



Children's Commission

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



Children's Commission Meeting Notebook

Virtual Meeting
November 3, 2023

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

November 3, 2023

Meeting Notebook
Table of Contents

Meeting Agenda

Commission, Committee, and Collaborative Council Member List1

Minutes from September 15, 2023 Commission Meeting2

Fiscal Year 2024 Goals & Strategies.....3

Collaborative Council Materials.....4



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

Friday, November 3, 2023

9:30 a.m. –11:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Commencement / Opening Remarks
First Order of Business – Adopt Minutes from September 15, 2023
- 9:40 Incoming & Outgoing Commission Members
- 9:45 Office of Court Administration Update
- 10:00 Department of Family & Protective Services Update
- 10:30 Special Presentation on Trauma-Informed Courts
- 11:15 Children's Commission Projects
- 11:25 Collaborative Council Announcements
- 11:30 New Business / Adjourn

Meeting Schedule: February 2, 2024 (in person)
May 17, 2024 (virtual)
September 13, 2024 (in person)
November 15, 2024 (virtual)

INSERT - TAB 1

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Rosie Alvarado	Mark Briggs	Anne Heiligenstein	Hon. Isaac Roldan
Hon. Rebeca Huddle, <i>Deputy Chair</i>	Karla Baker	Hon. Susan Brown	Rep. Stephanie Klick	Hon. Randy Shelton
Hon. Eva Guzman, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Erica Bañuelos	Hon. Darlene Byrne	Hon. Selina Mireles	Luanne Southern
Hon. Harriet O'Neill, <i>Chair Emeritus</i>	Chantel Bedlington	Hon. Julie Countiss	Katie Olse	Vicki Spriggs
	Corey Benbow	Sheila Sturgis Craig	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness	Terese Stevenson
	Dr. Gary Blau	Hon. Roy Ferguson	Sasha Rasco	Hon. Thomas Stuckey
		Madelyn Fletcher		Sen. Royce West

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

EXECUTIVE	SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT	LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS	TRAINING	DATA
Hon. Debra Lehrmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Rob Hofmann, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Thomas Stuckey, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Piper McCraw, <i>Chair</i>	Hon. Susan Brown, <i>Chair</i>
Hon. Rebeca Huddle	Hon. Rosie Alvarado	Karla Baker	Hon. Mark Atkinson	Hon. Rosie Alvarado
Hon. Eva Guzman	Dr. Gary Blau	Mark Briggs	Tymothy Belseth	Nathan Ezell
Hon. Harriet O'Neill	Hon. Julie Countiss	Sarah Bryant	Denise Campbell	Dr. Monica Faulkner
Hon. Susan Brown	Sarah Crockett	Hon. Delia Gonzales	Teal De La Garza	Hon. Delia Gonzales
Hon. Rob Hofmann	Gabriella McDonald	Hon. Charles Griffin	Barbara Elias-Perciful	Elizabeth Kromrei
Hon. Piper McCraw	Emily Miller	Brenda Kinsler	Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington	Jenn Meier
Hon. Thomas Stuckey	Hon. Robin Sage	Crystal Leff-Piñon	Margaret Halpin	Hon. Robin Sage
	Hon. Ian Spechler	Janet VanderZanden	Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness	Hon. Michael Schneider
	Natalie Taylor	Charlote Velasco	Kellie Price	Vicki Spriggs
<i>Staff:</i>	Jordan Watson		Hon. Tracey Scown	Hon. Carlos Villalon
<i>Jamie Bernstein</i>	Sarah Worthington	<i>Staff:</i>	Diane Sumoski	<i>Staff:</i>
		<i>Dylan Moench</i>	Hon. Elizabeth Watkins	<i>Dylan Moench</i>
		<i>Renée Castillo-De La Cruz</i>		<i>OCA Advisory:</i>
			<i>Staff:</i>	<i>Darrell Childers</i>
			<i>Milbrey Raney</i>	<i>Anissa Johnson</i>
			<i>Renée Castillo-De La Cruz</i>	<i>Casey Kennedy</i>
			<i>Andrea Vicencio</i>	<i>Alejandra Peña</i>
				<i>Mena Ramon</i>
				<i>Charlote Velasco</i>

