



**SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

**Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial
Commission for Children,
Youth and Families**

February 10, 2017

Meeting Notebook

The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701

**Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families**

**February 10, 2017
Meeting Notebook**

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Supreme Court of Texas
Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families
State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center
Austin, Texas
February 10, 2017
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Commencement / Opening Remarks – The Honorable Eva Guzman
- 9:45 First order of business – The Honorable Eva Guzman
1. Adopt Minutes from September 23, 2016, Tab 2
- 10:00 Commissioner Updates
- 10:50 Break
- 11:05 Commissioner Updates cont'd
- 11:45 Presentation: Paula Bibbs-Samuels & Texas Legal Services Center
- 12:15 Working Lunch / Presentation by Children's Commission Staff
- 1:00 Collaborative Council Input
- 1:30 Jurist In Residence Report / Legislative Update
- 2:00 DFPS/CPS Update
- 2:30 Office of Court Administration
- 3:00 New Business

2017 Meeting Schedule

May 12, 2017 and September 22, 2017 at State Bar of Texas

Adjourn

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Rob Hofmann, Vice Chair
 Paula Bibbs-Samuels
 Allison Billodeau
 Kristene Blackstone
 Hon. Gary Coley

Sheila Sturgis Craig
 Rep. Helen Giddings
 Dr. Andy Keller
 Hon. Lawrence Lujan
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Piper McCraw
 Hon. Mary Murphy

Cindy Patrick
 Hon. Ronald Pope
 Hon. Frank Rynd
 Hon. Peter Sakai
 Hon. Michael Schneider
 Luanne Southern
 Vicki Spriggs

Terry Tottenham
 Hon. Carlos Villalon
 Lt. Col. Travis Walters
 Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE

Hon. Eva Guzman,
Chair
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill,
Chair Emeritus
 Hon. Rob Hofmann
Vice Chair
 Hon. Michael Massengale
 Hon. Dean Rucker
 Hon. Michael Schneider
 Vicki Spriggs

*Staff: Tina Amberboy
 Monica Mahoney*

BASIC PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Schneider
Chair
 Sarah Crockett
 Mary Christine Reed
 Carolyne Rodriguez
 Tanya Rollins
 Hon. Peter Sakai
 Hon. Cynthia Wheless

*Staff: Kristi Taylor
 Dylan Moench
 Monica Mahoney*

TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Vicki Spriggs, *Chair*
 Jason Hassay
 Hon. Gilford Jones
 Elizabeth Kromrei
 Robert Nolen
 Hon. Virginia Schnarr
 Hon. Carlos Villalon

*Staff: Patrick Passmore
 Monica Mahoney*

*OCA Advisory:
 Darrell Childers
 Anissa Johnson
 Casey Kennedy
 Tim Kennedy
 Mena Ramon
 David Slayton*

TRAINING PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Massengale, *Chair*
 Hon. Mark Atkinson
 Tymothy Belseth
 Cathy Cockerham
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Debra Emerson
 Hon. Richard Garcia
 Tracy Harting
 Pam Kemp
 Tanya Rollins
 Fairy Davenport Rutland
 Hon. Ellen Smith
 Elizabeth Watkins

*Staff: Milbrey Raney
 Dylan Moench
 Andrea Vicencio*

FOSTER CARE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Rob Hofmann, *Chair*
 Joy Baskin
 Hon. Alyce Bondurant
 Briana Dovi
 Lori Duke
 Dr. Monica Faulkner
 Maya Guerra Gamble
 Dr. David Gardner
 Dr. Deena Hill
 Andy Homer
 Kelly Kravitz
 Kristine Mohajer
 Hon. Cathy Morris
 Jon Olson
 Wanda Peña
 Shannon Ramsey
 Michael Redden
 Carol Self
 Ian Spechler
 Julie Wayman
*Staff: Jamie Bernstein
 Andrea Vicencio*

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

M. Lynn Chamberlin
 Irene Clements
 Bill Connolly
 De Shaun Ealoms
 Barbara Elias-Perciful
 Debra Emerson
 Laura Figueroa
 Mike Foster
 Mara Friesen
 Sadie Funk

Helen Gaebler
 Teal de la Garza
 Christina Green
 Sandra Hachem
 David Halpern
 Ashley Harris
 Bruce Kendrick
 Knox Kimberly
 Kelly Kravitz
 Richard Lavallo

Tracy Levins
 Madeline McClure
 Hon. F. Scott McCown, ret.
 Gabriella McDonald
 Susan McDowell
 Pamela McPeters
 Katie Olse
 Anu Partap
 Judy Powell
 Mary Christine Reed

Carolyne Rodriguez
 Johana Scot
 Janet Sharkis
 Andrea Sparks
 Jeanne Stamp
 Gloria Terry
 Kenneth Thompson
 Arabia Vargas
 Kelly White

STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director
 Kristi Taylor, Assistant Director
 Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
 Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney
 Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant
 Dylan Moench, Staff Attorney
 Patrick Passmore, Grant Administrator
 Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney
 Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant
 Hon. Darlene Byrne, Senior Judicial Advisor
 Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence
Office of Court Administration

INSERT - TAB 2

PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 23, 2016
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center
Austin, Texas

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners	Attended	Did Not Attend
Chair, Hon. Eva Guzman, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Chair Emeritus, Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Justice, retired, Law Office of Harriet O'Neill, Austin		✓
Vice Chair, Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452nd District Court, Mason	✓	
Hon. Jo Ann Battise, Council Chairwoman, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Livingston		✓
Paula Bibbs-Samuel, Parent Representative, Slayton	✓	
Allison Billodeau, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Kristene Blackstone, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Jean Boyd, Judge (ret.), 323rd District Court, Fort Worth		✓
Hon. Gary Coley, Judge, 74 th District Court, Waco	✓	
Sheila Craig, (by proxy Ashley Harris), Associate Commissioner, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Hon. Helen Giddings (by proxy David Feigen), Texas House of Representatives, District 109, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Bonnie Hellums, Judge (ret.), 247th District Court, Houston	✓	
Dr. Andrew Keller, Chief Operations Officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas	✓	
Dr. Octavio Martinez, Executive Director, The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas, Austin	✓	
Hon. Michael Massengale, Justice, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Hon. Mary Murphy, Presiding Judge, First Administrative Judicial Region, Dallas	✓	
Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer, Meadows Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Ronald Pope, Judge, 328 th District Court, Richmond		✓
Hon. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese Galveston-Houston	✓	
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Hon. Michael Schneider, Judge, 315 th Juvenile Court, Houston	✓	
Luanne Southern, Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin	✓	
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin	✓	
Terry Tottenham, Of Counsel, Norton Rose Fulbright US L.L.P., Austin		✓
Hon. Carlos Villalon, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande, Edinburg		✓
Lt. Col. Travis Walters, State Public Affairs Officer (FTUS), United States Air Force, Fort Worth		✓
Hon. Judy Warne, Judge, 257th Family Court, Houston		✓
Hon. Royce West, Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
Senior Judicial Advisor		
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin	✓	

Collaborative Council	Attended	Did Not Attend
M. Lynn Chamberlin, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office	✓	
Irene Clements, President, National Foster Family Association, and Consultant, Butterfly Marketing, LLC, Pflugerville	✓	
William B. Connolly, Attorney, Connolly & Shireman, L.L.P., Houston		✓
De Shaun Ealoms, Parent Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Lawyers for Children, Dallas	✓	
Debra Emerson, CPS Director of Permanency, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Laura Figueroa, The Arbitrage Group, Inc., Katy		✓
Mike Foster, Assistant Director of Outreach, TCU Institute of Child Development	✓	
Mara Friesen, Deputy Director for Child Support, Office of the Texas Attorney General, Austin	✓	
Sadie Funk, Executive Director, Texas Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Austin		✓
Helen Gaebler, Senior Research Attorney, William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin		✓
Teal De La Garza, Attorney, Bill De La Garza & Associates, P.C.	✓	
Christina Green, Director of Public Affairs, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin	✓	
Sandra Hachem, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston	✓	
David Halpern, Director, Promise Mentor Program, Seedling Foundation, Austin	✓	
Ashley Harris, Child Welfare Policy Associate, Texans Care for Children, Austin		✓
Bruce Kendrick, Director of Outreach, Embrace Texas, McKinney		✓
Knox Kimberly, Vice President for Advocacy and Education, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Austin		✓
Kelly Kravitz, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Texas Education Agency, Austin		✓
Richard Lavallo, Legal Director, Disability Rights Texas, Austin		✓
Tracy Levins, State Development Specialist, Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health, The University of Texas, Austin		✓
Madeline McClure, Executive Director, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Dallas		✓
Hon. F. Scott McCown, Clinical Professor and Director of the Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin		✓
Gabriela McDonald, Pro Bono and New Projects Director, Texas Appleseed, Austin	✓	
Susan McDowell, Executive Director, Life works, Austin		✓
Pamela McPeters, Director of Public Policy, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Austin	✓	
Dr. Anu Partap, Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, Southwest Medical Center, Dallas		✓
Judy Powell, Communications Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin		✓
Mary Christine Reed, Director, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin	✓	
Carolyne Rodriguez, Independent Consultant, Austin		✓
Johana Scot, Executive Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Janet Sharkis, Executive Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin		✓
Andrea Sparks, Child Sex Trafficking Unit Administrator, Office of the Governor, Austin		✓
Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Charles A. Dana Center, Austin	✓	
Gloria Terry, Coalition President, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin		✓
Kenneth Thompson, Fatherhood Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Arabia Vargas, Chair, Bexar County Child Welfare Board, San Antonio		✓
Kelly White, Executive Director, LIFT Alliance		✓

Attending Committee Members and Guests

Tymothy Belseth, Research Associate, Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing, The University of Texas, Austin
David Feigen, Staff, Office of Representative Helen Giddings, Austin
Hon. Richard Garcia, Associate Judge, Bexar County Children's Court, San Antonio
Michelle Harper, Vice President of Child and Family Policy, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas
Andrew Homer, Director of Public Affairs, Texas CASA, Austin
Graham Keever, Legislative Director, Office of Honorable Royce West, Austin
Rebecca Lightsey, Austin
Maureen Metteauer, Legislative Director, Office of Representative James Frank, Austin
Dylan Moench, Moench Mediation, Austin
Kristine Mohajer, Education Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Katie Olse, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Wanda Peña, Senior Director, Casey Family Programs, San Antonio
Raman Sandhu, Contracts Manager, CASA/CAC Program, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Austin
Philip Ritter, Chief Operating Officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas
Elizabeth Watkins, Regional Attorney, Department of Family and Protective Services, Tyler
Sarah Worthington, Staff Attorney, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin
Michael Yanof, Attorney, Thompson Coe Cousins & Irons, L.L.P., Dallas

Attending Staff

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Children's Commission
Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission
Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney, Children's Commission
Anissa Johnson, Program Specialist VI, Office of Court Administration
Tim Kennedy, TexDECK Project Manager, Office of Court Administration
Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission
Patrick Passmore, Grant Manager, Children's Commission
Mena Ramon, General Counsel, Office of Court Administration
Honorable Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence, Children's Commission
Honorable Robin Sage, Jurist in Residence, Children's Commission
David Slayton, Administrative Director, Office of Court Administration
Kristi Taylor, Assistant Director, Children's Commission
Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS, Justice Eva Guzman

Justice Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Philip Ritter, Chief Operating Officer of Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Michelle Harper, Vice President for Child and Family Policy at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Michael Yanof, an attorney from Dallas and foster parent, and Judge Richard Garcia of the Bexar County Children's Court.

Justice Guzman announced that the Commission's annual report covering fiscal years 2015 and 2016 is now available and has been included with the meeting materials.

Commissioner Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced that three Commissioners will transition off on November 30, 2016: Judge Bonnie Hellums, Dr. Octavio Martinez, and Judge Judy Warne.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes

There were no changes to the Collaborative Council. Justice Guzman announced that the Collaborative Council Report will occur earlier on the meeting agenda than in past meetings. This change reflects the Commission's desire to better engage with the council and hear from council members present at today's meeting. Justice Guzman also announced that the Commission staff hopes to hold an in-person Collaborative Council Meeting in 2017.

Committee Member Changes

Justice Guzman noted that Tina Amberboy will discuss the committee structure and membership changes during the Executive Director Report.

Staff Member Changes

Justice Guzman announced that Tiffany Roper has left the Commission as the Assistant Director and taken a position at the Department of Family and Protective Services as the Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective System (CPS). Kristi Taylor has been promoted to the Assistant Director of the Commission. The Commission has also hired a new staff attorney, Dylan Moench, who is in attendance today and will begin working at the Commission on October 17, 2016.

Ms. Tina Amberboy gave an update on the issue of federal funding of the Court Improvement Program (CIP), noting there have been many conference calls lately with the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Ms. Amberboy explained that the CIP funds are made up of three grants: Basic, Data and Training. The Congressional Budget Office categorized each grant differently, but the entire CIP is included in the Family First Act, which is currently in the U.S. Senate but does not look favorable to move forward. Ms. Amberboy noted that the Commission may see a reduction in funding for fiscal year 2017.

Justice Guzman reported on the Strategic Planning Committee meeting recently held, with Judge Dean Rucker as the Chair. The committee discussed the Commission's plan for the next ten years and areas for improvement.

Justice Guzman clarified the Commission voting procedures and quorum requirements, noting that Ex Officio commissioners, those members who are appointed by the Governor, Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House, are much-appreciated and valued on the Commission, but are not voting members and are not counted in the number for quorum. Justice Guzman also announced that a proxy who attends a

meeting on behalf of a Commissioner does not need to vote. Additionally, a proxy will not be counted in the number for quorum.

Adoption of June 10, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2, noted that members had the opportunity to review the minutes. Justice Guzman asked if there were any other corrections or discussion. There were no corrections or discussion points raised.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to adopt the meeting minutes of the June 10, 2016 meeting. Ms. Vicki Spriggs motioned to adopt the minutes; the motion was seconded. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the meeting minutes unanimously.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Rob Hofmann reported on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which passed in December 2015 and replaced the No Child Left Behind Act. ESSA will go into effect in December 2016. Judge Hofmann reported on a recent series of webinars hosted by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services focused on the foster care provisions in ESSA, which featured Texas in the final webinar “Ensuring Educational Stability.” Judge Hofmann and Ms. Jamie Bernstein of the Children’s Commission provided a presentation on statewide efforts to develop and implement the Texas Blueprint for the webinar. Judge Hofmann noted that representatives from the Commission’s Foster Care and Education Committee presented at the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE) conference held in Austin in July 2016. Judge Hofmann reported on a presentation on local collaborations at the Education Advocacy for Children in the Foster Care System: A Symposium and Community Conversation, hosted by the Southern Methodist University’s Dedman School of Law on August 12, 2016. Also in July 2016, Judge Hofmann spoke at the Coalition for Children Conference in Florida.

