Children's Commission

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

Update from the

Children's Commission

Notebook

May 22, 2020

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

May 22, 2020

Notebook
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CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus
Hon. Piper McCraw, Vice Chair
Col. Sonya Batchelor
Corey Benbow
Paula Bibbs-Samuels
Dr. Gary Blau
Hon. Susan Brown
Hon. Darlene Byrne
Hon. Gary Coley
Hon. Julie Countiss
Sheila Sturgis Craig
Elizabeth Farley
Anne Heiligenstein
Hon. Randall Hufstetler
Rep. Stephanie Klick
Hon. Selina Mireles
Katie Olse
Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness
Cindy Patrick
Hon. Frank Rynd
Hon. Michael Schneider
Hon. Randy Shelton
Luanne Southern
Vicki Spriggs
Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE
Hon. Eva Guzman, *Chair*
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, *Chair Emeritus*
Hon. Piper McCraw *Vice Chair*
Hon. Rob Hofmann
Hon. Dean Rucker
Hon. Michael Schneider

Staff:
Tina Amberboy
Tiffany Edwards

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
Hon. Rob Hofmann, *Chair*
Dr. Gary Blau
Hon. Julie Countiss
Sarah Crockett
Andy Homer
Mary Christine Reed
Carolyne Rodriguez
Tanya Rollins
Hon. Peter Sakai
Hon. Ian Spechler

Staff:
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz
Jocelyn Fowler
Tiffany Edwards
Chelsea Martinez

LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS
Hon. Dean Rucker, *Chair*
Mark Briggs
Hon. Anne Darring
Lori Duke
Hon. Angela Ellis
Anna Saldaña Ford
Hon. Delia Gonzales
Monique Gonzalez
Hon. Randall Hufstetler
Crystal Leff-Piñon
Hon. Thomas Stuckey
Janet VanderZanden

Staff:
Dylan Moench
Chelsea Martinez

DATA
Hon. Michael Schneider, *Chair*
Jesse Booher
Dr. Jane Burstain
Katie Elseth
Dr. Monica Faulkner
Hon. Delia Gonzales
Elizabeth Kromrei
Hon. Robin Sage
Vicki Spriggs
Hon. Carlos Villalon

Staff:
Dylan Moench
Chelsea Martinez

OCA Advisory:
Darrell Childers
Anissa Johnson
Casey Kennedy
David Slayton
Charlotte Velasco

TRAINING
Hon. Piper McCraw, *Chair*
Hon. Mark Atkinson
Tymothy Belseth
Denise Campbell
Cathy Cockerham
Teal de la Garza
Barbara Elias-Perciful
Debra Emerson
Hon. Richard Garcia
Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington
Tracy Harting
Pam Kemp
Tanya Rollins
Fairy Davenport Rutland
Elizabeth Watkins

Staff:
Milbrey Raney
Andrea Vicencio

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Tymothy Belseth
M. Lynn Chamberlin
Irene Clements
Bill Connolly
Sarah Crockett
De Shaun Ealoms
Barbara Elias-Perciful
Debra Emerson
Mike Foster
Will Francis
Sadie Funk
Teal de la Garza
Christine Gendron
Sandra Hachem
David Halpern
Lisa Harst
Félix Herrera
Alex Hunt
Bruce Kendrick
Knox Kimberly
Norman Ladd
Tracy Levins
Gabriella McDonald
Dr. Jill McLeigh
Kate Murphy
Judy Powell
Mary Christine Reed
Carolyne Rodriguez
Tanya Rollins
Johana Scot
Janet Sharkis
Andrea Sparks
Hon. Ian Spechler
Jeanne Stamp
Gloria Terry
Kenneth Thompson

STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director
Jamie Bernstein, Assistant Director
Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Jocelyn Fowler, Staff Attorney
Monica Mahoney, Program Specialist
Chelsea Martinez, Executive Assistant
Dylan Moench, Staff Attorney
Patrick Passmore, Grant Administrator
Milbrey Raney, Training Director
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist
Hon. Michael Massengale, Senior Judicial Advisor
Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Jurist in Residence
Office of Court Administration

Last Updated: May 22, 2020

INSERT - TAB 2

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

Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2020

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Justice Eva Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. and welcomed Commissioners and guests to the first Commission meeting of 2020.

Recognition of Guests

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Dr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner for the Children's Bureau, and Mr. David Kelly, Special Assistant to the Office of the Associate Commissioner at the Children's Bureau. Ms. Sasha Rasco was introduced as the Associate Commissioner for Prevention and Early Intervention at the Department of Family and Protective Services. Justice Guzman welcomed Child Protective Services Associate Commissioner Kristene Blackstone and thanked her for her long service to the Commission as this meeting marked Ms. Blackstone's last meeting as a Commissioner.

Justice Guzman announced an after-lunch presentation from Mr. Felix Herrera from the Consulate General of Mexico and introduced Judge Delia Gonzalez from the Dallas County Permanency Court, Judge Robin Sage and Anne Heiligenstein from Casey Family Programs, and Mr. Graham Keever who was in attendance on behalf of Senator Royce West.

Presentation from Dr. Jerry Milner and Mr. David Kelly

Dr. Jerry Milner shared the vision of promoting primary prevention and strengthening families through community-based programs. Dr. Milner also reflected on his time spent with young adults with lived experience and noted that many of them experience extreme adversity, a lack of education or employment opportunities, or homelessness and may be victims of human trafficking. He underscored that each placement move induces more trauma to the child. Dr. Milner expressed his desire to use the funds allocated to child welfare to help families provide for their children's needs as opposed paying for foster care. Dr. Milner concluded by emphasizing the critical importance of legal representation and meaningful use of the reasonable efforts requirements.

Mr. David Kelly began his remarks with the premise that child welfare is the intersection of public health, poverty, and civil rights, and until this is understood, child welfare outcomes will not differ. Mr. Kelly underscored that attorneys should be trauma-informed, have knowledge around family separation and child development, as well as the importance of child and youth voice. Mr. Kelly stressed the impact of legal protection for vulnerable community members, from events that would cause further hardship, including eviction and immigration issues, as well as natural disasters and crisis. He noted that training funds are available from Title IV-E to aid the judicial community in providing legal services. Mr. Kelly concluded his presentation by sharing that there is a proposal to

double the CIP budget nationally and thanked Ms. Amberboy for her leadership of the Texas Court Improvement Program.

Commissioner Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced the Commissioner changes starting with Dr. Gary Blau, the Executive Director of The Hackett Center for Mental Health, who replaced Dr. Andy Keller as a Commissioner. Dr. Blau provided a brief introduction to meeting attendees, highlighting his extensive background working for the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families and as the Chief of the Child, Adolescent, and Family Branch of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Justice Guzman introduced Ms. Elizabeth Farley from Governor Greg Abbott's office, who replaced Ms. Erin Bennett as the Commission's *ex officio* member from the Governor's Office. Ms. Luanne Southern transitioned from being the Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting at Casey Family Programs to the Executive Director of the Texas Mental Health Consortium and will continue to serve on the Children's Commission. Ms. Anne Heiligenstein assumed the role of Director of Texas Strategic Consulting with Casey Family Programs and will be appointed to the Children's Commission in May.

Committee Membership Changes

Justice Guzman deferred the announcement of committee member updates to Executive Director Tina Amberboy.

Collaborative Council Membership Changes

Justice Guzman announced Mr. Norman Ladd from Ladd & Thigpen, P.C. as a new member of the Collaborative Council.

Staff Member Changes

Justice Guzman welcomed Ms. Chelsea Martinez, who previously worked for the Texas Education Agency. Ms. Martinez is the newest Executive Assistant for the Children's Commission.

Adoption of September 27, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2 of the Meeting Notebook and noted that members were provided the opportunity to review the September 27, 2019 minutes prior to the meeting. Justice Guzman asked if there were any corrections, and none were noted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Tina Amberboy directed meeting attendees to Tab 3 of the meeting notebook. At the September 2019 meeting, Ms. Amberboy proposed to Commission members a vote to restructure the standing committees. The Basic Committee was disbanded, and the Systems Improvement and Legal Practices and Processes Committees were created.

Ms. Amberboy announced that Dr. Blau and Justice Julie Countiss joined the Systems Improvement Committee, Judge Randall Hufstetler joined the Legal Practices and Process Committee, and Judge Robin Sage joined the Data Committee. Ms. Amberboy expressed her gratitude to the new committee members. Ms. Amberboy noted that there were no membership changes to the Training Committee and Dual Status Task Force.

Ms. Amberboy continued her update directing members' attention to Tab 4 of the meeting notebook to review the budget, noting that there was a slight amendment to the TCJ education grant, reminding members that in September the grant was still in negotiations. The final grant award was $575.00 more than the amount presented in September. Please see the February 2020 meeting notebook for details.

Ms. Amberboy also updated the meeting attendees on the Adoption and Permanency Workshop she, Ms. Jamie Bernstein, and Ms. Renee Castillo attended earlier in the week which focused on Judge Delia Gonzales' Permanency Court in Dallas. The Commission received technical assistance from the Capacity Building Center for Courts to help study the court and evaluate the court's processes.

Ms. Amberboy then directed meeting attendees to the Children's Commission 2019 Annual Report which was distributed to the Supreme Court and via the Commission's distribution lists in January.

Committee, workgroup, and project updates were provided by Ms. Renee Castillo, Ms. Jocelyn Fowler, Ms. Milbrey Raney, Mr. Dylan Moench, and Ms. Jamie Bernstein and can be found in its entirety here: http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/84475/final-report-to-commission-2-21-20.pdf.

Presentation from Ms. Carla Baker and Danna Mayhall

Ms. Carla Baker shared her road to reunification with her children when they were removed from her care by Child Protective Services. Ms. Baker explained that the process was not a simple one, but with peer support and determination, reunification was possible for her family. When appointed to her case, Ms. Mayhall shared a pamphlet she created in 2010 entitled "How to Conquer Your Service Plan and Get Your Kids Home Sooner," which was critical to Ms. Baker's success. Ms. Baker asked child welfare advocates attending the meeting to please remember their clients are real people with real life problems and are often afraid of an unknown process and system.

Ms. Danna Mayhall shared that she has represented parents with CPS cases since 2001. While she has many success stories, she added the collaboration with her clients is a critical ingredient for success. Ms. Mayhall also shared that the process can be more difficult for clients experiencing severe drug addiction. While not all are successful in family reunification, Ms. Mayhall offers support to her clients, ranging from providing transportation to having conversations with clients late into the night. She concluded by emphasizing that her primary goal as an attorney is always family reunification.

COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES

Hon. Randy Shelton from Beaumont shared that reading the article about Judge Sakai's early childhood court influenced him to look at the increase of family violence in his region. When taking a closer look, he discovered that nearly 50 percent of cases involved domestic violence. Judge Shelton

decided to take the approach of treating the parents like victims instead of perpetrators and placing additional focus on domestic violence in CPS cases in his court. Judge Shelton partnered with a family services organization to create a Victims Anonymous program. One challenge is finding sponsors, but the local sheriff is joining the cause and establishing a similar program at the local jail. The goal of the program is to approach domestic violence from a mental health perspective.

Judge Shelton concluded his report informing meeting attendees 2,000 prom dresses were collected to replace the prom dresses lost in the flood last year.

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels from Slayton announced the Parent Collaboration Group continues to meet quarterly. The last meeting held addressed the topic of parental input related to services provided to children when the child is in substitute care.

Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also requested of judges and commissioners that when addressing parents in CPS cases, that their names be used rather than "bio mom" or "mom" or a case number as that type of reference diminishes the role of the parent.

Ms. Bibbs-Samuels also asked attendee to consider when mothers or fathers seek assistance at domestic violence shelters and a case is opened with CPS whether a decision can be made more quickly regarding the allegations. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels expressed concern that parents experiencing domestic violence may not seek assistance for fear of CPS involvement with their families. She advised that the fear of CPS involvement could hinder parents from gaining help and safety.

Hon. Selina Mireles from Laredo shared that she is working on a video presentation to explain the process of CPS to parents. Judge Mireles observed that when parents arrive at court, they are very anxious and when given the pamphlet from CPS, they either don't read it or don't fully understand it. Her video will explain the purpose of the hearing, legal terminology, and the process. The Parent Collaboration Group is assisting with this process.

Judge Mireles has also started an incentive called Wings of Hope for her Drug Court Committee. Anyone who goes beyond the call of duty, will be given wings. Lastly, Judge Mireles reported about the Supervised Independent Living Program, where students had an opportunity to tour the dormitories at Texas A&M International University.

Hon. Julie Countiss from Houston announced that she is still familiarizing herself with her new judges and is sharing what she learns from the Children's Commission with the Houston judges. She plans to hold Brown Bag lunch sessions to offer support, training, and to be available to answer questions for her colleagues.

Representative Stephanie Klick from North Richland Hills informed meeting attendees that legislative committee hearings and conferences would start in the coming weeks.

Hon. Gary Coley from Waco announced the grand opening of the CASA headquarters in Waco in March. Also, that *Unbound,* a book authored with the help of local children to highlight the need for collaboration to prevent human trafficking is now available for purchase. Judge Coley also shared that Waco and Seattle's model for Human Trafficking was recently used as a model in Colorado.

