



Children's Commission

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



Children's Commission Meeting Notebook

September 13, 2024

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

September 13, 2024

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

Thompson Conference Center
Austin, Texas

Friday, September 13, 2024
9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Check-In / Networking
- 9:45 Commencement / Opening Remarks
First Order of Business – Adopt Minutes from May 17, 2024
- 10:00 Children's Commission Updates
- Fiscal Year 2025 Strategies and Budget Report
 - Legislation & Policy Resource Committee Presentation
- 11:00 Special Presentation: Data Trends
- 12:00 Break for Lunch
- 12:30 Department of Family and Protective Services Update
- 1:15 Office of Court Administration Update
- 1:45 Collaborative Council Member Announcements
- 2:00 New Business / Adjourn

Meeting Schedule:

- November 15, 2024 (virtual)
- Feb 7, 2025 (in person)
- May 9, 2025 (virtual)
- Sept 26, 2025 (in person)
- Nov 14, 2025 (virtual)

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Susan Brown	Anne Heiligenstein	Hon. Randy Shelton
Hon. Rebeca Huddle, <i>Deputy Chair</i>	Hon. Darlene Byrne	Rep. Stephanie Klick	Luanne Southern
Hon. Eva Guzman, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Hon. Julie Countiss	Hon. Selina Mireles	Vicki Spriggs
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Sheila Sturgis Craig	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness	Terese Stevenson
	Hon. Roy Ferguson	Sasha Rasco	Hon. Thomas Stuckey
	Hon. Bill Harris	Hon. Isaac Roldan	Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE	SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT	LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS	TRAINING
Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Rob Hofmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Thomas Stuckey, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Piper McCraw, <i>Chair</i>
Hon. Rebeca Huddle	Hon. Rosie Alvarado	Karla Baker	Hon. Mark Atkinson
Hon. Eva Guzman	Chantel Bedlington	Mark Briggs	Tymothy Belseth
Hon. Harriet O'Neill	Dr. Gary Blau	Sarah Bryant	Denise Campbell
Hon. Susan Brown	Hon. Julie Countiss	Hon. Delia Gonzales	Teal De La Garza
Hon. Rob Hofmann	Sarah Crockett	Hon. Charles Griffin	Barbara Elias-Perciful
Hon. Piper McCraw	Adrianna Cuéllar Rojas	Brenda Kinsler	Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington
Hon. Thomas Stuckey	Gabriella McDonald	Crystal Leff-Piñon	Margaret Halpin
	Emily Miller	Janet VanderZanden	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness
<i>Staff:</i>	Hon. Robin Sage	Charlotte Velasco	Judy Powell
<i>Jamie Bernstein</i>	Hon. Ian Spechler		Kellie Price
	Sarah Worthington		Hon. Tracey Scown
			Diane Sumoski
	<i>Staff:</i>		Hon. Elizabeth Watkins
	<i>Jamie Bernstein</i>		
	<i>Aimee Corbin</i>		<i>Staff:</i>
			<i>Milbrey Raney</i>
			<i>Renée Castillo-De La Cruz</i>
			<i>Andrea Vicencio</i>
			<i>Staff:</i>
			<i>Dylan Moench</i>
			<i>OCA Advisory:</i>
			<i>Darrell Childers</i>
			<i>Casey Kennedy</i>
			<i>Alejandra Peña</i>
			<i>Mena Ramon</i>
			<i>Charlotte Velasco</i>

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Andrew Brown	Kasey Jackson	Tanya Rollins	Jamie Bernstein, <i>Executive Director</i>
Dania Carter	Kerrie Judice	Danielle Schafer	Milbrey Raney, <i>Assistant Director</i>
Irene Clements	Norman Ladd	Johana Scot	Jessica Arguijo, <i>Communications Manager</i>
Sarah Crockett	Stephanie Madrigal	Andrea Sparks	Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, <i>Staff Attorney</i>
Teal De La Garza	Gabriella McDonald	Kenneth Thompson	Aimee Corbin, <i>Staff Attorney</i>
DeShaun Faloms	Dr. Jill McLeigh	Ruth Thornton	Tiffany Edwards, <i>Program Specialist</i>
Barbara Elias-Perciful	Kate Murphy	Sarah Worthington	Chelsea Martinez, <i>Program Specialist</i>
Mike Foster	Judy Powell		Dylan Moench, <i>Legal Representation Director</i>
			Patrick Passmore, <i>Finance Manager</i>
			Willette Sedwick, <i>Accountant</i>
			Andrea Vicencio, <i>Program Specialist</i>
			Hon. Rob Hofmann, <i>Senior Jurist in Residence</i>
			Hon. Piper McCraw, <i>Jurist in Residence</i>

STAFF

INSERT - TAB 2

Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission Virtual Meeting Minutes

**Friday, May 17, 2024
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.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. Rosie Alvarado, Judge, 438 th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Karla Baker, Parent Liaison, Region 4, Parent Collaboration Group Representative, Chandler	✓	
Erica Bañuelos, Associate Commissioner for CPS, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Chantel Bedlington, Supervisor of the Kinship Navigator Program, ACH Services, Fort Worth	✓	
Corey Benbow, Chief Executive Officer, The Tax Box, Austin		✓
Dr. Gary Blau, Senior Advisor for Children, Youth and Families; Office of the Assistant Secretary, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Houston	✓	
Mark Briggs, Chair, State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section, El Paso	✓	
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	✓	
Sheila Craig, Consultant and Director (ret.), Civil Rights Office, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin		✓
Hon. Roy Ferguson, Judge, 394 th District Court, Alpine	✓	
Madelyn Fletcher, Budget and Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Anne Heiligenstein, Senior Director Strategic Consultant, Casey Family Programs, Austin	✓	
Rep. Stephanie Klick, Texas House of Representatives, District 91, North Richland Hills		✓
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, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Isaac Roldan, Tribal Court Judge, Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo Tribe, El Paso		✓
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, 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	✓	

Attending Committee Members & Guests

Sarah Bryant, Managing Attorney, Family Helpline, Texas Legal Services Center
 Adrianna Cuéllar Rojas, CEO, TexProtects
 Barbara Elias-Perciful, Director, Texas Lawyers for Children
 Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington, Judge, 246th Family Court
 Cathy Krebs, Children’s Rights Litigation Committee Director, American Bar Association
 Brenda Kinsler, Managing Attorney Regions 4,5,6, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
 Debra Malone Renelt, Director of Placement Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Gabriella McDonald, Deputy Director, Texas Appleseed
Emily Miller, Attorney at Law, Emily Miller Law
Audrey O'Neill, Deputy Commissioner, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Hon. Robin Sage, Judicial Engagement Team, Casey Family Programs
Sarah Worthington, Director, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

Office of Court Administration Staff

Megan LaVoie, Administrative Director
Alejandra Peña, Director of Data and Research
Jeffrey Tsunekawa, Director of Research and Court Services
Charlotte Velasco, Project Manager

Attending Children's Commission Staff

Jamie Bernstein, Executive Director
Aimee Corbin, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Chelsea Martinez, Program Specialist
Dylan Moench, Legal Representation Director
Patrick Passmore, Finance Manager
Milbrey Raney, Assistant Director
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Justice Debra Lehrmann called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Justice Lehrmann expressed gratitude to the Commissioners for their attendance and their continued work to help the children and families of Texas.

Adoption of May 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Justice Lehrmann directed members to the May 17, 2024 Commission Meeting Minutes behind Tab 2 of the Meeting Notebook, distributed in advance of the meeting.

ACTION: Justice Lehrmann asked if there were any questions or edits to the minutes as written. Hearing none, after a motion and a second the Commissioners voted to adopt the minutes for the May 17, 2024 Children's Commission meeting.

Committee and Collaborative Council Member Changes

Justice Huddle announced that Adrianna Cuéllar Rojas, CEO at TexProtects, joined the Systems Improvement Committee. Justice Huddle shared that Chelsea Cornelius, Director of Research and Evaluation at Texans Care for Children, joined the Data Committee.

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION UPDATE

Ms. Bernstein directed members to Tab 3 of the Meeting Notebook for greater detail about updates since the February Commission meeting. She shared that the Children's Commission staff will present their plans for the coming fiscal year in today's meeting. Ms. Bernstein noted that there will likely be some additional projects to be determined from the ongoing Federal Child and Family Services Review.

Ms. Corbin listed the topics that the System Improvement Committee expressed interest in developing in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. Priorities include ways to address the number of runaways across the state, increasing the presence of youth in court and youth voice, creating a Community-Based Care judicial workgroup, and building on the Forensic Assessment Center Network (FACN) Round Table report to develop a related deliverable. Additionally, Ms. Corbin shared that DFPS and the Children's Commission have contracted to conduct regional trainings in the Texas Family First (TFF) pilot sites. These trainings will include a focus on reasonable efforts. In areas that do not yet have a Texas Family First pilot, these trainings will focus on reasonable efforts only.

In response to these ideas, Dr. Gary Blau suggested that gathering available data regarding runaways will help the committee to address related issues. Judge Rosie Alvarado expressed concerns about the high number of runaways she sees who present with complex behavioral health issues and end up without placement.