Judge Hofmann reported on the work being done in Region 9 to increase capacity, and to support the efforts of DFPS and the agencies who license the placement facilities. Judge Hofmann also noted some Blueprint Implementation highlights, reporting that the committee continues to meet quarterly, is focused on the work around data, and continue to work towards bridging the gap between TEA and DFPS to share data.

Hon. Bonnie Hellums reported on the Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) conference in June 2016 in Houston. Judge Hellums also reported on her recent work around Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorders (FASD) and the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD). Judge Hellums announced that she was recently appointed to the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD Board of Directors, which focuses on prevention efforts, and is also working with the City of Houston’s Sobering Center and Transformational Board.

Justice Michael Massengale announced two upcoming Training Committee projects: the Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC), scheduled for November 14-16, 2016, and the Trial Skills Training (TST) set for December 7-9, 2016, both in Austin. The December TST has received over 60 applications for the 21 available spots for the training. TST applications will be accepted until September 25, 2016. Justice Massengale reported on the appellate courts, noting issues surrounding representation of parents and parent's rights, specifically those regarding the *Anders* procedure and notification issues regarding unknown fathers.

Ms. Vicki Spriggs reported on the seventy two CASA programs that serve 213 of 254 counties in Texas. Ms. Spriggs announced that in fiscal year 2016, Texas CASA saw a 7.7% increase in the number of volunteers, and continued to report that the recruitment awareness campaign will be implemented state-wide in 2017. Texas CASA anticipates an increase of volunteers in 2017 also. Ms. Spriggs noted that the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) will expand to include work surrounding Permanent Management Conservatorship (PMC). Ms. Spriggs announced the annual Texas CASA Conference is scheduled for November 3-5, 2016 in Dallas and that scholarships are available through the CIP for attorneys who would like to attend the conference.

Hon. Mary Murphy announced the completion of the second formal evaluation of the associate judges who hear CPS cases in Texas, as mandated by the Legislature. Judge Murphy noted that the process is an effective tool for the evaluation of judges.

Ms. Sheila Craig updated the Commission on the work at the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities (CEDD) announcing that CEDD has created a specialized team to evaluate agency policy and recommend changes to ensure that policies remain equitable. Ms. Craig reported that CEDD is creating an operational tool to teach other systems and partners how to use the Texas model, in hopes that it will assist in mitigating disproportionality and disparities. Ms. Craig reported on various trainings throughout Texas, including the Courageous Conversations, Poverty Simulations, Health Equity classroom trainings, and Mental Health First Aid training. CEDD provides the Mental Health First Aid training both within the agency and to community partners as well. Ms. Craig highlighted the classroom training Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, which focuses on providing tools and resources to agencies and organizations that provide health care services to ensure their services, communication, and engagement are equitable and fair. The training has been presented to over 1,000 people and have over 600 health care providers who have committed to maintaining a standard of health equity in their organization. Ms. Craig also reported that as part of Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) transformation, the Office of Border Affairs has moved to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and has joined with the Office of Border Health, now collectively called the Office of Border Services at DSHS. CEDD also received an additional staff person from DFPS, Ms. Damaris Nicholson, as part of the transformation.

Ms. Craig then debriefed on the recent Cross Systems Summit held on August 16 – 17, 2016 in San Marcos, noting there were 416 attendees. Ms. Craig also reported on the CEDD State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities, which was created following a legislative mandate

and includes partners that represent every agency within HHSC and 16 community partners. The Coalition's report is due to State leaders and Legislature in December 2016. Ms. Craig announced that CEDD recently held a Courageous Conversations event in Tyler that focused on infant mortality. Ms. Craig also announced that CEDD has received a federal grant of \$10 million from the Office of Minority Health, and will focus on communities in Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Laredo on issues around obesity and chronic disease. Evaluating and providing recommendations for the revision of twenty one HHSC Medicaid Managed Care organizations culturally competency plans, adding questions to the Medicaid Consumer Assessment of Health Care Providers survey that address the racial and disparate impacts of the services on communities.

Senator Royce West reported on his focus on kinship care, and discussed the kinship care and permanency care assistance programs with DFPS representatives, Ms. Katie Olse and Ms. Kristene Blackstone, and Judge Darlene Byrne. Senator West noted that an analysis of kids in foster care and kids in permanency care that continue their education after high school would be helpful to the legislative committee.

Hon. Michael Schneider provided an update on the work being done in Harris County to focus on dual status youth - youth who are dually involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems - and noted the collaboration with My Brother's Keeper of Houston, the Houston Endowment and the group FSG. Judge Schneider continued to report that My Brother's Keeper of Houston has also partnered to work with the Houston Independent School District on dual status youth. Judge Schneider reported that the BBC News television network has filmed a documentary on human trafficking issues in Harris County, with particular interest in how their local CPS office works with victims of human trafficking. Judge Schneider reported on his work with the Redirect Diversion Program, which is run by City of Houston Department of Health to help mentor kids who are already in the juvenile justice system and are at-risk. Judge Schneider noted that he hopes to provide an updated report in the future on the implementation process for a cross-over court in Harris County to hear cases with dual status youth.

Dr. Octavio Martinez announced that the Hogg Foundation has developed a toolkit in partnership with National Child Traumatic Stress Network and SafePlace in Travis County to work with children who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Dr. Martinez also announced the third edition of A Guide to Understanding Mental Health Systems and Services in Texas is in the final stages of production and will be available in Fall 2016. Dr. Martinez noted to contact the Hogg Foundation for copies both the toolkit and mental health guide.

Cindy Patrick updated the Commission on the Meadows Foundation's possible funding projects, including advocacy groups in preparation for 85th session, Texans Care for Children and Texas Appleseed, as well as prevention programs and home visiting programs proposals from TexProtects. Ms. Patrick recently attended the second convening of a group of foundations from North Texas to discuss child welfare issues. Ms. Patrick noted the meeting focused primarily on the Family First Prevention Act and announced that another meeting is scheduled for October to discuss Foster Care Redesign and hear a report from the Redesign program in Region 2B.

Dr. Andrew Keller reported on the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute's (MMHPI) work regarding children with high needs in the foster care system and efforts to identify providers that can build capacity in Texas. Dr. Keller introduced Ms. Michelle Harper. Ms. Harper remarked on her prior experience at HHSC with behavioral health and Medicaid. Dr. Keller announced that the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance program has been implemented and will receive funding again in October 2016. The program aims to help children and family members of military families, and Dr. Keller encouraged members to recommend the program to families when applicable. Dr. Martinez also encouraged members to spread the word about the program, as the grants haven't been fully maximized in Texas. Justice Guzman noted the Commission is able to collaborate to disseminate information on the issue to child welfare judges and attorneys in Texas.

Dr. Keller introduced Mr. Philip Ritter, noting that Mr. Ritter is currently leading efforts with the judiciary to form a committee on policy around mental health. Mr. Ritter reported that the Texas Judicial Council created a mental health committee and asked Judge Camile DuBose to chair. The committee is charged with creating recommendations to make to the legislature during the 85th session in January and to develop the committee's structure. Mr. Ritter also discussed another legal issue that MMHPI is currently focused on – the law requiring the parity of mental health benefits and efforts to comply with the law.

Ms. Luanne Southern updated the Commission on Casey Family Program's work with the court systems and reported that she has collaborated with Judge Robin Sage and Ms. Tina Amberboy to accommodate requests from judges from other states to visit the Commission and learn about their model for the CIP. Ms. Southern reported on one of Casey's primary missions, which is to reduce the need for foster care by looking at the causes for increases into the foster care system and finding avenues to work with communities and states to address those causes. Ms. Southern noted that this work specifically targets removals from neglect due to substance abuse and/or mental illness. Ms. Southern announced Casey's work with the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division of DFPS to develop a Strategic Plan and on efforts to offer financing and support to programs that focus on issues of safety, permanency, and well-being in Texas. Ms. Southern reported that Casey is working with the new leadership at DFPS and has scheduled a meeting with various Casey staff and the DFPS leadership. Ms. Southern also announced that Casey plans to invest more in Texas within the next year, especially in partnership with DFPS. Ms. Southern noted that the Austin field office director position is currently vacant and accepting applications.

Hon. Gary Coley discussed local collaborations in McLennan County, including the group UnBound's work to fight human trafficking. Judge Coley reported on one training session that involved members of the community, law enforcement, CPS, juvenile justice system, schools, foster parents, and parents in McLennan County to discuss a case study of a child who had been in several parts of state, in CPS care, in several juvenile probation departments, attended multiple schools districts, and placed in several homes. Judge Coley noted this particular case study was used to demonstrate to stakeholders the importance of communication between systems to ensure that the needs of children involved in multiple systems are being met. Judge Coley announced that the community roundtable's next session will be

held in October and will plan to meet several times per year. Judge Coley reported on the cross over youth program, which is a collaboration between probation departments, the district attorney's office, CPS, and local CASA programs to exchange ideas and find solutions for issues such as placement needs for youth. Judge Coley also announced a meeting with the school districts and Justice of the Peace courts in McLennan County to discuss issues surrounding truancy cases. Foster parents have approached Judge Coley who are interested in creating a program to allow foster parents or relative placements to have a brief respite care program for a child or multiple children, similar to the Mother's Day Out program. Judge Coley further mentioned that some interest has been expressed in seeking to have legislation created to offer this type of program to foster parents.

Justice Guzman noted that the case study may be of interest for training at the Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC), if he is able to share. Ms. Amberboy introduced Judge Coley to Ms. Maureen Metteauer in Rep. James Frank's office.

Paula Bibbs-Samuels reported on the work being done to have a parent from every region in Texas represented on the statewide board. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels noted that the regions meet monthly and want to include parents involved in CPS cases, especially those in the beginning stages of their case, to offer more support and provide information regarding what to expect and their rights. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels reported on the Statewide Parent Collaboration Group, which meets quarterly to discuss policy and receive training on public speaking, how to propose and enact change, and other topics. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels will speak at the Partners in Prevention conference on September 30, 2016. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels asked that judges who hear CPS cases consider including the regional meetings on the plan of service for parents.

Hon. Peter Sakai gave an overview of the Bexar County Redesign data and metrics, available at the following link: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/73902/Bexar-County-Childrens-Court-Presentation-6-10-16.pdf>. Judge Sakai noted that Redesign has produced favorable results, including a decrease in the caseworker turnover rate, a reduction of caseworker caseloads, and increased stability. Judge Sakai reported on the early intervention efforts in the Infant Toddler Court in Bexar County, noting the focus to engage foster parents with biological parents.

Hon. Richard Garcia announced that Bexar County is working to set aside funds to assist families in kinship care or who have been a part of safety plans for an extended period to provide representation by an attorney ad litem (AAL) in an effort to avoid more families entering the system.

Hon. Frank Rynd discussed his work with the non-profit Child Advocates in Houston and discussed a recent intensive survey of former volunteers for Child Advocates, noting reasons for leaving included missing work (sometimes without pay), extensive time spent at the courthouse, and security at courthouse as inhibitive to attendance. Judge Rynd reported that he has met with Judge David Farr to get badges for Child Advocates (CA) volunteers to more easily access courthouse. Judge Rynd also reported that he is looking to provide an opportunity for CA volunteers to testify via Skype or another method. Judge Rynd announced that the Catholic Charities, Episcopal Diocese of Houston, and others

to develop a program with Ms. Susan McDowell of LifeWorks called Open Table, which would provide a service for young people who have aged out of the foster care system to engage with a network of adult mentors.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Irene Clements, Texas Foster Family Association (TFFA) announced the TFFA Conference will be held in San Antonio in October 2016 and the National Annual Foster Parent Association Conference will be held in Houston in June 2017. The national conference will include topics such as kinship care, adoption and human trafficking in addition to foster care and foster parents. Ms. Clements reported on efforts with DFPS around kinship care and working with kinship families. Ms. Clements announced that the SAFE Annual Global Conference on Human Trafficking will take place in Falls Church, Virginia on October 9-11, 2016. Ms. Clements also reported on a project with United Health Care to write a curriculum that focuses on the values of foster care, adoption, and kinship care.

Sandra Hachem, Harris County Attorney's Office echoed the importance of the *Anders* briefing issue raised by Justice Massengale and noted that is often is a cause of delay in cases. Ms. Hachem cited a case in case members are interested: *In the Interest of P. RJE*, 499 S.W.3d 571 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 2016). Ms. Hachem also expressed her interest in collaborating with others on legislation in the upcoming session.

Sarah Worthington, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) gave a report on behalf of Mary Christine Reed of TRLA, announcing that the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project's longtime paralegal Kristina Gritter is transitioning off the project and TRLA is now recruiting for the position and would like to give preference to a former foster youth.

Mara Friesen, Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Division (CSD) reported on the effort with DFPS on the crossover of CSD with the foster care system, noting the creation of a satellite case in the CSD system which helps get money to relative caregiver or kinship placement easier. Ms. Friesen suggested another solution for the issues surrounding orders in that when an order names the department as managing conservator it also note to whom child support should be paid.

Justice Guzman noted that the Commission staff can work with CSD to produce an information piece for judges on this issue.

Barbara Elias-Perciful, Texas Lawyers for Children discussed a recent meeting with the State Bar of Texas (Bar) President-elect Tom Vick and Michelle Hunter, Executive Director of the Bar, and Ray Cantu, Deputy Director of the Bar, wherein Ms. Elias-Perciful alerted the Bar to the unmet legal needs of children in Texas and the need for more pro bono lawyers working with children in the child welfare system. Ms. Elias-Perciful encouraged members of the Commission to contact President Vick via email if interested in supporting these ideas. Ms. Elias-Perciful also reported on her work with the Family Law Foundation to get a legislative mandate that children growing up in PMC are entitled to a lawyer for the duration of their case.