Judge Coley reported that Senate Bill 2737, which focuses on restraints used on juveniles for court proceedings, and the attire of the child, is being evaluated for implementation. The goal is to have consistency and clarity around how to handle restraints, clothing, and procedural justice matters affecting the juvenile population. A round table for further discussion is scheduled for April.

Ms. Vicky Spriggs from Austin reminded meeting attendees the 2020 CASA calendar is available, with artwork contributed by a CASA staff member and cases that reflect actual cases. Judge Sakai was featured for April. Ms. Spriggs also invited members to view Texas CASA's 2019 Annual Report. CASA is conducting focus groups to examine how it can serve local communities and the state in the most effective manner. A judicial focus group was hosted in January and facilitated by Judge Rob Hofmann.

Ms. Spriggs reported that the normalcy guide work is ongoing, which is a publication on how child welfare advocates can promote normalcy amongst youth, such as dating, social media, and liability concerns.

Ms. Spriggs reported that CASA participates in a few of the Children's Commission workgroups including the Foster Care & Education Committee, Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care, Legal Representation Committee, and the Dual Status Task force. Ms. Spriggs introduced Mr. Andy Homer and Ms. Sarah Crockett as a part of CASA's public policy team. She expressed her gratitude to Mr. Homer for carrying on her duties while she was out of the office. Ms. Spriggs completed her report announcing the CASA Primer would take place March 9, in Austin, and there is now a learning center offered on TexasCASA.org.

Hon. Piper McCraw from McKinney reported about a successful National Adoption Day that took place in Collin County in November. Judge McCraw had the opportunity to participate in the adoption of a child, who had his whole kindergarten class, the high school band, and the drill team in matching t-shirts cheering him on. Judge McCraw expressed her appreciation of all involved in the successful event.

Judge McCraw shared that the CASA Collaborative Family Engagement has begun in Collin County. For the children that were not able to be immediately placed with family, this tool has allowed them to be reunited with their siblings, which allows family to remain in the child's life.

Judge McCraw has started offering Brown Bag lunches, inspired by Judge Darlene Byrne. Judge McCraw also spoke of a parent who received extraordinary support from the community which donated a car, assistance with obtaining a driver's license, and funding for one year of car insurance. Judge McCraw relayed her optimism that this parent has a strong foundation to maintain a safe home for her children.

Judge McCraw announced that the Texas CASA office in McKinney that was undergoing renovations in February had a grand reopening on March 26. Judge McCraw concluded her update by expressing her appreciation to Ms. Kristene Blackstone for enabling a child to be placed with family a few days before Christmas rather than waiting an additional 30 days for approval.

Hon. Susan Brown from Houston reported attending the Child Welfare Judges Conference that took place in October and was able to see a presentation on data by Ms. Kristene Blackstone and Ms. Katie

Elseth. When data was presented, Judge Brown was disappointed in the low numbers of permanency placement in her region. With the assistance of Mr. Dylan Moench and Katie Elseth, Judge Brown was able to take a closer look at the statistics and data in her area from associate judges and district court judges. Judge Brown hopes that by analyzing the data, judges in her region can explore permanency more quickly, while also keeping in mind the best outcome for all family members involved.

Judge Brown also holds Brown Bag lunches where judges discuss three cases and explore why those children remain in care, and the next steps to assist with exiting from care. Judge Brown announced that, with assistance from DFPS, service providers in Matagorda and Wharton Counties had a gathering to bring together families to increase access to meetings, drug treatment, and other services encourage continued progress. Judge Brown announced plans to expand this model to all six counties in her area, thus encouraging volunteerism in different areas of service and giving providers an opportunity to meet the judge and case worker.

Judge Brown also announced that a third CPC in her area was established in October 2019. Currently, the court hears cases from Harris County, but she anticipates that Matagorda County will join the docket soon. Judge Brown noticed a lack of communication between criminal courts, DFPS, and children's court, and she is encouraging collaboration between the courts to better assist dual status youth. Judge Brown noted that with these changes, courts can better assist parents with services and that similar practices can be implemented in other counties to serve the same purpose.

Hon. Darlene Byrne from Austin addressed meeting attendees about an ongoing issue related to children in foster care whose parents are not U.S. citizens. She has observed there is not the same sense of urgency to obtain permanency for these children and she is interested in data regarding how long the adoption process takes for children whose parents are not citizens of the United States.

Ms. Cindy Patrick from Austin sent a survey to philanthropists across the state to gauge their interest on learning more about child welfare. Fifty responses were received from across the state. Ms. Patrick plans to convene this group to discuss Community Based Care basics and the Family First Prevention Services Act. DFPS Commissioner Jaime Masters will welcome the new group and speak at the first meeting. The goal is to provide opportunities for coordination and advance practices in the child welfare system with philanthropic support.

Ms. Katie Olse from Austin thanked the Commission and for the acknowledgement of Ms. Katie Elseth. Ms. Olse shared that Ms. Elseth is available to assist with data analysis and interpretation. She also commented on TACFS' collaboration with the Children's Commission on the SCTIC, working with Ms. Jocelyn Fowler and Judge Darlene Byrne.

Ms. Olse shared that collaboration with Texas Permanency Outcomes Project was awarded a $7 Million-dollar, five-year grant to the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing. The grant focuses on how foster care agencies can serve in a more supportive role for families. A two-year, pilot program will be rolled out to three areas of the state: Harris County, Region 2 (Corpus Christi), and the Rio Grande Valley. Ms. Olse shared that the projects are slated to start in the fall of 2020. Multiple trainings are also being offered around the state with a focus on community organizations that have

direct care of children, youth, and families, to support prevention and early intervention, with a focus on clinical work.

Ms. Olse expressed her gratitude to Judge Hofmann for his assistance to help educate judicial leaders, attorneys, youth, families, providers, and healthcare professionals about Community Based Care.

Ms. Olse also shared an update on the collaborative work with DFPS and Casey Family Programs, on the Families First Prevention Services Act, which has potential for significant change in Texas. Ms. Olse concluded her update with a request for meeting attendees to support the National Trauma Campaign urging Congress to adopt more trauma-informed policy.

Dr. Gary Blau from Houston expressed his gratitude to meeting attendees for incorporating youth voice, and the engagement of young people with lived experience in the child welfare reform process. Dr. Blau reported that primary care providers make up 75% of referrals for children who are referred to mental health services. he noted that at present pediatricians are primarily concerned with child mental health. As part of his job at the Hackett Center, Dr. Blau is exploring ways to broaden evidence-based practices and making use of the provisions of the federal FFPSA.

Dr. Blau also commented on the Building Bridges Initiative which started over 10 years ago in Nebraska, and is now in 17 states, including Texas. Dr. Blau expressed the importance of tracking young adults who have aged out of care and has conducted trainings with both DePelchin and Upbring focusing on necessary and timely supports for youth who have experienced residential treatment.

Dr. Blau concluded his report announcing a grant that was awarded to the City of Houston in partnership with the Baylor School of Medicine.

Ms. Elizabeth Farley from Austin introduced herself to meeting attendees. Ms. Farley represents Governor Abbott's office, noting her most recent position with Representative Four Price. Ms. Farley also works closely with DFPS focusing on the implementation of bills and the budget for the next legislative session. Ms. Farley offered her assistance to anyone she could be helpful to, concluding her report to the Commission.

Presentation from Mr. Felix Herrera

Mr. Felix Herrera from Austin gave a presentation on the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin. Mr. Herrera shared in-depth information on the Consulate and how it can assist with community affairs. The Consulate offers programs in education, culture, health, economic development, leadership training, and community engagement.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Carolyne Rodriguez of Austin, updated Commission meeting attendees on the nonprofit ChangeOne. She announced that they will be holding a fundraiser on Saturday and all proceeds will be going to the organization. Ms. Rodriguez will chronicle the story of ChangeOne once her service on the board concludes. She announced that she may be reaching out to a few judges to answer interview questions and requested that anyone interested in submitting a quote for the chronicle to

contact her. The Community Based Care Program in Austin has reached out to the youth of ChangeOne for feedback, she thinks it would be great if all regions did this. Ms. Rodriguez closed out her update by speaking on the challenges of helping a small nonprofit with no staff and no funding. She asked that anyone interested in meeting or sitting at a roundtable to discuss how to sustain funding contact her.

Ms. Barbara Elias-Perciful of Dallas expressed her gratitude to Governor Abbott for awarding the grant for two-day, 15-hour trainings on trauma for judges, attorneys, and stakeholders for the second year in a row. She announced that Dr. Bruce Perry will be the keynote speaker for the Child Protection Law Conference on March 26-27, 2020 in Houston. Ms. Elias-Perciful ended her update by requesting that the Children's Commission put together a task force or workgroup that focuses on the issue of misdiagnosis of foster children.

DFPS / CPS UPDATE

Ms. Sasha Rasco of Austin opened her update by speaking about the departure of Kristene Blackstone and how much she will be missed. She announced how excited the Department is about the new Family Connects Initiative, which allows nurses to visit new moms after birth. The Department has formed a framework group to figure out how to ensure that families have access to and are getting the necessary services under Family First. She announced to the group that they currently have an application out for their Texas Service Member Veteran Families Services and this year they opened it up statewide. Lastly, she announced they are planning a spring listening tour to get feedback on how things are going across the state.

Ms. Kristene Blackstone of Austin announced that the Child Protection Investigation held a Domestic Violence Conference to help strengthen our knowledge on the issue. CPI was awarded a grant that gives them the opportunity to seek out leadership coaching to assist with decision making and management. The Office of the Governor and DFPS have been working together on strategies to address child sex trafficking in Texas. DFPS has been setting up response teams when children are recovered from sex trafficking situations. She was very proud to announce that DFPS has cut down call wait times to seven minutes, which is a significant improvement and has raised the efficiency within the department.

Ms. Blackstone began her update on Child Protective Services by talking about the work they have been doing on Family First. They held a hearing on January 31 to talk about the intent of the bill, required conditions, and the work the department is doing. They were able to hear from stakeholders about services that the public would like to see. She was also able to meet with the Parent Collaborative Group and hear from parents with lived experience about services they feel could have helped them in their time of need. The Department is trying to partner with PEI and help them with evidence-based programs. They will give their recommendations to the legislature on September 1, 2020.

Ms. Blackstone gave an update about the progress of Community Based Care by announcing they will be going live with Stage 2 on March 1, 2020 in the Fort Worth area. Stage 2 means that conservatorship management services will be turned over to the local SSCC which in this area is Our

Community Our Kids and referred attendees to the Department's website for additional information, including the Department's implementation plan.

Ms. Blackstone closed her update by expressing how excited she is to meet with the new group of judges in Houston.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Ms. Anissa Johnson of Austin, on behalf of Mr. David Slayton, provided the update for Office of Court Administration. Ms. Johnson announced that they received funding to create new child protection courts across the state. The presiding judges will be meeting at their retreat next month to discuss the child protection courts across Texas.

JURIST IN RESIDENCE UPDATE

Hon. Rob Hofmann of Mason County announced that he and Judge Sage spoke at the Judicial Conference in Wyoming in October 2019. There is a lot of work being done with Community Based Care, when the program moves to your area there will be a program administrator that will serve as a liaison for that area.

Judge Hofmann announced that the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges is aware of the recommendation to double the current CIP budget. Judge Martinez-Jones will be going to Washington to discuss this request next week.

Judge Hofmann stated that the 10th Annual Hill Country Ad Litem will be held next Thursday, February 27, 2020.

Judge Hofmann commended Renee Castillo on the great work she has done transitioning into the new role of chair of the Foster Care and Education Committee.

Judge Hofmann ended his update by announcing how proud he was of the work of Texas A&M University and their implementation of Supervised Independent Living Programs at five new campuses. Lastly, Judge Hofmann announced that the Education Reach Conference would be held June 3-5, 2020 and encouraged all judges to attend.

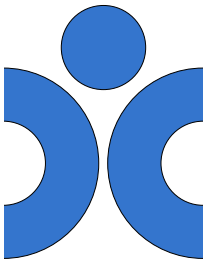
NEW BUSINESS

Justice Guzman announced the next Commission Meeting date: May 21, 2020, at the State Bar of Texas.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3



Children's Commission®

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

Report to Commission

May 22, 2020

Goal I: 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: Support statewide efforts to ensure and improve child safety.

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

Background: The Family First Prevention Service Act (FFPSA) became effective on February 9, 2018. FFPSA restructures federal child welfare funding, particularly Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, which Texas uses to pay for services for children in foster care and their families. FFPSA seeks to reduce entry in foster care, to limit the use of congregate care, and to increase access to substance abuse and mental health services. There are certain training provisions directly impacting the courts and Court Improvement Programs, but beyond that, FFPSA also mandates that states seeking Title IV-E funding create and provide more robust prevention services for families in the state's child welfare system. Also, with the FFPSA and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), it will be necessary for the Children's Commission to engage with stakeholders more deeply on prevention efforts. The CARA amendments to CAPTA require more focus on what are known as Plans of Safe Care, and although there is no specific court oversight of Plans of Safe Care, the judiciary is being asked to become familiar with the CARA amendments and partner with child welfare in a manner that makes existing and new Plans of Safe Care more meaningful.