Mr. Dylan Moench reported on potential projects of the Legal Process and Practice Committee. Mr. Moench shared that the Legal Representation Committee (LRC) received feedback from judges regarding a decrease in the number of attorneys representing parents and children. As a result, the committee is focusing on increasing awareness of child welfare law as a potential career path for law students. The LRC connected with Melissa Garcia, the director of the Texas High School Mock Trial and Related Education Association, who will present this idea at the Association's board meeting in June. Mr. Moench shared that the LRC would also like to focus on supporting pre-petition legal representation.

Mr. Moench announced that the Parent Resources Workgroup is hoping to complete two deliverables in FY2025. The first deliverable is a Pre-Litigation Guide to help parents navigate the investigative stage of the case. The second deliverable is to create parent voice videos to help parents experiencing the child welfare system understand the attorney-client relationship. Additionally, Mr. Moench reported that the Mediation Workgroup will focus on creating legal education in FY2025 that help both attorneys and mediators understand the process of mediation in child welfare cases.

Mr. Moench announced the development of a new committee called the Legislation and Policy Resource Committee. This committee will allow for more broad judicial engagement with the legislative process. The committee identified a few areas of focus to submit to the Texas Judicial Council for consideration. Judge Robin Sage and Mr. Mark Briggs suggested that the committee and Commission work with the Texas Indigent Defense Commission to help with outreach to young attorneys.

Ms. Milbrey Raney shared information about the proposed FY2025 Training Committee projects. Commission staff will employ webinars and podcasts as methods to provide training. Another priority from the Training Committee is to continue the Trial Skills Training contested hearings training pilot which will be offered for the first time in September. It will include 5 new lectures, a simulated contested adversary hearing, and a simulated reasonable efforts argument at a termination trial. The Commission also plans to modify the strategy for assistance to local jurisdictions to offer training and technical assistance. Mr. Mark Briggs suggested that this

assistance could be used to reach attorneys in more rural areas of the state where there are fewer training opportunities.

Mr. Dylan Moench shared that the Data Committee expressed interest in data regarding placement in the child welfare system and subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, the committee would like to examine the barriers to establishing permanency at 12 months by soliciting feedback from judges about their experiences with this issue. Dr. Gary Blau suggested that the committee investigate the data related to the number of children aging out of the foster care system. Ms. Luanne Southern requested to see data used not only to identify what is not working well but to also identify what is working well, in order to try to replicate those outcomes across the state.

Mr. Patrick Passmore guided members to the financial report behind Tab 4 in the Meeting Notebook to address a new section type titled “other income.” The purpose of this section is to include any funding that is anticipated or realized by the Commission that is neither federal Court Improvement Program grants funds nor monies appropriated by the Texas Legislature.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES (DFPS) UPDATE

Ms. Audrey O’Neill gave a presentation on DFPS’ efforts to reduce the number of children without placement (CWOP). She highlighted efforts beginning in March of 2023 to focus on providing adequate care, growing capacity, ensuring the continuum of services to youth, and diverting youth from CWOP. Ms. O’Neill shared that children who exhibit complex needs who remain in a placement for at least 30 days have a higher likelihood of stabilizing in that placement. Ms. O’Neill reported that the biggest drivers of CWOP are children coming from juvenile detention and children coming from psychiatric care based on Refusal to Accept Parent Responsibility (RAPR) circumstances. She provided an update on the number of children without placement from March to May 2024 where the statewide number of children without placement dropped from 107 to 17 children.

Ms. O’Neill shared that system-wide collaboration was a huge factor in reducing the number of children without placement. DFPS staff focused on individual children without placement in order to meet their complex behavioral and mental health needs; this effort helped to identify needs and provide the necessary wrap-around services. Lastly, she shared that DFPS is working on increasing capacity for certain types of placements for youth with high needs, such as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) and Treatment Family Foster Care (TFFC) beds.

Ms. Sasha Rasco highlighted that while some programs through HHSC are transitioning away from the child welfare system, they can continue to support families. Some examples are services like WIC, Medicaid, behavioral health support, and substance abuse treatment, which can stabilize families to help them avoid involvement with the child welfare system. Ms. Rasco shared that Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) expanded their prevention programming and added 17 new home visiting sites to date. PEI is evaluating and proposing more expansion opportunities including more family resource centers. She reported that both the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and DFPS updated their websites with locator services for the current family resource centers. Ms. Rasco visited various kinship navigation support groups and kinship navigation programs across the state to learn about the needs of kinship caregivers. The

navigation programs help to find free and/or financially supported legal resources for kinship caregivers. DFPS has federal funding for this program and is developing contingency plans to maintain and hopefully expand that financial support in the future.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION (OCA) UPDATE

Ms. Megan LaVoie shared updated data from the Child Protection Court Management System (CPCMS). She highlighted CPCMS data that shows over the past 12 months all but 3 of those months had a docket clearance rate of 100%. Ms. LaVoie then noted House legislative interim charges related to best interest and juvenile justice. She briefly touched on the Senate charge related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well.

Ms. LaVoie reported that OCA is hiring for two positions. Ms. Erin Morgan was hired to work with Texas' specialty courts and OCA is currently looking to fill the Children's Courts Program Manager position.

Ms. LaVoie also gave a brief update on OCA's goals of creating a new case-level data system as well as a text reminder system. She highlighted the current workload study for court staff and the recently signed contract with the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) to move that project forward. Also, the Judicial Compensation Commission met to determine the appropriate recommendation for judicial salaries. Lastly, Ms. Lavoie shared that OCA is working on legislative appropriation requests related to projects impacting the judiciary and that these will be formalized by August.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Sarah Bryant, Managing Attorney for the Family Helpline with the Texas Legal Services Center shared information about the launch of a new kin care legal services program. This statewide program is made possible by funding from the Texas Access to Justice Foundation. The program helps family members navigate access to government benefits, enrollment in school, receive all available benefits through the education system, address social security issues, identification documents, and consent to medical treatment.

Ms. Elias-Perciful, Director at Texas Lawyers for Children (TLC), shared that TLC is prioritizing training on trauma issues. TLC developed a 15-hour legal professional trauma training course for judges and attorneys. Ms. Elias-Perciful guided members to Tab 5 of the Meeting Notebook to a flyer about two mental health programs that are available in the TLC trauma training portal.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Lehrmann announced that the next Children's Commission meeting will be held in person on September 13, 2024. The final meeting of 2024 will be held remotely on Friday, November 15, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

INSERT - TAB 3

REPORT TO THE COMMISSION

September 13, 2024

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 as well as 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 serves as a member in each of the Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees.

The Children's Commission helps institutionalize collaboration by maintaining a statewide 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.

09/13/24 Update: The May 17, 2024 Commission meeting was held remotely and archived on the Commission's YouTube channel and website.

The Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees recently convened for the "All Committee Webinar" on Tuesday, September 3, 2024 to review FY2025 strategies and budget. The Data Committee convened on August 26, 2024 to analyze various data sources and address potential deliverables for the coming fiscal year. The Training Committee also met on August 20, 2024 to discuss new projects and upcoming training events.

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 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-weekly 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.

09/13/24 Update: Bi-weekly stakeholder calls, including updates and participation from agency staff and Collaborative Council members, continue to take place every other week. The annual Collaborative Council meeting will take place on the morning of the September 13, 2024 Children’s Commission meeting.

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 distributed through the Commission’s social media platforms.

09/13/24 Update: The Commission website is routinely updated for content and to highlight newly released reports and resources. While the website is designed for judges and attorneys, materials are often accessed by additional stakeholders in the child welfare system. In 2023, OCA upgraded the Content Management System (CMS) Umbraco. The Children’s Commission continues to explore design functionality and work with OCA to schedule further testing and improvements. Additionally, OCA offered to develop a tool and dashboard to analyze website traffic and commonly accessed resources. The Children’s Commission continues to research and develop utilization of social media platforms, expanding the LinkedIn business page, [Texas Children's Commission](#), and phasing out X, formerly Twitter ([@TXChildrensComm](#)).

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. The Children’s Commission also maintains an Attorney Advisory Group 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.

09/13/24 Update: Texas is currently undergoing Round 4 of the federal Child and Family Services Review, with increased emphasis on legal and judicial involvement in this round. In April 2024, ACF conducted the CFSR stakeholder interviews in Texas. Over twenty interviews were conducted, engaging over 260 parent advocates, young adults, caregivers, providers, judges, attorneys, CASA advocates, agency and Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) leadership and staff, and Tribal representatives from throughout the state. The Children’s Commission will continue to actively participate in the CFSR process. This includes conducting case reads, providing a forum for collaboration with legal stakeholders, and encouraging judges and attorneys to participate in the development of the Program Improvement Plan. It is anticipated that there will be legal and judicial involvement in the PIP strategies as well as implementation.

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 also serve on many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners.

In response to the growing numbers of children without placement (often referred to as CWOP or “child watch”), the Children’s Commission initiated a judicial workgroup to focus on this issue. Beginning in June 2021, the workgroup meets on a regular basis to provide a forum for judges from jurisdictions throughout the state to brainstorm effective approaches to identifying options for children without a licensed placement. The group is now referred to as the Judicial Child Welfare Forum to reflect the broad array of issues discussed and the meetings now occur on a bi-monthly basis.

09/13/24 Update: This is an ad hoc strategy and there are no updates during this reporting period.

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, youth, 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. 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: Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge of the 452nd District Court in Mason County and Hon. Piper McCraw, Judge of the 469th District Court in Collin County. Both JIRs participate multiple Children’s Commission meetings regarding Emergency Orders, proposed legislation and rules, Community-Based Care, prevention and early intervention, placement capacity, and other issues.

