

Child Protective Services



Child Protective Services (CPS)

Responsibilities

- ◆ Conduct civil investigations of reported child abuse and neglect.
- ◆ Protect children from abuse and neglect.
- ◆ Promote the safety, integrity, and stability of families.
- ◆ Provide permanent placements for children who cannot safely remain with their own families.

Continued Response to CPS Reform

In 2006, Child Protective Services continued to transform its operations and policies in response to Senate Bill 6, the sweeping protective services reform bill passed by the Texas Legislature and signed into law by Governor Rick Perry in 2005. These initiatives included strengthening investigations, supporting quality casework, improving services and child outcomes, building community partnerships, and preventing maltreatment.

Strengthening Investigations

Forensic Investigation/Law Enforcement

CPS created a new division to ensure forensic investigation techniques are incorporated into casework and to improve working relationships with law enforcement. The Investigation Division develops and revises investigation policy and provides technical assistance to CPS field staff. The division also develops best practices and policies and ensures they are part of CPS training.

Subject Matter Experts and Support Staff

In 2006, CPS hired regional subject matter experts and local support staff to assist caseworkers as part of the daily work of CPS. Subject matter experts include child safety specialists who have expertise in risk and safety assessment; law enforcement

liaison staff; nurses; youth specialists; legal liaison staff; substance abuse experts; and investigation screeners who provide additional review when CPS reports are received. CPS hired education and disability specialists in 2005.

Joint Investigations

In 2006, DFPS worked with law enforcement agencies and Child Advocacy Centers of Texas to develop guidelines for conducting joint investigations. These guidelines will help CPS and law enforcement agencies create local multidisciplinary teams. CPS has also begun providing advanced investigation training through the Shaken Baby Alliance.

Risk Assessment Initiative

While CPS has used a formal system for assessing the risk of future child abuse/neglect for about 15 years, staff have not consistently gathered, assessed or used appropriate information to make accurate and timely decisions. Through this 2006 initiative, CPS began the process for improving the risk assessment tool used by caseworkers. CPS updated the risk assessment tool to make it easier to understand and use and will continue making enhancements to it in FY 2007. Child Safety Specialists are helping staff focus on best practices related to ensuring child safety and developing plans with families to mitigate identified risk.

Reducing Response Time

Senate Bill 6 directs DFPS to develop rules, by no later than September 2007, that require CPS to immediately respond to reports that could lead to the death of or severe harm to a child. Highest priority reports must be responded to within 24 hours. All other reports must be responded to within 72 hours. Currently, CPS is already required to respond to the highest priority (Priority 1) cases within 24 hours. However the response time for lower priority cases (Priority 2) is 10 days. In 2006, CPS implemented pilot programs involving shift work schedules in every region to prepare for the transition to quicker response times.



Supporting Quality Casework

Hiring Additional Staff

DFPS hired more than 2,000 CPS direct delivery staff since September 2005, which included 600 former HHSC eligibility staff who were at risk of losing employment due to the implementation of the Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment system. Despite the challenge of high turnover, DFPS had a net gain of 503 CPS staff. CPS also placed on-the-job training supervisors in each region to help prepare new workers and reorganized regional hiring teams to ensure a standard and efficient process is used.

Creation of Functional Units

In FY 2006, CPS divided its direct delivery staff into “functional units.” These units apply to investigations, family-based safety services, and conservatorship programs. Each unit consists of five caseworkers and one supervisor, thereby reducing the supervisor’s span of control and increasing the time supervisors can spend with each worker teaching and guiding them to make sound casework decisions. Each functional unit also has a casework assistant and clerical support to assist caseworkers in meeting the workload demands of their jobs. CPS had a net gain of 743 functional unit staff in FY2006.

Improving Documentation of Cases

CPS enhanced the requirements for documenting cases to streamline the process for capturing information. DFPS also continued to provide Speakwrite transcription service to reduce time spent on documentation and increase the time spent working with families.

Rollout of Tablet PCs

Senate Bill 6 requires DFPS to explore the strategic use of technology to improve effectiveness of operations. After a successful 2005 implementation of Tablet PCs in the department’s Adult Protective Services program, DFPS conducted a statewide

rollout of approximately 3,000 Tablet PCs in 2006 to CPS investigation and family based safety services caseworkers and Residential Child Care Licensing staff. The Tablet PC is a caseworker’s mobile office and it provides immediate assistance to caseworkers who are managing high caseloads. The units provide remote access to case documentation, client history checks, and even a route-mapping tool for caseworkers on the go.

Reviewing Performance and Accountability

CPS implemented tools for management to use on a quarterly basis for reviewing regional performance, as well as accountability tools for delinquent investigations, quality assurance measures, and regional issues. The program also implemented a restructuring plan that strengthens and better supports regional management structure, enhances accountability, and provides clear expectations for regional managers.

