

Child Protective Services



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Child Protective Services (CPS) Responsibilities

- ◆ Investigate reports of child abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- ◆ Educate and serve children and families in their home to preserve the family unit.
- ◆ Ensure that all children who cannot stay in their homes have substitute care until they can be returned to their homes or another permanent placement.

Completed Initiatives

- ◆ PRS hired 380 new CPS direct delivery staff by Dec. 31, 1999.
- ◆ PRS implemented efforts to reduce staff turnover: a pilot telework program, training program with more on-the-job learning, caseworker reimbursement for professional licensure and streamlined documentation.
- ◆ PRS implemented the CPS Compensation Package and Professional Certification Program. Entry-level salary for a CPS caseworker rose from \$23,232 to \$27,540 per year. The annual salary for entry-level CPS supervisors rose from \$31,788 to \$35,100. Certification programs for caseworkers and supervisors were implemented, which link future promotions to education, experience, training, performance and job evaluations.
- ◆ PRS is using additional appropriated funding from the 76th Legislature to provide purchased services which include, but are not limited to, homemaker services, family preservation services, evaluation and treatment services, community and parent outreach, parent/caretaker training, day care, contracted home studies, and substance abuse-related services.
- ◆ The PRS Board increased rates to all foster care providers by 7 percent for 2000 and 2001.
- ◆ PRS began using a risk assessment tool to assess child vulnerability, home environment, caregiver capability, quality of care, social environment, client response to CPS services and maltreatment patterns as factors to determine the most appropriate course of action for each CPS case.

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Progress Continues

New Foster Care Rate

While the Legislature approved funding for the foster care reimbursement rate increase, they also required PRS to revise its foster care rate setting methodology with input from internal and external stakeholders. The proposed rate setting methodology is being validated by completion of a foster care time study and a foster home cost survey. Once validated, the

proposed methodology will be presented to the PRS Board for consideration in the summer of 2001 for implementation on Sept. 1, 2001. A 5 percent foster care rate increase for fiscal years 2002-2003 is included as one of PRS' exceptional items to be considered by the 77th Legislature.

Foster Care Respite Services

PRS recognizes that efforts to improve safety for Texas children must include addressing issues raised by families that care for children who have been exposed to abuse and

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neglect. PRS developed and implemented respite services to allow PRS foster parents up to 10 days of respite care per year.

The *Children with Disabilities* Project in Region 1, Lubbock, has two registered nurses who provide CPS staff and foster parents with health-related information and resources. This pilot project has served several regions to improve services to children in CPS conservatorship who have special needs. The nurses act as liaisons with the medical community and attend staff planning meetings for the children with disabilities. The project has been very beneficial to children, staff and foster parents, and is federally funded through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. Region 11, Edinburg, has a similar program with funding through regionally allocated dollars.

Reducing Staff Turnover

PRS implemented several initiatives to decrease staff turnover. One area focused on management supports, which included more on-the-job training for new staff; a telework pilot program; a statewide employee recognition and leadership development program; reimbursing caseworkers for professional licensure; and streamlined documentation.

Giving caseworkers the technological tools to do their jobs was also part of the 2000 efforts to impact CPS turnover rates. PRS upgraded computers statewide. Now with appropriations dedicated by the Legislature, modifications to the Child and Adult Protection System (CAPS), the statewide software application, are being made to increase caseworker productivity and ultimately improve services to children.

Part of the efforts to reduce turnover included the goal of lowering the caseworker-to-supervisor ratio. This initiative enables supervisors to provide more effective quality assurance. PRS' set a target in 2000 of 6 caseworkers to every supervisor. At the end of 2000, the caseworker-to-supervisor ratio was 6.2 workers for each supervisor.