09/13/24 Update: Between May 18 and September 13, 2024, a few examples of JIR activities include:

- Continued work as President-Elect and President for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) and attended multiple Executive and other Committee Meetings
- Attended monthly Judicial Child Welfare Forum Meetings, June-August, Virtual
- Participated in Children without Placement Judicial Focus Group, July 19, Virtual
- Presented at and Attended NCJFCJ Annual Conference, July 22-24, Phoenix, AZ
- Attended National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) Conference, August 12-14, Salt Lake City, UT
- Chaired the Children’s Commission Trial Skills Training Faculty Meeting, August 13, Virtual
- Attended Children’s Commission Executive Committee Meeting, August 16, Virtual
- Chaired the Children’s Commission Training Committee Meeting, August 20, Virtual
- Chaired the Children’s Commission Trial Skills Training Faculty Meeting, September 9, Virtual
- Participated in calls with Commission leadership and staff regarding various issues

Objective: Support efforts to build capacity to address complex mental health needs and embed a culture of trauma-informed care in the Texas child welfare system.

7. Strategy: Engage stakeholders in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health systems to apply principles of trauma-informed care and address gaps in services for children, youth, and families with complex mental health needs.

Background: The Children’s Commission initiated a Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care (SCTIC) in 2017 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. Efforts to implement the recommendations and priorities included in the report continue through training and a recent trauma informed courts initiative.

On June 24, 2022, the Children’s Commission and the Texas Judicial Commission on Mental Health (JCMH) held the first joint commission Round Table Discussion on Current Issues in Children’s Mental Health. Leadership from both commissions participated in the discussion, including Supreme Court of Texas Justice Debra Lehrmann, Chair of the Children’s Commission; Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Barbara Hervey, Co-Chair of the Judicial Commission on Mental Health; and Supreme Court of Texas Justice Rebeca Huddle, Deputy Chair of the Children’s Commission and Deputy Liaison to the Judicial Commission on Mental Health. A report from the Round Table Discussion was released on September 30, 2022 which outlined recommendations set forth in the June 2022 Round Table.

09/13/24 Update: The Children’s Commission recently began the next phase of the work related to trauma-informed care. On August 16, 2024, a new initiative called the Consortium on Trauma Informed Court Practices launched with the goal of providing a statewide network for judges to have a forum for discussion and education about trauma-informed and trauma-responsive court practices. Chaired by Hon. Carlos Villalon Jr., Associate Judge of the Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande Valley West, the Consortium will further broaden the reach of the SCTIC by sharing and expanding the work of the four Trauma Informed Court Pilot judges and their court teams. (TACFS issued a [report](#) on the work of these four courts, which was done in collaboration with the Children’s Commission.) These four judges will serve as mentors to participating judges in a bi-monthly virtual forum. Commission staff provides meeting support, continuing legal education credit as appropriate, and a related resource library.

The Children’s Commission also participates in the HHSC Children’s Mental Health Strategic Plan Subcommittee and in the related Governance Workgroup as well as the Youth and Family Voice Workgroup. Each of these groups met regularly from early spring into mid-summer 2024 in order to develop a shared understanding of the landscape of behavioral health governance, funding, and the service array, with the goal of submitting a plan to the Legislative Budget Board and the Office of the Governor on December 1, 2024. Commission staff will continue to review and provide suggestions for the proposed final draft before the internal completion date of September 20, 2024.

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.

09/13/24 Update: The Equity Workgroup last met on August 15, 2024 to share updates on local, regional, and state efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system. Updates included information from the DFPS Disproportionality Team, the Casey Family Programs Race Equity Collaborative, and additional member announcements. The workgroup will meet again in the fall to review disaggregated data on race and ethnicity.

Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings and related decision-making so that children and youth are involved in decisions being made about their lives.

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

Background: Inclusion of youth and family voice is critical to the goal of the Children’s Commission to improve the child welfare system by increasing awareness, encouraging judicial leadership, promoting best judicial and attorney practices, and informing policy and practice affecting child welfare in Texas. The Children’s Commission aspires to expand systems-level engagement of youth and family members with lived experience in child welfare and seeks to prioritize and encourage participation by compensating them for contributing their time and expertise to Children’s Commission efforts. In furtherance of this goal, the Children’s Commission created a “Lived Experience Participation Policy” so that participants are compensated based upon their time and preparation.

The Children’s Commission underscores the importance of educating judicial leaders and child welfare professionals on age-appropriate activities for children and youth in foster care through an emphasis on normalcy. The Children’s Commission continues to support and promote awareness of the Texas CASA [guide](#) entitled *Normalcy Matters: A Guide to Supporting Children & Youth in Texas Foster Care*, as well as a companion [video](#). The guide and video are hosted as resources on the Commission website.

09/13/24 Update: Commission staff continue to participate in a Supervised Independent Living (SIL) Workgroup led by DFPS. The purpose of the group is to review the current SIL policy and review the functionality and benefits for young adults aging out of care. Input from young adults with lived experience will be incorporated into the workgroup.

On July 2, 2024, Commission staff met with the Commissioner Representing Labor from the Texas Workforce Commission, the DFPS Commissioner, Casey Family Programs, and TACFS leadership to discuss ways of strengthening training and employment opportunities for youth aging out of foster care. Ideas circulated on how to include youth with lived experience for future planning. The workgroup will continue to meet to discuss these issues; the next meeting is set for October 4, 2024.

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.

10. Strategy: Engage judges and lawyers 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. The Children’s Commission collaborates with Casey Family Programs, DFPS, 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.

During 2021, DFPS’ Prevention Early Intervention (PEI) division proposed creating a new position for an Early Intervention Court Liaison in three jurisdictions. PEI partnered with the Children’s Commission and OCA to identify Texas communities that would benefit from the Court Liaison position. This position acts as a special assistant to the court, serves to identify and connect family support programs to the local Child Protection Courts and community, and offers a judicial perspective within community stakeholder meetings. The pilot site for the court liaison positions are Galveston, Bell, and Lubbock Counties.

During the 87th Texas Legislative Session, House Bill (HB) 3041 created a Family Preservation Services pilot program, referred to as the Texas Family First (TFF) pilot. Pursuant to Texas Family Code §§ 262.401 - 262.417, DFPS must provide family focused preservation services to children and families who are at imminent risk of having a child removed from the child’s home and placed in conservatorship due to a continuing danger. The TFF pilot operates under direct court supervision and DFPS is directed to utilize federal Title IV-E funds for services. Pilots are located in the following Community-Based Care Regions: 1, 2, 3W, and 8B, with plans for expansions into 6A and 8A.

09/13/24 Update: For the Early Intervention Court Liaison pilot, the Commission contracted with Texas A&M University to conduct a formal evaluation of the pilot program. Texas A&M completed their evaluation and provided a final report. OCA and PEI agreed to renew the early intervention pilot grant for 2024-2026. Easter Seals, a provider in the Rio Grande Valley, is working with the Child Protection Court of Rio Grande Valley West to obtain a position similar to the Early Intervention Court Liaisons.

Children’s Commission staff meet on a monthly basis with DFPS staff from Investigations, Family-Based Safety Services, Prevention and Early Intervention, Data and Evaluation, Legal, and Finance departments on the Texas Family First Pilot Implementation Steering Committee. During meetings, DFPS provides updates on steps taken to identify the target population served and implement the pilot.

In 2024, DFPS entered a contract with the Commission to conduct regional trainings on the Texas Family First Pilot and Reasonable Efforts (see Strategy 30 for more information). The TFF training content covers the pilot, including defining the eligible population, providing details on the current progress, and clarifying many questions related to referrals, referral sources, and time limitations. Trainings were conducted in DFPS 3W Region (Fort Worth), Region 1 (Lubbock), and Region 2 (Abilene). Additional TFF trainings will occur in 2025 when DFPS expands TFF into Houston and San Antonio.

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

11. 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. The FC&Ed Committee utilizes 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.

09/13/24 Update: Final planning for the next Foster Care & Education Summit is underway with an expansion to a two-day training to be held on September 26-27, 2024 at Angelo State University in San Angelo. This training aims to provide professionals who work with school-aged students with guidance on the educational needs and requirements for students in foster care.

The FC&Ed Committee last met on May 6, 2024, and discussed the future planning and projects, including updating the higher education guide, data and information sharing, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) tools. The next meeting will be held in October 2024.

The Every Student Succeeds Act Workgroup completed and published three one-pagers on Designated Points of Contact, Dispute Resolution, and Education Best Interest Decision Making. The one-pagers will help provide guidance to professionals in the child welfare and education systems.

TEA, DFPS, and the Children’s Commission are currently revising the 2022 Foster Care and Student Success Guide with updated resources and edits for publication in 2025. This guide is a resource to support Texas schools and child welfare professionals in addressing the educational needs of students in foster care.

On September 20, 2024, the Commission will host a 1-hour webinar entitled “Supporting School Aged Children in Care.” Three DFPS Education Specialists will present on the role of education specialists in supporting students in foster care and serving as a resource to judges and attorneys.

Commission staff continue to support child welfare partners by attending various conferences. In May 2024, Commission staff attended the Texas Workforce Commission Foster Youth Conference to learn about opportunities for youth with experience in foster care who pursue a vocational path. In June 2024, Commission staff attended the Texas Network of Youth Services to learn about how to better support older youth in foster care. In June 2024, Commission staff also attended the Education Reach for Texas Annual Conference, with a focus on encouraging improved post-secondary outcomes for young adults with experience in foster care.

