



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

2020-2024 Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

Part 3

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02



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Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

Collaboration and Vision 1. Mission, Vision & Values

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Mission and Vision Statement

1. Mission, Vision, and Values

► *Description of how the state has engaged and will continue to engage in substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration with stakeholders, tribes, and courts in the development and implementation of the 2020-2024 CFSP.*

In December 2018, the Department of Family and Protective Services developed the following DFPS Mission, Vision, and Values to guide the Texas child welfare system:

DFPS Mission

We promote safe and healthy families and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

DFPS Vision

Improving the lives of those we serve.

DFPS Values

- **Accountable:** We act with a sense of urgency to deliver results in an accountable, ethical, and transparent manner.
- **Respectful:** We recognize the value of each person and act timely, value privacy, and treat all with respect.
- **Diverse:** We promote diversity, inclusion, and equality by honoring individual differences.
- **Collaborative:** Whether through our staff or contractors, we work in partnership with clients, families, and communities to ensure our mutual success.
- **Professional:** We value our staff and strive for excellence while being professional, passionate, and innovative.

A number of the divisions within the agency have developed divisional mission, vision and value statements which are tailored to the division's area of responsibility but maintain consistency with the agency's overarching direction.

Consistent with the above Mission, Vision, and Values, DFPS engages in substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration with stakeholders, tribes, and courts in the development and implementation of the 2020-2024 CFSP in a variety of ways. As Texas is a large and diverse state, the agency makes every effort to use available tools for communicating with stakeholders about the delivery of services, outcomes, and opportunities to improve the Texas child welfare system. Although not limited to the list below, the following are examples of mechanisms used to engage internal or external stakeholders, tribes and courts:

- **Social Media:** DFPS uses Facebook, Twitter, and E-Mail to update stakeholders and solicit input regarding new programs or changes. DFPS encourages subscription to email notification for ongoing input, providing the opportunity to subscribe whenever an individual opens the agency web page. For example, as DFPS discusses the impact of the federal Family First Act, an email subscriber list shares information regularly. Dedicated email accounts are used to get input, provide an opportunity for questions, and a chance to give individualized input. When DFPS implemented the “3 in 30” project, a specific mailbox for dialogue about any of the three tools or implementation questions and comments was made available.
- **Agency Website:** The agency has a significant, well-maintained agency website that shares detailed information including an interactive data book, the posting of the Child and Family Service Plan and Annual Progress and Services Reports, published reports, and presentations. The agency also provides public notification and solicits input regarding programs, policy and protocol on the website.
- **Webinars and Public Hearings:** On a monthly basis, topical webinars (with opportunity for live questions and commentary) are presented. Public forums provide an opportunity for questions and comments to be directly provided. Webinars and Public Hearings are recorded and posted.
- **Advisory Groups:** These groups provide an opportunity for public comment and meetings, such as the DFPS Council Meetings, are live streamed.
- **Legislative Hearings, Reports, and Meetings:** DFPS staff provide information to elected officials in a variety of venues. These settings often involve stakeholders who provide input and recommendations, express concerns, or share experiences on services provided by the Texas child welfare system.
- **Workgroups, Committees, Commissions, and other Stakeholder Group Settings:** DFPS leadership at a statewide level, as well as regional and county levels, participate in a variety of workgroups that are focused on improving the child welfare system. The entities can include:
 - Large, system-wide groups such as the Children’s Commission (with the Court Improvement Project, Office of Court Administration, and Courts involved) or Statewide Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (with behavioral health stakeholders involved), or
 - Groups focused on specific topical areas, such as the STAR Health Joint Team Meeting or the Committee on Advancing Residential Practices, or
 - Groups focused on needs of a specific population, such as the DFPS/Tribal meetings.
- **Groups involving Children, Youth or Families:** Groups that emphasizes individuals experiencing services provide an opportunity for input and recommendations.

Examples include the Statewide Youth Leadership Council (that has a “Fish Bowl” exercise, in which youth representing all regions provide direct input to the Texas child welfare director), Kinship Caregiver groups, Parent Collaboration Groups, Foster Parent Associations, and Fatherhood groups.

- Formal Advisory Committees: Particularly during implementation of new programs, Statewide or Regional Advisory Committees are utilized to guide the process, monitoring roll outs, soliciting input on the process, assessing the program, and making recommendations for next steps.
- Formal solicitation of input through posting of Requests for Information when soliciting a major procurement, such as during the Community Based Care implementation process or prior to presenting a new Request for Proposal when it is a new or significantly altered solicitation.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

ii. Collaboration & Coordination

► *Description of how the state has engaged and will continue to engage in substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration with stakeholders, tribes, and courts in the development and implementation of the 2020-2024 CFSP.*

Collaboration

Building community relationships and partnerships is an integral part of DFPS work and is critical to providing clients with needed support. DFPS continues to utilize all available community support to provide for the safety, well-being, and permanency of Texas children and to help to ensure the successful implementation of the goals, objectives and strategies listed in the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). The 2020-2024 CFSP lists specific strategies that will be employed to actively seek collaboration and support for the successful implementation of the CFSP within the 2020-2024 timeframe. The agency's ongoing efforts to work toward implementing and completing 2020-2024 CFSP goals and activities, assessing outcomes, and developing strategic plans to increase the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the child welfare system will continue in the collaborative efforts identified in the CFSP as well as other such collaborative activities noted below.

Coordination with Community Resources

CPS has worked diligently to build and strengthen alliances and networks at the local level. CPS employs community engagement teams in each region of the state and a Community Affairs Liaison at the state level to help coordinate efforts. The regional community engagement teams developed localized community engagement strategic plans to ensure execution of strategies that best meet the needs of children and families served.

CPS continues to build sustainable community partnerships by using the following strategies:

- Entering into agreements, to the extent possible and feasible, for the establishment of joint offices or workplaces with local officials and organizations, including:
 - Children's Advocacy Centers
 - Law enforcement officials
 - Prosecutors
 - Health care providers
 - Domestic violence shelters
- Employing specialized staff, to the extent that funds are appropriated for that purpose, to serve as:

- Local Community Initiative specialists in each region who focus on building community alliances and networks
- Education Specialists
- Disability Specialists
- Nurse Consultants and Well Being Specialists
- Substance Use Specialists
- Strengthening the Memorandum of Understanding and contracting development procedures to ensure that both financial and non-financial agreements with community entities have the required elements to ensure:
 - Accountability
 - Continuity of operations when board members and operational staff and volunteers change over time
 - Flexibility in order to accommodate policy and funding changes; and
 - Regular review to ensure that the elements of the Memorandum of Understanding or contract are current and achievable
- Improving communication with stakeholders by:
 - Proactively releasing information on the agency's public website
 - Regularly visiting with stakeholder groups
 - Developing public education campaigns
 - Improving responsiveness to inquiries
 - Providing many ways for stakeholders to influence rulemaking and policy, including:
 - Participation in workgroups and stakeholder forums
 - Joining regional advisory groups
 - Submitting public comments via the Texas Register

DFPS uses different mechanisms to communicate about the delivery of services, outcomes, and opportunities to improve the Texas child welfare system. The following are examples, though there are others, of mechanisms that are and will continue to be regularly used to engage internal or external stakeholders, tribes and courts:

- Social Media
- Agency Website
- Webinars and Public Hearings
- Advisory Groups
- Legislative Hearings, Reports, and Meetings
- Workgroups, Committees, Commissions, and other Stakeholder Group Settings:
 - Large, system-wide groups
 - Groups focused on specific topical areas
 - Groups focused on needs of a specific population or geographic area
- Groups involving Children, Youth or Families
- Formal Committees
- Formal solicitation of input

Building community relationships and partnerships is an integral part of DFPS work and is critical to providing clients with needed support. DFPS will continue to utilize all available community support to provide for the safety, well-being, and permanency of Texas children and to help to ensure the successful implementation of the goals listed in the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). The agency's efforts to implement 2020-2024 CFSP goals and activities, assess outcomes, and develop strategic plans to increase the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the child welfare system will continue in the collaborative efforts identified in the CFSP and through the collaborations noted below.

Supreme Court Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children's Commission)

The Children's Commission's mission is to strengthen courts for children, youth and families in the Texas child protection system and thereby improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. The Children's Commission exists to improve the judicial handling of child protection cases systemically through improvements in technology, attorney and judicial training, and court improvement pilot projects. It has no authority over state agencies or their operational details and does not discuss or consider specific, active cases. The Children's Commission seeks information about systemic improvement through the Children's Commission's Collaborative Council and other interested parties.

The Children's Commission administers the federal Court Improvement Program for Texas. The formal Children's Commission is composed of an executive level group of judges, officials from CPS as well as other divisions of DFPS, non-profit foundations, State Bar leaders, private attorneys, legislators, parents, tribal, and mental health representatives. There are four standing committees: Data and Technology, Training, Basic Projects, and Foster Care and Education.

The Children's Commission links to the larger stakeholder community through the almost 45-member Collaborative Council, whose members include former foster youth, foster families, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and parent advocates. Representatives from institutions of juvenile justice, mental health and education are also included, as well as representatives from the private provider community, children's advocacy centers and many other child protection and child and family advocacy groups. Judge Dean Rucker, a retired district judge and regional presiding judge assists with judicial leadership initiatives, attorney and judicial training, legislative and policy matters, and Jurist in Residence letters. The Children's Commission's inclusive, collaborative structure and broad, high level membership generates and supports energy and enhances visibility of, the state's court improvement efforts, and helps facilitate collaboration among high level child protection stakeholders throughout the state.

The Children's Commission and DFPS continue to work together toward developing and achieving shared goals and activities detailed in the Children's Commission Strategic Plan. This partnership supports institutional and infrastructural change that result in

clearly defined, measurable outcomes for children and families. The Children's Commission is actively involved in child welfare strategic planning and program development, working closely with the agency on the federal requirements such as the Child and Family Services Review program improvement plan and annual IV-B state planning and reporting.

Texas has a strong record of Children's Commission and DFPS collaboration. DFPS and the Children's Commission review policy and procedures, share data and case analysis information, and explore opportunities to sponsor joint training activities at quarterly Children's Commission meetings, bi-weekly collaborative calls, joint workgroups and committees, conferences and other joint efforts involving DFPS staff at multiple levels, stakeholders for the Texas child welfare system in multiple regions, and Children's Commission and Collaborative Council members. DFPS and the Children's Commission collaborate on Roundtables that address key topics related to safety, permanency, and well-being.

Community-Based Care (*Formerly Foster Care Redesign*)

Since 2010, DFPS has been engaged in an effort to redesign the foster care system to expand the role of community providers, to take responsibility for placement services, capacity/network development, community engagement and the coordination and delivery of services to children in foster care and their families under a Single Source Continuum Contract. In 2017, DFPS was directed by the 85th Texas Legislature to purchase case management and services to relative / kinship placements from the Single Source Continuum Contractor. The new model became known as Community-Based Care.

Stakeholder involvement is paramount to the development and success of a redesigned foster care system in Texas. The project team has ensured comprehensive and extensive stakeholder involvement throughout the implementation of Community-Based Care. In October 2009, DFPS created the Texas Public Private Partnership. The Partnership is a collaborative endeavor among DFPS staff, former foster youth, parent partners, private providers, advocates, trade associations and judges. The Public Private Partnership continues to serve as the guiding body and to provide recommendations for Community-Based Care.

Building off of the Foster Care Redesign Communication Plan, DFPS developed a State Community-Based Care (CBC) Communications Plan. The State CBC Communications Plan emphasizes full engagement of internal and external stakeholders during the transition and implementation of each stage of Community-Based Care. The plan includes state level communication activities and provides guidelines and expectations for locally-developed Communications Plans.

DFPS maintains a public webpage to serve as a general communication venue for project updates and notices, CBC marketing messages, and content of interest to DFPS staff and providers of foster care services and other providers impacted by CBC.

The webpage includes the development and posting of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to answer CPS staff' and other stakeholders' questions and ensure staff receive

information as it becomes available. Additional communication activities in Community-Based Care sites include:

- Public forums in the catchment with time for questions and discussions
- Facilitated meetings between CPS staff and SSCC
- SSCC/DFPS (jointly facilitated) meetings with Courts, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Child Welfare Boards and other key stakeholders.

In previous years, DFPS has solicited public comment through formally posted Requests For Information to inform the model, procurement and implementation of Community-Based Care. DFPS will release another Request For Information in June 2019 to solicit public comment on the current Community-Based Care catchment boundaries.

Disproportionality

DFPS is committed to continually addressing disproportionality in the Texas child welfare system to ensure all children and families are afforded equitable opportunities for positive outcomes. DFPS has a responsibility to mitigate disparity in all phases of child welfare services delivery by:

- Delivering cultural responsiveness training to all service delivery staff;
- Increasing targeted recruitment for foster and adoptive families;
- Targeting hiring recruitment efforts to ensure diversity among DFPS staff; and
- Developing partnerships with community groups to provide culturally responsive services to children and families.

Partnerships with communities to address the problem of disproportionality exist in most regions statewide. Most regions have convened a Community Advisory Committee of people from the local area, including parents and youth alumni. However while there are currently five active committees in the state, there are numerous partnerships between DFPS and the community across the state that are crucial in the work to improve the Texas child welfare system, strengthen its services, and eliminate disproportionality.

Parent Collaboration Group

The Parent Collaboration Group is a partnership between CPS and parents who have been recipients of services from CPS. The Parent Collaboration Group provides a mechanism to include biological parents in the design, implementation and evaluation of the CPS program. Parents provide feedback to CPS that assists in the analysis of current policy and the evaluation of service delivery strategies. Each region has at least two parent representatives (referred to as Parent Liaison) and a CPS representative in the state Parent Collaboration Group. There is at least one group in each region. The CPS Parent Program Specialist serves as a liaison to the statewide Parent Collaboration Group. A web page on the DFPS Internet Web site has been dedicated to the Parent Collaboration Group Initiative. The CPS Parent Program Specialist is a member of the Children's Commission Collaborative Council and a Regional Parent Liaison serves on the Children's Commission. The Parent Program Specialist and a Parent Liaison are members of the Texas Family Voice Network.

Youth Leadership Council

The State and Regional Youth Leadership councils were created in the 1990s but were formalized in 2005. During the 84th Legislature (2015), the Youth Leadership Council was formally adopted into law. The Statewide Youth Leadership Council includes two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) from each region's Youth Leadership Council. Councils identify issues and make recommendations for improving services to children and youth in care, review policies and program initiatives, and give feedback to DFPS that is reviewed and incorporated into the IV-B annual report, State Plan, best practices or other program initiatives. DFPS also utilizes the Youth Leadership Council to seek input on the development of policy to ensure that input is received from children and youth involved with CPS to accurately meet the needs of this population. All youth and young adults who participated in these meetings were between the ages of 16-21 and lived in a variety of placement settings, including foster homes, congregate care facilities, kinship placements, and Supervised Independent Living.

Texas Foster Families Association

Texas State Foster Parents, Inc., also known as the Texas Foster Family Association (TFFA), recruits and provides training opportunities to Texas foster families to promote the well-being of children in foster care. This non-profit organization holds two annual training conferences, provides information to members via online newsletter several times per year, and has a presence on social media (a public website, www.tffa.org and TFFA Facebook page, as well as regional foster parent Facebook pages).

The Texas Foster Family Association Board is made up of foster parents, agency staff from DFPS, private child-placing agencies, as well as former foster parents who serve on the Executive Committee and head other committees. The full board holds two-day meetings three times per year to ensure goals are set, communication between participants occurs, and to increase productive relationships between foster families and staff. Regional DFPS staff, foster parents, and private-agency staff review proposed policy and make recommendations to improve foster family recruitment and retention and services to children in foster care. Input is incorporated into the agency's strategic and programmatic planning process.

Kinship Collaboration Group

The Kinship Collaboration Group provides a mechanism to include kinship caregivers in the design, implementation and evaluation of the CPS program. This initiative encourages collaboration with kinship caregivers who are affected by the CPS service delivery system and provides a unique perspective on how to improve services to kinship caregivers and children.

Kinship caregivers involved in the DFPS system have an opportunity for input into system improvement and a chance to understand that they are not alone in trying to care for their relative or kin children. The Kinship Collaboration Group process consists of regional Kinship Support Groups, which meet at least quarterly and sometimes as frequently as monthly, and a statewide Kinship Collaboration Group that meets four times a year.

These groups help educate kinship caregivers on the foster care system, develop tools and strategies to improve kinship care, and serve as a conduit process for new ideas. Their involvement provides kinship development workers with information needed to have a sense of urgency for achieving positive permanency.

Child Fatality Review Teams

Child Fatality Review Teams are multi-disciplinary, multi-agency panels that regularly review child deaths, regardless of the cause, in order to understand risk to children and to reduce the number of preventable child deaths. These teams are uniquely qualified to understand what no single agency or group working alone can: how and why children are dying in their communities. By sharing information, team members discover the circumstances surrounding a child's death and utilize the information to make recommendations that may inform CPS policies and practices.

Regional Child Death Review Committees review cases in which the death is determined to be the result of abuse or neglect and the family was previously known to CPS. This review occurs at the regional or local level and involves agency staff as well as local stakeholders to identify any systemic issues that may have impacted service provision to the family. The recommendations from these reviews are shared internally with regional management for consideration. The recommendations are also forwarded to State Office to review for statewide implications and incorporation into strategic and programmatic planning.

The Child Safety Review Committee is comprised of State Office staff and representatives of other disciplines with whom CPS routinely interacts such as Domestic Violence stakeholders, physicians, Texas Department of State Health Services, and State Child Fatality Review Team. This committee reviews the recommendations from the Regional Child Death Review Committees as well as data relating to child fatalities. The committee identifies issues that appear to be occurring statewide and makes recommendations to CPS to address the issues and incorporation into strategic and programmatic planning.

Citizen Review Teams

Citizen Review Teams are citizen-based panels established to evaluate DFPS casework and decision-making related to investigating and providing services to abused and neglected children. Membership includes community representatives and private citizens residing in the area for which the team is established. The five CAPTA teams are required to meet at least quarterly to address a wide range of CPS issues from intake to adoption, and must produce an annual report of their activities to inform the Title IV-B State Plan. Citizen Review Teams currently focus on CPS cases that involve near-fatalities in order to improve policy, practice and outcomes for such cases.

Texas Council on Adoptable Children

The Texas Council on Adoptable Children is a statewide organization that promotes adoption and services to adoptive families in Texas. This support is provided through a Texas Council on Adoptable Children State Board and regional branches throughout the

state. The State Board plans to meet two times a year with a liaison from DFPS to review current policies and provide feedback on the needs of adoptive families. Members of the organization often advocate and share information with DFPS regarding issues of concern to adoptive parents and their families.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)

DFPS is a member of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA), the interstate compact that protects the interests of children with special needs who have been adopted and placed or move interjurisdictionally. In addition DFPS sends at least one staff person each year to the annual AAICAMA National Conference. This conference provides training and supports DFPS in the proper and efficient administration of the state's Title IV-E program for adoption assistance.

Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards

The Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards is a statewide network of local and county board volunteers who are concerned with the welfare of children, especially children suffering from abuse and neglect, who are involved with DFPS. Representatives of these local county boards serve eleven DFPS regional councils that, in turn, provide representation on a state level to the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards. The Texas Council Executive Director, officers and members work with CPS staff on programs that meet children's needs, network with other organizations to provide care for abused and neglected children, and strengthen families through public information and education. The Texas Council reviews the IV-B State Plan annually, providing input and recommendations to DFPS on behalf of local county boards from every region.