The Children's Commission is collaborating closely with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on the implementation of FFPSA, as is required by the federal Administration for Children and Families. Texas has elected to delay implementation of certain provisions related the use of congregate care, which mandate that Court Improvement Programs provide training and education to judges and other legal system stakeholders on the limitations on funding for use of non-foster family home placements. The Children's Commission is collaborating with Casey Family Programs and other national workgroups on best practices for implementation of all FFPSA provisions, including the development of IV-E prevention programs, court oversight of congregate care placements, and court involvement in encouraging a primary prevention approach. Congress recently enacted the Family First Transition Act to provide $500 million in one-time, flexible transition funding to help jurisdictions with FFPSA implementation. This funding is intended to help offset costs associated with program startup, IV-E waiver transition, and improvements to foster care safety and quality. The legislation also offers grants to jurisdictions with expiring IV-E waivers if they face significant funding losses, ensuring stability and continuity of care for the children in care as the transition continues to new models under FFPSA. In addition to these new funding resources, the bill creates a two-year delayed phase-in for FFPSA's "well-supported" requirement for prevention services, which sets the evidence threshold prevention services must meet under FFPSA to be eligible for funding reimbursement. The delay offers states and counties greater flexibility to proceed with existing, evidence-based foster care prevention programs.

05/22/20 Update: On March 26, 2020, the Children's Bureau announced new ratings for additional programs and services added to the Clearinghouse, including Child-Parent Psychotherapy, Family Behavior Therapy for Adolescent, Adult, and Adult with Child Welfare Supplement, Homebuilders, and Solution Based Casework, to go along with the other dozen or so programs already included.

The Children's Commission recently joined a session of the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Listening Tour to engage with DFPS and service providers around prevention and child safety. In addition, Commission staff will participate on the PEI Prevention Framework Workgroup moving forward.

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 Education Blueprint.

Background: Since the inception of the Education Committee in 2010 and the release of the Texas Blueprint in 2012, the Children's Commission has convened a multi-disciplinary, statewide effort aimed at improving education outcomes for children and youth in foster care. The Foster Care and Education (FC&Ed) Committee was established in 2015 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations. In FY2019, the structure of the FC&Ed collaboration shifted from a workgroup model to a project-centered model. The FC&Ed Committee will continue to develop priorities and provide oversight for the statewide effort. As projects are identified, small groups will each meet periodically with a defined scope, deliverables, and a timeline. Although the structure will change, the core principles of strengthening collaboration between education, courts, and child welfare systems, developing cross-training opportunities, and encouraging data-driven decision-making remain fundamental to the FC&Ed Committee model.

05/22/20 Update: The FC&Ed Committee met on May 1, 2020 and received updates on workgroup projects this year. The next FC&Ed Committee meeting will occur on August 21, 2020.

- The Education in Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs) Workgroup has been drafting a series of color-coded, one-page resources for legal professionals, providers, and educators. The one-pager addressed to legal professionals is in the design phase and an online version will be made available soon with a hardcopy to follow. The workgroup anticipates that the provider and education one-pagers will be completed by August 1, 2020.
- The Resources for Higher Education Professionals Workgroup is creating a PowerPoint slide deck with accompanying one-pagers and reference documents (e.g. Higher Education Resources Chart, Education & Training Voucher (ETV) information, Tuition and Fee Waiver process map) aimed at providing high level training, tools, and resources for professionals in higher education including, but not limited to, administrators, financial aid officers, admissions, foster care liaisons, and others who may assist or provide services to foster care alumni on campus. The workgroup is on target to complete the project by May 2020 and will discuss presentation options at its next scheduled meeting in May.
- The Non-traditional Post-Secondary Education Workgroup is compiling information related to the Tuition and Fee Waiver, ETV funds, and other available funding for foster care alumni seeking non-traditional post-secondary education pathways such as trade and certificate programs. The information will be converted into flowcharts, a glossary of terms, an interactive eligibility determination tool, and a one-pager highlighting important information for students. The workgroup has a target deliverable distribution date of September 2020.
- The Records & Information Sharing Workgroup placed its project on hold until the end of the 2019-2020 academic school year. The workgroup reconvened on May 12, 2020 to discuss changes to the deliverable timeline and whether any additional records and information sharing issues have been identified during the COVID-19 crisis that need to be addressed.
- The Every Student Succeeds Act Workgroup placed its project on hold until the end of the 2019-2020 academic school year. The workgroup will reconvene in May to discuss changes to the deliverable timeline and to identify additional topics, if any, to address as a result of COVID-19 crisis.

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.

I.C.1. Strategy: Partner with trauma and mental health advocates and agencies to implement and apply principles of Trauma-Informed Care in the respective disciplines.

Background: In July 2017, the Children's Commission launched the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care (SCTIC), to elevate trauma-informed policy and practices in the Texas child welfare system by creating a statewide strategy to support system reform, organizational leadership, cross-systems collaboration, and community-led efforts with data-informed initiatives. The SCTIC adopted four broad goals with specific strategies and definitions for its year one plan. The SCTIC endeavors to raise awareness about Trauma-Informed Care through training and educational opportunities; lead a SCTIC to create a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive child welfare system that better meets the needs of children who have experienced trauma; and partner with other Texas and national trauma-informed workgroups and collaboratives. Based on the work of the SCTIC, the Children's Commission published a final report in February 2019: Building a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System: A Blueprint. The Blueprint provides a framework for the state to advance trauma-informed care practices in the child welfare system. The SCTIC continues under the guidance of an Implementation Task Force and utilizes the Blueprint to direct the SCTIC's work.

05/22/20 Update: Chaired by Judge Darlene Byrne of the 126th District Court, the SCTIC Implementation Task Force last met on February 28, 2020 and will meet again on June 12, 2020 via videoconferencing. On February 28, Task Force members heard updates from its three workgroups and determined next steps. During the COVID-19 crisis, all workgroups have met at least once to touch base with members and assess priorities for SCTIC workgroups.

Policy & Practice Workgroup**:** The Policy and Practice Workgroup's first priority has been to address Blueprint Strategy 1.1 calling for the adoption of definitions to create a common language among stakeholders. DFPS intends to adopt definitions of "trauma" and "trauma-informed" by rule. DFPS requested that the SCTIC serve as a stakeholder feedback group. The Policy and Practice Workgroup took into consideration existing and commonly used definitions and agreed on draft language taken primarily from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration but with additional language from National Child Traumatic Stress Network to more fully round out the concept of "trauma-informed." The workgroup submitted their recommendations to the SCTIC Task Force on February 28. After a minor addition to the "trauma-informed" definition, Task Force members voted to approve the workgroup's recommendations. A final report with the recommendations was sent to DFPS leadership on March 13th. DFPS' legal department is currently evaluating the best location in the Texas Administrative Code to add this definition and is expected to initiate the formal rulemaking process in the near future. The original agreed-upon timeline for this process has been disrupted due to COVID-19 priorities. The official rulemaking process to adopt definitions will likely take nine months to one year.

Training Workgroup**:** At the February 28 Task Force meeting, the Training Workgroup presented a final draft of the one-pager explaining the goals of the SCTIC. Task Force members provided additional feedback and the workgroup will aim to have a revised draft available for review at the next full Task Force meeting. The workgroup has partnered with staff from the South Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) to develop a training database (formerly referred to as an environmental scan) of current available trauma-informed trainings. Workgroup members are assisting MHTTC staff in identifying trainings relevant to child welfare. Once the database is nearly complete, the workgroup will filter the list for certain audiences such as caregivers and parents, legal community, and service providers and make this information available on the Children's Commission website. The training database might also help identify gaps in training across the state and direct the workgroup's efforts.

The workgroup also served as the curriculum advisory group for the Children's Commission staff in developing the Judicial Trauma Institute (JTI) conference which was scheduled for late March 2020 but postponed due to COVID-19. The workgroup provided feedback on the idea of transitioning the JTI to a virtual format and will continue to support Commission staff in identifying the best avenue for training the judicial court teams for whom the JTI was designed.

Information Sharing, Data, & Funding Workgroup**:** The Information Sharing, Data, and Funding Workgroup is focused on Strategy 7.2 of the Trauma Blueprint which calls for a statewide website to serve as a primary source of relevant information and training on trauma-informed care and practices. At the February 28 Task Force meeting, the workgroup presented a draft website concept paper which identifies the general requirements and process for identifying a host organization to develop the Texas-specific site. A goal is for the host organization to also secure funding to maintain the day-to-day operations of the site. The primary site audience will be family and caregivers, child welfare professionals, direct and non-direct service providers, and community collaboratives. The workgroup is also developing a "Return on Investment" document to illustrate the potential long-term benefits for investing in trauma-informed policies and practices.

I.D. Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources, and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically domestic child sex trafficking so that the judicial system can assist in preventing and responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS' conservatorship.

I.D.1. Strategy: Collaborate with state and local partners to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of youth in foster care.

Background: The Children's Commission partners with many key stakeholders with a goal of preventing and addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in foster care. In addition to serving on the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the Children's Commission also works with the Office of the Texas Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team, the DFPS Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation team, and the 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. The Children's Commission is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness about human trafficking as it impacts children involved with the child welfare system. The Children's Commission also participates in the state and national trainings on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to judges and attorneys as needed.

05/22/20 Update: The Commission will continue to work with child welfare and court stakeholders to build capacity to address trafficking throughout the state. In April, Commission staff provided input in the Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council survey aimed at capturing anti-trafficking efforts throughout the state. Commission staff participates in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region VI Human Trafficking Workgroup to spread best practices and better coordinate with other states on combatting human trafficking. The workgroup convened on April 7 to discuss possible effects of COVID-19 on youth vulnerability to trafficking.

Goal 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.

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.

II.A.1. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other stakeholders to identify topics for Round Table discussions.

Background: Round Table discussions are designed to address key, urgent issues affecting the Texas child welfare system through a half-day program that is facilitated by a subject-matter and legal expert. The topics vary year to year and the number of Round Tables hosted each year also varies according to the interest of stakeholders and issues demanding attention. The Children's Commission's role usually consists of forming a small workgroup to discuss the overall purpose, creating an invitation and distribution list, securing a venue, handling all invitations, RSVPs, and travel reimbursements, and producing a written report or paper within about 4 to 6 months following the event.

05/22/20 Update: The Children's Commission had to postpone the Round Table on Shackling in Juvenile Court scheduled for April 13, 2020 in Austin due to the COVID-19 crisis. A future date is still to be determined and Commission staff is exploring multiple ways to engage stakeholders on this issue. No other Round Table discussions are scheduled at this time.

II.B. Objective: Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support and JIR correspondence and communique 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.

II.B.1. Strategy: Provide JIR support to the judiciary and the legal and child welfare systems.

Background: The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR develops relationships with retired and sitting judges, 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, and publishes informational letters and electronic communiques ("e-blasts") concerning items of interest, such as changes in policy, law, practice, and training events. Additionally, the JIR assists with the development of curriculum for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference, and moderates and presents at the conference, as needed; reviews updates to the Child Protection Law Bench Book; and attends and participates in events on behalf of the Children's Commission, including Round Tables, other conferences, and Trial Skills Trainings.

05/22/20 Update: The Supreme Court has two Jurists in Residence: Judge Dean Rucker and Judge Rob Hofmann. The JIR activities will remain much the same for FY2020, with additional emphasis on elevating judicial leaders with expertise and interests related to prevention of removal to foster care, child and family well-being, and improving child and family voice in child welfare system reform. Since late February, both JIRs have assisted the Children's Commission in handling the COVID-19 crisis and its effect on courts and judicial processes across the state.

Jurist in Residence (JIR) Letters and Judicial and Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) issued between February 2020 and May 2020 include:

- 5/21/2020: Benefits of Utilizing Technology in Child Welfare Cases
- 5/13/2020: Announcement regarding the Children's Commission website, COVID-19 webpage and resource links
- 5/8/2020: Register Now: Webcast on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom on May 22nd
- 5/1/2020: Save the Date! Upcoming Webcast on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom
- 4/28/2020: Resources to Support Educational Success for Students in Foster Care During COVID-19
- 4/20/2020: Resources for Parents and Families Involved with CPS

- 4/14/2020: April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month
- 4/8/2020: Handling Sensitive or Protected Information in Child Protection Hearings; Interview of Child in Chambers
- 4/1/2020: Guidance for Services and Service Plans
- 3/25/2020: DFPS Issues Virtual Contact Guidelines for Caseworkers
- 3/23/2020: Current Suggested Best Practices for Family Visitation During the COVID-19 Crisis
- 3/20/2020: COVID-19 Resources Related to CPS Cases
- 3/19/2020: Supreme Court Emergency Orders Suspending Deadlines and Procedures
- 3/2/2020: DFPS News Release on Community-Based Care
- 2/19/2020: Hands-on Trial Skills Training Applications Extended to Friday, February 21st
- 2/13/2020: MCLE on Essentials of Family Representation in CPS Cases Now Available in the TexasBarCLE Online Classroom

II.B.2. Strategy: Maintain, update, and support a high-quality Child Protection Law Bench Book for CPS Judges (Bench Book).

Background: The Children's Commission maintains a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists. The Bench Book also includes tips and best and promising practices. It is updated annually with new information, as needed, and is disseminated to judges at training events and upon request. The Bench Book is also hosted on the Children's Commission website and through LawBox, which can both be accessed through the Commission website.

05/22/20 Update: The Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book was last updated in October 2019 to incorporate statutory changes resulting from the 86th Texas Legislative Session and to include updates to all topical chapters. New sections on de novo hearings and joint managing conservatorship, as well as new topical chapters on children with disabilities, Mexican Consular relations, and substance use disorders were added. The Bench Book is currently undergoing updates for distribution in October 2020. The current version of the Children's Commission's Bench Book is maintained online here: http://benchbook.texaschildrenscommission.gov/. The Bench Book is also hosted by LawBox online services for FY2020.