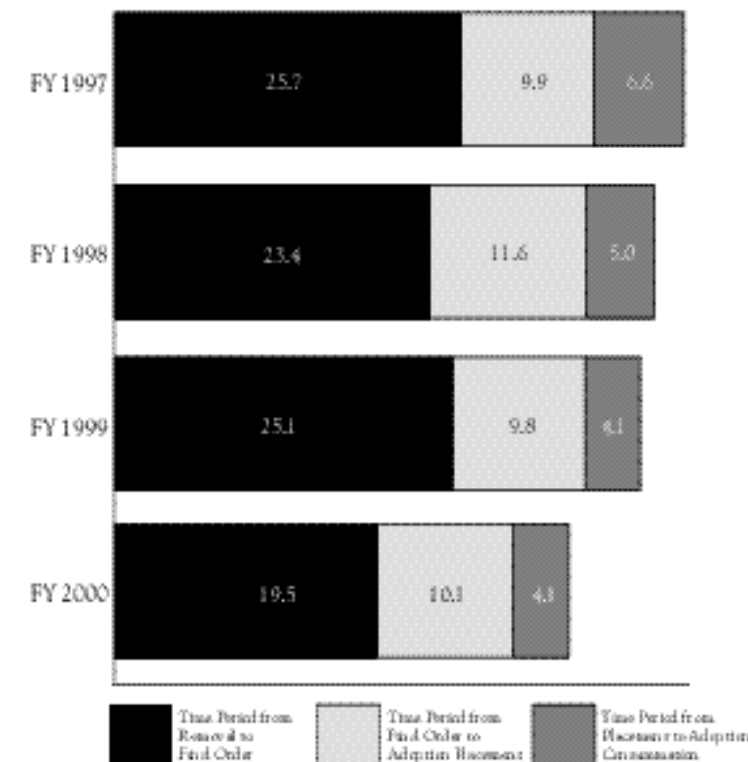
One factor in the retention of CPS workers is high caseload. The targeted CPS caseload for the biennium is 21.1 cases per caseworker. The average caseload was 25.1 per caseworker at the end of 2000.

Although PRS has been successful in recruiting persons to fill the 380 positions authorized by the Legislature, retention of current CPS caseworkers continues to be an issue. The turnover rate for CPS caseworkers in 2000 was 26.5 percent which was an increase over the 24.4 percent in 1999.

Improving Permanency Efforts

Within one year of coming into state custody, most children are placed in a permanent living situation. PRS has shortened the time to permanency despite increases in the number of children removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. At the same time, the number of completed adoptions has increased nearly three fold in five years. The length of time needed for a family to complete an adoption has steadily decreased. The time to other permanency options, such as returning home, has decreased as well.

Months Spent in State Care for Children Whose Adoptions Were Consummated



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Child Welfare Demonstration Project

Having received approval from the federal government, Texas will begin a more comprehensive assessment of prospective adoptive families and children waiting for adoption beginning in June 2001. CPS believes that this approach will reduce the disruption and dissolution rate of PRS adoptions, decrease the average length of time that children spend in foster care prior to adoptive placement, increase satisfaction among children

and families, and increase the number of children leaving foster care for placements with adoptive families. The goal of this effort is to speed permanency. The Houston region will implement the demonstration project. There are also several private child-placing agencies that will participate in the joint preparation and training of prospective foster and adoptive families. PRS signed an agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in February 2000 for this five-year project.

Collaborative Adoption Project (CAP)

PRS and the Texas Collaborative Adoption Network of private child-placing agencies joined in an innovative partnership to reduce the number of relocations in foster home placements and provide children adoptive homes sooner. CAP, which began in January 2000, also works to reduce the number of children waiting for adoption and decrease the number of children designated as unadoptable. A federal grant from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services funds this three-year project.

Permanency Achieved Through Coordinated Efforts (PACE)

PACE is a pilot project serving a 10-county area in the Arlington region. The goal of the project is to provide more effective substitute care services at the same or less cost. PRS implemented PACE to competitively procure substitute care services for children. This service delivery approach is intended to allow greater provider flexibility and produce better outcomes for children. In 1998, PRS contracted with Lena Pope Home, a nonprofit agency that coordinates foster care services with a network of other subcontracting child-care providers. Services provided include immediate placement of children in a safe environment, child assessment services, family involvement services, therapy for the child, dual-licensed foster/adopt homes and daily casework services. PACE also prepares children for permanency. PRS is collecting data on how well children are doing in PACE compared to the traditional child protective services system, but it is still too soon to draw conclusions on the project.



Excerpt from *The Monitor*, McAllen, Texas
Picture by Joel Martinez

Marlene and Dwight Steiner have parented for 38 years. Like thousands of foster parents throughout Texas, they know how to love—and they have learned how to let go.

Since 1992, the Steiners have shared their home with about 300 foster children. “I’ve always said, it’s like a potato chip—once you take a bite, you can’t quit,” Marlene said with an innocent giggle.

It is foster parents like the Steiners who try to ease the pain and supply temporary stability to children who have been taken from abusive or neglectful living situations.

“We try to bond as a unique family,” Marlene said of her constantly changing foster family. “Of course, we’ll never take the place of their real family. Our goal ultimately is family reunification, but many of our kids don’t have that luxury of family to go back to,” she said.