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

12. Strategy: Partner with national, state, and local leaders to better support children, youth, and families with specialized needs such as addressing sexual abuse, physical abuse, or runaway issues.

Background: The Children’s Commission partners with many key stakeholders with a goal of raising awareness on specialized needs that children and youth in foster care may experience such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, and running away. The Children’s Commission works with the Office of the Texas Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team, the DFPS Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation Team, TEA, OCA, and various other statewide stakeholders to develop strategies to improve judicial handling of child welfare cases where children and youth are at high risk of being subjected to sexual abuse or running away, which increases their vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation. The Children’s Commission is focused on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness about these specialized needs that impact children and youth involved with the child welfare system.

09/13/24 Update: Commission staff participate in a monthly TEA 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 on July 31, 2024.

On September 11, 2024, the Commission staff attended the quarterly Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force meeting led by the Office of the Attorney General. This meeting is comprised of multiple agencies from across the state including the Department of Public Safety, Department of Licensing and Regulation, Texas Alcohol and Beverage Commission, DFPS and Office of the Governor, along with local county agencies who work to prevent and end trafficking.

On July 16, 2024, the Children’s Commission along with the Officer of the Governor, DFPS, and other stakeholders had their third meeting to develop a resource highlighting the relevant laws aimed at protecting children who survive sexual abuse. The workgroup is led by Hon. Selina Mireles, Judge of the 4th & 5th Administrative Judicial Regions Cluster Court, and the goal is to provide an easy-to-use guide that child survivors and their caregivers can use to identify and understand their legal rights. Youth with lived experience will be consulted on the resource.

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.

13. 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.

09/13/24 Update: This is an ad hoc strategy and there are no updates during this reporting period.

14. Strategy: Engage stakeholders in the legal system in statewide efforts to develop and expand placement capacity, including the rollout of Community Based Care, kinship care, and the Qualified Residential Treatment Program model.

Background: Placement capacity is an issue across the state of Texas, both in urban and rural areas. Judges and attorneys are key partners in identifying gaps and encouraging community supports to provide safe and stable placements for children who experience foster care. Several initiatives at the Children’s Commission aim to engage the legal and judicial communities in efforts to develop placement capacity statewide. Additionally, Community-Based Care (CBC) is the new foster care model in Texas. In this model, most Child Protective Services duties will transfer to a local service network led by an SSCC.

SB 1930 by Senator Kolkhorst passed during the 88th Regular Legislative Session and contains the recommendations from the Children’s Commission SB 1575 Workgroup created by the 87th Legislature regarding procedures for placing a child in a Residential Treatment Center or Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP). The bill is effective September 1, 2023.

09/13/24 Update: Children’s Commission staff serve on the Partners for Children and Families Committee (PCFC), the advisory body for the rollout of Community-Based Care in Texas. The most recent PCFC meetings took place on May 31 and August 19, 2024. The committee will oversee multiple workgroups with a focus on topics such as Community-Based Care and placement.

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.

15. Strategy: Prioritize areas in need of improvement in the handling of juvenile justice cases as well as 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.

In FY2024, the Children’s Commission will create a juvenile justice committee to study broader issues related to children and youth involved with the Texas juvenile justice system.

09/13/24 Update: The Children’s Commission Juvenile Justice Committee last met on September 6, 2024. The primary focus of the meeting was prioritize areas of focus as the Children’s Commission explores increased support for judges handling juvenile justice and dual status cases.

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.

16. 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 to 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.

09/13/24 Update: The LRC last met on August 2, 2024, to discuss the status of several committee projects.

The LRC hosted presentations from Emilie Cook, Preventive Legal Advocacy Fellow at the Barton Child Law & Policy Center, and Dr. Elissa Madden, Associate Professor at Baylor University. Ms. Cook discussed her experience supporting pre-petition programs through the Preventive Legal Advocacy / Pre-Petition National Cohort and Dr. Madden presented on her evaluation of the McLennan County Pre-Petition Pilot Program.

After a structured discussion following these presentations, the committee identified three projects to support the establishment of pre-petition programs for FY2025: an implementation guide for establishing pre-petition programs based on lessons from the McLennan County pilot and other programs around the country; a model presentation with the research on the benefits of pre-petition representation; and a sample memorandum of understanding between a pre-petition program and DFPS.

To help increase the number of child welfare attorneys practicing appellate law, the Children's Commission is offering registration reimbursement scholarships for attorneys to attend the Civil Appellate Section of the State Bar of Texas Civil Appellate Practice 101 training on September 4, 2024.

The LRC will meet again on October 11, 2024 to discuss implementation of the identified pre-petition projects.

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

17. 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.

The Children’s Commission Child Welfare Law Standards of Representation Committee (Standards Committee) is charged with drafting proposed standards to submit to the State Bar of Texas. The Honorable Roy Ferguson, Judge of the 394th District Court, is the Committee Chair; Justice Debra Lehrmann of the Supreme Court of Texas is the Executive Chair; and Professor Stephanie Tang of the Baylor University School of Law serves as the Reporter. Committee members were selected for their expertise in child welfare law and represent the diversity of jurisdictions across Texas.

09/13/24 Update: The Standards Committee is currently drafting standards for attorneys representing children. The committee most recently met in-person on June 7, 2024 to continue drafting Phase 2, which covers the investigative stage of a case. Over the summer, committee members reviewed the draft of Phase 1 (Attorney-Client Relationship) and will submit proposed final edits on September 3, 2024. The next meeting of the Standards Committee on September 26-27, 2024 will focus on concluding the draft of Phase 2 and beginning the draft of Phase 3 (Preparatory Stage).

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

18. 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.

09/13/24 Update: Applications for the 2024 Child Welfare Board Certification Exam are closed and twenty-seven applicants were determined eligible to take the fall exam. The exam take place over a two-day period on September 30 and October 1, 2024. The Children’s Commission will continue to reimburse exam fees for attorneys who pass the exam and become certified, as detailed on the Commission’s website.

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.

19. Strategy: Convene and support a Parent Resource Workgroup and maintain the parent resource guides 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 comprised of parent mentors, parent advocates, parent attorneys, DFPS staff, and other interested stakeholders. Prior to establishing the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline (see Strategy #20 for additional information), 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.

09/13/24 Update: The Pre-Litigation Guide Subgroup worked diligently over the summer to finalize the Pre-Litigation Resource Guide. Digital publication of the guide will occur after the upcoming 89th Legislative Session, to ensure that the most current information is available when the guide is released. The Parent Resource Workgroup and the Parent Materials Subgroup will reconvene in October.

20. 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 Child Protective Services (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.

09/13/24 Update: During the first half of this fiscal year, TLSC was awarded several grants to expand services related to child welfare. Not all grants affect the Family Helpline directly, but they present an opportunity to explore options for expanding or modifying the Family Helpline’s services in the future. The purpose of the grants was to address gaps in legal services that were identified by Family Helpline data over the past six years, including the need for an expansion in services for kinship caregivers and the creation of an online portal for families in Texas to receive automatic personalized referrals to legal aid organizations and self-help resources relevant to their legal issue, location, and income.

In addition to responding to calls, Family Helpline staff continue to provide information in a variety of ways including writing articles and creating video content for the TexasLawHelp.org website and presenting at conferences. The Family Helpline will have their final call numbers available at the end of their fiscal year in October 2024 and will share their data in anticipation of the November 2024 Commission meeting.

Objective: Strengthen the legal and judicial response in child welfare cases so that Native American children, youth, and families stay connected to their community, culture, customs, and beliefs.

21. Strategy: Establish and support meaningful relationships with federally recognized Tribes and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

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 maintain contact with the three federally recognized Tribes in Texas and continue to communicate any resources that may be helpful.

09/13/24 Update: Commission staff meet with DFPS and Tribal ICWA liaisons on a monthly basis to discuss emerging issues regarding the application of ICWA and related issues. The Commission also participates in ICWA Constituency Group calls organized by the Capacity Building Center for Courts.

On June 20 and July 18, 2024, Commission staff participated in the tribal/state collaborative calls hosted by DFPS. Additionally, Commission staff attended a site visit at the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo on August 2, 2024. It is the goal of the tribal/state collaborative to host an in-person ICWA Summit in 2026.

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

22. Strategy: Maintain a comprehensive 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 welfare 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.

09/13/24 Update: The 2023 edition of the [Texas Child Welfare Law Bench Book](#) (Bench Book) is now available online and includes updates from the 88th Regular Legislative Session. The 2023 edition is organized by the following sections: Statutory, Legal Essentials, Federal, Health, Well-being, Safety, System Issues, and Family Connections. A new Bench Card on Reasonable Efforts is included. The 2024 version will become available in October 2024.

23. Strategy: Maintain tool kits for attorneys representing parents, children, and the Department of Family and Protective Services in child welfare cases.

Background: The Children’s Commission’s Tool Kit Committee is responsible for updating the Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases, and the DFPS Representation Subcommittee is responsible for updating the Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing DFPS in Child Welfare Cases. At the conclusion of each legislative session, the committees meet and develop a plan to review, edit, and update the tool kits to ensure they reflect current case law, statutory law, and best practices. The committees also develop and review plans for publicizing and distributing the tool kits to ensure they are accessible to practitioners.