II.C. Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the Children's Commission website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.

II.C.1. Strategy: Develop and distribute information to attorneys that communicate or announce changes in law, policy, or practice and inform attorneys of training and other events.

Background: Since May 2016, the Children's Commission has maintained a distribution list to help inform legal practitioners of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay pertinent child welfare-related information. The Children's Commission publishes attorney resource letters about emerging, relevant, and changing policy, laws, practice, and training opportunities that are of interest to attorneys handling Child Protective Services (CPS) cases. All letters are posted on the Children's Commission's website.

05/22/20 Update: The Children's Commission's distribution list has grown to more than 4,100 Texas attorneys, judges, court staff, and stakeholders. See Strategy II.B.1 for a listing of Judicial / Attorney Resource Letters (JARLs) distributed between February and May 2020.

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.

II.D.1. Strategy: Maintain and enhance usability and function of the Children's Commission website.

Background: The Children's Commission maintains a website that features published reports, guides, announcements, and training opportunities. CIP grant applications and grant recipient information are also included on the website. The website links to a Twitter account, @TXChildrensComm through which JIR and JARL communiques are announced once they are published.

05/22/20 Update: The Commission website was updated in February 2020 to reflect recent Children's Commission Committee structure changes and is routinely updated for content and newly released reports and resources. A webpage dedicated to COVID-19 resources and announcements including emergency court orders related to child protection cases was created in March 2020. While the website is specific to judges and attorneys, website visitors have full access to these online tools and can subscribe to join Children's Commission electronic mailing lists to receive announcements.

II.E. Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders and organizations to enhance knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with and throughout Texas.

II.E.1. Strategy: Provide assistance to and collaborate with local jurisdictions, DFPS, and state and national partners and organizations.

Background: The Children's Commission provides various types of support for child welfare partners and stakeholders including meeting facilitation and support, travel reimbursement for meeting and training event attendees, presentations by Children's Commission staff as requested, and assistance securing speakers for local, regional, or national events, as appropriate.

05/22/20 Update: In March 2020, the Children's Commission offered a scholarship for one attorney who staffs the Travis County Drug Court (Parenting in Recovery) to attend the annual National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) conference on May 27-30, 2020 in Anaheim, CA. The NADCP Board of Directors has determined that RISE20 can no longer be held in person. The conference will now be held virtually on May 26-29, 2020. Topics at the conference include drug testing, substance abuse, parental engagement, treatment planning, incentives, sanctions, and best practices gleaned through research on drug court programs.

II.F. Objective: Support the use of best practices in court case management.

II.F.1. Strategy: Partner with Office of Court Administration (OCA) to support the maintenance, enhancements, impact, and usability of the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS), as well as efforts to enhance child and family engagement in court proceedings.

Background: CPCMS is a case management system that is unique to Child Protection Courts (CPCs) that has been in use since 2009. CPCMS is currently in maintenance mode. OCA staffs a CPCMS Advisory Council of CPC judges, OCA staff, and Children's Commission staff to identify and discuss various enhancements and issues. User-generated problems and enhancements are routed through the Advisory Council, which also advices on data collection and reporting features of CPCMS. The Children's Commission regularly collaborates with OCA on the statue of CPCMS' functioning, problems, and enhancements.

05/22/20 Update: The CPC Advisory Council met on March 6, 2020, to discuss planned updates for CPCMS. The Advisory Council reviewed the new Dual Status flag indicating Juvenile Court involvement and welcomed members of the Commission's Dual Status Task Force to participate in the Advisory Council. The council discussed progress on the customizable "Data Dashboard" and requests for enhancements and fixes. Since the Advisory Council meeting and the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, the Advisory Council has taken steps to insure CPCMS adapts to the crisis and the transition to virtual court rooms, including switching to a six month's forward view of court dockets and adding a CPC directory of YouTube channels to the CPCMS posting docket webpage. The target date for the next CPCMS update will be August 2020 and will include the Judicial Dashboard feature after feedback the judicial focus group helped narrow the parameters. The next meeting of the CPCMS Advisory Committee is scheduled for early June 2020.

II.F.2. Strategy: Collaborate with and provide support for specialty courts, dockets, or programs.

Background: The Children's Commission partners with or supports individual court efforts seeking to adopt specializes practices or programs. For example, in FY2019, the Children's Commission provided seed money through OCA to employ an Associate Judge and Court Coordinator to assist in handling child abuse and neglect cases filed in Dallas County Family Courts to promote achieving permanency for children in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

05/22/20 Update: There are no new specialty court partnerships or funding requests to consider currently, but since March 2019, the Dallas County Child Protection & Permanency Court has assisted youth in the long-term care of CPS. Participating courts include the 254th, 256th, 301st, 303rd District Courts. Efforts are underway for an evaluation of Dallas Permanency Court model to examine the permanency and well-being outcomes in the court and identify which practices promote positive outcomes for children and youth.

II.F.3. Strategy: Convene a Task Force to examine the issues related to youth involved both in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

Background: The Children's Commission has worked since its inception to strengthen courts for children and families in the Texas child protection system. Federal Court Improvement funds require a focus on children who are abused and neglected but children involved in the juvenile justice system present with many of the same challenges and needs. The Texas Judicial Council recommended to the Supreme Court in 2018 that the Children's Commission should convene a task force to study and report on issues relating to youth with involvement in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The task force was formed to establish a common, statewide definition(s) for the population, identify resources needed to meet the needs of dual status youth, and make other recommendations as may be necessary to improve outcomes for dual status youth. The task force was directed also to address training needs for judges and other necessary parties on handling cases involving youth involved in both systems. The Task Force is co-chaired by Judge Gary Coley of the 74th District Court in Waco and Judge Lisa Jarrett of the 436th District Court in San Antonio. On July 24, 2019, the Children's Commission convened the first Dual Status Task Force (DSTF) meeting. The DSTF plans to meet 4-6 times over an 18-month time period to develop definitions of dual status youth and recommendations for improved handling of dual status cases.

05/22/20 Update: The DSTF created five workgroups to study and make recommendations on several aspects of serving dual status youth. The Task Force approved two definitions presented by the Definitions Workgroup, one for dual status youth who are concurrently involved in both systems and another for dual system youth who have a history of involvement in either or both systems. The Judicial Practices Workgroup will explore issues ranging from documenting what works in jurisdictions that already have crossover dockets to exploring the implications of SB 1887 (86th Texas Legislative Session). The Training Workgroup will identify training needs for judges, lawyers, and advocates as well as other interested stakeholders. The Legal Representation & Advocacy Workgroup will focus on addressing ethical issues in representing dual status youth, raising awareness about the dual status population among prosecutors, and defining the role of a guardian ad litem in a dual status case. The Transition Planning & Local Coordination will address how to strengthen support for dual status youth during transitions between systems (e.g. re-entry) and identifying other opportunities for collaboration at the local level. The Task Force last met on March 3, 2020 and will convene again on July 31, 2020. At the March meeting, the Task Force dissolved the Definitions Workgroup and approved the creation of a Data Workgroup to assess what data currently exists to get a better understanding of both the population size and the outcomes for dual system and dual status youth in Texas.

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

III.A. Objective: Participate in and promote institutional collaboration among high-level state and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders to ensure open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners aimed at improving the child welfare system functionality, promoting equitable services, and ensuring justice for all parties.

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

Background: The Children's Commission helps institutionalize collaboration by maintaining a statewide multi-disciplinary judicial commission, holding regular meetings that include child welfare stakeholders, partnering with the state child welfare agency, and partnering with other state and national level executives, partners, and organizations. The Children's Commission creates an environment and the space for stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information on an ongoing basis.

05/22/20 Update: The Children's Commission held its first meeting of FY2020 on September 27, 2019 and the Children's Commission approved several funding and project strategies. The second meeting of the fiscal year was held on February 21, 2020, where the Commission welcomed Dr. Jerry Milner, Associate Commissioner of the Children's Bureau and his Special Assistant David Kelly, to discuss federal perspectives on improving the child welfare system. Collaborative Council Member Felix Herrera made a special presentation about the services available through the Office of the Consulate General of Mexico. Ms. Karla Baker and her attorney, Ms. Danna Mayhall also presented on the importance of parent engagement and high-quality legal representation. The Children's Commission organized a team of stakeholders, including CPS, PEI, and the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services to attend the State Team Planning meeting in Washington, DC from March 11-13.

Since the beginning of March, the Children's Commission has canceled or postponed most, if not all events, due to the COVID-19 crisis. The Children's Commission postponed the Round Table on Shackling in Juvenile Court that had been scheduled for Friday, April 13, 2020. The Children's Commission has continued its partnerships with its many

collaborators, with most events taking place online via Zoom or conference calls. All partnerships and stakeholder relationships are intact including, but not limited to, the Office of the Governor, Office of the Attorney General, the Judicial Commission on Mental Health, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, The University of Texas School of Social Work, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, and the Child Protection Reform Round Table. Also, DFPS leadership has a standing position on the Children's Commission and at least one state-level DFPS staff member is on every Children's Commission committee. DFPS participates in a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child welfare stakeholders, which occurred weekly until May 13, 2020, and include the executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, the Children's Commission's Collaborative Council, and other child welfare stakeholders.

III.B. Objective: Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services on the Child and Family Service Reviews, Program Improvement Plans, Child and Family State Plans, and the Court Improvement Program Strategic Plans.

III.B.1. Strategy: Confer with DFPS on federal plans, audits, and requirements as mandated by federal program instructions.

Background: Federal Law mandates that states receiving Title IV-E funds must collaborate with the state's Court Improvement Program (CIP). The Children's Commission administers the CIP for Texas. As such, the Children's Commission is required to collaborate and partner closely with the Department of Family and Protective Services. Specifically, the entities are required to collaborate on the State's five-year Child and Family State Plan (CFSP), periodic Child and Family Service Reviews and ensuing Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and the annual Court Improvement Program Strategic Plan and Self-Assessment. The Children's Commission ED and Staff serve on and advise the State PIP Team.

The Executive and Assistant Directors of the Children's Commission regularly confer with DFPS to discuss certain elements of the CFSP and PIP. Specific areas of collaboration, some of which are included in the approved PIP include:

- Participation in the Commission's annual child welfare judges conference by joining regional directors and judges to discuss data, gaps, and processes. This PIP element was completed in October 2019. (5.1; 5.5).
- Collaboration on improving notice and engagement of parties beyond the CPC Courts and the CPCMS system.
- Collaboration on Roundtable discussions about systemic and specialized topics.
- Consideration of legal and judicial input regarding:
    - Working with court stakeholders to ensure effective and appropriate use of court involvement in cases with court-ordered services (3.6.6);
    - Determining barriers and possible strategies to strengthen DPFS policy and practice related to incarcerated parents (4.1.5; 4.1.6);
    - Sharing practice guidance regarding how to best engage and support parent victims of family violence (4.5);
    - Continuing to raise awareness and improve practices regarding the importance of family engagement with staff and child and parent representatives who have direct contact with parents and children served by DFPS (4.6);
    - Consulting with attorneys who represent parents to determine barriers and strategies to strengthen DFPS policy and practice related to Family Group Decision-Making 5.4.3; 5.4.4);
    - Polling judges (through Children's Commission process) about the challenges and suggestions for improvements to enhance and speed permanency in cases involving the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (the ICPC) (5.9.4);
    - Sharing information about Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) and any evaluations and next steps related to expanding CFE (5.10.4).

- Utilizing the Children's Commission Legal Representation Committee to obtain legal and court stakeholder feedback (4.6.11)
- DFPS will partner with legal and child welfare system stakeholders, including representatives of the court system on Trauma Informed Care practices and reform (6.4.4)

In addition to the items in the PIP, the Children's Commission, at the suggestion of ACF and request of DFPS, formed an Attorney Advisory Group (AAG) comprised of seasoned, experienced child welfare attorneys from across the state who have agreed to offer input and perspective on an ad hoc basis via email or conference call on matters of DFPS policy changes when requested by DFPS, gauging the impact of a legislative proposal, or providing feedback on trends or practice issues and concerns.

05/22/20 Update: In January 2020, Children's Commission staff attended an Adoption Summit sponsored by the federal Children's Bureau to continue momentum from the first Adoption Call to Action summit held in August 2019 and focused on achieving permanency for children in care without a permanent family. The Children's Commission, in partnership with DFPS, also participated in an Adoption / Permanency Workshop sponsored by the Capacity Building Center for Courts in February focusing on the permanency goals and achievements of the Dallas PMC Court which was launched in December 2018. The CBCC workshop elements include: understanding the project and setting intentions/goals for the next 12 months; exploring data and how to use it effectively; conducting a root cause analysis and developing a theory of change; implementation successes; identifying appropriate program/practice change and implementation plans; fidelity and outcome assessments; and project evaluation. The Children's Commission submitted information to DFPS related to the completion of several PIP items on 4/2/20 and 4/23/20 and provided an update to the DFPS State Plan on 4/29/20. The AAG provided feedback on the Department's Permanency Planning Resource Guide in April 2020.

Goal IV: Promote high quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, ensure child and family involvement, and support 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.

