

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Mission

Our mission is to protect children and people who are elderly or have disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation by working with clients, families and communities.

Vision

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS):

- ◆ Is recognized for innovative, effective services.
- ◆ Builds strong, effective partnerships with clients, communities and state leaders.
- ◆ Provides effective leadership that is accountable for its actions and communicates openly with clients and stakeholders.
- ◆ Supports staff who are highly motivated, diverse, ethical, well trained, and professional.

Values

- ◆ We protect the unprotected.
- ◆ We involve clients, families and communities in decision-making.
- ◆ We provide quality services.
- ◆ We are innovative and strive for excellence.
- ◆ We are ethical and accountable.
- ◆ We promote diversity.
- ◆ We value our staff.

Overview

A nine-member council, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, makes recommendations regarding the department's rules and policies. The DFPS Commissioner, who is appointed by the Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, directs about 9,167 employees in about 280 local offices. These offices are located in five administrative districts that are 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).

DFPS Renewal

In 2007, DFPS proposed a package of recommendations to the 80th Texas Legislature to build on the foundation of reforms from the previous session and to assure continued progress. The 80th Legislature embraced those recommendations through the passage of the appropriations bill and SB 758. While SB 6 of the previous regular session dealt mostly with investigation aspects of the protective services system, the Reform II legislation of 2007 focused on other parts of the system. To that end, the Legislature and Governor allocated an additional \$101 million to DFPS, plus another \$87 million for a variety of purposes including more prevention programs, and more family based safety services and statewide intake staff. The Legislature also repealed the requirement of SB 6 to outsource substitute care and case management services for children in DFPS conservatorship.

The chief goals of this next phase of DFPS Renewal are to:

- ◆ Keep families together.
- ◆ Reduce the length of time children remain in state care.
- ◆ Improve the quality and accountability of foster care.

DFPS will accomplish these goals in three ways.

First, CPS will work to keep families together by enhancing efforts to engage families before removals become necessary. Specifically:

- ◆ CPS will lower the caseloads of family based safety services caseworkers and enhance family preservation services by adding additional staff.
- ◆ CPS will expand family group decision making so that in some cases conferences will be held before removals.
- ◆ DFPS will create an in-home support pilot program to offset the effects of poverty.

Second, to reduce the length of time children spend in state care DFPS will:

- ◆ Provide additional Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) services to families.
- ◆ Increase purchased services to help reunite families.
- ◆ Add additional conservatorship staff to enable CPS to visit foster children more often, increase child safety, and speed the path to permanency.
- ◆ Increase Kinship staff to support reaching permanency quicker.
- ◆ Add legal staff to speed up adoptions and improve court services.

Executive Summary

Third, to improve the quality and accountability of foster care:

- ◆ DFPS will provide tablet PCs to all Residential Child Care Licensing monitoring representatives by the end of FY 2008. (RCCL investigators were equipped in 2006). Also, half of all CPS conservatorship workers will receive tablet PCs with the goal of eventually equipping all conservatorship workers.
- ◆ DFPS will integrate case information and upgrade IMPACT, the electronic case management system.
- ◆ RCCL will add new procedures and increase its staff by 64%.
- ◆ RCCL will conduct "team" inspections of every child placing agency (CPA) and residential treatment center (RTC) at least once a year.
- ◆ RCCL will begin investigating some standards violations in CPA homes with children younger than age 6, rather than relying solely on private child placing agencies.
- ◆ RCCL will also hire investigation analysts and child safety experts to identify risks or additional steps needed to protect children.
- ◆ DFPS will strengthen contract oversight through improved monitoring and enhanced technology.
- ◆ DFPS will also improve the quality and timeliness of background checks by centralizing this function.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Highlights

- ◆ With new resources, CPS investigation caseloads have decreased from an annual average of 34.7 in fiscal year 2006 to 25.3 in fiscal year 2007.
- ◆ In 2007, CPS implemented pilot programs to shorten response time for Priority 2 child abuse cases to 72 hours, and by August made this change statewide.
- ◆ CPS initiated the "Why Not Me?" statewide public awareness campaign aimed at increasing the adoption of older children in CPS conservatorship. Adoptions increased 19.2 percent overall in FY 2007.

Adult Protective Services (APS) Highlights

- ◆ As of August 2007, the average daily caseload for APS In-Home Services workers was 36.4 compared to 51.2 in August 2006.
- ◆ In fiscal year 2007, APS continued to enhance the use of performance management information to improve worker performance.

Child Care Licensing (CCL) Highlights

- ◆ CCL implemented a new federal law requiring fingerprint based criminal history checks in foster and adoptive situations.
- ◆ CCL implemented a weighted enforcement system in January 2007, which assigns weights to individual minimum standard based on the risk to children.

Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Highlights

- ◆ In FY 2007, DFPS contracted with the Relief Nursery of Eugene, Oregon to begin replicating their comprehensive model program in Texas on a limited basis. This pilot program provides at-risk families with comprehensive support services.
- ◆ The 80th Texas Legislature granted DFPS additional funding to implement two new programs that will begin in FY 2008. The first is a juvenile delinquency prevention program called the Statewide Youth Services Network (SYSN). This program will provide community and evidence-based juvenile delinquency prevention programs in each DFPS region. DFPS also received funding for the Community Based Family Services (CBFS) program to help reduce and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Office of Consumer Affairs

While DFPS' goal is to have a positive impact 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 agency's policies have been followed properly. During fiscal year 2007, the Office of Consumer Affairs received 13,983 contacts from various sources including the public, clients, elected officials, other agencies, and DFPS staff. Of the total contacts received, 3,238 were handled as case-specific complaints, and 898 were inquiries from elected officials. The validation rate of complaints has been stable at 3.4 percent for the last several years.