Presentation by Children's Commission

Mr. Patrick Passmore discussed the four grant applications for fiscal year 2017, available at the following link: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/78811/FINAL-Grant-Application-Presentation-9-23-Commission-Mtg.pdf>

Hon. Dean Rucker reported on his service on a task force produced from the last legislative session on improving outcomes for children who are adjudicated of a sex offense. Judge Rucker reported that the task force has been meeting since last December, and has heard testimonies from experts in the field, families, and other sources. The task force has discussed the propriety of automatic registration of children as sex offenders under Chapter 62 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the quality of sex offender treatment, and the quality and consistency of training. Judge Rucker announced the task force's next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2016 in Austin, which will feature a presentation from the subgroup charged with drafting recommendations for the Legislature to consider as a part of the overall report. The task force will file its report with the Legislature in December 2016 and will continue to operate until December 2017.

Judge Rucker continued to report as the Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, which was formed to develop a plan for the Commission through 2021, to review the 2007 Supreme Court order establishing the Commission and recommend changes, and to review the Commission mission statement and operating procedures. Judge Rucker reported that the committee agreed no changes were needed to either the court order or mission statement, and also further agreed no proxy voting should be allowed at Commission meetings.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, Ms. Tina Amberboy

Ms. Amberboy discussed the Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2021, available at the following link: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/78808/FINAL-9-23-16-PPT.pdf>

Ms. Amberboy directed members to review the Financial Report handout. Ms. Amberboy noted that the total budget amount for fiscal year 2017 is \$1,902,580.00.

ACTION: Justice Guzman asked for a motion to approve the budget for fiscal year 2017. Judge Frank Rynd motioned to adopt the budget; Judge Bonnie Hellums seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the budget for fiscal year 2017 unanimously.

Ms. Rebecca Lightsey updated the Commission on the feasibility study regarding the establishment of a foundation on child welfare. Ms. Lightsey noted that the study remains in Phase 1, to assess the interest or need for such a foundation by interviewing other foundations, stakeholders, and interested parties. Twenty interviews and focused discussions have been completed. Ms. Lightsey highlighted some of the needs pointed out during the interviews: the need for more Texas-specific data; a more targeted information about what is an what is not working; the need for data by locality to identify best practices on a local level; the need for an entity that can focus on long term solutions; the need for an entity that

could leverage information and data from number of different data sources; the need for an entity that is a true independent source of analysis; and the need for more evidence-based analysis to identify best practices. Ms. Lightsey further noted that some stakeholders expressed caution and skepticism about the need for such a foundation, the duplication of efforts, and the ability to establish an entity truly independent of the interests of particular groups or political factors. Ms. Lightsey also touched on the federal government's interest in the collection of data through the CIP and the issues currently surrounding the CIP funding. Ms. Lightsey reported that next steps include a stakeholder survey before moving forward to Phase 2 of the study, which will determine financial viability and governing structure of such a foundation.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE REPORT

Hon. Robin Sage reported on her work on the Commission's Strategic Planning Committee and work with Commission staff on the development of the 2016 CWJC agenda. Judge Sage also noted the implementation of a judicial survey to those judges who hear cases from participants of the 2016 April TST in an effort to get the judge's feedback on the impact of the training.

DFPS UPDATE, Assistant Commissioner for CPS Kristene Blackstone announced that CPS has hired four new Regional Directors. Ms. Blackstone also announced the release of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a second DFPS region to establish a Foster Care Redesign program following the success of the program in the Fort Worth area. Ms. Blackstone discussed an integrated case care management program, which could possibly better serve the acute needs of high needs children and expects an RFP to be issued soon. Ms. Blackstone announced an upcoming meeting in El Paso to discuss a new project that will be in the FBSS stage of service and include contracted services with an outside broker to develop an array of evidence-based services. Ms. Blackstone reported that an RFP is expected to follow the scheduled meeting in October. DFPS has launched the Family Strength and Needs Assessment (FSNA) and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) on September 1, 2016. More information available here: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/73574/CANS-FSNA-PDF.pdf>.

Ms. Blackstone announced a new project in the investigative stage of service, the Information Analyst Pilot, scheduled to test in Williamson and Milam counties. The Pilot will include coordinating with DPS on priority 1 and 2 case referrals to help identify the environments the caseworker can expect to encounter. Ms. Blackstone followed up on Safety Summits hosted this summer, noting an occupancy report has been issued and that DFPS has held meetings in regions to discuss children that are struggling to be placed. DFPS is working with faith-based groups across the state to identify temporary home settings for children who need a placement. Ms. Blackstone announced that DFPS is currently accepting applications for a faith-based initiatives director. Ms. Blackstone also announced that the Lt. Governor will host a Faith Based Leaders Summit on November 2, 2016 at Capitol. Ms. Blackstone reported that DFPS is in the process of setting up a kinship collaboration that will serve kinship parents in a similar way as the Parent Collaboration Group serves parents.

Judge Garcia discussed a situation involving group homes. Judge Sage inquired on the release date of the special master report. Mr. Trevor Woodruff noted that an extension has been granted to file the report on November 4, 2016.

Ms. Katie Olse reported as Deputy Commissioner of DFPS, on behalf of Commissioner Whitman. Ms. Olse announced that DFPS recently published its Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) and is available on the website at https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Financial_and_Budget_Information/. Ms. Olse noted that many legislative presentations were made over the summer and are also available online.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE, Mr. David Slayton

Mr. Slayton gave a presentation on the Texas Child Protective Services Workload Assessment Final Report, available online at <http://www.txcourts.gov/media/1436073/texas-child-protective-workload-final-report-2016.pdf>. Mr. Slayton noted that the Office of Court Administration (OCA) has requested four additional child protection courts: one in the Taylor county area, one in Hood county, one in the Hunt county area, and one in Williamson county and adjacent eastern counties. Judge Byrne announced that Travis County has asked OCA to do this type of study for juvenile justice cases.

Judge Byrne announced that NCJFCJ will begin a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy, and that Travis County will host a training on November 8, 2016.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Guzman announced the date of the next Commission Meeting is February 10, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3



**SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS PERMANENT JUDICIAL
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families

Report to Commission

February 10, 2017

The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701

Updated on February 10, 2017

I. Goal: Encourage judicial leadership, accountability, and appropriate oversight of child protection cases to improve safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.

I.A. Objective: Participate and provide resources to statewide collaborative efforts to improve child safety.

I.A.1. Strategy: Collaborate and support agency and partner efforts to examine, secure, assess and improve child safety.

Progress Report

Activities:

- Serve on the DFPS Prevention Advisory Committee
- Support implementation of the recommendations issued by the Protect Our Kids Commission

The Prevention Advisory Committee convened by the Prevention and Early Intervention Division of DFPS was a key recommendation from the Protects our Kids Commission (POK). The POK Commission was established by Senate Bill 66 during the 83rd Legislative Session and was charged with identifying promising practices and strategies to address and reduce fatalities from child abuse and neglect and recommending a comprehensive statewide strategy for reducing those fatalities. The PAC includes representatives such as pediatricians, judges, child welfare agency representatives, prosecutors, medical examiners, provider groups, and policy experts in prevention and community advocacy.

2/10/17 Update:

CC staff attended the November 18, 2016 PAC meetings hosted by DFPS. CC staff and Justice Guzman also attended Faith Leader's Summit on November 2, 2016. The ED, along with Judge Ryan Larsen who also serves on the PAC) are scheduled to meet with agency personnel on February 3, 2017 to discuss community outreach and judicial leadership and involvement.

I.B. Objective: Support the improvement of education outcomes for children in the conservatorship of DFPS to increase opportunities for educational progress, leading to a more productive and stable adult life.

I.B.1. Strategy: Implement the Texas Blueprint.

Progress Report

Activities:

- Staff the standing Foster Care and Education (FC&E) Committee
- Ensure the committee meets periodically to assess progress of implementation of the Texas Blueprint
- Promote continued collaboration between education, child welfare, and the courts
- Seek guidance of top-level judicial, education, and child welfare leadership, as necessary
- Develop and promote cross-system training opportunities to increase awareness about the educational needs of students in DFPS conservatorship and develop capacity to respond to those needs
- Facilitate use of data to inform systems improvements in both education and child welfare systems, including data related to higher education
- Create and monitor workgroups or subcommittees to carry out charge or purpose of the FC&E Committee

The Foster Care and Education (FC&Ed) Committee was established in 2015 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations, issued in 2012.

There are four FC&Ed subcommittees: Data, Postsecondary, Special Education, and Local Collaboration. The Data Workgroup focuses on improved information-sharing and data collection between DFPS and the Texas Education Agency. The Postsecondary Workgroup focuses on issues of college or career readiness, identification of students currently or formerly in care, supports to encourage better outcomes beyond high school, developing resources to assist new foster care liaisons at institutions of higher education, and data exchange between DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The Special Education Workgroup focuses on the over and underrepresentation of students in foster care in special education as well as transition planning in the child welfare and special education contexts, training and designation of surrogate parents, and best practices surrounding confidentiality. The Local Collaboration Workgroup focuses on strategies to promote collaboration at the local level.

The CPS Bench Book also includes a chapter and checklist on education issues which have been updated for the 2016 version.

[2/10/17 Update:](#)

In October 2016, CC staff participated in a panel presentation with THECB, CPS, and higher education professionals entitled "Identifying, Connecting, and Serving Former Foster Care Youth in Higher Education." The training was provided at the Texas Association of College & University Student Personnel Administrators conference and yielded a robust conversation about the unique needs of former foster youth in the higher education environment.

From November to December 2016, the Local Collaboration Workgroup distributed a statewide survey to identify best practices and target areas for improvement on issues related to foster care and school stability. The survey yielded over 500 responses from judges, attorneys, CPS personnel, school district employees, CASA advocates, and caregivers. The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing, is currently assisting with interpreting the survey results. The survey results will be used to inform the work of all the FC&Ed workgroups as it

	<p>represents input from individuals working with children in foster care throughout the state.</p> <p>In December 2016, the FC&Ed Committee approved the continuation of the Data, Postsecondary, Special Education, and Local Collaboration Workgroups. The committee also decided to address discipline and school-based behavioral interventions and supports in 2017.</p> <p>CC staff collaborated with the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Association of School Boards, and CPS to develop resources related to implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA includes important provisions that went into effect December 10, 2016 related to students in foster care. To access the ESSA Q & A, link here: http://tea.texas.gov/ESSAfostercare_qa.pdf. A Jurist in Residence and an Attorney Resource Letter about the transportation provisions in ESSA were released on January 27, 2017.</p>
<p>I.C. Objective: Promote awareness of and embed a culture and practice among the judiciary and legal community around Trauma Informed Care so that the legal and judicial community is aware, educated and supportive of the concept and application.</p>	
<p><i>I.C.1. Strategy: Partner with Trauma and Mental Health advocates and agencies to ensure the legal and judicial community is aware, educated, supportive of, and implementing and applying principles of Trauma Informed Care in the respective disciplines.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlight importance of child well-being among judiciary and other stakeholders - Liaise with and participate as a partner in the various trauma-informed workgroups and collaborative groups - Monitor the trauma-informed care trainings, workgroups, meetings, strategies, timelines and provide reports to the CC and other stakeholders as appropriate 	<p>The 2016 Child Protection Law Bench Book includes an updated chapter on trauma.</p> <p>Pursuant to SB125 from the 84th Legislature, DFPS launched a comprehensive assessment that includes a trauma screening on September 1, 2016. The CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment) is used in conjunction with a Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to provide a comprehensive assessment for family service planning.</p> <p>The CC also continues to support DFPS’s shift to a trauma-informed care system and in addition to developing and promoting an attorney training about trauma-informed care, will include a session on Trauma Informed Courts at the annual judicial conference in November 2016.</p> <p>The Child Protection Law Bench Book also includes an updated chapter on trauma. Pursuant to SB125 from the 84th Legislature, DFPS launched a comprehensive</p>

assessment that called the CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment) that is used in conjunction with a Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to provide a comprehensive assessment for family service planning.

2/10/17 Update:

Following the 2015 Trauma-Informed Care survey and 2016 report issued by Texas CASA, the Children's Commission, in partnership with Texas CASA and the Shield Ayers Foundation, created a one-hour training to help introduce trauma-informed care to Attorneys ad Litem, Guardians ad Litem and CASA volunteers. The presentation includes strategies for advocating for children in courtrooms, schools, and placements to meet each child's unique needs. Other topics include how trauma influences a child's ability to communicate about the case and how to appropriately respond to a child's trauma-related behaviors. The CC worked with the SBOT to secure MCLE credit for this presentation. Please link here for more information:

[http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/training/continuing-legal-education-\(cle\).aspx](http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/training/continuing-legal-education-(cle).aspx)

The CC distributed a Jurist in Residence Letter and an Attorney Resource Letter on 9/30/16 on the use of CANS and FSNA. You may link to both here:

<http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/73574/CANS-FSNA-PDF.pdf>;

<http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/74097/ARL-CANS-FSNA.pdf>.

The November 15th annual judicial conference included a session on Trauma Informed Courts.

The A.D. participated in several trauma-informed workgroups and meetings including The Travis County Collaborative for Children (TCCC Advisory Council) which endeavors to bring system-wide change for improved healing and well-being of children in the Travis County foster care system. The TCCC is based on Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development. TCCC hosts TBRI Community gatherings, coaching and support sessions, and free trainings.