Committee for Advancing Residential Practices

The Committee for Advancing Residential Practices includes residential providers, residential provider associations, advocacy groups, stakeholders, HHSC Residential Child Care Licensing and DFPS representatives from Residential Contracts and Child Protective Services who meet quarterly in an effort to strengthen the partnership, improve communication, provide a venue for focusing on advancements to residential practices that support enhanced safety, permanency and well-being for children, and incorporate input into strategic and programmatic planning

Early Childhood Systems Integration Group

The Early Childhood Systems Integration Group is a collaboration of Texas state agencies working together to identify, coordinate and implement cross-sector initiatives for young children and their families. The work group addresses issues and opportunities related to service delivery, systems design and data coordination. Members include representatives of DFPS, Health and Human Services, Department of State Health Services, Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, and Office of the Attorney General. The group shares information about services and trends, which are incorporated into strategic and programmatic planning.

Prevention Task Force

The Prevention Taskforce, established in 2015, submitted its legislatively required report making recommendations to the Commissioner of DFPS regarding changes to law, policy and practice pertaining to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, the implementation of the changes in law made by House Bill 1549, 85th Texas Legislature, and the implementation of the five year strategic plan for PEI. Members represent fatality review teams, pediatricians, judges, prosecutors who specialize in child abuse and neglect, medical examiners, DFPS service providers and policy experts in child abuse and neglect prevention, community advocacy or related fields.

Rider 17.10 Juvenile Justice Prevention Group

DFPS, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Military Department work together to coordinate the delivery of juvenile delinquency prevention, dropout prevention, and intervention services aimed at preventing academic failure, failure on state assessments, dropout, juvenile delinquency, truancy, runaways, and children living in family conflict. The group meets to learn about one another's programming; to identify key considerations in the coordination, planning and delivery of services; and to identify opportunities to enhance the coordination, planning and delivery of prevention and intervention services.

Coordination with Children's Bureau Grant Programs

CPS has engaged with and continues to meaningfully involve representatives of Children's Bureau grant programs in service coordination and support of mutual goals for the following three Children's Bureau Grant Programs:

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP):

DFPS has utilized CBCAP funding for over a decade to support initiatives, programs, and activities to strengthen and support families to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Due to the flexible nature of this funding DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) has the ability to use CBCAP funding to support shared goals in various ways. A few examples of how this funding has afforded meaningful collaboration include:

- DFPS CPS and PEI recently partnered with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and Casey Family Programs to develop a statewide capacity needs assessment to assess Texas's capacity to offer services under the federal Families First Prevention Services Act to prevent the entry of children into foster care for those families at imminent risk of having their children removed. Among others, this survey was sent to both PEI and CPS providers that contract with DFPS.

- The Prevention Task Force, established during the 85th Legislative session, was tasked with providing recommendations to the DFPS commissioner for consideration in advancing Texas's prevention efforts. This task force provided a two-year opportunity for community stakeholders and state agencies to develop strategies and collaborate on ways for DFPS to align around prevention goals.
- DFPS PEI will embark upon its third Spring Listening Tour during Fiscal Year 2020 to gather information from communities across Texas as to what PEI can do to enhance the prevention services provided across the state. DFPS regional staff are encouraged to participate in these meetings.
- TexProtects, Texas's Prevent Child Abuse Chapter, is planning upcoming forums for CPS regional staff on home visiting programs and appropriate referrals to further community collaboration between PEI providers and regional CPS staff.
- DFPS CPS and PEI had the opportunity to attend a peer learning opportunity, hosted by Casey Family Programs, to discuss prevention efforts in multiple states. Out of this opportunity DFPS (CPS and PEI), Casey Family Programs, the Department of State Health Services Title V, and the University of Texas System established a workgroup to explore developing a Texas specific parenting/prevention model and establishing an evidence base.
- Continued collaboration at the community level to provide services and supports for families before they're in a crisis that could result in the removal of their child continues to be highlighted by the number of CPS involved families PEI provides services to. Out of the 67,030 families that voluntarily engaged PEI providers for services in Fiscal Year 2018, over 20,000 families had some form of contact with CPS and over 500 families had an open CPS case.

Children's Justice Act (CJA):

The Children's Justice Act Task Force enjoys a close, collaborative relationship with DFPS, particularly on issues related to child safety. The Task Force has worked closely with DFPS regarding initiatives over the past several years that will continue during the next five years including addressing disproportionality in the DFPS system, the Fatherhood Initiative, Joint Investigations Training for law enforcement and CPS, Alternative Response, training for DFPS attorneys, training for DFPS investigation staff on children with disabilities, training for DFPS staff on working with families experiencing domestic violence, training for all investigative staff on physical and sexual abuse investigations, and training for DFPS staff on working with children who have disabilities or significant healthcare needs. A few examples of collaboration between the Children's Justice Act and DFPS include the following:

- CJA has a strong working relationship with DFPS, particularly with the Child Protective Investigations Division of the agency. James Sylvester, Associate Commissioner for Investigations for CPS is a member of the CJA Task Force. CJA staff also regularly attends various stakeholder meetings related to the CFSP/APSR such as Collaborative Committee meetings hosted by the Supreme Court Children's Commission and quarterly Children's Commission Meetings. The CJA Project Director also attends relevant legislative committee hearings related to DFPS as well as meetings held by advocates and stakeholders involved with DFPS. DFPS staff are frequently presenters at these meetings and give updates relevant to current issues. Many of our Task Force members are also participants and presenters at these meetings.
- While DFPS is clearly looking at turnover and backlogged investigations as part of the Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan, CJA also views this as a systemic issue. The Task Force is focused on under-resourced law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, and hospitals and the impact that lack of capacity in these essential partner agencies is having on child abuse cases.
- A CJA project with Texas Legal Service Center has helped to address the issue of inadequate parental engagement by giving parents information about the CPS process and helping parents and relatives through the various aspects of their cases.
- The priorities and recommendations of the CJA 2018-2021 Three Year Assessment deal with the problems related to resource constraints/insufficient services for stakeholders, children and families throughout the state. While CJA might be focused on specific stakeholders or aspects of a case that differ from DFPS' overall priorities, we both understand the serious difficulties represented by the problematic resource distribution, particularly in rural areas.

CJA funded projects that demonstrate the meaningful collaboration include:

- A CJA project with the Department of State Health Services employs Child Fatality Review Team Coordinators, intended to improve the data collection and analysis from Child Fatality Review Teams and support the Strategic Plan to Reduce Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities. Additionally, the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences has begun to work with the Investigation Division of DFPS, on their CJA funded project to improve data collection in the Infant Injury Database.
- CJA was the initial funder for the first few years of Alternative Response in the state, allowing the state to implement Alternative Response in limited areas to develop experience and expertise while ensuring fidelity to the model and allowing DFPS to make any adjustments to the model of practice and policy that were needed after initial implementation. Specifically, CJA funding supported staff development related to Alternative Response and the CJA Task Force continues to support the DFPS Alternative Response program.
- The Parent Helpline project, funded by CJA, helps to answer parents' questions and support them through the CPS process. This helps parents feel supported and, in turn, helps them keep their children safe and prevent removal.

- The CJA continues its collaboration with the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families (Children’s Commission) and CJA is a partial funder of the Children’s Commission’s Trial Skills Training project.
- A new project supported by the CJA Task Force will be to fund a two-year Texas Adaptive Coaching Project with the Investigation Division of DFPS.

Court Improvement Project (CIP):

The Supreme Court of Texas Children’s Commission is funded by the Court Improvement Project grant and administers it. The Children’s Commission collaborates with DFPS on almost every aspect of its work. A few examples of collaboration between DFPS and the Children’s Commission include:

- Active Children’s Commission membership includes the DFPS Associate Commissioner for CPS, several staff on the Commission’s Collaborative Council, and at least one state level DFPS staff member on every Children’s Commission committee.
- The Children’s Commission, Texas Education Agency, and DFPS continue to collaborate on numerous recommendations submitted by the Children’s Commission Education Committee in the 2012 “Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children & Youth in Foster Care,” commonly referred to as the Texas Blueprint. Members of the Foster Care and Education committee continue to focus on making improvements in education outcomes in the areas of transition planning, education decision-makers, data and information sharing, and higher education liaison support.
- DFPS, the Children’s Commission and a variety of stakeholders have sustained robust participation on the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care and assisted with developing the recommended strategies in the 2019 report “Building a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System: A Blueprint. The first of its kind in the nation, the Trauma Blueprint is a roadmap to transforming the Texas child welfare system into one that routinely and consistently provides trauma informed care to children and families.
- The Children’s Commission hosts a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child welfare stakeholders, including executive staff of CPS, Office of Court Administration, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and many other stakeholders.
- DFPS and the Children’s Commission review policy and procedures, share data and case analysis information, and explore opportunities to sponsor joint training activities at quarterly Children’s Commission meetings.
- The Children’s Commission’s Executive Director has served and will continue to serve on the Texas CFSR Program Improvement Plan Team. The Executive Director also serves as a member of the Public Private Partnership, the Steering Committee that advises DFPS on the rollout of Community-Based Care.

- The Children's Commission recently created a grant funded data analyst position in partnership with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services and DFPS. The analyst will take publicly available DFPS and court data to strengthen the court's continuous quality improvement process in CPS cases.
- The Children's Commission partners with DFPS on one to two priority issues for round table meetings every year. The round table discussion includes experts from around Texas with a focus on identifying barriers and solutions to complex problems. Recent round table topics include normalcy, mediation, education in residential treatment centers, youth participation in court, and Parental Child Safety Placements.
- At each annual conference for child welfare judges hosted by the Children's Commission and the Texas Center for the Judiciary, DFPS Associate Commissioner presents information on the high level trends in data across Texas. Regional directors then facilitate small group meetings with additional data to inform judges of local trends in need of attention. Other DFPS staff often participate in conference sessions on topics of interest or impacting the judiciary.
- The Children's Commission continues to provide attorney scholarships to DFPS attorneys to participate in CPS related trainings. The Children's Commission will also cover speaker fees for the annual DFPS Attorney Conference. The Children's Commission and DFPS also collaborate on Trial Skills Training which occurs one to two times annually.
- The Children's Commission includes a Tribal leader to the Commission membership and supports the State/Tribal/Federal meetings held regularly throughout the year.

Technical Assistance and Evaluation

DFPS indicates its intent to continue with or seek future use of technical assistance to strengthen achievement of goals and activities. Additionally, in support of its continuous quality improvement approach, DFPS uses evaluation to help ensure actions are resulting in the desired outcomes. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- AdoptUSKids: Information and training for staff around best practices in developing strengths-based public and private narratives, the continuum of information sharing throughout the family recruitment and engagement process and using photolisting effectively. Texas and AdoptUSKids will collaborate to address systemic issues with the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) system and how it is used and relates to the AdoptUSKids photolisting site to protect children's private information and align with AdoptUSKids guidance for best practices. It is estimated that only a third of the children that should be photolisted are actually listed on the site. Texas has identified a need for a cultural shift, internally and externally, toward TARE. Texas is working to embed a strengths-based approach in their system, and work together will help further that goal.

- Casey Family Programs has multiple areas of support:
 - Training for Family Based Safety Services staff in Region 7 to support facilitation and implementation of the Nurturing Parenting Program by FBSS caseworkers. This technical assistance is to support development of family engagement and assessment skills in FBSS.
 - Technical Assistance for the decision-making process for DFPS and the State of Texas regarding the Family First and Prevention Services Act. This includes support for strategic planning requirements mandated through Senate Bills 355 and 781 by the Texas Legislature.
 - Strengthening the effectiveness of the Parent Collaboration Group, to improve collaboration with parents who have received or are receiving child welfare services.
- DFPS may request additional support from the Capacity Building Center regarding Plans of Safe Care, but has not determined need at this time. Quality Improvement Center – Collaborative Community Court Teams (Family Intervention – Infant Toddler Court, Harris County), a grant in Houston, is currently supporting Plans of Safe Care work.
- The Children’s Commission has multiple statewide projects supporting improvement of outcomes. The work is described above and elsewhere in the 2020-24 CFSP, but includes funding a data evaluation position to help assess court outcomes, judicial surveys, and topic-specific Roundtables or workgroups to help with systemic improvement.
- Several universities are providing technical assistance to help assess and improve outcomes. Several examples include:
 - Texas Tech University and Chapin Hall/University of Chicago assisting on evaluation of Community Based Care and Chapin Hall/University of Chicago
 - University of Kentucky assisting in evaluation of the use of Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) and effective use of CANS in the service planning process
- DFPS has a Data and Decision Support program with two divisions. A new Division as of September 2015, the Business Analytics Division serves all DFPS programs -- Adult Protective Services (APS), Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Child Protective Services (CPS), Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), and Statewide Intake (SWI) -- as well as administrative and support functions in DFPS Operations. This division collaborates closely with the CPS Systems Improvement division, which includes experts who use predictive analytics to improve safety, permanency, and well-being. The DDS Director will begin hiring a team of data analysts in fall 2015 to begin looking at data more proactively than DFPS has done in the past. DFPS is concurrently modernizing its data warehouse

and reporting tools to better support data analysis and visualization for both internal and external stakeholders.

Also within the Data and Decision Support Division of DFPS, is the [Management and Reporting Statistics](#) (MRS) division. MRS is responsible for the non-budget related reporting and statistical requirements of DFPS. MRS produces reports, analyses and datasets for agency staff and external requestors and produces statistical data for publication in support of the agency's mission, management, renewal, oversight, and performance measurement. The MRS also quality assures any data to be published, whether created by MRS or another agency department. MRS is designated as the official source of all DFPS statistical reporting. Management Reporting and Statistics compiles data from the agency's five main Oracle databases (IMPACT, CLASS, DPEI, Reporting and FPS) and from this data, produces statistical reports. These reports make the data more accessible to users and help the program areas and other departments with decision-making and research.

- DFPS provides routine data regarding performance measures for all of its programs and makes the information publicly available for review and use. Performance-monitoring includes reporting of quarterly and annual information regarding actual performance to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor's Office of Budget, Planning and Policy, including analysis of any variances. The Legislative Budget Board assesses agency performance data and reports these assessments to the Legislature. Performance measures are subject to audit by the State Auditor office in order to verify accuracy and determine how the agency is using performance information to achieve expected results. Results of an audit are published and reported to the Legislature and Governor. Legislative committees may hold hearings to inquire about variations of performance or expenditures.

Each quarter, key performance measure data is entered into the Legislative Budget Board's database and the data is available to members of the Legislature and their staff. Performance measure reports for each quarter of the current fiscal year and the prior fiscal years are posted on the DFPS public website. When a performance measure varies five or more percent from the established target, a variance statement is required. The variance statement describes the circumstances that cause the agency to deviate from the targeted performance and includes a statement regarding how the agency intends to address the variance. Variance statements focus only on the relationship between the measure's data and the target. A performance measure may need a variance statement but actually reflect an accomplishment beyond what was anticipated when the target was set two years prior. Each measure has a year-end update from data captured on Nov. 7. The Nov 7 database is frozen and used for other external reporting such as the DFPS Data Book.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

2. Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

2. Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

► *This section is to provide information on the current assessment of the state's performance to support the selection and development of goals and objectives, measures, and outcomes for the next five years. In order to assess state performance on child and family outcomes and agency systemic factors, the state must provide relevant and reliable data on its performance on each of the seven CFSR child and family outcomes and each of the seven CFSR systemic factors.*

Please refer to Part 2 Section 2 for the 2019 APSR and Assessment of Performance in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

3. 2020-2024 CFSP – Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02

3. 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Development - Plan for Enacting the State's Vision

DFPS collaborated with a variety of stakeholders to solicit input on strategies for the next five years that will improve safety, permanency and well-being for children and their families through the Texas child welfare system. While all of these groups are not all led or managed by DFPS, DFPS is a participating member and the groups provide actionable guidance to the child welfare system. During the first six months of federal Fiscal Year 2019, DFPS solicited input on its performance, protocol and policy and develop plans and strategies to move forward with the following entities listed below. DFPS will continue to engage these stakeholders throughout the 2020-2024 CFSP five year period.

- Texas Network of Youth Services Runaway Prevention Sessions around the state, held with providers and youth with lived experiences to look for ways to prevent runaways and improve care
- Regional Provider Meetings, with residential caregivers, CPS staff, and medical service providers participating to identify ways to increase collaboration and service provision for children/youth in CPS within each region.
- SB1758 Workgroup, a statewide meeting focused on strategies to improve services to older youth.
- Governor's Committee on Disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Workgroup
- Travis County Disproportionality Committee
- Texas Juvenile Justice Division Data Sharing Workgroup
- Foster Youth Transition Meeting with Disability Rights Texas and other stakeholders
- Texas Permanency Outcomes Project
- Public Private Partnership (CBC)
- Committee on Advancing Residential Practices
- Statewide Kinship Collaboration Group*
- Parent Collaborative Group*
- Texas Supreme Court Children's Commission Statewide Collaborative on Trauma Informed Care
- Children's Hospital Association of Texas (CHAT meeting—Superior, HHSC, DFPS and Hospitals)
- Psychotropic Medication Monitoring Group
- Texas Family Violence Interagency Collaborative
- Advisory Committee on Promoting Adoptions of Minority Children
- Statewide Supervisor and Caseworker Advisory Committees*
- Statewide Youth Leadership Council*
- Texas Foster Family Association
- Council on Adoptable Children of Texas
- DFPS Council

(An * indicates meeting occurs at both state and regional (local) levels.)

2020-2024 CFSP Progress and Services Report (APSR)

Goals, and Objectives

Goal 1: Maximize the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth

Rationale: The Texas child welfare system, including Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) divisions such as Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), Child Protective Investigations (CPI), and Child Protective Services (CPS), have a comprehensive service array that extends to all regions and counties across the state. Texas maintains methods that assess the strengths and needs of children and families to determine the services necessary to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when possible, and help children in out of home placements achieve permanency. The family focus culture encourage families to build on their strengths to develop individualized family plans that include supportive resources necessary to care for children within their own homes and communities.

Children in DFPS conservatorship receive medical care through Medicaid primarily through a statewide, comprehensive managed care program known as STAR Health. STAR Health is administrated by Superior Health Plan and provides medical, behavioral health, dental, vision, pharmacy services and a Health Passport record for each child. The Health Passport is a computer-based system that has health data including information on medical and dental visits, hospital stays, prescriptions and immunization records.

The agency has developed specialized positions to help meet children's well-being needs, including Well-Being Specialists, Developmental Disability Specialists, Mental Health Specialist, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment Program Specialist, Trauma Informed Care Specialist, Nurse Consultants, Education Specialists, the Parent Program Specialist, the Fatherhood Program Specialist, and Family Group Decision Making staff. In addition, the Human Trafficking and Child Exploitation (HTCE) division was established to strengthen the anti-trafficking work for the children and youth served by the agency.

DFPS has a strong collaborative relationship with the Texas Children's Commission who, in partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and many stakeholders, launched an Education Blueprint with an action plan to focus on improving educational outcomes for children in care.

Goal 1 relates to CSFP PIP cross-cutting issues number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Objective 1.1: Prevent delinquency and child abuse/neglect

Rationale: Research has identified risk factors that contribute to an increased likelihood of child maltreatment and/or juvenile delinquency and conversely protective factors that protect children from maltreatment and reduce youth's engagement in delinquency by strengthening the child, their family, and communities. PEI invests in primary and secondary prevention programs and services that reduce risk factors and promote protective factors and resiliency in children, youth, families and communities. These programs strive to prevent entry into the Texas child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Expected Outcomes:

- Parents/caregivers who complete a minimum amount of required services will not abuse/neglect their children.
- Children served will not suffer from abuse/neglect.
- Youth who complete a minimum amount of required services will not engage in juvenile delinquency.
- Parents/caregivers who complete a minimum amount of required services will experience an increase in at least one protective factor as demonstrated by the results of the protective factors survey completed before and after receiving services.
- Youth who complete a minimum amount of required services will experience an increase in at least one protective factor on the protective factors survey completed before and after receiving services.