IV.A.1 Strategy: Convene and maintain a Legal Representation Committee to support efforts to ensure high quality legal representation for parties.

Background: When a family is involved in a child protection proceeding, quality legal counsel is essential for all parties to ensure that the court strikes the appropriate balance between the rights and duties of all parties involved. The Children's Commission has maintained a Legal Representation Committee (LRC) since its inception. The Committee exists to identify training needs, advise child welfare system stakeholders on best legal and judicial system practices, evaluate proposed statutory amendments, assess the quality of legal representation throughout the state, and help ensure that court proceedings safeguard due process, promote child and family engagement, and produce quality legal representation outcomes for the children and families involved.

05/22/20 Update: The projects discussed at the January 30, 2020 LRC meeting continued to advance despite the COVID-19 crisis. Commission staff continued to refine the Tool Kit for Representing Parents and Children in CPS Cases in response to the feedback from the LRC Committee and the Tool Kit Workgroup. However, the crisis and the cancelation of the State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section Advanced CLE on March 26, 2020 forced an adjustment to the timeline for publishing the Tool Kit. The Commission hopes to have an online version of the Tool Kit available in June and hard copies available in August for the Advanced Family Law Child Abuse workshop. The work of the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation continued with each of subcommittee holding virtual meetings to discuss what adjustments needed to be

made due to the crisis. The Task Force agreed to divide the April 24, in-person meeting, into three virtual meetings from April 24-May 1. The meetings featured a question and answer session with guest representatives from different models of representation from California, New York, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Massachusetts, and Washington. The Task Force will hold its next meeting in early June 2020 and the next meeting of the Legal Representation Committee will be on August 28, 2020.

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.

IV.B.1. Strategy: Support development and adoption of Standards of Representation for attorneys representing children and parents in child protection cases.

Background: Though attorneys for parents and children are required by the Family Code to become familiar with the ABA standards of practice for attorneys who represent parents and children in abuse and neglect cases, Texas does not require compliance with the ABA standards as a condition of appointment, nor has Texas adopted its own standards of practice for court-appointed attorneys. The 2018 Legal Representation Study surveyed stakeholders regarding the effect that the lack of enforceable standards of practice has on the legal representation of parents and children. Across stakeholder groups, participants demonstrated a high level of confidence that the creation and enforcement of standards would improve the quality of representation, including 70% of responding court-appointed attorneys indicating that standards would have a positive effect.

05/22/20 Update: The Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation's subcommittee on quality, standards, and accountability for attorneys met on April 3 to discuss what role standards of representation will play in the Task Force's Report to the Texas Legislature in November 2020. The subcommittee is working to identify Texas-specific requirements that any standards must include to ensure quality legal representation.

IV.C. Objective: Encourage attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise to pursue child welfare specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization to provide a higher caliber of legal representation.

IV.C.1. Strategy: Support the Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advisory and Exam Committees and the National Association of Counsel for Children in efforts to certify Texas attorneys as specialists in Texas and national child welfare law.

Background: On February 14, 2017, the Texas Supreme Court officially recognized Child Welfare Law as the 20th area of certified legal specialization. Judge Dean Rucker serves as the chair of the Advisory Commission which considers applications to become board certified in child welfare law and has the authority to review and suggest changes in standards. Children's Commission staff serve as the chair of Exam Commission, which is responsible for drafting and grading the certification exam. Also, for several years the Children's Commission has offered reimbursement of either the Application Fee or the Certification Exam Fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the National Association of Counsel for Children's Child Welfare Law Specialist Exam. The scholarship includes the NACC Red Book Training to help applicants prepare for the exam and a copy of the Red Book. Additionally, assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking re-certification of their CWLS every five years. As of June 2017, the program is open in 43 states and there are over 600 CWLS across the country. Texas is currently in the top five states for number of certified attorneys/judges.

05/22/20 Update: Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the Texas Board of Legal Specialization has extended the deadline to submit applications for 2020 certification until May 18, 2020. The exam will be held October 12, 2020 and the Board of Law Examiners is meeting regularly to establish safety protocol and procedures for the exam. The Exam Commission will continue to meet throughout the year to revise existing exam questions and draft new questions in preparation for the October 2020 Exam.

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.

IV.D.1. Strategy: Maintain a Parent Resource Workgroup and the Parent Resource Guide.

Background: The Children's Commission supports a Parent Resource Group which is made up on parent mentors, parent advocates, parent attorneys, DFPS personnel, and other interested stakeholders. Prior to establishing the Family Helpline, the Children's Commission partnered with the University of Texas and other stakeholders to produce the Parent Resource Guide, which is available in print and online on the Children's Commission website as well as many on other Children's Commission partner and advocate websites, in English and Spanish.

05/22/20 Update: The Parent Resource Group met on March 6, 2020 to discuss how to support parents experiencing a CPS case and how to make the best use of the Parent Resource Guide as well as the "What Does a Parent's Attorney Do?" pamphlet. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission collaborated with various stakeholders to identify resources available to help parents navigate the COVID-19 crisis and published a Resource Letter to judges and attorneys with an extensive list of resources for parents and families in CPS cases. The Parent Resource Group will hold its next meeting May 19, 2020 to identify further needs and supports for parents.

IV.D.2. Strategy: Support efforts to provide access to information and resources for Texas families through the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline.

Background: Since 2017, the Children's Commission has partnered with Access to Justice and the Children's Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation to establish the Family Helpline, which provides easy, statewide access for parents and family members to basic information, education, and resources addressing 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, right to legal counsel, non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other variations of these situations.

05/22/20 Update: The COVID-19 crisis has required the Family Helpline to adapt in several ways. Texas Legal Services Corporation has frozen all hiring, including the Helpline's open staff attorney position. The Helpline has ceased all in-person outreach activities, educational activities, and travel for the safety of their staff and the general public and is evaluating call volume to determine if electronic outreach would be a feasible and an alternative to in-person outreach. The Helpline also saw a drop in call volume in the middle of March, as the COVID-19 crisis began to cause multiple changes and closures throughout the state. However, in April the reduction in calls dissipated and call volume is now steady. In the second quarter of FY2020, the Helpline aided over 430 individual callers about child welfare legal issues across the state of Texas. The calls involved 463 adults and 724 children, and covered questions regarding 108 different issues related to CPS. Despite the reduction in staff and the disruptions due to the crisis, the Family Helpline was able to provide continuous service to Texas families due to the creation of a work-from-home program that was implemented before the outbreak began. The program allowed staff to transition to a remote work environment without any disruption in services and remain available to assist the public at their regular hours of operation.

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.

IV.E.1. Strategy: Promote and improve availability and use of the OCA Notice and Engagement tool.

Background: All parties involved in CPS cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from 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. The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. OCA will market the resource and periodically re-issue announcements, survey users on the usefulness and effectiveness of the system and monitor the system login and search information. Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data is populating according to search criteria. Reports/data will be produced and provided to the Children's Commission.

05/22/20 Update: On May 8, 2020, OCA experienced a security breach in its network, disabling several OCA websites and data systems including CPCMS and its notice and engagement tool. Since that time, OCA has been working tirelessly with law enforcement, cybersecurity professionals, and the Texas Department of Information Resources to get the systems up and running as soon as possible. OCA and the Children's Commission remain committed expanding and improving the notice and engagement tool once the system is restored.

IV.F. Objective: Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may, in turn, help children and families exit the child welfare system more quickly.

IV.F.1. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability, quality, support, cost, training, and usefulness of mediation in CPS cases.

Background: Mediation is used in CPS cases throughout Texas and can be an effective and financially prudent method of resolving cases. One benefit of mediation is that it can enhance participants' sense they were treated fairly. Studies show that an enhanced sense of fair treatment increases both acceptance and compliance with court decisions. Though the use of mediation to resolve CPS cases prior to trial has become widely accepted, the Children's Commission is interested in exploring whether mediation is being under-utilized in CPS cases because it often occurs too late in the case timeline for the benefits of increased compliance to be realized.

05/22/20 Update: The Commission hosted a Round Table on Mediation in CPS cases on February 22, 2019 at the University of Texas at Austin. The Round Table brought together 45 mediators, attorneys, judicial leaders, subject matter experts, and policymakers from across Texas to discuss issues affecting mediation in child protection cases. Participants exchanged experiences and ideas regarding how to create conditions for successful mediation, when and how to use mediation as an effective tool, as well as the challenges facing diverse jurisdictions in establishing effective mediation programs. The Commission will be publishing the report from the Round Table in June 2020 and is forming a workgroup to analyze the issues that arose from the discussion and to develop action items that can be implemented to raise the quality of mediation in CPS cases across the state of Texas. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission is making efforts to connect experienced CPS mediators who are able to conduct mediation remotely with courts who may lack access to experienced mediators in their local jurisdictions or who are looking to expand how they utilize mediation.

IV.G. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings and related decision-making so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.

IV.G.1. Strategy: Elevate the importance of youth voice, youth presence, and youth input in the outcome of their case, including the use of video conferencing services to facilitate youth participation in court hearings, and support normalcy strategies and activities.

Background: In FY2018, the Children's Commission helped Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) establish a Statewide Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC) designed to elevate and incorporate youth voice in statewide policy and administrative procedure discussions, particularly in the area of the child welfare system. The Children's Commission also granted TNOYS funding to assist with Physical and Environmental Activities for Knowledge and Skills (PEAKS) Adventure Program which helps transform the lives of participants, which include youth and young adults living in shelters, halfway houses, and juvenile justice facilities to help youth build resiliency skills through structured experiential learning and positive interactions with adults and youth peers. The Children's Commission also continues to support a video conferencing project which enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without being physically present in the courtroom. The Children's Commission provides funding to OCA via a grant to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements (primarily RTCs). In furtherance of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P. L. 113–183), the Children's Commission held a Round Table in February 2019 and provided funding to Texas CASA to expand understanding, availability, and implementation of normalcy culture and activities throughout the child welfare system. The Commission also provides funding each year to print the Foster Youth Aging Out Guide published by Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

05/22/20 Update:

PEAKS: The Children's Commission provided $20,000 in grant funding to TNOYS to support the participation of youth and young adults at its FY2020 PEAKS camp. Due to COVID-19, TNOYS will be unable to host PEAKS as planned in fiscal year 2020. TNOYS did incur $5,000 in sunk costs for staff and contractor time in preparation for PEAKS which the Commission will reimburse. TNOYS and Commission staff are discussing possible reallocation of the budget to support youth more appropriately under the current circumstances.

Videoconferencing: The video-conferencing program remains available to the courts to include youth in hearings and for RTCs and CASA workers to conduct visitation. In the first quarter of FY2020, there were 53 video hearings conducted. In the second quarter of FY2020, there were 30 video hearings conducted. The decrease is likely due to courts using Zoom for all hearings during COVID-19 crisis. OCA has created a webpage with links to each Child Protection Court's livestream hearing page. Video conferencing activities for FY2020 are focused on user support and efforts to increase awareness of and how to use the program. OCA is developing an online scheduling tool to make scheduling hearings more convenient for the court, placement facilities, and DFPS caseworkers. To facilitate development of this tool, OCA hosted a call in March with the focus group of Child Protection Court Associate Judges and Court Coordinators to provide input on functional requirements. This tool will accommodate any video platform, including Zoom. OCA staff plan to have a pilot of the scheduler tool ready in August.

Normalcy: The Commission provided $26,000 in FY2020 for Texas CASA to create a role-based guide regarding normalcy in FY2020. The goal of the guide is to inform the child welfare system participants - attorneys, judges, CASAs, foster parents, congregate care staff, kinship caregivers, community partners, agency employees, education partners, and others - about normalcy and about best practices for each role in promoting and attaining normalcy for children and youth in foster care. Another goal of the guide is to address challenging topics related to normalcy, including liability concerns, transportation, social media, unsupervised activities, dating, etc. Texas CASA convened a workgroup of child welfare system participants to help draft sections for each participant's role. The workgroup's first meeting was held on January 31, 2020 and a second meeting was postponed due to COVID-19.

Foster Youth Aging Out Guide: The Children's Commission provided funding to Texas RioGrande Legal Aid to re-design and print the 7th Edition Foster Youth Aging Out Guide. The Guide has been printed and the online version can be found on the Texas Foster Youth Project website and is shared on the Children's Commission website as a resource for youth voice and normalcy.

Goal V: 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: Use child welfare agency, court system and/or other data to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

V.A.1. Strategy: Utilize Data Analyst to assist the Children's Commission with data projects to identify, track, and measure outcomes, identify best practices, and address areas in need of improvement.

Background: In April 2019, the Texas Alliance for Child and Family Services (TACFS), through its Research and Policy Division and with funding from the Children Commission, hired a data analyst who will have the responsibilities to access publicly available data from DFPS, court-specific data, data from the TACFS, and analyze them in a manner that provides information to the judiciary.

05/22/20 Update: The Data Committee was re-organized in FY2020 to focus on using data to better understand the relationship between outcomes and practices and to develop ways to best utilize the data analyst position. The data analyst is supporting the Commission's Data Committee by analyzing publicly available child welfare data in a manner that facilitates discussions between DFPS and judges about data, judicial processes and practices, and potential systemic improvements. Data Committee projects for FY2020 include collaborating with Casey Family Programs to evaluate the PMC Specialty Courts in Houston and Dallas, working with the Office of Court Administration to create a "data dashboard" for CPC judges utilizing CPCMS along with a condensed and user-friendly guide for understanding required data entry, supporting the work of the Task Force on Court-Appointed Legal Representation data and financial analysis subcommittee, and supporting jurisdictions participating in the Judicial Trauma Institute to track the implementation and outcomes of their action plans. The Data Committee met on May 14, 2020 to discuss how to evaluate and prioritize data committee projects in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Goal VI: 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.