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Andrew Brown	Will Francis	Kasey Jackson	Judy Powell	Jamie Bernstein, <i>Executive Director</i>
Dania Carter	Fedora Galasso	Kerrie Judice	Tanya Rollins	Milbrey Raney, <i>Assistant Director</i>
Irene Clements	Dr. Linda Garcia	Bruce Kendrick	Danielle Schafer	Jessica Arguijo, <i>Communications Manager</i>
Sarah Crockett	Barbra Grimmer	Norman Ladd	Johana Scot	Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, <i>Staff Attorney</i>
Teal De La Garza	Sandra Hachem	Stephanie Madrigal	Andrea Sparks	Aimee Corbin, <i>Staff Attorney</i>
De Shaun Faloms	Julia Hatcher	Gabriella McDonald	Kenneth Thompson	Tiffany Edwards, <i>Executive Assistant</i>
Barbara Elias-Perciful	Félix Herrera	Dr. Jill McLeigh	Ruth Thornton	Chelsea Martinez, <i>Executive Assistant</i>
Mike Foster	Tina Hosaka	Kate Murphy	Sarah Worthington	Dylan Moench, <i>Legal Representation Director</i>
				Patrick Passmore, <i>Finance Manager</i>
				Willette Sedwick, <i>Accountant</i>
				Andrea Vicencio, <i>Program Specialist</i>
				Hon. Rob Hofmann, <i>Senior Jurist in Residence</i>
				Hon. Piper McCraw, <i>Jurist in Residence</i>

STAFF

INSERT - TAB 2

Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission Meeting Minutes

**Friday, September 15, 2023
9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

ATTENDANCE

Commissioners	Attended	Did Not Attend
<i>Chair</i> , Hon. Debra Lehrmann, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin		✓
<i>Deputy Chair</i> , Hon. Rebeca Huddle, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Hon. Rosie Alvarado, Judge, 438 th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Karla Baker, Parent Liaison, Region 4, Parent Collaboration Group Representative, Chandler	✓	
Erica Bañuelos, Associate Commissioner for CPS, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Chantel Bedlington, Supervisor of the Kinship Navigator Program, ACH Services, Fort Worth	✓	
Corey Benbow, Chief Executive Officer, The Tax Box, Austin		✓
Dr. Gary Blau, Senior Advisor for Children, Youth and Families; Office of the Assistant Secretary, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Houston		✓
Mark Briggs, Chair, State Bar of Texas Child Protection Law Section, El Paso		✓
Hon. Susan Brown, Presiding Judge, 11 th Administrative Judicial Region, Houston	✓	
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Chief Justice, Third Court of Appeals, Austin		✓
Hon. Julie Countiss, Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Hon. Roy Ferguson, Judge, 394 th District Court, Alpine		✓
Madelyn Fletcher, Budget and Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Anne Heiligenstein, Senior Director Strategic Consultant, Casey Family Programs, Austin		✓
Rep. Stephanie Klick, Texas House of Representatives, District 91, North Richland Hills		✓
Hon. Selina Mireles, Associate Judge, 4 th and 5 th Admin. Judicial Regions Child Protection Court, Laredo		✓
Katie Olse, Executive Director, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Robbie Partida-Kipness, Justice, Fifth District Court of Appeals, Dallas	✓	
Sasha Rasco, Chief Prevention and Community Well-Being Officer for Prevention, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Isaac Roldan, Tribal Court Judge, Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo Tribe, El Paso		✓
Hon. Randy Shelton, Judge, 279 th Civil District Court, Beaumont	✓	
Luanne Southern, Executive Director, Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, Austin	✓	
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Austin	✓	
Terese Stevenson, Vice President, Grants, The Rees-Jones Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Thomas Stuckey, Associate Judge, Centex Child Protection Court South, Seguin	✓	
Hon. Royce West, Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
Jurists in Residence		
Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452 nd District Court, Senior Jurist in Residence, Mason	✓	
Hon. Piper McCraw, Judge, 469 th District Court, Jurist in Residence, McKinney	✓	
Equity Advisor		
Sheila Craig, Director, Civil Rights Office, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Senior Judicial Advisor		
Hon. Michael Massengale, former Justice, First Court of Appeals, Houston		✓
Attending Committee Members & Guests		
Jessica Allen, CPS Federal and Program Improvement Review Division Administrator, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		
Stephanie Battaglia, Public Policy Coordinator, Texas CASA, Austin		
Kristen Bell, Director of Training & Operations, Texas Lawyers for Children, Dallas		