Outcome Measures:

- Clients experience an increase in protective factors as demonstrated by protective factors survey results.
- Children remain safe.
- Youth do not engage in delinquent behavior.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Procure new PEI programs according to DFPS and Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) procurement plans.	Ongoing
Create/disseminate child abuse prevention awareness calendar.	Annual
Promote infant safe sleep awareness, water safety, and hot car campaigns.	Ongoing
Enhance/promote statewide child abuse prevention campaign.	Ongoing
Build awareness of Child Abuse Prevention Month to the public and stakeholders.	April (annual)
Participate in workgroups and plan with other agencies providing prevention or early intervention services, and collaborate with stakeholders, including other state agencies to improve the effectiveness of prevention efforts.	Ongoing
Conduct an annual training conference that brings together child abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency prevention, early intervention professionals, and service providers.	Ongoing
Utilize the primary caregiver satisfaction survey to inform planning and decision making.	Ongoing
Monitor contractors' administration of program experience survey.	Ongoing
Share key information on prevention services and topics with DFPS investigation caseworkers.	Ongoing
Coordinate efforts and share PEI program and public awareness information with other DFPS program resources to ensure effective local relationships.	Ongoing
Coordinate HTCE program, public awareness information, and prevention efforts with PEI and PEI providers to improve capacity to identify, report, recover, and restore children and youth who are trafficked.	Ongoing

Objective 1.2: Improve prevention and intervention strategies and services

Rationale: Through targeted service delivery in the PEI division, and through direct delivery services available in the CPI and CPS divisions, child safety can be strengthened while simultaneously improving family and community protective factors. PEI's legislatively required growth strategy, which includes data associated with child abuse and neglect fatalities or near-fatalities, informs the expansion of services for prevention and intervention with families. DFPS, through PEI, will target communities with high maltreatment risk to assist in providing prevention services.

Expected Outcomes:

- Communities will select programs specific to their identified needs to provide services prior to DFPS involvement.
- Communities will build capacity to serve families where child maltreatment has already been identified.
- Targeted efforts aimed at preventing abuse and neglect will include both fatal and near-fatal abuse and neglect.

Outcome Measures:

- Increased number of children who remain safe during services.
- Decreased number of child victims with subsequent reports of abuse and/or neglect.
- Decreased number of child deaths with previous DFPS history.
- Continued collaboration with the state agencies to ensure improved coordination of information, policies and programs for prevention and early intervention of child abuse/neglect.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Coordinate with Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to review child fatality data and provide aggregate information to inform prevention and intervention services on a county and statewide scale.	Ongoing
Track and analyze child maltreatment related fatalities and near fatality cases.	Ongoing
Track cause and manner of death.	Ongoing
Monitor system for reviewing, recording, and analyzing child abuse and neglect related near-fatalities and fatalities through continuous quality improvement process.	Ongoing
Produce annual report regarding investigated child fatalities and near fatalities. Annual Report will be published on the DFPS Office of Child Safety website.	Ongoing (Annually)
Collaborate with stakeholders and other state agencies to design, promote, and/or support ongoing prevention efforts surrounding trends identified in child fatality and near-fatality review.	Ongoing
PEI will continue to improve and sustain productive relationships with communities,	Ongoing
PEI will continue to explore best practices in program implementation and expansion while maintaining model fidelity.	Ongoing
Utilize PEI's growth strategy in the development of purchasing requests for proposals	Ongoing
Monitor and update PEI's business and strategic plans	Ongoing

Objective 1.3: Expand Alternative Response philosophy into traditional investigations

Rationale: Solution-focused practice and family engagement skills proved effective in obtaining quality work with families as Alternative Response was implemented. By using solution-focused practice and engaging families differently, caseworkers gathered more pertinent child safety information from families and assisted development and utilization of the family support networks. Engagement strategies resulted in families becoming more invested in the safety of their own children and in the parents working alongside the caseworkers as a team. Additionally, a majority of families reported being more satisfied with the Alternative Response approach and felt they were able to participate in developing solutions or selecting services.

Expected Outcomes:

- Caseworkers and managers will know how to use solution-focused practice when working cases.
- Information reflected in case files will be more family-focused through use of engagement tools, solution-focused questions, and input from families in the creation of plans and selection of services.
- Caseworkers will show effective family engagement skills through use of engagement tools, solution-focused questions, and partnering with families throughout the casework process.
- Managers will use the parallel process by demonstrating use of solution-focused practice in case staffing, case direction, and leadership of their staff.

Outcome Measures:

- Caseworkers show increased solution focused practice and family engagement.
- Supervisors model the parallel process, thereby increasing the critical thinking, decision-making skills, and competency of their staff.
- All staff understand and use the parallel process.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Strengthen caseworker training to include solution-focused practice and focus on family engagement and assessment skills.	Ongoing
Promote Technical Coaching support services as an available resource to all CPI staff to support development and transference of skills.	Ongoing
Promote Adaptive Coaching as an available CPI leadership resource to encourage strength-based supervision.	Ongoing

Utilize monthly webinars for all CPI staff to provide ongoing training of solution focused practice and family engagement skills.	Ongoing
Disseminate solution-focused practice and engagement tools to all CPI staff. Information will be made available on the Safety Net.	Ongoing

Objective 1.4: Promote high quality standards for investigations

Rationale: Child safety is the central focus of investigative practice. The foundation of quality investigations is the education, development, support, and retention of staff. Direct service staff (caseworker, manager, and staff in supporting roles) are the medium through which investigations are made and families are served. To assist staff in completing high quality investigations, DFPS provides supports such as technological resources, trainings, supervision support, reporting systems, and policies that allow staff to better serve families. In addition, DFPS collaborates with outside agencies that provide feedback on how to continue to improve the quality of investigations.

Expected Outcomes:

- Caseworkers will exhibit the necessary critical thinking skills and ability to detect child abuse and neglect to effectively intervene with families to assure child safety.
- Caseworkers will demonstrate effective family engagement skills. **(CFSR PIP Goal 4)**
- Staff will have access to expert consultations as needed to guide and develop practice skills.
- Support services such as training, case reviews, and data will be aligned to support quality investigations.

Outcome Measures:

- Recidivism will decrease.
- Staff turnover will continue to decrease. **(CFSR PIP Goal 1)**
- Staff will have access to real time data to help them manage tasks and workloads.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Hire, develop, and retain a strong workforce. (CFSR PIP Goal 1)	Ongoing
Caseworker training will be strengthened to better support strong practice skills including family engagement and assessment skills. (CFSR PIP Goal 6)	Ongoing
Training for managers will reinforce the Texas CPI model of supervision. (CFSR PIP Goal 4)	Ongoing
Managers will develop skills in using technology and data to assist in ensuring that critical safety tasks are completed timely.	Ongoing

CPI will continue to use the Master Investigators to respond to workload and staff development needs across the state.	Ongoing
Use the expertise of the Child Safety Specialists in improving response to repeat child maltreatment for the most vulnerable children.	August 2021
Coordinate with HTCE program to improve investigator capacity to identify, report, recover, and restore children and youth who are trafficked.	Ongoing
Enhance the specialty and certification training processes for CPI staff to include Human Trafficking.	August 2021

Objective 1.5: DFPS will strengthen the provision of FBSS and practices to engage families across the state in order to better achieve safety and child and family well-being outcomes.

Rationale: Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS) are designed to support children safely in their homes by strengthening the family’s ability to protect their child and reduce dangers to their child’s safety. FBSS provides a variety of services directly by CPS staff, through contracted service providers, or through referrals to community-based providers. Traditionally, services have included, but are not limited to, family counseling, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment, and domestic violence intervention. FBSS caseworkers may also provide one-on-one parenting and homemaker skill trainings in areas where community-based services are not available. Texas has adopted Structured Decision Making tools that assess the strengths and needs of children and families to determine the services necessary to create a safe home environment and enable children to remain safely with their parents when possible.

Expected Outcomes:

- Strengthen FBSS service plan development and ongoing evaluation of safety by focusing on proper use of the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA), Safety Assessment, and Risk Reassessment tools. **(CFSR PIP Goal 3)**
- Improve casework practice and staff competency to enhance safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
- Prevent removal and work with families to keep children safe in their homes.
- Make data-driven decisions to decrease recidivism in FBSS cases.
- Expand and enhance services to families in areas that are historically lacking resources by providing services through a single entity contracting with DFPS and serving Region 10 (El Paso). **(CFSR PIP Goal 3)**
- Enhance family engagement and reduce recidivism with families who are participating in the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) facilitated by FBSS staff in five pilot sites.

Outcome Measures:

- Measure data reports to evaluate timely family plans of service and timely contacts with families.

- Measure recidivism rates through evaluation of data warehouse reports.
- Monitor and evaluate quality case documentation through Quality Assurance (QA) and Program Director case reads.
- Review data reports, case review results, and quarterly monitoring outcomes to evaluate progress for the Region 10 Family Services Contract pilot to assess whether the pilot has resulted in improved child safety, permanency, and well-being for children and youth, and whether changes will allow for extension of the pilot to other areas of the state.
- Evaluate outcomes for the five FBSS units providing NPP to families under their care.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Re-training all FBSS staff on use of the FSNA, Safety Assessment and Risk Reassessment, as these Structured Decision Making tools will be automated into the DFPS IMPACT system as part of the second release of IMPACT Modernization.	April 2019
Enhance the specialty and certification training processes for FBSS caseworkers to include more in-depth training on appropriate and timely service plans, enhanced family engagement, and elevating child safety.	September 2020
Monitor improving recidivism through data warehouse reports. Analyze input from qualitative “live read” case reviews for FBSS in all regions and use the results from the “live read” to enhance caseworker meetings, use in supervisor coaching, and integrate findings of aggregate trends into regional improvements.	Ongoing
Develop new data warehouse reports to capture frequency of contact and risk assessment data related to newly established and enhanced FBSS policy, and provide outcome measures to regional staff to be integrated into supervision and casework practices improvement.	Ongoing
Monitor and evaluate the family services contractor, HomeSAFE, for quality documentation, timely services, child safety, and family engagement performance measures through case reviews, quarterly data evaluation, and quarterly contract performance monitoring.	Ongoing
Monitor and evaluate casework performance and recidivism data for families who participated in the NPP pilot.	Ongoing
Coordinate with HTCE program to improve FBSS capacity to identify, report, recover, and restore children and youth who are trafficked.	Ongoing

Objective 1.6: Reduce the number of children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

Rationale: Exiting children to a permanent family setting improves overall child well-being. DFPS will continue efforts to achieve positive permanency for children. The preferred permanency goals for children consist of: (1) exiting a child to a family, and (2) transferring legal custody to that family.

Expected Outcomes:

- More robust clinical practice around the topic of permanency and engagement.
- Increased collaboration with families and stakeholders.

Outcome Measures:

- Decrease in the number and percentage of children in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS, based on data regarding the legal status of children in DFPS conservatorship.
- Increase in exits to positive permanency for children and youth in care over fiscal year.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Enhance understanding and awareness of the importance of permanency through values training, collaborative family engagement trainings, and collaborative family engagement trainings.	Ongoing
Continue collaboration with the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families.	Ongoing
Continue collaboration with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to locate and/or recruit potential permanency resources for children and youth in Temporary Managing Conservatorship and Permanent Managing Conservatorship through collaborative family engagement.	Ongoing

Objective 1.7: Facilitate reunification and permanency efforts (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

Rationale: Reunification is the primary permanency goal in most cases when DFPS has conservatorship of a child. Through enhancing agency practice and services focused on safety, permanency, and well-being, the agency will achieve reunification timely while identifying and addressing barriers to reunification earlier in the case. When children and youth enter DFPS conservatorship, DFPS must immediately begin the process of planning for positive permanency. Positive permanency guides DFPS to seek an outcome in which the child exits DFPS care into a permanent setting with a legal relationship to a family. When a child is unable to return home safely, positive permanency underscores the need for DFPS staff to seek another permanent family setting for the child. If DFPS is unable to achieve positive permanency for a child, then it is incumbent upon the agency

to identify, develop, and support connections to caring adults who agree to provide support when the youth ages out of the foster care system.

Expected Outcomes:

- Children and youth will have visitation with family and maintain connections to their community.
- Family Reunification will be the priority permanency goal for children in Temporary Managing Conservatorship unless aggravated circumstances exist or reunification has been ruled out.
- DFPS will safely reduce the number of children and youth in DFPS conservatorship by reducing the time to positive permanency.

Outcome Measures:

- The number of safe and timely exits from Temporary Managing Conservatorship to Family Reunification will increase.
- The number of children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship who exit to Family Reunification will increase.
- Length of time in care for children will decrease.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Develop statewide and regional strategies to improve permanency outcomes for children and youth in DFPS conservatorship.	Ongoing
Enhance Family Group Decision Making model to include more focus on safety and permanency; incorporating the single case plan model and collaborative family engagement.	Ongoing
Utilize expertise of the Conservatorship Program Administrators to identify barriers, opportunities for improvement and best practices.	Ongoing
Utilize the parent collaboration groups across the state to identify opportunities for improvement in practice and to provide feedback on policy and services provision to parents.	Ongoing
Enhance fatherhood engagement.	Ongoing

Objective 1.8: Increase permanent placements to kinship families when not reunifying (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

Rationale: When children and youth are placed with kinship families, they are able to maintain a closer connection to their family and culture. Kinship care helps to increase placement stability and child well-being. Children experience better outcomes when they are placed with family members and can maintain connections to their communities. Kinship families often provide care for large sibling groups.

Expected Outcomes:

- Texas will increase the placements of children with kinship caregivers and permanent exits to kinship families.
- Children will remain connected to their families and communities.

Outcome Measures:

- The number of children placed with kinship caregivers will increase.
- The number of kinship caregivers who become verified as foster parents will increase.
- Increased exits to permanent managing conservatorship to relatives and adoption to relatives.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Enhance safety, permanency, and well-being for children through the provision of direct services and support to their relative or kinship caregivers.	Ongoing
Improve early identification of potential kinship placement resources.	Ongoing
Continue to train staff about the kinship program to ensure timely referrals.	Ongoing
Continue using Family Team Meetings and community collaborations to identify and engage potential kinship caregivers.	Ongoing
Publish a kinship quarterly newsletter.	Ongoing

Objective 1.9: Achieve permanency more quickly (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

Rationale: Adoption is the best choice for children and older youth in DFPS care when it is not safe for them to return home and the rights of the child’s birth parents are terminated. Adoption benefits children and older youth by giving the child a stable and permanent home, a sense of belonging and security, and lifelong support to grow and become a healthy, productive adult.

This objective seeks to eliminate barriers to timely permanency for Texas children in foster care through systems change efforts that center on adoption services and recruitment of adoptive homes. This includes state-level policy and practice enhancements, ongoing and new state level initiatives and partnerships, and community-specific strategies. Because barriers to adoption and capacity are unique to a community, specific strategies in support of this objective must be identified and implemented at the local-level. DFPS drives systems improvement through regional strategic planning and initiatives. Simultaneously, DFPS is transitioning to a community-based service-delivery system with the implementation of Community-Based Care. A performance-based

contract with a Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) incentivizes increased permanency and decreased time in foster care.

Expected Outcomes:

- More children will achieve positive permanency.
- The time to achieve positive permanency will decrease.
- The number of consummated adoptions will increase.
- Culture change with agency workforce, providers, and stakeholder partners.
- The time to submit and process Regional Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) home study requests will decrease.
- Number of ICPC case completion within required timeframes will increase.

Outcome Measures:

- Increase number of exits to positive permanency.
- Decrease length of time to positive permanency.
- Increase in number of consummated adoptions.
- Decrease in foster care days.
- Decrease times for submitting and processing outgoing ICPC home study requests.
- Increase in number of incoming ICPC home study approvals received within required timeframe.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Build awareness of adoption with the public and stakeholders.	Ongoing
Promote adoption of target populations.	Ongoing
Evaluate and build upon current adoption and post-adoption services.	Ongoing
Use child specific recruitment efforts to identify adoptive homes for children who are waiting for adoption and are not yet in their permanent placement.	Ongoing
Policy and practice enhancements.	Ongoing
Regional permanency plans focusing on region-specific barriers to permanency, including adoption, informed by local data and analysis.	Reviewed quarterly and updated annually
Foster care capacity building plans include recruitment of foster-adopt homes and is data-driven based on the DFPS annual foster care needs assessment.	Reviewed quarterly and updated annually
Rollout of Community-Based Care for a total of five sites by 2020.	Dependent on legislative direction and resources
Monitor outgoing ICPC cases to ensure approvals are received within required timeframes.	Ongoing

Evaluate timeliness of submission and processing for outgoing ICPC home study requests.	Ongoing
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Objective 1.10: Promote normalcy

Rationale: In order to maximize child development and well-being, it is important for children to participate in extracurricular and social activities. The legal status of the child, specifically that being in the custody of the state, should not interfere with a child experiencing normalcy. DFPS continues to work on creating a foster care system that allows foster children and youth access to the same activities and experiences as children and youth who are not in foster care. Not only do these experiences increase child and youth well-being while in foster care but potentially lead to permanency resources. These resources can be the start of a caring connection to an adult as they transition into adulthood or lead to positive permanency.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improved child well-being, improved education outcomes, and increased connection to community and permanency resources.
- Increase awareness by staff on the impact and effects of normalcy for children in foster care.
- Clarity on normalcy by residential providers and their understanding of the prudent parent standard.

Outcome Measures:

- Community collaborations will increase.
- Children will be more engaged in extracurricular activities.
- DFPS staff and residential providers will take annual normalcy trainings.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Enhance service planning for children and youth in DFPS conservatorship to support participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities--similar to activities that children outside of the foster care experience.	Ongoing
Continue to work with residential contracts and private providers to support normalcy activities for children and youth in DFPS conservatorship.	Ongoing
Collaborate with youth leadership councils.	Ongoing
Develop tools and job aids for staff.	Ongoing

Objective 1.11: Support physical and behavioral health oversight (CFSR PIP Goal 6)

Rationale: There were 30,610 children in DFPS substitute care at the end of Fiscal Year 2018. Each child enrolled in STAR Health is eligible for service coordination; and service management is available for children with more serious health and behavioral health needs. STAR Health also oversees and reviews psychotropic medications and provides an electronic Health Passport, member services, and nurse advice line. DFPS collaborates with HHSC, which manages the contract with Superior HealthPlan, to oversee the healthcare children are receiving through STAR Health.

Expected Outcomes:

- Children will receive adequate services to meet their physical and behavioral health needs.

Outcome Measures:

- The percentage of children receiving adequate services to meet their physical health needs.
- The percentage of children receiving adequate services to meet their mental/behavioral health needs.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Collaborate with HHSC, STAR Health, managed care contractors, residential providers and staff to support appropriate medical services to children in DFPS care.	Ongoing
Continue efforts to strengthen policy, procedure, contracts, and training related to the provision of informed consent for psychotropic medications.	Ongoing
Collaborate with partners regarding monitoring the use of psychotropic medications, including the continuation of the Psychotropic Medication Monitoring Group chaired by the DFPS Medical Director.	Ongoing
Continue collaboration with HHSC and STAR Health for the psychotropic medication utilization reviews of children placed in Texas under the ICPC.	Ongoing
Provide training to staff and stakeholders on STAR Health, medical consent, psychotropic medications, 3 in 30 (Texas Health Steps, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment [CANS], and 3-Day Medical Exam), and the Health Passport.	Ongoing
Collaborate with HHSC and STAR Health to increase compliance with initial Texas Health Steps Medical Checkups, CANS and the 3-Day Medical Exam.	Ongoing
Facilitate the use of multi-disciplinary team “case meeting” to develop service and health care plans for children with complex health needs	Ongoing

Increase the awareness of the availability of STAR Health services under the Medicaid Former Foster Care Youth program and the Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Youth program for youth who are aging out or who have aged out of care.	Ongoing
Assist caregivers in navigating and managing the healthcare system effectively.	Ongoing
Collaborate with HHSC and STAR Health to increase the availability of STAR Health network providers certified and trained in trauma informed, evidence-based therapy.	Ongoing

Objective 1.12: Improve education outcomes

Rationale: Education is a key component contributing to a child's overall social and emotional well-being. Nationally, children in foster care often have poor educational outcomes due to a number of factors, including prior instances of family neglect and abuse, substance abuse, and family instability resulting in education disruptions. The 2020-2024 goals are to maintain and strengthen education stability and improve the education outcomes for children and youth in DFPS conservatorship by collaborating with multiple agencies and community stakeholders to remove barriers from practices and policies, which hamper educational success.