Training

In 2006, DFPS revised its initial core training for new CPS Caseworkers by expanding training from 6 weeks to 12 weeks and developing specialized training for different types of services. In conjunction with its Disproportionality Initiative (see below under “Improving Services and Child Outcomes”), CPS partnered with Casey Family Programs to provide cultural competency training on “Undoing Racism” for management staff and “Knowing Who You Are” training for new caseworkers and trainers.

Improving Services and Child Outcomes

Outsourcing

Senate Bill 6 directs DFPS to contract with private entities to provide all substitute care and case management services on a statewide basis by Sept. 1, 2011. This is designed to allow DFPS to increase its focus on protecting children from abuse and neglect and give the private sector a greater role in achieving better results for children and families.



Child Protective Services

In early FY 2006, DFPS and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) released the planned structure, processes, and timelines for transitioning to outsourced services. DFPS asked stakeholders to contribute ideas and recommendations in writing. The agencies also hosted public forums in San Antonio, Houston, Arlington, Lubbock, and Austin.

On April 19, 2006, DFPS and HHSC announced the selection of the San Antonio Region (Region 8) as the first outsourced area of the state. This 28-county region was selected for a variety of reasons, including its existing capacity of foster homes, emergency shelters, and residential treatment centers; its size, diversity, and mix of urban and rural communities; and its wide base of community support.

The department released a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the Independent Administrator on May 1, 2006 and two proposals were submitted by the July 31, 2006 deadline. However, in the fall of 2006 DFPS and HHSC announced an indefinite delay of the announcement of a tentative award.

Family Focus Initiative

Begun in 2005, this initiative is responsible for the cultural change in CPS to a more family-focused philosophy. This initiative matches services to individual family needs by improving family member involvement in the actual case planning process, as well as increasing opportunities to listen to the voices of parents and former foster youth.

In 2006, CPS incorporated this family focus approach into training. CPS also converted the Permanency Planning Team process into one that incorporates and expands Family Group Decision Making principles and increases the kinship program.

Tablet PCs For CPS Workers



In August 2006, DFPS announced the statewide rollout of mobile computers for staff whose jobs are to protect vulnerable children. The distribution of these tablet PCs, which followed a similar effort by Adult Protective Services in 2005, included 3,000 computers for Child Protective Services (CPS) and Residential Child Care Licensing (RCCL).

Laura Weiser, a Family-Based Safety Services worker in Hallettsville, was one of the first CPS staff to receive a tablet PC. Weiser, who covers a rural part of the state, works 45 minutes away from her supervisor in Victoria. Her job includes coordinating and providing in-home services to stabilize families and reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect.

"I definitely do a lot of traveling as part of my job and it takes a lot of time," said Weiser. "Right now, I have a case that is at least an hour and a half away from the office. All the traveling has hindered my ability to complete documentation. When we see families, we are sometimes required to do random drug tests and visits. It can be very time consuming to drive one way just for a random visit. While we are waiting for a family, we could be entering in documentation instead of just sitting. I think the tablet PC helps save time."

The feedback from staff has confirmed that tablet PCs are not just a tool for doing more work, but for doing that work better. "It is very important to have your documentation accurate," said Weiser. "The more quickly you can get that information written down or typed in, the more accurate it will be. Accuracy is key when you are reporting a court case. I think having this technology will enable me to close cases quicker."



Through Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), CPS engages families in decision-making and development of a plan of service. FGDM recognizes a family's strengths for meeting a child's safety, well-being, and permanency goals. FGDM is more inclusive of family and significant others in the planning process. As of August 2006, 4,611 FGDM conferences were held in many counties throughout Texas. CPS has also integrated family-focused philosophy throughout training, policy, and contract processes.

The Kinship Program is a variety of supportive services for relatives and other designated caregivers who are caring for children in DFPS conservatorship. Families participating in the Kinship Program may be assigned a Kinship Development Worker who can help find community resources and services, attend school meetings, and provide ongoing support and other assistance. Kinship caregivers may receive some financial compensation if children who are related or have a significant symbolic relationship are placed with them and in the legal custody of DFPS. Kinship caregivers qualify for a one-time integration payment of \$1,000 per sibling group, as well as annual payments of \$500 per child for as long as the child remains in DFPS legal custody. If permanent legal custody is awarded to the kinship caregivers, they can receive up to \$500 per child, per year for three years or until the child reaches age 18, whichever comes first.

Disproportionality

In 2006, CPS continued to address systemic factors and identify improvements in practices to address disproportionality, which is the over representation of a race or cultural group in a program or system. In the Texas CPS system, disproportionality means a higher percentage of African-American children are removed from their homes, a lower percentage are successfully reunited with their families, and a higher percentage age out of foster care.

In January 2006, CPS released an analysis of disproportionality and in July 2006 released a remediation plan, parts of which have already been implemented and are making a difference. CPS worked to reduce problems with disproportionality through training, partnerships with community organizations, and hiring a state level disproportionality director and disproportionality specialists in Houston, Arlington, Fort Worth and Beaumont/Port Arthur.

