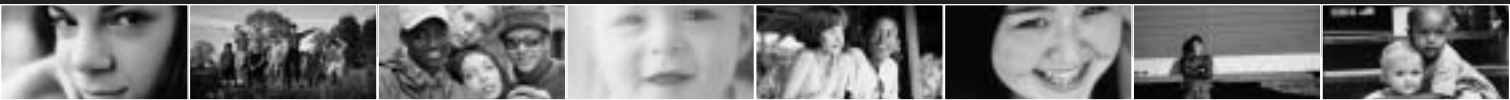




Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI)

Prevention and Early Intervention



Responsibilities

- ◆ Work with Texas communities to develop services for preventing child abuse, delinquency, running away, truancy, and dropping out of school.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a statewide inventory of prevention programs that try to prevent child maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, and academic failure.
- ◆ Plan, develop, and administer a comprehensive and unified approach to deliver prevention services to avoid fragmentation and duplication of services.

Advances

PEI held its first annual provider conference, Partners in Prevention, Oct. 17-19, 2001 in Austin. The conference gave contracted service delivery providers the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience. The conference offered numerous workshops on a variety of agency, prevention, and professional topics.

The agency worked with Kids Sports Network to provide training to about 300 youth league leaders and parents. The training focused on preventing child abuse and neglect and improving experiences for children who participate in sports. Training was held in College Station, Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, Galveston, Laredo, Lubbock, Plano, Temple, Tyler, and Wichita Falls.

Using the findings from a formative evaluation, PEI modified the Second Chance program for FY 2003 to ensure the program's services are not duplicated by other programs.

The Runaway and Youth Hotlines helped increase coordination of services with the CPS child abuse hotline and Preparation for Adult Living program, as well as with the National Runaway Switchboard and the Texas Council on Family Violence.

Response to Legislation

Staff worked with United Ways of Texas and other state agencies to implement House Concurrent Resolution 254, 77th Texas Legislature. The legislation called on PRS to coordinate with community groups in Blanco, Duval, Gray, Hunt, Titus, Wichita, and Williamson counties to assess existing services and help

develop a plan for a continuum of prevention and early intervention services to youth who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

PEI staff worked with the Texas Child Fatality Review Board and the Shaken Baby Alliance of Texas to implement Senate Bill 55, 77th Texas Legislature, which enacted the Infant Mortality Prevention Education Program. The program, which began June 1, 2002, will educate the public to help reduce infant death rates.

Ongoing Initiatives

In 2002, Communities In Schools began a partnership with the Intercultural Developmental Research Association, an independent, non-profit organization that advocates the right of every child to a quality education. The partnership will help both programs better address Hispanic dropout issues.

What PEI Does

PEI manages and contracts with community-based programs to prevent the abuse, neglect, delinquency, truancy, and school dropout of Texas children. PEI programs are administered through contracts with local community agencies or organizations. PEI also helps local communities enhance the services provided by all PRS programs. All services are not available in all Texas communities. To find out if your community has services available, visit our agency's web site at www.tdprs.state.tx.us.

Programs Benefiting Children, Youth, and Families

At-Risk Mentoring

Adult mentors spend time on a weekly basis with youths. Mentors are supervised during their involvement with the youths to ensure that the relationships are mutually beneficial. Youth served through this program are ages 7 through 17 and are at risk of substance abuse, educational failure, dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency, gang activity, or running away. In 2002, PRS provided support to 11 community-based mentoring programs.



Communities In Schools Helps Keep Youth from Falling Through the Cracks

The goal of the Communities In Schools (CIS) program is to prevent and reduce school dropout and prepare students for life by coordinating community resources in school settings. At Martin Junior High School in Austin, CIS collaborates with other organizations and programs such as AmeriCorp, Association of Retarded Citizens of Austin, Austin Child Guidance, Austin Housing Authority, the Austin Project, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (also administered by PRS), the Pebble Project, and Social Service Network. There is also involvement from sorority and fraternity members at the University of Texas at Austin who serve as mentors and tutors.

