

Executive Summary





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Mission

The mission of The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by working with clients, families, and communities.

Vision Statement

DFPS aspires to be a department that:

- ◆ delivers effective, efficient, and innovative client services that are nationally recognized for excellence;
- ◆ supports its staff, who are highly motivated, well prepared for their jobs, exhibit a strong sense of professionalism, and enjoy their work;
- ◆ builds strong, effective, and mutually valued partnerships with clients, communities, and state leadership; and
- ◆ provides effective leadership that is accountable for its actions and communicates openly with clients and stakeholders.

Overview

A nine-member council appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate makes recommendations regarding the agency's rules and policies. The DFPS Commissioner is appointed by the Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and directs approximately 6,700 employees in five administrative districts further divided into 11 regions, and a state headquarters in Austin. Four major programs make up DFPS: Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS), Child Care Licensing (CCL), and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI).

Agency Renewal

In 2003 and 2004, several high-profile abuse and neglect cases ended in tragedy, focusing intense scrutiny on the state's Child Protective Services (CPS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) programs. The state's overtaxed protective services system had reached a breaking point, and expectations were unrealistic considering the resources and systems in place to protect children and vulnerable adults.

As a result, Governor Perry directed the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to investigate and reform APS and CPS. HHSC launched an independent review of relevant laws, cases, training procedures, policies, management and organizational structure, and more. By the end of 2004, HHSC had issued recommendations for reforming DFPS' two largest programs.

In 2005, DFPS responded by organizing 24 workgroups to lay the groundwork for reform, while awaiting direction and funding decisions from the Legislature. The Texas Legislature acted swiftly, instructing DFPS to improve the services it provides to children, families, the elderly, and adults with disabilities. DFPS was given an unprecedented increase in funding and started making far-reaching changes to its CPS, APS, Child Care Licensing (CCL), and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) divisions. Sen. Jane Nelson and Rep. Suzanna Hupp passed Senate Bill 6, the omnibus DFPS reform bill. The reforms required by Senate Bill 6 and others identified administratively affect all department programs and divisions.

In order to facilitate the required changes, the Legislature appropriated \$2.1 billion to DFPS for the FY 2006-07 biennium, nearly a 22 percent increase compared to the previous budget. DFPS will grow to employ 8,443 workers in FY 2006 and 9,532 in FY 2007. The department will hire more than 2,500 additional workers during this period, representing a 36 percent increase in staff. Most of the new staff will deal directly with clients, including 848 more CPS investigators. The addition of support staff and new technology will further reduce the workload.

Hundreds of improvements were begun in 2005, affecting every aspect of DFPS. These changes will form the basis for strengthening investigations, improving management and accountability, reducing caseloads, and supporting quality casework. Department-wide reform efforts include:

- ◆ developing a comprehensive, consistent community engagement approach;



- ◆ implementing a communications plan that increases public awareness;
- ◆ measuring performance and establishing accountability of the department's programs;
- ◆ increasing funding to improve technology-related issues at the department's abuse hotline, to make hardware and software upgrades, and to enhance the department's casework management system;
- ◆ examining the way the department allocates resources to regions; and
- ◆ developing a better screening and selection process for prospective employees and doing a better job of keeping current employees.

For more information on the department's renewal efforts, visit our web site at www.dfps.state.tx.us

Child Protective Services—Highlights

- ◆ In 2005, CPS reorganized its central administration and regional structure by creating offices of investigation and regional operations. This realignment strengthened:
 - the program's focus on investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect;
 - relations with law enforcement;
 - oversight by management; and
 - overall support for caseworkers.
- ◆ In 2005, CPS began to address systemic factors and identify improvements in practices to address disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for African-American children and their families within the protective services system. The agency looked at issues surrounding not only the disproportionate rate at which such children enter the CPS system, but also the equity of access to services for children of color and their families. The agency also looked at disproportionate and disparate outcomes for African-American children once they are engaged in the child welfare system, including all phases of service, such as investigation, removal, placement and emancipation.

Adult Protective Services—Highlights

- ◆ APS carried out a number of initiatives to enhance the investigation process and the quality of services. These include:

- increasing the systematic review of cases to facilitate and enhance the quality assurance process;
 - increasing field supervisors' oversight and responsibility;
 - hiring specialized staff in the areas of financial exploitation, risk/self-neglect, resources and external relations, and community initiatives; and
 - requiring caseworkers to engage other community professionals in moderate or high-risk cases.
- ◆ APS implemented a new method to assess clients referred for services. The CARE (Client Assessment & Risk Evaluation) instrument helps caseworkers identify and document problems with a person's living conditions, finances, physical health, mental status, and social relations. With the CARE instrument, APS staff can develop plans to address factors that threaten a person's health and safety.