Another collaboration in trauma work involves the Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship Support and Preservation (QIC-AG). The A. D. serves on an advisory committee for this grant-funded national pilot project that is studying evidence-based models in eight states to address the pre and post permanency needs of children in foster care. The Texas QIC-AG will implement Pathways to Permanence

	<p>2: Parenting Children who Have Experienced Trauma and Loss from the Kinship Center.</p> <p>The Texas QIC-AG is targeting children in PMC in Region 7 who meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children whose biological parents have had their parental rights terminated and do not have a finalization hearing scheduled within 60 days; or • Children whose biological parents have not have their parental rights terminated or only partial termination of parent right has occurred and who have been in care for two years or more.
<p>I.D. Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically Child Sexual Exploitation so that the judicial system can assist in preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS’ conservatorship.</p>	
<p><i>I.D.1. Strategy: Collaborate with state and local partners to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of foster youth.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate with Office of Attorney General and Statewide Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force as well as the Office of the Texas Governor - Work with Child Welfare Agency on identification and assessment of children from child welfare system who are victims or at high risk of becoming victims of human trafficking - Gain understanding of existing data collection efforts and identify additional or new data collection elements or efforts needed - Coordinate and collaborate with child welfare agency and other child welfare partners on various programs and efforts to combat HT - Understand, participate and help identify HT placements and services available to foster children who are trafficked or at risk of being trafficked - Identify training needs for judges, attorneys, and other stakeholders - Collaborate on prevention efforts at state, regional, and local levels, as appropriate - Examine the connection between HT and crossover youth population 	<p>The CC is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness of human trafficking as it impacts children involved with the child welfare system.</p> <p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored trainings and updated the Child Protection Law Bench Book to include recent legislation regarding human trafficking and a one-page checklist on human trafficking added to the Bench Book as an additional resource for judges. Through JIR correspondence, the CC also relayed important information to judges hearing child welfare cases about the intersection of child welfare and human trafficking.</p> <p>The CC also participates in the nationwide Capacity Building Center for Courts PL 113-183 Constituency Group to learn about best and current practices to prevent and respond to trafficking of children and youth in foster care and attends local, state, and national training events, including the Family Focused Treatment Association conference sessions on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to judges and attorneys as needed.</p> <p>In addition to serving on the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the CC also works with the Office of the Texas Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team and the</p>

	<p>Office of Court Administration to develop strategies to improve judicial handling of child welfare cases where children or youth are at high risk of becoming trafficking victims.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>As a member of the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, CC staff attend Task Force meetings and contribute to statewide prevention efforts.</p> <p>Most recently, the CC provided information related to the intersection of human trafficking, child welfare, and the courts in the 2016 Report to the Legislature. For more information, link here: https://texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/agency/20162911_htr_fin.pdf.</p>
<p>I.E. Objective: Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may, in turn, help children and families exit the child welfare system more quickly.</p>	
<p><i>I.E.1. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability, quality, support, cost, training, and usefulness of mediation in CPS cases.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with the University of Texas at Austin to understand recent data analyses related to cost-effectiveness of mediation and outcomes for Travis County and how those outcomes can be applied statewide - Assess mediator training availability and needs - Assess potential costs, resources spent by counties, and funding sources for CPS mediation 	<p>In September 2014, UT applied for a grant to help determine the best practices and cost-effectiveness of mediation for Travis County, Texas. This project also aimed to develop a cost formula that could be applied to other counties in the state and to provide a research framework and questions that can be used by other counties.</p> <p>Due to data delays associated with the SACWIS / child welfare system, the project was unable to be completed. UT produced a cost benefit report, however (linked here: http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/54517/Model-Court-Cost-Analysis-Memo-FINAL.pdf)</p> <p>In April 2016, the CC surveyed 85 judges about the availability, frequency, usefulness, funding options and benefits of mediation in CPS cases. That survey was analyzed by UT and the results were presented at the Child Welfare Judicial conference in November 2016.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p>

	<p>In the fall of 2016, Dr. Cynthia Osborne of the Child and Family Research Partnership at UT Austin completed her analysis of the Children’s Commission 2016 Mediation Judicial Survey and presented her findings at the 2016 Child Welfare Judges Conference in Austin in November 2016. The analysis revealed that mediation is widely used in Texas and is considered effective and beneficial by jurisdictions which use it. Despite the level of satisfaction and the perceived benefits of mediation, the survey also revealed that mediation is used almost exclusively after the second permanency hearing when the parties are getting ready for trial.</p> <p>The results of the study were also discussed at the Legal Representation Committee Meeting on January 27, 2017, focusing on what information still needs to be gathered, and what further changes need to be made to maximize the benefits of mediation as a tool in child welfare cases.</p> <p>In FY2017, the CC hopes to establish a workgroup to explore further the barriers to using mediation, possible funding sources, training availability, and practice standards for mediators.</p>
<p>I.F. Objective: Collaborate with the full continuum of providers, including health and mental health providers, to identify ways to enhance effective and efficient services and supports for children in foster care and their caregivers.</p>	
<p><i>I.F.1. Strategy: Partner and collaborate with the residential provider community.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CC Staff will serve on the Public-Private Partnership for Foster Care Redesign - Confer and attend meetings of the Texas Chapter of the Family Focused Treatment Association and other child placing collaboratives 	<p>CC Executive Director continues to serve on the DFPS Public Private Partnership, which is the DFPS committee that provides advice and input into the state’s Foster Care Redesign effort.</p> <p>CC staff will also attend the 2017 Family Focused Treatment Association meetings and annual conference to stay informed about provider concerns and look for opportunities to connect the provider community to the judiciary and legal communities to help improve placement stability and capacity concerns.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>E.D. attended the October 2016 and January 2017 PPP meetings.</p>

	<p>E.D. presented to FFTA provider group on 11/08/16 and will present to the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services in February 2017.</p> <p>Also, via a JIR and an ARL (discussed herein), CC staff shared an e-notification announcement with provider partners in December to encourage and increase engagement and participation in court proceedings by ensuring that parties and interested persons receive notice of hearings held by Child Protection Courts (CPCs).</p>
<p><i>I.F.2. Strategy: Lead a Child Welfare Trauma Consortium to create a trauma-informed child welfare system that better meets the needs of children who have experienced trauma.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify best practices in TIC both in Texas and nationally - Identify key TIC players in Texas and catalog their efforts and activities to provide a more comprehensive picture of what organizations are already doing to address TIC training and services, including an analysis of how Texas can leverage existing models - Assess the need for a statewide coordination plan regarding TIC - Examine payment and coordination barriers to serving foster care children who have experienced trauma - Assess data regarding how TIC practices affect systems with respect to costs and level of care - Partner with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to create a report reflecting the TIC research - Assemble a multi-disciplinary Consortium to develop an implementation plan for creating a TIC child welfare system - Facilitate collaboration to implement plan to create a TIC child welfare system - Evaluate and apply findings 	<p>The CC has established a small working group with Texas CASA, DFPS, MMHPI, Hogg Foundation and others to develop a comprehensive trauma-informed care state strategy and practice model for all of child welfare system stakeholders.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>MMHPI has begun a consultation project to interview key informants, review existing literature, and create a report cataloguing their results. This process will identify the key TIC stakeholders in Texas and will provide a more comprehensive picture of what organizations are already doing to address TIC training and services how Texas can leverage existing models. Best practices will be considered for various roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary (e.g., foster parent); • Secondary (e.g., attorney, caseworker, guardian, educator, judge); or • Clinical contact with youth. <p>The report will include an operational definition of TIC and assess the need for a statewide coordination plan regarding TIC in the child welfare system.</p>

<p>II. Goal: Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.</p>	
<p>II.A. Objective: Create opportunities to bring together subject matter experts, judicial and executive branch leaders, and key policy makers so that important and urgent issues are examined and recommendations and solutions are identified.</p>	
<p>II.A.1. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other stakeholders to identify topics for Round Table discussions.</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Form workgroup to define the purpose and goal of each Round Table and solicit participation from experts to promote substantive discussion - Develop meeting materials and agendas - Secure facilitator and location - Handle RSVPs and travel reimbursements - Produce a written report within 4-6 months - Consider implementation strategies based on the report and recommendations 	<p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>Although there are no RT scheduled at this time, the CC has entered into a partnership with Casey Family Judicial Engagement Team to try and improve relationships, process, and outcomes in DFPS Region 3-East (Dallas). This effort may result in RT in FY2017.</p> <p>The first meeting between Casey JET and DFPS Region 3-E staff occurred on January 27, 2017.</p>
<p>II.B. Objective: Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support and JIR correspondence and communicate to ensure judges are equipped to make informed, educated decisions, and use best practices in conducting hearings that will contribute to better outcomes for children and families.</p>	
<p>II.B.1. Strategy: Maintain, update, and support a high-quality Child Protection Law Bench Book for CPS Judges (Bench Book).</p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists - Include tips and best and promising practices throughout Bench Book - Annually update Bench Book with new information, as needed - Disseminate updated Bench Book at annual child welfare judicial conference, annual college for new judges, and upon request - Maintain an updated Bench Book on the CC's website - Ensure all statutory citations are maintained and connected to an online resource 	<p>The CC staff finalized updates in October 2016 and uploaded the new version in November 2016.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>Approximately 100 Bench Books were distributed to judges who attended the Child Welfare Judicial Conference held on November 13 – 15, 2017.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track distribution of Bench Book 	<p>Additionally, Information about the Bench Book and the Children’s Commission was provided at the College For New Judges on December 11, 2016.</p> <p>Topics to be added and corrections are being tracked. The next update will occur after the 85th Legislative Session concludes.</p>
<p><i>II.B.2. Strategy: Provide JIR support to the judiciary and child welfare system.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with retired judges with child welfare experience to serve as JIRs - JIRs will participate in conference calls, meetings, and conferences as requested/needed - JIRs will release communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to judges hearing CPS cases - JIRs will market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities - Publish JIR letters with CC drafting and research assistance - With CC assistance, distribute to CPS judge listserv, and post JIR letters on the CC website - JIRs will provide judicial technical assistance to Children’s Commission, as needed - JIRs will help recruit, retain, and advance judicial leaders 	<p>The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR acts as a consultant, trainer, and speaker to provide expert and seasoned judicial advice on matters affecting courts and legal system handling of child welfare cases and issues. Additionally, informational letters and “blasts” concerning items of interests, such as training events, are routinely issued.</p> <p>Additionally, the JIRs assist with the development of curriculum for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and moderate several sessions of the conference. The JIRs also review updates to the Child Protection Law Bench Book and attend and participate in events on behalf of the CC, including Round Tables and Trial Skills Trainings.</p> <p>The JIR activities will remain much the same for FY2017, but additional emphasis will be placed on recruiting judges to serve on subcommittees and workgroups that oversee short-term and long-term projects, and elevating judicial leaders with particular expertise and interests related to child and family well-being and improving the child welfare system.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>Judge Robin Sage retired from JIR status in September 2016. Judge Dean Rucker continues to serve as JIR and regularly consults on amendments and additions to the CPS Judge Bench Book as well as other pressing or emergent issues brought to the CC’s attention by DFPS or other stakeholders. JIR and CC staff have started meeting regularly to discuss legislative issues and bills that potentially affect the Texas Family Code or other statutes closely related to the judicial handling of child protection cases.</p> <p>JIR Letters and Announcements Topics between September 2016 and February 2017:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes to DFPS Case Management System (IMPACT) - Every Student Succeeds Act Update - Parent Resource Guide Available in Spanish, Announcement: Parent Helpline Now Taking Calls - Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) and Family Strength and Needs Assessment (FSNA) - The Importance of Youth Voice in Court Proceedings - Notice and Engagement Email Notification Announcement - Hands-on Trial Skills Training Opportunity Announcement - Survey on Students in Foster Care - 2016 Bench Book, Children’s Commission Resources, Trial Skills Training May Application Reminder Deadline
<p>II.C. Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the CC website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.</p>	
<p><i>II.C.1. Strategy: Develop and distribute Attorney Resource Letters (ARLs) that communicate or announce changes in law, policy or practice and inform attorneys of training and other events.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and maintain a distribution list of any / all attorneys known to the CC to work on child protection dockets throughout the State of Texas - Publish communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to attorneys handling CPS cases - Post ALRs on the CC website - Provide shorter communications (Attorney Blasts) with attorneys regarding specific training opportunities and other matters of interest 	<p>In May 2016, the CC created a distribution list of more than 3,000 attorneys to inform legal practitioners of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay information about issues related to child welfare.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>The following ARLs were distributed to the Attorney d-list between May 2016 when the d-list was developed and February 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS) and Family Strength and Needs Assessment (FSNA) - New MCLE Video on Trauma-Informed Advocacy for Attorneys - The Importance of Youth Voice in Court Proceedings - Notice and Engagement Announcement - Hands-on Trial Skills Training Opportunity - Survey on Students in Foster Care, Announcement of archived CPS-related MCLE at Texas Bar CLE - Free ABA Teleconference: Youth Transitioning from Foster Care to Adulthood
<p><i>II.C.2. Strategy: Create and maintain an Attorney Resource webpage.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create an Attorney Resource page and link from CC homepage - Post relevant links, pages, reports, resources on the page - Maintain and update the page periodically 	<p>In FY2017, the CC will establish an attorney resource page that can be linked to from the CC home page.</p> <p>2/10/2017 Update:</p> <p>A webpage has been created to feature the Attorney Resource Letters and timely announcements. To view this webpage, link here:</p> <p>http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/training/attorney-education/attorney-resource-letter.aspx</p>
<p>II.D. Objective: Maintain and enhance the Children’s Commission website to provide an easily accessible, user-friendly resources for the judiciary, attorneys and the child welfare community to obtain information and best practices in their interactions with children and families.</p>	
<p><i>II.D.1. Strategy: Maintain and enhance usability and function of the Children’s Commission website.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On a regular basis, update the website with recent, up-to-date, and pertinent content and work with OCA for website support 	<p>In FY2017, the CC will update features of its website to improve its look as well as to reconfigure certain features to improve functionality and usefulness.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide links and resources related to each of the projects outlined in the Strategic Plan - Provide a portal for website visitors to submit inquiries or sign up for CC mailing lists and notification features - Use technology, such as Twitter, to communicate important news announcements and spread awareness about key events - Provide CIP grant application information and updated applications and forms 	<p>2/10/2017 Update:</p> <p>An update of the CC website is underway and expected to be complete by March 2017. Children’s Commission staff is working with OCA to complete the update.</p>
<p>II.E. Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders and organizations to enhance the opportunity to gain knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with and throughout Texas.</p>	
<p><i>II.E.1. Strategy: Provide assistance to local jurisdictions, DFPS, and other state and national partners.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secure speakers and/or provide funds for meeting support and facilitation - Make presentations at training events, as requested - Evaluate the effectiveness of the assistance 	<p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored the keynote speaker for the Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop, provided funding for the 2016 Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) conference, and made presentations about the Indian Child Welfare Act and Foster Care and Education at the Williamson County Bar Association annual attorney ad litem training.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>There has been no request for assistance to date.</p>
<p>II.F. Objective: Support the use of best practices in court case management.</p>	
<p><i>II.F.1. Strategy: Evaluate the quality, impact and usability of the Office of Court (OCA) Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS).</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with OCA on the management, programming, and testing services for CPCMS - Monitor bug fixes or enhancements required based on input from CPCMS users - Participate in the CPCMS Advisory Group to determine the nature and priority of CPCMS enhances and bug fixes 	<p>CPCMS is a case management system that is unique to Child Protection Courts. It has been in use since 2009. OCA provides project management, programming, and testing services for CPCMS. OCA staffs a CPCMS Advisory Council of CPC judges, OCA staff and CC staff to evaluate bug fixes or enhancements. CPCMS underwent a major upgrade of the CPCMS infrastructure and primary judge page in FY2015. Overall, these changes have made CPCMS more efficient and easier for judges and court coordinators to use. CPCMS is currently in maintenance mode, but OCA continually</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor equipment and software purchases required for proper and efficient operation and maintenance 	<p>works on the architecture to streamline how CPCMS functions and serves the needs of the CPC judges and court staff who it. Part of CPCMS management includes staffing an Advisory Committee that oversees the governance structure and works to continue enhancing the system as needed by the governance committee. OCA will conduct semi-annual governance meetings to establish priorities for CPCMS enhancements and to report the status of governance activities and will provide at least four software releases during the fiscal year.</p> <p>Another feature of CPCMS is data collection, which may be useful in monitoring outcome measures which in turn provide judges with meaningful feedback regarding court practices that affect safety, permanency, and well-being.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>OCA continues to maintain CPCMS by releasing software updates in response to user and system generated error reporting. CPCMS Application Upgrades:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. October 27, 2016, Version 6.4, Release 6, eliminated seven system/user reported errors. 2. November 17, 2016, Version 6.4 Release 7, corrected four additional system/user reported errors. <p>No CPCMS Advisory Group Meetings have been scheduled yet for FY17. The semi-annual group meetings are a priority this term and OCA is working on scheduling the same.</p>
<p><i>II.F.2. Strategy: Explore feasibility of providing support for specialty courts such as family treatment, crossover youth, and permanency dockets.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with judges who handle specialty court dockets - Develop and provide resources and tools helpful to specialty court judges - Assess the effectiveness of the assistance, resources, and tools 	<p>No activity to report at this time.</p>