Christopher Gearing, Legislative Aide, Office of State Senator Royce West, District 23, Dallas
Hon. Angela Graves-Harrington, Judge, 246th Family Court, Houston
Dr. Valerie Jackson, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Monarch Family Services, Houston
Liz Kromrei, CPS Director of Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Hon. Nikki Mundkowsky, Associate Judge, Centex Child Protection Court North, Waco
Stephanie Muth, Commissioner, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Hector Ortiz, Director of Conservatorship, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin
Carol Self, Public Policy Director, Casey Family Programs, Austin
Jennifer Sims, Deputy Commissioner, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin

Office of Court Administration Staff

Megan LaVoie, Administrative Director
Charlotte Velasco, Project Manager

Attending Staff

Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager
Jamie Bernstein, Executive Director
Renée Castillo-De La Cruz, Staff Attorney
Aimee Corbin, Staff Attorney
Tiffany Edwards, Executive Assistant
Chelsea Martinez, Program Specialist
Dylan Moench, Legal Representation Director
Patrick Passmore, Finance Manager
Milbrey Raney, Assistant Director
Willette Sedwick, Accountant
Andrea Vicencio, Program Specialist

CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS

Justice Rebeca Huddle called the meeting to order at 9:48 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Justice Huddle noted that the primary goals for the meeting were to look forward to the fiscal year ahead, present the proposed strategies and budget for approval, and hear presentations on kinship supports and the upcoming Child and Family Services Review.

Committee and Collaborative Council Member Changes

Justice Huddle announced that Ms. Sandra Hachem completed her term as Chair of the State Bar Child Protection Law Section so she will transition from serving as Commissioner to serving as a Collaborative Council member. Justice Huddle also shared that Mr. Mark Briggs is the current Chair of the Child Protection Law Section, and therefore during his term he will serve as a Commissioner. Lastly, Justice Huddle reported that Jeff Cox has transitioned to a position at DePelchin’s Children’s Center and no longer serves on the Data Committee.

Recognition of Guests in Attendance

Justice Huddle recognized and welcomed several guests: Stephanie Muth, Commissioner with the Department of Family & Protective Services; Jennifer Sims, Deputy Commissioner with the Department of Family & Protective Services; Hon. Nikki Mundkowsky, Judge of Centex Child Protection Court North; and Dr. Valerie Jackson, Founder & Chief Executive Officer of Monarch Family Services. Justice Huddle thanked all of these special guests for joining the meeting.

Adoption of May 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Justice Huddle directed members to the May 12, 2023 Commission Meeting Minutes behind Tab 2 of the Meeting Notebook, distributed in advance of the meeting.

ACTION: Justice Huddle asked if there were any questions or edits to the minutes as written. Hearing none, after a motion and a second the Commissioners voted to adopt the minutes for the May 12, 2023 Children's Commission meeting.

CHILDREN'S COMMISSION UPDATE

Ms. Jamie Bernstein's announced a staff member change that staff attorney Jocelyn Fowler left the Children's Commission in July 2023.

Adoption of FY2024 Strategies and Budget

Commission staff provided an overview of the proposed strategies and budget for Fiscal Year 2024. For additional details, the [FY2024 Strategies & Budget PowerPoint](#) can be found on the Children's Commission website.