Expected Outcomes:

- Children and youth in DFPS conservatorship will improve education outcomes by reducing school placement moves and education disruptions.
- DFPS staff will continue its strong collaborative ties with the TEA, the Texas Children's Commission, CASA, Disability Rights Texas, University of Texas at Austin, and community groups by participating in ongoing community consortiums, stakeholder workgroups, presentations, and seminars.

Outcome Measures:

- Average number of child placement and school moves.
- Monthly reports from regional education specialists on education-related activities to internal and external stakeholders and responses to child-specific issues.
- Monthly status of education portfolio for children in conservatorship.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Provide training through presentations by regional Education Specialists to internal and external stakeholders on identifying and resolving critical issues which serve as barriers to meet the educational needs and goals of children in foster care.	Ongoing
Establish and maintain a minimum of two community consortia in every region.	Ongoing

Engage external stakeholders, including agencies, school districts and support entities providers, caregivers, and community groups in collaborative efforts to address and improve education outcomes for students in foster care.	Ongoing
Establish current education portfolio, which reflects the required documentation to support education decisions and student success, for 100% of the school-age children and youth in DFPS conservatorship.	Ongoing
Reduce the number of different school moves for children in foster care during the school year below established baseline of 3.2 moves	Ongoing

Objective 1.13: Strengthen parental engagement (CFSR PIP Goal 4)

Rationale: Engaging and working with parents is critical to maintaining safety, achieving permanency, helping the child maintain connections, and promoting child and family well-being.

Expected Outcomes:

- Staff will have an enhanced understanding of the importance of parental engagement.
- Parent engagement, particularly with fathers, will increase.
- Staff will have a better understanding of working with parents who are incarcerated.
- Increased collaboration with external stakeholders on how to improve engagement practices.

Outcome Measures:

- Increase visitation between parents and children.
- Increased engagement and collaboration between CPS and the parent.
- Family strength and needs assessments are utilized in developing plans of service.
- Increase identification of fathers.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Revamp expectations for working with absent and incarcerated parents.	Ongoing
Implement the Volunteer Expansion program that will train volunteers to assist biological parents with transportation to visits and appointments.	Ongoing

Implement a network of local providers designed to meet the specific needs of families in the Community-Based Care catchment areas (such as the Quality Parent Initiative in Region 3B Catchment Area).	Ongoing
Improve casework with families whose fathers are reconnecting with children after an incarceration.	Ongoing
Complete a video series for regional staff statewide to provide more practice guidance on how best to engage and support the parent victim of family violence, the children as well as the parent using violence, implementing a change process to increase safety and well-being for all family members.	Ongoing
Continue to raise awareness and improve practices regarding the importance of family engagement with staff and child and parent representatives who have direct contact with the parents and children served by the agency.	Ongoing

Objective 1.14: Better meet the needs of children and youth within their communities

Rationale: DFPS must establish effective practices for assessing the comprehensive needs of children, youth, and families to create a child welfare service delivery system that is responsive to these needs and can affect positive client outcomes. DFPS is implementing Community-Based Care to promote community ownership, flexibility, and innovation in providing residential and child protective services that meet the unique needs of local children and families.

Expected Outcomes:

- Children and youth are safe from abuse and neglect.
- Placements in home communities will increase.
- Children and youth are appropriately served in the least restrictive environment.
- Stability in placements will increase.
- Connections to family and others important to the child are maintained.
- Children and youth are placed with siblings.
- Services respect the child's culture.
- Children and youth are provided opportunities, experiences, and activities similar to those experienced by their peers who are not in foster care.
- Children and youth are provided opportunities to participate in decisions that impact their lives.
- Reunification with biological parents, when possible, will increase. (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

- Increase placement with relative or kinship caregivers if reunification is not possible. (CFSR PIP Goal 5)

Outcome Measures:

- Percentage of children and youth safe from abuse and neglect while in care.
- Percentage of children placed in foster care within 50 miles of their home at removal.
- Percentage of sibling groups placed together in foster care.
- Number of foster care placements per child.
- Percentage of care days in least restrictive placement settings.
- Percentage of service plans with child participation.
- Percentage of court hearings attended by children not excused from attendance.
- Percentage of youth turning 18 who complete Preparation for Adult Living life skill services.
- Percentage of youth age 16 and older with a driver’s license or state identification card.
- Percentage of youth who remain in the school attended at removal.
- Percentage of children placed with relatives.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
DFPS will continue to implement Community-Based Care, Stage I in Region 2 and catchment area 8a. Upon successful contract negotiations, DFPS will initiate Stage I Start-Up and implementation in Region 1 and catchment area 8b.	Fiscal Year 2020
DFPS will implement Community-Based Care stage II, to include case management and services to families, in Region 2 and 3b catchment area.	Fiscal Year 2020
DFPS will procure Community-Based Care contracts in additional areas of the state dependent on legislative direction and appropriation.	Ongoing
HTCE program will coordinate with Community-Based Care providers to improve to identify, report, recover and restore children and youth who are trafficked.	Ongoing

Goal 2: Recruit, develop, and retain quality employees (CFSR PIP Goals 6 and 1)

Rationale: DFPS must recruit and retain employees to meet the needs of children and families. DFPS caseworkers work closely with the public. The work is often urgent and done in an emotionally charged environment. It is important to recruit and retain frontline caseworkers who have the skill set to succeed in such a work environment. DFPS seeks to recruit employees who can best interact with clients and who want to make a career in the protective services field. DFPS also wants to retain experienced support staff shown to be a good fit for the agency.

DFPS has its own training division, the Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence (CLOE). This division works with DFPS programs and divisions to provide over 12,000 staff with training and professional development. Within CLOE, there is the CPS training division, which designs, develops, and conducts CPS Professional Development (CPD) for new CPS caseworkers based on the specific request from CPS State office. Additionally, the CPS training division designs, develops and conducts CPS supervisor CPD and continuing education courses based on the need identified by CPS State office program. Trainings are conducted using various methods such as instructor led classroom settings, hands on field training, computer- and web-based training, and the learning management system as an online training environment.

CLOE also provides supervisor development training to new supervisors and advanced/upper-level management. DFPS LEADS (Leadership, Excellence, Advancement, Distinction, and Support) aids in the professional development of supervisors and managers at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels:

- Upon hire, every promoted or newly hired supervisor/manager immediately attends a two-day course (Beginning Manager: Beginning Manager Transition from Peer to Manager) that focuses on DFPS-related information and resources needed to work effectively and efficiently.
- For beginning and intermediate management, the LEADS primary focus includes the development of eight competencies: managing change, collaboration, communication, cultural competence, decision-making, integrity, professional development of self and others, and strategic thinking.
- For advanced management, the program continues competency development while adding on the enhancement of program specific job functions that advanced/upper-level management staff must carry out on a daily basis.

In 2014, DFPS Executive Leadership established and implemented the Leadership for Advanced Management initiative within CLOE to provide leadership development for DFPS Advanced/Upper Level Management. The focus of the Leadership for Advanced Management initiative is on enhancing program specific job functions that advanced/upper management staff must carry out on a daily basis with the competency framework.

The Leadership for Advanced Management program is focused on managers at the level of:

- DFPS Program Director and above who supervise staff in the regions; and
- Division Administrator and above who supervise staff at state office.

CLOE also manages the DFPS Certification Program. Certification is a voluntary process designed to recognize professional development beyond the basic skills required for DFPS specialists and supervisors. Staff is highly encouraged to seek certification which strengthens staff capacity because certified staff have met requirements for work-related training, experience, performance.

Goal 2 relates to CSFP PIP cross-cutting issues 1, 3, and 4.

Objective 2.1: Recruit and Retain Quality workforce

Rationale: DFPS requires a competent, detailed, professional, and stable workforce to achieve the outcomes the agency desires for the children and families served. Improved recruitment and hiring practices enables the agency to design options which may ultimately contribute to increased retention of staff. Staff retention leads to quality casework that in turn promotes positive outcomes for clients. Tenured staff are more efficient and effective due to the complex nature of the work performed by DFPS. Developing skills and knowledge base takes time and experience. DFPS has an opportunity to provide superior services by attracting and retaining the highest quality staff possible.

In response to legislative directive to reduce turnover, Workforce Development's *Human Resources Management Plan* implemented multiple initiatives to address the working environment and compensation. The results and progression of these initiatives are published on the agency's website at the beginning and middle of each fiscal year to monitor improvement throughout the year.

Expected Outcomes:

- Hiring of quality job candidates will increase.
- Job vacancy rates will decrease.
- CPS and CPI turnover rates will decrease.

Outcome Measures:

- CPS and CPI vacancy rates.
- Quarterly/annual CPS and CPI turnover rates.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Maintain an internet presence with job postings.	Ongoing
Use pre-employment screening for job candidates.	Ongoing
Focusing on hiring candidates with targeted degrees (social work, counseling, early childhood education, psychology, criminal justice, elementary or secondary education, sociology, and human services).	Ongoing
Increase starting pay for social work graduates.	Ongoing
Increase starting pay for bilingual hire.	Ongoing
Offer 6.8% above base in certain approved locations.	Ongoing
Offer locality pay in certain locations in Texas.	Ongoing
Organize hiring fairs in specific locations to interview many staff in one or two days.	Ongoing
Post jobs on job search websites or newspapers that target needed professionals.	Ongoing
Request positions in certain locations be posted as a "hot job" in database of the DFPS personnel and job application system.	Ongoing
Offer retention stipends to CPI caseworkers and supervisors.	Ongoing
Continue calls by regional management to staff in 6-24 month tenure range.	Ongoing
Evaluate existing retention strategies and expand proven effective retention strategies across the agency. Implement statewide performance recognition campaign.	Ongoing
Maintain regional and statewide supervisor and caseworker advisory committees.	Ongoing
Recognize exemplary work through Regional Director Awards and CPS Award of Distinction.	Ongoing
Provide merit raises as funding is available.	Ongoing
Provide enhanced training for supervisors and program directors to improve quality of leadership and support.	Ongoing

Objective 2.2: Train new hires, employees, supervisors, and management (CFSR PIP Goal 6)

Rationale: To enhance the quality of training provided to newly hired CPS caseworkers, the agency will continue to evaluate and enhance the CPD Training program. To ensure the quality of training provided to newly hired CPS managers (supervisors and program directors), the agency will continue to evaluate and enhance the training program.

Expected Outcomes:

- Well-trained workforce will result in improved casework practice, services, and outcomes for children and families.

- Improved caseworker practice and competency leading to improved child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes.
- Supervisors that are well trained and developed in both practice and leadership will result in improved staff retention and a highly skilled workforce.

Outcome Measures:

- Ongoing evaluation of the new worker training as needed.
- Evaluate mentor support.
- Evaluate and adjust supervisor training and program director training.
- Evaluate subject matter and effectiveness of Program Director training.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Conduct focus groups with former protégées, mentors, supervisors, and CLOE staff and provide summary to identified stakeholders	June 2019
Enhance CPD training and certification tracks	Ongoing
Enhance mentor support based on feedback	September 2019
Continue to monitor program director trainings	Ongoing
Conduct leadership conference for program directors	August 2020
Provide continuous learning opportunities for program directors	Ongoing

Goal 3: Provide equitable and trauma-informed services (CFSR PIP Goal 6)

Rationale: Children and youth entering the child welfare system have experienced trauma and may continue to experience trauma as the agency works to secure their safety, permanency, and well-being. Building a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive culture through training, services, and collaboration with social service agencies and organizations will allow DFPS to better serve the children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

A trauma-informed child welfare system must also be culturally competent and equitable to the diverse populations it serves. By enhancing the cultural competency of staff and stakeholders in the Texas child welfare system, the system can appropriately meet the individual needs of diverse populations and improve outcomes. DFPS is committed to eliminating the disproportionality and disparities in the Texas child welfare system. With multiple efforts underway to keep families intact, the combined efforts will result in strategies to eliminate disparities.

Goal 3 relates to CSFP PIP cross-cutting issues 1, 4, and 6.

Objective 3.1: Embed trauma-informed, equity-based knowledge into best practices

Rationale: By enhancing the competency of staff and stakeholders in the Texas child welfare system, the system can appropriately meet the individual needs of diverse populations and improve outcomes with trauma-informed and equity-based best practices. To significantly improve the outcomes for children and families, DFPS needs to embed knowledge and skills into casework practice.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced knowledge and competency in trauma-informed and race equity concepts among staff and stakeholders.
- Increased casework practices supporting positive outcomes for children and families and demonstrating an integrated knowledge of trauma-informed and equity concepts.

Outcome Measures:

- Improvement in trends and patterns of disaggregated data reported by race and ethnicity.
- Staff training evaluation data showing increased knowledge in trauma-informed and equity-based subject matters.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Development of training curriculum for CPS and CPI staff on working with a combined trauma and equity lens.	August 2020
Review and complete as-needed updates of CPS, CPI, and CLOE required and available trainings on trauma-informed and equity-based subject matters.	Annually
Develop a disproportionality computer-based training.	August 2019
Review and completed as-needed updates of CPS and CPI policies and practices using a trauma- and equity-informed approach.	Ongoing
Develop an agency campaign regarding the impact of secondary trauma and staff support.	September 2020

Objective 3.2: Collaborate among social service agencies and organizations

Rationale: DFPS engages with community partners to develop and implement programs and policies that help to reduce disproportionality in child welfare and ensure equity in child welfare services while enhancing a trauma-informed perspective and practice. Through engagement, affected communities are empowered in innovative ways to support individual and community efforts for inequities in the system and healing from trauma.

Expected Outcomes:

- The community has a voice and a choice in actions and decisions that impact them so that system changes may occur and be sustainable.
- Enhanced collaboration with systems and stakeholders who interact with DFPS children and families to increase trauma and equity informed practice and services.

Outcome Measures:

- Positive community feedback regarding inclusion in dialogues, discussions, planning, and decision-making of efforts.
- Positive stakeholder feedback regarding inclusion in external and internal workgroups, round tables, and other relevant activities.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Continued inclusion of the community in dialogues, discussions, planning, and decision-making of efforts regarding trauma-informed and equity-based practice.	Ongoing
Collaboration with external stakeholders through participation in external and internal workgroups, round tables, and other relevant activities promoting trauma-informed and equity-based practice.	Ongoing

DFPS participation in the Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-informed Care implementation plan.	Ongoing
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Objective 3.3: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the child welfare system

Rationale: Disaggregated data reported by race and ethnicity allows the Texas child welfare system to understand the extent of disproportionality and disparities in outcomes and then develop targeted efforts to address them.

Expected Outcomes:

Outcomes for all families within the domains of safety, permanency, and well-being will improve.

Outcome Measures:

- Rate of reunification among African American children and their families will increase.
- The removal rate gap among African Americans, Latinos, and Anglos will continue to close.
- Parity for families receiving Family Group Conferences and Family Team Meetings services.

Interim Benchmark/Milestone	Target Completion
Annual data analysis reports related to disproportionality.	Ongoing
Analyze data at key decision making points.	Ongoing
Train staff and community in anti-racist principles.	Ongoing



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

4. Services

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

4. Services

i. Child and Family Services Description, Continuum and Coordination

► *Describe the publicly funded child and family services continuum, including child abuse and neglect prevention, intervention, and treatment services and foster care; family preservation services; family support services; and services to support reunification, adoption, kinship care, independent living, and services for other permanent living arrangements.*

► *Considering the prevention vision articulated by CB, explain how the services will be linked to, coordinated with, or integrated into other services in the child and family services continuum and how services under the plan will be coordinated over the five- year period with services or benefits under other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same populations to achieve the goals and objectives in the plan.*

On September 1, 2017, as directed by statute enacted by the 85th Texas Legislature, DFPS became a standalone agency and is no longer under the umbrella of Health and Human Services. DFPS was also directed to establish an Investigations division, separate from Child Protective Services, that oversees the Investigations, Special Investigations, and Child Care Investigations programs. The Investigations and Special Investigations programs investigate reports of child abuse and neglect while Child Protective Services provides ongoing services beyond the investigation stage. The DFPS continuum of services is described by Division and stage of service, beginning with Prevent and Early Intervention, Statewide Intake, Investigations, and Child Protective Services. State law requires anyone who believes a child is being abused or neglected to report the situation so that the Child Protective Investigations (CPI) division of DFPS can investigate. The CPI division oversees Investigations and Special Investigations. While both programs investigate reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, the Special Investigations program primarily provides support to Investigations and only handles a specific subset of investigations

Prevention and Early Intervention

The Division of Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) is essential for meeting the responsibilities of protecting children and promoting the safety, integrity, and stability of families. PEI consolidates prevention and early intervention programs within a single state agency (DFPS) to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services for at-risk children, youth, and families.

Below are brief descriptions of each PEI program. The Prevention Services section of the DFPS website (www.dfps.state.tx.us) provides information on the availability of PEI-

funded programs in each of the state's 254 counties. This website is updated regularly to provide Texans with timely information on prevention and early intervention services.

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program seeks to increase community awareness of existing prevention services and strengthen community and parental involvement in child abuse prevention efforts. It funds parent education, specifically fatherhood programs, professional education and public awareness campaigns.

Community Youth Development Program

Community Youth Development provides community-based juvenile delinquency prevention services in 18 service areas, comprised of 23 zip codes that are known to have a high incidence of juvenile crime. The program serves children and youth ages 6-17 years, focusing on youth ages 10 through 17 years. Examples of Community Youth Development Program services include youth leadership development, life skills classes, character education, conflict resolution, enrichment, tutoring, mentoring, prevention services for caregivers and other family members and recreation.

Services to At-Risk Youth Program

This program currently provides services to all 254 Texas counties. Commonly known as STAR, the Services to At-Risk Youth Program services are provided to youth and their families experiencing family conflict or at risk of abuse. Services include crisis intervention; short-term emergency shelter; individual and family counseling; youth and parent skills groups; and universal child abuse and neglect prevention activities.

Statewide Youth Services Network Program

The Statewide Youth Services Network is available in all DFPS regions. The Statewide Youth Services Network provides evidence-based juvenile delinquency prevention services to improve conditions which normally would result in negative outcomes for children and youth. The program is open to children ages 6 through 17 with a focus on youth ages 10 through 17.

Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES) Program

The Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support or "HOPES" program contracts with community-based organizations to provide child abuse and neglect prevention services to families with children between 0-5 years of age in specifically targeted counties. HOPES services typically include a home-visiting program component, as well as other services designed to meet the needs of the target county. HOPES contractors should also be involved with or initiate collaborations between child welfare, early childhood education, and other child and family services.

Helping through Intervention and Prevention (HIP) Program

Helping through Intervention and Prevention or "HIP" provides voluntary services to families in order to increase protective factors and prevent child abuse. Eligible families include families who have had their parental rights terminated due to child abuse and

neglect in the previous two years and who currently have a newborn child; families who have previously had a child die with the cause identified as child abuse or neglect in the previous two years and who currently have a newborn child; and current and former foster youth who are pregnant, have recently given birth, or are parenting a child up to two years old. The program provides an extensive family assessment, home visiting programs that include parent education, and basic needs support.

Military Families and Veterans Pilot Prevention Program

The Military Families and Veterans Pilot Prevention Program provides child abuse and neglect prevention services to military and veteran families in three target counties with significant active-duty military and veteran populations: Bell, Bexar, and El Paso. The program works with families from these communities with children ages 0-17 years. The program seeks to reduce the incidence of child maltreatment by increasing protective factors in the families served.

Texas Nurse-Family Partnership Program

The Texas Nurse-Family Partnership program is a voluntary, evidence-based program that helps transform the lives of low-income, first-time moms and their babies through regular home visitation by specially trained registered nurses. Educational information is provided to improve prenatal health, parenting, child health, and family self-sufficiency. Texas Nurse-Family Partnership enrolls mothers who are no later than the 28th week of pregnancy and at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. Services are available through the child's second birthday.