Marlene and her husband see foster parenting as a profession now. “You have to work as a team to work for these kids,” she said. “We’ve kind of got our little routine and take it as it comes.”

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The CPS Program

CPS investigates reports of suspected abuse and neglect of children by their parent or others responsible for their care. The aim is to ensure the safety of children and provide services to promote the integrity and stability of the family.

CPS helps parents and other family members solve the problems that lead to abuse or neglect. When necessary to ensure a child's safety, CPS provides temporary out-of-home care. Each child placed into care has a permanency plan developed in conjunction with the parents and other parties in the case. These plans help determine services needed so the family can work toward the return of their child.

Relatives may be identified for possible placement. In some cases, adoption is the permanency plan that will lead to a permanent, safe and stable home for the child.

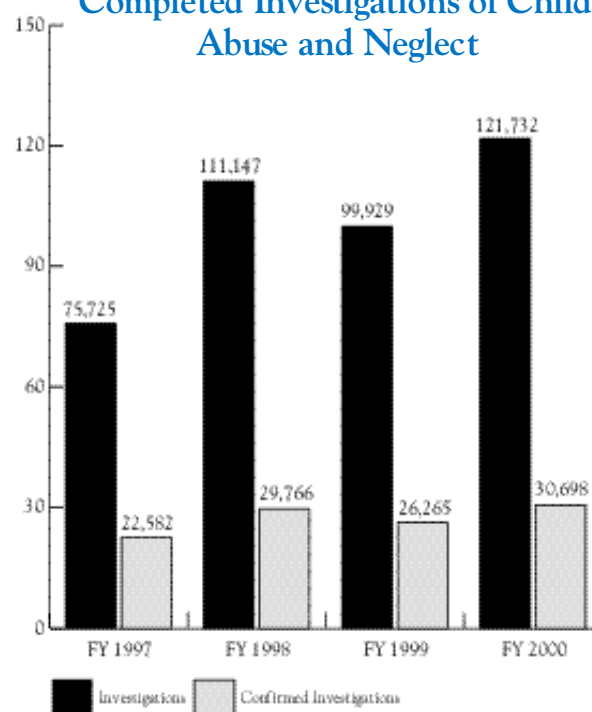
Intake

PRS administers a toll-free, 24-hour statewide intake system for reporting suspected abuse or neglect at 1-800-252-5400. This centralized system was completed in 1999 and allows anyone who needs to report abuse or neglect in English or Spanish to reach a professional intake worker. All reports that meet the statutory definitions of abuse and neglect are assigned a priority based on the level of risk. This ensures that the most urgent cases receive immediate attention. Law enforcement agencies are also notified of reports. The agency received 170,944 reports of child abuse and neglect in 2000. PRS assigned 139,898 of these for investigation. Other states and countries have examined this innovative program to improve their intake systems.

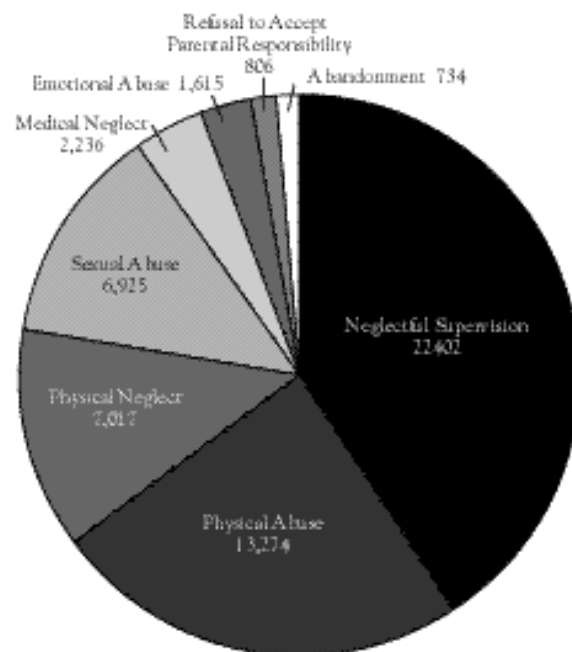
Investigations

CPS workers interview children, parents and others who have knowledge of the family to determine if child abuse or neglect has occurred and to assess the continued risk to the child. If criminal conduct is involved, law enforcement may investigate at the same time to determine if criminal charges will be filed. About 25% percent of all investigations were confirmed in 2000. The 2000 Data Book contains detailed statistics on reports of child abuse and neglect investigations.

