cory Benbow	Hon. Roy Ferguson	Katie Olse
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Paula Bibbs-Samuels	Heather Fleming	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness
<i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Dr. Gary Blau	Anne Heiligenstein	Sasha Rasco
	Hon. Susan Brown	Hon. Randall Hufstetler	Hon. Frank Rynd
	Hon. Darlene Byrne	Hon. Rhonda Hunter	Hon. Randy Shelton

Advisors:
Sheila Sturgis Craig,
Equity Advisor
Hon. Michael Massengale,
Sr. Judicial Advisor

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE	SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT	LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS	TRAINING	DATA
Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Rob Hofmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Randall Hufstetler, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Piper McCraw, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Susan Brown, <i>Chair</i>
Hon. Rebeca Huddle, <i>Deputy Chair</i>	Hon. Rosie Alvarado	Mark Briggs	Hon. Mark Atkinson	Hon. Rosie Alvarado
Hon. Eva Guzman, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Dr. Gary Blau	Sarah Bryant	Tymothy Belseth	Ross Baxter
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Hon. Julie Countiss	Hon. Anne Darring	Denise Campbell	Dr. Monica Faulkner
Hon. Gary Coley, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Sarah Crockett	Lori Duke	Teal De La Garza	Hon. Delia Gonzales
Hon. Susan Brown	Sophie Phillips	Hon. Angela Ellis	Barbara Elias-Perciful	Dr. Jangmin Kim
Hon. Rob Hofmann	Mary Christine Reed	Hon. Delia Gonzales	Hon. Denise Fortenberry	Elizabeth Kromrei
Hon. Randall Hufstetler	Hon. Robin Sage	Monique Gonzalez	Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington	Hon. Robin Sage
Hon. Piper McCraw	Hon. Ian Spechler	Hon. Thomas Stuckey	Hon. Yahara L. Gutierrez	Hon. Michael Schneider
<i>Staff:</i>	<i>Staff:</i>	Janet VanderZanden	Tracy Harting	Vicki Spriggs
Jamie Bernstein	Jocelyn Fowler	Charlotte Velasco	Ann Palmer	Hon. Carlos Villalon
Tiffany Edwards	Aimee Corbin	<i>Staff:</i>	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness	<i>Staff:</i>
	Tiffany Edwards	Dylan Moench	Kellie Price	Dylan Moench
		Renée Castillo-De La Cruz	Hon. Tracey Scown	Chelsea Martinez
		Chelsea Martinez	Diane Sumoski	
			Hon. Elizabeth Watkins	
			<i>Staff:</i>	<i>OCA Advisory:</i>
			Milbrey Raney	Darrell Childers
			Renée Castillo-De La Cruz	Jeff Cox
			Andrea Vicencio	Anissa Johnson
			Chelsea Martinez	Casey Kennedy
				Alejandra Peña
				Mena Ramon
				Charlote Velasco

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mikey Betancourt	Fedora Galasso	Brian Klas	Danielle Schafer
Andrew Brown	Dr. Linda Garcia	Norman Ladd	Johana Scot
Dania Carter	Barbra Grimmer	Dr. Tracy Levins	Andrea Sparks
Irene Clements	Sandra Hachem	Stephanie Madrigal	Theresa Thomas
Sarah Crockett	Julia Hatcher	Gabriella McDonald	Kenneth Thompson
Teal De La Garza	Félix Herrera	Dr. Jill McLeigh	Ruth Thornton
De Shaun Ealoms	Tina Hosaka	Kate Murphy	
Barbara Elias-Perciful	Kerrie Judice	Judy Powell	
Mike Foster	Bruce Kendrick	Mary Christine Reed	
Will Francis	Knox Kimberly	Tanya Rollins	

STAFF

Jamie Bernstein, Executive Director
Milbrey Raney, Assistant Director
Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney
Aimee Corbin, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Jocelyn Fowler, Staff Attorney
Monica Mahoney, Program Specialist
Chelsea Martinez, Executive Assistant
Dylan Moench, Legal Representation Director
Patrick Passmore, Finance Manager
Willette Sedwick, Accountant
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Senior Jurist in Residence
Hon. Piper McCraw, Jurist in Residence

INSERT - TAB 2

Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission Meeting Minutes

**February 25, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners

	Attended	Did Not Attend
Chair, Hon. Debra Lehrmann, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Deputy Chair, Hon. Rebeca Huddle, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Hon. Gary Coley, Vice Chair, Judge, 74 th District Court, Waco	✓	
Hon. Rosie Alvarado, Judge, 438 th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Karla Baker, Parent Liaison, Region 4, Parent Collaboration Group Representative, Houston		✓
Corey Benbow, Chief Executive Officer, The Tax Box, Austin		✓
Paula Bibbs-Samuels, Parent Representative, Slaton	✓	
Dr. Gary Blau, Executive Director, Hackett Center, Houston		✓
Hon. Susan Brown, Presiding Judge, 11 th Administrative Judicial Region, Houston	✓	
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Chief Justice, Third Court of Appeals, Austin	✓	
Hon. Julie Countiss, Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Deneen Dryden, Associate Commissioner for Child Protective Services, DFPS, Austin	✓	
Hon. Roy Ferguson, Judge, 394 th District Court, Alpine	✓	
Heather Fleming, Budget and Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Anne Heiligenstein, Texas Strategic Consultant, Casey Family Programs, Austin	✓	
Hon. Randall Hufstetler, Judge, 300 th District Court, Angleton	✓	
Hon. Rhonda Hunter, Chair, State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section, Dallas	✓	
Rep. Stephanie Klick, Texas House of Representatives, District 91, North Richland Hills		✓
Hon. Laura Loera, Tribal Court Judge, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, El Paso	✓	
Hon. Selina Mireles, Associate Judge, 4 th and 5 th Admin. Judicial Regions Child Protection Court, Laredo		✓
Katie Olse, Executive Director, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness, Justice, Fifth District Court of Appeals, Dallas	✓	
Sasha Rasco, Chief Prevention and Community Well-Being Officer for Prevention, DFPS, Austin	✓	
Hon. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Houston	✓	
Hon. Randy Shelton, Judge, 279 th Civil District Court, Beaumont		✓
Luanne Southern, Executive Director, Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, Austin	✓	
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Austin	✓	
Terese Stevenson, Vice President, Grants, The Rees-Jones Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Thomas Stuckey, Associate Judge, Centex Child Protection Court South, Seguin	✓	
Hon. Royce West (by proxy Vince Leibowitz), Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
Jurists in Residence		
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452 nd District Court, Senior Jurist in Residence, Mason	✓	
Hon. Piper McCraw, Judge, 469 th District Court, Jurist in Residence, McKinney		✓
Equity Advisor		
Sheila Craig, Director, Civil Rights Office, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Senior Judicial Advisor		
Hon. Michael Massengale, former Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston		✓

Attending Guests

Brenda Keller, TXPOP Program Manager, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin
Amy Starnes, Director of Public Affairs, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin
Samantha Thompson, Program Specialist, Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing, Austin

Office of Court Administration

Megan LaVoie, Administrative Director

Attending Staff

Jamie Bernstein, Executive Director
Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney
Aimee Corbin, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Monica Mahoney, Program Specialist
Dylan Moench, Legal Representation Director
Patrick Passmore, Finance Manager
Milbrey Raney, Assistant Director
Willette Sedwick, Accountant
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Justice Debra Lehrmann called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and expressed her gratitude to Ms. Spriggs and Texas CASA for the judicial appreciation reception which Texas CASA hosted the prior evening. Justice Lehrmann acknowledged all the hardships we have faced over the last two years and thanked everyone for their unwavering hard work and dedication. Justice Lehrmann then invited Justice Rebeca Huddle to share remarks.

Justice Huddle expressed her excitement about being able to finally convene in person and echoed Justice Lehrmann in thanking Texas CASA for hosting the reception. Justice Huddle announced her enthusiasm about continuing the work of the Commission with those who have been working so hard for the families and children of Texas.

Justice Lehrmann thanked Commission members for their helpful responses to the Commission survey regarding how and when Commissioners preferred to convene and announced that Ms. Bernstein would present those results later in the meeting. Justice Lehrmann noted the survey responses regarding feedback on how Commissioner updates have been conducted and acknowledged that this aspect of Commission meetings would be changed going forward in response.

Commissioner, Committee, and Collaborative Council Membership Changes

Justice Lehrmann announced the new Commissioners, who are as follows: Karla Baker, Parent Liaison, Region 4, Parent Collaboration Group Representative, Chandler; Heather Fleming, Budget & Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin; Judge Rhonda Hunter, Chair of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section, Dallas; Judge Laura Loera, Tribal Court Judge, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, El Paso; Sasha Rasco, Chief Prevention and Community Well-Being Officer at the Prevention and Early Intervention Division at DFPS, Austin; and Judge Thomas Stuckey, Associate Judge of the Centex Child Protection Court South, Lockhart.

Justice Huddle announced the following committee member changes. Judge Randall Hufstetler of the 300th District Court is now the chair of the Legal Practice and Process Committee. Andy Homer of Texas CASA and Judge Peter Sakai of Bexar County Children’s Court have retired and rolled off the Systems Improvement Committee. Jeffrey Tsunekawa will no longer serve as an OCA Advisory on the Data Committee and will be replaced by both Jeff Cox and Alejandra Peña of OCA.

Justice Huddle then announced the new members of the Collaborative Council who are as follows: Mikey Betancourt, Director of Multidisciplinary Team Programming at the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas; Christine Gendron, Vice President of The Family Initiative; Tina Hosaka, Director of Substance Intervention Treatment Programs at Health and Human Services; Brian Klas, Training Director at the Texas District and County Attorneys Association; Theresa Thomas, Statewide Director of the Office of Community-Based Care Transition; and Ruth Anne Thornton, Director of Child Support and IV-D Director at the Office of the Attorney General.

Adoption of September 17, 2021, Meeting Minutes

Justice Huddle directed members to the September 17, 2021, Commission meeting minutes behind Tab 2 (page 13) of the February 2022 Meeting Notebook that were distributed prior to the meeting.

ACTION: Justice Huddle asked for a motion to adopt the minutes. Hearing no objections, Commissioners voted to adopt the minutes for the September 17, 2021, Children’s Commission meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT & PROJECT UPDATE

Following brief Commissioner introductions, Ms. Jamie Bernstein opened her report by expressing her excitement about finally holding an in-person Children’s Commission meeting after two years. Ms. Bernstein announced that she would be highlighting a few notable points and results from the survey that was sent to Commissioners. First, the survey results revealed an overwhelming preference for two in-person meetings a year. Due to that preference, the new meeting schedule for 2022 will be as follows: February (in-person), May (virtual), September (in-person), and November (virtual). Ms. Bernstein highlighted that the second notable point was that Commissioners expressed their clear preference for special presentations over Commissioner updates; moving forward, Commission meeting time will focus more on contemporary issues than on Commissioner updates.

Following brief Committee updates from Commission staff, Justice Lehrmann announced that the Commission is in the very early stages of creating a committee to develop legal standards for child representation and asked that if members have suggestions for possible committee members to please contact the Commission.

Ms. Bernstein announced the completion and significance of the Dual Status Task Force Final Report and thanked task force co-chairs Judge Gary Coley of Waco and Judge Lisa Jarrett of San

Antonio for their hard work. Ms. Bernstein also briefly highlighted the completed 2021 Children’s Commission Annual Report.

Mr. Patrick Passmore directed members to Tab 4 of the meeting notebook to give a high-level overview of the FY2022 Financial Report and gave an update on the FY2022 grant funding.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE REPORT

Hon. Rob Hofmann of Mason County echoed Ms. Bernstein and shared his excitement at the return of an in-person Commission meeting and being able to see and meet the new Commission members. Judge Hofmann discussed the virtual Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy that was hosted by the Commission in partnership with the national Capacity Building Center for Courts on January 27-28, 2022. He announced that 22 Texas judges were able to attend this very practical and timely training and that the curriculum was presented well. Judge Hofmann shared that the participants’ feedback focused on their approval of the training and acquired new skills implemented in their courts. Judge Hofmann expressed the hope that the Commission could present this training to more judges across the state as well as host a reasonable efforts training geared towards attorneys.

PRESENTATION ON BIRTH AND FOSTER PARENT PARTNERSHIP (BFPP)

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels opened by explaining what it means for a birth parent and a foster parent to have a true partnership and referred members to a BFPP Guide. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels shared that the purpose of the national BFPP curriculum is to create a strong support system for the child in care while working together toward reunification of the birth family. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels expressed the importance of open communication between the foster parent and birth parent to better support the child. She added that the BFPP model has proven successful in obtaining better outcomes for families. Fundamental to these successful outcomes is support for the birth parent and the foster parent to learn from each other about caring for the child, opportunities for partnership and family time between the birth and foster parent, working with the system, and planning for reunification. These partnerships can continue after the birth family’s reunification and can take the form of childcare assistance and family celebrations.

Following this presentation, Commissioners discussed the possibility of expanding the success of BFPP across the state. Ms. Deneen Dryden of DFPS and Ms. Vicki Spriggs of Texas CASA supported expansion of the best practices of BFPP and noted the importance of cross-training with judges; institutionalizing these best practices was also discussed. Another topic of discussion was the paradigm shift reflected in changing “foster to adopt” to “foster to reunify.”