09/13/24 Update: At the Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop in San Antonio on August 7, 2024, 200 copies of the newly-revised 2024 Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases were distributed to attendees. Printed copies were also distributed at other events over the summer including the Special Education, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice System course in Austin and the Texas Association of Family Defense Attorneys Annual Family Defense CLE in Galveston. The Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents and Children in Child Welfare Cases is also available at no cost on the Children’s Commission website as an online as a searchable pdf and in an interactive format, which is available through the LawBox app for mobile and other electronic devices.

The 2024 Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing DFPS is now available online for download and print through the Commission’s website. The tool kit will also be made available in an interactive format provided by LawBox, which will be accessible on the Commission’s website and through the LawBox app for mobile and other electronic devices. A limited quantity of printed copies is also planned for the near future, and Commission staff will identify the best means of distribution for the intended audience of this resource.

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, including the use of the Office of Court Administration (OCA) Notice and Engagement tool.

Background: All parties involved in child welfare 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 are produced by OCA and provided to the Children’s Commission.

09/13/24 Update: The number of Notice and Engagement system users continues to increase. 142 new users signed up to date in FY2024 (from October 1, 2023 to present) through the Notice and Engagement system to receive hearing notifications, bringing the total number of users to 2,370. Hearing notifications were sent for 6,554 hearings with a total of 21,011 notifications sent this fiscal year.

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. OCA aims to identify jurisdictions interested in adopting the API in the future.

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

25. Strategy: 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 child welfare 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 child welfare cases prior to trial has become widely accepted, the Children’s Commission is interested in exploring whether mediation is being underutilized in child welfare cases because mediation often occurs too late in the case timeline for the benefits of increased compliance to be realized.

09/13/24 Update: The Mediation Workgroup last met on July 8, 2024 to discuss current and future projects. The workgroup reviewed drafts of 8 mediation-related checklists, with the goal of releasing the checklists in FY2025. Additionally, the workgroup developed a one-hour webinar hosted by workgroup members Michelle Morgan, Sean Healy, and Sonja Sims entitled “Mediation in Child Welfare Cases: Preparing, Participating, and Proposing Solutions.” The webinar occurred on August 29, 2024 and 98 attendees participated. Plans for FY2025 include creating additional webinar content on topics such as nonparty participation in child welfare mediations and considerations for mediations involving incarcerated parents.

Objective: Support innovation and encourage best practices for Texas courts hearing child welfare cases.

26. 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.

09/13/24 Update: This strategy is developed on an ad hoc basis and there were no updates during this reporting period.

27. Strategy: Track and assess the impact of changes in law, policy, and rule affecting the legal process in child welfare cases.

Background: The Children’s Commission created a new committee focused on legislative and policy matters in FY2024. Changes to the Texas Family Code and other areas of law and policy have a significant impact on the child welfare legal process and the entire child welfare system.

The purpose of the committee is to create a formal structure to identify judicial considerations on changes to child welfare law, policy, and rule. Possible committee activities could include meeting regularly, drafting proposals for the Texas Judicial Council, and contributing to related written materials.

09/13/24 Update: The Legislation and Policy Resource Committee (LPRC) last met on June 10, 2024 to discuss and prioritize legislative proposals to be submitted to the Texas Judicial Council. The committee agreed on 8 separate proposals. Commission staff then drafted background and proposal language which committee members reviewed and approved. Commission staff will present the LPRC proposals to the Texas Judicial Council’s Civil Justice Committee on September 9, 2024.

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. In January 2024, the Children’s Commission provided partial funding for three breakout sessions on child welfare issues at TCJ’s Annual Family Justice Conference. Throughout FY2024, TCJ and the Children’s Commission partner to plan two annual Child Welfare Judges Conferences (CWJC) and to host one. The Child Welfare Judges Conference is the Commission’s largest annual in-person judicial training. 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.

09/13/24 Update: The 17th Annual Child Welfare Judges Conference will take place on October 21-23, 2024. This year’s training will feature a three-hour pre-conference hosted by the Office of Court Administration for the Child Protection Court judges and court coordinators, which will be followed by a full conference that is open to judges who devote a minimum of 15% of their docket to hearing civil child welfare cases. The full conference will feature a keynote address designed to inform and inspire judges who serve children, youth, and families experiencing the child welfare system. Panel presentations that follow will address topics such as How to Attract and Keep High Quality Legal Representation; Fatherhood; Dealing with Death, Grief, and Loss on the Bench; Housing Options, Challenges, and Solutions; Child Support; and Judicial Leadership and Innovation. Speakers will include members of the judiciary, DFPS leadership, OCA leadership, SSCC leadership, and youth and parents with lived experience in the child welfare system. For more information on regional breakouts at the conference, please see Strategy 37.

In addition to providing in person judicial training, the Commission has online training content available for judges to access at their convenience, many of which offer Family Violence Credit Hours and/or TBLS hours in addition to Minimum Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) and ethics hours.

29. Strategy: Support specialized training for the Child Protection Court (CPC) program, judges, and support staff.

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 partners with OCA to provide training and other support for CPC judges and court coordinators to conduct hearings and manage cases. There are currently 30 CPCs and 1 Harris County Child Protection Court; these courts hear child welfare cases in 148 Texas counties.

09/13/24 Update: Commission staff are coordinating with the new Children’s Courts Program Manager at OCA regarding the preconference for CPC judges and court coordinators at CWJC. Commission staff initiated the planning process for the summer 2025 biennial Child Protection Court Convening in partnership with OCA.

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: Expand knowledge of and encourage high-quality hearings regarding Reasonable Efforts determinations.

Background: Reasonable Efforts findings are required by federal and state law in child welfare hearings. Neither federal nor Texas law defines reasonable efforts and explains that to do so would be a direct contradiction of the intent of the law which requires determinations to be made on a case-by-case basis. In Texas, the child welfare agency must make reasonable efforts to maintain the family unit, to prevent or eliminate the need for removal, to return the child home, to safely reunify the child and parent, and to finalize permanency. Additionally, the child welfare agency must document all reasonable efforts made. During the 88th Regular Legislative Session, new reasonable efforts legislation was passed which effects all child welfare statutory hearings and adds a third prong to findings in termination of parental rights final hearings (with just a few statutorily-defined exceptions). Providing training which will expand knowledge of and encourage high-quality hearings regarding Reasonable Efforts determinations is critical for judges, attorneys, DFPS, other child welfare advocates, and stakeholders in order to implement the new laws and facilitate best outcomes.

09/13/24 Update: The Children’s Commission continues to provide education and training on federal and state Reasonable Efforts law and its impact on child welfare cases and hearings.

The Children’s Commission, in partnership with DFPS, offered Texas Family First/Reasonable Efforts training events at no cost for members of the legal and child welfare community in DFPS Region 3W on June 3, 2024, DFPS Region 1 on July 9, 2024, and DFPS Region 2 on August 22, 2024. Fictional scenarios facilitated hands-on practice with making legal arguments related to reasonable efforts. The Children’s Commission will host additional regional trainings in partnership with DFPS throughout FY2025. The next four trainings planned for 2024 are for DFPS Regions 7, 6B, 10, and 9 and will focus on reasonable efforts.

31. 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 (ret.), the TST is now directed by JIR Judge Piper McCraw. Trial Skills Training is held once or twice a year and offers up to 20 MCLE (Minimum Continuing Legal Education) hours, including ethics hours. Eleven 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, Pediatric Fellows and/or Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, 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.

09/13/24 Update: The Trial Skills Training Contested Hearing Practices Pilot will include 21 participants and take place over the course of three days this September. The first day of instruction will occur over Zoom on September 18, 2024, and will be followed by two days of in person instruction at the Embassy Suites Dallas Market Center in Dallas, Texas on September 25-26, 2024. Five new lectures focused on contested hearings practice were added including Building the Attorney-Client Relationship; Preparing for the Initial Contested Hearing; Understanding the Required Burdens of Proof and Reasonable Efforts Findings in Child Welfare Cases; Motions Practice; and Bench Trials.

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

Background: In response to the need for online training, Commission staff are developing more regular webinars to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. The Commission hosts regular webinars to address current and emerging issues, as well as gaps in training, to help educate child welfare attorneys, judges, and stakeholders across the state. These webinars focus on topics relevant to the legal and judicial communities and may be relevant to child welfare stakeholders as well. All of the Commission’s web-based content is archived and is available on the On-Demand Training and MCLE webpage.

09/13/24 Update: The Commission held a webinar entitled “Taking Your First Child Welfare Appeal” on June 26, 2024. The webinar focused on what attorneys need to know about how to appeal a final order in a child welfare case, what to look for when reviewing a record key element of Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure, and what to focus on when drafting a petition.

On July 18, 2024, the Commission hosted a webinar entitled “Understanding the Federal Intersection with Key Texas Child Welfare Laws.” This webinar provided a high-level overview of several significant federal child welfare laws and an in-depth look at related provisions in the Texas Family Code, and it highlighted the similarities and difference between these federal and state laws.

On August 29, 2024, the Commission hosted a webinar entitled “Mediation in Child Welfare Cases: Preparing, Participating, and Proposing Solutions.” Mediators Michelle Morgan of Morgan Law, Sean P. Healy of Healy Law, and Sonja Sims of Sims & Purzer provided an overview of the mediation process in child welfare cases and discussed how attorneys can make effective use of the benefits of mediation. The panel covered what to expect at mediation, how to prepare, and how attorneys can negotiate solutions for their clients during mediation.