VI.A.1. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate judicial training conferences and events.

Background: The Children's Commission collaborates with the Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ) to design 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 TCJ. Each year TCJ plans at least one annual Child Welfare Judges Conference in partnership with the Children's Commission. The Children's Commission also provides partial funding for a half-day CPS Continuing Judicial Education (CJE) track at TCJ's annual Family Justice Conference. Additionally, the Children's Commission usually plans and funds at least one multidisciplinary conference or summit during the fiscal year with TCJ. Planning and funding activities include designing curriculum and agenda for conferences, determining the budget and number of attendees, participating in planning calls, vetting judicial scholarship applicants, surveying participants, and evaluating the process and event for future planning.

05/22/20 Update:

Child Welfare Judges Conference: The 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC), hosted in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary (TCJ), is scheduled to convene over October 26-28 at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center. At this time, Commission and TCJ staff are hopeful that this conference can still be held in person and are planning accordingly. Commission staff will continue to confer with TCJ to assess what format is best as the conference dates approach and consider shifting to a virtual conference if needed. On April 28, the Commission convened a CWJC Curriculum Committee Call with 19 judges from across the state, including Child Protection Court judges, Associate Judges, District Judges, and a Presiding Judge to request their feedback about what they would like the CWJC curriculum to focus on. Commission staff, OCA staff, and TCJ staff participated in this call as well. The Commission's proposed curriculum was based in part on specific judicial requests for further education in the 2019 CWJC post-event survey results collected by TCJ and the Commission. The Curriculum Committee reported that they would like to have COVID-19-related updates on judicial practices and statewide data, but that COVID-19 should not overshadow the conference. Other suggestions for conference content from the Curriculum Committee included the following presentations: a Case Law Update, an update on Community Based Care, a panel honoring retiring judges, and breakout sessions with judges to review regional data with DFPS staff (to include Regional Directors, Investigations staff, and Family Based Safety Services staff). Commission staff will refine the agenda based on this input and confer with the Curriculum Committee Members to receive additional feedback and speaker recommendations before proceeding to finalize the CWJC Agenda.

Judicial Trauma Institute: Based on a strong, ongoing interest in trauma-informed training indicated by judges, Commission staff designed and planned to host a Judicial Trauma Institute in partnership with the Texas Center for the Judiciary to meet this need. The conference was structured to follow a "Beyond the Bench" format, track the flow of a CPS case, and involve participation with court teams. Twelve judicially-led teams of six people each were scheduled to attend the Judicial Trauma Institute over March 29-31, 2020, at the Sheraton Austin Georgetown Hotel and Conference Center, with each judicial team typically comprised of a judge; a court coordinator; a prosecutor; an attorney who takes appointments for parents and for children in CPS cases; a Senior-level Caseworker or Supervisor at DFPS; and a CASA Executive Director or Program Director. The goal of the conference was for each of the 12 judicial teams to leave with more information and resources about what it means to be a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive court on CPS cases, and to have a fully developed action plan about how to implement these gains in knowledge in their jurisdiction upon return. Unfortunately, due to growing concerns about the spread of COVID-19, TCJ and the Commission sent notices to all attendees on March 12th that the Judicial Trauma Institute would be postponed. Given current circumstances, the JTI will likely be rescheduled for some time in 2021.

VI.A.2. Strategy: Support specialized training for Child Protection Court program, judges, and support staff.

Background: Child Protection Courts, also known as CPCs in Texas, were created to assist trial courts in rural areas with managing their child abuse and neglect dockets. Like the child support court associate judges, these associate judges are appointed by their regional presiding judges and are OCA employees. At the discretion of the presiding judge, visiting judges are sometimes appointed to hear these cases instead of associate judges. The judges assigned to these dockets hear child abuse and neglect cases exclusively. With this exclusive focus, children on CPC dockets can achieve permanency more quickly and the quality of placement decisions should be higher. The 25 child protection courts operate in over half of Texas counties. The Children's Commission provides funding to support CPCMS as well as other goods and services required by CPC judges and coordinators to conduct hearings and manage cases.

05/22/20 Update: Based on the success of the July 2019 CPC Convening at which CPC Judges and their court coordinators were trained on court management and data collection by the Commission in partnership with OCA, the Commission plans to host a similar convening in the summer of 2021. In the meantime, CPC judges and their court coordinators will receive training from OCA at a Pre-Conference just prior to the opening of the full conference at the upcoming October 26-28, 2020 Child Welfare Judges Conference, referred to under strategy VI.A.1.

Also, for the first time, Commission staff will produce an in-house, judicially-led webcast designed for judges who preside over child protection cases. Moderated by Judge Rob Hofmann, JIR for the Children's Commission, a live judicial panel will address the many benefits of utilizing technology in child welfare cases. The webcast will include tips on efficient docket practices in CPS cases as well as silver linings and success stories, to encourage judges to expand their use of technology to continue hearing CPS cases while hearings are conducted remotely. The webcast is scheduled for June 5, 2020 and will be paired with a JIR communique that will set forth all of the positive implications for continuing to use technology in CPS cases.

VI.A.3. Strategy: Produce high-quality training and evaluate delivery and content.

Background: Trial Skills Training (TST) is a 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. Developed and initially spearheaded by Justice Michael Massengale, the TST is now led by Judge Piper McCraw. Trial Skills Training is held once a year and offers approximately 17-18 MCLE hours, including ethics hours. Ten TSTs have been hosted by the Children's Commission since its inception in October 2013. Each TST program has a competitive application process and is limited to 21 less-experienced attorneys. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. TST provides parent, child, and state attorneys numerous 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 Parent Therapists serve as live witnesses. 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. Also, in partnership with TexasBarCLE, the Children's Commission makes several online courses available to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys. Once each year the Children's Commission works with the CLE branch of the SBOT, TexasBarCLE, to broadcast a day-long, 6 MCLE hours' worth of training for attorneys who represent children, parents, and the state of Texas in CPS proceedings. TexasBarCLE'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 Children's Commission collaborates with the Training Committee Chair on the conference agenda and develops the content based on CQI from recent conferences and feedback from post-event surveys where scholarship awardees indicate what additional education would assist them in their work on the CPS docket. The Commission also collaborates with TexasBarCLE regarding audience, budget, marketing, and evaluation; helps ensure notice of the event to judges and attorneys; ensures CLE is available; analyzes survey results from evaluations distributed by the organizers; and conducts CQI of the process and training content.

05/22/20 Update:

Trial Skills Training: This year's Trial Skills Training (TST) was to be held over June 24-26, 2020 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in San Marcos, Texas and would have been the eleventh iteration of this unique, effective, and robust hand-on litigation training. The Commission received 58 applicants total and had invited twenty-one finalists to participate in the TST. TST faculty and curriculum preparations as well as coordination with the event venue were underway. However, due to concerns about the safety and health of all attendees, as well as restrictions on gatherings, Commission staff in concert with the Training Committee Chair and the TST Faculty decided to postpone the June 2020 in-person TST to 2021 and is working with the conference hotel to secure early spring 2021 dates for the rescheduled June 2020 participants, as well as to identify dates for a second TST later in 2021 for our yearly TST event. In the meantime, Commission staff are convening a subcommittee of TST faculty to discuss the possibility of producing some virtual training in June to offer to the June 2020 TST cohort.

SBOT Annual One-Day Webcast with TexasBarCLE: Commission staff is coordinating with TexasBarCLE to find a date for this year's day of taping in their studio. Topics will be selected in part from the feedback which the Commission received from our 2019 post-event surveys of scholarship awardees. As in all prior years, any webcast produced by the Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE will be archived and made available as webinars for viewing at the same discounted rates provided for the live webcasts in the CPS Practice Area of the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom. TexasBarCLE provides discounts to court-appointed attorneys and scholarships to other viewers, while the Children's Commission provides scholarships to attorneys representing the Department of Family and Protective Services. All prior years' webcasts produced in partnership between the Commission and TexasBarCLE have been archived and are available as webinars for viewing at the same discounted rates provided for the live webcasts in the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom.

Online Classroom: Through its CLE arm, TexasBarCLE, the SBOT currently offers a number of online continuing legal education (CLE) courses in the CPS Practice Area of TexasBarCLE related to representation of all parties on the CPS docket. A total of 24 webcasts have been archived in the CPS practice area of the TexasBarCLE's Online Classroom, the vast majority of which were produced by the Children's Commission in partnership with TexasBarCLE. The topics cover relevant and timely issues of interest to attorneys who work in the area of child welfare. Some or all 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. All of the courses can be found at the following link: http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/OCSearch2.asp. At the request of the Commission, several courses from the 2019 Advanced Family Law's Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day CLE Track have been added to this roster by TexasBarCLE.

In-House Webcasts: Commission staff have developed the capacity to host a regular series of webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. This will supplement the 6 hours a year described above which the Commission is grateful to film in partnership with the State Bar in TexasBarCLE's studio. In response to current circumstances and the need for virtual training, Commission staff is developing more regular webcasts to help educate child welfare stakeholders across the state. In addition to the judicial panel webcast described above, the Commission is planning to host a 90-minute webcast on Zoom at noon on May 22, 2020 for attorneys, on Effective Advocacy in the Virtual CPS Courtroom. Moderated by JIR Judge Rob Hofmann, a panel consisting of a prosecutor, an AAL, and a parent attorney will discuss best practices and pitfalls to watch out for when preparing their cases and clients for a virtual hearing. This will include how to facilitate the client's meaningful participation in a virtual hearing; how to properly elicit testimony on Zoom; how to properly enter evidence on Zoom; and how to review orders in a virtual setting. The webcast will be archived on the Commission's website and is available for free to all viewers. The Commission will continue to plan and host webcasts as the opportunity and need arise and has established a YouTube Channel for additional educational videos.

DFPS Regional Attorney Training: This annual conference has two components: the 2020 Legal Support Professionals Training will be held on October 7, 2020 in Corpus Christi, Texas, and the 2020 Regional Attorney Trainings will be held at T-Bar-M in New Braunfels, Texas as follows: October 26: Trial Skills; October 27-28: Attorney Conference; October 29: Focused training TBD (possibly Trauma Informed Care). DFPS is currently working on an agenda and content for the conference. The Commission will provide support for this training with a $10,000 grant ($5,000 will be allocated to the attorney training and $5,000 will be allocated to the legal support professionals' training).

VI.B. Objective: Ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.

VI.B.1. Strategy: Support attendance at state and national judicial and legal conferences and training events.

Background: The Children's Commission administers different judicial and attorney scholarship opportunities throughout the fiscal year, including but not limited to: (1) The biennial ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference held in Washington D.C.; (2) The SBOT Advanced Family Law Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop; (3) the National Association of Counsel for Children Annual Conference; and (4) the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference. For all scholarships, the Children's Commission determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained and 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. All attorney applicants for Commission scholarships must be currently representing DFPS or taking appointments on the CPS docket, be in good standing with the SBOT and with their primary judge and commit to completing a post-event survey from the Commission. Judges with applicants from their jurisdiction are notified by the Children's Commission and asked to confirm that the applicant is currently representing DFPS or taking appointments on the CPS docket.

05/22/20 Update: Due to health and travel concerns associated with the COVID-19 crisis, many 2020 events have been cancelled or postponed. The Commission had allocated funds for judicial and attorney scholarships for several conferences, but, given the concerns regarding travel at this time, the Commission is waiting to see if conference partners will continue with summer events. Subsequently, many scholarship processes have been delayed.

The 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Conference: The Commission allocated $10,000 to cover conference costs and scholarships for attendees for the Section's third Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Course, which was scheduled for March 26-27, 2020 in Houston. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the 3rd Annual Advanced Child Protection Law Conference was cancelled. This conference will not be rescheduled.

Texas District and County Attorney Association Training: The Texas District and County Attorneys' Association (TDCAA) had invited the Commission to again provide 12 hours of CPS-related MCLE for their CPS Track at their biennial Crimes Against Children four-day conference. TDCAA's Crimes Against Children Conference is designed for District and County Attorney Offices across the state. The Commission provided speakers and scholarships for DFPS Regional Attorneys in 2018 and planned to do so again this April. Working with the TDCAA training director and a planning committee, Commission staff developed curriculum for the 2-day breakout track on CPS issues and had contracted with TDCAA to register up to 28 Regional Attorneys on Commission scholarships. COVID-19 concerns led the TDCAA to cancel their conference. No postponed date has been announced yet. If and when it will be rescheduled, the Commission plans to partner with TDCAA to provide speakers and scholarships for DFPS Regional Attorneys as described above.

Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Workshop: This year's Child Abuse and Neglect One-Day Workshop is currently scheduled for August 5, 2020 and will be hosted by the SBOT Child Protection Law Section. The Commission plans to support this statewide MCLE effort by partnering with the SBOT to provide registration scholarships to qualified attorneys from across the state. The Commission has allocated $7,500 to cover 75 attorneys at $100 each for registration to the live one-day workshop or any of the subsequent replays. The Commission hopes to announce the attorney scholarship application process in the near future.