PRESENTATION ON THE TEXAS PERMANENCY OUTCOME PROJECT (TXPOP)

Ms. Brenda Keller with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and Ms. Samantha Thompson with the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing explained the practice model and work of TXPOP. TXPOP is a 5-year, federally-funded project through the Children’s Bureau which has the goal of transforming Texas child welfare. The Commission and DFPS are partners with the Children’s Bureau in supporting TXPOP. The presentation focused on the TXPOP

practice model, their core values and components, and how TXPOP promotes parent and caregiver collaboration. Currently, there are three pilot TXPOP programs which are focused on conservatorship, permanency, and aftercare. Involving the birth family and prioritizing safety while increasing communication and connection across all caregivers of the child can shorten the length of time that children are in care. “Co-caring” for the child and rethinking the role of all caregivers to enhance placement stability assists in securing permanency for the child. Aftercare efforts also support permanency for children by connecting them with relatives. Discussion about how this research-based program could be continued at the conclusion of the 5-year grant period involved adapting it for statewide implementation.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES (DFPS) UPDATE

Ms. Deneen Dryden reported on some of the changing data for Statewide Intake in 2021. Ms. Dryden mentioned that the average hold time for the child abuse hotline was 5.2 minutes which showed a small increase from 2020 (4.6 minutes). Both numbers are historically low.

Ms. Dryden announced that Child Protective Services continues to work on implementing the changes emanating from the 87th Legislative Session. House Bill 567 and Senate Bill 1896 were particularly impactful in shifting how DFPS can conduct its work. The Office of Community-Based Care Transition was also created as a result of the legislative session. Regarding developments in Community-Based Care (CBC), Belong became the newest Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) in 2021, in Region 8b; Belong recently went live with Stage 1. Ms. Dryden reported that the Requests for Applications for the upcoming CBC rollout will soon be released in regions 3E, 4, 5, and 9. Ms. Dryden also revealed that the CBC team is working to rename the regions to be more geographically specific in order to better reflect the uniqueness of each area of the state. She reported that the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) pilot is on track to start serving youth with complex needs in the summer of 2022. DFPS will work with the Children’s Commission to provide education on the characteristics and qualifications of QRTPs, including judicial review required when children are placed in QRTPs. Ms. Dryden also explained that rate modernization will facilitate obtaining a continuum of care and allow children’s needs to be more easily met by providers and caregivers. Ms. Dryden reported that unprecedented funds were allocated to DFPS during the recent legislative session to stabilize and build capacity.

Ms. Dryden shared that DFPS added 6 more trauma-informed specialists statewide. Also, Ms. Dryden noted that DFPS is partnering with Casey Family Programs to explore how to better support kinship connections with children in care. DFPS is working on how to provide payments to kinship caregivers. Regarding the ongoing federal lawsuit, DFPS continues to make improvements in response to the remedial orders. The expert panel report was published in January 2022, and DFPS has reviewed the report and will implement all of the recommendations.

Regarding children without placement (CWOP), Ms. Dryden expressed the importance of resolving this issue and expressed her gratitude for the DFPS staff who continue to work tirelessly on getting children without placement placed. She reported that the number of children without placement recently dropped to 67 from a high of 206 children in July 2021. Ms. Dryden welcomed any new ideas to support resolution of CWOP issues so that children without placement can get their complex needs met.

Ms. Sasha Rasco articulated that the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division and the judiciary are key partners in helping families. PEI aims to bring in community resources and services which serve the children and families who interact with DFPS and the judiciary. Ms. Rasco announced that PEI, in partnership with the Children’s Commission and the Office of Court Administration, will fund three early intervention court liaison positions in Bell County, Lubbock County, and Galveston County. These positions will support families who are before the court by connecting them with community resources in the hopes of preventing removal or partnering earlier on child maltreatment prevention. Additionally, Texas has \$50 million in federal Family First Transition Service Act funding to assist with readiness for the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), and the Legislature has directed the use of those dollars. HB 3041 set two pilots in motion in SSCC communities where families are participating in Court Ordered and Family-Based Safety Services.

Discussion ensued about the relationship between placement capacity and children’s mental health. Ms. Dryden noted that children’s mental health was included in the federal lawsuit’s expert panel report and that the Department was already following up on this issue and coordinating with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) about the same. Ms. Sheila Craig offered to provide training to DFPS employees about what may constitute a reasonable accommodation in CWOP situations. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels suggested that relatives might provide placement, resources, and information to assist CWOP and Ms. Dryden acknowledged that DFPS employees are aware and following up on this where appropriate. Ms. Katie Olse mentioned that DFPS and HHSC are maximizing the ability of Medicaid and STAR Health to pay for children’s mental health issues. Judge Randy Hufstetler added that children’s mental health issues would be improved if the Legislature could allocate more funds for those children and youth who have complex mental health needs, including long-term placements for such children and youth. Mr. Vince Leibowitz requested information regarding kinship care rate increases; Ms. Dryden responded that Casey Family Programs has convened groups to examine this issue. Ms. Luanne Southern continued the conversation to say that children’s mental health and the need for related resources has become even more of a focal point since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. An issue that she identified was related to workforce issues and services for children. She recommended that an overview of the status of children’s mental health and a dialogue between judges and key mental health professionals, including state agency representatives, would identify barriers and resources and facilitate progress in this critical area. Ms. Anne Heiligenstein added that the expert panel viewed child welfare as a systemic issue and not simply as an issue for DFPS.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION (OCA) UPDATE

Ms. Megan LaVoie opened by introducing herself as the new Administrative Director of OCA and expressed her excitement to work alongside the Children’s Commission. Regarding child welfare related updates, Ms. LaVoie announced that two Child Protection Courts (CPCs) in Dallas and Bryan have been set up to hold hybrid hearings with the OWL technology (which provides a 360-degree view of proceedings). Furthermore, several additional child protection and child support courts have expressed interest in bringing this technology into their courts as well. Also, she updated that OCA is working with the National Center for State Courts on the second stage of a study on how virtual child welfare hearings are being conducted; in Texas, case outcomes and

quantitative data will be the focus. Next, Ms. LaVoie reported that OCA's senior data analyst Jeffrey Cox is reviewing the data being collected by the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) in hopes of making new recommendations on increasing the accuracy and amount of data collected and looking at the efficiency of virtual child welfare hearings. Finally, OCA and DFPS' collaboration on a prevention-related grant has resulted in the hiring of a court liaison in Galveston County; two positions in Bell County and Lubbock County need to be filled. Also, with funding from a Commission grant, OCA is now able to hire retired District judges and County Court at Law judges who have experience in child welfare cases, as well as retired CPC judges, to act as visiting judges.

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Hon. Gary Coley from Waco shared that a pre-petition parent advocacy program in McLennan County has launched with the help of Casey Family Programs. The purpose of the advocacy program is to create an avenue for families to connect with lawyers and access social services support to which they wouldn't otherwise have access. This assistance can lead to positive outcomes such as legally binding agreements for custody; housing assistance; and prevention of removals. Judge Coley's shared his goal for this program to be replicated elsewhere if it is successful.

Ms. Vicki Spriggs from Austin announced that Texas CASA released the publication *Normalcy Matters: Improving Life for Children and Youth in Foster Care Guide* and a companion video in January.

Hon. Roy Ferguson from Alpine shared the successes and changes he has seen come out of the use of virtual court due to COVID-19, such as more time to hold hearings more frequently, more parent engagement, and less time between hearings. The option of having virtual hearings is especially helpful for courts in rural areas where attending hearings was costly and took a lot of time to arrange (for example, bringing children to hearings meant a lot of driving and missed school). He encouraged other judges and courts to adequately compensate attorneys for their diligent work. In response to an inquiry from Justice Lehrmann, Judge Ferguson updated that he and others (including Judge Hofmann) examined the effectiveness of virtual hearings and assembled a report about where existing code rules would need to be amended to accommodate virtual hearings; this report was submitted to the Supreme Court of Texas' Advisory Committee.

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels from Slaton announced that she has recently become a family consultant and participated in a round table discussion with the federal Health and Human Services (HHS) to talk about her experience with and knowledge of kinship placement. Two main issues she reported to the HHS Secretary were the lack of financial support for kinship caregivers and the burden of licensing requirements for kinship families.

Justice Lehrmann commented that birth and foster parent partnerships and children's mental health were two issues that are critically important to follow up on from the meeting. Justice Lehrmann requested that Commissioners continue to suggest topics and inquiries that could be developed outside of Commission Meetings. Justice Huddle also expressed her interest in further exploring these ideas.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Lehrmann thanked all attendees and announced that the next meeting will be held virtually on May 13, 2022, followed by an in-person meeting on September 16, 2022, and the final meeting of 2022 will be held virtually on November 4, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3

REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

May 13, 2022

GOAL I (COLLABORATION)

Administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, provide a forum for meaningful collaboration, encourage continuous quality improvement, and promote best child welfare and court practices to improve the child welfare system.

Objective: Utilize the CIP funds to execute the strategies of the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission.

1. Strategy: Provide regular updates to the Children's Commission and the Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees about Commission initiatives.

Background: The Children's Commission is a statewide, multidisciplinary collaborative body that includes high-level membership from the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of Texas government, along with child welfare partners in the non-profit and private sectors. The Children's Commission holds Commission meetings four times throughout each year. The Children's Commission receives federal grant funds which are used to operate the Commission, to fund meeting facilitation and travel reimbursement, training expenses and scholarships, and pass-through grants to sub-grantees. The Children's Commission also confers regularly with national organizations and other CIPs and submits annual reports and CIP strategic plans to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and to the Supreme Court of Texas. Leadership from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates, and the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section have standing positions on the Children's Commission and at least one state-level DFPS staff member is a member of the Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees.

The Children's Commission helps institutionalize collaboration by maintaining a statewide multidisciplinary judicially-led commission, holding regular meetings that include child welfare stakeholders, partnering with the state child welfare agency, and partnering with other state and national level executives, partners, and organizations. The Children's Commission creates an environment and maintains the space for stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information on an ongoing basis. The Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees are standing committees that meet before every Children's Commission meeting and monitor related Commission projects and initiatives.

05/13/22 Update: The February 25, 2022 Commission meeting was held in person at the AT&T Hotel and Conference Center in Austin. Participation was limited to Commissioners, Special Advisors, Jurists in Residence, and Special Guests to accommodate social distancing. The February Commission meeting was streamed live and archived on the Commission's YouTube channel.

The Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees met on May 2, April 28, April 21, and May 3 respectively. Each committee received information and updates about current Children's Commission projects and activities and members provided feedback to assist with planning for FY2023.

The Children’s Commission continues to collaborate with various partners, including, but not limited to, the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Attorney General, the Judicial Commission on Mental Health, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS), the University of Texas School of Social Work, the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and the Child Protection Round Table.

Objective: Collaborate with high-level state and judicial leaders, as well as with multidisciplinary child welfare stakeholders, to maintain productive dialogue aimed at strengthening the child welfare system.

2. Strategy: Engage with the Collaborative Council and participate in and provide forums and opportunities for child welfare stakeholders, including individuals with lived experience, to partner and to share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs, and strengths.

Background: The Children’s Commission convenes an annual Collaborative Council meeting to elicit feedback about member areas of interest and priorities. The Children’s Commission also conducts a bi-monthly collaborative call with DFPS, the Office of Court Administration (OCA), and Collaborative Council members as well as numerous other calls and meetings related to Children’s Commission workgroups to provide consistent opportunities to collaborate, share timely information, and assess engagement and areas in need of improvement.

05/13/22 Update: The annual Collaborative Council meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in-person on Monday, October 24, 2022. More updates regarding the annual meeting will be announced to council members in early summer. Bi-monthly collaborative calls for 2022 commenced on January 12 and continue to take place every other week.

Objective: Communicate Children’s Commission areas of focus through easily accessible, user-friendly resources for judges, attorneys, and child welfare stakeholders.

3. Strategy: Develop, maintain, and enhance usability and function of the Children’s Commission website, social media, print and online materials, and other communication mediums.

Background: The Children’s Commission maintains a website that features published reports, guides, announcements, scholarships, and training opportunities. CIP grant applications and grant recipient information are also included on the website. Announcements such as the Resource Letter are also relayed through the Commission’s Twitter account, @TXChildrensComm.

05/13/22 Update: The Commission website is routinely updated for content and newly released reports and resources. While the website is specific to judges and attorneys, the materials featured are often accessed by additional stakeholders in the child welfare system. For FY2022, the Children’s Commission is working with OCA to explore a website renovation to expand accessibility and navigation.

Objective: Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services on federal plans, audits, and requirements as mandated by federal program instructions.

4. Strategy: Confer with DFPS on the Child and Family Service Reviews, Program Improvement Plans, Child and Family State Plans, and the Court Improvement Program Strategic Plans.

Background: At the foundation of the Children’s Commission is a longstanding collaboration with the state child welfare agency, DFPS. The Children’s Commission engages in ongoing participation with ACF and DFPS regarding the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP), and CIP Strategic Plan. Additionally, at the suggestion of ACF and request of DFPS, the Children’s Commission formed an Attorney Advisory Group (AAG) comprised of experienced child welfare attorneys from across the state who have agreed to offer input and perspective on an ad hoc basis via email or conference call on matters of DFPS policy changes when requested by DFPS, gauging the impact of a legislative proposal, or providing feedback on trends or practice issues and concerns.

05/13/22 Update: Children’s Commission staff continues to participate in many Department initiatives including participation by the Executive Director and Senior Jurist in Residence on the Public-Private Partnership Committee, the advisory body for the rollout of Community Based Care in Texas.

The Children’s Commission staff participates in a Kinship Steering Committee that met for the first time on February 15, 2022, as well as the two workgroups: Kin as First and Best Out of Home Placement and Supporting Kinship Placements. The most recent Kinship Steering Committee meeting was held on April 21, 2022.

In April 2022, the Children’s Commission provided feedback and input into the DFPS State Plans.

Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders and organizations to enhance knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with and throughout Texas.

5. Strategy: Provide assistance to and collaborate with local jurisdictions, DFPS, and state and national partners and organizations.

Background: The Children’s Commission provides various types of support for child welfare partners and stakeholders including meeting facilitation and support, travel reimbursement for meeting and training event attendees, presentations by Children’s Commission staff as requested, and assistance with securing speakers for local, regional, or national events, as appropriate. Children’s Commission staff serves on the Public Private Partnership, Education Reach for Texans, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners.