33. 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 has produced MCLE courses on child welfare and related issues to provide training for court-appointed attorneys and attorneys representing DFPS. From 2012 through 2019, the Children’s Commission partnered with TexasBarCLE to produce courses on child welfare law and related issues to provide training for attorneys who represented children, parents, and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in child welfare proceedings. These live broadcasts are archived in the TexasBarCLE’s Child Welfare [Practice Area](#) in their Online Classroom. Both the live and archived recordings of these 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. The Commission also worked with TexasBarCLE in 2022 to produce “Building Better Youth Outcomes: The Importance of Being Trauma Informed.” 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 §§ 107.004 and 107.0131.

At this time, the Commission's partnership with TexasBarCLE involves participation in the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section's Curriculum Committee and supporting that Section through a grant for scholarships to the annual spring Advanced Child Protection Law Course, which has been expanded to also include a half-day "101" course, as well as the annual summer Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop. Additionally, the Children's Commission partners with DFPS and TDCAA to provide high-quality training for attorneys representing DFPS.

09/13/24 Update:

State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section: As a part of the Commission's collaboration with the State Bar's Child Protection Law (CPL) Section, a Commission staff member participates in the CPL CLE Committee and provides feedback on the Section's training efforts, including the annual Advanced Family Law Conference Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop which was held on August 7, 2024 in San Antonio. Curriculum planning for the 2025 Advanced Child Protection Law Course will begin in the next few months.

Special Education, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Justice System Course: In collaboration with the State Bar's Child Protection Law Section, Juvenile Law Section, and Disability Issues Section, the Children's Commission Executive Director served as Course Director for the 2024 Special Education, Child Welfare, and the Juvenile Justice System Course. The live course was hosted on June 14, 2024, in Austin. Topic highlights included trends in special education, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems, assisting kinship caregivers with school-related issues, and attorney duties for children placed in congregate facilities.

Texas District and County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) Prosecuting Crimes Against Children Course: In collaboration with TDCAA, the Children's Commission will develop the child welfare track for the bi-annual TDCAA Prosecuting Crimes Against Children Course planned for 2025. This will be the third time that TDCAA has partnered with the Commission to host a child welfare track in this course.

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.

34. 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: The Children's Commission maintains an electronic distribution list and regularly publishes Resource Letters about emerging, relevant, and changing policy, laws, practice, and training opportunities. While Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters are specific to Texas judges, the Resource Letter reaches nearly 4,000 attorneys, judges, court staff, and stakeholders to relay pertinent child welfare related information. All Letters are available on the Children's Commission website.

09/13/24 Update: Several examples of Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters and Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) issued between May 17 and September 13, 2024 include:

- 5/23/2024: [Parent, Youth, and Young Adult Surveys from the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council](#)
- 6/7/2024: [Scholarship Opportunities for Child Welfare Judges and Attorneys to Summer Conferences](#)
- 6/10/2024: [June is Reunification Month](#)

- 6/12/2024: Jurist in Residence Letter: [Identifying Child Sexual Exploitation: A Judicial Discussion](#)
- 6/18/2024: [Upcoming Webinar: Understanding the Federal Intersection with Key Texas Child Welfare Laws; Family Protection Representation Mentorship Announcement from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission](#)
- 7/12/2024: [Youth SIM Mapping; Call for Family Representation Mentorship Program Applications](#)
- 7/18/2024: [Webinars: Mediation in Child Welfare; Handling Your First Child Welfare Appeal](#)
- 7/26/2024: Jurist in Residence Letter: [Registration Now Open: 2024 Child Welfare Judges Conference](#)
- 8/1/2024: [Scholarship Announcement: Civil Appellate Practice 101 Course](#)
- 8/14/2024: [Webinar: Supporting School Aged Children in Care](#)
- 8/27/2024: [Now Available: 2024 Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing the DFPS in Child Welfare Cases](#)
- 8/29/2024: [Educational Resources for the 2024-2025 School Year](#)

35. 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 TexasBarCLE Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course; (2) the TexasBarCLE Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop; (3) the National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference; and (4) 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 that scholarship recipients plan to implement and/or 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.

09/13/24 Update:

Handling Your First (or Next) Civil Appeal Webcast Replay: The “Handling Your First (or Next) Civil Appeal Webcast Replay” was held on May 22, 2024. The Commission awarded 6 registration scholarships to qualified attorneys.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Training: The NCJFCJ 87th Annual Conference was held on July 21-24, 2024, in Phoenix, Arizona. The Commission awarded 12 reimbursement scholarships to qualified judges.

Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop: The Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop was held on August 7, 2024, in San Antonio, Texas. The Commission awarded 28 registration scholarships for attorneys to attend the live event. Additionally, 16 registration scholarships were awarded for the webcast replays, which will occur later in the year.

National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference: The 47th Annual NACC Conference was held on August 12-14, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Commission awarded 8 reimbursement scholarships

to qualified judges and attorneys.

Civil Appellate Practice 101: 2024: The Civil Appellate Practice 101 was held on September 4, 2024, in Austin, Texas. The Commission awarded 6 registration reimbursement scholarships for attorneys to attend the live event. Additionally, 11 registration reimbursement scholarships were awarded for the webcast replay, which will occur on October 9, 2024.

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.

36. Strategy: Utilizing all available data sources, analyze trends in child welfare data such as referrals, investigations, removals, and exits.

Background: The Data Committee is committed to identifying and analyzing available data that could enhance courts' understanding of statewide trends in relevant benchmarks and whether the trends correlate with the changes made to the Family Code or to DFPS policy.

09/13/24 Update: The Data Committee most recently met on August 26, 2024. The committee received a presentation from Christine Barela and Stacy Russel on future DFPS data and case management tools that could replace the IMPACT system. Committee members provided feedback on how such a system can incorporate legal and judicial needs and perspectives. Additionally, the committee reviewed the requested data from DFPS regarding prior placement by youth in DFPS conservatorship who enter the juvenile justice system. The committee also reviewed initial responses from the 2024 CWJC pre-conference survey identifying barriers to achieving permanency in twelve months. The Data Committee will meet again on October 25, 2024 to review how the Data Committee can use CPCMS and other data sources to make existing Children's Commission projects more data informed.

37. 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 as well as Regional Breakouts to members of the judiciary at the Child Welfare Judges Conference, which is hosted by the Commission in partnership with TCJ. This strategy 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 statewide data and updates from the Department. The Regional Breakout sessions provide the opportunity for judges, their DFPS regional directors from Child Protective Investigations, their CPS regional directors, and their regional systems improvement specialists to discuss region-specific data elements and permanency outcomes in the context of statewide data. 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.

09/13/24 Update: Planning for the October 2024 Child Welfare Judges Conference Regional Breakouts is well underway. This year's sessions will incorporate feedback from previous conferences in order to increase gains in knowledge and facilitate higher-level discussion and problem-solving. Statewide data will be shared in the DFPS leadership panel presentation so that the processes which lead to data outcomes can be presented for a greater understanding of the intersection of law, policy, practice, and data. Key topics will be

covered along with accompanying data on safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes at the statewide level. Regional Breakouts will examine and discuss regional data with an eye towards improving outcomes for children and families. During these breakout sessions, judges will meet by DFPS Region with CPS Regional Directors, CPI Regional Directors, Regional Systems Improvement Specialists, and SSCC representatives as applicable, to examine and discuss regional data with an eye towards improving outcomes for children and families.

Judicial and agency feedback following these sessions at the 2023 conference was very positive and focused on the helpful aspects of examining and discussing regional data within the statewide data context. Participants reported that communication between judges, agency staff, and SSCC staff improved in their respective jurisdictions.

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.

38. Strategy: Partner with OCA to support the maintenance, enhancements, data collection, impact, and usability of the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS), including integrating CPCMS with other data systems.

Background: CPCMS is a case management system which is unique to Child Protection Courts and has been in use since 2009. 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.

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 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.

09/13/24 Update: The CPCMS Advisory Council last met on August 9, 2024 to discuss planned updates and enhancements for CPCMS. Recent updates to the CPCMS system were released on August 22, 2024. The council welcomed Marcus Crosby as the new Children’s Court Program Manager. The council reviewed and discussed several proposed changes to the CPCMS system. The council decided to keep the “Services Review” hearing type active, and review functionality for tickler messages associated with 180 days from the first or most recent services review. The council decided to remove “Motion to Participate” as it is no longer a valid hearing type (it has been replaced with Court Ordered Services or “COS”).

Other enhancement requests included renaming the “Trial /Final” hearing type to “Bench Trial/Final,” for clarity and distinguishability from “Jury Trial,” adding additional options to the document type field, and creating a tickler message for cases without a hearing in 180 days and no future hearing scheduled. The next meeting of the Advisory Council will occur in the first quarter of FY2025.