Texas was one of 13 states with teams selected by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to participate in a Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Reducing Disproportionality. This methodology helps groups generate new ideas, then implement and test them rapidly.

In addition, CPS held town hall meetings in Tarrant, Dallas and Denton counties to build awareness about disproportionality as well as engage the community in discussions about their concerns and invite them to collaborate with DFPS in the development of solutions. CPS is planning to hold town hall meetings in Houston, Austin, and Beaumont/Port Arthur.

Transitional Living Services

In 2006, CPS began the Transitional Living Services Initiative, which is a systematic approach to improving services for youth who age out of the state's foster care system. As a result, CPS:

- ◆ expanded a program called Circles of Support to make services available in one or more areas in each region statewide. The program pairs foster youth with families, friends, and professionals to discuss their strengths, hopes, dreams, and goals, etc.;
- ◆ modified Medicaid coverage so that annual re-certification for 18-21 year olds is not required;
- ◆ developed and provided training for caseworkers on transition planning, resources, and services for youth leaving foster care;



Expert Advice Helps CPS Provide Better Service



In 2006, CPS hired subject matter experts based in each of the 11 DFPS regional headquarters to help caseworkers with their daily work. They include child safety specialists who have expertise in risk and safety assessment; law enforcement liaison staff; nurses; youth specialists; legal liaison staff; substance abuse experts; and investigation screeners. CPS hired education and disability specialists in 2005.

Cheronda Tillman (right) had been through the Texas foster care system. Now as a youth specialist in San Antonio, she is trying to help make CPS better. "Senate Bill 6 enabled CPS to hire youth specialists like me. I'm a former foster youth and I'm an advocate who helps other foster youth through the transition to adulthood."

Tillman's job duties include working with CPS staff to provide a youth/alumni perspective in the program's practices, procedures, and policies related to current and former foster care youth. She also gathers input from youth to give CPS staff a consumer perspective. "I try to advocate on behalf of youth, interact with youth and alumni, and go to the table with elected officials and DFPS to let them know how things are working. I tell them I have been through the system and what steps are needed to make things work better. I make suggestions on how can we collaborate for the best solution to fix problems."

Last July, Laticia Everett, a former foster youth (left) from San Antonio, and Tillman attended an annual teen conference at University of Texas at Arlington. Sponsored by CPS, the event is held for youth in foster care who are age 16 and older, and features motivational speakers and

workshops. Everett helped plan the workshops, work with providers on arranging booths, and more. "The conference gives Texas foster youth the opportunity to meet, learn together, and plan for the future." Everett now serves in the U.S. Army.

Tillman said the conference gives youth an opportunity to see they have potential. "Through the workshops, we are educating them how to better make the transition, access community support systems, better utilize services, and help them gain the confidence and tools they need to become self sufficient."

Both Tillman and Everett are involved with a youth-run organization called Youth and Alumni Initiating Advocacy (formerly known as Youth Advocates In Action). The goal of the San Antonio-based group is to assist emancipated foster youth as they travel on their journey to self-sufficiency. Youth and Alumni Initiating Advocacy is supported by DFPS, as well as Baptist Child and Family Services, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Casey Family Programs, and the Alamo Community College District.

In recent years, Tillman worked with the organization to help transitioning foster youth by convincing lawmakers to extend Medicaid from age 18 to 21. One of the organization's recent public awareness and fund-raising efforts includes the creation of a board game called "Life in Foster Care." The board game mirrors what youth experience from the time they first come into contact with CPS.



Tillman said the idea came from Angie Cross, a consultant based in Kyle, Texas. "We sat around the table and decided we wanted to produce something that really mirrored what youth experience from the time they first come into contact with CPS. Everyone who plays the games gets their own little manila folder, just like they are on someone's caseload." Proceeds from the sale of the game support Youth and Alumni Initiating Advocacy.



- ◆ finalized an agreement for cooperative activities between DFPS and the Texas Workforce Commission; and
- ◆ launched the Texas Youth Connection web site at www.texasyouthconnection.org, which contains resources for youth in and transitioning out of foster care.

Psychotropic Medication Reduced

DFPS and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) entered into an interdepartmental agreement to assess prescribing practices and recommend a process for on-going clinical reviews of the use of psychotropic medications in treating children in foster care. A report by HHSC, DFPS and DSHS, "The Use of Psychotropic Medication in Texas Foster Children State Fiscal Year 2005" was published in June 2006. The report indicated that in the five months since the release of psychotropic medication guidelines for children in foster care, there was a 7 percent decrease in the number of foster children prescribed psychotropic medications and a 29 percent decrease in the number of children taking two or more psychotropic medications.