Regarding short training videos, suggested topics from Commissioners included a training on intellectual and developmental disabilities; issues with youth transitioning from DFPS' care to possible guardianship; utilizing the Texas Child Welfare Law Bench Book's Bench Card on disproportionality; information on placements for children and youth; and the roles of the regional DFPS Clinical Care Coordinators and DFPS Education Specialists. For data strategies, Ms. Sheila Craig suggested reviewing data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

In the discussion about the proposed FY2024 budget, Justice Huddle inquired about why the data line item had no budget allocation. Mr. Patrick Passmore responded that data is integrated into every strategy and does not have a separate cost. Mr. Passmore further elaborated that Court Improvement Program funding remains at the same level but operational costs have increased and this accounts for a smaller carry forward amount.

ACTION: Justice Huddle asked if there were any additional questions or edits to the proposed strategies and budget. Hearing none, after a motion and a second the Commissioners voted to adopt the FY2024 strategies and budget.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES (DFPS) UPDATE

Mr. Hector Ortiz reported that DFPS leadership has been working on addressing gaps in placement capacity by identifying providers to assist. DFPS received \$19 million dollars in grant funding and was able to award 20 grants to help build capacity for children with higher needs. New Horizons and other programs will be working on building new Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) and Treatment Foster Family Care. Through the capacity grants, DFPS was able to award more contracts, which will facilitate a substantial increase in available QRTP beds. Expanding on the purpose of QRTPs, Mr. Ortiz explained that these programs are designed to help those children with the most complex mental and behavioral health needs. He further clarified that the model includes on site medical staff and the QRTP is not designed as a

long-term placement. Ms. Renee Castillo-De La Cruz suggested that anyone wanting additional information about QRTPs could watch the webinar entitled “[Overview of Qualified Residential Treatment Program Legal Requirements](#),” available on the Children’s Commission website. Mr. Ortiz added that DFPS staff will support any provider that wants to start a QRTP program or family foster care program.

Mr. Ortiz reported that DFPS has focused on increasing kinship placements and about 40% of children in care are placed with relatives and kin. DFPS received \$6.9 million to assist caregivers with concrete needs, including up to \$1,000 to support the licensing verification process. Lastly, Mr. Ortiz noted that there was an additional \$3 million allocated to the Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs) for mental health capacity related to kinship care.

Ms. Terese Stevenson inquired about Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) funding and how it will affect Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs), since facilities are required to meet different standards in order to become QRTPs, and QRTPs receive federal funding. Commissioner Muth informed the Commission that federal matching funds cannot go to congregate care facilities that are not licensed QRTPs. There are funding incentives to assist RTC providers in becoming QRTPs. Judge Rob Hofmann noted that RTCs are not the same thing as QRTPs, and the state will likely continue to have RTCs. Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Sims also stated that some states no longer use RTCs and transitioned completely to QRTPs.

Judge Rosie Alvarado inquired about what criteria DFPS staff use for capacity building. Mr. Ortiz stated that the location of the QRTPs is dependent on whether a provider expresses interest in becoming a QRTP. Judge Alvarado also asked about the outreach that the Department is doing when they recognize that a specific area needs a QRTP. Commissioner Muth shared that DFPS is working with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and their SSCC partners to educate and talk to providers. Mr. Ortiz reported that CPS Regional Directors in the legacy system hold a yearly meeting to complete a needs assessment. They identify the needs of the region to help build capacity and then create a Regional Capacity Plan for each region. Commissioner Muth announced that as a result of new legislation there was an appropriation of resources to Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to develop and increase the capacity of children's mental health services.

Lastly, Mr. Ortiz reported that DFPS is working on implementing SB 135 which requires the development of a statewide electronic tracking system for all home studies. Judge Angela Graves-Harrington inquired whether DFPS will track the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC). Mr. Ortiz shared that DFPS tracks the ICPC when sending a referral to another state for a home study.

Judge Hofmann asked a question about what DFPS is doing to address attorney recruitment and retention for attorneys that represent DFPS. Commissioner Muth noted that there was an increase in funding given to DFPS by legislature to help the Department be more competitive with pay for attorneys.