NACC Annual Conference: The NACC's upcoming 43rd annual conference has recently transitioned into a virtual conference and is scheduled for Monday, August 24 through Friday, August 28, 2020. The virtual pre-conference is scheduled for August 23rd for the NACC's Red Book Training (which is helpful training especially for those attorneys and judges wanting to take the Child Welfare Law Specialization exam). The Commission has allocated $10, 000 to provide scholarships to qualified Texas judges and attorneys for registration costs. The Commission hopes to announce the scholarship application process in the near future.

NCJFCJ Annual Conference: The NCJFCJ's 83rd Annual Conference is currently scheduled for July 19-22, 2020 in Reno, Nevada. The Commission has allocated $50,000 to provide reimbursement scholarships for qualified judges upon request to cover registration fees and conference-related expenses such as travel, lodging, and meals, up to the amount of $2,000 per person.

Goal VII: 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.

VII.A.1. Strategy: Identify and promote data-driven, cross-disciplinary training opportunities to address disproportionality and disparities among children and families involved in child protection cases.

Background: The Children's Commission is committed to the goal of reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system through development and deployment of judicial and attorney resources aimed at increasing awareness, sharing data and information, as well as best practices for dealing with disproportionality and disparities systemically and locally.

05/22/20 Update: Commission staff continue to use an equity lens when developing trainings and new projects. The SCTIC Implementation Task Force emphasizes employing the concepts of equity as vital and necessary to implementing a trauma-informed child welfare system. The Commission continues to identify opportunities to enhance judicial and attorney awareness of disproportionality issues and techniques for reduction of disparate impacts in the child welfare system. In April 2020, Commission staff attended a training by Nurturing Diversity, entitled "Racism as Trauma." Addressing cultural differences and equitable services was a focus of the Judicial Trauma Institute which was postponed in March 2020 and any virtual or in-person version of the JTI will include this focus.

Goal VIII: 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.
VIII.A.1. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally-recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.
Background: The Children's Commission supports partnering with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance. The Commission also works with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of the Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines. The Children's Commission also partners with DFPS in supporting tribal/state collaborative meetings and collaborates with the Capacity Building Center for Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group. **05/22/20 Update:** On August 21, 2019, the Commission sent a JARL providing an update in the case challenging the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), *Brackeen v. Bernhardt* (formerly *Brackeen v. Zinke*). On August 9, 2019 a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion reversing the lower court's decision and upholding the ICWA as constitutional. On November 7, 2019, all of the Fifth Circuit's judges met and vacated the August 9 decision *sua sponte* and agreed to rehear the case *en banc.* The full court decided to rehear the case on its own motion before deciding to instead grant the plaintiff's motion for rehearing. Oral arguments took place on January 22, 2020. Commission staff will continue to monitor this case and provide relevant updates. The Commission is a regular participant in the CIP ICWA Constituency Group monthly calls organized by the Capacity Building Center for Courts. Commission staff maintain contact with the three Texas Tribes during the COVID-19 crisis and communicate any resources that may be helpful during this time. Commission staff actively recruit tribal members to participate in Commission initiatives. A behavioral health staff from the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo serves on the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care.

Goal 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.
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 well-being.
IX.A.1. Strategy: Engage in activities integral to the Children's Commission's functions and operations.
Background: The Children's Commission is a statewide, multi-disciplinary collaborative body that includes high-level membership from the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of Texas government, along with child welfare partners in the private sector. At the foundation of the Children's Commission is a longstanding collaboration with the state child welfare agency, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The Children's Commission receives state appropriated as well as federal grant funds which are used to operate the Commission, fund meeting facilitation and travel reimbursement, training expenses and scholarships, as well as pass-through grants to sub-

grantees such as Texas Center for the Judiciary and Office of Court Administration. The Children's Commission adopted its most recent Strategic Plan in 2016. The Children's Commission also confers regularly with national organizations and other CIPs and submits annual reports and CIP strategic plans to the Administration for Children and Families and to the Supreme Court of Texas. The Children's Commission holds Commission meetings every four months throughout each year of the five-year plan and conducts a bi-monthly collaborative call with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders as well as numerous other calls and meetings related to Children's Commission workgroups. Children's Commission Staff serves on the Public Private Partnership, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Education Reach for Texans, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners. The Children's Commission engages in ongoing participation with ACF and DFPS regarding the CFSP, APSR, CFSR and PIP and CIP Strategic Plan.

05/22/20 Update: In FY2019, the Children's Commission received approximately $1.7 million in federal CIP funds for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. These funds are used for Commission operations as well as being passed through to grant recipients such as the Office of Court Administration, Texas Center for the Judiciary, and Texas Legal Services Corporation, as well as grants for training events to DFPS, SBOT, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others. DFPS staff participate on the following workgroups and committees: Collaborative Council, Systems Improvement Committee, Data Committee, Training Committee, Legal Process and Practice, Dual Status Task Force, Foster Care & Education committee and workgroups, Parent Resource Workgroup, and on the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care. The Children's Commission publishes an updated Report to Commission in advance of each Commission meeting as well as JIR and JARL letters, project reports, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and follow up reports for all short-term and long-term projects throughout the fiscal year. The Children's Commission also publishes an annual report to the Supreme Court of Texas in December of each year.

INSERT - TAB 4

Children's Commission®

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

Children's Commission
Financial Report

FY 2020 BUDGET

FY 2019 Carry Forward	$	1,668,768
FY 2020 State General Revenue	$	91,924
FY 2020 Federal Distribution	$	1,791,065
FY 2020 Available Funds	**$**	**3,551,757**

FY 2020 OBLIGATIONS

		Budget		Expenses To-date		Outstanding Obligations
Indirect	$	1,273,639	$	667,489	$	606,150
Staff Directed Projects	$	183,500	$	34,003	$	149,497
Grants	$	1,021,569	$	312,432	$	709,137
Scholarships	$	96,500	$	2,728	$	93,772
	$	2,575,208	$	1,016,653	$	1,558,555

CURRENT FINANCIAL STATUS

State General Revenue Balance 5/15/20	$	88,358
Federal Fund Balance 5/15/20	$	2,446,746
FY 2020 Outstanding Obligations	$	1,558,555
Estimated Unexpended/Carry Forward FY 2021	**$**	**976,549***

*Due to COVID-19 and resulting postponement/cancellation of conferences and meetings, the carry forward balance to FY 2021 will increase. The exact amount of this increase is not certain at this time. Actual numbers will be presented at the September 2020 Commission Meeting.

Insert Tab 5

Commissioner Updates
May 2020

Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels - Statewide Parent Collaboration Group

The pandemic has caused many of us to have to cancel monthly meetings to adhere to the 6 feet of separation rule and recommendation. It is expected that there will be an increase in reported child abuse and domestic violence cases as a result of pandemic induced stress therefore parents are expecting to be supportive and helpful during this time. I am still talking to parents on the phone and we plan to schedule a Zoom Parent Support Group for May 21, 2020 and ensuing meetings until we are able to meet personally again.

Please remember parents of the Statewide Parent Collaboration Group and the parent liaisons in the different regions are available to you for input, advice, perspective, and to speak. We want to ensure information continues to be provided regarding parents involved in the Child Welfare system and their experiences as well as how procedures can be improved and modified to promote consistency, familial connections, and safe families.

Hon. Gary Coley - 74th District Court

Since our last meeting, I know that we have all been focused on trying to adapt and remain accessible in a remote manner. While many events were cancelled or postponed, the Heart of Texas Human Trafficking Coalition went forward with a virtual meeting on April 16, 2020. Over 100 attendees heard Judge Robert Lung share his story at our Zoom meeting. While I wish we had been able to hear his story in person, one of the byproducts of the Zoom meeting was that we have a recording that I can share with everyone.

Webinar Recording from Heart of Texas Human Trafficking Coalition Virtual Meeting

In April, our team in Waco hosted a webinar for the Heart of Texas Human Trafficking Coalition with Judge Robert Lung from Colorado. Judge Lung is a survivor of sex trafficking and chair of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. You can hear him share his powerful story in the following webinar recording.

https://vimeo.com/408627094/24f8c5211f

Along those lines, Unbound also is opening a new drop-in center in Fort Worth and I am including the link to the video below.

https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=C955jSF0fno

Ms. Kate Olse - Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services

The Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS) continues the important work of supporting direct service providers across the State. While COVID-19 presents many challenges to the entire child welfare system in Texas, the impact has been immediately felt by community organizations working directly with children, youth and families. Even through this pandemic, TACFS continues to progress our work involving

Community Based Care readiness, FFPSA, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth projects, the Texas Permanency Outcomes Project, work with our mental health cohort, and our partnership with the Children's Commission. TACFS also continues to look for new, innovative ways support child and youth serving organizations during this challenging time through data, research, and clinical support.

TACFS Coronavirus Pandemic Response

- The Texas Alliance for Child and Family Services, dedicated a page of their website for COVID-19 updates, shared protocols and state and federal information for members and stakeholders - https://tacfs.org/covid-19.php
- TACFS is facilitating communication through meetings that address new pandemic information including:
    - Residential Child Care Licensing regulatory modifications to child visitations, background checks for new staff, and trainings for new foster parents and staff
    - Emphasis on crisis interventions and escalating need for child maltreatment prevention
    - Public health shifts in service, including telehealth and telemedicine
    - The DFPS modifications to policy and procedures for family and court visits
    - Immediate COVID response expenses
- Distributing frequent updates to providers about federal financial relief and new changes to COVID-19 response and protection.
- TACFS mailed COVID care packages to child welfare organizations across the state.

And, with generous support from funders, TACFS has begun down-granting funds to child welfare direct service organizations to help address the immediate needs of children and families in response to COVID-19. We have already down-granted thousands of dollars and distributed approximately $17,000 in PPE supplies. Several thousand more dollars will be distributed over the next several weeks. Child welfare organizations have experienced varying changes in demand for services, quick adaptability to virtual services delivery, a lack of necessary PPE and protective/cleaning supplies to ensure safety of children, families, and staff, and funding challenges due to reductions in private funding, donations, volunteers, etc. Our hope is that this additional support will ensure children, youth, and families across Texas continue receiving access to high-quality services and support during this crisis.

Updates on events

TACFS recently hosted our Spring symposium on Resilience which was made up of speakers who shared their diverse perspectives and experiences on trauma and resilience in both child welfare and the healthcare sectors. They all presented impactful perspectives to inspire us as we all navigate through this uncharted territory.

May is foster care appreciation month and TACFS is honored to highlight and recognize our member organizations that have continued to provide essential services to at-risk youth in foster care and families all of the time, but especially in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Follow along on our social media platforms as we highlight their incredible work happening across Texas.

TACFS continues to plan for its annual Texas Child Care Administrators Conference, which is scheduled for October 19-21, 2020. TACFS is planning a training event not to be missed with great speakers, informative sessions, and cutting-edge training.

Ms. Vicki Spriggs - Texas CASA

Texas CASA appreciates all the hard work and innovation by the courts, Child Protective Services, attorneys and other system participants to enable us to continue our work with children and families during this public health crisis. State leaders should be proud of these combined efforts under such difficult circumstances. Texas CASA would like to share COVID-19 related resources that we have assembled and developed: We created a COVID-19 Resource page that can be found here: https://covid19.texascasa.org/.

We also created a short document identifying critical issues facing children, parents and families during the health emergency and CASA's response, which can be found here: https://covid19.texascasa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/60/2020/04/Texas-CASA-COVID19-Response-CASAs-Essential-Role_Final4.24.pdf. We look forward to seeing all of our partners and friends with the Children's Commission soon.

Collaborative Council Updates

Ms. Christine Gendron – Texas Network of Youth Services

TNOYS has been working hard to support youth service providers in responding to COVID-19 and adapting to the new reality the pandemic creates. We help our members stay informed and ensure their needs are met, so that they can continue to provide the highest quality of service to youth and families.

Emergency Response Resource Center: TNOYS expanded its Emergency Response Resource Center, which focuses on keeping children and youth safe during and after emergencies, to include a robust array of Resources and Information on COVID-19. These resources include guidance from state and federal agencies, guidance for community-based programs on providing virtual services, and guidance for residential programs on topics including securing bulk groceries and other needed supplies amidst scarcity, implementing emergency response protocols, and managing challenging youth behavior during a time of crisis.

Facilitate Collaboration and Coordination: TNOYS is facilitating information-sharing, collaboration, and coordination between service providers and state regulatory agencies. TNOYS is utilizing its established role as a cross-system convener to facilitate information-sharing and coordination of resources across systems.

Coordinate Distribution of Supplies and Funding: TNOYS has been distributing needed supplies, such as masks, hand sanitizer, and laptops and tablets for videoconferencing, to Texas' emergency shelters and other child and youth-serving organizations. Additionally, TNOYS is providing small grants to member organizations to support their continued operations and service provision amidst the pandemic.

Impact Report from Youth Perspective: TNOYS is developing a report that examines the lasting impact of natural disasters and other emergencies on youths' lives, from the youth perspective. TNOYS' young adult staff are interviewing youth and young adults who are homeless or in foster care to gather information for the report.

Training to Build Texas' Capacity to Keep Youth Safe During Emergencies: TNOYS is integrating training content relevant to the pandemic into its 37thAnnual Conference on Services to Youth and Families, which will take place virtually June 25-26. **TNOYS will offer continuing education, including CLEs, to conference participants**. Topics will include resilience, trauma-informed care, emergency preparedness and response, and more.