Strengthened Medical Support for Children in Care

Court reports now incorporate the summary of children's medical care. Regional nurses have been hired and will provide medical consultation to regional staff to improve decision-making and child safety. Regional interdepartmental teams, with representatives from HHSC, DSHS, DFPS and Texas Alliance, met quarterly in 2006 to coordinate informing foster parents about the services available through Texas Health Steps and to facilitate referrals for medical case management for children in foster care who have serious and complex medical conditions.

Building Community Partnerships

Community Engagement

Building community partnerships is an integral part of DFPS' work and is critical to providing clients with needed support. As a part of the DFPS department-wide community engagement initiative, CPS has developed a comprehensive strategic plan to improve community engagement.

In FY 2006, CPS placed specialized staff in each region to coordinate community-based and public awareness activities. These staff focus on building alliances with civic and service organizations, as well as partnerships with professionals such as local judicial, law enforcement, medical, and other providers. In 2006, CPS also expanded the community engagement training provided to incoming DFPS staff. As a result of enhancing DFPS volunteer programs, the number of volunteers within the CPS program has increased. At the end of FY 2006, there were more than 3,700 active CPS volunteers.

Co-Location

DFPS began conducting a cost-benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of co-locating CPS staff with other community services such as hospitals, police departments, schools, and child advocacy centers. These opportunities for co-location would enhance services to clients and may help provide additional office space for CPS staff.

Preventing Maltreatment

Drug Endangered Child Initiative

CPS, in coordination with the Texas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, law enforcement, medical personnel, and prosecutors, developed protocols for investigating drug endangered children cases. CPS has partnered with the Texas



Alliance for Drug Endangered Children to conduct training sessions and formed local drug endangered children teams. CPS also began tracking cases involving methamphetamine manufacturing and signed an agreement with the Texas Department of Public Safety that standardizes how cases are handled when children are found in homes where methamphetamine is being manufactured.

Additional Accomplishments

- ◆ In FY 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded Texas a total of \$4,082,000 for increasing the number of children adopted from foster care. Texas will use these funds to enhance our child welfare programs. The state's adoption incentive award was more than that received by any other state in the US.
- ◆ In FY 2006, CPS established a specialized unit of child placing specialists in each region. As a result, there was a reduction in placement disruptions, a reduction in the number of children experiencing emergency shelter placements, and more accountability and oversight when matching children to appropriate foster caregivers.
- ◆ CPS launched an online database available through an Extranet in December 2005. Through this web site, residential providers can enter/ delete/update vacancies in their foster homes, residential treatment centers, emergency shelters or institutions and includes specific criteria on each of those vacancies. With more than 400 residential providers entering their vacancy data into the database daily, CPS staff can then conduct a search based on a child's criteria to find the most appropriate placement available.
- ◆ Every three years, states must undergo a federal review of foster care cases for compliance with federal regulations regarding the determination of Title IV-E foster eligibility. For the second time, DFPS had zero errors found in the 80 sample cases reviewed, including (for the first time) a special supplemental sample of juvenile justice cases.
- ◆ In 2006, CPS implemented the Relative Diligent Search program. The program identifies relatives of children in substitute care who may be potential placements, may wish to have some form of contact with these children, or have additional information regarding the child's heritage, medical, or family background.
- ◆ In 2006, CPS launched Operation HOME ("Help On Matching Every-child") to focus attention on finding adoptive homes for older children who have a goal of adoption, but are not in permanent placements. The goal of HOME is to place at least 150 children in adoptive homes by Dec. 31, 2006. The initiative was a follow-up to another successful adoption recruitment program, Operation PUSH ("Placing Us in Safe Homes"), which concluded in early FY 2006. Through Operation PUSH, adoptions of 1,800 children were consummated.
- ◆ In 2006, CPS worked with LifeWorks and Casey Family Programs to create a center for providing services to youth transitioning out of foster care. Serving a 30-county area, the center provides increased depth of services to homeless youth and case management, crisis intervention, resource referral, and additional life skills education to youth transitioning out of foster care. In addition, the center serves an additional 65-80 transitioning youth through Casey Family Case Managers working in the Austin area.



Regional Vignettes

Region 1 (Amarillo Region)

Lubbock: In early 2006, foster home placements reached a critical point in the Texas Panhandle. At one point, there were only three placements available in Lubbock, a city of more than 200,000 people. Staff responded by convening a meeting between CPS, DFPS Child Care Licensing (which licenses child placing agencies and foster homes), and independent child placing agencies. As a result, they forged new alliances, established a memorandum of understanding, and shared resources and information. The community held a foster recruitment event that was attended by more than 1,500 people, with plans for additional events in the future. The goal: Recruiting more nurturing foster homes to care for children in need.