Ms. Sasha Rasco announced that the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division is currently working with HHSC on the transition of PEI to HHSC following the 88th Legislative Session. She added that PEI is working on ways to discern which PEI projects will remain within DFPS, such

as kinship navigation and ongoing pilot projects. Ms. Rasco shared that PEI received \$40 million for expansion of services and to work with HHSC to grow support for families by growing capacity. The 87th Legislature appropriated funds from the Family First Transition Act (FFTA) to both Nurse-Family Partnerships and to parenting supports, specifically for families in Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) cases. PEI added capacity to those programs to provide home visiting services specifically for families with children under the age of 5, where a practitioner visits to the home to offer assessment and education. In addition, funds were also allocated to support pregnant and parenting youth. Ms. Rasco reported that the FFTA funds were not continued after the 88th Legislative Session but were redirected to the Texas Family First (TFF) pilot, however state funding has allowed some of the projects which had been under FFTA to continue. Ms. Rasco announced that PEI will continue the TFF pilots in partnership with the SSCCs. PEI partnered with the University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston on the initial FFTA evaluation that will be released in December.

Judge Nikki Mundkowsky inquired about the effort to assist caseworkers who are supervising children without placement (CWOP). Commissioner Muth reported that the Department is exploring options and ideas to better assist caseworkers, including addressing the challenges of CWOP. Commissioner Muth also stated that DFPS is engaging with other states to get ideas on best practices and on setting up a better structure to address the CWOP issue.

Judge Alvarado shared that she is in favor of creating a position for caseworkers who would be solely dedicated to CWOP and at-risk youth. Mr. Ortiz mentioned that DFPS has Clinical Care Coordinators to support the caseworkers. These coordinators meet with the child and their care team to set up services, take the child to appointments, and determine possible placement options for children without placement.

Judge Hofmann asked how the Department is addressing the barriers to kinship placement. Commissioner Muth reported that DFPS is working with HHSC to help streamline the process. The legislature funded an increase for non-verified kinship homes to help with the disparity between kinship and non-kinship placements and to support families taking on a child who would otherwise be without placement. Judge Graves-Harrington asked about what specific measures are underway to address the sex trafficking happening in some CWOP locations. Commissioner Muth responded that DFPS is taking steps to holistically address sex trafficking and not just as it occurs in instances of CWOP. Ms. Vicki Spriggs asked about children without placement who act out and whether law enforcement or crisis teams are called. Deputy Commissioner Sims noted that sometimes law enforcement is contacted but that they aim to be trauma-responsive. DFPS is engaging with the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and County Probation Departments to address these issues. Dr. Valerie Jackson inquired about the procurement of therapeutic emergency shelters rather than using hotels for children without placement. Deputy Commissioner Sims responded that DFPS partnered with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services to see what the emergency shelters need to take in these children and noted that the bed capacity is significantly lower at an emergency shelter.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CSFR) PRESENTATION

Ms. Liz Kromrei, Director of Services with DFPS and Ms. Jessica Allen, Federal and Program Improvement Review Division Administrator with CPS gave a presentation on the Child and Family Service Review (CSFR). The [Child and Family Service Review \(CFSR\) PowerPoint](#) can be found on the Children's Commission website. Ms. Kromrei and Ms. Allen described how the CSFR looks at the whole child welfare system, including permanency, safety, and well-being and shared how Texas data compares to federal standards.

KINSHIP SUPPORTS SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Ms. Chantel Bedlington, Commissioner and Supervisor of the Kinship Navigator Program at ACH Child and Family Services gave a presentation on Kinship Supports. The [Kinship Supports PowerPoint](#) can be found on the Children's Commission website. Ms. Bedlington discussed how she helps to support kinship placements, assists kin to apply for licensing, and works to alleviate the struggles many kinship caregivers face.

OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION (OCA) UPDATE

Ms. Megan LaVoie reported that according to the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) data, there was a downward trend in new cases in the child protection courts. She also shared that OCA saw closed cases trending higher than new cases being opened. Ms. LaVoie noted that the top three reasons for case closure were adoption, reunification, and permanent placement with relatives, and that these discharges made up 58% of cases over the past five years. Ms. LaVoie announced that in FY2024 OCA will work with judges and court coordinators to enhance data integrity in CPCMS.

