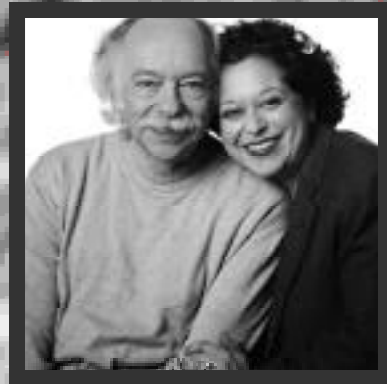


Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

1999 Annual Report



Sept. 1, 1998–Aug. 31, 1999



Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services

Protecting the Unprotected

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Child Safety Report, Maps, Hotline Numbers
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The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services mission is to protect the unprotected — children, elderly and adults with disabilities — from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The agency regulates child care; investigates allegations of abuse and neglect against children, the elderly and people with disabilities; provides foster care, adoption, and a variety of services for victims and their families; and supports contracted programs that make families safe and secure. The 1999 Annual Report is a summary of the services provided, as well as an overview of the agency's performance and accomplishments for the fiscal year from Sept. 1, 1998 to Aug. 31, 1999.

Executive Summary

The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (PRS) is governed by a six-member board appointed by the governor to staggered, six-year terms. The board sets policy and selects an executive director, who is responsible for administration and operations. During 1999, the agency employed an average of 6,330 staff. The agency's headquarters are in Austin. Offices are located throughout the

state, which is divided into 11 administrative regions. PRS provides services through four main divisions: Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, Child Care Licensing and Community Initiatives for Program Development. All four divisions saw significant changes in 1999 due largely to actions taken by the 76th Texas Legislature.

Child Protective Services

Nowhere was support for PRS more significant than in Child Protective Services (CPS), where the governor and both houses of the Legislature increased resources to improve protection of children at risk of abuse and neglect. The Legislature approved \$9 million of emergency funding for fiscal year 1999 which became available in April to begin addressing some of the urgent issues identified by the agency. This funding allowed PRS to begin hiring 220 new CPS staff, to increase purchased day care for children in foster care, and to increase purchased services, such as counseling, for families and children served by CPS. Beyond emergency appropriations, the Legislature increased PRS funding by \$202 million for the 2000–01 biennium, primarily to continue improvements to the state's child protection system.

Legislators dedicated additional resources for CPS in part due to a petition from State District Judge Scott McCown. In November 1998, Judge McCown submitted a petition to PRS, the Legislature and the governor for better financed child abuse and neglect prevention and early intervention efforts by the state.

The report concluded that Texas spends so much of its child protection funds on children in state custody that not enough is left to rescue children in severe danger of abuse and neglect. With funding from the Legislature, PRS worked with an independent consultant to specifically identify areas where resources were most needed, including prevention, intervention

and quicker permanency in child protection cases in Texas. Foremost on that plan is improving services to children and families by reducing staff turnover, improving staff training, upgrading the technology that supports staff and focusing on prevention and intervention strategies.

Adult Protective Services

In an extensive rewrite of the Human Resource Code, the Legislature changed the way Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates allegations of abuse or neglect in community-based service waiver programs, a type of group home operating under contract with the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR). Legislators specified that investigations in these contracted facilities are the responsibility of APS's MHMR investigations branch. The move should help ensure consistency in all MHMR facility investigations. The rewrite also gave APS the authority to provide emergency social services to clients living in the contracted community-based facilities if an investigation warrants them.

The 76th Legislature added an APS representative to the Texas Guardianship Advisory Board, which is coordinated through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The Guardianship Alliance, as it is commonly known, is charged with developing a statewide guardianship system to coordinate resources for people who are incapacitated and need a court-appointed guardian. For the first time, lawmakers appropriated specific funds to APS for guardianship.

Collaborating with other entities interested in helping the elderly and people with disabilities is not new to APS. In fact, APS, the Baylor College of Medicine, the Harris County Hospital District and Ben Taub Hospital in Houston began in 1999 the first in-patient elder abuse unit in the United States. For the past 15 years, APS has hosted an international training conference for adult protection professionals. This year, 34 states and two foreign countries were in attendance.