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**Children's Commission
Adjusted End of Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Report**

FISCAL YEAR 2024 FEDERAL/STATE REVENUE

Fiscal Year 2023 CIP Carry Forward	\$	1,178,688
(+) Fiscal Year 2024 CIP Distribution*	\$	1,853,476
(+) Fiscal Year 2024 COLA Payment	\$	55,200
Fiscal Year 2024 CIP Funds Available	\$	3,087,364

FISCAL YEAR 2024 OTHER REVENUE

		Contract	
		Contract Amount	Reimbursement
(+) 2024 Casey Family Programs Contract	\$	40,000	\$ 30,000
(+) FY2024DFPS Training Contract	\$	1,009,809	\$ 222,351
Fiscal Year 2024 Other Income	\$	1,049,809	\$ 252,351

FISCAL YEAR 2024 EXPENDITURES

	Budget	Expenses To-date	Anticipated Expenditures**
Operating	\$ 1,381,933	\$ 1,234,462	\$ 99,691
Commission Projects	\$ 161,000	\$ 31,724	\$ 72,671
<i>Systems Improvement</i>	\$ 30,000	\$ 5,856	\$ 11,065
<i>Legal Practice and Process</i>	\$ 74,800	\$ 23,740	\$ 11,605
<i>Training</i>	\$ 56,200	\$ 2,128	\$ 50,000
Scholarships	\$ 97,500	\$ 41,206	\$ 43,143
<i>ABA Parent Representation Conference</i>	\$ 15,000	\$ 8,989	\$ -
<i>Appellate Law Section Boot Camp</i>	\$ 7,500	\$ 475	\$ 7,025
<i>Child Protection Law Section</i>	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,860	\$ -
<i>NACC -Annual Conference</i>	\$ 10,000	\$ 5,250	\$ 4,750
<i>NCJFCJ - Judicial Scholarship</i>	\$ 35,000	\$ 14,732	\$ 20,268
<i>State Bar CAN CLE</i>	\$ 7,500	\$ -	\$ 7,500
<i>TBLS - CWL Specialization Exam Fee Waiver</i>	\$ 5,000	\$ 900	\$ 1,100
<i>TDCAA - Conference</i>	\$ 2,500	\$ -	\$ 2,500
Grants	\$ 622,929	\$ 424,791	\$ 203,138
<i>FY22 NCE: Baylor - Parent Advocacy Program Evaluation</i>	\$ 4,699	\$ 4,699	\$ -
<i>FY23 NCE: Pearls Foundation</i>	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ -
<i>DFPS - Regional Attorney Training</i>	\$ 12,000	\$ -	\$ 12,000
<i>OCA - Data Analyst, Technology, Visiting Judge</i>	\$ 223,007	\$ 146,456	\$ 76,551
<i>TCJ - Judicial Training</i>	\$ 259,641	\$ 203,685	\$ 55,956
<i>TFYJP - Hotline Data Collection</i>	\$ 11,081	\$ 11,081	\$ -
<i>TLSC - Family Helpline</i>	\$ 112,500	\$ 53,869	\$ 58,631
	\$ 2,263,362	\$ 1,732,182	\$ 418,642

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

Fiscal Year 2024 CIP Funds Available	\$	3,087,364
(-) Fiscal Year 2024 Expenditures to Date	\$	(1,732,182)
(+) Fiscal Year 2024 Contract Expense Reimbursement	\$	252,351
(-) FY2024 Anticipated Expenditures	\$	(418,642)
Estimated Carry Forward FY 2025	\$	1,188,891

* FY2024 additional distribution from ACF of \$19,948.00

** Reduction to budget categories that will not materialize in FY2024 - \$112,538.

**Children's Commission
Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget**

FISCAL YEAR 2025 ESTIMATED FEDERAL/STATE REVENUE

Estimated Fiscal Year 2024 Carry Forward	\$	1,188,891
(+) Estimated Fiscal Year 2025 Federal Distribution	\$	1,871,863
(+) Fiscal Year 2025 COLA Payment	\$	94,770
Projected Funds Available for FY 2025	\$	3,155,524

FISCAL YEAR 2025 OTHER REVENUE

	<u>Contract Amount</u>	
(+) 2024 Casey Family Programs Contract	\$	10,000
(+) FY2025 DFPS Training Contract	\$	787,458
Fiscal Year 2025 Other Income	\$	797,458

FISCAL YEAR 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

	<u>Budget</u>	
Operating	\$	1,466,286
Commission Projects	\$	178,800
<i>Systems Improvement</i>		40,000
<i>Legal Practice and Process</i>		66,400
<i>Training</i>		72,400
Scholarships	\$	82,000
<i>Appellate Law Section Boot Camp</i>		7,500
<i>Child Protection Law Section</i>		10,000
<i>General Judicial Scholarship</i>		5,000
<i>NACC - Annual Conference</i>		10,000
<i>NCJFCJ - Judicial Scholarship</i>		30,000
<i>State Bar CAN CLE</i>		7,500
<i>TBLS - CWL Specialization Exam Fee Waiver</i>		2,000
<i>TDCAA - Conference</i>		10,000
Grants	\$	481,240
<i>DFPS Regional Attorney Training Support</i>		12,500
<i>OCA - CIP Technology Project</i>		128,279
<i>OCA - CPC Visiting Judge</i>		13,000
<i>Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ)</i>		232,460
<i>TLSC Family Helpline</i>		95,001
Total Proposed Expenditures	\$	2,208,326

ESTIMATED FISCAL YEAR 2025 ENDING BALANCE

Projected Funds Available for FY 2025	\$	3,155,524
(-) FY 2025 Proposed Expenditures	\$	(2,208,326)
Estimated FY 2025 Carry Forward	\$	947,198

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion.

There are a number of reasons why the world's population is growing so rapidly. One of the main reasons is that the number of children born to each woman has increased. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that women are now having children at a younger age, and that there are more children surviving to adulthood.

Another reason why the world's population is growing so rapidly is that the number of people who are surviving to old age has increased. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that people are now living longer, and that there are more people surviving to old age.

There are a number of other reasons why the world's population is growing so rapidly. One of the main reasons is that the number of people who are migrating to other parts of the world has increased. This is due to a number of factors, including the fact that people are now moving to other parts of the world in search of better opportunities.

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Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2025

Organization:	Office of Court Administration (OCA)
Project:	OCA/CIP Partnership Grant
Strategic Category:	Systems Improvement, Data
Grant Amount:	\$128,279.22
Project Description:	<p>Enhance, maintain, and support the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) and the hearings Notice and Engagement system. This includes continuance of the established governance structure and work to enhance technology solutions in accordance with governance committee assessment and decisions.</p> <p>Facilitate communication between youth and their judge, and youth participation in their Review Hearings, through case management system functionality and availability of video conferencing.</p>
Project Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conduct system maintenance and other support for technology solutions provided by OCA for child welfare court judges and staff. This could include software upgrades, security updates, database administration, and adherence to OCA-IS operating procedures and policies. – Continue to publish CPCMS software releases for enhancements and maintenance as necessary. Develop, test and deploy enhancements. Focus areas include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection and tracking of data elements identified as necessary for reporting purposes; • Reports requested by CPC judges designed to promote safety, permanency, and wellbeing for the child and family, and reports requested by the Children's Commission; • Collaboration with the committees of the Children's Commission on case management system enhancements and reporting supporting activities of the committees; • Features and functionality requested by the Advisory Council; and • Expanding training coverage of CPCMS features and functionality, providing timely access to information needed to effectively manage child welfare cases and to generate useful data for continued improvement of court practices. – Facilitate communication between youth and their child welfare court judge through case management system features/functionality and through supporting use of video conferencing. – Provide webcams and microphones as needed and conduct refresh of MiFi hotspot devices used by CPC staff.
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits Supplies (Cellular Hotspot Devices)

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2025

Organization:	Office of Court Administration (OCA)
Project:	Visiting Judge Support
Strategic Category:	Legal Practice & Process
Grant Amount:	\$13,000.00
Project Description:	The visiting judge grant would allow OCA to continue the established mechanism of payment for the appointment of former/Retired Child Protection Court associate judges and former/retired district and county court at-law judges experienced in hearing Child Protective Services (CPS) cases to cover Child Protection Court dockets in absence of the active associate judge.
Project Activities:	OCA will contract with former and retired Child Protection Court associate judges at a daily rate of \$494.00 for a full day of service or \$247.00 for a half day of service, and former and retired district court and county court at-law judges, experienced in CPS matters, at a daily rate of \$620.00 for a full day of service or \$310 for a half day of service. Travel expenses incurred in performance of these services are reimbursable in accordance with the State of Texas guidelines for state employees.
Use of Funds:	Contractual

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2025

Organization:	Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ)
Project:	Judicial Training
Strategic Category:	Training
Grant Amount:	\$232,460.00
Project Description:	<p>TCJ will conduct the 2024 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC). This is a 2.5-day conference, which will include an optional half-day pre-conference training on topical issues relevant based on children's age group. The conference will be held October 21-23, 2024, at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center. The conference is estimated to train around 95 judges and 30 child protection court coordinators.</p> <p>TCJ will also begin the planning process for the 2025 Child Welfare Judges Conference.</p>
Project Activities:	<p>TCJ will participate in periodic planning calls with the Children's Commission and OCA. They will communicate with attendees about reservations, reimbursements, work directly with speakers to facilitate travel, develop program descriptions, prepare materials including conference programs, signage, and conference app, and apply for, track, and reconcile MCLE for conference participants. At the conclusion of the conference, TCJ will prepare and distributing conference evaluations, tabulating and providing results to the Children's Commission.</p>
Use of Funds:	<p>Personnel & Benefits Travel Supplies Contractual (Speaker Fees) Other (Overhead, A/V Conference Support)</p>