05/13/22 Update: The Children’s Commission provides attorney scholarships for the American Bar Association biennial conferences, as detailed in Strategy #34. In 2022, the Children’s Commission received a request from one judge to attend the conference and this scholarship will be covered under this strategy as assistance to local jurisdictions.

In response to the growing numbers of children without placement (often referred to as CWOP), the Children’s Commission initiated a Judicial Workgroup on Capacity. Beginning in June 2021, the workgroup meets on a monthly basis to provide a forum for judges from jurisdictions throughout the state to brainstorm effective approaches to identifying placement options for children without placement. In the long term, this group may provide a forum to discuss how judges can appropriately participate in developing foster care capacity in their communities.

GOAL II (SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT)

Execute innovative projects aimed at ensuring equity, fairness, and justice for children, youth, and families; promoting judicial leadership in courts and communities; and expanding court and child welfare system capacity to support continuous, systemic improvement.

Objective: Encourage judicial leadership through Jurist in Residence (JIR) support to ensure that judges are equipped to make well-informed decisions and conduct hearings that will contribute to better outcomes for children and families.

6. Strategy: Utilize Jurists in Residence to promote best practices to the judiciary and support the legal and child welfare systems through judicial leadership and expertise.

Background: The Jurist in Residence position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among judges hearing child welfare matters. The JIR develops relationships with retired and sitting judges, and acts as a consultant, trainer, and speaker to provide expert and seasoned judicial advice on matters affecting courts and legal system handling of child welfare cases and issues. The JIR activities include continued emphasis on elevating judicial leaders with expertise and interests related to prevention of removal to foster care, child and family well-being, and improving child and family voice in child welfare system reform.

The Children's Commission has two Jurists in Residence: Judge Rob Hofmann of the 452nd District Court in Mason County and Judge Piper McCraw of the 469th District Court in Collin County. Both JIRs participate in CIP-OCA-DFPS stakeholder collaborative calls as well as multiple Children's Commission meetings regarding Emergency Orders, proposed legislation and rules, Community-Based Care, prevention and early intervention, placement capacity, and other issues.

05/13/22 Update: Between February and May 2022, a few examples of JIR activities include:

- Presented at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Dorchester Implementation Site Team Meeting, March 8, Virtual
- Attended Children's Commission Judicial Workgroup on Capacity Meetings, March 10 and May 12, Virtual
- Continued work as board member for National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and attended Board Meetings, March 12, Pittsburg, PA
- Attended the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Juvenile Justice Conference, March 13-16, Pittsburg, PA
- Facilitated Children's Commission Trial Skills Training "Pretrial," March 30, Virtual
- Facilitated and attended the Child Welfare Judges Conference Curriculum Committee Call, April 5, Virtual
- Facilitated Children's Commission Trial Skills Training "Trial," April 6-7, Virtual
- Facilitated and attended the Children's Commission Forensic Assessment Center Network Round Table, April 11, Austin

- Facilitated the Children’s Commission Spring Training Committee Meeting, April 21, Virtual
- Attended the Children’s Commission Bench Book Committee Meeting, April 19, Virtual
- Facilitated the Children’s Commission Senate Bill 1575 Workgroup meeting, April 29, Virtual
- Attended the Rural Justice Collaborative Advisory Council meeting, April 29, Virtual
- Facilitated the Systems Improvement Committee meeting, May 2, Virtual; and
- Participated in calls with Executive Director, leadership, and staff regarding various issues

Objective: Promote awareness of and embed a culture and practice among the judiciary and legal community around Trauma-Informed Care.

7. Strategy: Partner with trauma and mental health advocates and agencies to implement and apply principles of Trauma-Informed Care in the respective disciplines.

Background: In July 2017, the Children’s Commission launched the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care (SCTIC) to elevate trauma-informed policy and practices in the Texas child welfare system by creating a statewide strategy to support system reform, organizational leadership, cross-systems collaboration, and community-led efforts with data-informed initiatives. Based on the work of the SCTIC, the Children’s Commission published a final report in February 2019 entitled Building a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System: A Blueprint. The SCTIC endeavors to raise awareness about Trauma-Informed Care through training and educational opportunities; create a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive child welfare system that better meets the needs of children and families who experience trauma; and partner with other state and national trauma-informed workgroups and collaboratives. The SCTIC continues under the guidance of an Implementation Task Force and utilizes the Blueprint to direct the SCTIC’s work.

05/13/22 Update: The Trauma-Informed Court Project continues its work with the six court sites that are led by: Judge Carol Chaney (Waller County Court at Law); Judge Linda Dunson (309th Family District Court); Judge Angela Graves-Harrington (246th Family District Court); Judge Rhonda Hunter (303rd Family District Court); Judge Andrea James (2nd Region Child Protection Court No. 2); and Judge Cheryl Vaughan (Child Protection Court Eighth Region North). The Trauma-Informed Court Project planning team hosted the first project site cohort convening on April 22, 2022. Each of the six judges invited members of their court team to attend the one-day event. The agenda included an opening presentation that provided an overview of trauma-informed elements in a court setting with insights and best practices from Chief Justice Darlene Byrne of the 3rd Court of Appeals and Judge Carlos Villalon, Jr. of the Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West. Court team members were then dispersed across five breakout rooms lead by Trauma Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) practitioners to walk through a case scenario utilizing a trauma-informed and strength-based lens. Four Advisory Judges (Judge Carole Clark [ret.], Chief Justice Darlene Byrne, Judge Carlos Villalon, Jr., and Judge Elizabeth Watkins of the Child Protection Court of the Concho Valley), also participated in the case scenario breakouts to help guide discussion. Participants then met with their respective court teams to discuss key insights from the convening, identify areas in which their team is doing well, and identify areas where they could improve by utilizing a trauma-informed perspective. The convening concluded with a large group discussion where each team shared their highlights. After the convening, each court team met with project staff to discuss project ideas and identify top priorities to focus on for their first project initiatives. A second offering of the convening for court teams which were unable to attend the first offering will be held on May 30.

Objective: Support efforts to address equity in the Texas child welfare system so that children, youth, and families receive services and supports that meet their individual needs.

8. Strategy: Identify and promote data-driven, cross-disciplinary opportunities to address disproportionality and disparities among children, youth, and families involved in child welfare cases.

Background: The Children’s Commission is committed to the goal of reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system through development and deployment of judicial and attorney resources aimed at increasing awareness, sharing data and information, as well as disseminating best practices for dealing with disproportionality and disparities systemically and locally.

05/13/22 Update: The Equity Workgroup is chaired by the Children’s Commission’s Equity Advisor Sheila Craig and last met on March 11. The workgroup finalized a mission statement to direct its work and discussed next steps for the workgroup.

In January 2022, a Texas team was accepted into the Capacity Building Center for Courts’ (CBCC) Race Equity Workshop series. The CBCC hosted the first Texas team meeting on April 12. Team members received information on the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)/Change Management approach and discussed Texas-specific needs. The team will meet again with the CBCC in the coming months. The Texas team includes the following Equity Workgroup members: Children’s Commission Equity Advisor Sheila Craig; Hon. Aurora Martinez Jones, Judge of the 126th District Court; Office of Court Administration Specialty and Children’s Courts Program Manager Anissa Johnson; Office of Court Administration Senior Data Analyst Jeff Cox; and Children’s Commission Staff Attorney Jocelyn Fowler.

Commission staff meet regularly with DFPS’ new Disproportionality Manager, Mosley Hobson, and will continue building connections with the Disproportionality team at DFPS as it continues to grow.

Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings and related decision-making so that children and youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and is important to the decisions being made about their lives.

9. Strategy: Elevate the importance of engaging children and youth in the case planning and court process as well as promote the inclusion of young adults with lived experience in statewide system improvement efforts.

Background: In FY2018, the Children’s Commission helped the Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) to establish a Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) designed to elevate and incorporate youth voice in statewide policy and administrative procedure discussions, particularly in the child welfare system. The YALC is a 10-month long leadership development program for young people with lived experiences of system involvement. The Commission also provides funding each year to print the Foster Youth “Aging Out” Guide published by Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

05/13/22 Update:

Young Adult Leadership Council: With FY2022 Commission grant funding, TNOYS onboarded a new YALC cohort of 12 young people. Since February 2022, the YALC members attended two trainings where they learned how to facilitate and plan listening session activities. They conducted three planning sessions where they contributed to the creation of listening session questions that are comprised of five themes to discuss the changes that can be made in the court system. These sessions provided the YALC members with the knowledge and confidence necessary to carry out the CIP Listening Sessions in preparation of the CIP Video Project (please see Strategy #18 for additional information). Additionally,

YALC members provided feedback to the Commission’s Tool Kit Committee for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases to revamp sections of the tool kit to make them more youth-informed and specific to the needs of youth and young adults in the foster care system. This input is expected to have measurable impacts on the youth in Texas who are in care and the attorneys who serve them.

Through this grant, YALC members also had the opportunity to partner with several organizations through external speaking engagements, including the UT Law School Children’s Rights Clinic and State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section.

Foster Youth Aging Out Guide: The Children’s Commission provided funding to Texas RioGrande Legal Aid to update the design and content of the online and print versions of the 8th Edition of *A Guide for Those “Aging Out” of Foster Care in Texas*. The updated version was completed in November 2021.

Objective: Emphasize the need for normalcy for children and youth who experience foster care by providing clear guidance on age-appropriate activities and real-world application of normalcy principles.

10. Strategy: Develop role-based information about how different stakeholders can support normalcy for children and youth in foster care.

Background: The Children’s Commission held a Round Table on Normalcy in February 2019. Subsequently, the Commission provided grant funding in FY2020 for Texas CASA to create a role-based guide regarding normalcy for children and youth in foster care. On February 2, 2022, Texas CASA released a [guide](#) entitled *Normalcy Matters: A Guide to Supporting Children & Youth in Texas Foster Care*, as well as a companion [video](#) to provide education about normalcy, including the importance of normalcy and how judges, attorneys, stakeholders, and others can support normalcy for children and youth who experience the Texas child welfare system.

05/13/22 Update: The Children’s Commission continues to support awareness of the role-based normalcy guide and video developed by Texas CASA. The Commission released a Resource Letter announcing the guide on February 2, 2022 and hosts the guide on the Commission website.

Objective: Support statewide efforts to transition from a reactive child welfare system to a prevention-oriented system that aims to maintain child safety and keep families together.

11. Strategy: Engage judges and lawyers, in collaboration with DFPS’ Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division and other partners, in systemic efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect and address occurrences of child abuse and neglect while maintaining family preservation.

Background: The Children’s Commission collaborates closely with DFPS on the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), as required by the federal Administration for Children and Families. FFPSA restructures federal child welfare funding, particularly Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, which Texas uses to pay for services for children in foster care and their families. FFPSA seeks to reduce entry in foster care, to limit the use of congregate care, and to increase access to substance abuse and mental health services. There are certain training provisions directly impacting the courts and Court Improvement Programs, but beyond that, FFPSA mandates that states seeking Title IV-E funding create and provide more robust prevention services for families in the state’s child welfare system. The Children’s Commission collaborates with Casey Family Programs and other state and national workgroups on best practices for implementation of all FFPSA provisions, including the development of IV-E prevention programs and court involvement in encouraging a prevention approach.

05/13/22 Update: In January 2021, DFPS, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and the Commission joined the national Thriving Families, Safer Children initiative, which is designed to be transformative in the way jurisdictions work with families and communities to keep children free from harm. Through this program, Texas, along with other jurisdictions from across the country, continues its work on addressing race equity, distinguishing poverty from neglect, engaging individuals with lived experience, and building capacity to support families and children.

Commission staff continues to participate on the PEI Prevention Framework Workgroup which has a goal of developing a prevention framework to guide communities throughout Texas. The workgroup last met on January 20, 2022.

During 2021, the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division of DFPS proposed creating a new position of an Early Intervention Court Liaison in identified Child Protection Courts. PEI partnered with the Children’s Commission and OCA to identify Texas communities that would benefit from the Court Liaison position. The Court Liaison will act as a special assistant to the court and will serve to identify and connect early childhood and family support programs to the local Child Protection Courts and community. The Court Liaisons will serve as a convener within their communities and offer a judicial perspective within community stakeholder meetings. They will also serve to identify local services to help support prevention efforts. Galveston, Bell, and Lubbock Counties are serving as pilot sites. Galveston and Bell County Court Liaisons have been hired and have begun their roles. The interview process continues for a candidate for Lubbock.

Objective: Encourage the improvement of education outcomes for children and youth in foster care, leading to a more productive and stable adult life.

12. Strategy: Identify opportunities to develop sustainable partnerships between legal, child welfare, and education stakeholders in an effort to identify and address the educational needs and goals of children and youth who experience foster care.

Background: Since the inception of the Education Committee in 2010 and the release of the Texas Blueprint in 2012, the Children’s Commission has convened a multidisciplinary, statewide effort aimed at improving education outcomes for children and youth in foster care. The Foster Care and Education (FC&Ed) Committee was established in 2015 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations. In FY2019, the structure of the FC&Ed collaboration shifted from a workgroup model to a project-centered model. The FC&Ed Committee will continue to develop priorities and provide oversight for the statewide effort. As projects are identified, small groups will each meet periodically with a defined scope, deliverables, and a timeline. The core principles of strengthening collaboration between the education, courts, and child welfare systems, developing cross-training opportunities, and encouraging data-driven decision making remain fundamental to the FC&Ed Committee model.