III. Goal: Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.

III.A. Objective: Promote and support institutional collaboration among high-level state, legislative, and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders so there is open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners.

III.A.1. Strategy: Provide a forum and opportunity for child welfare stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs, and strengths.

Progress Report

Activities:

- Maintain a statewide multidisciplinary judicial commission
- Hold regular CC meetings that will include child welfare stakeholders
- Promote active participation by judges, the CC Executive Director, and DFPS in the federal review process
- Ensure the visible and joint involvement of a Supreme Court of Texas Justice and the DFPS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner of CPS, and Deputy Assistant Commissioner of CPS
- Maintain a collaborative council of child welfare advocates, stakeholders, and state agencies to promote collaboration in development and implementation of CIP initiatives
- Conduct bi-weekly collaborative calls involving a variety of stakeholders and participants
- Share information through CC website, judge and attorney distribution lists, and commission meetings and commission-sponsored events

The CC will work to develop and achieve shared goals and activities detailed in the CC Strategic Plan. CC partnerships over the past nine years has resulted in institutional changes that have led to improved outcomes for children and families.

Current collaboration efforts:

- DFPS leadership has a standing position on the Children’s Commission.
- At least one state-level DFPS staff member is on every CC committee.
- Participation in a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child-welfare stakeholders, including executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, and other child welfare stakeholders.
- DFPS and the CC will renew efforts to collaborate on the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP and CIP-SP.
- DFPS members have the opportunity to present at each CC meeting to provide information regarding DFPS initiatives and efforts.
- The CC ED and CC Staff serve on the State PIP Team, the statewide Foster Care Redesign Public Private Partnership Committee, the Prevention Advisory Council and many other DFPS-sponsored workgroups and subcommittees.
- Joint Court/DFPS attendance at the CIP Annual Conferences.
- DFPS leadership attends the annual child welfare judicial conference.

2/10/17 Update:

	<p>The CC has scheduled three commission meetings in FY2017 (February 10, May 12, and September 22). All 28 commission members, 45 collaborative council members, committee and subcommittee members, and interested persons are invited.</p> <p>DFPS leadership attended, facilitated, and presented at the November 2016 Annual Child Welfare Judges Conference. DFPS leadership also attended the September 2016 Commission meeting and is scheduled to attend the February 10th 2017 meeting.</p> <p>Meeting notebooks, reports, and attorney and judge communique are uploaded to the Children’s Commission website regularly.</p> <p>The E. D. has met regularly with DFPS regarding the results of the recent federal review, and the next meeting is set for February 9, 2017.</p> <p>The Children’s Commission has held regular by-weekly calls with stakeholders, and has continued to conduct regular subcommittee and workgroup meetings to help advance the strategies adopted by the Children’s Commission in September 2016.</p>
<p>III.B. Engage in policy and procedural improvements that advance child welfare system functionality, promote effective and equitable services, and ensure justice for all parties.</p>	
<p><i>III.B.1. Strategy: conduct the following activities and perform CQI evaluations of the same</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serve as facilitator and convener of substantive discussions related to child welfare matters, and produce related reports with recommended changes to judicial, attorney, child welfare, and advocate practice, as well as state policy and statute - Monitor, evaluate, and consult on proposed legislation for impact to the judiciary and the child welfare system, and provide research and testimony to the Texas Legislature, as requested - Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services, federal Administration of Children and Families officials, other CIPs, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, National Center for State Courts, National Association of Counsel for Children, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law on issues affecting child welfare policy and practice in Texas and nationally - Speak and present publicly in a variety of settings to audiences including congressional staff, national organizations, private foundations, state leadership, 	<p>The CC will serve as facilitator and convener of Round Table discussions, CIP committee and subcommittee meetings, and conference calls related to the short and long term projects in the strategic plan.</p> <p>In Legislative years, including 2017, the CC will monitor and evaluate legislation filed, and provide testimony and resources papers to the Legislature upon request. At all times, the CC will collaborate regularly with the welfare agency as well as national and state judicial and advocacy organizations.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>The Children’s Commission has held regular by-weekly calls with stakeholders, and has continued to conduct regular subcommittee and workgroup meetings to help advance the strategies adopted by the Children’s Commission in September 2016.</p>

<p>state legislators and staff, attorneys and advocates, and all levels of the Texas Judiciary, including the Supreme Court of Texas</p>	<p>The CC has also produced an annual report, an attorney ad litem training, and a Beyond The Bench Summit for the Supreme Court since September 2016.</p> <p>CC staff has also begun monitoring legislation and providing input to legislative matters upon request.</p> <p>See also Strategy III.A.1 and IX.A.1.</p>
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IV. Goal: Promote high quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, child and family involvement, and effective legal representation of parties.	
IV.A. Objective: Improve legal representation so that parents, children, and the State of Texas experience high-quality court hearings.	
<i>IV.A.1 Strategy: Work locally and nationally to improve all aspects of legal representation for parties.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate with Casey Family Program, ABA, and other CIPs to reform Texas legal representation system - Maintain a Legal Representation Committee and relevant, pertinent subcommittees, as appropriate 	<p>The CC will serve on the advisory committee of the Family Justice Initiative, which is a national group of key legal experts focused on improving legal representation nationwide. At a meeting in Denver in July, the group identified action steps to positively impact permanency through improved representation, how to build consensus on how to define permanence, removal avoidance, reunification, and strengthening families, and to identify what professionals in the legal system do that impacts permanency and strengthening families.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: This project has been named the Family Justice Initiative (FJI) and the work has been divided into eight workgroups. Texas will participate on the State Focus workgroup. The eight groups are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State Focus (to conduct a 50 state survey and identify best practice representation models throughout the country) 2. Quality Representation (to define and develop unity around what constitutes quality representation for children and parents) 3. Resource Development (to support the campaign) 4. Data & Research (to evaluate the value and outcomes of high quality representation for children and families, to assess the costs and savings of models and to integrate research and practice) 5. Communication (to craft a campaign message for different audiences) 6. Partnership Building (to build a network of campaign supporters) 7. Social justice/litigation (to look at how the law defines the legal rights at stake) and 8. Federal legislation (to secure long-term financial support for child and parent representation) <p>There is no additional information available related to this project to date. This project is being managed by Casey Family Programs and the ABA.</p>

<p><i>IV.A.2 Strategy: Work through the Legal Representation Committee and Training Committee to identify training needs, develop and host training events, and support efforts to ensure high quality legal representation for parties.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please see activities under Section III.A for training activities - LRC will convene at least twice each year to examine issues related to legal representation, due process, local community relationships, financial impact of legal representation, and legislative and policy considerations - Target subjects and opportunities for additional training focused on improving legal representation - Support the efforts of the TBLS Advisory Committee as described in IV.B.1 - Oversee the development of Standards of Representation as described in IV.C.1 	<p>The CC will maintain a Legal Representation Committee for FY2017. The LRC last met in July to discuss AAL Training, the new Attorney distribution list and Attorney Resource Letters, as well as the work of its two subcommittees: DFPS Representation and County Commissioners Court Relationships. The DFPS subcommittee focuses on improving the relationship between prosecutors and regional attorneys and collaboration on training for all attorneys representing the state and the County Commissioner subcommittee focuses on strengthening relationships with county organizations.</p> <p>The DFPS subcommittee created a practice guide for new prosecutors, and the CC-CR subcommittee published a guide in May to help judges in gathering information, assembling data, and presenting case to commissioner’s courts regarding what is a sufficient budget to pay for court appointed attorneys as well as what data would be useful and persuasive to underscore the need for and the importance of legal representation with particular emphasis on early appointment.</p> <p>On June 3rd, the CC sent a survey related to compensation rates, timing of, and duration of appointments to over 3000 attorneys. The survey closed on July 6th with 299 responses. Attorneys representing children and parents made up the vast majority of respondents, 87 percent, and attorneys representing the Department made up about 13 percent. The results of the survey are available from the Children’s Commission.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>The LRC Committee met on January 27, 2017 to discuss AAL Training, Attorney Resource Letters, receive updates from the DFPS Representation subcommittee, the Parent Resource Group, and the TBLS Advisory Committee, as well as analyze the results of the CC’s judicial mediation survey, and address the current legislative session.</p> <p>Additionally, The LRC Committee discussed the request of Texas House Representative James Frank (Wichita Falls), that the Children’s Commission will</p>

	<p>submit a proposal to conduct a study of legal representation in Texas child protection cases. The study proposes to examine the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Method of Appointment II. Judicial Oversight and Accountability III. Attorney Qualifications and Training IV. Timing and Duration of Appointment V. Compensation Rates and Methods VI. Cost of Foster Care v Cost of Legal Representation VII. Quality of Representation and Client Satisfaction for Parents and Children VIII. Standards of Representation and Board Specialization IX. Caseload Standards and Best Practices X. Post-Trial Representation XI. Appellate Procedures and Standards XII. Data Collected XIII. Suggestions for Improvement <p>The LRC committee discussed how Texas can continue to improve and optimize the quality of legal services in CPS cases and how a comprehensive study could best assess how Texas can go further in improving quality, training and accountability. The LRC committee further discussed how the study could examine the administration and funding responsibilities of counties and the state, research caseload standards, analyze how post-trial proceedings affect permanency, collect data, and make suggestions for improvement.</p>
<p>IV.B. Objective: Develop, adopt and promote standards of practice for attorneys representing parties in child protection cases so that attorneys are encouraged to gain a higher level of expertise and provide high-quality legal representation.</p>	
<p><i>IV.B.1. Strategy: Work with the Legal Representation Committee to develop, adopt and promote Standards of Practice.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work within the Legal Representation Committee to consider the development of Standards - Draft Standards of Practice for consideration - Determine appropriate avenue for adoption - Develop a plan for promoting Standards 	<p>The LRC discussed Standards of Representation at its July 29, 2016 meeting, and the committee discussed the many practice, competency, compensation and accountability issues that beg the question of whether there are other issues that must be addressed before Standards are adopted. Before moving forward, the CC will place additional emphasis on judicial and attorney training and awareness. Towards that end, the Children’s Commission has worked with the Texas Center for the Judiciary in 2016/2017 to ensure the Family Justice Conference agenda included</p>

	<p>sessions on the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys in CPS cases, the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do, how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding, and the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>The LRC Committee again addressed the issue of standards of representation at the Committee Meeting on January 27, 2017 focusing on whether the Children’s Commission Legal Representation Study planned for 2017 presents an opportunity to move creation, adoption, and implementation of Standards of Practice into the foreground of the committee’s agenda.</p>
<p>IV.C. Objective: Establish a specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization so that attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise can provide higher caliber of legal representation.</p>	
<p><i>IV.C.1. Strategy: Staff and support a Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advisory Committee.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and support TBLs Advisory Committee meetings and activities - Draft a TBLs exam for child welfare specialization, if requested - Work with TBLs Staff to offer the board specialization exam, if appropriate - Work with TBLs Staff to administer exam, if appropriate 	<p>The CC submitted a full application for legal specialization in child welfare law to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLs) in April 2015 and a revised application in September 2015. As directed by the TBLs staff, the CC identified and then named an Advisory Committee to oversee the development of testing standards and to assist in writing the exam. TBLs circulated the proposed standards for comment by the advisory commissions of other legal specializations and other stakeholders, with the public comment period in March 2016 with a closing date of May 31, 2016.</p> <p>On July 8, 2016, the TBLs Board met to discuss the proposed standards and the comments received. On July 11, 2016, TBLs forwarded all comments received to Judge Rucker and the CC. Most comments were positive and in favor of establishing a specialization. However, there were several worthy comments pointing out that the standards, as written, would preclude many experienced and dedicated attorneys from qualifying.</p> <p>Update for 2/10/17</p>