Ms. Mary Christine Reed – Texas Foster Youth Justice Project

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, a special project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc., provides free legal representation and guidance to current and aged out foster youth across Texas and to those that work with them. Common legal issues we address include identification document problems, issues with accessing the Former Foster Care Children's (FFCC) Medicaid Program, name changes, and obtaining CPS records. We also address immigration/citizenship issues, sibling access, foster youth rights, education issues, clearing criminal and juvenile history, unresolved Class C misdemeanor issues from their time in foster care, access to extended foster care and aged foster youth benefits, etc. This is but a small sample of the services we provide, and we are constantly adding to this list to be responsive to the incredibly diverse needs of individuals among the current and former foster youth population.

While our physical offices have closed due to the pandemic, our staff is working remotely, and we are continuing to accept new clients. We are especially concerned about the legal needs of our client community stemming from the impact of the pandemic on our economy and other systems. We've developed COVID-19 resources for foster youth and made them available on our website. In addition, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid's website has a vast array of COVID-19 legal information and resources available that are helpful to youth and families involved in the child welfare system. Additional resources are added to these websites on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available. Texas RioGrande Legal Aid has also hosted a number of Facebook Live Q&A sessions on common issues such as economic stimulus payments, worker's rights, and family law.

Our project developed and published *A Guide for Those "Aging Out" of Foster Care in Texas*, currently in its 7th Edition. In February 2020, thanks to the generous financial support of the Children's Commission, we received a large shipment of printed guides, which can be ordered from us free of charge for distribution to youth. It also can be download from our website. Due to the pandemic, we have put shipments on hold, but will resume shipment once our office reopens. Email us at info@texasfosteryouth.org if you would like to order guides.

The Texas Foster Youth Justice Project can be reached at:

1-877-313-3688 (toll-free)
info@texasfosteryouth.org

4920 N. IH 35
Austin, TX 78751
texasfosteryouth.org

We welcome referrals of youth to our Project for assistance. Even if we are unable to provide legal representation, we will always strive to give them legal advice regarding their specific issue or situation. You are welcome to contact us for initial guidance or to help facilitate the referral of the youth for services.

DFPS/CPS Updates

Ms. Deneen Dryden - Texas Department of Family & Protective Services, Child Protective Services

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a report on behalf of DFPS and Child Protective Services. I am the new CPS Associate Commissioner, as of May 2020. I am excited and humbled by this opportunity. My husband was born and raised in Texas and rejoiced in the chance to return home. I worked in the Kansas child welfare system for several years and worked in the area of Trauma Informed Care for a private agency. I also bring a residential provider perspective, with more than twenty years of experience as a foster parent and we adopted some of our foster children who were not able to return home. If you see me, I may have a "deer in the headlights" look, as there is so much to learn and I realize I have big shoes to fill. Kristene Blackstone provided tremendous leadership over the last four years and our child welfare system is much stronger because of her. I know the Children's Commission will continue to support our work and I look forward to meeting each of you in person.

During this unprecedented pandemic, we worry about the stress that our children and families are experiencing. We are carefully monitoring their needs and will always do our part to help keep children safe.

Thank you for your continued collaboration during this challenging time. We continue to prioritize the important parent/child visitation when children are in out of home care, using face-to-face visits when possible and virtual visits when there is a standing court order related to visitation or health-related concerns. During the week of May 11, CPS staff resumed most face-to-face contacts after having relied predominantly on virtual contacts for two months. There are exceptions where we will continue to use a virtual method, such as contacts with children who have complex medical needs where our contact could jeopardize their fragile health. We are also working to reduce the contacts where possible, with practices to minimize multiple caseworkers coming into a facility or working with a family. For example, one caseworker will visit the child and the kinship caregiver, rather than both a child's caseworker and a kinship development worker.

Our investment in a mobile workforce prior to the COVID-19 pandemic helped us be more prepared to adjust to this situation. Most of the staff are continuing to telework to increase physical distancing and reduce the viral spread. Our staff have and are using protective personal equipment in their contacts. We have closely tracked children and youth in conservatorship who have been tested for COVID-19, including

those who test positive. We have partnered with the medical community to provide guidance on how to best care for children who have tested positive or been exposed.

Our collaborative work with stakeholders has been critically important during the last few months and it has only strengthened our work together. Texas participates in several national calls and has been recognized for its creative efforts to continue court hearings through the use of technology in order to remove barriers to children and youth achieving permanency. The partnerships we share with the Children's Commission stakeholders, advocates, residential and medical providers, faith-based organizations, governmental agencies, and other community groups have reminded us that even during such a widespread crisis, our focus on safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families is an important mission and we are not in it alone. Thank you for your valuable partnership during this difficult time.

Our ongoing work, such as the expansion of Community Based Care, the analysis of options for the Family First Act, the improvement of our support for youth transitioning to adulthood, preparation for an upcoming legislative session, and other critical areas remain. I look forward to future involvement with the Children's Commission and the opportunity to update you on our strategic efforts to continue moving the Texas child welfare system forward.

Office of Court Administration Update

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home orders, in late March, the Office of Court Administration (OCA) established protocols to continue court activities by providing state judges the ability to stream and host court proceedings via Zoom and YouTube.

On Friday, May 8th, the Office of Court Administration (OCA), the information technology provider for the appellate courts and state judicial agencies within the Texas Judicial Branch, identified a serious security event in the branch network, which was later determined to be a ransomware attack. The attack is unrelated to the courts' migration to remote hearings amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Work continues to bring all judicial branch resources back online. Critical judicial branch information, including updates concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, is available on the Texas Judicial Branch website.

Jurist in Residence Report

Hon. Rob Hofmann – Jurist in Residence and 452nd District Court

Since the last meeting:

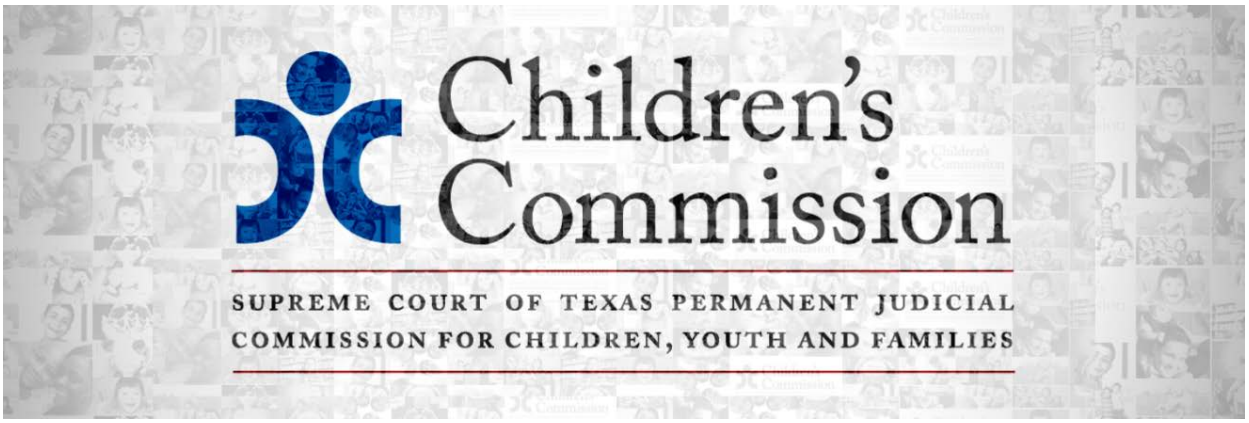
- Attended the Texas HHSC Public Private Partnership meeting, October 11, Austin
- Continued work as board member and committee chair for National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and attended Board Meetings, Nov 14, Pittsburg, PA and March 20, Virtual
- Attended the Texas HHSC Public Private Partnership meeting, January 10, Austin
- Chaired the Foster Care and Education Committee meeting, January 10, Austin
- Chaired the Systems Improvement Committee meeting, February 11, Virtual

- Presented at the Concho Valley Foster Care Education Consortium, February 24, San Angelo
- Assisted with planning and present at the Hill Country Ad Litem Training, February 28, Kerrville
- Participated in Commission's conference calls Re: Covid-19 Guidance Documents
- Assisted with planning and prepared to moderate the Texas Judicial Trauma Institute, Postponed
- Served as Subject Matter Expert for the Texas Office of Court Administration Uniform Case Management System Virtual Workshops, March 30, April 13, 15, 17, 20, 21
- Participated in CIP-OCA-DFPS Stakeholder collaborative calls
- Participated in Education Reach for Texans Higher Education Liaison Covid-19 calls, April 9, 13
- Participated in Children's Bureau Covid-19 call, April 9
- Attended National Judicial College *Constitutional Examination of Covid-19 Pandemic,* April 14, Virtual
- Participated in Commission's conference calls Re: Emergency Orders/CPS Deadlines
- Held conference call with One Accord for Kids Staff, April 22
- Participated in conference call with planning team for the Child Welfare Conference, April, 28
- Chaired the Foster Care and Education Committee meeting, May 1, Virtual
- Chaired the Systems Improvement Committee meeting, May 12, Virtual
- Planned/moderated Commission's Best Practice in Virtual Hearings Seminar, May 22, Virtual
- Planned for and prepared to moderate Commission's Silver Linings Seminar, Late May, Virtual

Future events:

- Attend the Children's Commission Staff Retreat, June
- Attend the Texas HHSC Public Private Partnership Meeting, July 10, Austin
- Continue work as board member and committee chair for National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and attend Board Meetings, July 18, Sparks, NV; and Nov 12, Pittsburg, PA
- Attend the 83rd National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference, July 19, Sparks, NV
- Attend the Concho Valley Foster Care Education Consortium, September 28, San Angelo
- Attend the Child Welfare Conference, October 25-28, Georgetown
- Present at the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Annual Conference, November 11, San Antonio
- Present at the Education Reach for Texans Conference, postponed to Spring, 2021

Insert - Tab 6



COVID-19 in Texas and the Child Welfare System Response

On March 11, 2020, the novel coronavirus, also referred to as COVID-19, was declared a pandemic and efforts quickly went into place to protect the health and safety of children and families in Texas and throughout the United States. Texas Governor Greg Abbott first issued a declaration of a state of emergency on March 13, 2020. In general, measures to protect the community included orders to stay home in many jurisdictions, closure of schools through the end of the 2019-2020 school year, and guidance regarding protective equipment and masks, social distancing, and conducting essential business. Below is a summary of some of the most impactful changes to the Texas child welfare system.

Virtual Court Proceedings

The Supreme Court of Texas has issued various Orders related to the judicial system response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Courts throughout the state have suspended in-person hearings and have been directed to convene court through the use of technology. The Office of Court Administration purchased Zoom licenses for all Texas courts and offered various webinars and technical support to ensure judges and court staff have tools at their disposal to provide access to the virtual courtroom. For more information, please visit OCA's Zoom Information and YouTube Support webpage.

Child Abuse Prevention

The spread of COVID-19 coincided with the observation of Child Abuse Prevention Month. The effects of the pandemic causing office, school, and childcare facilities to close underscores the importance of preventing child abuse and neglect and addressing the underlying issues that put children in danger. Supreme Court Justice and Chair of the Children's Commission, Justice Eva Guzman, authored an editorial aimed at raising awareness about the need to prevent child abuse and emphasized the urgency of prevention efforts in the wake of the pandemic. The editorial entitled, "The Challenge to Protect Our Children Has Never Been Greater," was released by multiple news sites, including the Austin American Statesman.

Guidance on Handling Child Welfare Cases

The Children's Commission has developed a series of communiques to assist Texas judges and lawyers handling child welfare matters in adjusting their practice and approach in response to

the pandemic. The following topics have been shared via guidance documents as well as webinars via Zoom: modifying service plans and expectations for compliance when services may be unavailable in person; handling sensitive matters and protecting privacy while upholding the open courts doctrine; maintaining a commitment to child abuse prevention when many mandated reporters are not in direct contact with children; identifying special needs for parents and accessing technology and support when parents lack resources; maintaining educational progress amidst school closures; encouraging strong legal advocacy in the virtual courtroom; and preventing case backlog by leveraging the available online and technology avenues available for resolution. For more information, please visit the Children's Commission website.

Virtual Contact and Virtual Visitation

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) issued guidance regarding how caseworkers and staff can conduct case planning that involves children and families while observing health and safety precautions. The Department also developed virtual visitation guidelines to promote continued contact between children, families, caregivers, and caseworkers. DFPS has also closely monitored placements and tracked the spread of COVID-19 among the population of children and youth in DFPS managing conservatorship. For more information, please visit the DFPS Coronavirus Resources webpage.

Additional Links and Resources:

- National Association of Council for Children: COVID-19 Resource Hub
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Parent/Caregiver Guide To Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: COVID-19 Resources and Updates
- Texas Alliance of Child & Family Services: COVID-19 webpage
- Texas CASA: Updates & Resources Regarding COVID-19
- Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium: COVID-19 Mental Health Resources webpage
- Texas Council on Family Violence: COVID-19 Resource Center
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission: Statewide COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free at 833-986-1919.
- Texas Network of Youth Services: Resources and Information on COVID-19
- Texans Care for Children: Coronavirus webpage
- TexProtects: A Helpful Guide for Families to Thrive During COVID-19