Texas Home Visiting Program

The Texas Home Visiting program serves at-risk, pregnant women and families with children under the age of 6 years through home visitation programs staffed with early childhood and health professionals. Home visiting services are delivered in conjunction with strategic efforts to build community-based, early childhood systems by connecting home visiting services to resources in the community, thus building a community-driven vision for early childhood. The primary goals of the program are improved maternal and child health outcomes and increased school readiness and achievement.

Texas Runaway and Youth Hotline exclusively serves Texas youth and families. Hotline staff and volunteers work closely with social service agencies and juvenile delinquency prevention programs to provide 24-hour crisis intervention and telephone counseling. This includes conference calls to parents and shelters; a confidential message relay service between runaways and parents; paging services for callers in need of immediate assistance from program staff after regular office hours; and information and referrals to callers in need of food, shelter, and transportation to their homes. Callers with a broad range of youth-related concerns can talk to trained volunteers who provide referral information, crisis intervention, and telephone counseling.

Special PEI Initiatives

The PEI Division executes specific projects and initiatives focused on preventing child abuse and juvenile delinquency. Efforts during this reporting period include the following:

- Media campaigns that include television, social media, website redevelopment, instructional videos on a variety of parenting topics, and media relations. The instructional videos include topics such as: “Help for Parents, Hope for Kids” (child abuse prevention, including the campaign for safe sleep practices for infants, “Room to Breathe”), “Look before You Lock” (prevention of child injury and death due to being left alone in automobiles), and “Watch Kids around Water” (water safety for children at home and outdoors). Additionally, in FY19, PEI developed two new animated videos for its instructional library that will be promoted in FY20 on the developmental screenings and screen time.
- Creation of a parenting tips calendar endorsed by the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Among the topics covered are water safety, healthy eating, stress management, screen time, and following rules.
- Hosting the annual Partners in Prevention conference. The conference provides a professional development and networking opportunity for more than 900 professionals in or allied with the prevention field.

Statewide Intake

The DFPS Statewide Intake (SWI) Division is a toll-free statewide reporting system or “hotline” with the purpose of assisting individuals in:

- reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults who are elderly or have disabilities;
- reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children; and
- reporting abuse, neglect, and exploitation of persons in state schools, state supported living centers, state centers and community based centers licensed by Health and Human Services when staff in those facilities are alleged perpetrators.

SWI is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round, including holidays. In addition to phone calls, SWI receives faxes, letters, and internet reports that are reviewed, assessed, and entered into the IMPACT case management system by an intake specialist. SWI is the “front door to the front line” for all DFPS programs. It is Statewide Intake’s job to assess all reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and route them to the right local office. In FY2018, SWI handled 579,277 phone calls, 177,189 e-reports, and 28,676 mail and fax inquiries. 57% of reports met the legal criteria of abuse, neglect or exploitation and were sent to the appropriate DFPS program for investigation. As a result, SWI handled an average of about 1,650 contacts a day. If the caller has information regarding child abuse or neglect, SWI regularly collaborates with the Investigations Division described below.

Statewide Intake and Investigations coordinate regarding policy and procedural changes to determine required information to gather, such as

- Demographic information

- Allegations
- Background information about a family's pertinent problems
- Any other supporting rationale used to support the decision made;
- Whether the reported information appears to involve a child that is not safe, the occurrence of abuse or neglect, as well as continued risk of abuse/neglect; and

Reports ("intakes") determined to meet the statutory definitions of abuse and neglect are assigned a priority based on the alleged severity of harm and level of risk to the child. Intake specialists assign the appropriate priority, "1," "2," or "None" based upon information available at the time the report is accepted.

Priority 1 reports require an immediate response if death or substantial bodily harm to the child will result without immediate intervention, otherwise within 24 hours of the report. Priority 2 reports require a response within 72 hours. Priority 2 reports that go to Alternative Response require a 24 hour phone contact with the family with a more substantial contact made within 5 days.

Priority None reports mean an investigation is not recommended by Statewide Intake but will be reviewed by an Investigations screener. The investigation or alternative response supervisor may specify a more exact timeframe for initiating the investigation after receipt of the intake from Statewide Intake. Intakes are either routed through a screening process or sent directly to investigation units depending on the priority and substance of the report.

Investigations

State law requires anyone who believes a child is being abused or neglected to report the situation so that DFPS can investigate. The DFPS Investigations division oversees Investigations and Special Investigations. While both programs investigate reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, the Special Investigations program primarily provides support to Investigations and only handles a specific subset of investigations.

Whenever suspected child abuse or neglect by parents, caregivers or household members is reported to DFPS and meets the statutory definitions of abuse or neglect, the report is assigned for investigation to either Investigative staff or Special Investigation staff in certain instances. The two programs are responsible for conducting civil investigations of reported child abuse and neglect. The objectives of the investigation are to:

- Ensure child safety,
- Determine whether abuse or neglect occurred,
- Assess whether the child may be at risk of abuse or neglect in the future,
- Provide the family or child with needed safety services, and
- Refer the family for services available in the community or through the agency that reduce the risk of abuse and neglect and enhance the wellbeing of the family.

When conducting investigations, Investigations and Special Investigations staff interview children, parents, and others who know about the family to determine if child abuse or neglect occurred, if the children are safe, and if they are at risk of future harm. The staff may refer families for services in the community, such as individual or family therapy, parenting classes, medical assistance, mental health services, substance abuse assessment and treatment; or to programs offering financial assistance for utilities, rent, or childcare.

When staff are concerned about a child's ongoing safety, they refer the family to one of two types of ongoing services, depending on whether removal is necessary. If a child can remain safely in the home while issues are resolved, the family is referred for Family Based Safety Services. If services cannot ensure the child's safety in the home, staff may petition the court to remove the child from the parents' custody and place the child in a substitute care setting. When either type of transfer occurs, a variety of services are provided to the child and family to address issues needing ongoing agency intervention.

Screened Intakes

Mandated by legislation, specific Investigation caseworkers called "screeners" review a subset of reports received at intake. To be eligible for screening, the intake must be a priority 2 or priority None report in which the victims are ages six and older and involve a family with no open cases in other stages of service, and the intake does not require an immediate response. Screeners clarify information in the reports by contacting collaterals and professionals when possible, reviewing case history, and carefully evaluating information that was not available to the intake specialist. The review supports decisions made whether the report is assigned for a traditional investigation or Alternative Response or if the report is determined to be appropriate for closure. The intake is closed if the child's safety can be assured without further investigation and the screener refers the family to community resources, when appropriate. Screening allows caseworkers to limit investigation to cases that warrant Investigations or Special Investigations involvement. For any allegations involving victim children under the age of six or any intakes that involve serious abuse or neglect allegations which are not eligible for screening, the intake is immediately sent for a traditional investigation.

In FY 2018, Investigations received 300,375 reports of abuse or neglect from Statewide Intake. Of those, Investigations closed 54,301 (18.1%) after determining through formal screening process or through supervisor review that the case did not need an investigation.

Alternative Response Screening

If a report is eligible for screening, investigation screeners review the information in the case and Investigations policy regarding eligibility criteria for Alternative Response to determine if the information in the intake meets conditions for a traditional investigation or Alternative Response case. For any reports that are eligible for screening and do not involve allegations of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse and do not require an immediate response for child safety, the intake is reviewed for Alternative Response. Eligibility for Alternative Response is based on factors such as:

- The type and severity of the alleged maltreatment,
- Age of the children involved, and
- Family's willingness to participate in the Alternative Response process.

Traditional Investigations Screening

For any reports eligible for screening, investigation screeners review the intake and document history, search prior history for locating information, and make additional phone calls to assist the caseworker in gathering information pertaining to the allegations of abuse or neglect. If information obtained by the investigation screener does not support allegations of abuse or neglect, the screener does have the ability to close the case without further investigation. If the report meets standards for investigation and after the formal screening process is complete, the investigation is sent to either Investigations or Special Investigations staff for assignment.

Alternative Response

Alternative Response is a program in Investigations that allows investigative staff to respond differently to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect based on such factors as the age of the child, type and severity of the alleged maltreatment, and willingness of the family to participate in services. Alternative Response is a flexible response that works to engage with families to determine their needs while also addressing safety concerns in the home. The primary focus of the case remains on child safety through identifying the family's support systems, safety plans, parental child safety placements, and all other means necessary to ensure child safety. Because community resources are of particular importance in Alternative Response cases, caseworkers must work closely with community partners to support families through the development of resources and provision of services. This relationship building with the community allows families to seek assistance when Investigations is no longer involved and potentially prevent future involvement with the child welfare system.

The Alternative Response case must be completed within 60 days from the date the case was stage progressed to Alternative Response unless the supervisor approves an extension. These cases differ from traditional investigations in that they do not substantiate allegations, or enter perpetrators into the Central Registry (a repository for reports of child abuse and neglect), and there is a heightened focus on service provision and advocacy from the initial interaction with the family.

Research shows that Alternative Response increases child safety, family involvement, and family satisfaction. Alternative Response can strengthen the family unit and prevent future involvement with the child welfare system. A statewide, phased-in implementation of Alternative Response began in November 2014 and is scheduled to be completed in 2019. All regions except for Region 6A (Harris County) are fully implemented and the initial data continues to show positive results.

Traditional Investigations

Traditional Investigations are conducted by Investigations and Special Investigations staff using a flexible approach that provides for different methods of investigation based on the safety concerns for the child. Types of traditional investigations include the following:

- Thorough Investigations, which incorporate the full range of investigative procedures and outcomes.
- Abbreviated Investigations, which begin as thorough investigations but are shortened and do not include the full range of investigation procedures due to case-specific reasons consistent with child safety. For example, an abbreviated investigation may be used when initial contacts with the alleged victim or family provide enough information to clearly indicate the abuse or neglect allegations can be ruled out without having to complete all the investigative steps mandated in policy.
- Preliminary Investigations are administratively closed for various reasons, such as a determination that DFPS lacks jurisdiction, or because new or additional information obtained prior to contacting the family refutes the allegations or indicates that the child is safe. For example, an initial interview conducted by the caseworker could yield information that the alleged perpetrator was a neighbor and that there are no concerns about the parent's supervision of the child. In this instance, the caseworker would inform law enforcement about the new information and close the investigation.
- Investigations and Special Investigations conduct traditional investigations on reports of child abuse and neglect to determine whether any child has been abused or neglected, is unsafe, or is at future risk of being abused or neglected by a parent or household member. If the report alleges a child has been or may be the victim of a crime and is in immediate danger of physical or sexual abuse that could result in death or serious harm, Investigations or Special Investigations staff, as appropriate, must request a joint investigation with law enforcement.

When reports of abuse or neglect alleging sexual abuse of a child are made by professional reporters or the case involves a child fatality in which there are surviving children in the deceased child's household or under the supervision of a caregiver involved in the child fatality, the caseworker must contact their local Children's Advocacy Center's to initiate a multidisciplinary team response and determine whether a forensic interview of the child is appropriate. All investigations must be completed within 45 days from the date the report was received by the agency, unless the supervisor approves an extension.

At the end of the investigation, the caseworker must assign a disposition to each allegation identified in the investigation. A disposition is a finding that states whether of the alleged abuse or neglect occurred. Each disposition that the investigator gives to an individual allegation is considered when finalizing the overall investigation disposition. There are four categories of findings: reason to believe, ruled out, unable to complete, and unable to determine. For FY 2018, overall investigation dispositions included the following:

FY2018 Investigation Disposition

Disposition	Number
Reason to Believe	41,120
Ruled Out	112,113
Unable to Complete	1,575
Unable to Determine	16,420
Total Completed Investigations	171,228

Source: Data Warehouse report INV_cps_03

If the caseworker concludes that, the children are safe and not at risk of future harm, then the case may be closed. However, if the caseworker concludes that the children are not safe, the investigator may refer the case to ongoing services. If the child can remain safely in the home or live elsewhere temporarily with relatives or close family friends while the services are provided, the case is referred to Family Based Safety Services. If the caseworker determines that the children are in immediate danger, the investigator may file a petition to initiate civil court action to protect the children, which may include removal of children from the home. If a child is removed from the home, Substitute Care services are provided.

DFPS does not protect children all by itself. It works within a child welfare system. Only a court can issue an order to remove children from their homes. Once that happens, the courts play a critical role in determining their future and make the final decisions on what happens to them. No child enters or leaves foster care without a court order. A judge decides where the child will live and for how long. Texas courts decide whether a child goes home or to live with a relative, visits a sibling, or becomes eligible for adoption.

In addition to the courts, DFPS works with many other people and organizations, including but not limited to:

- Law enforcement agencies statewide,
- Foster parents and private child-placing agencies,
- Service providers and service organizations,
- Health and Human Services agencies,
- Community organizations, and
- Child and family advocates and stakeholders.

Child Protective Services

If a family needs services beyond the Investigation stage in order to ensure child safety and child and family well-being, ongoing services are available through Child Protective Services (CPS). Generally, CPS also has two major programs, as well as components

to those programs in order to protect children and assist children and families. These include:

1. Family Based Safety Services and
2. Substitute Care:
 - Temporary Managing Conservatorship
 - Permanent Managing Conservatorship
 - Kinship Care
 - Foster Care and Placement Services
 - Foster and Adoption Development
 - Transitional Living Services and Extended Foster Care

Family Based Safety Services includes Family Preservation and Family Reunification Services.

Family Preservation Services

Family Preservation, also referred to as Family Based Safety Services, are In Home services to help families alleviate crises that might lead to the out-of-home placement of children, maintain the safety of children in their own homes, support families in obtaining services, and promote parent competencies and behaviors that will enhance the parent's protective actions and abilities to promote child safety in the home and successfully nurture their children. Most children receiving Family Preservation services continue to live at home, but some may temporarily live elsewhere in a voluntary Parental Child Safety Placement (with relatives or close friends) until it is safe for them to return home. Family Based Safety Services are provided statewide, are child-safety centered and family focused, and involve children who are not in the legal conservatorship of DFPS. At all times, the safety and welfare of children are of paramount concern. If at any point staff determine the safety of a child can no longer be ensured, CPS implements an immediate plan for the child's safety, including court-ordered services or, if necessary, removal.

Family Reunification Services

CPS provides family reunification services to families immediately before and after a child returns home from an out-of-home placement, while DFPS still has legal conservatorship of the child. The purpose of reunification services is to provide support to the family and the child during the child's transition from having been previously removed and living elsewhere to once again living in his or her parent's home. All of the following criteria must be met for a family to be eligible for family reunification services:

- At least one child has been removed from the home.
- Issues that placed the child at risk appear to be sufficiently resolved for the child to return home safely.
- Parents are working to complete goals listed on the family service plan.
- Parents have a reasonably stable living arrangement.
- A target date has been set for the child to make his or her transition to the home, or the transition process has begun.

During Family Reunification Services, CPS caseworkers assess the family's strengths and needs related to child safety and develops a service plan with the family to identify the services needed to ensure the long-term safety and well-being of the child and family. Each family is provided with the family service plan that details the specific services discussed. Services may be provided to any member of the family responsible for the child's safety including parents, paramours, or caregivers. Additionally, services can be provided to the child to address his or her needs. Services available may include purchased client services (such as day care, counseling, parenting classes or homemaker services) or referral to community resources.

Substitute Care

If, during the course of an investigation or during the provision of Family Based Safety Services, DFPS determines it is not safe for a child to live with his or her own family, DFPS petitions the court to remove the child from the home. Although "DFPS" is the entity that is given conservatorship of the child and is referenced in the Texas Family Code, it is CPS conservatorship staff who provide the substitute care services (unless otherwise stated in this section).

There are two types of legal custody typically granted by the courts to DFPS: temporary and permanent managing conservatorship. Both are granted to DFPS as a result of a court hearing and written court order and continue until a judge issues another court order changing the legal status of the child. The legal status for children typically progresses from temporary managing conservatorship to permanent managing conservatorship. The judicial review process and responsibilities are guided by state and federal statute. In general, there are specific court reviews and hearings for children in DFPS conservatorship. Section 5500 of the CPS Handbook provides the timeline and definitions of court reviews and hearings.

Temporary Managing Conservatorship

An ex parte order may be granted either before or after removal, prior to the first noticed hearing, in the event of circumstances requiring emergency involuntary removal of a child from the parent or caretaker. In all cases, children enter conservatorship when DFPS is awarded temporary managing conservatorship. When a child is in temporary managing conservatorship of DFPS, a final order must be determined within 12 months, although statute allows for a six month extension.

When courts put a child in the temporary managing conservatorship of the agency, CPS evaluates the family's situation and the parents' ability to care for the children. The family and CPS then have up to 12 months to resolve the case. During this time, substitute care staff must find the best placement for that child while also helping to address issues impacting the child's safety within the family as well as helping to resolve the issues that resulted in the child's removal. Services may include kinship assessments and home studies, behavioral health assessments, therapeutic services for children and families, parenting classes, substance abuse counseling, substance abuse testing, and more.

Permanent Managing Conservatorship

Permanent managing conservatorship is considered one type of final order. Other final orders can include dismissal of conservatorship (occurs with reunification or when a child enters adulthood), transfer of permanent managing conservatorship to another (such as a relative), or (if termination of parental rights has already occurred) adoption. If the final order appoints DFPS as the permanent managing conservator, permanency review hearings are held as required by statute. The purpose of a permanency review hearing is to review the legal status, consider whether DFPS has taken actions to help achieve permanency for the child, review the appropriate placement, and review other information central to the child's safety, permanency and well-being. CPS substitute care staff participate in the hearings, providing required information to the judge and other parties as required in statute.

"Positive Permanency" is achieved when one of the following occur:

- The child is reunified with a parent.
- The child is adopted.
- Custody is transferred to kin or other adult.

During the time a child is in the conservatorship of DFPS, CPS staff rely on the substitute care setting best suited to a particular child's needs. This can include placement in kinship care, foster care, residential care facilities, adoptive homes, or settings that help the youth transition to independent living.

The goals of substitute care are to ensure that children are protected and receive the care they need to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Substitute care is a temporary living arrangement; it provides for social and remedial services appropriate to each child's unique needs and makes reasonable efforts to reunite children with their families by assessing circumstances specific to each child and family. CPS develops and implements a time-limited, reunification service plan to change the conditions that have placed the child at risk and prepare the child and the family for the child's return home or to find alternative permanent placements for children who cannot safely go home.

When a child cannot safely return home, CPS may recommend to the court that the parent-child relationship be terminated and the children be placed with another permanent family or caregiver. The parental rights of both parents must be relinquished or terminated before a child is legally free for adoption. If the court does not terminate the parental rights of a child but it is unsafe for the child to return home, DFPS or a kinship family may be named permanent managing conservator of the child. If DFPS is named permanent managing conservator, the child remains in foster care while DFPS continues to work towards achievement of positive permanency for the child.

CPS staff provide important services to children and their families. The services provided during the substitute care stage include:

Kinship Care Services

Kinship care occurs when relatives or other fictive kin care for a child who cannot live safely with a parent. Kinship care is the preferred option for children in DFPS

conservatorship. Kinship caregivers meet children's need for safety while preserving connections to family, community, and culture. Children in kinship placements experience less trauma, have shorter stays in substitute care, fewer placement disruptions, and better outcomes compared with children in unrelated foster care. Kinship care services are provided by CPS Kinship Development Workers. They provide kinship caregivers with training, access to day care services when needed, case management, resources and financial assistance. Financial assistance is available to eligible kinship caregivers to help provide for the basic needs of the child in their home.

DFPS uses state and federal funding to administer the Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Assistance Program which provides eligible kinship caregivers with a daily kinship reimbursement and, if the child exits care to permanent placement with a kinship caregiver, the Post Permanent Managing Conservatorship Payment.