	<p>On September 30, 2016 the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) Advisory Committee met to review the public comment to the proposed child welfare standards. After a thorough discussion amongst committee members, the standards were revised to incorporate the public feedback and to bring them in line with other board specialization standards. A final draft was approved by majority vote and submitted to TBLS on November 9, 2016. Advisory committee member Charles Griffin attended the TBLS Board meeting on December 2, 2016 and was instrumental in the TBLS Board approving the proposed standards pending a revision grandfathering in those attorneys who meet the standards and have been board certified in family law for at least ten years.</p> <p>The advisory committee approved that revision, and the application for legal specialization in child welfare law has been approved by the TBLS Board and sent to the Texas Supreme Court for final approval. Once the Supreme Court has approved the Child Welfare Board Certified Specialization, TBLS staff will format the online application and begin the process of writing the exam and administering the applications. The CC has submitted to TBLS proposed members for both the Child Welfare Advisory Commission and the Child Welfare Exam Commission. The Advisory Commission will consider applications to become board certified in child welfare law and will have authority to review and suggest changes in standards going forward, and the Exam Commission will write and grade the exam. Members of each commission will serve three year terms with the exception of the initial terms which will be staggered for one, two and three years in length in order that a core of experienced members will always be present.</p> <p>The goal of this Committee is to administer the first exam in February 2018.</p>
<p>IV.D. Objective: Create, distribute, maintain, support, and evaluate resources for parents involved in CPS cases so that parents can gain more equal footing and support for their rights once they become involved with CPS.</p>	
<p><i>IV.D.1. Strategy: Support a Parent Resource Hotline and Parent Resource Guide.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain and update the Parent Resource Guide on the CC website and online (LawBox, Reprints) - Establish, support, and evaluate a Parent Resource Hotline through a partnership with the Texas Legal Services Corporation - Staff a committee focused on improving Parent Representation in CPS cases 	<p>The Parent Resource Guide was completed in May 2015 and is accessible in print and online on the CC website as well as many on other CC partner and advocate websites. The PRG is currently being translated from English to Spanish and this should be completed by the end of September.</p>

For FY2017, the CC will partner with Access to Justice and the Children's Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation to establish a helpline for parents. The helpline will provide easy, statewide access for parents to basic information, education, and resources addressing the following issues, which may extend to family members under certain circumstances:

- Parental rights as they relate to CPS Investigations, the provision of Family Based Services, Parental Child Safety Placements, Chapter 34 non-parent agreements, termination of parental rights, custody, access, visitation, service plans, the court's role in conducting hearings and oversight, permanency planning, mediation, and final trials on the merits.
- CPS process and working with CPS, service plans, paternity establishment, voluntary relinquishment, and other options at court.
- How to gain access to a court-appointed lawyer (free, court-appointed counsel, cooperation).
- Special topics (non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other variations).

Update for 2/10/17

The Parent Resource Workgroup is pleased to announce that the Spanish version of the Parent Resource Guide is available online on the Children's Commission website. Link here:

http://texaschildrenscommission.thelawbox.com/package/gov.texaschildrenscommission.parent_resource_guide_espanol

The application TLSC submitted to establish a Parent Helpline was granted and will be funded by the Children's commission, Access to Justice, and The Children's Justice Act. Job descriptions for Helpline staff were completed in November and TLSC has hired Scott Constantine from the Bronx Defenders Family Defense program to be the Helpline's managing attorney. In his ten years at the program he grew the staff from three to more than fifty and developed a holistic approach to assisting parents and families. Additionally, Crystal Leff-Pinon has been hired as the Helpline's Staff attorney. She spent over seven years with the Travis County District Attorney's Family Justice Division where she represented DFPS in child welfare cases.

The phone number has been finalized and will begin taking calls January 31, 2017. Outreach to inform the public about the line has already begun. An announcement TLSC email blast was sent out January 19, 2017 and the statewide CASA trainer has

	<p>agreed to distribute Helpline business cards to all new CASA trainees. DFPS is reviewing how best to distribute Parent Helpline information with its staff and materials and TLSC will begin to provide training to the Office of the Attorney General's Access and Visitation Hotline (which receives an estimated 9000 CPS related calls annually) regarding the new Parent Helpline. Additional plans for outreach include public service radio spots, dissemination of materials through law libraries and district court clerks, as well email blasts to Legal Aid and TLSC list serves.</p> <p>The Parent Resource Group will be reconvening in March to review the data and feedback regarding Parent Helpline's launch and plan next steps.</p>
<p>IV.E. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of families and caregivers in court hearings so that court hearings are higher quality and more meaningful for the families and children involved.</p>	
<p><i>IV.E.1. Strategy: Promote and improve availability and use of the CPCMS Notice and Engagement tool.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market OCA web tool that allows establishing a user ID, searching for a child / case, and setting timely email alerts - Periodically re-issue announcement to various audiences - Develop a survey tool to assess the usefulness, effectiveness and accuracy of the system - Monitor the number of users and hearings included in alerts sent by the system 	<p>The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. All parties involved in CP cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This issue includes the foster placements and DFPS service provider facilities where the children/youth are in placement and results in many parties not being able to attend scheduled court hearings. OCA will monitor the system login and search information, Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data is populating according to search criteria, and reports/data will be produced and provided to the CC.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: On December 12, 2016, the first marketing effort promoting the Notice and Engagement tool was conducted. Information about the N&E tool, links to the registration page, and setup instructions were distributed to over 1,000 judges and 3,000 attorneys through the CC's JIR and ARL announcements.</p> <p>The marketing effort thus far has been a success, with a 73% increase in total registered users in just one month, bringing the total registered users to 502.</p>

	<p>In continuing the effort to promote an effective and efficient means of receiving hearing notification, a survey to assess the usefulness, effectiveness, and accuracy of the system will be sent to all registered users in May 2017.</p>
<p>IV.F. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.</p>	
<p><i>IV.F.1. Strategy: Elevate the importance of youth voice, youth presence and youth input in the outcome of their case.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize the importance of youth voice and youth presence in court - Provide training about the importance of youth voice - Include foster youth and former foster youth as part of judicial training events - Promote bench cards and other resources and tools that judges can use to appropriately involve youth in court hearings and permanency planning 	<p>On May 20, 2016, the CC hosted a Round Table to discuss how to improve involvement and consideration of our youths’ voices and views in court hearing. The discussion focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Texas law governing the child’s appearance at and participation in hearings, - the pros and cons of the child being present in court, - the physical and cultural barriers, attitudes, and practices that affect how well courts accommodate the child’s presence <p>At the conclusion of the Round Table, most participants expressed that generally every child should appear at every permanency hearing. The group also supported the expectation that the court will excuse a child on a case-by-case basis and not operate under a blanket order or rule.</p> <p>The final report includes recommendations regarding: Training Issues, Practice and Court Changes, Using Technology, Development of New Resources and Tools, Possible Legislative Changes. Pertinent recommendations included training to ensure judges, attorneys, guardians, caseworkers, foster parents, parents, and caregivers understand what the current law requires, as well as each person’s role in ensuring the law is followed. Also, training was recommended for courts to encourage courts to make an individual decision, per child, per hearing before excusing a child from a permanency review hearing. Other recommendations deal with docketing, trauma audits, and video conferencing resources, and automated notice for all parties,</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>The updated 2016 Bench Book now includes ABA Bench Cards on interviewing children.</p>

	<p>In November 2016, the CC hosted a former foster youth at the annual Child Welfare Judicial Conference who spoke to judges about the importance of involving youth in the permanency planning and court proceedings. This closing session of the annual conference was the second highest-rated presentation.</p> <p>In December, the CC distributed a JIR and an Attorney Resource Letter on the importance of youth voice in court proceedings. To view this, link here: The Importance of Youth Voice in Court Proceedings</p> <p>In January 2017, the CC made a presentation to judges at the Family Justice Conference about the importance of involving youth in decisions impacting their lives.</p>
<p><i>IV.F.2. Strategy: Promote and improve the availability and use of the Video Conferencing (VTC) hosted and maintained by the Office of Court Administration (OCA).</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide funding for OCA to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate VTC between courts and residential placements - Work with OCA to refine and publish the procedures and protocol between OCA, DFPS, Courts, and other users - Monitor OCA’s efforts to maintain an updated set of instructions for participation and provide to end-users, a list of Residential Treatment Centers, courts, and other facilities with internet infrastructure and capability - Monitor OCA hearing logs that include the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality or technological barriers - Work with OCA and others to expand capability and feasibility for use beyond court hearing 	<p>The video conferencing project enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without them being physically present in the courtroom. OCA hosts and supports the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements. OCA maintains a list of courts, Residential Treatment Centers and local CASA offices with video conferencing capability. OCA maintains a log of all hearings conducted, including the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality, or technical difficulties.</p> <p>OCA upgraded the video conferencing platform in 2016 and the configuration now provides conferencing capability from mobile devices, multiparty video conferencing, and email and calendar invitation capabilities.</p> <p><u>2/10/17 Update:</u> For the State FY17 reporting period of September 2016 through January 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72 video hearings were conducted • 76 children/youth participated • 11 courts participated • 36 placement facilities participated <p>Courts that are video enabled to participate in video conferencing project – 32</p>

	Placement facilities that are video enabled – 83 Local CASA offices that are video enabled – 5
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V. Goal: Collect and analyze court and child welfare-related data to develop solutions to improve outcomes, quality, and sustainability of Children’s Commission strategies.	
V.A. Objective: Ensure data collection, analysis and continuous quality improvement (CQI) is incorporated in each grant and project in order to highlight the success and potential for sustainability of the project or grant.	
V.A.1. Strategy: Incorporate data collection and analysis into a continuous quality improvement process for each project and grant.	Progress Report
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review each grant application and CC project for possible data collection and analysis opportunities - Identify a manner of data collection - Establish a method for analysis - Apply the results to the project 	<p>This strategy articulates the CC’s effort to use data collection and analysis to inform the benefits and sustainability of projects and initiatives.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: The two commission projects that undergo the most extensive CQI are the Trial Skills and Blueprint Implementation. Link to the CIP Self-Assessment submitted annually to ACF. Link here:</p> <p>http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/77409/2016-Self-Assessment11-20-16.pdf</p> <p>Several other CIP projects include CQI elements and are explained in greater detail in the CIP Strategic Plan submitted to ACF in November. Link here:</p> <p>http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/77406/FY2017-2021-Texas-CIP-Application.pdf</p>
V.B. Objective: Use agency administrative data to improve permanency outcomes for children who achieve permanency.	
V.B.1. Strategy: Examine agency data to improve outcomes for kids who achieve permanency to ensure permanency in less than 12 months	Progress Report
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine data (September 2015 – August 2016) for kids who achieved positive permanency to determine: 	<p>Starting in FY2017, CIP programs will be required to be familiar and make use of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. All CIPs and Child Welfare agencies must jointly design and implement one project using available child welfare data that focuses on improving a specific safety, permanency or well-</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reunification data: when did they go home, whether a monitored return was involved, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before reunification - Permanent managing conservatorship data: when was permanent managing conservatorship awarded, to whom (relative or non-relative), child’s placement pattern, and last placement before PMC placement - Adoption data: when was the adoption consummated, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before each child’s adoptive placement - Demographics (age, race, siblings) for each of the above listed permanency exits, - Sort results by region or county, if possible - Develop a plan to share information, conduct focus groups, deploy surveys, as appropriate 	<p>being outcome for children and families. Texas CIP and DFPS will focus on the CFSR Outcome related to permanency within 12 months of entry into foster care.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: In November 2016, the CC presented three sessions at the annual Child Welfare Judicial Conference on permanency data, court barriers to permanency, and how to improve court practices to promote swift resolution of CPS cases so that courts are not a barrier to children exiting foster care within 12 months of entering care. Mr. Christopher Church presented national permanency data and compared it to Texas data, and explained how Texas data could be used to target improvements. Judge Michael Schneider discussed inadvertent court barriers that can prevent children from exiting foster care such as: extending cases beyond the 12-month deadline without extraordinary circumstances: docketing practices: failure to adequately and meaningfully engage youth, caregivers, and foster parents in the permanency planning and court process, and granting continuances and delays in hearings and case progress. Judges also broke out into groups with their DFPS Regional Directors and Regional Systems Improvement staff to discuss regional permanency data to gain a better idea of the permanency outcomes in their locale and what they can do to help move the needle on the 12-month exit measure. At least 30 of the 38 respondents to the CWJC post conference survey indicated that docketing practices and extensions beyond the one-year statutory deadline are the most significant barriers to permanency.</p> <p>The CC will meet with DFPS on 2/09/17 to discuss this strategy in detail and attempt to determine what the CC can or should do to help improve this outcome measure.</p>
<p><i>V.C. Objective: Engage in CFSP/APSR/CFSR/CIP partnership with DFPS so that CIP and DFPS can better understand and improve the content, processes and uses of the various reports.</i></p>	
<p>V.C.1. Strategy: CIP/CFSP/CFSR workgroup</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet or hold conference call at least once per quarter - Review and provide input, as appropriate, in the development of the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP, CIP Strategic Plan 	<p>Workgroup made up on CIP staff and child welfare agency staff to confer, evaluate, and inform the development and execution of the Department’s Child and Family State Plan, Annual Progress and Services report, Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan, and Court Improvement Program’s Strategic Plan.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: The CC will meet with DFPS on 2/09/17 to discuss the final CFSR report and ensuing Program Improvement Plan (PIP).</p>

VI. Goal: Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.	
VI.A. Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training resources for judges and attorneys to ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.	
<i>VI.A.1. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate at least one judicial conference.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with TCJ to design curriculum and agenda for conferences - Determine budget, number of attendees - Conduct periodic planning calls, including creation of workgroup to plan agenda - Determine attendee criteria - Coordinate with OCA about inclusion of Child Protection Court staff, space requirements, and agenda development. - Identify topics and speakers - Develop program agenda - Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend - Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback - Evaluate conference planning process, the actual event, and participant feedback - Use feedback into improve future conference planning, as appropriate 	<p>The CC provides specialized judicial education and training opportunities for active, retired and former Texas appellate, district and county court at law judges, as well as associate judges and court personnel through its grant with the TCJ. Each year TCJ plans at least one child welfare judicial conference. As in years past, the CC and TCJ will conduct pre- and post-conference evaluations as part of CQI.</p> <p>Also, in January 2017, the CC will sponsor a half-day track at the annual Family Justice Conference. Last year, approximately 100 judges attended the Commission-sponsored track. The schedule for 2017 will include a sessions on CPS legal representation to help highlight the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys and the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do. Other topics include how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding for legal representation, the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>The November 14-16 Child Welfare s Judicial Conference was attended by 80+ judges from across the state and was well-received. Conference topics included presentations on:</p> <p>Trauma Informed Courts; Child Safety and Family Violence; National Center for State Courts Weighted Caseload Study in CPS Cases; Improving Permanency Outcomes Through Data Analysis; Addressing Court Barriers to Permanency; DFPS Regional Round Tables to Discuss Regional Outcome Data; Case Law Update; Results from Travis County Mediation Study; DFPS Update with Commissioner Hank Whitman, Associate Commissioner Kristene Blackstone, and General Counsel Trevor Woodruff; Medically Fragile Children; Judges as Catalysts for Change: How to Make Local System Better for Children; Closing Speaker, Amy Peters, Former Foster Youth.</p>