Child Care Licensing—Highlights

- ◆ During the 2005 session of the Texas Legislature, the Child Care Licensing program worked with elected officials to revise Chapters 42 and 43 of the Texas Human Resources Code. Chapter 42 is the major enabling statute that oversees the regulation of child-care operations and child-placing agencies. Chapter 43 is the law enabling the regulation of child care and child-placing agency administrators. Changes to the law, which went into effect at the beginning of fiscal year 2006, include drug testing for residential child care providers, random inspections of agency foster homes, and increased enforcement tools such as administrative penalties.
- ◆ The Child Care Licensing division took the lead in launching a statewide public awareness campaign to remind parents and caregivers to be vigilant when it comes to children and water safety. The campaign was called "See and Save" (www.seeandsave.org). Child Care Licensing also continued the agency's statewide "Look Before You Leave" campaign to raise public awareness about the dangers of leaving unattended children in hot cars (www.lookbeforeyouleave.org).



Prevention and Early Intervention—Highlights

- ◆ PEI worked in conjunction with the Contract Performance division to continue to develop and refine client outcome performance measures for PEI programs. These performance measures ensure that the services provided by PEI contracts accomplish the goals of the programs and make a positive difference in the lives of those served. Outcome measures were incorporated in FY 2005 contract renewals and are being further developed for subsequent procurements.
- ◆ PEI continued to improve and streamline division policy and procedure, including implementation of a new program summary report provided to contractors twice a year with data on contract performance, development of further efficiencies in the contract renewal process, and institution of a feedback process for contractors associated with on-site monitoring.

Other Changes and Initiatives

- ◆ The time and detail involved in documenting cases has been a workload issue that has affected caseworkers for many years. Often, given the demands on a caseworker's time, driving from house to house on home visits makes it difficult for a caseworker to keep up with entering information in the department's database system for tracking cases. In late February 2005, the department rolled out a mobile-dictation program for CPS, APS, and CCL caseworkers. The service, which is provided by a company called Cyber Secretaries, allows staff to dictate work-related material into a phone and have the recording sent electronically for transcription. A typed copy is then sent back to the caseworker via e-mail. On average, the process is completed within three hours. The text can be cut and pasted into the database system, court reports, letters, or other documents. The service allows staff more time out in the field with clients.
- ◆ DFPS, its mission, and its programs are part of a larger Texas community, a community that is dedicated to protecting vulnerable citizens. In order to provide maximum support to its clients, DFPS has redoubled its commitment to working with families and communities to find solutions for clients, and views effective community part-

nering as a priority for success. The 79th legislative session made additional resources available to DFPS to support this commitment. In 2005, DFPS enhanced its regional staff dedicated to community engagement in both Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services. Now, both APS and CPS have in each region:

- a Resource and External Relations Specialist to support relations with providers, law enforcement, courts, physicians, schools, and other service and professional communities in achieving good client outcomes; and
- a Community Initiatives Specialist to assist staff and the civic/volunteer community in building strong partnerships to provide much needed support to clients and their families. DFPS is actively seeking opportunities to work with community members in support of its mission, and welcomes all inquiries.
- ◆ In an effort to reduce future staff turnover, DFPS developed a new process for screening APS and CPS job applicants. Staff identified competencies of exceptional CPS and APS caseworkers and used that information to develop a behavior-based screening tool that measures quality of work, conscientiousness, planning and organization, problem-solving, flexibility and adaptability, ethics, interpersonal communication, and handling conflict.

Office of Consumer Affairs

While DFPS' goal is to have a positive influence on the lives of the people we serve, it is important to respond to complaints. When clients have case-specific complaints about DFPS, they may contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-720-7777 for an impartial review of their case. The review determines if the department's policies have been followed properly. If corrective action is needed, DFPS offers a variety of solutions such as administrative reviews, hearings, and mediation. During fiscal year 2005, the Office of Consumer Affairs received 11,404 contacts from various sources including the public, clients, elected officials, other agencies, and DFPS staff. Of the total contacts received, 3,790 were handled as case-specific complaints, and 1,053 were inquiries from elected officials. The validation rate of complaints was 2.9 percent.