As of September 1, 2023, the OCA Research and Court Services Division has been separated into two divisions and Ms. Alejandra Peña is the new Director of the Research Division. She also informed the Commission that the results for the weighted caseload study designed to show where new courts are needed is expected in the coming months. Ms. LaVoie gave an update on the backlog of cases and reported that the clearance rate from May to June was 99% and the family backlog is down 10%. Ms. LaVoie reported that a new Text Reminder Program is in the procurement phase after the 88th Legislative Session; this will remind criminal defendants when to show up for court. Lastly, she shared that associate judges across the state received a pay increase.

COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATES

Ms. Kristen Bell with Texas Lawyers for Children (TLC) shared that TLC trained 1,200 judges and attorneys on trauma and are receiving feedback from those who attended the training. She also noted that TLC will be holding a training on Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) on September 28 which will be archived for later viewing as well.

Ms. Sarah Worthington with the Texas Foster Youth Justice Project announced that the project released a new bifold brochure for youth to understand the benefits they have access to when aging out.

Ms. Barbra Grimmer with the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) reminded attendees that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. She also noted that TCFV will hold a virtual Town Hall on the first Thursday of October and shared that they will host their first regional convening on serving CPS-involved survivors of domestic violence on September 27.

NEW BUSINESS

Justice Huddle announced that the final Children's Commission meeting of 2023 will be convened virtually on November 3, 2023.

2024 Commission Meetings:

- Friday, February 2, 2024 (in person) NEW DATE
- Friday, May 17, 2024 (virtual)
- Friday, September 13, 2024 (in person)
- Friday, November 15, 2024 (virtual)

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:46 p.m.

INSERT - TAB 3

GOAL I (COLLABORATION)

Administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, provide a forum for meaningful collaboration, encourage continuous quality improvement, and promote best child welfare and court practices to improve the child welfare system.

1. Strategy: Provide regular updates to the Children's Commission and the Systems Improvement, Legal Practice & Process, Training, and Data Committees about Commission initiatives.
2. Strategy: Engage with the Collaborative Council and participate in and provide forums and opportunities for child welfare stakeholders to partner and to share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs, and strengths.
3. Strategy: Develop, maintain, and enhance usability and function of the Children's Commission website, social media, print and online materials, and other communication mediums.
4. Strategy: Confer with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on the Child and Family Service Reviews, Program Improvement Plans, Child and Family State Plans, and the Court Improvement Program Strategic Plans.
5. Strategy: Provide assistance to and collaborate with local jurisdictions, DFPS, and state and national partners and organizations.

GOAL II (SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT)

Execute innovative projects aimed at ensuring equity, fairness, and justice for children, youth, and families; promoting judicial leadership in courts and communities; and expanding court and child welfare system capacity to support continuous, systemic improvement.

6. Strategy: Utilize Jurists in Residence to promote best practices to the judiciary and support the legal and child welfare systems through judicial leadership and expertise.
7. Strategy: Engage stakeholders in the child welfare, juvenile justice, and mental health systems to apply principles of trauma-informed care and address gaps in services for children, youth, and families with complex mental health needs.
8. Strategy: Identify and promote data-driven, cross-disciplinary opportunities to address disproportionality and disparities among children, youth, and families involved in child welfare cases.
9. Strategy: Emphasize the importance of engaging children and youth in the case planning and court process as well as promote normalcy and the inclusion of young adults with lived experience in statewide system improvement efforts.
10. Strategy: Engage judges and lawyers in systemic efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect and address occurrences of child abuse and neglect while maintaining family preservation.
11. Strategy: Identify opportunities to develop sustainable partnerships between legal, child welfare, and education stakeholders in an effort to identify and address the educational needs and goals of children and youth who experience foster care.
12. Strategy: Partner with national, state, and local leaders to better support children, youth, and families with

specialized needs such as addressing sexual abuse, physical abuse, or runaway issues.

13. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders to identify critical and urgent topics for Round Table discussions and hold Round Table events as needed.
14. Strategy: Engage stakeholders in the legal system in statewide efforts to develop and expand placement capacity, including the rollout of Community Based Care, kinship care, and the Qualified Residential Treatment Program model.
15. Strategy: Prioritize areas in need of improvement in the handling of juvenile justice cases as well as recommendations developed by the Dual Status Task Force.