Region 2 (Abilene Region)

Wichita Falls: CPS staff took great advantage of two new developments in 2006: They had the opportunity to co-locate with staff from the Juvenile Probation Department and were equipped with state-of-the-art mobile computers, called Tablet PCs. During meetings with juvenile probation staff, CPS quickly noticed how much information both agencies could share on common cases, especially considering that CPS staff were now equipped with Tablet PCs. These portable computers enable caseworkers access to IMPACT, the APS and CPS case management system, as well as perform many other work functions while they are away from their offices.

Region 3 (Arlington Region)

Fort Worth: Due to high turnover rates, the Tarrant County CPS workers who handle children in foster care—known as conservatorship workers—temporarily experienced unusually high caseloads. Regional management asked staff in

other offices if they would be willing to help. The response was overwhelming: Staff from 19 counties, from as far away as Hunt, Ellis, Navarro, Collin, and Denton counties answered the call, as did workers from Dallas, Johnson, and Parker counties. These volunteers took on extra work duties such as filing paperwork, documenting cases, visiting parents, caregivers, and children, and providing transportation. Within three months, managers hired enough additional conservatorship workers to make caseloads more manageable.

Region 4 (Tyler Region)

Tyler: The evidence of CPS staff's commitment to community was phenomenal in 2006. Regional Children's Advocacy Centers and Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) recognized investigation staff for their commitment to and teamwork in protecting children. Texas CASA named John Watkins, a conservatorship supervisor in Sulphur Springs, statewide supervisor of the year. The Texas Foster Family Association chose Jackie Hubbard, a foster/adoption program director in Tyler, as program director of the year.

Region 5 (Beaumont Region)

Beaumont: CPS staff hosted "Girls Night Out," an evening at Junior League House filled with fashion, food, and fun for 20 high school girls in foster care. During the evening, the girls watched a fashion show presented by a local high school, giving them a close-up look at the latest prom styles. Then, the foster youth pieced together their own stunning outfits from hundreds of prom dresses, shoes, jewelry and other chic essentials donated by the local community. Each foster youth received a goodie bag filled with make-up, nail polish, an Outback Steakhouse gift card, and a gift certificate to have her hair styled the night of her prom.



Region 6 (Houston Region)

Houston: Staff from across CPS (investigations, family based safety services, conservatorship) worked with community partners, and Casey Family Programs to tackle the issue of disproportionality, which is the overrepresentation of minority children in the child welfare system. In 2006, Region 6 staff were looking to the future and willing to try different methods to address the issue. This region was the first in the United States to have identified disproportionality specialists.

Region 7 (Austin Region)

Austin: CPS staff set up a monitoring and tracking system for the Kinship Program, which provides support to kinship caregivers who accept placement of related children. Through the system, staff are better able to track reimbursement stipends on a county basis. Staff's goal is to provide equal access to these funds across this 30-county region.

Region 8: (San Antonio Region)

San Antonio: CPS staff worked diligently on a number of collaborations with the faith-based community. Staff held pastoral breakfasts and participated in events such as National Blue Sunday Child Abuse, which included a citywide prayer service at the San Antonio Convention Center on April 30. The faith-based community responded in many ways including hosting the Heart Gallery photos, providing for the needs of children and families, and by participating in the Adopt-A-Caseworker program, a volunteer project through which community organizations such as church groups and Sunday school classes can help meet the needs of abused and neglected children and their caseworkers.

Region 9 (Midland Region)

Midland: CPS developed an educational video to show to all new mothers in hospitals after they give birth. It includes information on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and accidental rollover/smothering deaths, drug and alcohol dangers, water safety, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and car safety. This video was developed at the recommendation of the Region 9 Child Death Review Committee, in partnership with the Midland Memorial Hospital, KWES-TV in Midland, and Abilene and Midland Regions (Regions 2/9) child welfare boards. The video will be distributed to all hospitals in West Texas, and to CPS staff and clients.

Region 10 (El Paso Region)

El Paso: In 2006, CPS conservatorship and family based safety services staff maintained excellent working relationships with the court systems handling drug cases. The region has the first family based safety services drug court in the state and CPS staff report successful outcomes among families participating in these programs.

Region 11 (Edinburg Region)

Corpus Christi: Youth who age out of foster care face extra challenges as they enter adulthood. Many are unaware or fail to take advantages of the services available to help them make this transition. In 2006, local CPS staff stepped up their efforts in planning for these older foster youth to make certain that when they become young adults they have a chance to succeed and be supported in the process.



CPS Services

Intake

State law requires anyone who believes a child is being abused or neglected report the situation to the DFPS abuse hotline. DFPS administers a toll-free, 24-hour statewide hotline (1-800-252-5400) for reporting suspected abuse or neglect of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities. People can also report online through a secured web site at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>.

Anyone needing to report abuse or neglect (in English or Spanish) can reach a professional intake worker. All reports meeting the statutory definitions of abuse and neglect are assigned a priority based on the level of risk to the alleged victim. Law enforcement agencies are also notified of reports regarding children. DFPS received 239,102 reports of child abuse and neglect in 2006.