Child Care Licensing

Perhaps the most positive support that the Legislature provided for Child Care Licensing was \$8.4 million for a new automated system. The system will provide accessible, user friendly information for parents and child care providers; speed turnaround on background checks of child-care workers; increase monitoring capabilities; and improve data analysis capabilities.

The Legislature changed the education requirements for certain child care providers to include specialized training on shaken baby syndrome, sudden infant death syndrome and early childhood brain development. PRS has monitoring authority over these mandates as well as new vision and hearing screening requirements for day-care centers and group day-care homes.

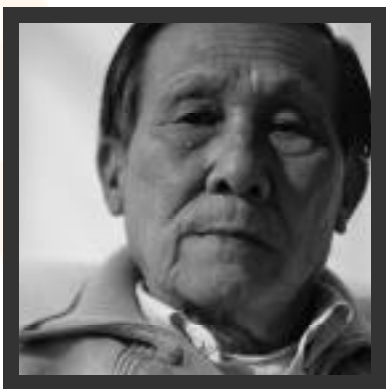
Community Initiatives for Program Development

Next to Child Protective Services, Community Initiatives saw the most change, culminating with law rewrites during the Legislative Session. Community Initiatives, renamed Prevention and Early Intervention as of Sept. 1, 1999, will have primary responsibility for implementing and managing programs intended to prevent at-risk behaviors that lead to child abuse, juvenile delinquency, running away, truancy and dropping out of school. The Legislature moved programs from the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, the Texas Juvenile

Probation Commission, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Children's Trust Fund of Texas to PRS to consolidate prevention efforts. A 1999 report from the Criminal Justice Policy Council and a recommendation of the Senate Interim Committee on Gang and Juvenile Justice spurred the legislative action, noting PRS already provided prevention, intervention and protective services to improve family functioning. Researchers found that abused and neglected children were 53 percent more likely to be arrested as a juvenile and 38 percent more likely to be arrested as an adult.

Greater Texas Community Partners and Texas Junior League won the 1999 Governor's Volunteer Award for collaboration and partnership to meet the needs of abused and neglected children and families. In just over two years, 57 Community Partners groups have formed, 49 Rainbow Rooms have opened, and more than 250 CPS caseworkers have been adopted in the Adopt-A-Caseworker program. Rainbow Rooms are store-like rooms stocked with supplies for caseworkers to meet emergency needs of children and families that CPS serves. Adopt-A-Caseworker matches local organizations with CPS caseworkers to provide resources and emotional support.

In December 1998, PRS launched the Texas Youth Hotline, which is answered 24 hours a day to provide prevention services to callers who face a variety of issues including family conflicts, delinquency, truancy, and abuse and neglect. The confidential hotline at 1-800-210-2278 is answered by volunteers and staff who are dedicated to helping youth and family members in need of assistance.



Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400

Before PRS became an agency in 1992, incoming telephone calls regarding abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable Texans were handled by local staff in each region. Many areas did not provide access to agency staff outside of business hours. To improve access, efficiency, accountability and consistency, PRS began centralizing intake calls in 1993. In 1999, the agency completed the centralization process and is now handling all calls through one hotline known as Statewide Intake. The 24-hour, 7 day-a-week intake program enables anyone needing to report abuse, neglect or exploitation in English or Spanish to reach a professional intake worker at all hours. During 1999, the abuse hotline handled 522,329 calls, making it the largest call center of its kind in the world. Other states and countries, including New Zealand, have examined this innovative program and used it as a model or resource for improving their intake systems.

Handling Complaints

We recognize that PRS can have a great impact in the lives of the people we serve. And when those people dispute our actions, they may contact our Ombudsman's Office at 1-800-720-7777. The Ombudsman's Office provides an impartial review of cases in which there has been a complaint. The review determines whether the agency's policies have been followed properly. If the Ombudsman's Office determines that corrective action is needed, PRS offers a variety of solutions such as administrative reviews, hearings and mediation. During 1999, the Ombudsman's Office received 1943 complaints. Of that number, 5 percent or 96 resulted in valid findings.