Completed Investigations of Child Abuse and Neglect



Types of Abuse/Neglect FY 2000



Child Safety

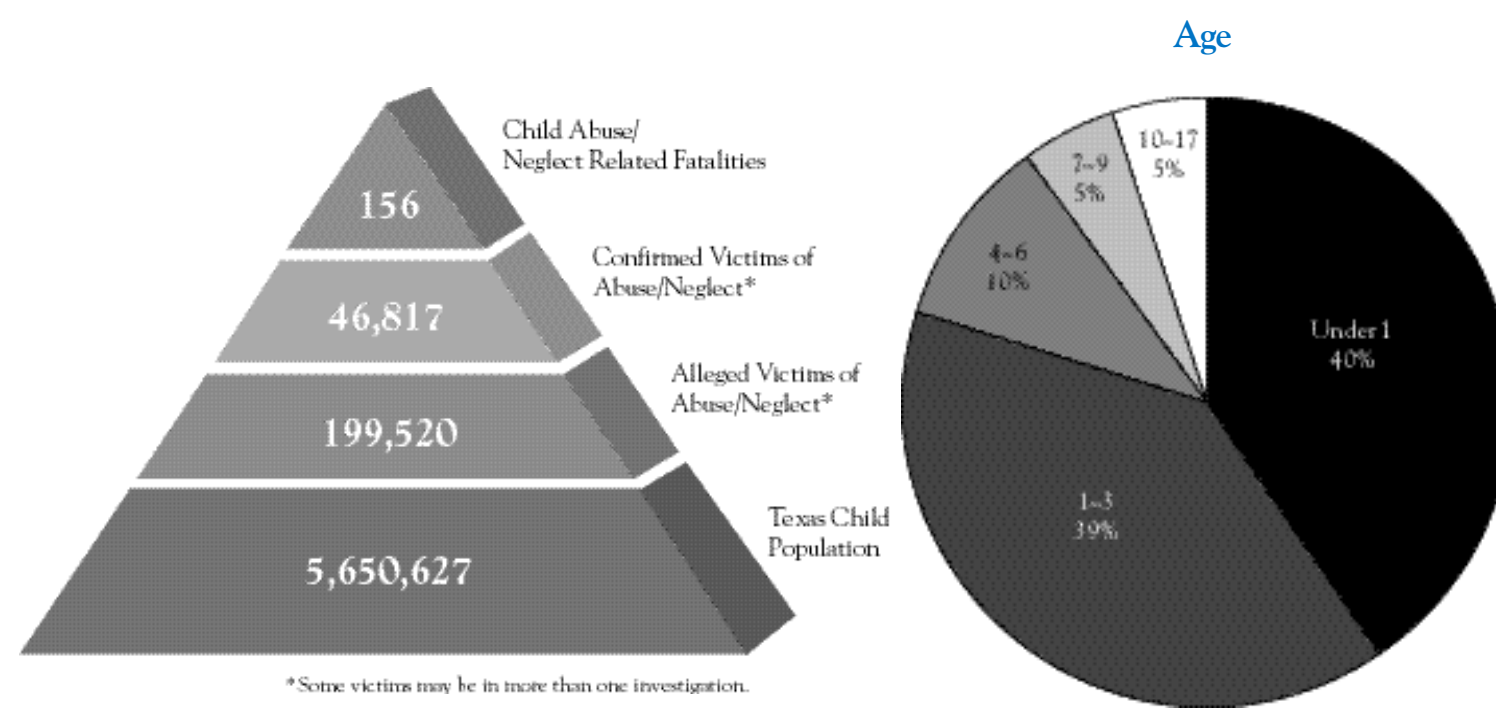
CPS investigates cases of child abuse and neglect, including the most serious of those cases—those in which a child dies. In 1998, CPS began special evaluations of these cases to learn more about what circumstances posed the most risk to children. CPS uses this information during an investigation to identify risk factors and improve the safety of Texas children.

The highest risk cases of child abuse and neglect involve young children, regardless of their gender or ethnicity. In 2000, 40 percent of the children who died from abuse or neglect were under 1 year old, nearly 80 percent were 3 or under.

Besides their inability to protect themselves from harm, young children are more vulnerable to maltreatment because of a parent's ability to limit their access to people who might report concerns about the child's care.

As in previous years, the most frequent cause of abuse related deaths are from shaking or beating. The most frequent cause of neglect related deaths are from drowning.