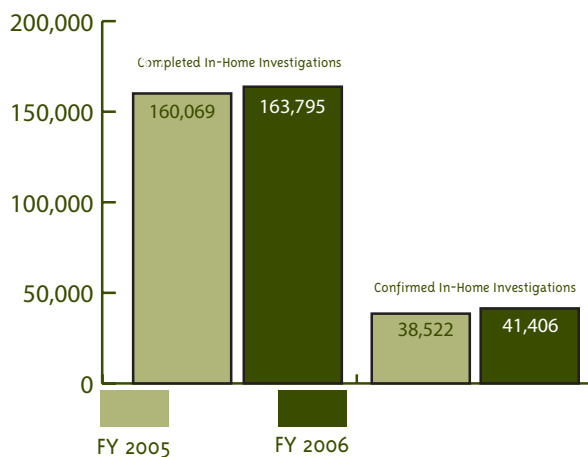
Investigations

When an intake report is assigned, CPS workers interview children, parents, and others with knowledge of the family. These interviews help determine if child abuse or neglect has occurred and assess the risk of further harm to the child. If criminal

conduct is involved, law enforcement may investigate at the same time to determine if criminal charges will be filed. In 2006, CPS completed 163,795 investigations. Even if evidence of abuse or neglect is not found, caseworkers may refer families to services in the community, such as individual or family therapy, parenting classes, or programs offering financial assistance for utilities, rent, and child care.



Completed Investigations



Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS)

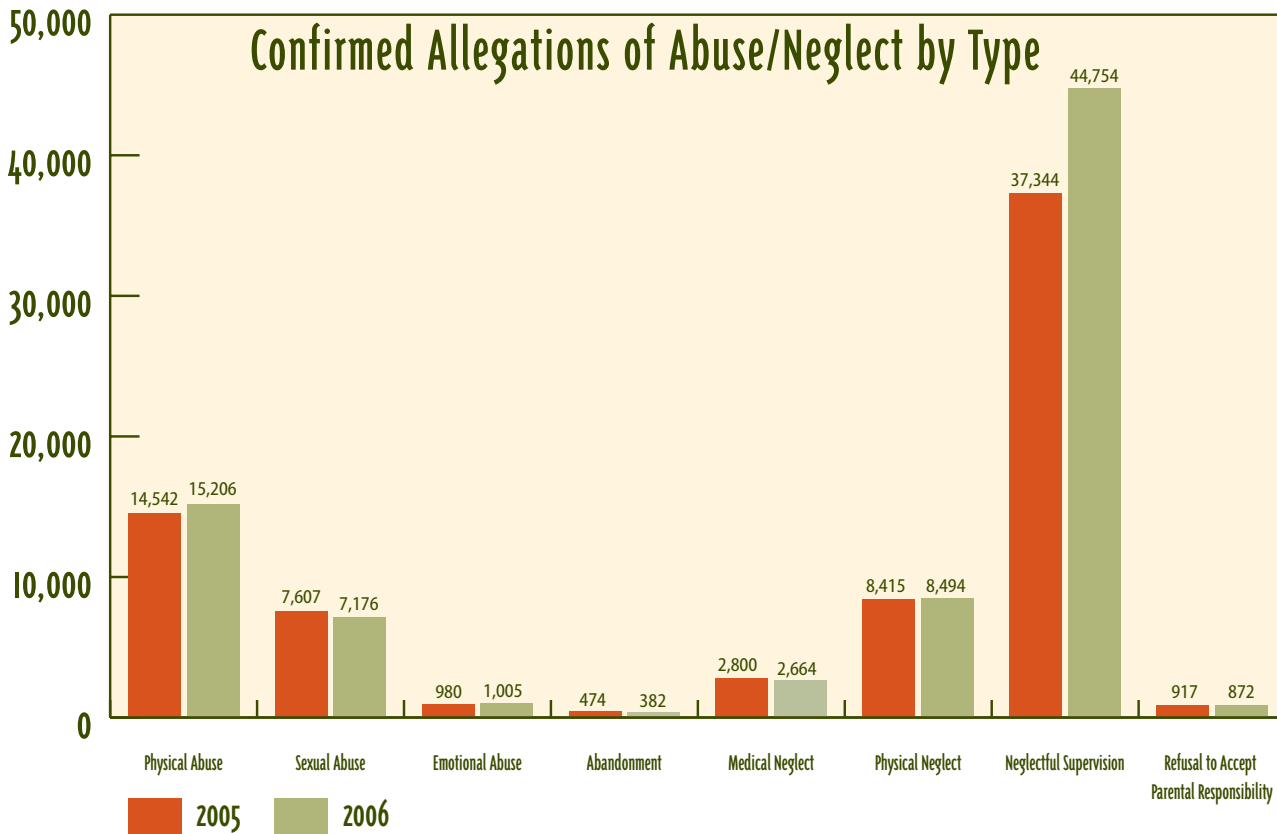
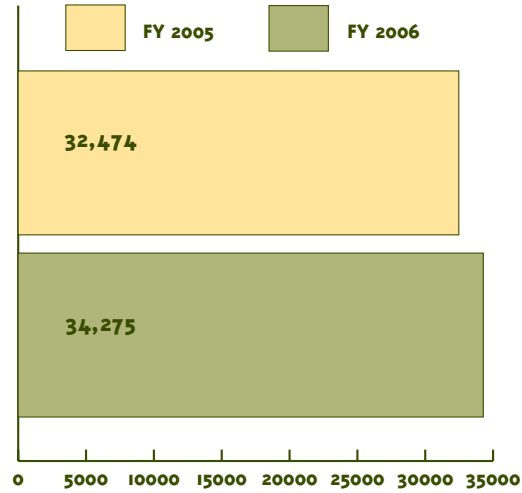
When child safety can be reasonably assured, CPS provides services to help stabilize the family and reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect. Services provided include family counseling, crisis intervention, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, and child care. Most children served by FBSS continue to live at home while the department works with their families. In other cases, children may live elsewhere temporarily, usually with relatives or family friends, until the home becomes safe enough for them to return. In 2006, an average of 12,828 families per month received in-home services.