GOAL III (LEGAL PRACTICE & PROCESS)

Assist trial and appellate courts, judges, and legal advocates to ensure that children, youth, and families involved with child welfare experience a legal system in which they have access to justice and their rights are protected.

16. Strategy: Convene and support a Legal Representation Committee to sustain efforts to ensure high-quality legal representation for parents, children, and DFPS.
17. Strategy: Support development and adoption of Standards of Representation for attorneys representing parents, children, and DFPS in child welfare cases.
18. Strategy: Assist the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) Advisory and Exam Committees in efforts to certify Texas attorneys as specialists in child welfare law.
19. Strategy: Convene and support a Parent Resource Workgroup and maintain parent resource guides to sustain efforts to increase parental understanding and engagement in the child welfare system.
20. Strategy: Support efforts to provide early and reliable access to information and resources for Texas families through programs such as the Texas Legal Services Center Family Helpline.
21. Strategy: Establish and support meaningful relationships with federally recognized Tribes and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
22. Strategy: Maintain a comprehensive Bench Book for judges hearing child welfare cases.
23. Strategy: Maintain tool kits for attorneys representing parents, children, and DFPS in child welfare cases.
24. Strategy: Support increased child and family engagement through the use of technology, including the use of the Office of Court Administration (OCA) Notice and Engagement tool.
25. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability and cost of mediation services and promote the training and support necessary to raise the quality and usefulness of mediation in child welfare cases.
26. Strategy: Collaborate with and provide support for specialty courts, dockets, and programs.
27. Strategy: Track and assess the impact of changes in law, policy, and rule affecting the legal process in child welfare cases.

GOAL IV (TRAINING)

Oversee and develop judicial and legal training efforts at all levels of practice that identify and promote best practices to improve outcomes and establish and maintain a well-informed judiciary and bar.

28. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate judicial training through conferences, online content, and events.
29. Strategy: Support specialized training for the Child Protection Court (CPC) program, judges, and support staff.
30. Strategy: Expand knowledge of and encourage high-quality hearings regarding Reasonable Efforts determinations.
31. Strategy: Provide practical, experiential trial skills training that offers attorneys an opportunity to develop their skills in a small-group, low-stakes environment.
32. Strategy: Create and maintain online content that offers information and guidance on relevant child welfare law issues.
33. Strategy: Partner with the State Bar of Texas, DFPS, and other organizations to offer training to attorneys and advocates who serve children and families in child welfare cases throughout Texas.
34. Strategy: Develop and distribute information to judges and attorneys that communicates best practices or changes in law, policy, or practice and informs judges and attorneys of trainings and other relevant events.
35. Strategy: Support attendance at state and national judicial and legal conferences and training events.

GOAL V (DATA)

Operationalize data-driven decision-making through continuous quality improvement and an analysis of publicly available child welfare and court data to identify legal processes and practices that produce desired outcomes, as well as which practices need improvement.

Objective: Use child welfare, court, and other data to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and youth in foster care.

36. Strategy: Utilizing all available data sources, analyze trends in child welfare data such as referrals, investigations, removals, and exits.
37. Strategy: At the annual judicial conference, partner with DFPS to provide a statewide data presentation as well as tailored data presentations on state, regional, and local challenges and opportunities and encourage data-driven systemic improvements and collaborative efforts.
38. Strategy: Partner with OCA to support the maintenance, enhancements, data collection, impact, and usability of the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS), including integrating CPCMS with other data systems.

INSERT - TAB 4

Children's Commission Meeting
Collaborative Council Announcements
November 3, 2023

- Texas Lawyers for Children



**Texas
Lawyers for
Children**

Championing Children's Rights

Legal Professional Trauma Training

15 hours of **FREE CJE/CLE** that address all
trauma training requirements listed in
Texas Family Code 107.004

Fully online – accessible 24/7!



**SCAN THE QR CODE OR
VISIT THE URL BELOW!**



TraumaTraining.TexasLawyersforChildren.org