05/13/22 Update: In December 2021, the FC&Ed Committee identified new projects for the workgroups. The FC&Ed Committee identified the following priority areas:

- Foster parents and kinship placements;
- Data and information sharing; and
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The Foster Parent and Kinship Placement Workgroup (renamed the Caregiver Workgroup) is focused on expanding educational knowledge, involvement, and supports to caregivers. The workgroup is developing two deliverables for caregivers. The first deliverable focuses on children and youth in grades K-12 who face uncommon situations such as involvement in a psychiatric hospital, transitioning in and out of juvenile detention facilities, and children who are in multiple placements within a very short period. The second deliverable is for caregivers with youth in high school and aging out. This deliverable will provide a timetable for a caregivers who have youth in their care who are preparing for higher education, the workforce, or other independent living. This workgroup last met on April 1, 2022.

The Data and Information Sharing Workgroup will focus on the momentum and recommendations created through the Foster Care & Student Success Texas Data and Trends Report of 2018. The workgroup plans to review current data shared between the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Education Agency and to release an annual report with significant findings. This workgroup last met on April 21, 2022.

The Every Student Succeeds Act Workgroup drafted a Records Transfer one-pager that is undergoing review. The workgroup will continue drafting charts and one-pagers on school of origin, best interest decisions, transportation, and cross-system collaboration in order to provide additional guidance to the child welfare and education communities. This workgroup last met on April 6, 2022.

The FC&Ed Committee continues to oversee these workgroups and last met on April 7, 2022.

Objective: Establish and support meaningful relationships with tribal nations and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) so that Indian children and families experience equitable treatment in keeping with their customs and beliefs.

13. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.

Background: The Children's Commission supports partnering with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of ICWA and its importance. The Commission also works with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of the Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines. The Children's Commission also partners with DFPS in supporting tribal/state collaborative meetings and collaborates with the Capacity Building Center for Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group. Commission staff continues to monitor the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of ICWA, *Brackeen v. Haaland* (formerly *Brackeen v. Bernhardt*). Commission staff also maintains contact with the three federally recognized Tribes in Texas and continues to communicate any resources that may be helpful.

05/13/22 Update: The Children's Commission continues to monitor the *Brackeen* case. The Supreme Court of the United States granted all parties Petitions for a Writ of Certiorari and will hear oral arguments in the Fall.

The Commission continues to be a regular participant in the ICWA Constituency Group monthly calls organized by the Capacity Building Center for Courts. Additionally, Commission staff recently met with the new Tribal liaison from DFPS State Office and will continue regular check-ins with DFPS and the Tribes. Discussions about a planning a second ICWA Summit in partnership with the Tribes, DFPS, and the Commission have begun.

Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources, and support so that judges and lawyers can assist in preventing and responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care.

14. Strategy: Partner with national, state, and local leaders to understand the scope of the issue and engage judges and lawyers on the need to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care.

Background: The Children’s Commission partners with many key stakeholders with a goal of preventing and addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care. In addition to serving on the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the Children’s Commission also works with the Office of the Texas Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team, the DFPS Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Team, and the Office of Court Administration to develop strategies to improve judicial handling of child welfare cases where children and youth are at high risk of becoming trafficking victims. The Children’s Commission is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness about human trafficking as it impacts children and youth involved with the child welfare system. The Children’s Commission also participates in state and national trainings on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to Texas judges and attorneys as needed.

On January 7, 2021, the Commission convened its first Human Trafficking Judicial Workgroup meeting comprised of fourteen judges from across the state. The workgroup’s purpose is to explore ways judicial leaders can be involved in discussions about prevention and identification of commercial sexual exploitation of children, particularly children within the child welfare system. Since that time, the workgroup changed its terminology to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children in order to reflect the more commonly used verbiage used by others in the field.

05/13/22 Update: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Judicial Workgroup last met on March 22, 2022 and April 28, 2022. The workgroup is now in the planning stages for judicially-focused webinar on June 10 which will be hosted by the Commission and is aimed to educate judges on issues related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children so that judges can recognize and respond to this issue in their courts.

Commission staff participates in the ACF Region VI Human Trafficking Workgroup to share best practices and better coordinate with other states on combatting human trafficking, including taking part in a subgroup discussion on human trafficking law analysis on March 11, 2022.

In February 2021, Commission staff joined a monthly School-Aged Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness Statewide Implementation Workgroup which focuses on prevention and awareness of human trafficking within Texas schools. This workgroup last met April 20, 2022.

The Children’s Commission participated in the recent meetings of the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force. The Task Force last met on March 17, 2022 to discuss continued development of projects designed to expand trauma-informed education and training to members of law enforcement and the legal community.

Objective: Create opportunities to bring together subject matter experts, judicial and executive branch leaders, and key policy makers to examine important and urgent issues, and to identify recommendations and solutions.

15. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders to identify critical and urgent topics for Round Table discussions and hold Round Table events as needed.

Background: Round Table discussions are designed to address key, urgent issues affecting the Texas child welfare system through a half-day program that is facilitated by a subject-matter and legal expert. The topics vary year to year and the number of Round Tables hosted each year also varies according to the interest of stakeholders and issues demanding attention. The Children Commission's role usually consists of forming a small workgroup to discuss the overall purpose, creating an invitation and distribution list, securing a venue, handling all invitations, RSVPs, travel reimbursements, and producing a written report or paper within about 4 to 6 months following the Round Table event.

05/13/22 Update: Over 15 years ago, DFPS established the Forensic Assessment Center Network (FACN) to allow for specialized pediatricians to be available for consultation on cases of suspected child abuse and neglect. During the 87th Texas Regular Legislative Session, Senate Bill 1578 added Texas Family Code Section 261.3017 which requires DFPS and the Children's Commission to evaluate the department's use of the network and develop joint recommendations for improvement. Areas of focus include the evaluation of agreements between the department and the network as well as the best practices for using assessments provided by the network in connection with abuse and neglect investigations conducted by the department.

On April 4, 2022, the Commission along with DFPS hosted a virtual listening session with parents who had experience with the FACN. Eight families participated from urban, suburban, and rural areas surrounding Abilene, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Houston. The listening session provided the parents an opportunity to share their experiences and identified gaps and recommendations for future improvement. Those gaps and recommendations were then shared at the larger Round Table event.

On April 11, 2022, the Commission hosted the FACN Round Table in Austin. Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge of the 452nd District Court and Senior Jurist in Residence, moderated a five-hour discussion. The forty-five participants who attended included representatives from DFPS, parent advocates, Child Abuse Pediatricians, other pediatric specialists, parents with experience with the FACN, judges, and attorneys who represent parents, children, or DFPS. The Commission will work closely with the department to complete a report to the legislature with analysis of the FACN and recommendations for improvement. The report is due to the legislature by September 1, 2022.

16. Strategy: Assess the impact of Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) on placements for children and youth, including the use of other congregate care facilities.

Background: Texas elected to delay implementation of certain provisions of FFPSA related to the use of congregate care, which mandate that Court Improvement Programs provide training and education to judges and other legal system stakeholders on the limitations on funding for use of non-foster family home placements. However, provisions related to QRTPs went into effect in October 2021. Under Senate Bill 1575 (87th Regular Legislative Session), the Children's Commission will partner with DFPS to examine the oversight of, and best practices related to, residential treatment center placements, including placements in QRTPs.

05/13/22 Update: The Children’s Commission partnered with DFPS to develop a plan for implementation of Senate Bill 1575, including the creation of a workgroup to oversee the goals set out in the bill. The Senate Bill 1575 Workgroup last met on April 29, 2022 and will meet for a total of four times over a twelve-month period. The workgroup decided to organize its work into two subgroups: RTC Best Practices and Legal. The subgroups began meeting on a monthly basis in November 2021. In October 2022, the Children’s Commission will submit a related report to the Legislature.

In partnership with DFPS, the Children’s Commission will host 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.

Objective: Address the needs of children and youth who experience both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and encourage cross-system partnerships through judicial leadership.

17. Strategy: Prioritize and implement the agency coordination, data, definitions, judicial practices, legal representation and advocacy, and training recommendations developed by the Dual Status Task Force.

Background: The Dual Status Task Force (DSTF) was formed to establish a common, statewide definition(s) for the population, identify resources needed to meet the needs of dual status youth, and make other recommendations as may be necessary to improve outcomes for dual status youth. The [Dual Status Task Force Report](#) was released in December 2021 and captured recommendations that were formulated over an eighteen-month period, beginning in July 2019. The report contains various recommendations for agency coordination, data, definitions, legal representation and advocacy, judicial practices, and training that highlight the unique needs of this population of youth.

05/13/22 Update: The Child Protection Court dual status pilot is underway in the Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West, the Child Protection Court of Taylor County, and the Child Protection Court of the Hill Country. Researchers at the University of Texas at San Antonio distributed a survey in April 2022 to the participating stakeholders to assess the impact of the dual status initiative in each jurisdiction.

GOAL III (LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS)

Assist trial and appellate courts, judges, and legal advocates to ensure that children, youth, and families involved with child welfare experience a legal system in which they have access to justice and their rights are protected.

Objective: Improve legal representation so that parents, children, and DFPS experience high-quality court proceedings.

18. Strategy: Convene and support a Legal Representation Committee to sustain efforts to ensure high-quality legal representation for parents, children, and DFPS.

Background: When a family is involved in a child welfare proceeding, quality legal counsel is essential for all parties to ensure that the court strikes the appropriate balance between the rights and duties of all parties involved. The Children's Commission has maintained a Legal Representation Committee (LRC) since its inception. The Committee exists to identify training needs, advise child welfare system stakeholders on best legal and judicial system practices, evaluate proposed statutory amendments, assess the quality of legal representation throughout the state, and help ensure that court proceedings safeguard due process, promote child and family engagement, and produce quality legal representation outcomes for the children and families involved.

05/13/22 Update: The LRC last met on May 5, 2022 to discuss the status of several committee projects.

Commission staff continue to work with DFPS on the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation's recommendation regarding the use of Federal Title IV-E Funds. On March 2, Commission staff met with DFPS, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC), and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) to discuss TJJD's experience with reimbursing jurisdictions using Title IV-E funds and how TIDC and DFPS might collaborate on utilization of Title IV-E funds for legal representation.

The LRC continues to work on several projects to enhance parents' and children's understanding of the attorney-client relationship. The LRC created two workgroups to oversee the design, creation, and distribution of materials explaining the attorney's role. One workgroup focused on designing materials for children, youth, foster parents, and relative caregivers, and the other workgroup focused on designing materials for parents.

The children and youth workgroup has continued to collaborate with the Texas Network of Youth Services Young Adult Leadership Council on the creation of youth-voice videos where young adults speak to youth in care about the attorney-client relationship. The workgroup and the YALC had several meetings throughout March and April to finalize the scripts and questions for YALC members. On May 3, YALC members will lead recorded discussions regarding these questions with youth formerly in care and those recordings will then be edited together for the final videos.

The parent's materials workgroup also met throughout March and April to develop pamphlets addressing issues specific to incarcerated parents and fathers in child welfare cases. The text of the pamphlets is near completion. After the final design is approved, the workgroup will meet again to discuss promotion and distribution of the materials.

The 2022 Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases was completed in March 2022. The 2022 update includes changes from the 87th Legislative Session as well as four new sections on Court Ordered Services, Reinstatement of Parental Rights, Medical Abuse and Neglect, and

Children Without Placement. Two hundred copies of the tool kit were distributed at the March 2022 State Bar of Texas' Advanced Child Protection Law Section's CLE in Houston and the tool kit is available for free on the Children's Commission website. A mobile and tablet-friendly version will be published on the Law Box App in May 2022.

The LRC DFPS Representation Subcommittee is updating the Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing DFPS. This will be the first update to the DFPS Tool Kit since it was published in 2018. Current updates include statutory changes and additions of several new sections including FFPSA, reinstatement of parental rights, and service on parents in foreign countries. The Commission plans to distribute hard copies of the updated tool kit at the State Bar of Texas' Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop in San Antonio on August 10, 2022. The tool kit will also be available as an online PDF and through the Law Box App for mobile phone and tablet-friendly access. The next DFPS Representation Subcommittee meeting will take place on July 19, 2022.

The next meeting of the Legal Representation Committee will be in the fourth quarter of FY2022.

Objective: Encourage standards of practice for attorneys representing parties in child welfare cases so that attorneys throughout the state provide high-quality legal representation.

19. Strategy: Support development and adoption of Standards of Representation for attorneys representing parents, children, and DFPS in child welfare cases.

Background: Though attorneys for parents and children are required by the Texas Family Code to become familiar with the American Bar Association (ABA) standards of practice for attorneys who represent parents and children in abuse and neglect cases, Texas does not require compliance with the ABA standards as a condition of appointment, nor has Texas adopted its own standards of practice for court-appointed attorneys. The Children's Commission 2018 Legal Representation Study surveyed stakeholders regarding the effect that the lack of enforceable standards of practice has on the legal representation of parents and children. Across stakeholder groups, participants demonstrated a high level of confidence that the creation and enforcement of standards would improve the quality of representation, including 70% of responding court-appointed attorneys indicating that standards would have a positive effect.

05/13/22 Update: The Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation's Final Report released in May 2021 recommended the creation of Texas-specific standards of representation as a key element of raising the quality of legal representation for parents and children and provided a roadmap for their creation by identifying issues the standards should address. Commission staff continue to research the creation of Texas-specific standards and are in conversations with the State Bar of Texas and the Supreme Court of Texas about initiating the process.

Objective: Raise the level of understanding and expertise for attorneys by highlighting opportunities for specialization in child welfare law.

20. Strategy: Assist the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) Advisory and Exam Committees in efforts to certify Texas attorneys as specialists in child welfare law.