	<p>The post-conference survey, answered by 38 judges, revealed that 80% have a good or very good understanding of the effects of trauma on children in foster care; 83% found the presentation on improving permanency through data analysis very helpful; at least 30 of the 38 respondents indicated that docketing practices and extensions beyond the one-year statutory deadline are the most significant barriers to permanency. 77% of the respondents responded favorably to the DFPS Panel presentation; 100% responded that the case law update was very helpful; the majority responded favorably to including a presentation from a former foster youth, and 76% responded favorably to the idea of including a panel presentation by foster parents at the next conference.</p> <p>The CPC Judges also attended a ½ day session on the first day of the conference to discuss issues unique to CPC courts such as CPCMS. The CPC Judges also had a session on docketing practices and the potential barriers certain docketing practices present in achieving timely permanency.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.2. Strategy: Provide judicial scholarships to state and national conferences and training events.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine budget, number of attendees - Determine attendee criteria - Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend - Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback - Evaluate scholarship planning process, and participant feedback - Incorporate feedback into subsequent year’s planning, as appropriate 	<p>The CC, through its grant to TCJ, will provide scholarships to 20-25 judges to attend the 2017 annual NCJFCJ conference in Washington D.C. As with previous NCJFCJ conferences, criteria will be established for the scholarships. The application process for scholarships to the conference will open in March/April 2017. All judges attending the conference on CC scholarship are asked to attend the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and to participate in pre- and post-conference surveys/evaluations.</p> <p>Pre- and post-conference evaluations are reviewed and shared with TCJ and incorporated into subsequent years’ planning, funding, and content development.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update: There is no update at this time.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.3. Strategy: Partner with organizations or independently produce attorney training content and provide scholarships and financial support to attorneys to attend national and state conferences and training events.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>State Bar of Texas (SBOT)</p>	<p>In partnership with the State Bar, the CC makes several online courses available to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys, including the one-day Child</p>

- Work with SBOT to develop one day of MCLE content on CPS-related topics for live taping and subsequent archiving in the online CPS classroom
- Identify dates, content, speakers for the one-day event
- Publicize CLE on CC website and through other methods such as JIR and Attorney Blasts, at Commission meetings, and other events
- Provide scholarships based on financial need to attorneys in order to access the SBOT online classroom

ABA/Advanced Family Law/NACC and Misc. Attorney Scholarships

- Determine which conference scholarships will be awarded in FY2017, criteria for award, and amount of scholarship
- Market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities through the Attorney Blast / Resource Letter system
- Determine budget, number of attendees
- Determine attendee criteria
- Approve attendee list to ensure attorneys with the greatest need and interest attend
- Create application process, evaluate each scholarship event and process and makes changes, as appropriate
- Award scholarships pursuant to defined process, and collect evaluation data from attendees for increases in knowledge and other feedback
- Amend scholarship process, as necessary, and make recommendations regarding the 2017 funding

Abuse and Neglect track from its annual Advanced Family Law conference. Also, once each year the CC works with SBOT to webcast a day-long, 6 MCLE hours' worth of training for attorneys who represent children, parents, and the state of Texas in CPS proceedings. The SBOT's online classroom of CPS-related webinars is available at a reduced rate to attorneys representing children and parents, and there are scholarships available through the Commission and through the Bar for attorneys who represent the State of Texas and need financial assistance to access this online training.

The CC also administers three different attorney scholarship opportunities: (1) The State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop; (2) The bi-annual ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference held in Washington D.C.; and (3) the NACC Annual Conference.

For all scholarships, the CC determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained, new practices attendees plan to implement and/or a current practice they plan to change. The surveys also inquire about additional topics of interest to help inform planning for future conferences.

2/10/17 Update:

Regarding webcasts: on August 23 and September 19, 2016, CC Staff worked with a total of 11 speakers to produce and tape 6 hours of MCLE content at the State Bar studio. These MCLEs have since been archived on the Texas Bar CLE website. They are entitled as follows: "Effective Representation of Children and Aged Out Foster Youth: Beyond the Basics;" "Tips and Traps from Appointment Through Trial: Effective Representation of a Parent in a CPS Case;" and "Special Issues in CPS Parent Representation." A total of 543 viewers tuned in from across the state to the live webcasts. Some or all of the content of these webcasts and archived webinars may be considered in some jurisdictions to satisfy the educational requirements for court-appointed attorneys under Texas Family Code Sections 107.004 and 107.0131.

Regarding scholarships: The CC awarded scholarships to 104 attorneys from across the state to attend the State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop and 81 attended either the live conference in San Antonio in August or the video replays in Dallas and South Padre in October; (2) The bi-annual ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference was not held this summer

	<p>but is scheduled for April 2017; and (3) Six attorneys were sent on CC scholarship to attend the NACC Annual Conference in Philadelphia in August.</p> <p>Post-event survey results from 78 of the scholarship recipients to the SBOT Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop indicated that the majority of the scholarship recipients would not have attended the Workshop without the scholarship; and that they intended to change a current practice or implement a new practice based on their new knowledge of the impact of trauma on permanency; parents with disabilities; and issues related to obtaining emergency orders for children.</p> <p>Additionally, survey respondents expressed interest in learning more about CPS-related trial skills; CPS policy and infrastructure; trauma; permanency; and resources and services for parents and children.</p> <p>Post-event survey results from 5 of the scholarship recipients to the NACC Annual Conference indicated that they intended to change a current practice or implement a new practice based on their new knowledge of education advocacy for children and youth in care, and advocating for youth in group homes or residential facilities. Additionally, survey respondents expressed interest in learning more about representing parents, litigation strategies; trauma-informed care; and ICWA.</p> <p>In April 2017, the ABA Center on Children and the Law will host two, back-to-back conferences for child, state, and parent attorneys. This year, the 5th National Parent Attorney Conference entitled “Valuing Dignity and Respect for All Families” will be held in Tyson’s Corner, Virginia, on April 25 and 26, 2017. The 17th National Conference on Children and the Law entitled “SOAR: Strengthening Our Advocacy for Results” will be held in Tyson’s Corner, Virginia, on April 27 and 28, 2017. At this time, the CC plans to send one attorney along with a CC staff attorney to attend both conferences.</p> <p>This year’s live State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop will be held on August 9, 2017, and the CC plans to follow our usual scholarship process to send qualified attorneys to attend the live and fall 2017 video replay MCLEs.</p> <p>Finally, the NACC Annual Conference will be held over August 10-12, 2017, In New Orleans.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.4. Strategy: Reimburse exam and recertification fees for attorneys and judges who pass the NACC CWLS exam or qualify for recertification.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CC will enter into a grant agreement with NACC to provide reimbursement - NACC will collect the \$300.00 application or \$350.00 examination fee from the applicant - NACC will administer the exam and report to the CC a list of Texas examinees who have passed the certification exam - CC will reimburse NACC funds on a first-come, first-serve basis to applicants that pass the exam through the end of the grant period - NACC will provide the names of the Texas attorneys and judges who are awarded certification or recertified and the total number of Texas attorneys and judges who applied to be certified during the calendar year - NACC will share any information or feedback it receives or solicits about the quality, subject matter, and process of giving the exam - NACC will also provide the passage rate of Texas applicants 	<p>The CC offers reimbursement of the Certification Exam Fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the Child Welfare Specialist Exam. The cost of the fee to take the Child Welfare Certification Exam is \$350 per attorney.</p> <p>Additionally, assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking re-certification of their CWLS every five years, which is reimbursed at \$190. Currently, there are 38 Texas CWLS.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>In FY16, the Commission reimbursed all five Texas attorneys who sat for and passed the Child Welfare Law Certification Exam. Also in FY16, four Texas attorneys were due for recertification. All four sat for, passed, and were reimbursed for their recertification fee. The national pass rate averages around 80%.</p> <p>Although the number of Texas attorneys who took advantage of the scholarship was less than the 14 that were eligible in FY16, the numbers are up from the one exam fee reimbursement received by the CC in FY15. NACC attributed the increase in the number of attorneys taking advantage of the Commission’s scholarship opportunity in FY16 to improvements in NACC exam messaging (deadlines, study aids, reminders). NACC and the Commission will continue to improve communication efforts in FY17 to promote an increase in the number of CWLS examinees in FY17.</p> <p>NACC has identified the following numbers for potential CWLS scholarship opportunities in FY17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-certifications due in 2017: 7 • CWLS Applicants: 24 <p>Commission staff is currently working with NACC to complete the FY17 grant application.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.5. Strategy: Support regional and local training events throughout the state, as needed and upon request.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with local sponsor/convener on the conference agenda, audience, budget, marketing, and evaluation - Help ensure notice of the event to judges and attorneys 	<p>There are no activities planned at this time. In the past, the CC has funded the Harris County Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe Conference.</p> <p><i>2/10/17: No update.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the sponsor applies for CLE, if appropriate - Analyze survey results from evaluations distributed by the organizers - Conduct CQI of the process and training content 	
<p><i>VI.A.6. Strategy: Develop and support Trauma Informed Care and Practice training for attorneys representing children and families in CPS cases.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support efforts to identify and survey trauma knowledge, training available, training accessed, and results or impact of training - Identify training needs for judges and attorneys and develop and promote training and tools for trauma-informed care - Sponsor and support additional training events for stakeholders with particular focus on attorneys ad litem - Collaborate with interested partners on training content, speakers, budget, marketing and evaluation - Provide notice of any training developed to judges and attorneys - Analyze any survey results obtained - Conduct CQI of the process and training content - 	<p>CASA collaborated throughout much of FY2016 with the CC to develop a trauma training for attorneys. Also, the Annual Texas CASA conference on November 3-5, 2016 was developed to include a 3-hour trauma institute. CASA will use a portion of its CIP funds for attorney scholarships to enable more attorneys to attend the event. Judges can attend the event at no charge.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>A one-hour training was recorded in front of a live audience at the Heman Marion Sweatt Travis County Courthouse on September 27, 2016, and was presented by Elizabeth Watkins, JD, Regional Attorney for the Department of Family and Protective Services. The presentation includes strategies for advocating for children in courtrooms, schools, and placements to meet each child’s unique needs. There is also discussion about how trauma influences a child’s ability to communicate about the case and how to appropriately respond to a child’s trauma-related behaviors. The CC obtained MCLE credit for this presentation through the SBOT and it is available through the CC website. To date, 15 attorneys have viewed this training through the CC website, and CASA reports 67 viewers of the training through their auspices at this time. 12-14 attorneys attended the CASA Conference in November.</p>
<p><i>VI.A.7. Strategy: Help sponsor the DFPS Regional Attorney Training.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with DFPS on the budget, location and event evaluation - Provide notice to judges of the DFPS training event, if appropriate - Analyze any survey results obtained by the organizer - Conduct CQI of the supporting role and process used in deploying the training 	<p>With the CC’s help, DFPS has been able to hold regular, annual regional attorney training events for its approximately 100 attorneys and staff who provide legal representation to the State of Texas.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p>

	<p>The DFPS conference was held in New Braunfels on November 3 - 4, 2016 and attended by approximately 100 attorneys and staff who provide legal representation to the State of Texas in approximately half the counties in the state. A survey was conducted after the training and responses indicated a high measure of satisfaction with the training, with Boots to the Bench (judicial panel), Detecting Child Abuse (medical presentation), and Criminal Prosecution of CPS Case viewed as particularly successful presentations. The next Regional Attorney Conference will be November 2-3, 2017 in San Marcos.</p>
<p>VI.A.8. Strategy: Host two Trial Skills Training (TST) events each fiscal year.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convene two, 3-day TST events that include lectures, demonstrations, and practice sessions with live witnesses - Include hands-on practice of trial skills with the assistance of professional, live witnesses, videography, and coaching by trained faculty - Allow faculty review of individual attorney's filmed practice session for additional feedback - Evaluate each TST event - Edit and update TST curriculum and materials, as necessary 	<p>TST is an 18.75 MCLE hour, hands-on training designed to improve the litigation skills of child welfare law attorneys in order to raise the caliber of legal services to children and families in child protection cases. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. It provides parent, child, and state attorneys litigation exercises in the CPS context, including lectures and demonstrations from trained faculty comprised of senior attorneys and judges, followed by personal critiques and coaching. Caseworkers, Pediatricians, and a Parent Therapist serve as live witnesses.</p> <p>Materials are updated and new faculty is recruited and trained with each event. Extensive internal and external CQI is involved with each event. The Children's Justice Act covers the cost of participants who represent the state in CPS proceedings.</p> <p>To measure long-term effectiveness and impact, judicial evaluations of the TST graduates was developed.</p> <p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>The CC convened two Trial Skills Trainings in 2016: on April 20-22 and December 8-10, training 40 attorneys. Highlights from the internal and external debriefs of the TST course structure and curriculum from 2016 indicate the following:</p> <p>Objections and Foundations lectures were much improved, along with the practice of entering a document into evidence. New exhibits were added to ensure that all attorney groups had numerous pieces of evidence to work with, including text messages and emails. A new lecture was developed: How to Build a CPS Trial Notebook. The curriculum on cross-examination, impeachment, and experts was reworked, more faculty demonstrations were created, including a high-level cross exam and impeachment of an expert and more specific instruction to the participants</p>

was developed and sent earlier in both of the planning cycles, ensuring more prepared attorney-participants who received fuller benefits from their seven, small group strategy and practice sessions.

Two new faculty members were trained, increasing the total number of available TST teaching faculty to 17.

Comments from participants included feedback regarding recommendations to other attorneys about the usefulness of the training, the significance and importance of the training to the attorney's practice, the qualifications of the faculty, the quality of the content.