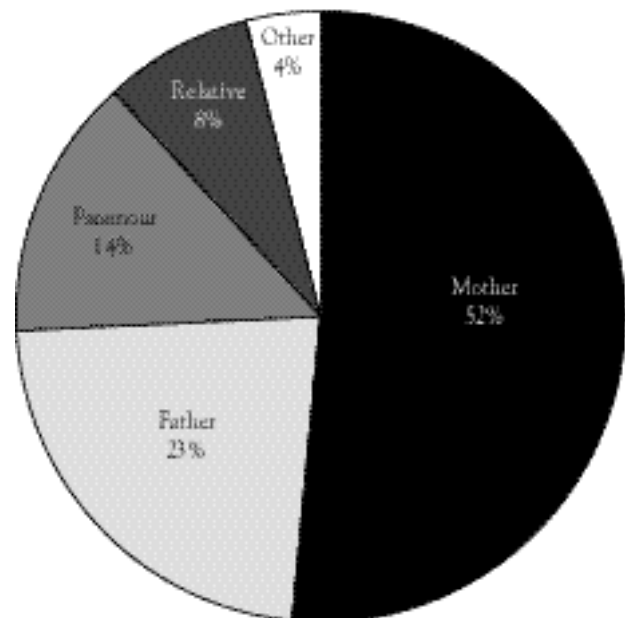
Child Fatality Data FY 2000



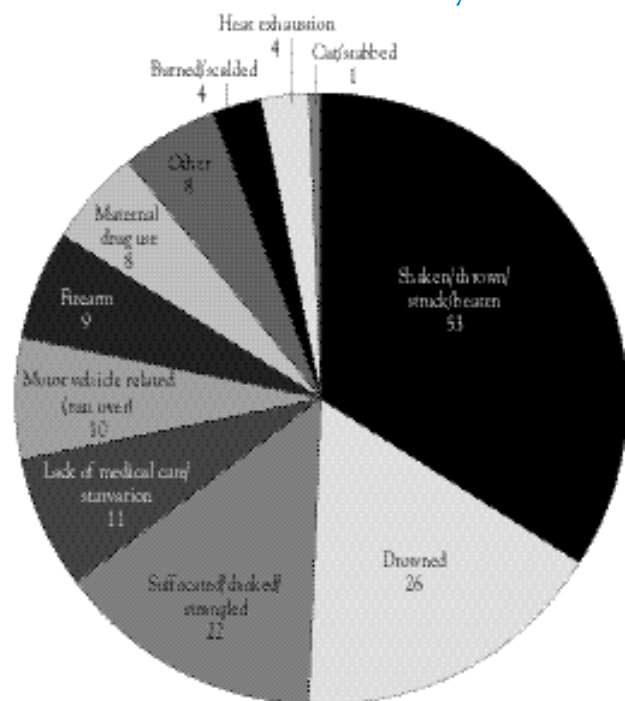
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Child Fatality Data FY 2000

Relationship to Victim



Cause of Child Fatality



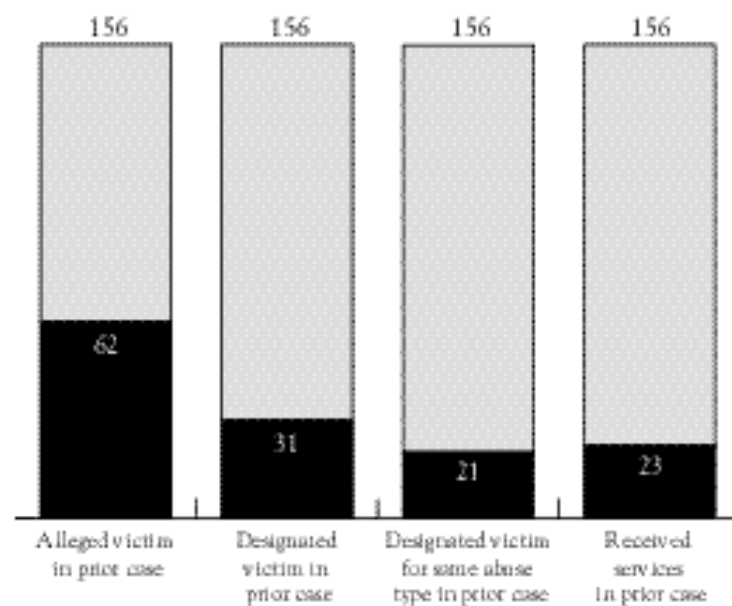
Although relatively few children die as a result of abuse or neglect when compared to the number of children in the general Texas population, one preventable death is too many.