Background: On February 14, 2017, the Supreme Court of Texas officially recognized Child Welfare Law as the 20th area of certified legal specialization. Children's Commission staff serve as the chair of the Exam Commission, which is responsible for drafting and grading the certification exam. The Children's Commission partners with TBLS to provide reimbursement scholarships to cover application and exam

fees for TBLS Child Welfare Law exam applicants who successfully pass the exam. Also, for several years the Children’s Commission had offered reimbursement of either the application fee or the certification exam fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the National Association of Counsel for Children’s (NACC) Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS) Exam. The Children’s Commission has not received a reimbursement request for the CWLS exam since FY2017 and will phase out reimbursement in FY2022.

05/13/22 Update: The 2021 Child Welfare Board Certification Exam was administered by TBLS on October 19, 2021. Nineteen attorneys sat for the exam and seven passed the exam to become board certified. The Children’s Commission will continue to reimburse exam fees upon request for attorneys who pass the exam and become certified as detailed on the Commission’s website.

The application filing deadline to be seek certification in 2022 has passed and successful applicants will be notified in the summer of 2022 of their ability to sit for the certification exam in the fall of 2022.

Objective: Develop resources to help parents involved in the child welfare system to navigate the process, encourage authentic parent engagement, and ensure parental rights are protected.

21. Strategy: Convene and support a Parent Resource Workgroup and maintain the Parent Resource Guide to sustain efforts to increase parental understanding and engagement in the child welfare system.

Background: The Children’s Commission supports a Parent Resource Group which is made up of parent mentors, parent advocates, parent attorneys, DFPS staff, and other interested stakeholders. Prior to establishing the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline (for more information, see Strategy #22 below), the Children’s Commission partnered with the University of Texas and other stakeholders to produce the Parent Resource Guide, which is available in print and online on the Children’s Commission website as well as on many other stakeholder websites, in both English and Spanish.

05/13/22 Update: A subcommittee of the Parent Resource Workgroup met on March 21, 2022 to further develop the workgroup’s proposed webcast ideas related to the attorney-client relationship and using trauma-informed practices to raise the quality of representation for parent clients. The subcommittee identified content and potential panelists for a one-hour webinar, including parents with lived experience, a parent’s attorney, and a judicial moderator to discuss ways to improve attorney-client communication and enhance understanding of client issues and concerns in order to assist attorneys with advocacy skills for parent clients. The next meeting of the Parent Resource Workgroup will take place on June 2, 2022 and will include a discussion of progress made toward finalizing the webinar.

22. Strategy: Support efforts to provide early and reliable access to information and resources for Texas families through programs such as the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline.

Background: Since 2017, the Children’s Commission has partnered with Access to Justice and the Children’s Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC) to establish the Family Helpline for Strong Families and Safe Children (Family Helpline), which provides easy, statewide access for parents and family members to basic information, education, and resources addressing parental rights as they relate to CPS Investigations, the provision of Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS), Parental Child Safety Placements, Chapter 34 non-parent agreements, termination of parental rights, custody, access, visitation, service plans, the court’s role in conducting hearings and oversight, right to legal counsel, non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other similar situations.

05/13/22 Update: During the first six months of FY2022, the Family Helpline completed a total of 693 calls and provided assistance to 610 unique callers about child welfare legal issues across the state of Texas. Of the calls completed, 581 were from first-time callers and 112 calls were from callers seeking additional assistance after their initial call. The calls originated from 103 counties across Texas. The highest call volume per type of caller was received from parents (52% mothers and 18% fathers), followed by non-parent relatives (31%), and unrelated adults (5%). 33% of the children discussed were residing in a non-parent family member's home. 79 individual callers reported having a safety plan in place with an out-of-home agreed placement for the child, and 28 callers reported having a Parent Child Safety Placement (PCSP) in place.

Top trending issues discussed by callers to the Family Helpline included Child Protection Investigations (CPI), child neglect, conservatorship issues, Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC) by DFPS, modifications, parent visitation, safety plans or PCSPs, substance use and abuse, domestic violence, and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

In addition to assisting callers with pertinent legal information, the Texas Family Helpline strives to connect callers with relevant legal resources. In furtherance of that goal, staff made 195 referrals to various legal aid or pro bono legal representation organizations and referred 75 callers to a lawyer referral service. The helpline also referred 297 callers to forms and articles on texaslawhelp.org, and additional referrals were made to websites such as txaccess.org, the DFPS policy handbooks website, and the various resources on the Children's Commission's website such as the Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book and Parent Resource Guide.

Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality judicial resources and tools that provide clear, relevant information about law, policy, and best practices.

23. Strategy: Maintain a comprehensive Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book for judges hearing child welfare cases.

Background: The Children's Commission maintains a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists. The Bench Book also highlights special issues and includes best and promising practices. It is updated annually with new information, as needed, and is disseminated to judges at training events and upon request. The Bench Book is also hosted on the Children's Commission website and through LawBox, both versions of which can be accessed at no cost through the Commission website.

05/13/22 Update: The Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book is updated annually and was revised in October 2021 to include updates throughout from the 87th Regular Legislative Session and new chapters on FFPSA and domestic violence. Additionally, a new Bench Card on remote hearings was created. The online version of the [Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book](#) is available as a free, downloadable PDF for print and also as an interactive resource through LawBox.

The Bench Book Committee met on April 19, 2022 to discuss ideas for the October 2022 Bench Book update. The committee's suggestions included a new chapter regarding dual status youth and a new checklist on findings for Quality Residential Treatment Programs, as well as some updates for existing chapters. The committee also discussed a reorganization of the chapters to create better navigation for users.

Objective: Improve and expand engagement of families and caregivers in court hearings so that court hearings are higher quality and more meaningful for the families and children involved.

24. Strategy: Support increased child and family engagement through the use of technology.

Background: The Children’s Commission continues to support a video conferencing project which enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without being physically present in the courtroom. The Children’s Commission provides funding to OCA via a grant to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements (primarily Residential Treatment Centers).

The outbreak of COVID-19 forced a monumental change in youth participation in court. In March 2020, OCA provided licenses for the Zoom video conferencing tool to all Texas courts to allow courts to conduct virtual hearings. The necessity of virtual hearings and universal court access to the video conferencing technology has allowed more courts and youth to attend hearings virtually and for courts and youth to engage together and determine how to make best use of the virtual environment. For nearly two years, Zoom has been used for video conferencing hearings and the Child Protection Courts (CPCs) have provided feedback to support Zoom as the preferred video conferencing application. The Children’s Commission is committed to finding ways to maintain the benefits of virtual hearings as courts transition back to more in-person and/or hybrid hearings.

05/13/22 Update: At the May 2021 Commission meeting, funding for upgraded technology to support hybrid hearings in two CPCs was approved. Commission staff and OCA identified Hon. Andrea James, Judge of the Child Protection Court #2, Second Judicial Administrative Region, and Hon. Delia Gonzales, Judge of the Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court as the two courts which will participate in the pilot program. Both Judge Gonzales and Judge James provided overall positive feedback from their court’s CPC Hybrid Hearing Technology pilot, and four additional courts have expressed interest in joining the pilot.

25. Strategy: Encourage the availability and use of the Office of Court Administration (OCA) Notice and Engagement tool.

Background: All parties involved in CPS cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from DFPS. This issue includes foster placements and DFPS service provider facilities where the children/youth are in placement and results in many parties not being able to attend scheduled court hearings. The Notice and Engagement tool involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. OCA will market the Notice and Engagement tool and periodically re-issue announcements, survey users on the usefulness and effectiveness of the system, and monitor the system login and search information. Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data are populating according to search criteria. Reports/data will be produced by OCA and provided to the Children’s Commission.

05/13/22 Update: The number of Notice and Engagement system users continues to increase. 81 new users signed up through the Notification and Engagement system to receive hearing notifications, including 6 CASA volunteers and 54 case workers. Hearing notifications were sent for 5,648 hearings with a total of 14,190 notifications sent.

OCA created an Application Programming Interface (API) that will allow courts other than those using the Child Protection Court Case Management System (CPCMS) to upload their hearing data into the system. The goal of the API is to expand the hearing notification tool to all courts hearing child welfare cases in order to provide parties with up-to-date hearing information and to provide courts with an alternate means of notification free of charge.

To pilot the use of the Notice and Engagement tool for a court that is not a CPC, Tarrant County court data were successfully imported into CPCMS, and a court account was created for four individuals working with Tarrant County to enter data into CPCMS moving forward. OCA is continuing to collaborate with Tarrant County regarding bringing the system online.

Objective: Promote the value of mediation in child welfare cases, including opportunities to achieve timely permanency and increase efficiency in child welfare cases.

26. Strategy: Convene and support a Mediation Workgroup to establish an understanding and framework regarding availability and cost of mediation services and promote the training and support necessary to raise the quality and usefulness of mediation in child welfare cases.

Background: Mediation is used in CPS cases throughout Texas and can be an effective and financially prudent method of resolving cases. One benefit of mediation is that it can enhance participants' sense that they were treated fairly. Studies show that an enhanced sense of fair treatment increases both acceptance and compliance with court decisions. Though the use of mediation to resolve CPS cases prior to trial has become widely accepted, the Children's Commission is interested in exploring whether mediation is being underutilized in CPS cases because it often occurs too late in the case timeline for the benefits of increased compliance to be realized.

05/13/22 Update: The Mediation Workgroup last met on March 3, 2022 and participated in a discussion with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to help identify points of interest for data collection on mediation in the second phase of the NCSC's virtual court study. The next Mediation Workgroup meeting will occur in late May.

Objective: Support innovative court practices for Texas courts hearing child welfare cases.

27. Strategy: Collaborate with and provide support for specialty courts, dockets, and programs.

Background: The Children's Commission partners with or supports individual court efforts seeking to adopt specialized practices or programs. For example, in FY2019, the Children's Commission provided seed money through OCA to employ an Associate Judge and Court Coordinator to assist in handling child abuse and neglect cases filed in Dallas County Family Courts to promote achieving permanency for children in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS. Since March 2019, the Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court has assisted youth in the long-term care of DFPS. The Children's Commission is also exploring a judicially-led prevention effort in partnership with the Prevention and Early Intervention Division of DFPS.

05/13/22 Update: This strategy is developed on an ad hoc basis and there are no current updates during this reporting period.

GOAL IV (TRAINING)

Oversee and develop judicial and legal training efforts at all levels of practice that identify and promote best practices to improve outcomes and establish and maintain a well-informed judiciary and bar.

Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training and resources that encourage judicial leadership both within the courtroom and in the broader child welfare community.

28. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate judicial training through conferences, online content, and events.

Background: The Children’s Commission collaborates with the Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ) to design specialized judicial education and training opportunities for active, retired, and former Texas appellate, district, and county court at law judges, as well as associate judges and court personnel through its grant with TCJ. Each year TCJ plans at least one annual Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC) in partnership with the Children’s Commission. The Children’s Commission also provides partial funding for a half-day CPS Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) CIP track at TCJ’s annual Family Justice Conference. Planning and funding activities include designing curricula and conference agendas, determining the budget and number of attendees, participating in planning meetings, vetting judicial scholarship applicants, surveying participants, and evaluating the process and event both internally and externally for future planning.

05/13/22 Update:

Child Welfare Judges Conference: The Child Welfare Judges Conference is the Commission’s largest annual judicial training. The upcoming CWJC will be held on October 24- 26, 2022 in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary and will take place at the Sheraton Georgetown Hotel & Conference Center. The CWJC Curriculum Committee was convened in early April and provided feedback on the proposed conference agenda; this was incorporated into a revised final proposed agenda which was approved by the members. Commission staff are proceeding to identify and confirm speakers and develop course descriptions and content in preparation for the conference registration process which TCJ will open this summer. Generally speaking, the curriculum will include current topics of interest; a presentation by Department leadership; information about DFPS’ resources; and panels which will include youth and family voice. Additionally, Regional Breakouts will be convened after a statewide data presentation and will include DFPS staff and staff from Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs) in regions where Community-Based Care is in place. In the meantime, the 2021 CWJC content has been archived on TCJ’s website and is available for review for free to judges who attended as well as additional judges who wish to view the curriculum. Recordings of the 2021 presentations will be available through TCJ’s website for a year following the date of the live virtual event.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Webcast: On June 10, 2022, the Children’s Commission Judicial Workgroup on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children will host a judicially-led webcast to educate their fellow judges about human trafficking issues and what red flags to look for from the bench. This offering will be archived on the Commission’s website for future viewing.

29. Strategy: Support specialized training for the Child Protection Court (CPC) program, judges, and support staff, including topics such as Reasonable Efforts.

Background: Child Protection Courts, also known as CPCs, were created to specialize in managing child abuse and neglect dockets. Like the child support court associate judges, these associate judges are appointed by their regional presiding judges and are OCA employees. CPC judges hear child welfare cases exclusively. The goal for CPC dockets is to help children and families achieve safety, permanency, and well-being in a timely manner. The Children’s Commission provides funding for the Child Protection Court Management System (CPCMS), as well as training and other support for CPC judges and court coordinators to conduct hearings and manage cases. There are currently 30 CPCs and these courts hear child welfare cases in 147 Texas counties.

05/13/22 Update: Based on the success of the virtual January 2022 statewide Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy training, which was hosted by the Commission in partnership with the national Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC), the Commission is exploring the possibility of offering the training again. Additionally, several CPC judges participated in the Child Welfare Judges Conference Curriculum Committee and articulated their feedback and requests for training topics and speakers at the annual fall conference as mentioned above in Strategy #28.

Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training and resources, along with information for attorneys representing parents, children, and DFPS, as well as other advocates and stakeholders.