- The Kinship Reimbursement Payment is a monthly payment made to the kinship caregiver on behalf of the child placed in the home and may not exceed one half of the daily rate paid to foster caregivers of a child. (The Kinship reimbursement rate is \$11.55 daily per child, during this reporting period). These monthly reimbursement payments are time-limited and may be paid for up to twelve months. In rare circumstances, if DFPS determines there is good cause for an exception, payments may be made for an additional six months. Eligibility criteria exist for this payment, including a requirement that the kinship caregiver not be receiving foster care payments concurrently (be verified as a foster parent).
- A kinship caregivers may also qualify for an annual Post Permanent Managing Conservatorship Payment, reimbursement of up to \$500 per child for child-related expenses to an unverified kinship caregiver that received permanent managing conservatorship of the child, if the expenses meet eligibility requirements and the kinship caregiver is eligible. The caregiver receives the annual reimbursement on the anniversary of the date he or she received permanent managing conservatorship. If the kinship caregiver qualifies, the caregiver may request the \$500 annual reimbursement for up to the three years immediately following the award of permanent managing conservatorship, or until the child reaches age 18, whichever comes first.

Kinship caregivers are encouraged to become verified foster parents in order to obtain maximum support to sustain the placement and prepare for possible permanent care of the child, if needed. The benefits for the kinship caregiver who becomes verified as a foster parent and cares for their kin child are: training, monthly payments at the foster care daily rate, and the ability to qualify for Permanency Care Assistance, described below.

Foster Care Services

Foster parents provide children with a safe, nurturing environment and receive a daily reimbursement for the costs of caring for children. CPS substitute care staff and foster

parents arrange all educational, medical, dental, and therapeutic services needed by the child. CPS provides services to the biological parents until the family is reunited or the courts approve another permanent living arrangement for the children. The court has ongoing oversight while a child is in foster care and will ask CPS to place the child temporarily in a foster care setting such as a:

- Foster home verified by a licensed child-placing agency
- General residential operation licensed by DFPS
- Facility under the regulatory authority of another state agency.

Foster and Adoptive Home Development Services

CPS and private child-placing agencies recruit and verify foster homes and approve adoptive families to help ensure there are enough foster and adoptive homes for children in DFPS conservatorship. CPS staff and foster parents work as a team to develop and find the best permanent home possible for children in substitute care. Foster parents may also become approved as an adoptive home. Each region in CPS holds a license issued by Residential Child-Care Licensing to operate as a child-placing agency. As a child-placing agency, CPS adheres to the same minimum standards and is monitored in the same way as any other child-placing agency. According to the 2018 Data Book, there were 11,906 children placed in CPA foster homes and 1,516 children placed in DFPS foster homes. DFPS adoptive families willing to accept placement of children not legally free for adoption, but whose permanency plan is adoption, are also required to meet foster home minimum standards and be verified as a foster home.

Transitional Living Services

Although CPS tries to find a permanent home for every child, sometimes that is not possible. For older youth in Foster Care, substitute care staff inform youth about the Transitional Living Services program, described more fully in the Chafee and ETV section of this report, including the Preparation for Adult Living program, the Education and Training Voucher program, and the college tuition and fee waiver. These services help youth prepare to transition to adulthood successfully. The Preparation for Adult Living program ensures that DFPS foster youth and those aging out of care receive information, resources, supports, and access to community connections they need to become self-sufficient adults. Supportive services and benefits are provided to eligible youth starting at age 14 and continue until age 21, and specifically ETV benefits can continue until age 23. In addition, independent living assessments are completed starting at age 14 for youth in permanent managing conservatorship and for those in temporary managing conservatorship starting at age 16. These assessments are annually updated to determine what independent living skills the youth learned during the preceding year. More information about Transitional Living Services is available to youth and the general public at the Texas Youth Connection website: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txyouth/Default.asp>.

- Experiential Life Skills Training for Youth 14 and Older. Foster parents and other childcare or residential providers are required to include training in independent

living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, use of public transportation, money management, and basic household tasks for youth ages 14 and older. Providers have access to resource guides and other training information at the [DFPS Residential Contracts](#) website. The youth's experiential learning while in care and Preparation for Adult Living activities, complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's service and transition plan. Other activities and events for foster youth include an annual experiential camp, a statewide teen conference- and college conferences, aging-out seminars, regional conferences and opportunities to serve on regional youth leadership councils where youth voices can be heard when it comes to DFPS policy and practice.

- Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program. The PAL Program helps older youth in foster care prepare for their departure and transition from DFPS care and support. Supportive services and benefits are provided to eligible youth starting at age 14 and 15 for youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS to complete an independent living skills assessment up to age 21. PAL is funded by the federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, state general revenue funds and community match (20 percent). The program includes the PAL Independent Living Skills Assessment and Life Skills Training in the following core areas:
 - Health and safety.
 - Housing and transportation.
 - Job readiness.
 - Financial management.
 - Life decisions and responsibility.
 - Personal and social relationships.

Extended Foster Care

A young adult who ages out of conservatorship at age 18 can stay for Extended Foster Care, provided the young adult has signed a voluntary extended foster care agreement, there is an available placement, and the young adult meets one of the following eligibility requirements: The young adult can stay up to the end of the month of their:

22nd birthday if:

- regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (General Education Development); or

21st birthday if:

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester); or
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment; or
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

Services for young adults participating in the Extended Foster Care program include: placement; monthly casework; continued work on Transition Plan goals; Circles of Support; access to the college tuition and fee waiver program; access to Education and Training Voucher funds; and access to PAL classes and staff for assistance with transitional living services. With the exception of After Care Room and Board and the Transitional Living Allowance financial assistance, young adults continue to receive other Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services. Caseworkers and providers ensure that young adults are aware of and have access to all services and benefits needed to transition to self-sufficiency that they are eligible for.

While in Extended Foster Care, the court continues jurisdiction, not legal custody (managing conservatorship in Texas). This allows the court to keep the young adult's case open and continue permanency hearings every six months to review progress on transition plan goals and services.

Supervised Independent Living Placement Program

With the enactment of the federal Fostering Connections Act of 2008, Texas developed a Supervised Independent Living placement program with contracted providers. Young adults are able to live in age appropriate, non-traditional foster care settings that are regulated by contract. These settings can include apartments, shared housing, college and non-college dorms, and host homes. As of March 2019, DFPS has thirteen contracted providers in eight regions.

Trial Independence Period

The federal Fostering Connections Act of 2008 also allowed young adults to have a trial independence period after leaving care that would allow them to return for Extended Foster Care if needed and resume their foster care eligibility. As a result, statute was amended regarding extended court jurisdiction for young adults turning 18 years in DFPS conservatorship to allow for the six month trial independence period that could be increased to twelve months, if court ordered. During this period, the young adult can still contact their former caseworker for limited assistance, if needed. They can also contact their PAL staff for transitional living services. In Texas, the court jurisdiction continues during the trial independence period and issues concerning transitional living services can be presented to the court if needed.

Return for Extended Foster Care

Texas offers the ability to return for Extended Foster Care even after the trial independence period ends until turning 21 in order for a young adult to take advantage of any of the options allowed under the Extended Foster Care program. The PAL staff pre-screen young adults who want to return for Extended Foster Care.

Other CPS Services

Family Group Decision-Making

Family Group Decision-Making describes a variety of practices to work with and engage children, youth, and families involved with the child welfare system in safety and service

planning and decision-making. Through Family Group Decision-Making, the unique strengths, needs, and resources of children, youth, and families are identified and used to develop individualized plans to ensure the safety, protection, and well-being of children. This process encourages families to utilize and enhance their family connections, to find security and a sense of belonging within their own families, and to take responsibility to care for and provide a sense of identity for their children. There are a variety of Family Group Decision-Making models used, including:

- *Family Team Meetings* are a pre-removal, quick response to child safety concerns. Family Team Meetings are used to achieve positive outcomes for children in the earliest stages of DFPS involvement (during Investigation or FBSS) and strengthen family connections by engaging family, community members, and other caregivers in critical decisions related to child protection, safety, placement and permanency. All participants strive for a consensus when deciding how to ensure child safety.
- *Family Group Conferences* are used when a family is participating in CPS, whether the child remains in the parent's home (Family-Based Safety Services) or resides outside the family home (Conservatorship) and encourages families to join with relatives, friends, and community supports to organize resources and develop plans to meet long-term child needs for on-going safety, permanency, and well-being.
- *Circle of Support* conferences are used with youth in DFPS conservatorship and are a youth-driven forum for developing and refining transition plans for older youth who are moving from substitute care to adulthood as well as identifying barriers to permanency, exploring permanency options, and connecting youth to caring/supportive adults. It includes broad participation of the youth's support network, such as substitute caregivers, teachers, siblings, pastors, other relatives, and may also include the youth's biological parents. Circles of Support are required for youth 16 years and older (though they may begin as early as 14 years).

Placement Stability-Regional Placement Team

In order to enhance placement stability, the function of placement was centralized throughout the state. All regions in the state have a Regional Placement Team consisting of a Residential Treatment Placement Coordinator, a Centralized Placement Unit Coordinator, and a Developmental Disability Specialist. The Regional Placement Teams were established to facilitate and expedite foster care placements, while ensuring placements meet best practice, policy, and minimum standards. The Regional Placement Team considers the individual needs of each child to identify placement options that will best meet those needs to ensure safety and well-being, as well as placement stability.

The Regional Placement Teams exchange information about placement options for youth who present with challenging behaviors, as well as emotional, psychological or medical issues. The Placement Team is well versed in identifying regional resource needs and barriers to the placement process, and can quickly address and eliminate issues that may impede children from being placed or maintained in appropriate residential settings.

The Regional Placement Team currently utilizes a Child Placement Vacancy Database to search for an appropriate home. DFPS is developing a new application called the Child Placement Portal (CPP) which will replace the Child Placement Vacancy Database in November or December 2019. Residential providers will enter vacancy data into the database daily, including information about foster homes, general residential operations, and residential treatment centers. The Regional Placement Team will utilize the CPP for all placement searches matching children and their specific needs against provider vacancy and services they provide to help locate and choose the most appropriate placements to meet the individual needs of children in DFPS conservatorship.

Medical Services

DFPS ensures medical, behavioral and dental health needs are met for children in DFPS conservatorship. The CPS Medical Services division works in concert with CPS substitute care staff to ensure that each child in substitute care receives accessible, coordinated, comprehensive, and continuous health care. Medical Services staff include a Medical Director, Well-Being Specialists, Regional Nurse Consultants and Medical Services Program Specialists. Most children and youth in DFPS conservatorship receive medical and dental care through Texas Medicaid. Healthcare services are more fully discussed in the Health care Oversight and Coordination section of this report.

STAR Health is the statewide Medicaid managed care plan for children and youth in foster care and young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. STAR Health provides an integrated medical home where each foster care child has access to Primary Care Providers, regular checkups, medical, behavioral health, dental, vision, and pharmacy services. STAR Health also offers Service Management services to help members understand benefits, get help with appointments, find transportation assistance and identify local community resources, and Training Programs that provide clinical expertise and program information for families, caregivers, caseworkers and other child advocates. DFPS collaborates with the Health and Human Services and STAR Health for oversight and coordination of health care services for children through monthly joint team meetings. STAR Health participates with CPS in the Trauma Informed Care initiative and provides Trauma Informed Care training to CPS staff and other foster care stakeholders.

Behavioral Health Services

A newly created division has program specialists assisting CPS staff with issues related to mental health and substance use issues. The division also is responsible for the policy, protocol, and technical assistance related to the use of the CANS assessment tool.

Permanency Care Assistance

Permanency Care Assistance is a resource for children unable to return home or be adopted, who would otherwise likely remain in foster care. The Fostering Connections Act of 2008 made possible additional permanent placement options for many children in the managing conservatorship of CPS through verification of relative caregiver to become foster parents. The federal Strengthening Families Act of 2014, allows for the preservation of a child's eligibility for Permanency Care Assistance payments if a Permanency Care Assistance-Successor (a person appointed to permanently care for the child in the event

that the original kinship caregiver is no longer able) replaces the original kinship caregiver as the child's legal guardian.

The ultimate goal of the Permanency Care Assistance Program is to help children achieve successful permanency. Eligible relative or kinship caregivers who are verified as foster parents and foster the child for six consecutive months prior to being awarded Permanent Managing Conservatorship are eligible to receive Permanency Care Assistance funding until the child reaches adulthood. The total number of children who have exited to permanency with a relative receiving Permanency Care Assistance benefits since the program began (October 2010 through end of FY 2018) is 5091 children.

Recruitment Services

Recruitment of foster and adoptive homes is a continuous process and is described more fully in Statistical and Supporting Information chapter. It includes:

The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange, a tool used to find adoptive homes for children available for adoption and not in an intended to be permanent placement. Known in Texas as TARE, the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange is a web-based referral and photo listing application to provide information on children waiting for adoption. It was established so that children available for adoption and families who wish to adopt them can be brought together. The web-based application allows interested families to register with the website. It is a quick and easy way for adoptive families in Texas and throughout the United States to tell CPS about their adoption preferences and interest in adopting Texas children. CPS substitute care staff may consider these families for adoption of children who may or may not yet be photo listed on the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange. The DFPS "Why Not Me" campaign directs the public to the TARE website using a redirected URL of www.adoptchildren.org. DFPS uses this campaign featuring TV and radio ads designed to inspire Texans to adopt older and minority children. CPS also participates with other adoption organizations during national recruitment campaigns and promotes children registered on the TARE on organizational websites, including the AdoptUSKids, A Family For Every Child, Children Awaiting Parents, Adoption.com, and Adoption.net.

Adoption Assistance

Monthly adoption assistance payments and Medicaid coverage are provided on behalf of children who qualify as special needs and would not be adopted in a timely fashion without assistance. In addition to the monthly subsidy, non-recurring payments are provided after consummation of the adoption to reimburse families up to \$1,200 for adoption related expenses. Those expenses include home study costs, attorney fees, court costs and travel expenses related to the placement. Inter-country adoption of special needs children qualify for the non-recurring payment when the parents have an adoption assistance agreement with DFPS before legal completion of the adoption.

DFPS also provides Enhanced Adoption Assistance, which increases the monthly adoption assistance DFPS pays for families who are adopting a child who would otherwise remain in foster care through age 18. The maximum amount of enhanced assistance is the amount that DFPS would pay foster parents for care of a child based on

that specific child's foster care service level needs. The purpose of Enhanced Adoption Assistance is to create an incentive for increasing adoptions of children with such pervasive and intensive needs that they are not expected to exit state care.

As allowed by the federal Fostering Connections Act of 2008, the Texas Legislature extended adoption benefits to encourage adoption of older youth. Extended adoption benefits were added in October 2010 for youth who were 16 or older when the adoption agreement was signed. For families adopting older youth, extended benefits are available until the young adult is 21.

Post-Adoption Services

Post-adoption services support adoptive families by helping with the periodic and ongoing adjustments to adoption, helping the child cope with a background of abuse, and avoiding permanent or long-term removal of children from the adoptive family setting. CPS supports adoption of special needs children through the adoption assistance program.

CPS contracts with service providers throughout Texas to provide post-adoption services. Currently, there are four primary providers and some providers serve more than one region. Available services include information and referral, casework services and service planning, parent groups, parenting programs, counseling services, intermittent alternate care, limited residential placement services in critical need situations, and crisis intervention. Availability of these services is dependent on funding and the individual child and family situation.

Disproportionality Work

The purpose of the Disproportionality Work is to identify systemic factors that impact racial and ethnic disparities and implement system improvements that will reduce disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for children and their families of color within the child welfare system. In addition to examining disproportionate rates of children entering the child welfare system, equity with which all children of color and their families receive access to available services and the disparate outcomes for children of color once they are engaged in the child welfare system are addressed. This promotes equity and improves outcomes for all children and families in Texas.

By statute, DFPS is required to annually report to the Governor and legislative leadership the number of children removed from their homes by DFPS and the number of children investigated, by racial and ethnic group, in the seven largest urban regions of the state during the preceding fiscal year. The first report was submitted in October 2006 and has been submitted annually thereafter.

DFPS Support Functions

In addition to the three main program areas of investigation, family based safety services, and substitute care, there are other areas within DFPS that help facilitate the casework involving children and families.

Purchased Client Services

Purchased Client Services is a division within DFPS that assists in purchasing direct services through contracts for children and families served by CPS. Purchased Client Services plans for services, assists with service procurement, manages and monitors contracts, and resolves contracting issues. Purchased Client Services monitors contractor performance based on risk and document monitoring activity in the Statewide Monitoring Plan. Contract monitoring may include on-site visits, desk reviews, and billing reviews. Fiscal monitoring includes a review of the contractor's financial operations, which may include a review of internal controls for program funds in accordance with state and federal requirements, an examination of principles, laws and regulations, and a determination of whether costs are reasonable and necessary to achieve program objectives. Programmatic monitoring includes a review of a contractor's service delivery system to determine if it is consistent with contract requirements, including the quality and effectiveness of programs.

Residential Contracts

The Residential Contracts division manages contracts with 24-hour residential child-care facilities that provide substitute care to children in DFPS conservatorship. Through these contracts, DFPS establishes the qualifications, standards, services, expectations, and outcomes for 24-hour child-care facilities and child-placing agencies across the state. Residential contracts work with CPS staff, Residential Child Care Licensing, and a third-party service level system contractor to ensure compliance and oversight. Residential contract managers are regionally based staff and are responsible for assessing, monitoring, and managing residential contracts. Residential contract managers serve as liaisons between CPS field staff and providers.

Regional Contracts

The Regional Contracts division manages purchased client services contracts that impact multiple regions or are statewide. DFPS enters into regional contracts to provide clients additional protective services and to support and expand DFPS's capacity to serve the community. Regional contract staff manage several types of contracts for CPS direct and support services. Examples of direct services contracts include: post-adoption services, evaluation and treatment services, substance abuse and treatment services, Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) services, and adoption services. DFPS enters into Support Services contracts to improve the effectiveness of direct client services and to support organizations that provide indirect assistance to clients. Examples of support services contracts include contracts with: foster parent associations, and eligible councils and organizations who are volunteers; Title IV-E county child welfare and legal services; and burial services for deceased children in the managing conservatorship of DFPS. These agreements are contracts, interlocal agreements, memoranda of agreement, or interagency agreements with other state agencies.

Contract Performance

Contract Performance is part of the Office of Data and Systems Improvement (DSI). The DSI mission is to build an infrastructure and environment that ensures effective coordination, communication and consistency across the agency around data reporting

and how it's used in understanding and improving performance and outcomes. Contract Performance helps fulfill that mission by:

- Crafting meaningful metrics to evaluate contractor performance
- Tracking and analyzing metrics
- Integrating and interpreting the metrics and other analyses to provide actionable information on contractor performance
- Supporting contract managers in working with contractors to improve the quality of contracted services

Continuous Quality Improvement

There are support functions in place designed to review the quality of DFPS casework across all three major program areas (investigations, family based safety services, and substitute care) and give feedback to the regions based on the case reviews. Continuous Quality Improvement is more fully described in the Program Support/Quality Assurance chapter.

Federal and Program Improvement Review Division

The Division of Federal and Program Improvement Review consists of Quality Assurance Specialists in three teams responsible for live and closed case reviews. One team uses a structured case review process modelled after the federal Child and Family Services Review. Investigation, Alternative Response, FBSS, and Conservatorship stages are randomly selected and 100 cases are reviewed every quarter. Each case is debriefed with staff and regional and statewide data and trend reports are produced. CPS disseminates the reports to all applicable staff and posts them on the DFPS employee website. These reviews and feedback allow regional staff to learn about how casework actions affect outcomes to children and families.

To improve safety in Family Based Safety Services, CPS targets case review resources toward cases that data show are at high risk of serious recidivism. Using a structured reading tool, a team of reviewers conduct qualitative reviews on high risk Family Based Safety Services cases and help insure identification of unaddressed safety issues. Systems Improvement Division staff identify cases to review and help analyze patterns or trends to inform any needed training.