Sonya (left) and Griselda (right) are just two of about 60 students at Martin who are benefiting from CIS thanks to people like James Cordova (center). "If you're failing, they'll come to help you and pick you right up," says Sonya. "If you don't come to school and learn, you won't get the education you need." Griselda says CIS is really helping her pull her grades up. "And that's important, because you have to graduate school to get a good job. Some of my friends get mad because I come to CIS. But I choose to go because I want to."

Cordova says it's hard to pigeonhole all of these youth because all are referred to the program for different reasons from academics to truancy to behavior. However, all of those in CIS have one thing in common: They are crying out for assistance. "If you're willing to work with these kids, they'll buy into everything you can give them," says Cordova. "They're just waiting for some sort of help and if it weren't for programs like CIS, they would just fall through the cracks."

Communities In Schools (CIS)

CIS develops and coordinates programs, community and business partners, and resources as a one-stop shop to improve school attendance, academic performance, everyday behavior, and the Texas dropout rate. At the end of 2002, there were 27 CIS programs that received state contract funds. In August 2002, CIS launched its first statewide public awareness campaign, which included radio and television public service announcements.

Community Youth Development Grants (CYD)

The CYD program provides grants to develop juvenile delinquency prevention programs in communities that have a high incidence of juvenile crime. Approaches used by communities to prevent delinquency include mentoring, parenting skills, tutoring, youth employment, career preparation, and alternative recreation activities. Local communities decide the exact prevention services provided. In 2002, PRS awarded grants to serve 15 targeted communities. PRS provides ongoing training and technical assistance for all local CYD programs. PRS also supports an annual youth conference, the Teen Summit, to promote youth leadership and provide training and activities.

Dan Kubiak Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Program

This specialized program helps develop honor, pride and dignity in minority and at-risk youth. The goal is to reduce and prevent risky behavior, truancy, and juvenile delinquency in males ages 10 to 17. The program strives to increase youth volunteer work, community service, leadership, and cultural activities. Referrals are received from juvenile probation departments, schools, churches, and civic groups. There are five projects located in Bexar, Dallas, Tarrant, Tom Green, and Washington counties.

Facility-Based Youth Enrichment Services

Local after-school and summer youth programs deliver enrichment activities to youth who reside in communities identified as at risk due to indicators such as juvenile crime and high dropout rates. In 2002, PRS funded three such programs.

Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

HIPPY helps prepare children ages 3 to 5 for school and increase their parents' skills. Home instructors, recruited from targeted communities, are trained paraprofessionals who have or have had a child in the HIPPY program. In 2002, PRS funded four HIPPY programs in Austin, Dallas, Denton and Houston.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Parents As Teachers (PAT)

Volunteers, mostly former teachers, work with the support of age-appropriate curricula and parents with newborns to 5-year-old children to minimize developmental problems and lay the foundation for school success. In 2002, PRS expanded eligibility for participation in the program. During 2002, PRS funded five PAT programs in Austin, Falfurrias, Garland, Laredo and Taylor/Callahan counties.

Second Chance Teen Parent Program

This program provides an array of services to teen parents who receive benefits through the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. The goals are to reduce and prevent the problems teenage parents and their children face and to break the cycle of welfare. Services are accessible to teens referred by the Texas Department of Human Services. Priority is given to those youth who can't live at home and are at risk of losing their TANF benefits. Second Chance programs operate in Bexar, Dallas, Harris, and Hidalgo counties.

Services To At-Risk Youth (STAR)

Through contracts with community agencies, STAR offers family crisis intervention counseling, short-term emergency residential care, and individual and family counseling to youth ages 7 to 17 who experience conflict at home, have been truant or delinquent, or have run away. STAR services are available in all 254 Texas counties.

Texas Families: Together and Safe (TFTS)

TFTS funds community-based programs that alleviate parental stress, promote parental competency, and increase child nurturing while working toward family self-sufficiency. During 2002, there were 16 programs that provided services in about 35 counties.