30. **Strategy: Provide practical, experiential trial skills training that offers attorneys an opportunity to develop their skills in a small-group, low-stakes environment.**

Background: Trial Skills Training (TST) is a hands-on training designed to improve the litigation skills of child welfare law attorneys in order to raise the caliber of legal services to children and families in child protection cases. Developed and initially spearheaded by Justice Michael Massengale, the TST is now led by JIR Judge Piper McCraw. Trial Skills Training is held once or twice a year and offers up to 20 MCLE hours, including ethics hours. Ten in-person and three virtual TSTs have been hosted by the Children’s Commission since its inception in October 2013. Each TST program has a competitive application process and is limited to 21 less-experienced attorneys. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. TST provides parent, child, and state attorneys numerous litigation exercises in the CPS context and includes lectures and demonstrations from trained faculty comprised of seasoned attorneys and judges, followed by personal critiques and coaching. Caseworkers, Pediatricians, and Parent Therapists serve as live witnesses. Materials are updated and new faculty is recruited and trained with each event. Extensive internal and external CQI process and outcome evaluation is involved with each event.

05/13/22 Update: The Spring 2022 Trial Skills Training (TST) was presented on March 30, 2022, and April 6-7, 2022, via Zoom. This was the Commission’s third virtual iteration of the training. 19 attorneys completed the full three-day interactive, Zoom offering consisting of up to 17.75 hours of MCLE, including 1.25 hours of ethics. Additionally, participants were assigned three pre-recorded lectures in preparation for the training that qualifies for 2.5 self-study hours of MCLE. The Commission sent out a post-event survey and will use the participant feedback to inform refinements to the training.

The Commission will host a Fall 2022 TST on August 24, 2022 and August 31- September 1, 2022. This will consist of a virtual “Pretrial” on August 24, 2022 and in-person “Trial” instruction on August 31-September 1, 2022 in Central Texas. The attorney application for the Fall 2022 Trial Skills Training opened on April 28, 2022.

31. Strategy: Create and maintain online content that offers information and guidance on relevant child welfare law issues.

Background: In response to current circumstances and the need for virtual training, Commission staff are developing more regular webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state.

05/13/22 Update: Commission staff developed the capacity to host a regular series of webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. These webcasts focus on topics relevant to the legal community and are meant to supplement the approximately six hours a year described below which the Commission tapes in partnership with the CLE branch of the State Bar of Texas, TexasBarCLE.

On March 8, 2022, the Commission presented a 75-minute webcast entitled “Child Welfare Case Primer: Statutory Hearings and Current Issues.” Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge of the 452nd District Court and Senior Jurist in Residence, provided a summary of the nuts and bolts of a child welfare case from investigations through various final outcomes. The recorded webcast was approved for 1.25 hours of MCLE and 1.25 hours of family violence training credit for judges. The archived video and all material related to the webinar, including the PowerPoint from the presentation, are available on the Training Committee’s [On-Demand MCLE](#) webpage.

On May 17, 2022 from 12:00 p.m.- 1:30 p.m., the Commission, together with DFPS, will present a live one-and-a-half-hour webcast for judges, attorneys, and child advocates entitled “Overview of Qualified Residential Treatment Program Legal Requirements.” Registration for the webinar is currently open.

The Commission is also developing a Youth Voice webinar, entitled “Enhancing Youth Court Experience: How to Prepare and Support Children to Appear in Their CPS Case,” which will focus on how enhanced communication with youth can increase the effectiveness of attorney advocacy and provide more accurate information for judges, as well as provide a more positive experience for youth in care. The webinar is planned for July 22, 2022, and registration information will be made available in a Resource Letter to Judges and Attorneys closer to the webinar date.

32. Strategy: Partner with the State Bar of Texas, DFPS, and other organizations to offer training to attorneys and advocates who serve children and families in child welfare cases throughout Texas.

Background: In partnership with the CLE branch of the State Bar of Texas, TexasBarCLE, the Children’s Commission produces MCLE courses on child welfare and related issues to provide training for court-appointed attorneys and attorneys representing DFPS. Typically, once each year the Children’s Commission works with TexasBarCLE to broadcast a day-long, 6 MCLE hours’ worth of training for attorneys who represent children, parents, and the state of Texas in child welfare proceedings. These live broadcasts are then archived in the TexasBarCLE’s Child Welfare [Practice Area](#) in their Online Classroom. Both the live and archived recordings of child welfare-related webinars are available at a reduced rate to attorneys representing children and parents, and there are scholarships available through the Bar for attorneys who represent DFPS and need financial assistance to access this training. Additionally, the Children’s Commission partners with DFPS to provide high-quality training for attorneys representing DFPS, primarily through supporting their annual attorney training.

05/13/22 Update:

State Bar of Texas Annual Webcast Taping with TexasBarCLE: In partnership with the Commission, TexasBarCLE presented a live, one-hour webcast entitled “Building Better Youth Outcomes: The Importance of Being Trauma Informed” on March 10, 2022. Chief Justice Darlene Byrne of the 3rd Court of Appeals reviewed the new trauma informed training requirements added for attorneys ad litem in Texas Family Code § 107.004 during the 87th Regular Legislative Session. This course is available on the TexasBarCLE Online Classroom and was approved for one hour of CLE credit and one hour of ethics credit.

In addition, the Commission is coordinating with TexasBarCLE to produce an additional six hours of MCLE this year focused on providing updated “101” course offerings for court-appointed attorneys in TexasBarCLE’s Online Classroom. All prior years’ webcasts produced by the Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE are archived and available as webinars for viewing at the same discounted rates provided for the live webcasts in the Child Welfare Practice Area of the TexasBarCLE’s Online Classroom.

Online Classroom: Through TexasBarCLE, the State Bar of Texas currently offers a number of online continuing legal education courses in the Child Welfare Practice Area related to representation of all parties on the CPS docket. A total of 24 webcasts have been archived in the Child Welfare Practice Area of the TexasBarCLE’s Online Classroom, many of which were produced by the Children’s Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE. The topics cover issues of interest to attorneys who work in the area of child welfare, including legal representation, statutory duties, and best practices. Some or all of the content of these webcasts and archived webinars may be considered in some jurisdictions to satisfy the educational requirements for court-appointed attorneys under Texas Family Code Sections 107.004 and 107.0131. All of the courses can be found in TexasBarCLE’s Child Welfare Practice Area. In the Child Welfare Practice Area of their Online Classroom, TexasBarCLE provides discounts to court-appointed attorneys and scholarships to other viewers.

DFPS Regional Attorney Training: This year’s DFPS Attorney Training will take place at the Embassy Suites San Antonio on October 25-26, 2022. This is the first opportunity for the Department attorneys to gather together in-person for training, to work on team building, and to share ideas since 2019. The Children’s Commission has provided funding in the form of a grant to support this training.

Objective: Ensure that judges and attorneys are knowledgeable and aware of educational opportunities in order to employ best practices in conducting hearings and in providing legal representation.

33. Strategy: Develop and distribute information to judges and attorneys that communicates best practices or changes in law, policy, or practice and informs judges and attorneys of trainings and other relevant events.

Background: Since May 2016, the Children’s Commission has maintained an electronic distribution list to help inform judges, legal practitioners, and child welfare stakeholders of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay pertinent child welfare-related information. The Children’s Commission regularly publishes resource letters for judges and/or attorneys about emerging, relevant, and changing policy, laws, practice, and training opportunities that are of interest to judges, attorneys, and stakeholders handling child welfare cases. All resource letters are posted on the Children’s Commission’s website. The Children’s Commission’s distribution list has grown to more than 4,100 Texas attorneys, judges, court staff, and stakeholders.

05/13/22 Update: Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters and Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) issued between February and May 2022 include:

- 4/28/2022: Upcoming Educational Opportunities: In-Person Trial Skills; Webcast: Overview of QRTP Legal Requirements
- 4/14/2022: Jurist in Residence Letter, Judicial Scholarship Opportunity to NCJFCJ 85th Annual Conference in Reno, NV
- 4/8/2022: New Education Resources: Updated Foster Care and Student Success Guide and New Top 10 "Things to Know" Lists
- 4/5/2022: April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month
- 4/1/2022: Child Welfare Case Primer Webcast Replay
- 3/24/2022: Now Available: 2022 Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases
- 2/28/2022: TBLS Now Accepting Applications for Board Certification in Child Welfare Law for 2022; Update on CWLS Certification
- 2/25/2022: Scholarship Opportunity for TexasBarCLE's 4th Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course
- 2/22/22: Children's Commission Webcast: Child Welfare Case Primer: Statutory Hearings and Current Issues
- 2/4/2022: New Resources: Attorney Ad Litem Coloring Book Now Available in Spanish and English; Eighth Edition of the "Aging Out" Guide
- 2/2/2022: New Resource – Normalcy Matters: A Guide to Supporting Children & Youth in Texas Foster Care

34. Strategy: Support attendance at state and national judicial and legal conferences and training events.

Background: The Children's Commission administers various judicial and attorney scholarship opportunities throughout the fiscal year, including but not limited to: (1) the biennial ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference; (2) the TexasBarCLE Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course; (3) the TexasBarCLE Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop; (4) the National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference; and (5) the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference. For all scholarships, the Children's Commission determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained and new practices attendees plan to implement and/or a current practice attendees plan to change. The surveys also inquire about additional topics of interest to help inform planning for future conferences. All attorney applicants for Commission scholarships must currently represent DFPS or take appointments on a child welfare docket, be in good standing with the State Bar of Texas and with their primary judge and commit to completing a post-event survey from the Commission. Judges with applicants from their jurisdiction are notified by the Children's Commission and asked to confirm that the applicant currently represents DFPS or takes appointments on their child welfare docket.

05/13/22 Update:

The Advanced Child Protection Law Conference: The Commission offered registration scholarships for qualified attorneys to attend the 4th Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course, hosted by TexasBarCLE and the Child Protection Law Section of the State Bar of Texas on March 24-25, 2022 in Houston, Texas and via webcast replay on April 26-27, 2022. The Commission allocated \$10,000 to cover registration costs to attend and awarded 47 scholarships total: 18 to attend the live event in Houston and 29 to view the webcast replay. The Commission has distributed a post-event survey to collect feedback from awardees.

Texas District and County Attorney Association Training (TDCAA): The Commission worked with the TDCAA Training Director and a planning committee to develop CLE content on child welfare issues and basic training for attorneys representing the Department. The “Fundamentals of Child Welfare Law” online course is now available on the TDCAA website. The six-part online course was designed for less-experienced child welfare prosecutors and covers the fundamental skills needed for prosecutors assigned to represent DFPS, from pretrial to final outcomes of a child welfare case. The Commission offered 14 reimbursement scholarships for new attorneys currently representing DFPS and has awarded 8 scholarships to date. The TDCAA online course has open enrollment, and the scholarship application link will remain posted on the Commission’s website until all 14 scholarships have been awarded or until the end of the fiscal year.

American Bar Association’s 2022 National Conferences: The ABA’s Center on Children and the Law hosted the Access to Justice for Children and Families Conference on April 5-6, 2022 and the National Parent Representation Conference on April 7-8, 2022 in Tyson’s Corner, Virginia. In January 2022, the Commission offered a limited number of reimbursement scholarships for qualified attorneys to attend. This scholarship was awarded to 10 attorneys in the form of reimbursement of up to \$1,250 for the conference registration fee and eligible conference-related travel expenses to attend one of the conferences. The Commission has distributed a post-event survey to collect feedback from awardees.

Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop: This year’s Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop is scheduled for August 10, 2022 in San Antonio, Texas. The Commission plans to support this statewide MCLE effort by partnering with the State Bar of Texas to provide registration scholarships to qualified attorneys from across the state. The Commission allocated \$10,000 to cover 100 qualified attorneys at \$100 each for registration to the live one-day workshop or any of the subsequent replays. The Commission plans to announce the 2022 attorney scholarship application process by early summer.

National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference: The NACC’s 45th National Child Welfare Law Conference will be held in a dual-format this year: in-person on August 22-24, 2022 in Baltimore, Maryland and virtually on September 21-23, 2022. The Commission allocated \$10,000 to provide scholarships to qualified Texas judges and attorneys to attend the annual conference. The Commission hopes to announce the 2022 scholarship application process for the NACC conference by early summer.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges 85th Annual Conference: The NCJFCJ’s 85th Annual Conference is scheduled for July 17-20, 2022 in Reno, Nevada. On April 14, 2022, the Commission announced that reimbursement scholarships were available for qualified judges to attend the conference through a Resource Letter and on the Judicial Scholarships webpage. Applications were accepted through April 29, 2022, and the Commission will award up to 13 scholarships in the form of reimbursement for registration and eligible travel-related expenses up to \$2,100 each.

GOAL V (DATA)

Operationalize data-driven decision-making through continuous quality improvement and an analysis of publicly available child welfare and court data to identify legal processes and practices that produce desired outcomes, as well as which practices need improvement.

Objective: Use child welfare, court, and other data to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

35. Strategy: At the annual judicial conference, partner with DFPS to provide a statewide data presentation as well as tailored data presentations on state, regional, and local challenges and opportunities and encourage data-driven systemic improvements and collaborative efforts.

Background: On an annual basis, DFPS and the Children's Commission partner to offer a statewide data plenary presentation to members of the judiciary at the Child Welfare Judges Conference, which is hosted by the Commission in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary. The project also includes breakout sessions between judges and DFPS regional directors and regional systems improvement specialists to discuss region-specific data elements and permanency outcomes. This is achieved at the annual judicial conference through collaboration between the CIP and DFPS during the portion of the conference which focuses on educating the judiciary with data and updates from the Department. 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.

05/13/22 Update: Planning for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference is underway and the Statewide Data session will include Department data and updates on programs at the state level with judges and examine outcomes in the past year and how these data vary across the state. Regional breakouts will follow this presentation in order to examine and discuss regional data with an eye towards improving outcomes for children and families experiencing the child welfare system. The regional breakouts are comprised of judges by DFPS Region, DFPS Regional Directors, DFPS Regional Systems Improvement Specialists, and Single Source Continuum Contractor representatives in regions with Community-Based Care.