The 76th Texas Legislature authorized PRS to designate at least one person per region to serve as a safety coordinator known as risk directors. The regional risk directors focus on risk factors related to child abuse and neglect investigations. They are responsible for staff reviews and evaluations of high-risk cases, monitoring of cases that involve multiple referrals, and approval in decisions on high-risk case investigations.

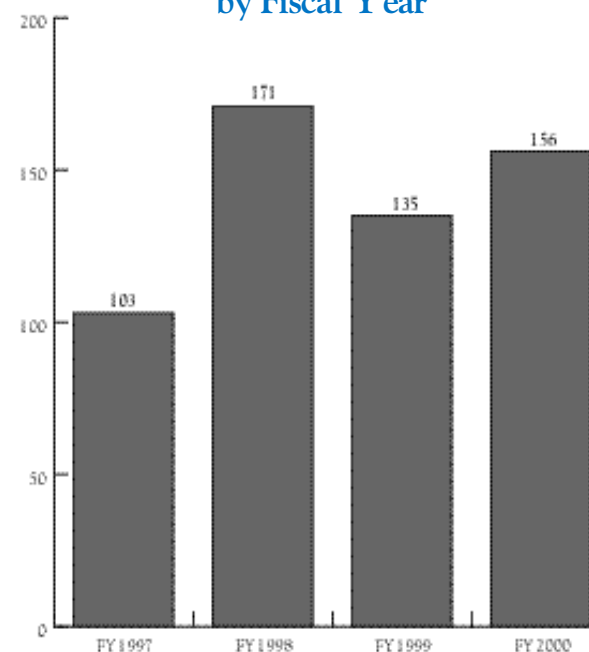
In the majority of cases, CPS never had a chance to intervene before a child was harmed. PRS recognizes that it must reach out to the community to prevent abuse, neglect and death.

In April 2000, PRS launched a three-year, multimedia, public service campaign aimed at preventing neglect, especially among young children. The campaign – *It's Up to You* – compliments the community-based prevention efforts undertaken every year during April, Child Abuse Prevention Month. The campaign Web site – www.itsuptoyou.org – details child abuse prevention methods.

Previous PRS Involvement (n=156)



Child Abuse/Neglect Related Fatalities by Fiscal Year



Risk Assessment

PRS designed a risk assessment tool based on research from Texas, other states and Canada on situations where children had been abused or neglected. This tool helps workers focus on risks within the family as an integrated whole. It incorporates concepts such as child vulnerability, home environment, caregiver capability, quality of care, social environment, client response to CPS services and maltreatment patterns.

CPS workers began using the risk assessment tool in December 1999 and received training on this new procedure prior to implementation. Staff not only use the risk assessment tool during an investigation but also when a relative is studied for a potential placement, prior to a child being reunified with a parent and even after a case is closed.



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Family-Based Safety Services

When risk factors can be controlled, PRS provides in-home services to reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect. Sometimes, children may continue to live at home while the agency works with families. In other cases, children may live elsewhere temporarily until the home becomes safe enough for them to return. In 2000, an average of 8,282 families per month received in-home services.

Foster Care

When it isn't safe for children to live with their own families, PRS provides for their safety. They may be placed temporarily with relatives, a foster family, an emergency shelter or an assessment center. Foster families provide a place for children to live while out of their home. Foster families are reimbursed for a portion of the costs of caring for children. At the end of 2000, there were 12,857 children in foster care.

Some children have special emotional needs or other disabilities that can be difficult to care for in a family home. These children may be placed in group homes, residential treatment centers or other facilities. Efforts are underway to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's *Olmstead* ruling, which requires the least restrictive community setting to people with disabilities. A staged plan is being developed in coordination with other organizations to move children in PRS conservatorship from nursing homes, state schools and institutions for the mentally retarded into foster homes or home-like settings with specialized foster homes.

Permanency Planning Teams

When children are removed from their home and placed in the state's custody, a special team of staff and other professionals involved in the case work together to develop a written case plan and address the factors that caused abuse or neglect. They also review the progress made in the case plan

on a regular basis. The goal is to ensure children do not linger in foster care and live in a stable, nurturing environment. This coordination helps all parties concerned to determine a permanent solution for a child — or what is known as a "permanency plan." Whether the plan is for a child to return home or be adopted, the team works to avoid unnecessary delays in the process.