Of particular note is the judicial feedback obtained by 14 CPS judges who responded to a pre- and post-TST survey issued by former CC JIR, Judge Robin Sage, regarding the April 2016 participants from their jurisdictions. Of these CPS judges with April 2016 TST graduates, 13 of 14 had observed the TST graduate in their court for a trial or other contested matter in the 6 months following the April 2016 TST, and all of the 14 judges had seen the participant from their jurisdiction appear in their court in a non-contested matter during the same 6 month period. The judges reported observing the graduates' in-court skills a minimum of 3-4 times and a maximum of more than 15 times over the same 6-month period.

Prior to the TST, judges sent the following comments regarding the need for the hands-on litigation practice: (1) "He's a new attorney in my court. He seems to have good skills but would benefit from instruction;" (2) "She is quite timid in her representation of her clients. I would love to see this training provide her with some confidence in her skills;" (3) "She is essentially a new lawyer who has not had the benefit of any real mentoring following law school. She has raw skills and potential but needs refinement to make the transition from mock trial in law school to actual trial." Additionally, one judge indicated his intent to appoint the participating attorney to contested matters for parents on return from the training; this judge had only appointed the attorney to unknown and alleged fathers served by publication prior to her admittance into the April 2016 TST.

These 14 judges noted the following changes:

Twelve judges noticed an improvement in the attorney's courtroom demeanor or skills; comments included "more confidence, more poise; performance is much improved." Another judge commented: "I believe these trainings help build the

attorney's confidence in their child protection court skills and I have seen them more excited about their court work after returning from this training." Additionally, as compared to the pre-event rating of their graduates' skills, each judge ranked their graduates' trial skills as improved at all stages of trial. By contrast, in the pre-TST survey, judges had noted a need for improvement in all of these areas.

One TST is planned for 2017; it will be held in San Marcos on May 8-10, 2017. Instead of a second TST, CC staff is planning 6 hours of MCLE content on Trial Skills in CPS Cases which will be presented by TST faculty and taped live in the SBOT studio.

VII. Goal: Reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.	
VII.A. Objective: Support efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in the Texas child welfare system so that children of color do not experience disparate effects and outcomes that prolong their stay in foster care.	
<i>VII.A.1. Strategy: Educate judges and consider data in helping address disproportionality and disparities among children and families involved in child protection cases.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and promote judicial and attorney training on how to apply training and tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias - Partner with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups, including one Poverty Simulation Workshop - Help connect judges and lawyers to data about their communities and to experts who can help develop disproportionality efforts at the local level - Liaise with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities - Staff and monitor the Judicial Workgroup Addressing Disproportionality Workgroup (JWD) including conducting quarterly strategy meetings with the JWD Co-Chairs - Include information about Disproportionality and bias in the CC CPS Judicial Bench Book 	<p>The CC's disproportionality and disparities work is overseen by its Judicial Workgroup to Address Disproportionality (JWD), which works on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and promoting judicial and attorney training on how to apply tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias - Partnering with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups - Helping connect judges and lawyers to their communities to develop disproportionality efforts at the local level - Liaising with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities - Staffing JWD meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product - Updating the CPS judicial Bench Book. <p>In 2016, the CC added to the CPS Bench Book bench card three questions related to making culturally aware decisions during child welfare hearings.</p> <p>For FY2017, the CC will offer to sponsor one Poverty Simulation in a jurisdiction and the JWD will meet in November under the leadership of new co-chairs Judge Cyndi Wheless from Collin County and Judge David Canales from Bexar County. Judge Wheless and Judge Canales will co-chair with Sheila Craig.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update: the JWD met in mid-November 2016 at the Child Welfare Judicial Conference where the new Co-Chairs welcomed members, and received feedback about the 2016 Poverty Simulation. In late November, David Slayton convened a</i></p>

	<p>Poverty Simulation for the Office of Court Administration in partnership with the CEDD and DFPS.</p> <p>In December 2016, many members of the JWD assisted Chief Justice Nathan Hecht and Justice Eva Guzman with the Beyond the Bench: Law, Justice and Communities Summit. At the Summit, state leaders, judges, and community advocates came together to explore diverse viewpoints and engage in candid conversations about what can be done to restore trust in the justice system. Keynote speaker Chief Art Acevedo addressed the Summit as the new Chief of the Houston Police Department.</p> <p>The conference featured a presentation entitled “When Intuition Fails: Mental Shortcuts and Unconscious Bias,” by Dr. Jeffrey Rachlinski, a Cornell Law School professor who shared his research on unconscious bias. Judge Scott McCown led a panel discussion of a fact pattern about a young man in foster care. The panel examined possible bias in their decision-making from the perspective of their various professional roles. Participants were asked to submit “big ideas” in response to a question about a practical first step that could be taken right now to address issues discussed at the Summit. Children’s Commission staff has compiled these responses along with other suggestions for creating a similar summit in a toolkit that can be accessed by contacting the Children’s Commission.</p>
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VIII. Goal: Recognize and respect tribal sovereignty, protect the best interests of Native American children and promote stability of Native American children and families.	
VIII.A. Objective: Establish, strengthen and support meaningful and respectful relationships with tribal nations and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act so that Indian children and families experience equitable and respectful treatment in keeping with their customs and beliefs.	
<i>VIII.A.1. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.</i>	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance - Work with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of new Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines - Continue to support the role of Peacemaker or Tribal Judge as Children's Commission member - Staff and monitor the Tribal/State Workgroup meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product for FY2017, including monthly strategy meetings with tribal partners and DFPS - Partner with DFPS to support the biannual tribal/state collaborative meetings - Assist with any CIP grant application, as requested and appropriate - Further connections with Alabama-Coushatta, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, and Kickapoo tribes through the DFPS tribal/state meetings, Annual Conference of the Native American Section of the State Bar, and other networking opportunities - Continue to collaborate with the National Center for State Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group 	<p>The Tribal/State Collaborative Workgroup meets monthly via conference call continue to develop new trainings to educate judges and attorneys about amendments to the Texas Family Code that requires judges to ask all parties present at each Adversary, Status, and Permanency hearing whether the child or the child's family has any Native American heritage and identify any Native American tribe with which the child may be associated.</p> <p>CC staff is currently participating in a national consortium of state leaders who work with tribes through their Court Improvement Programs.</p> <p><i>2/10/17 Update:</i></p> <p>The Children's Commission continues its collaboration with tribal nations and system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance. Judge Lawrence Lujan of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo has been named a Commissioner and will be advising the Children's Commission on important work within his Pueblo and throughout the nation. New Federal Regulations and BIA Guidelines have been released and these updates will be added to the ICWA chapter of the Child Protection Law Bench Book, and publicized through the Jurist in Residence Letters and attorney communications and trainings.</p>

<p>IX. Oversee and administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, endeavor to increase funding available to the Children’s Commission and leverage funds with strategic and statewide partners.</p>	
<p>IX.A. Objective: Execute strategies of the Supreme Court Children’s Commission to help strengthen courts and the child welfare system to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and wellbeing.</p>	
<p><i>IX.A.1. Strategy: Engage in activities integral to the Children’s Commission’s functions and operations.</i></p>	<p>Progress Report</p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop annual strategic plan for Texas - Submit the required application to the Administration of Children and Families for CIP funds - Coordinate pass-through grants to sub-recipients - Oversee project management of short and long-term projects and initiatives - Publish reports, newsletters, judicial directives, policy and data analysis, and Commission website content - Plan and conduct quarterly Commission meetings with detailed progress reports, agendas, presentations, and budgets - Submit regular reports to the federal Administration of Children and Families and to the Supreme Court of Texas 	<p>In September, the Children’s Commission (CC) developed a five-year Strategic Plan for both the CC and the Court Improvement Program (CIP).</p> <p>In 2017, the CC will pass through grants to Texas CASA, Office of Court Administration, Texas Center for the Judiciary, Texas Legal Services Corporation, as well as grants for training events to DFPS, Harris County, State Bar of Texas, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others.</p> <p>The CC will continue to hold a Commission meeting every four months throughout each year of the five-year plan, and will continue its bi-weekly collaborative call with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders. CC Staff will continue to serve on the Public Private Partnership, Prevention Advisory Council, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Texas Reach, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners.</p> <p>The CC will publish an updated Report to Commission in advance of each Commission meeting and will continue to publish JIR and ARL letters, project reports, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and follow up reports for all short-term and long-term projects.</p> <p>CC will participate in quarterly calls with ACF, and will conduct quarterly calls with DFPS to discuss the Child and Family State Plan (CFSP), Annual Progress Services Report (APSR), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), related Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and the CIP Strategic Plan.</p> <p>CC will confer regularly with national organizations and other CIPs, and will submit annual reports to the ACF and to the Supreme Court of Texas.</p>

	<p>2/10/17 Update:</p> <p>CC staff will present the final five-year Children’s Commission Strategic Plan to the full commission for adoption on 2/10/17. On November 22, 2016, the CC submitted a partial CIP Strategic Plan to the Administration of Children and Families per Program Instructions ACYF-CB-PI-16-05.</p> <p>Pass-through grant recipients are executing CIP strategies according to the grants approved in September 2016.</p> <p>February 10, 2017, is the first commission meeting of FFY2017. The CC has held only four bi-monthly collaborative calls since September due to holidays and staff scheduling conflicts due to the Child Welfare Judicial Conference, TST, and the Beyond the Bench Summit.</p> <p>Staff has attended meetings and phone calls related to the PPP, PAC, MMHPI, Texas Reach, FC&E, LRC, QIC-AG/Trauma and numerous other meetings and phone calls hosted by the CC and other child welfare stakeholders such as Texas CASA and the CPS Improvements Round Table.</p> <p>The CC is scheduled to meet with ACF and DFPS regarding the recent final CFSR report and ensuing PIP on February 9, 2017.</p>
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INSERT - TAB 4

Texas Court Improvement Program Five Year Strategic Plan

State Name: Texas

Date Strategic Plan Submitted: September 15, 2016

Timeframe Covered by Strategic Plan: 10/01/16 - 09/30/21

Mission: To strengthen courts for children, youth and families in the Texas child-protection system and thereby improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.

GOALS:

- I. Encourage judicial leadership, accountability, and appropriate oversight of child protection cases to improve safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.
- II. Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.
- III. Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.
- IV. Promote high-quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, child and family involvement, and effective legal representation of parties.
- V. Collect and analyze court and child welfare system data to improve outcomes, quality, and sustainability of Children's Commission strategies.
- VI. Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.
- VII. Reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.
- VIII. Recognize and respect tribal sovereignty, and protect the best interests of Native American children and promote stability of Native American children and families.
- IX. Oversee and administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, endeavor to increase funding available to the Children's Commission and leverage funds with strategic and statewide partners.

- I. **Encourage judicial leadership, accountability, and appropriate oversight of child protection cases to improve safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families.**
 - A. Participate in and provide resources to statewide collaborative efforts to improve child safety.
 - B. Support the improvement of education outcomes for children in the conservatorship of DFPS to increase opportunities for educational progress, leading to a more productive and stable adult life.
 - C. Promote awareness of and embed a culture and practice among the judiciary and legal community around Trauma Informed Care so that the legal and judicial community is aware, educated and supportive of the concept and application.
 - D. Promote awareness of and provide training, resources and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically Child Sexual Exploitation so that the judicial system can assist in preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS' conservatorship.
 - E. Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may, in turn, help children and families exit the child welfare system more quickly.
 - F. Collaborate with the full continuum of providers, including health and mental health providers, to identify ways to enhance effective and efficient services and supports for children in foster care and their caregivers.

- II. **Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.**
 - A. Create opportunities to bring together subject matter experts, judicial and executive branch leaders, and key policy makers so that important and urgent issues are examined and recommendations and solutions can be identified.
 - B. Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support, and JIR correspondence and communicate to ensure judges are equipped to make informed educated decisions, and use best practices in conducting hearings that will contribute to better outcomes for children and families.
 - C. Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the CC website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.
 - D. Maintain and enhance the Children's Commission website to provide an easily accessible, user-friendly resources for the judiciary, attorneys and the child welfare community to obtain information and best practices in their interactions with children and families.
 - E. Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders to enhance the opportunity to gain knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with Texas.
 - F. Support the use of best practices in court case management

- III. **Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.**

- A. Promote and support institutional collaboration among high-level state, legislative, and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders so there is open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners.
 - B. Engage in policy and procedural improvements that advance child welfare system functionality, promote effective and equitable services, and ensure justice for all parties.
- IV. Promote high-quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, child and family involvement, and effective legal representation of parties.**
- A. Improve legal representation so that parents, children, and the State of Texas experience high-quality court hearings.
 - B. Develop, adopt and promote standards of practice for attorneys representing parties in child protection cases so that attorneys are encouraged to gain a higher level of expertise and provide high-quality legal representation.
 - C. Establish a specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization so that attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise can provide higher caliber of legal representation.
 - D. Create, distribute, maintain, support, and evaluate resources for parents involved in CPS cases so that parents can gain more equal footing and support for their rights once they become involved with CPS.
 - E. Improve and expand engagement of families and caregivers in court hearings so that court hearings are higher quality and more meaningful for the families and children involved.
 - F. Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.
- V. Collect and analyze court and child welfare system data to develop solutions to improve outcomes, quality, and sustainability of Children’s Commission strategies.**
- A. Ensure data collection, analysis and continuous quality improvement (CQI) is incorporated in each grant and project in order to highlight the success, opportunities for improvement, and the potential for sustainability of the project or grant.
 - B. Use agency administrative data to improve permanency outcomes for children and families.
 - C. Engage in CFSP/APSR/CFSR/CIP partnership with DFPS so that CIP and DFPS can better understand and improve the content, processes, and uses of the various reports.
- VI. Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.**
- A. Provide high-quality, affordable, and easily accessible training resources for judges and attorneys to ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.
- VII. Reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.**

- A. Support efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in the Texas child welfare system so that children of color do not experience disparate effects and outcomes that prolong their stay in foster care.

VIII. Recognize and respect tribal sovereignty, protect the best interests of Native American children, and promote stability of Native American children and families.

- A. Establish, strengthen and support meaningful and respectful relationships with tribal nations and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act so that Indian children and families experience equitable and respectful treatment in keeping with their customs and beliefs.

IX. Oversee and administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, endeavor to increase funding available to the Children’s Commission and leverage funds with strategic and statewide partners.

- A. Execute strategies of the Supreme Court Children’s Commission to help strengthen courts and the child welfare system to improve outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.