36. Strategy: Design and support a study to evaluate the efficacy of the Permanent Managing Conservatorship Court model.

Background: The Data Committee continues to facilitate meetings between TACFS, Casey Family Programs, and other stakeholders regarding the evaluation of Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) Courts. A retrospective study on the work of the Houston PMC court has made significant progress since the last meeting. The appropriate data set has been identified and can be evaluated under pre-existing MOUs between DFPS and TACFS. The evaluation team is also working on initial steps toward the prospective study of both the Dallas and Houston PMC courts and is focusing on identifying sources for necessary qualitative data and the permissions and agreements necessary to acquire those data.

05/13/22 Update: The results from the 2021 surveys, focus groups, and interviews from the CASA programs in Harris and Dallas Counties and attorneys practicing in the PMC courts in both jurisdictions revealed that stakeholders were aligned on how they conceptualize well-being for children and youth in

PMC. The results also showed that 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 in youth in the PMC of the department.

While the results of the preliminary study are promising, the workgroup has determined that the only way to evaluate the causal evidence of effectiveness of the PMC court model is to conduct a study that compares two groups – children whose cases were placed on the PMC’s court docket upon entering PMC and children whose cases stayed in a non-PMC court. The workgroup also concluded that in order for the evaluation to give a complete picture of the court’s effectiveness, it must be able to measure both permanency outcome indicators and well-being indicators.

To accomplish those goals, the evaluation will need partnership with DFPS to allow access to children and youth in PMC in Dallas and Harris Counties to collect well-being data and track outcomes in both groups. A draft of the evaluation proposal has been submitted to DFPS and Commission staff met with DFPS staff on April 28 to answer questions about the evaluation. The workgroup will submit a formal request for access and data once DFPS completes their new portal for data and access requests in May 2022.

Objective: Study the efficacy of virtual or hybrid court hearings in child welfare cases and develop training, tools, and resources designed to maintain the benefits of technology.

37. Strategy: Assess qualitative and quantitative data to identify best practices in conducting virtual or hybrid hearings and utilize this information to support improved legal and judicial practice.

Background: Texas will develop a virtual hearings study to identify best practices for virtual or hybrid hearings in child welfare cases. The study will include data collection and analysis to better understand the impact of remote proceedings in child welfare cases in Texas in response to COVID-19.

05/13/22 Update: In September 2021, the Office of Court Administration and the Children’s Commission executed a contract to support the hiring of a Senior Data Analyst. The Senior Data Analyst conducts research and analysis about the benefits and drawbacks of virtual or hybrid hearings. The Senior Data Analyst also participates in the Children’s Commission Data Committee and supports court-related child welfare data projects. The data analyst has completed a court observation tool to collect data on court practices in virtual and hybrid courts and the court observation process should begin in late May or early June of 2022.

Objective: Support robust data collection and appropriate information sharing in court case management.

38. Strategy: Partner with OCA to support the maintenance, enhancements, impact, and usability of the Child Protection Case Management System.

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

05/13/22 Update: The CPCMS Advisory Council met on February 11, 2022, to discuss planned updates and enhancements for CPCMS. Updates to the CPCMS system were released on October 12, 2021, including added functionality to create a surrogate parent relationship for a child, allowing for multi-county docket reporting, and incorporating emergency order extensions into the active extension dashboard chart.

The council continued its review of CPCMS-required data fields to make sure the requirements reflect current best practices in court management and data tracking. The council also discussed sixteen separate proposed enhancements for CPCMS. Due to time constraints, other proposed enhancements were not discussed at the meeting, but the Advisory Council addressed them over email, in particular updating non-conservatorship case type to reflect the new statutory requirements under Tex. Fam. Code Section 264.203. The next meeting of the Advisory Council will be on May 27, 2022.

39. Strategy: Encourage efficiency in data collection and information sharing, including integrating the DFPS IMPACT system and CPCMS, expanding CPCMS to non-Child Protection Courts, and working with other jurisdictions that do not utilize CPCMS.

Background: The Data Committee facilitates meetings between OCA, DFPS, and Data Committee members to discuss data sharing and integration between OCA's CPCMS system and DFPS' IMPACT system. The goal of integration is reducing errors and increasing data accuracy while reducing court staff workloads. OCA has also created an Application Programming Interface (API) that will allow Courts other than Child Protection Courts to upload their hearing data into the system and utilize the data collection and case management features of CPCMS.

05/13/22 Update: On June 25, 2021, OCA, DFPS, and Data Committee members formed a workgroup to discuss a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share a sample data set to test the data matching criteria to determine whether data sharing and integration between the CPCMS and IMPACT systems could be successful. The MOU has been reviewed by OCA and DFPS legal staff, but the project is on hold as DFPS is undergoing a comprehensive overhaul of its data sharing policy and process and all data requests have been paused until the overhaul is complete.

The overhaul includes creating a new web-based self-managed process for requesting data for research, policy, or custom analysis requests. DFPS is also developing an Institutional Review Board process to streamline the submission of research applications as well as ensure the reviews follow federal regulatory protocols for human subjects. DFPS estimates the overhaul will be complete in May 2022 and the CPCMS and IMPACT workgroup will resume the project at that time.

OCA and Commission staff, in partnership with judges in Tarrant County, are exploring the use of CPCMS for courts outside of the statutory Child Protection Courts. Tarrant County data have been converted and loaded into CPCMS and OCA and Tarrant County are in conversations about bringing the system online.

Commission and OCA staff, including Senior Data Analyst Jeff Cox, also began a project of analyzing trends in referrals, investigations, and removals prior to and after the changes to the Texas Family Code implemented by the 87th Texas Legislative Session. Preliminary results were shared at the May 3 Data Committee meeting.

INSERT - TAB 4

**Children's Commission
Financial Report**

FY 2022 BUDGET

FY 2021 Carry Forward	\$	1,695,586
FY 2022 Federal Distribution	\$	1,820,871
FY 2022 Available Funds	\$	3,516,457

FY 2022 OBLIGATIONS

		Budget		Expenses To-date		Outstanding Obligations
Operating	\$	1,216,406	\$	599,690	\$	616,716
Commission Projects	\$	211,200	\$	53,952	\$	157,248
<i>Systems Improvement</i>	\$	95,650	\$	17,773	\$	77,877
<i>Legal Practice and Process</i>	\$	84,250	\$	33,720	\$	50,530
<i>Training</i>	\$	30,050	\$	2,460	\$	27,590
<i>Data</i>	\$	1,250	\$	-	\$	1,250
Scholarships	\$	82,000	\$	6,083	\$	75,917
Grants	\$	811,402	\$	235,096	\$	576,306
<i>DFPS - Regional Attorney Training</i>	\$	13,000	\$	-	\$	13,000
<i>OCA - CIP Technology Project</i>	\$	170,276	\$	53,935	\$	116,341
<i>OCA - CPC Visiting Judge</i>	\$	21,110	\$	4,123	\$	16,987
<i>OCA - Data Analyst</i>	\$	100,000	\$	-	\$	100,000
<i>OCA - Virtual Court Equipment Update</i>	\$	25,000	\$	7,640	\$	17,360
<i>TACFS - Data & Trauma Informed Court Practices</i>	\$	109,269	\$	46,723	\$	62,546
<i>Texas CASA - Child Welfare Legal Process</i>	\$	25,265	\$	-	\$	25,265
<i>TCJ - Family Justice, Child Welfare Judges Conference</i>	\$	135,418	\$	40,907	\$	94,511
<i>TLSC - Family Helpline</i>	\$	160,000	\$	63,256	\$	96,744
<i>TNOYS - Young Adult Leadership Council</i>	\$	52,064	\$	18,512	\$	33,552
	\$	2,321,007	\$	894,821	\$	1,426,186

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Federal Fund Balance	\$	2,621,636
FY 2022 Outstanding Obligations	\$	1,426,186
Estimated Carry Forward FY 2023	\$	1,195,450

May 6, 2022

INSERT - TAB 5

Children's Commission Meeting

Collaborative Council Updates

May 13, 2022

- Texas Lawyers for Children
- Texas RioGrande Legal Aid Foster Youth Justice Project

Texas Lawyers for Children
Legal Professional Trauma Training Program Agenda

Important Note: This 15-hour program includes 10.5 hours of training that cover all topics required by Texas Family Code Section 107.004(b-4) and includes 4.5 hours of additional trauma-informed practice tips and strategies. The agenda below specifies the breakdown of the presentations.

Time	Topic	Speaker	Statutory Requirement
.5 Hrs. (.5 ETHICS)	A Lawyer’s Duty Regarding the Harrowing Reality of Childhood Trauma	Barbara Elias-Perciful, J.D.	Overview of TFC 107.004(b-4)
1.25 Hrs.	The Impact of Trauma on Child Development, Attachment, and Functioning	Kristen Bell, J.D.	TFC 107.004(b-4)(1), (2)
1.0 Hr.	How Misunderstanding the Effects of Trauma Harms Children	Barbara Elias-Perciful	TFC 107.004(b-4)(1), (4), (5)
.5 Hrs.	Foster Youth Spotlight: Jimmy Vaughn	Jimmy Vaughn, Patricia Hogue, J.D.	TFC 107.004 (b-4)(1), (4), (5)
1.0 Hrs.	What Heals Trauma: The Foundation for Trauma-Informed Legal Advocacy	Kristen Bell	TFC 107.004(b-4)(3), (5), (6)(A)
.5 Hrs.	Foster Youth Spotlight: Angel Jackson	Angel Jackson, Patricia Hogue	TFC 107.004 (b-4)(1), (4), (5)
1.25 Hrs.	Developing Trust with Children Who Have Experienced Trauma	Patricia Hogue	TFC 107.004(b-4)(3), (6)(B)
.5 Hrs.	Foster Youth Spotlight: Caleb Pitts	Caleb Pitts, Patricia Hogue	TFC 107.004 (b-4)(1), (4), (5)
.75 Hours	Overcoming Obstacles: Trauma-Informed Services for Children in Foster Care	Kate Black, J.D.	TFC 107.004(b-4)(6)
1.25 Hrs. (1.0 ETHICS)	Preventing Misdiagnosis and Inappropriate Use of Psychotropic Medication and the Duty to Seek Nonpharmacological Interventions	Barbara Elias-Perciful (w/Dr. Bruce Perry by video)	TFC 107.004(b-4)(4), (5), (6)
1.0 Hrs. (1.0 ETHICS)	A Lawyer’s Duty to Advocate for the Constitutional Rights of Children	Barbara Elias-Perciful	TFC 107.004(b-4)(3), (4), (5), (6)
1.0 Hrs.	Hope for the System: Transformation to a Trauma-Informed System of Care	Barbara Elias-Perciful & Kristen Bell	Overview of TFC 107.004(b-4)
Presentations Covering All Topics Required by TFC 107.004(b-4)			10.5 Hours (2.5 ETHICS)
1.0 Hrs.	Early Trauma: Substance Abuse in Utero	Carole Hurley, J.D.	TFC 107.004(b-4)(1)
.75 Hrs. (.75 ETHICS)	Legal Arguments and Duties to Protect Children and Promote Systemic Change	Patricia Hogue	TFC 107.004(b-4)(5), (6) (B)
.75 Hrs. (.75 ETHICS)	A Lawyer’s Duty to Advocate for the Educational Needs of Children Who Have Experienced Trauma	Kristen Bell	TFC 107.004(b-4)(4), (6) (B)
1.25 Hrs.	A Look at Trauma-Informed Courts: “All Rise for the Good of the Children”	Film Viewing	TFC 107.004(b-4)(1)
.75 Hrs. (.75 ETHICS)	Intergenerational Trauma and Representation of Parents Who Have Experienced Trauma	Patricia Hogue	TFC 107.004(b-4)(1)
Presentations Providing Additional Trauma-Informed Practice Tips and Strategies			4.5 Hours (2.25 ETHICS)
TOTAL ONLINE TRAINING			15 HOURS (4.75 ETHICS)



Texas Lawyers for Children

The Child Protection Connection for Texas

Championing Children's Rights

Legal Professional Trauma Training

Get Access to 15 Hours of Comprehensive Training and Tools in this Portal

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Help Desk 800-993-5TLC (5852) Hours: M-F, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | [Forgot User Name / Password?](#)

We are glad you are here to learn more about how traumatic experiences (including abuse and neglect) impact children, how symptoms of trauma are often misunderstood in ways that harm children, and how we can change children's lives and the system by engaging in trauma-informed advocacy and decision making.

While this training is geared toward legal professionals, we welcome anyone who works within the child protection field to our training portal. The portal includes over 15 hours of training regarding the impact of trauma on children and how to address it. This training meets all the requirements of Texas Family Code 107.004(b-4).

We are especially grateful for the young adults with lived experience in foster care who have been brave enough to tell their stories. We dedicate these efforts to them and to all children who have experienced trauma. It is our hope that this training (along with other efforts throughout the state) changes the system, and in turn, changes children's lives for the better.

Impact of TLC's Legal Professional Trauma Training

Through our Legal Professional Trauma Training, Texas Lawyers for Children has trained over 1,000 judges, attorneys, CASAs and other professionals in 215 Texas counties on the impact of trauma on children and related legal issues. Feedback has been extremely positive. One recent training participant made these comments:

"I have waited for a training like this to be released for about 15 years, since I first became a trauma-informed parent. I changed my law practice from intellectual property law to children's law when my adopted child showed me and taught me what trauma was all about. As I tried to explain these concepts to schools, caseworkers, and others, they looked at me like I was crazy. Even in court all these years later, I see such a huge lack of trauma knowledge among attorneys and even some caseworkers. THIS is the training I wish I had been given before adopting my daughter so she didn't have to teach me, through her behavior and suffering about trauma. THIS is the training I hoped I could give teachers, social workers, therapists, friends, and family 15 years ago to support our family and could not. THIS is the trauma training attorneys need. It would change the lives of children everywhere if those in the system could understand these concepts. I have been to hundreds of hours of trauma training and conferences but, if I had to pick just one training for everyone to see, this would be THAT training."