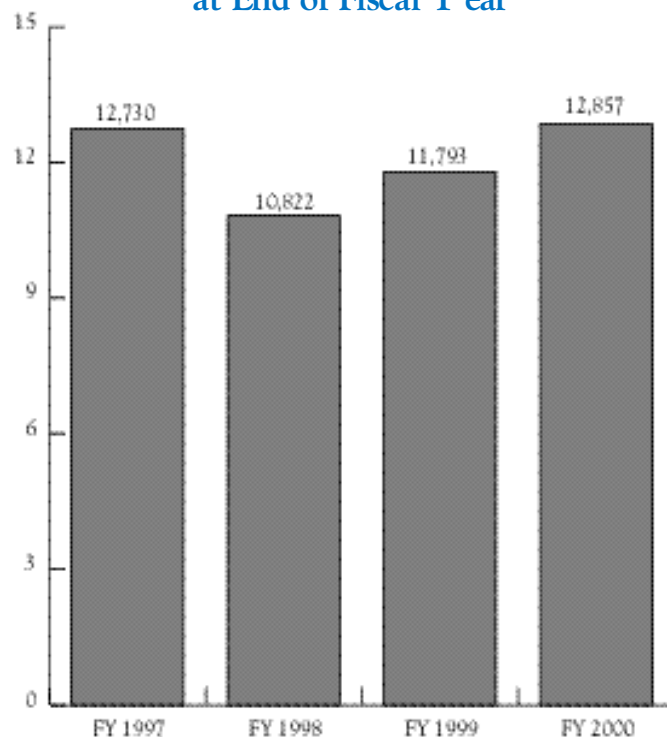
Adoption

When it is not possible for a child to return home, the court may terminate the parents' rights and legally free the child for adoption. The number of completed adoptions increased to 2,063 in 2000. PRS also contracts with licensed private child placing agencies to increase the number of adoptive families available to place foster children waiting for adoption. At the end of fiscal year 2000, there were 3,100 children in the agency's custody waiting for adoption.

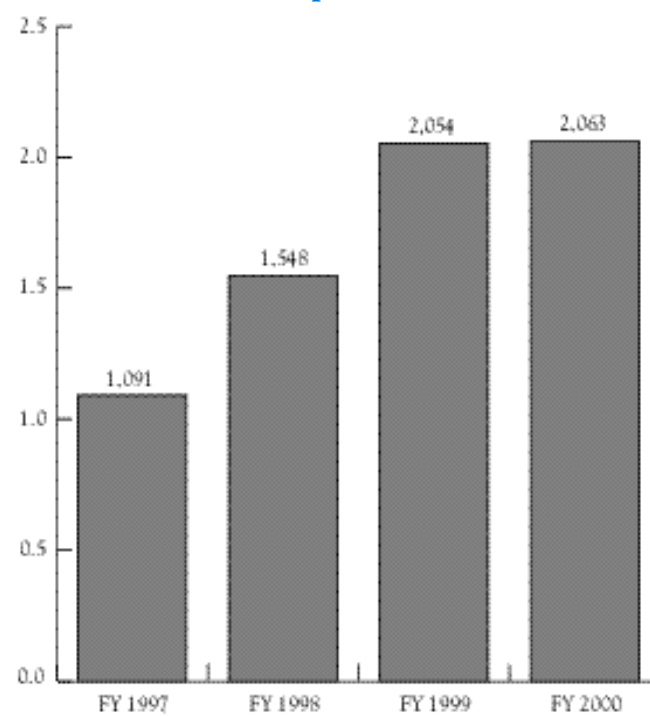
Dual-Licensed Homes

Many foster parents are making the decision to adopt the children placed into their care when the children's permanency plan becomes adoption. National studies have indicated greater chances for successful adoptions in these situations. The reason for these successful adoptions is the attachment formed between the children and parents during the foster care placement. In recognition of that, PRS has made a concerted effort to license resource homes for foster care and adoption services. These homes are known as dual-licensed homes. In 2000, 53 percent of adoptions were by foster parents.

Children in Foster Care at End of Fiscal Year



Completed Adoptions



There has been extensive national attention on a church in Shelby County. This church has been the focus of a *Good Morning America* show, the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, on the front page of the *Houston Chronicle* and in *People* magazine. This is a very small church near Center, Texas, that has made a special commitment to provide loving, permanent homes to abused and neglected children. So far, members of Bennett Chapel have adopted 39 children who were in the custody of Child Protective Services and are committed to eventually adopting at least 50 children total.

This effort started with the church's pastor, the Rev. W.C. Martin and his wife Donna, who were honored by *Essence Magazine* with a 2000 Essence Award on April 14. The awards ceremony was at Radio City Music Hall and was televised on the Fox network.