Foster Care

When it is not safe for children to live with their own families, CPS petitions the court to remove the children from their homes. They may be placed temporarily with relatives, a verified foster family, or an emergency shelter. Verified foster families provide a safe, nurturing environment for most children in CPS care. Foster families receive reimbursements for the cost of caring for children. CPS is required to arrange all medical, dental, and therapeutic services needed by the child. Some children have special emotional needs or other disabilities that can be difficult to address in a foster home. These children may be placed in specialized group homes, residential treatment centers, or other facilities.

Children in Foster Care During Fiscal Year 2006



Adoption

When it is not possible for a child to return home, the court may terminate the parents' rights and legally make the child available for adoption. DFPS completed 3,376 adoptions in 2006. DFPS contracts with licensed private child-placing agencies to increase the number of adoptive homes available to adopt foster children. At the end of 2006, there were 5,428 children in the department's custody awaiting adoption. Of these 3,850 were in placements not intended to be permanent.



Dual-Licensed Homes

In 2006, 44.8 percent of adoptions were by foster parents. National studies indicate greater opportunities for successful adoptions in these situations because children and their new parents form a bond during the foster care placement. CPS makes a concerted effort to "dually license" homes for both foster care and adoption.

Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Families

CPS actively recruits foster and adoptive families through national, state, and regional campaigns and through the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange web site at www.adoptchildren.org. Examples include:

- ◆ the statewide Foster Care Month in May;
- ◆ Adoption Awareness Month in November;
- ◆ faith-based collaborations such as the Congregations Helping in Love and Dedication (CHILD) and the One Church, One Child programs currently in place in Dallas/Fort Worth, Beaumont, Tyler, and Houston;
- ◆ "Heart galleries," a national movement involving photo exhibits of children waiting for adoptive families. Through heart galleries, professional photographers volunteer their time and skills to capture children's personalities and help them find loving homes; and
- ◆ increased mass adoption events by working with juvenile courts, adoptive families, attorneys, and others to schedule clusters of hearings for finalizing adoptions to coincide with the month of November, which is celebrated nationally as Adoption Awareness Month.

Texas Adoption Resource Exchange

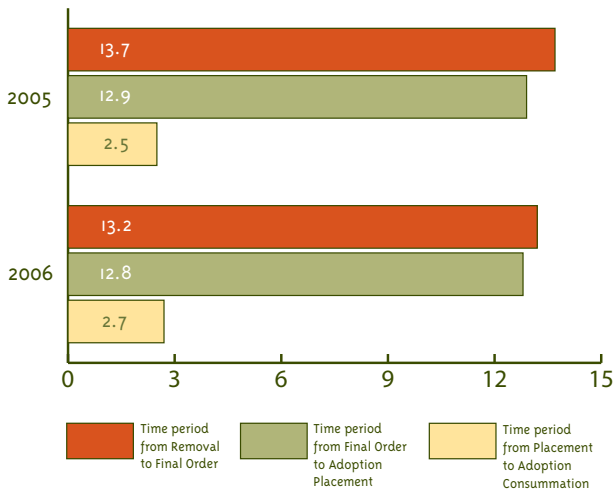
The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) provides information on children awaiting adoption. Photos, profiles, videos, and inquiry forms are on the Internet at www.adoptchildren.org. TARE participates with other adoption organizations