A third team conducts weekly Live Reads for cases with at least one child in a new Parental Child Safety Placement under age 6. The team also conducts monthly Closed Case Reads on a random sample of cases closed with a child remaining in the Parental Child Safety Placement. In addition to qualitative reviews, the PCSP team continue to contact caregivers of children who remained in a PCSP at case closure at 6 and 12 months post-closure. This is done as a support for the caregiver and a safety check for the child.

Organizational Effectiveness

The DFPS Organizational Effectiveness Team utilizes American Public Human Services Association's Model (Define, Assess, Plan, Implement, and Monitor) and tools to help drive both rapid and long-term improvements to the performance and performance capacity in all regions. This organizational effectiveness facilitation model is a means to

make continuous improvement and involves a family-centered practice approach to the "way of doing business." The Organizational Effectiveness team provides continuous quality improvement support services to all DFPS programs and divisions to promote successful outcomes for children, adults, and families. Through a series of face-to-face meetings, Organizational Effectiveness facilitators help a group drill down to the root causes of complex problems and then assist in the development and implementation of strategies to solve those problems.

Regional Systems Improvement Division

Regional Systems Improvement is part of the DFPS Office of Data and Systems Improvement. The Data and Systems Improvement mission is to build an infrastructure and environment that ensures effective coordination, communication and consistency across the agency around data reporting and how it's used in understanding and improving performance and outcomes. Regional Systems Improvement staff help fulfill that mission by working directly with regional leadership to embed continuous quality improvement within regional operations. Regional Systems Improvement Specialists take the "what" of data universe, translate it into a useable format, help regional leaders determine "why" issues are occurring, and develop action plans that address "how" to improve.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

ii. Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries

► *Describe the activities that the state plans to take over the next five years to support children adopted from other countries, including the provision of adoption and post-adoption supports.*

Please refer to Part 2; Section 3i for the Services for Children Adopted from other Countries in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

iii. Services for Children Under the Age of Five

► *Describe the activities the state plans to undertake over the next five years to reduce the length of time young children under the age of five are in foster care without a permanent family, and to address the developmental needs of all vulnerable children under five years of age.*

Please refer to Part 2; Section 4ii for the Services for Children Under the Age of Five in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Requirements

iv. Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths

► *A description of the steps the state is taking to compile complete and accurate information on child maltreatment deaths to be reported to NCANDS, including gathering relevant information on the deaths from the relevant organizations in the state including entities such as state vital statistics department, child death review teams, law enforcement agencies, or offices of medical examiners, or coroners; and*

► *A description of the steps the state is taking to develop and implement a comprehensive, statewide plan to prevent child maltreatment fatalities that involves and engages relevant public and private agency partners, including those in public health, law enforcement, and the courts. Provide a copy or link to any comprehensive plan that has been developed.*

Texas ensures information regarding child fatalities is publicly available upon request, see Texas Family Code §261.203. The process for creating the reports has been automated to the greatest extent possible. DFPS provides the public information on Near Fatalities in much the same manner as information is provided on abuse/neglect related fatalities. Staff review the IMPACT information for the case and complete a form using summary information. The form is then reviewed by the Open Government Attorney to ensure that only releasable information is included. The information can then be provided to the public upon request.

The source of information used for tracking and reporting child maltreatment fatalities is the "reason for death" field contained in the DFPS IMPACT system. The field indicates whether or not the fatality was related to abuse or neglect and whether or not CPS had been previously involved with the child/family.

DFPS uses information gathered by law enforcement and medical examiner's offices to reach dispositions in the child fatalities investigated by DFPS. Fields have been added in IMPACT to document preliminary or final medical examiner findings regarding cause and manner of death. Medical Examiner finding information is not transmitted to the federal National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System as it does not currently have a field to receive this information. Preliminary or final medical examiner findings regarding cause and manner of death reporting is considered as part of the decision-making process for the CPS Reason for Death.

DFPS is the primary agency required by law to investigate and report on child maltreatment fatalities in Texas when the perpetrator is a person responsible for the care of the child. Information from the state's vital statistics department, child death review teams, law enforcement agencies and medical examiner's offices is often used to make

reports to DFPS that initiate an investigation into suspected abuse or neglect that may have led to a child fatality. DFPS uses information gathered by law enforcement and medical examiner's offices to reach dispositions in the child fatalities investigated by DFPS. Other agencies, however, have different criteria for assessing and evaluating causes of death that may not be consistent with the child abuse/neglect definitions in the Texas Family Code and/or may not be interpreted or applied in the same manner as with DFPS. DFPS produces an annual report regarding child fatalities investigated for suspected abuse and neglect.

The FY2017 Child Maltreatment Fatalities and Near Fatalities Annual Report was published on March 1, 2018 and is available on the DFPS public website at the following location:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/PEI/documents/2018/2018-03-01-Child_Fatality_Annual_Report-FY2017.pdf.

As contained within the report published in March 2018, the general findings include:

Child Population and Reports of Child Abuse and Neglect	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
Child Population of Texas	6,865,824	6,952,177	6,996,352	7,121,499	7,266,760	7,311,923	7,407,636	7,500,272
Number of Intakes Assigned for Investigation or Alternative Response by CPS	231,532	222,541	206,200	194,803	215,512	232,159	238,591	238,600
Number of Investigated Child Fatalities	1024	973	882	804	797	739	796	807
Number of fatalities where abuse/neglect was confirmed	227	231	212	156	151	171	222	172
Child Fatality Rate per 100,000 Children	3.31	3.32	3.03	2.19	2.10	2.34	2.99	2.29
National Rate for Equivalent Federal Fiscal Year	2.10	2.10	2.18	2.09	2.14	2.26	2.36	***

SOURCE: DATA FROM US CENSUS BUREAU; TEXAS STATE DATA CENTER; DFPS DATA BOOKS FY2010-FY 2017; DFPS DATA WAREHOUSE REPORT FT_06; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES. POPULATION DATA

SOURCE: POPULATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS PROGRAM, TEXAS STATE DATA CENTER, OFFICE OF THE STATE DEMOGRAPHER AND THE INSTITUTE FOR DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO. CURRENT POPULATION ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS DATA AS OF DECEMBER 2017.

*** Child Maltreatment 2017 is scheduled to be released in January/February 2019.

DFPS has partnered with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to analyze and link DFPS-Child Fatality Review Data (DFPS-CFR) with other data sources including birth records, death records, and community-level risk indicators (for example, concentration of poverty, education levels, or mobility). The focus of these analyses is three-fold:

- (1) to understand the prevalence of abuse and neglect fatalities within the population;
- (2) to identify communities that are high risk for specific types of abuse and neglect fatalities; and
- (3) to explore which risk factors in the family are associated with abuse and neglect.

The collaboration between DFPS and DSHS aims to use these results to guide a strategic plan to coordinate support services between DSHS and DFPS. The ultimate goal of this plan is to reduce abuse and neglect fatalities by providing timely, coordinated, and evidence-based services to families and communities in need. By taking into consideration the entire population to understand, analyze, and build comprehensive strategies to target child abuse and neglect fatalities, DFPS and DSHS can leverage resources, programs, and community collaborations to target specific issues and geographical areas based on their individual needs.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

v. Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

► *Identify and describe which populations are at the greatest risk of maltreatment, how the state identifies these populations and how services will be targeted to those populations over the next five years*

Please refer to Part 3 Section 3iii for Populations at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

vi. Monthly Caseworker Visits

► *Describe how the state plans to use the Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant over the next five years to improve the quality of caseworker visits, to continue to meet state and federal standards for caseworker visits, and to improve caseworker decision-making on the safety, permanency, and well-being of foster children, and to improve caseworker recruitment, retention and training.*

Please refer to Part 2; Section 7v for the Monthly Caseworker Visits in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

vii. Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments

► *In the 2020-2024 CFSP, states must describe:*

- The services the state expects to provide to children and families using the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds.
- The plan for timely expenditure of the funds within the 36 month expenditure period.

Please refer to Part 2; Section 3v for the Services Description Update for Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

viii. Adoption Savings

Adoption Savings

► *Describe the services the state expects to provide to children and families using the Adoption Savings over the next five years.*

The state expects to use Adoption Savings on Protective Day Care, Post Adoption Client Services, Client Services for Family Preservation, Foster Care Assistance Payments, Adoption Assistance Payments, Guardianship Assistance Services, and Prevention and Early Intervention Services such as Services to At-Risk Youth (STAR) and CYD (Community Youth Development). The state expects to provide Post-Permanency Purchased Services and Domestic Violence Services over the next five years

► *Provide an estimated timetable for spending unused savings calculated for previous years.*

Based on appropriated funds the agency spends anywhere from 40% to 75% of the savings earned each year including unused savings from previous

► *Discuss any challenges in accessing and spending the funds year.*

Any challenges our Agency has are attributable to the non-supplementation requirement as our appropriations grow each Fiscal Year. DFPS has had no difficulties expending these funds in a timely manner previously and does not foresee any future changes, issues or challenges.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

5. Consultation and Coordination Between the States and Tribes

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

5. Consultation and Coordination between The States and Tribes

► *In the 2020-2024 CFSP, states must address the following:*

- *Describe the process used to gather input from tribes for the development of the 2020- 2024 CFSP, including the steps taken by the state to reach out to all federally recognized tribes in the state. Provide specific information on the name of tribes and tribal representatives with whom the state has consulted.*
- *Provide a description on the arrangements made with tribes as to who is responsible for providing the child welfare services and protections for tribal children.*
- *Provide a description, developed after consultation with tribes, of the specific measures taken by the state to comply with ICWA.*

Please refer to Part 2; Section 5 for the Consultation and Coordination Between the States and Tribes in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement; and to Part 3; Section 6 for the Chafee and Foster Care Program in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.

► *In the 2020-2024 CFSP, states must address the following:*

- *Provide information regarding discussions with Indian tribes in the state specifically as it relates to the Chafee program.*

Please refer to Part 3; Section 6 for the Chafee and Foster Care Program in the 2015 – 2019 Final Report for the DFPS response to this requirement.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

I. Chafee Foster Care Program

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
ACYF-CB-PI-19-02

2015 – 2019 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Final Report & 2020 - 2024 CFSP Requirements

6. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)

i. Chafee (CFCIP)

► *Description of how the agency will administer the program that provides oversight to the programs or agencies that directly provide CFCIP services and supports.*

DFPS provides Chafee Foster Care Independence and state-paid program services and benefits on a statewide basis through its Transitional Living Services Program, which incorporates Preparation for Adult Living (PAL), Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), and other related services in support of young people starting at age 14 for some youth up to 22 years of age, and in some cases 23, who are currently or formerly in foster care, or transitioning out of care to a successful adulthood. In addition, a life skills assessment is provided to youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship at age 14 starting in FY19. Other services are provided as funding or resources are available to youth 14 and 15 years of age. Transitional Living Services are provided on a statewide basis by DFPS staff, contracted service providers, or through available community resources such as Transition Centers across Texas. Each DFPS region offers various Transitional Living Services and events to youth and young adults. This plan addresses the eight broad program purposes to Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. While DFPS is considering options to expand Chafee benefits as allowed by the Family First and Prevention Act, DFPS has not opted to make the change at this time.

DFPS uses objective criteria to determine eligibility for benefits and services which includes factual information such as age, legal status, the completion of training for the transitional living allowance, funding availability, and available resources. In addition, DFPS considers the individual needs of youth to ensure fair and equitable treatment. For example, all youth and young adults who meet the eligibility criteria for the Education and Training Voucher is awarded up to \$5000 per academic school year based on need.

DFPS uses data available on a national and state level to determine service needs as part of continuous quality improvement efforts. Data that is captured in the DFPS data system such as for the National Youth in Transition database collection is used to make this determination. For example, after a comparison of 21 year old survey responses from Cohort 1 (FY15) to Cohort 2 (FY18) it was determined there was improvement in most areas across the three year time span with the exception of homelessness. As a result, DFPS is working on ways to improve in this area. For example, DFPS is working on a Memorandum of Understanding template to provide the regions to assist with HUD voucher applications. In addition, regions provide information in their annual reports to state office outlining the type of services provided, the number of services provided, accomplishments, challenges, and collaborations. Data from these reports is provided throughout this Chafee plan. For example, the data for teen conferences and aging-out

seminars, in addition to youth evaluation results, are reviewed and discussed by regional staff and state office to determine if these type of services should be modified to ensure youth are receive needed services to prepare them for their successful transition to adult living. As a result of feedback and data, the aging-out seminar materials and process is being updated to ensure youth receive more experiential activities and to ensure more youth attend the seminars.

The general objective of the DFPS Transitional Living Services Program is to continue to implement a systemic and integrated approach in transition planning and services affecting youth beginning at age 14 in DFPS conservatorship that improves outcomes for youth and young adults. The program is without regard as to whether the youth is placed with a parent/guardian, was emancipated by a court order while in DFPS conservatorship, aged out of DFPS conservatorship (regardless of whether placed with a parent/guardian at the time they aged-out of care at 18), or is a young adult enrolled in the DFPS extended foster care program or exiting the DFPS extended foster care program.

The Transitional Living Services Program is comprehensive and includes:

- Experiential Life Skills Training
- Transition Planning and Circles of Support
- Permanency Planning for Older Youth
- Provision of personal documents for Youth at ages 16 and 18
- Youth Transition Portfolio
- Credit Reports for youth
- Driver license fee waivers
- Community Engagement and collaborations
- Youth Engagement and Youth Leadership Councils
- Employment Services for Youth and Young Adults with Special Needs
- Preparation for Adult Living Program
- Aging-Out Seminars at age 17
- Data collection for the National Youth in Transition Database
- Annual Higher Education Data Report of Foster Care Students
- Tuition and fee waivers
- Education and Training Voucher Program
- DFPS Scholarships
- Transition centers
- Collaborations with Colleges and Universities
- Partnerships with local Workforce Boards and Workforce Centers
- Extended Foster Care Program
- Supervised Independent Living Placement Options for Extended Foster Care
- Trial Independence Period and return capability for Extended Foster Care

- Former Foster Care Children Program (Medicaid Coverage) for Young Adults ages 18 through 25
- Information about temporary housing assistance between academic terms
- Texas Youth Connection -Instagram page and website

Four principles guide the DFPS Transitional Living Services Programs:

- Engage young people in all aspects of the work;
- Engage the community to build and strengthen community partnerships;
- Collaborate to improve systems, programs and services; and
- Collect and evaluate data, document what works and communicate the results.

1. **Support all youth who have experienced foster care at age 14 or older in their transition to adulthood through transitional services such as assistance in obtaining a high school diploma and post-secondary education, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training and opportunities to practice daily living skills (such as financial literacy training and driving instruction), substance abuse prevention, and preventative health activities (including smoking avoidance, nutrition education, and pregnancy prevention).**

Opportunities to Practice Daily Living Skills

Foster parents and other providers are required to include training in daily living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, nutrition education and cooking, use of public transportation when appropriate, financial literacy training to include money management, credit history, and balancing a checkbook, and performing basic household tasks for youth age 14 and older. If the youth has a source of income, the provider must assist the youth in establishing a savings account. Foster parents and caregivers must connect youth and young adults to community resources such as post-secondary education; employment opportunities; and vocational/technical school opportunities. The youth's opportunities to practice daily living skills while in foster care and the receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's service and transition plans. Foster parents receive training on normalcy from their Child Placing Agency to understand their role in allowing youth to participate in normalcy activities, such as going on outings with friends, going on dates, taking a driver's education course, participating in extracurricular activities, etc. Updates have been made to the FY2018 Residential Requirements Guide to strengthen the experiential life skills requirement and normalcy activity language and includes an updated link to the DFPS website of recently updated resources to aid foster care providers with access to web-based information about life skills and normalcy activities.

Transition Planning and Circles of Support

DFPS uses a personalized transition planning process that builds on a youth's strengths, assessments, supports, and current service planning needs. The transition plan is used to identify what supports or services are needed to accomplish goals for transitioning to a successful adulthood. It includes any "caring adults" who make up the youth's support system. The transition plan addresses housing, Medicaid, employment, education (secondary and post-secondary), mentoring opportunities, continuing support services, workforce supports and employment services as well as addresses immigration/citizenship needs, personal identification documents, and normalcy activities.

The transition plan is integrated into the child's plan of service and helps to ensure all youth are receiving the services they need to meet their unique needs. The Circle of Support and child's plan of service include dedicated sections on the youth's hopes and dreams, strengths, talents and abilities, fears, and concerns, educational, housing and employment goals, finances, physical and mental health including medications, and emotional well-being. Transition planning begins at age 14, with more detailed sections used starting at age 16.

The child's plan of service is a living document where progress is tracked as needed and at regular intervals and over time by the youth, their caring/supportive adults, and DFPS. All students receiving special education services in public schools begin transition planning at age 14, as directed by state and federal laws. DFPS, school staff and the student may collaborate in developing the student's unique transition plan. Sections of the transition plan address special needs for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities or immigration needs, and ensure all youth leave care with important personal documents they need, such as birth certificate, social security card, and state/personal identification cards. The transition plan information is accessible to the youth and those caring/supportive adults the youth chooses. The transition plan is a part of the child's plan of service and includes normalcy activities that the youth is currently participating in as well as any activities the youth would like to be involved in.

Circles of Support are youth-driven/focused meetings based on the Family Group Decision Making philosophy, and are offered to youth beginning at 16, though a Circle of Support can be held as early as 14 when needed. They enable youth to develop or update a transition plan for moving from care to successful adulthood and connecting with supportive and caring adults who can help the youth after the youth leaves care.

Circles of Support operate in all regions in the state and are facilitated meetings with participants that youth identify as "caring adults" who make up their support system. Circle of Support participants can be the youth's birth family members, substitute care providers, teachers, relatives, church members, mentors, and others. These participants come together to develop and review the youth's transition plan, including all Preparation for Adult Living life skills training components.

Each caring adult participant identifies a personal way to help support the youth's transition to successful adulthood and the youth's efforts to attain short-term and long-term goals toward self-sufficiency. The caring adult signs the transition plan to seal the agreement. If a youth declines to participate in a Circle of Support or the Circle of Support cannot be convened, plans for transitioning to successful adulthood are reviewed at a regularly scheduled review meeting of the child's plan of service. A Circle of Support is the preferred method for developing and reviewing the youth's child's plan of service for youth age 16 and up.

DFPS uses data to track what percentage of eligible youth have participated in a Circle of Support and gathers information to determine capacity for holding Circles of Support. This information is used to determine if adjustments need to be made to ensure that DFPS is providing Circles of Support to as many eligible youth as possible. DFPS is integrating the former and separate transition plan form into the child's plan of service with the next release of the DFPS electronic reporting and case recording system (IMPACT) which rolled out April FY19.

Permanency Planning for Older Youth

For youth 14 years and older in DFPS conservatorship or in voluntary extended foster care, DFPS uses Circles of Support for permanency planning whenever possible. This allows the youth to be an active participant in their permanency planning and aids in the preparation of the youth when they transition from care. In an effort to strengthen achieving permanency for this population, transition plans are modified to include discussing permanency options that could be explored prior to the youth turning age 18. Youth identify current connections to caring adults and any potential family or kinship relationships that they would like to explore for placement and permanency. In FFY17, the National Youth in Transition Database results from youth who took the survey at age 17 reflected 94% reported having a current connection to an adult.

The transition plan includes exploration of barriers to permanency and all possible permanency options. The DFPS goal is to achieve positive permanency for all youth in conservatorship, regardless of age. In order to achieve permanency, Case Planning and Concurrent Permanency Goals tools are used to identify the appropriate permanency goal for a youth and determine a course of action to achieve permanency.

Assessments of youth address specific behavioral, emotional, cultural, therapeutic, educational, physical, or medical issues/conditions that have been identified and would help clarify current needs, identify a plan of treatment, or rule out the need for further services. In some cases a psychological or psychiatric evaluation might be required for a placement or might be requested by the courts. Beginning with youth removed on or after September 2016, all youth have a CANS assessment conducted upon entering DFPS foster care and annually thereafter.