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2025

Organization:	Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
Project:	2025 DFPS Legal Conference
Strategic Category:	Training
Grant Amount:	\$12,500.00
Project Description:	The attorney and legal assistant training will take place in October 2025 and provide ongoing agency-attorney focused training, which in the past has included topics such as ICWA compliance, CBC Transition, protecting the appellate record, trial skills, ethics, human trafficking, and others. The goal is to continue to provide MCLE presentations based on the current needs of agency attorneys and trends as they appear in 2025.
Project Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify trends, issues and needs identified for training based on post-event surveys from 2024 program; - Identify topics and possible speakers; - Contact and confirm speakers; - Prepare agenda and materials for distribution; - Present program in October 2025; and - Tabulate and assess evaluations to use in planning future training.
Use of Funds:	Travel Contractual (Venue, Audio/Visual)

Children's Commission Grant Summaries

Fiscal Year 2025

Organization:	Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC)
Project:	Family Helpline
Strategic Category:	System Improvement, Data
Grant Amount:	\$95,001.11
Project Description:	<p>TLSC's Family Helpline was established in 2017. The Family Helpline assists Texans who have legal questions regarding the child welfare system and child safety. Family Helpline attorneys are available Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. CST. When a caller dials the phone number, their call is answered by a child welfare attorney. Since its inception, staff attorneys have completed more than 12,000 calls, affecting more than 18,000 children across Texas. The goal of the helpline is to improve safety and stability for children, and to empower families through education about their legal rights and court processes. The Family Helpline serves all 254 counties in Texas.</p>
Project Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide one-on-one legal education, information, and referrals to approx. 1,200 individuals in Texas regarding CPS involvement or child safety (Monday - Friday from 9am - 6pm CST). This will be tracked and measured using Legal Server case management software. - Present legal trainings on a topic related to child welfare law a minimum of twice per fiscal year with a goal of reaching at least 10 attorneys or professionals per presentation. - Provide child welfare content for TexasLawHelp.org with a minimum of 2 self-help kits or articles per year. - Collect data regarding the child welfare system – including the caller's role, type of case, issues discussed, trends, and areas for improvement; this data will be reported on to the Commission twice per year. - Distribute at least 500 outreach materials to entities across the state (such as local courts and clerk's offices, local public libraries and law libraries, CPS offices, CASA offices, local parenting class providers, drug treatment and rehabilitation centers, child advocacy centers, medical provider offices, and law enforcement offices). - Observe court in 10 counties and track observations; a summary of these observations will be included in a report to the Commission 2x/yr.
Use of Funds:	Personnel & Benefits Travel Supplies Contractual (IT Support, Security) Other (Overhead)

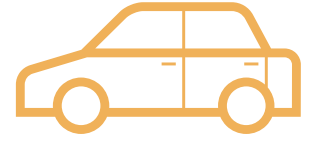
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Children's Commission Meeting
Collaborative Council Announcements
September 13, 2024

- Texas Foster Youth Justice Project
- Texas Lawyers for Children



FREE DRIVER EDUCATION!



The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Driver Education Funding Program will pay for driver's education classes for people who qualify, helping them learn how to drive and get a driver's license.

Are you eligible for this program?

Current or Former Foster Youth

- You are younger than 18 years old and residing in foster care now, or;
- You are at least 18 years old, but younger than 21, in foster care being paid for by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), or;
- You are younger than 26 years old and aged out of the Texas foster care system.

Impacted by Homelessness or Abuse

- You are younger than 26 years old and have experienced/are experiencing homelessness, or;
- You are a child of someone who experienced abuse by a family member or a romantic partner, or;
- You experienced abuse by a family member or a romantic partner.

How to Apply:

1. Find a pre-approved driving school or help a school you choose sign up.
 - a. You can find a list of schools that have already signed up as vendors for TWC's program here: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/driver-education-funding-program/information-driver-education-applicants>. (See QR code below)
 - b. If you have another school in mind, they can become a TWC vendor by following the instructions on this page: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/driver-education-funding-program/information-driver-education-schools>. You, or your driving school, can email DriverEducationProgram@twc.texas.gov for help registering them as a vendor.
2. Complete the **TWC Application** and **Eligibility Verification Form**, available at the link above and QR code below. Be sure to follow the application instructions on that webpage.
3. Email the **TWC Application** and **Eligibility Verification Form** to DriverEducationProgram@twc.texas.gov.

If you need to access a computer:

1. Go to your local library, or
2. Go to your local Workforce Solutions office - they will give you an application or access to a computer. Find your local office here: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/find-locations>.

Find TWC's
driver education
webpage and
apply here





CALLING ALL DRIVING SCHOOLS!



Become a vendor for TWC'S Driver Education Funding Program now!

- **The Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Driver Education Funding Program** pays for driver education classes, in-car classes, road tests, and other fees for services necessary to obtain a driver's license for: youth and young adults who were in foster care, experienced family violence, or who experienced homelessness. Visit <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/driver-education-funding-program> (or the QR code below) for more information.
- **Driving schools** can join the program as vendors to get paid to provide driver education and other services to eligible youth and young adults.

Requirements to Become a Vendor:

1. Be registered with the **Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR)** as a licensed Texas Driving School.
2. Complete the **TWC1020: Substitute W-9 and Direct Deposit Form** available at: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation/forms>.
3. Send the **form** and a **copy of your TDLR Driver Education Provider License** to DriverEducationProgram@twc.texas.gov.

Once Schools are Approved:

- The provider will be listed on TWC's Driver Education Funding Program [webpage](#) and can be chosen as a driving school by any eligible applicant.
- Applicants (prospective students) will contact the driving school to discuss the services they need and the necessary cost information for their TWC application.
- Once TWC reviews a student's application, the student and the school will be notified of their decision within 5 business days. If the student is approved, TWC will send payment to the school within 30 days. ***TWC will pay the driving school, as a vendor, for all driver education services at the same market rate that the school would typically charge for their services.**

Have questions or need help submitting your vendor application?

Contact:

DriverEducationProgram@twc.texas.gov

View TWC's webpage with information for driving schools here



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has increased from 600 million to 800 million (FAO 2001).

There are a number of reasons for this increase. One of the main reasons is the increase in the world population. The world population has increased from 5 billion in 1987 to 6 billion in 2000, and is projected to reach 9 billion by 2050 (UN 2000). This increase in population has led to an increase in the demand for food, which has led to an increase in the number of people who are undernourished.

Another reason for the increase in the number of people who are undernourished is the increase in the number of people who are living in poverty. The number of people living in poverty has increased from 1 billion in 1987 to 1.2 billion in 2000, and is projected to reach 1.5 billion by 2050 (UN 2000). This increase in poverty has led to an increase in the number of people who are undernourished.

A third reason for the increase in the number of people who are undernourished is the increase in the number of people who are living in rural areas. The number of people living in rural areas has increased from 3 billion in 1987 to 4 billion in 2000, and is projected to reach 5 billion by 2050 (UN 2000). This increase in rural population has led to an increase in the number of people who are undernourished.

There are a number of ways in which the number of people who are undernourished can be reduced. One way is to increase the production of food. This can be done by increasing the number of people who are working in agriculture, by increasing the number of people who are working in food processing, and by increasing the number of people who are working in food distribution.

Another way to reduce the number of people who are undernourished is to increase the number of people who are living in poverty. This can be done by increasing the number of people who are working in the private sector, by increasing the number of people who are working in the public sector, and by increasing the number of people who are working in the non-profit sector.

A third way to reduce the number of people who are undernourished is to increase the number of people who are living in rural areas. This can be done by increasing the number of people who are working in agriculture, by increasing the number of people who are working in food processing, and by increasing the number of people who are working in food distribution.

There are a number of challenges that must be overcome in order to reduce the number of people who are undernourished. One of the main challenges is the increase in the world population. The world population is projected to reach 9 billion by 2050, which will lead to an increase in the demand for food.

Another challenge is the increase in the number of people who are living in poverty. The number of people living in poverty is projected to reach 1.5 billion by 2050, which will lead to an increase in the number of people who are undernourished.

A third challenge is the increase in the number of people who are living in rural areas. The number of people living in rural areas is projected to reach 5 billion by 2050, which will lead to an increase in the number of people who are undernourished.



**Texas
Lawyers for
Children**

Coming in October!

(DAY TBD) **FREE**

ASK AN EXPERT



ANA M GOMEZ, MC, LPC

JUDGES AND ATTORNEYS --

This is your chance to ask internationally acclaimed mental health expert Ana Gomez questions about mental or behavioral health issues that impact children in your cases. Ana Gomez is a renowned psychotherapist, author, and international speaker who specializes in evidence-based treatments and therapies for child trauma.

You don't want to miss this interactive webinar to help identify the needs of children who have experienced trauma when it is impacting their behavioral and mental health.

Past webinars featuring Ana and other experts are available **FREE** to Texas judges and attorneys at

www.TexasLawyersforChildren.org in the Trauma Training Portal

NAVIGATING INTRICACIES IN HEALING CHILD COMPLEX TRAUMA FROM A CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

2 Hours FV-CJE & CLE

Ana Gomez discusses the importance of addressing trauma through effective, evidence-based treatments and therapies for child trauma that bring healing for abused and neglected children.

EMDR: A GAME CHANGER FOR TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

3 Hours FV-CJE & CLE

This webinar explores EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) -- an evidence-based trauma therapy -- and the incredible impact it can have in the healing of children in foster care.

Email Kristen Bell at kristen@texaslawyersforchildren.org with questions.