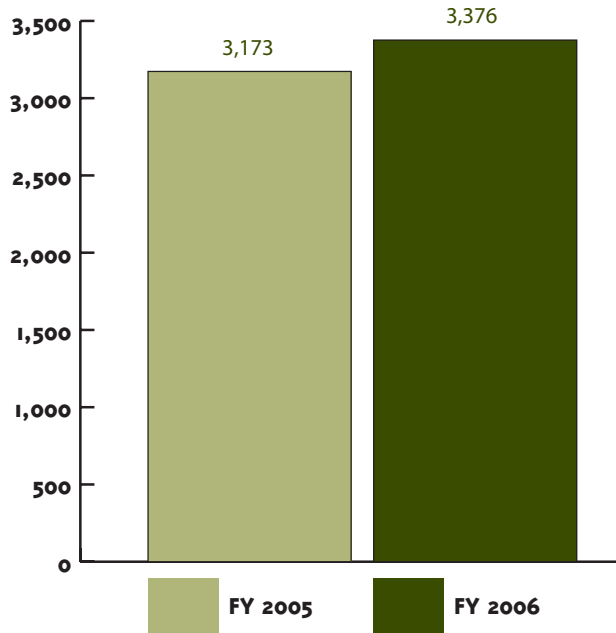
during national recruitment campaigns and promotes children on TARE in the AdoptUSKids national web site as well as other web sites. At the end of FY 2006, there were 1,014 children registered in TARE. In FY 2006, 583 children were adopted through TARE, 158 children were pending placement, 60 were removed due to numerous inquiries from approved adoptive families, and 270 children were removed from TARE due to changes in their permanency plan or medical needs.

TARE offers a toll-free Statewide Adoption and Foster Care Inquiry Line (1-800-233-3405) and the Adoption Family Network (AFN). AFN is a free, self-registration listing of adoptive families and individuals across the United States who are approved for adoptions. Through AFN, families may list their preferences on children they are willing to parent, and this information is available to CPS adoption staff through a searchable database. The AFN has more than 2,000 approved adoptive families across the U.S. who have registered their adoption preferences so that DFPS staff can match them with waiting children.

Months Spent in State Care for Children whose Adoptions were Consumated



Completed Adoptions



The toll-free statewide inquiry line receives about 150 to 200 calls a month from prospective foster care and adoptive families across the state. These calls are entered into the Internet inquiry forms and forwarded to their respective regions as soon as they are received.

Adoption Support Services

Adopted children who have suffered abuse or neglect often need help coping with the effects of abuse and the loss of their birth families. Each CPS region contracts with private agencies to provide post-adoption services to adopted children and their families. Those services include case management, mental health services, therapeutic services to children and families, parent training, support groups, and respite care for adoptive parents. Post-adoption services were provided to 2,445 children and families in 2006.



Services for Foster Youth Transitioning Out of Care

Preparation for Adult Living

The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program helps make the transition to adulthood successful for youth in foster care. PAL services include independent living assessments, time-limited financial help, and training in such areas as money management, job skills, educational planning, and interpersonal skills. A statewide youth leadership committee meets quarterly to review policies and practices and submits recommendations to the DFPS Council and other decision-makers to improve services for children and youth. In 2006, 7,279 youths ages 16 through 20, participated in the PAL program. In addition, 812 teenagers ages 14 and 15 received PAL services.



Funds from the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Act enabled CPS to provide aftercare room-and-board assistance for 902 young adults and case management services for 1,513 young adults ages 18 through 21 who exited foster care.

Education and Training Vouchers

In 2004, CPS received federal funding to create a new program that helps youth reach their educational goals after they age out of the state's care. The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program provides additional money for youth, who have left CPS care and are going to school, to help cover expenses such as rent, computer, day care, and transportation. The program supplements the state's Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program and a tuition waiver program at state-funded universities, colleges, junior colleges, and vocational schools. In 2006, the ETV program served 435 youth.

Working With Partners

Greater Texas Community Partners

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 to caseworkers in a store-like setting. Adopt-A-Caseworker projects pair church and civic groups, businesses, and individuals with CPS caseworkers to help 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. The unique public/private partnership between DFPS and local community partners groups throughout Texas supports 113 Rainbow Rooms and 232 adopted caseworkers at 18 sites.



Abuse/Neglect Fatalities

CPS has developed both internal and external mechanisms to review child fatalities due to abuse/neglect. Citizen Review Teams, Child Fatality Review Teams, CPS child safety specialists, regional CPS child death review committees, and the state Child Safety Review Committee all review child deaths. While each entity reviews child deaths for unique purposes, a common goal is to help CPS and communities identify the causes of child fatalities and develop strategies, programs, and training to reduce the rate of preventable child deaths, as well as provide intervention services to families and children at risk.

CPS confirmed abuse/neglect as the cause of death for 227 children in FY 2006.



Texas State Strategy

The Texas State Strategy is a collaborative systems improvement effort of Casey Family Programs and DFPS. The strategy addresses challenges in the areas of kinship services and foster care transition services in Texas.

Age of Fatality Victims Due to Abuse/ Neglect – 2006