Contact Us



P.O. Box 192586
 Dallas, Texas - 75219
 ☎ 800-993-5TLC (5852)
 ✉ Email Us

Help Desk

Feel free to give us a call.
 Hours: M-F, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

TLC's online services are recognized by the Texas Supreme Court's Texas Court Improvement Program as a resource to improve the court system's handling of child abuse cases.

The children depicted here were not taken from actual child abuse cases.



Legal Professional Trauma Training Portal

Welcome back, **Michael Garrett**.

Videos & Handouts

Toolkit

Links & Resources

TLC's Trauma Training Toolkit:

All resources in this toolkit were created by TLC's attorneys. We hope these are helpful to your practice, and we look forward to providing more. **PLEASE REMEMBER:** The videos and resources in the Portal are provided only for your personal viewing and learning. By viewing anything in the Portal you agree to the following -- You agree that if you print any resources, you will **retain the copyright information** on them. You also agree that you will **not download any videos** and you will **not post any videos or resources on the internet** without written permission from TLC. You further agree that **if you want to use anything contained in the Portal for any purpose other than your personal viewing and learning (including, but not limited to, group training), you must request written permission from TLC to do so. You are expressly prohibited from distributing any video or written materials without TLC's written consent.**

- [A Girl's Story](#)
- [Changing the Lens: Seeing a Child's Behavior through a Trauma-Informed Framework](#) (case scenarios adapted from book, Attachment, Trauma & Healing)
- [Considerations for Assessing Residential Treatment Centers & Psychiatric Institutions](#)
- [Considerations for Decisionmakers: Is Our Approach Trauma-Informed?](#)
- [Constitutional Rights of Children in Child Protection Cases](#)
- [In What Situations Can a Legal Professional Use Trauma Training to Help?](#)
- [Learning More About Proposed Interventions and Therapies for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma](#)
- [Meeting the Needs of Traumatized Children](#)
- [The "Plastic Brain" - Rewiring the Brain Through Positive Experiences](#)
- [Practices, Policies, & Decisions that Break Connections and Feelings of Safety](#)
- [Quick Reference - Legal Arguments](#)
- [Responses to Stress](#) (adapted from book, The Body Keeps the Score)
- [Tips for Meeting the Needs of Traumatized Children](#)
- [TLC's Amicus Brief \(M.D. v. Abbott\)](#)
- [What Can Go "Offline" in a Child's Brain Because of Trauma?](#)

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Legal Professional Trauma Training Portal

Welcome back, **Michael Garrett**.

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Toolkit

Links & Resources

Other Helpful Links and Resources:

[8 Steps for Getting Started with Trauma-Informed Practices](#)

[ABA Legal Representation in Child Welfare Proceedings](#)

[ABA Policy on Trauma-Informed Advocacy for Children and Youth](#)

[ABA Trauma-Informed Client Representation](#)

[ALL RISE: For the Good of the Children](#)

[California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#)

[Centers for Disease Control - Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

[Child Trauma Academy, Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics](#)

[Dan Siegel - The Adolescent Brain](#)

[DFPS Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care - Form K-908-2530](#)

[DFPS Service Levels for Foster Care](#)

[Family Justice Initiative Attributes of High-Quality Legal Representation for Children and Parents in Child Welfare Proceedings](#)

[Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child](#)

[Identifying Polyvictimization and Trauma Among Court-Involved Children and Youth: A Checklist and Resource Guide](#)

[Kevin S. v. Jacobson](#) (current class action suit in New Mexico regarding children's rights to trauma-informed care)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

[NCTSN Bench Card](#)

[Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development](#)

[Psychotropic Medication Utilization Parameters for Foster Children \(DFPS\)](#)

[TBRI Practitioner List](#)

[TCU Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development](#)

[Ted Talk: Amelia Franck Meyer, The Human Need for Belonging](#)

[Ted Talk: Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime](#)

[Texas Children's Commission: Building a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System: A Blueprint](#)

[Texas Education Agency](#)

[Texas Mental Health Resource Guide](#)

[Toxic Stress on Children: Evidence of Consequences \(American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)

Recommended Books & Articles:

Bath, Howard. "The Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care." *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall 2008). ([Link to Subscribe](#))

Levy, Terry & Michael Orlans. *Attachment, Trauma, and Healing* (2d. ed.) (2014). ([Purchase on Amazon](#))

Perry, Bruce. *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* (2017). ([Purchase on Amazon](#))

Purvis, Karyn & Dr. David Cross. *The Connected Child*. (2007) ([Purchase on Amazon](#))

Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score* (2015). ([Purchase on Amazon](#))

Other Resources in TLC's Online Center:

- Log in to TLC's Online Center at www.TexasLawyersforChildren.org
- Under "Resources" choose "Browse by Topic"
- The following topics on trauma are available -
 - Trauma: Causes
 - Trauma: Cultural Issues
 - Trauma: Effects
 - Trauma: Parents
 - Trauma: Polyvictimization
 - Trauma: School Training
 - Trauma: Secondary
 - Trauma: Separation
 - Trauma: Termination
 - Trauma-Informed Advocacy: General
 - Trauma-Informed Advocacy: Ad Litem
 - Trauma-Informed Judicial Practice

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Update: Impact of Legal Professional Trauma Training

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“I have waited for a training like this to be released for about 15 years, since I first became a trauma-informed parent. I changed my law practice from intellectual property law to children’s law when my adopted child showed me and taught me what trauma was all about. As I tried to explain these concepts to schools, caseworkers, and others, they looked at me like I was crazy. Even in court all these years later, I see such a huge lack of trauma knowledge among attorneys and even some caseworkers. THIS is the training I wish I had been given before adopting my daughter so she didn’t have to teach me, through her behavior and suffering about trauma.

THIS is the training I hoped I could give teachers, social workers, therapists, friends, and family 15 years ago to support our family and could not. THIS is the trauma training attorneys need. It would change the lives of children everywhere if those in the system could understand these concepts. I have been to hundreds of hours of trauma training and conferences but, if I had to pick just one training for everyone to see, this would be THAT training.”

Below are additional examples of some the feedback we have received from the Legal Professional Trauma Training, with 97% of training participants (in both the live and online versions) rating the training as excellent, very good, or good.

- *This is the most helpful CLE I’ve ever attended and I’ve been licensed 9 years.*
- *This training was very informative. I’ve been licensed over 20 years and I’ve enjoyed this CLE the most. It will truly help children in CPS and the juvenile justice system! Thank you!*
- *This should be mandatory training for all family, criminal, and juvenile lawyers and judges.*
- *Definitely more aware of the impact of the global impact of trauma on a child. I will look at all kids through that lens from now on. I wish every judge, AAL and CASA were required to attend.*
- *This webinar should be required for any attorney wanting to practice in the area of abused & neglected children. It contains extremely important information for caregivers, especially those who see the care of foster children as just a job.*
- *I would love to see this (or very similar) training be provided and required for Foster Homes, CPS, CASA as well as therapists, doctors, & other providers. It would also be great if all lawyers were required to attend.*
- *I want to . . . ensure that trauma training is required for every person who deals with a foster child from the foster parents, to the therapists, to the attorneys and judges involved. There should be a minimum of 8 hours of trauma training required for every practitioner and foster parent.*

Below, please find specific ways children and families have been served as a direct result of TLC's Legal Professional Trauma Training:

- Being able to get children and parents the treatment they need to heal their families.
- We have court programming with a therapeutic component. We have been able to implement many of the principles and concepts learned into group therapy and individual therapy sessions. We have also trained our mentors, who we pair with the foster youth, on these concepts as well.
- I was able to get a foster agency investigated when they authorized anti-psychotic medication to a six-year-old child without notice to the Department. The CASA and I got an immediate medication review. After review, the Department filed a licensing complaint against the foster agency, and they have since changed protocol to ensure the Department consents to the use of this medication.
- As a judge, I have been able to temper the judicial decisions I make based on the information I learned about the impact of trauma to children and/or parents.
- There was a sibling group, and one child was going to be separated because of his behaviors. I spoke to the relative placement about the trauma the child had suffered, and the relative placement agreed to take the child too, so the siblings could stay together.
- I've been able to ensure that [counseling and mental health] professionals have the right qualifications to address the specific needs of the children they serve.
- One of my parent clients worked really hard and was able to have her kids returned on a return and monitor. She had experienced trauma in her life, but I was able to get through to her and help her communicate more effectively which helped immensely.
- Two children who had been severely traumatized were struggling in school. I was able to meet with school personnel and discuss the girls' behavior as symptoms of trauma and come to a comfortable resolution, so the girls could succeed at school.
- A child kept running away from one placement, but I advocated for the child to go to a trauma-informed placement, and the child is doing much better.
- The training allowed me to handle a highly contested situation with more confidence and I have been able to redirect state action from a law enforcement matter to a more trauma-informed approach.
- I identified a child who had been trafficked.
- I represent the Department, and I have been able to encourage my client to be more proactive when it comes to children who are medicated instead of being treated for their underlying trauma.
- I successfully argued against a child going to a residential treatment facility after his 4th placement by getting family trauma therapy reinstated to help with his behaviors.
- The training helped me direct a parent from being angry and helpless with her pending CPS legal case. She was able to refocus and open to help. She in turn was able to help her husband. They will be reunified with their children soon.

the 1990s, the number of people who have been employed in the public sector has increased in all countries.

There are a number of reasons for the increase in public sector employment. One of the main reasons is the increasing demand for public services, such as health care, education, and social security. Another reason is the increasing need for public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and public housing.

The increase in public sector employment has led to a number of challenges for governments. One of the main challenges is the increasing cost of public services, which has led to higher taxes and public debt.

Another challenge is the increasing need for public sector reform, which has led to a number of countries implementing structural adjustment programs.

There are a number of ways in which governments can address these challenges. One way is to improve the efficiency of public services, which can be done through a number of measures, such as privatization and deregulation.

Another way is to increase the productivity of the public sector, which can be done through a number of measures, such as training and development.

Finally, governments can also address these challenges by increasing the transparency and accountability of the public sector, which can be done through a number of measures, such as public sector reform and good governance.

In conclusion, the increase in public sector employment in the 1990s has led to a number of challenges for governments. However, there are a number of ways in which governments can address these challenges, and it is important that they do so in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the public sector.

The following table shows the number of people employed in the public sector in various countries in the 1990s.

Country	1990	1995	2000
USA	10.5	11.5	12.5
UK	12.5	13.5	14.5
France	15.5	16.5	17.5
Germany	18.5	19.5	20.5
Japan	21.5	22.5	23.5

The following table shows the percentage of the population employed in the public sector in various countries in the 1990s.

Country	1990	1995	2000
USA	15.5	16.5	17.5
UK	18.5	19.5	20.5
France	21.5	22.5	23.5
Germany	24.5	25.5	26.5
Japan	27.5	28.5	29.5

The following table shows the number of people employed in the public sector in various countries in the 2000s.

Country	2000	2005	2010
USA	12.5	13.5	14.5
UK	14.5	15.5	16.5
France	17.5	18.5	19.5
Germany	20.5	21.5	22.5
Japan	23.5	24.5	25.5

The following table shows the percentage of the population employed in the public sector in various countries in the 2000s.

Country	2000	2005	2010
USA	17.5	18.5	19.5
UK	20.5	21.5	22.5
France	23.5	24.5	25.5
Germany	26.5	27.5	28.5
Japan	29.5	30.5	31.5

The following table shows the number of people employed in the public sector in various countries in the 2010s.

Country	2010	2015	2020
USA	14.5	15.5	16.5
UK	16.5	17.5	18.5
France	19.5	20.5	21.5
Germany	22.5	23.5	24.5
Japan	25.5	26.5	27.5

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

Identification Documents for Foster Youth by Age 16

The Project continues to provide representation, advocacy, and training related to providing all foster youth identification documents, by age 16, as mandated by state law. The Project has identified the need for updated materials for DFPS staff to help them obtain the required documents for youth. Along with other agencies that work on identification documents for foster , the Project plans to work with DFPS to update the materials to ensure staff have access to all the avenues available, including important programs the Texas legislature enacted in 2019.

Reminder: Pandemic Relief Funds for Current and Aged Out Foster Youth

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has access to millions of dollars of extra pandemic relief funds to assist current and aged foster youth ages 14-20 through August 31, 2022. These funds came from the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic law, Division X of the mammoth Consolidated Appropriations Act FY 2021. The agency reserved a portion of these funds for Fiscal Year 2022.

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project prepared an [informational flyer](#) for youth and young adults to highlight the availability of the funds and the importance of asking their Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) worker or transition support services provider for help with their financial needs. The flyer is a great resource for those that work with foster youth to help identify needs that DFPS normally would not be able to assist with due to limited funds.

These funds provide a remarkable opportunity to provide meaningful financial assistance to vulnerable young adults and youth. However, DFPS has provided limited information about the availability of the funds or that more substantive assistance than normal is available. Advocates should be aware that there is no actual application for the additional funds; the youth or young adults must simply notify their Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) worker or transition support services provider about the specific financial need they have. The funds are not a cash payout to youth or young adults; they are used for direct payments to the businesses or service providers. In addition, funds are available for those currently in foster care, including extended foster care/supervised independent living, as well as those who have aged out of foster care.

If youth reach out for help with specific financial needs and are told they cannot receive help or are not getting responses to their request, they can contact the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project for legal assistance. For more information about the funds or for youth to seek free legal assistance, contact the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project at 877-313-3688 or info@TexasFosterYouth.org.

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project provides free legal services for current and former foster youth throughout Texas. For more information, please visit the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project website TexasFosterYouth.org. The Project is currently hiring a Paralegal Youth Specialist and is seeking a candidates with a lived experience in foster care; more information can be found [here](#).

Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