Texas Youth and Runaway Hotlines

PRS operates the Texas Runaway Hotline, toll-free at **1-888-580-HELP** and the Texas Youth Hotline at **1-800-210-2278**. The hotlines, which include a volunteer workforce of about 80, offer crisis intervention, telephone counseling, and referrals to troubled youth and families. Many callers face a variety of problems including family conflicts, delinquency, truancy, and abuse and neglect issues. During 2002, the programs increased public awareness through television, radio, billboards and other media efforts, and Governor Rick Perry proclaimed the week of June 10th as "Runaway and Homeless Youth Awareness Week" in Texas. Calls to the hotlines have increased from 41,846 calls in 2000 to 44,017 calls in 2002. During 2002, hotline staff and volunteers provided callers with 9,772 referrals to community organizations, including social service and law enforcement agencies and other youth-related organizations.



STAR-funded Community Program Helps At-Risk Youth

A few years ago when Ray Cardenas first entered the Services To At Risk Youth (STAR) program, it wasn't clear if he would make it out of high school. Today, he is a college sophomore who is interested in psychology and theater. Through Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives, a program in San Antonio that receives funding from the STAR program, Cardenas says he was able to talk to a therapist and get a better sense of direction in his life.

Michele Cortez, Roy Maas' Youth Alternative's counseling center director, says at-risk youth who have issues such as truancy, delinquent behavior, running away, and family conflict are referred to her organization's program through juvenile probation, the court system, school districts, PRS, the Texas Youth Commission, and other youth-related agencies. Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives offers services such as individual and family counseling, life skills classes, a grief group for teens, a summer mentor program, and shelter services. "While Ray was in the STAR program, he and his mom benefited from our counseling services. As a result of spending some time with us they were able to learn different strategies to help them better able to cope with a difficult time in their life."

Cardenas says the program helped him grow as a person and to handle stressful situations better. "Michele opened my eyes a lot. This agency really helps people turn their lives around. It brings them from not caring about themselves or people around them to seeing reasons why they should care."



**Youths' Contributions Help Rainbow Room
Serve Abused and Neglected Children**

When Emily Saultz of Amarillo (furthest right, standing) turned 13 in 2002, she wanted to celebrate her birthday in true giving fashion. Instead of receiving gifts for herself, Saultz asked the girls invited to her party to bring an item for contribution to the Rainbow Room.

A student at Bonham Middle School, Saultz first learned about the Rainbow Room through the youth group at her church, St. Thomas the Apostle, which had collected items in the past. Saultz wanted to continue in that giving spirit to assist local children who were less fortunate than her.

"I had things I wanted for my birthday, but nothing I really needed, because I have a family who has always provided for me," says Saultz. "At the same time, I knew there were kids out there who didn't have the things they needed. I really wanted to help them." She adds that her friends were very supportive and glad to help out. One friend told her, "I think what you are doing for the Rainbow Room is awesome."

Top row from left: Christin Baloglou, Stacy Boone, Elyse Miller, Karissa Gonzalez, and Katy Turnbow. Middle row from left: Alicia Coventry, Katie Hershey, Hanna Brooks, Kimberly Smith, and Emily Saultz. Bottom row from left: Cynthia, Stacy, and Libby Saultz.

Community Initiatives Programs that Address Abuse

Abuse Prevention Campaigns

In April 2002, PEI, along with other PRS divisions, began the final year of a three-year statewide, multimedia campaign to prevent child abuse and neglect called "It's Up To You." The focus in 2002 was on child neglect with the theme, "Take It Personally." Austin-based singer-songwriter Sara Hickman joined PRS' efforts to prevent child abuse. The campaign was produced with a combination of public and private funds.

Child Abuse Prevention Kit

PEI worked with Child Protective Services and several partnering agencies including Prevent Child Abuse Texas, Texas Interagency Council on Early Childhood Intervention, Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards to increase public awareness about abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children through the Child Abuse Prevention Kit. The 2002 kit contains overviews of the agency's programs, statistics, public awareness materials such as sample press releases and posters, and various informational resources. More than 30,000 kits were distributed around the state as a resource for parents, teachers, and communities. The kits also can be downloaded from the agency's web site at www.tdprs.state.tx.us or at www.itsuptoyou.org.