Susan Ramsey, the adoption specialist in the Beaumont Region who has worked so successfully with the Bennett Chapel project, has been selected as the year 2000 Child Welfare League of America Social Worker of the Year for the Southern Region.

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Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Families

PRS actively recruits foster and adoptive families and individuals through numerous statewide and regional campaigns. One example is the *One Church, One Child* program currently in place in Fort Worth/Dallas, Beaumont and Houston. It is designed to increase recruitment of minority families by finding at least one family from each participating congregation to adopt a child or sibling group.

Texas Adoption Resource Exchange Receives National Award

The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) received the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services "Adoption 2002" Excellence Award for public awareness in November 1999. TARE provides information on children waiting for adoption. The information is provided primarily on the Internet at www.adoptchildren.org and in a quarterly paper publication. It was the first adoption exchange to use multimedia technology to find families for children with special needs. TARE participates with national adoption organizations during national recruitment campaigns and promotes TARE children in other national Web sites. TARE had 800 children registered and 1,100 adoption inquiries per month in 2000.

The TARE Family Network (TFN) is another service offered through TARE. TFN is a listing of adoptive families and individuals across the United States who have an approved adoptive home study. The family's adoption preferences on children they are willing to parent are available to PRS adoption staff in a searchable database. More than 200 approved adoptive families were registered in the TFN in 2000.

Adoption Assistance Services

Children who have suffered abuse or neglect often continue to need help coping with the effects even after adoption. PRS contracts with nine organizations to provide casework, mental health and therapeutic services to children and families. These agencies also provide parent training, support groups and respite care for adoptive parents. Post-adoption

services were provided to 1,341 children and families as compared to 1,057 in 1999. PRS provided 10,785 adoption subsidies in 2000 compared to 9,104 in 1999.

Preparation for Adult Living

The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program provides services that make the transition to adulthood less problematic for youth in foster care. PAL services include independent living assessment, time-limited financial help for the transition period and training in such areas as money management, job skills, educational planning and interpersonal skills. In 2000, 3,110 youth, ages 16 through 20, participated in the PAL program. New federal legislation, the *Chafee Foster Care Independence Act*, allows funds to be used to train foster-care providers to prepare adolescents for adulthood. In 2001, PRS will provide room and board for young adults ages 18 through 21 who have left foster care. This law also gives states the option to extend Medicaid coverage for these young adults. PRS is collaborating with a number of public and private organizations to improve outcomes for youth leaving foster care.

Children's Justice Act Project

The mission of the Children's Justice Act (CJA) is to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases. CJA funds court-based mediation of CPS cases in 13 projects throughout the state. Mediation reduces trauma to the child victim, provides an alternative to hostile litigation, reduces the costs of lengthy litigation, provides better outcomes for children and families, and achieves prompt permanency for children. CJA also funds a telemedicine project that is building a network of medical professionals who evaluate cases of sexual abuse. CJA sponsors an annual conference to train prosecutors across the state and funds two Family Group Conferencing projects – a mechanism to address cultural differences, allow for more extended family involvement and reduce lengthy court proceedings.

Services

Texas Court Improvement Project

The Texas Court Improvement Project (CIP) is a federal grant to the Texas Supreme Court administered by PRS to improve judicial proceedings in foster care and adoption cases. Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) continues to expand with financial help from CIP. This funding also pilots projects known as "Cluster Courts," where a traveling judge hears only CPS cases for a cluster of counties. The Texas Legislature appropriated \$1 million for eight such courts throughout the state. CIP also helps fund several judicial trainings and training tools on child abuse and neglect. CIP funds also maintain the Judicial Web Page. This is a tool for judges and PRS attorneys that allows them to check on the status of any child abuse or neglect case filed in Texas. CIP money funds the development of on-line training software and video conferencing pilot projects, allowing a child to testify from the security and comfort of a Children's Crisis Care Center, are being tested.

Child Fatality Review

Child Fatality Review Teams are multidisciplinary, multi-ethnic, multiagency panels that review all child deaths regardless of the cause. The goal of the review team is to decrease preventable child deaths. Members include law enforcement, prosecutors, medical examiners, justices of the peace, health-care professionals, educators and child advocates. These teams are uniquely qualified to understand what no single agency or group working alone can: how and why children are dying in their community. From their findings, review teams help develop prevention initiatives. Child Fatality Review Teams have grown rapidly since their inception in 1992. Today there are 42 teams that cover 142 counties.