Advances in Technology

Year 2000: Although much of the world focused on potential computer problems due to Y2K, floods, terrorist attacks and hurricanes are just a few of the many disasters that can strike PRS. The Business Continuity/Disaster Preparedness Steering Committee

was formed to ensure the agency can provide uninterrupted delivery of mission-critical services that protect vulnerable Texans and fulfill responsibilities to staff, critical providers, suppliers and other partners. The short-term goal was to allow PRS to respond to any Y2K-related disruptions. More than 200 local PRS offices designed contingency plans to ensure they can respond to urgent matters regardless of disruptions that may occur to phones, computers or other systems. The agency's mission-critical automation systems are Y2K compliant. These include the Child and Adult Protective System (CAPS) and Automated Child Care Licensing Activity and Information Management (ACCLAIM). The agency also uses the Uniform Statewide Payroll/Personnel System (USPS) and the Integrated Statewide Administrative System (ISAS), both of which are certified Y2K compliant by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Outside software used by agency staff such as Microsoft Office is Y2K compliant. The Y2K plan will be updated and adapted for response to any other disasters that might occur.

Internet: In 1999, Information Technology migrated the agency's website to its own, new servers. The homepage for PRS is www.tdprs.state.tx.us. Depending on internal computers to power its website, PRS is able to control its own cyber-destiny, expanding the information available on the web and improving interactivity of the PRS site without coordinating with an external host.

In 1999, the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) launched a new feature, making it the first website of its kind in the United States — a listing of children available for adoption that includes on-line video clips of the children. TARE, which is located at www.adoptchildren.org on the World Wide Web, profiles more than 500 children and is updated monthly.

The Professional Association for Information Technology Managers recognized the CPS Judicial Web Page as a business process improvement winner. When legislation mandated that child abuse and neglect cases be resolved within 12 months, the Texas Court Improvement Project task force worked with

PRS to develop a web-based application for tracking CPS cases across the state.

Automation: In 1999, the Information Technology Division (IT) of PRS began implementing a plan to replace all of the computers used by PRS staff statewide. The replacement process continues through 2000. This replacement will uplift the productivity tools of the agency by moving into Microsoft 2000 and Exchange Mail.

IT also began consulting with Child Care Licensing to identify the specifications for an automated system. The Legislature approved funding to implement the project in the 2000–01 biennium. IT coordinated multiple PRS divisions to develop a secure intranet site for employees across the state to access up-to-date information. Employees can access information such as policies and procedures, employment and benefits, and new reports and events.

A Stronger Workforce

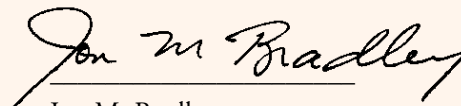
As the nature of our type of work involves significant and ongoing change, so must our workforce. In 1999, the agency took several steps to strengthen its staff and streamline its operations. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) recognized PRS for its strategic improvement of services for the protection of children. Reasons for the citation included statewide legal training for judges, attorneys, and others in handling Child Protective Services cases, funding for new direct delivery positions for permanency efforts, creating a case tracking system for judges, reducing of the budget deficit, and significantly increasing in the number of adoptions of children.

Without the dedication of all PRS employees, the award from the CWLA would not have been possible. We want to gratefully acknowledge the tremendous job done by our workers in the field and the staff who support them. The workers must shoulder demanding and stressful responsibilities, yet they approach their jobs with the knowledge that they make a positive difference in people's lives. We are proud of the work they do and take satisfaction in their accomplishments.

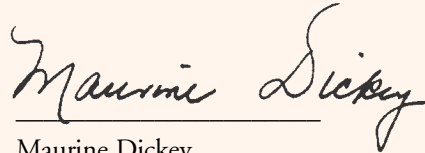
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