Community-Based Family Resource and Support Program (CBFRS)

These contracts enable local communities and state networks to plan and coordinate family resource and support programs aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect. During 2002, PRS worked with 10 communities to increase awareness and community involvement in preventing child abuse and neglect. The Federal grant – part of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act – also funded child abuse prevention awareness materials and a small respite care project.

Family Outreach

Family Outreach is a community-based program that helps families in times of stress. The program enlists volunteers to provide support, encouragement, and parenting information under the supervision of a PRS case manager. There are 31 Family Outreach centers throughout the state supported by one PEI contract for training and technical assistance.

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Greater Texas Community Partners: Rainbow Rooms and Adopt-A-Caseworker

Greater Texas Community Partners supports two projects that help CPS caseworkers meet the needs of their clients: Rainbow Rooms and Adopt-A-Caseworker. Rainbow Rooms, supported by community contributions, provide donated clothes, toys, formula, and supplies in a store-like setting. Adopt-A-Caseworker projects pair church and civic groups, businesses, and individuals with CPS caseworkers to help families and children. Participants donate items such as birthday gifts, household goods, bus passes, new clothes, gift certificates for children's meals, and money to pay for utilities. A unique public/private partnership with PRS, local Community Partners support more than 100 Rainbow Rooms and 358 adopted caseworkers statewide.

Healthy Texas Families

An intensive home visitation program, Healthy Families is a primary child abuse and neglect prevention program. Healthy Families services begin as early as pregnancy and may continue until the child is 5 years old. Services are provided by trained professionals and include intensive home visitation, parent education, case management, and information and referral. During 2002, there were 1,768 families served by Healthy Families contracted programs.

Tertiary and Secondary Prevention Training and Technical Assistance

PRS contracts with Family Forward, formerly known as Parents Anonymous of Texas, to provide tertiary and secondary prevention training and technical assistance services to community-based parent support groups throughout the state. The goal is to promote positive parent behavior that will prevent child maltreatment.



Community Youth Development
Reduces Youth Crime, Delinquency

An African proverb says, "Children are like trees; they grow in whatever direction we point them." In an effort to try to prevent juvenile delinquency, truancy, and crime, the 74th Texas Legislature created the Community Youth Development program so that PRS could assist communities design comprehensive approaches to support families and enhance the positive development of youth.

Has the strategy worked? "In 1995, Oak Cliff had 369 felonies committed by youth and in 2002 that was reduced to 112," says Libbie Terrell Lee, director of the Dallas Community Youth Development (CYD) Program. "While we can't take credit for all of the reduction, we know the program has made a difference. We are changing lives and assisting in preventing a lot of children from entering the juvenile justice system." In 2002, the Dallas program also helped graduate high-risk youth from South Oak Cliff High School. "The graduation rate for youth in the program is 80 percent. It's unbelievable. Children are truly being helped and finding an alternative to crime."

Lee says a lot of children get into the program through after-school activities. "Children gravitate toward fun things to do. By offering them after school snacks, we get to their hearts through their stomachs. The In Bounds athletic program allows children to be competitive and to learn and follow rules. Once they learn about things like boundaries, they can apply these skills in everyday life." The program also provides after-school programs in conflict resolution training, character development, cognitive life skills, and gang prevention.

One of Lee's favorite success stories involves a 14-year-old boy who entered the program in 1996. "When he first entered the program, he was in a gang and battling at every corner. His mother was addicted to crack cocaine, his father had been killed in prison, and he was living in an indescribably deplorable living situation. Through the mentoring component, a person took him under his wing. The young man gave up his affiliation with the gang – a very dangerous thing to do--turned his life completely around, attended day and evening classes, graduated high school and technical college, and is now holding down a full-time job in the community. By the time he was 17, his marked change resulted in an invitation to meet the Vice President of the United States.