



# Children's Commission.

## Attorney Resource Letter:

### For Attorneys Handling Child Protective Services Cases

May 12, 2017

#### Best Practices for Residential Interventions for Youth and their Families: A Resource Guide for Judges and Legal Partners with Involvement in the Children's Dependency Court System

The Building Bridges Initiative and Association of Children's Residential Centers, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, released a best practices guide earlier this year focused on residential placement considerations for youth ages 12 to 17 in foster care. It is available online on the Building Bridges Initiative website at <http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/>.

The resource guide encourages the use of residential placement as a brief, therapeutic intervention and lays out best practices and practical tools to improve outcomes. The guide defines residential placements as group homes, residential treatment centers, and other congregate care facilities. In 2013, 4,687 children and youth in foster care, 15.8% of the total population of children in care, were placed in congregate care facilities in Texas.<sup>1</sup> Attorneys play a critical role in advocating for the use of residential placements only when appropriate. Also critical is for courts to maintain a sense of urgency when the residential placement is no longer in a child's best interest.

Part I of the guidance centers on when it is appropriate to place a child in a residential setting, utilizing the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) and Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to inform the unique placement considerations for each child and family. Click [here](#) to read more about the CANS and FSNA tools used by the Department to assess the family. Part II contains specific information about what constitutes an effective residential program.

The guide includes concrete questions for judges and attorneys to ask about permanency, involving families, engaging youth, cultural and linguistic competence, trauma-informed care, linking with community, restraint and seclusion, transition planning, psychotropic medication, and whether residential programs employ best practices or use outcome data to drive decision-making.



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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau, A National Look at the Use of Congregate Care in Child Welfare, May 13, 2015. Available online at [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cbcongregatecare\\_brief.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cbcongregatecare_brief.pdf).