Personal Documents for Youth ages 16 and 18

Youth who are about to turn age 16 and 18 must be provided copies and originals (or certified copies in place of the original) of personal documents to assist them in gaining employment, enrolling in school, leasing an apartment, opening a bank account, setting up utility services, getting a driver's license and accessing other resources. A youth in DFPS conservatorship on or before the date the youth turns age 16 must be provided with a copy or original document of a:

- Birth certificate;
- Social Security card or replacement Social Security card, as appropriate; and
- Personal identification card issued by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

A youth who is discharged from DFPS foster care and is age 18 or legally emancipated will receive either a copy or original personal documents (if not already provided) and other information. These include:

- A birth certificate;
- A Social Security card or a replacement Social Security card;
- A personal state identification card issued by DPS;
- Immunization records;
- Information contained in the youth's Health Passport;
- Proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate;
- Medical Power of Attorney Information-Forms 2559 A and B
- "Almost 18" Letter; and
- Youth Transition Portfolio

Youth Transition Portfolio

As part of a youth's transition out of care at age 18, DFPS ensures that the youth is provided with a Youth Transition Portfolio at least 90 days before the youth turns 18. The Youth Transition Portfolio includes personal documents, education records, credit reports, Health Passport records, an updated version of the youth's transition plan (child's plan of service) document, and other information.

Former youth that lose or misplace their personal identification documents can request copies of these documents, which are stored in a separate section from the case records for easy accessibility by the Records Management Group. Caseworkers send personal documents through a separate system to be stored and made available to youth at least 30 days before leaving care. Upon request by the young adult, these records will be sent securely through an encrypted email to the young adult's personal email, mailed, or faxed to them. Instructions are provided to the young adults regarding email server security

access to encrypted documents. The Records Management Group developed a form that young adults can submit indicating which personal documents they are requesting copies of. This information is posted in the Legal/Records section on the Texas Youth Connection website and shared with the Preparation for Adult Living staff, CPS caseworkers, providers, and other stakeholders.

Credit Reports

Youth 14 to age 18 years are notified by caseworkers that their consumer credit report is run annually until discharged from DFPS care. In September 2018, DFPS compiled personal youth data from the DFPS IMPACT system by each region. This data was later formatted to required specifications and used to request batch files of consumer credit reports from each of the credit reporting agencies. Individual reports may be requested by the caseworker if there is suspicion of fraudulent credit activity, by a court order, or if the youth is age 17 or older and recently came into the conservatorship of DFPS. In addition to ensuring the youth is notified that a credit report has been run, the caseworker is also required to document this information in the case files, explain the credit report, and convey the importance of maintaining good credit and correcting any inaccuracies in the report. Agreements with the three credit reporting agencies allow credit reports to be run for youth who are still in the conservatorship of DFPS. Young adults in extended foster care are provided with instructions, information, and assistance on how to access their own credit reports.

For the current FY19, DFPS has processed credit report files with Equifax, Transunion, and Experian for eight regions and this totaled 4,151 youth ages 14 up to 17 1/2. The batch files processed with all three agencies totaled 12,453 files. There were 238 youth whose files contained credit discrepancies or 5.73% of total files run. DFPS has a plan to complete processing for youth in the remaining regions by April 2019. Requests to clear credit files with discrepancies were initiated and are on-going. Each agency requires specific documents (birth certificate, social security card, and custody orders) be submitted for each report with a discrepancy. Providing a report ensures youth are protected from fraudulent and inaccurate information on their credit reports. A consumer credit report exists only if the youth has credit activity, with a credit account opened using the youth's Social Security number. General inquiries or address changes do not create a credit history.

Youth should understand how to interpret a consumer credit report and the importance of maintaining accurate information in their consumer credit report. Youth who participate in Preparation for Adult Living Life Skills Training classes attend a Financial Management class and learn about credit, its importance, and how to interpret credit reports. CPS continues to seek video training resources for both caseworkers and youth that will easily explain how to read and interpret credit reports. As resources are located, the information is posted on the Texas Youth Connection website.

Driver License and Texas Identification Fee Waivers

Driver license and Texas Identification fees are waived for youth in DFPS conservatorship and young adults, 18 up to 21 who reside in a paid foster care placement through funds collected via donation and made available for that purpose, as long as funds are available. When funds are no longer available, DFPS resources are used for that purpose.

Community Engagement

DFPS Preparation for Adult Living program staff and contractors statewide in each of the regions collaborate with community organizations to help youth make the transition to self-sufficiency. DFPS regions contract or partner with community entities to provide transitional living and Preparation for Adult Living services to youth and young adults, 16 to 21 years of age. Beginning in FY2018, a life skills assessment was provided to youth age 15 - in Permanent Managing Conservatorship. In addition, the life skills assessment will be provided to youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship starting at age 14 in FY2019. Other services are provided as funding or resources are available to youth 14 and 15 years of age. Transition centers are one of the many community organizations that DFPS staff use for transitional living services.

Preparation for Adult Living services use other community resources to assist youth and young adults in developing skills to help with their transition to a successful adulthood. PAL staff provide information, assistance and presentations at staff meetings and to new caseworkers in training, community groups, foster parents and tenured caseworkers.

Involving community partners is integral in assisting former youth in their transition to self-sufficiency. DFPS works closely with the regional Community Engagement Specialists to ensure that outreach and engagement with local organizations and other community resources will raise awareness of the needs of youth and young adults in care. In FY18, the Community Engagement Specialists (in some instances with the PAL staff) provided presentations about the tuition fee waiver and other resources available to all of the Community Resource Coordination Groups in Texas (140). Regions have provided back to school, prom, graduation, and holiday celebrations for youth and young adults with help from community partners.

Collaborations to include Other Private and Public Agencies including youth

Transitional Living Services program staff engage youth and young adults, CPS staff, community partners, service providers, private and public agencies, foster parents, higher education, and other stakeholders in program and policy improvements, as part of the systemic and integrated approach to transition planning and services affecting youth and young adults. DFPS collaborates with the purpose of helping youth in foster care achieve independence by 1) participating on regional and statewide workgroups which includes public and private agencies, 2) inviting public and private sector agencies and individuals to provide input on policy, protocol and practices and 3) providing information to private

and public agencies as requested. Examples of collaboration with public and private agencies include participation on 1) driver license, state identification card and documents workgroup led by Texas CASA with the goal of easing requirements and fees for youth to obtain their essential documents; and 2) Career Development and Education Program, Foster Care and Education, Education Reach for Texans workgroups with the goal of improving education outcomes and making state resources known; and 3) other related workgroups. Regional youth specialists and the Youth Leadership Council provide guidance, information and advocacy supports to regional Youth Leadership Councils and to policy makers and decision makers.

Human Trafficking

DFPS utilizes resources such as Traffick 911, the Central Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking, and Mosaic Family Services to educate youth about human trafficking and its dangers during Aging Out Seminars, PAL life skills classes, and workshops at the 2019 Texas Teen Conference. Additionally, DFPS compiled information for youth and staff about the risks of human trafficking and how to access needed help. This information, along with contact information in each region, is posted on the Texas Youth Connection website.

Youth with Other Needs

DFPS has been working in collaboration with advocates to explore policy and evidenced-based practices to enhance positive permanency outcomes for children and youth while providing CPS staff the tools they need to support youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth. In addition, there is training provided across the state in partnership with advocates and Cenpatico to enhance staff knowledge, raise awareness, and provide practical application skills to staff. The training is a part of the caseworker certification program and information regarding normalcy for youth has been integrated into a normalcy curriculum. The CANS Assessment enables professional clinicians and staff to engage in dialogue with youth, families, and foster parents related to gender identity and expression. CPS continues to explore methods to best serve this population.

Through the Texas Youth Connection website, CPS continues to offer resources and information on diversity to better serve youth and young adults. The resources inform caseworkers and providers that understanding and expressing sexual orientation and gender and developing related identities are typical development tasks that vary for different children and youth. The website offers regional staff access to local organizations and professional resources where a youth can be referred for a support network of their peers.

Although the Residential Child Care contracts require residential providers to transport youth or young adults to life skills training classes, youth leadership council meetings, aging out seminars and Texas Workforce Centers, transportation continues to be an

issue. DFPS staff arranging these activities that have difficulty with providers transporting the youth are advised to report transportation issues to the residential contract manager for resolution. Residential providers were reminded of the transportation provisions in their contracts and the requirement that youth have access to community vocational technical training programs, volunteer opportunities, and workforce services. Providers were also reminded to encourage youth to actively participate in PAL camps, Teen and College conferences and regional youth leadership councils and to contact the regional Preparation for Adult Living staff if a presentation to providers is needed about Transitional Living Services.

Secondary Education

DFPS staff collaborates with the Children's Commission, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Association of School Boards, and other state and local agencies. The Post-Secondary Education and Transition committee identified areas which contribute to a youth's more successful entry into the workforce: gaining training through a certificate program, transition planning mirrored by DFPS and the high school counselors, high school students in foster care enrolling in dual credit classes or early college start classes, and encouraging assessments for general work skills, aptitude and interests.

Guides were created by the workgroup regarding confidentiality, "Information Sharing Between Child Welfare and Schools" and "Transition Planning Guides for Students in Foster Care Receiving Special Education". These guides were distributed to judges, school foster care liaisons, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and Education Service Centers and posted on the Children's Commission website, <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/foster-care-education/education-resources.aspx>

DFPS collaborates with agencies and programs that serve youth and young adults receiving special education services. Additionally, DFPS staff collaborates with community groups and service providers such as Communities in Schools, college vocational programs, Goodwill training programs, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Education Agency, and Transition Centers.

In February 2017, the Texas Workforce Commission released a request for proposals for a Youth Dropout Prevention and Recovery High School Completion Pilot Program. The proposals seek to deliver dropout prevention and recovery services to current and former foster care youth for high school completion and provide them with pathways to post-secondary education and work. The program will enhance and supplement efforts by DFPS on credit recovery for youth. The eligible population to be served includes current and former youth who are between the ages of 16 and 25; are or were in DFPS conservatorship; and have not completed secondary education. The program is a vital effort in assuring foster care students know that they are part of the state's new higher education plan, 60x30TX Higher Education Plan. <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=5033056A-A8AF-0900->

[DE0514355F026A7F](#). Eligible offerors for this project are: Texas Independent School Districts, Open Enrollment Charter Schools, Institutions of Higher Education, or a school district or county system. The offerors are required to partner with a local workforce board and a Transition center. The grant started summer 2017 and the grant period is approximately 24 months from the start date.

DFPS Regional Education Specialists continue to develop regional consortiums to identify and facilitate services for youth in care. DFPS and Health and Human Services agencies meet with local school administrators, school counselors, and special education directors to discuss DFPS policy, education, or school issues. Community groups, including other care providers, private therapy providers, foster care family groups, and faith-based organizations also participate in these consortium meetings. DFPS Education Specialists work with CASA volunteers and community groups to advocate for educational services for children in care.

All students in DFPS conservatorship have an education decision-maker named to make education-related decisions. A form names the student's caregiver, caseworker, and education decision-maker. Students who receive special education services have a surrogate parent named to make decisions on special education issues. The names of the education decision-maker and surrogate parent must be filed with the court and named parties within 5 days of the adversary hearing and with any change in the education decision-maker or surrogate parent. School districts are required to designate a foster care liaison who is responsible for enrolling and securing school records in a timely manner for students in care. The Texas Education Agency has created and funded a state level position dedicated to improving the educational outcomes for youth in care.

New federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act, directs local school districts to work with foster child care systems to ensure children and youth in foster care remain in their school of origin, unless it is not in the child's best interest. DFPS staff make every effort to identify an appropriate placement, which meets the education needs of the student and allows the student to attend the same school they attended at the time of placement. The school district and DFPS collaborate and make transportation plans for the student, as appropriate. If placement is not possible to the school of origin, DFPS staff are directed to seek a placement within the student's same school district.

There are state initiatives which added specific rules to the Texas Education Code and directed schools to enhance services to students in care. Every school district must name a Foster Care Liaison to facilitate enrollment and services to students in foster care. Services include timely records transfer (within 10 days), course completion for graduation requirements, post-secondary assistance and services, excused school absences for requirements in a child's service plan, awarding partial credit for coursework completed prior to a student's placement and school changes. All students must have a Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) by the time the student enters 9th grade or enters a new secondary school setting. The Personal Graduation Plan is prepared by the student,

school counselor, and parent and is reviewed and updated at least annually. State law also requires Texas public colleges, universities, and state technical schools name a Foster Care Liaison to provide services, facilitate student enrollment, and resolve multiple issues post-foster care students may experience. Services include assistance with ETV, financial aid, housing, student employment, transportation, and priority in class selections. The Texas Education Agency has worked with DFPS to expand the capability to collect and share specific data on students in foster care.

DFPS continues to work with Texas Education Agency, the Children's Commission, and Texas Association of School Boards in fulfilling the commitment to improving the educational outcomes for children and youth in care. DFPS participates in several state and community level working committees to identify barriers to providing seamless education services to children in care. DFPS Regional Education Specialists have completed presentations on ensuring education stability for students in care through Education Service Centers, local school districts, CASA, child placing agencies, and community organizations. Each DFPS region has established and operates at least three community consortia, which include community and post-secondary education stakeholders, local family court judges, youth, school administrators, and DFPS staff. Consortia meet at least quarterly to identify and resolve barriers to students in foster care. The Meadows Center at the University of Texas at Austin has developed professional development trainings/webinars for teachers working with students in care and sponsored statewide workgroups to implement changes in working with students in care and developing best practices.

DFPS faces challenges to meeting the educational needs and goals of youth in care. Limited information from schools about vocational/technical training opportunities for students who would prefer to learn a marketable job skill and not pursue a two or four year college degree exists. Other challenges include facilitating school enrollment and transfers; maintaining educational stability; resolving transportation related issues for students in rural communities; and using data-driven evidence to develop best practices in the provision of services. DFPS staff continue to coordinate with caregivers to help interested students enroll in workforce services provided by the Workforce Solutions offices to explore career opportunities and the training and education needed to pursue identified careers.

Students with disabilities have post-secondary programs available in seven colleges and universities. Regional Education Specialists provide caseworkers with program information.

DFPS Education Specialists and caseworkers participate in school transition planning beginning at age 14. Students are encouraged to explore careers through job shadowing, career days, and internships. DFPS caseworkers and school counselors share information on transition services available for eligible students in foster care through community resources. School counselors are required by state law to review the DFPS

Education and Training Voucher program and the college tuition waiver with each student in foster care and enrolled in their school district.

DFPS provides additional resources to internal and external stakeholders on transition services for youth and young adults in care. The DFPS Education program offers monthly newsletters with current school and community resources to school administrators, foster care liaisons at local schools and colleges, and community colleges, as well as to 20 Education Service Centers, service providers, and community resources. The Education program also provides monthly webinars, available for free and open to the public, on various topics: Transition Services for Students in Foster Care and Receiving Special Education Services, Multiple Resources for Students in Foster Care from the Texas Workforce Commission, ETV and Fee Voucher Training, and Preparing for an Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Meeting (includes Social Security, Housing, Medical, Transportation, and Workforce Commission representatives).

The College for All Texans website allows youth to select a Texas school, plan for costs, fill out school applications, and apply for financial aid. Career schools and colleges that are privately owned institutions offer classroom or online training to teach the skills needed to perform a particular job. The Texas Workforce Commission licenses career schools and colleges that offer programs where students can receive certificates for various skills trainings and provides information and technical assistance to schools, students and the public. DFPS works with the Texas Workforce Commission to obtain services available to youth interested in pursuing specific career paths. TWC offers regular presentations on post-secondary career options available to students in foster care to school counselors, DFPS/CPS consortia meetings with community stakeholders offered throughout the state, and training to foster care liaisons at the school and college level.

The most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available (In FFY17) indicated -5% of the youth age 17 reported finishing high school or obtaining a GED.

Post-Secondary Education

Education Reach for Texans is a 501(c) (3) group of current educators and administrators from several Texas colleges and universities who partner with DFPS staff to provide support, technical assistance, and advocacy for youth formerly in youth care and enrolled within higher education institutions. In the past six years, this group has annually convened at different campuses in Texas, bringing together other colleges, universities, advocates, stakeholders, caregivers, youth, and DFPS staff. The 10th annual conference will be held on June 6-7 at the Renaissance Austin. - DFPS Transitional Living Services staff help plan and participate in these annual conferences.

The *Education Reach for Texans* group focuses on using existing student support services to assist youth currently and formerly in care youth with their academic efforts,

to navigate the school's system, and to help improve educational outcomes. One of the primary barriers to effectively supporting these students is being able to identify the students so that outreach efforts can occur. Some schools work with the financial aid office when students submit the tuition and fee waiver exemption to identify the students. DFPS works with *Education Reach for Texans* to encourage more Texas colleges and universities to participate and develop student support services to serve youth formerly in care who are enrolled in Texas colleges and universities.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board added an additional question to identify youth in DFPS Conservatorship on or after age 14 to the Apply Texas application used to apply to Texas colleges and universities starting July 2018 (2018-2019 application cycle).

The Education and Training Voucher program, the Texas college tuition and fee waiver, and two DFPS scholarships are available for youth and young adults who want to go to college. These programs and scholarships are promoted at conferences, events, life skills classes, and aging-out seminars youth and young adults attend. Each youth and young adult is encouraged to utilize all financial benefits available to them.

The Children's Commission facilitates the Foster Care Post-Secondary Education workgroup, with membership consisting of former youth, colleges and universities, Preparation for Adult Living staff and providers, CASA, Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and legal advocates. The workgroup created a comprehensive resource guide for college foster care student liaisons, high school counselors, caseworkers, caregivers, and students. It identified an online tool that provides a one-stop resource of helpful links to CPS programs and other important information for students formerly in foster care and identify available data to track post-secondary outcomes of youth and young adults in foster care. The workgroup meets on an occasional basis to discuss objectives, collaborate to find solutions, and develop resources.

The Children's Commission will host an Education and Post-Secondary planning meeting on June 28, 2019 in Austin, Texas. One of the discussions will be on comprehensive transition planning by the school, Texas Workforce Commission, and CPS on preparing students in foster care for post-secondary opportunities. Education Reach for all Texans is a collaboration of foster care stakeholders, including CASA, DFPS/CPS, Texas Workforce, Health and Human Services Commission and community groups and services, and providers with post-secondary community colleges, 4-year colleges and universities, vocational and technical institutions that champion post-secondary success for Texas foster alumni. The group will meet in Austin, Texas June 5th and June 6th develop strategies to increase post-secondary student enrollment.

The Texas Legislature directed all public community colleges, junior colleges, and four year colleges to name a foster care liaison to assist former foster care students transitioning from high school to college. The list of college liaisons is maintained by the

Higher Education Coordinating Board and is posted on the College for All Texans webpage.

The most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available (FFY 17) indicate 92% are currently enrolled in and attending high school, GED classes, post-high school vocational training, or college.

Secondary and Post-Secondary

DFPS established a workgroup in FY18 comprised of representatives from the Texas Education Agency, Transition Centers, post-secondary institutions of higher learning, vocational college, alumni of foster care and other stakeholders to create a legislatively required Career Development and Education Program that assists youth in obtaining a high school diploma or equivalency certificate and industry certifications, provides career guidance, and informs youth about the Tuition Fee Waiver in Texas. Workgroup members contributed information about known services, gaps, solutions and recommendations. A report was submitted to the Texas Legislature on September 1, 2018 outlining the program and recommendations. DFPS meets with workgroup members bi-annually to discuss updates to the program. A meeting is planned for summer 2019. DFPS is in process of posting information about the Career Development and Education Program on the DFPS website under Transitional Living Services, as the workgroup agreed that Texas has many career and education resources but identified the need to place them in one central location.

Transition Centers

As of 2018, there are 18 independently operated, one-stop transition centers across Texas, with at least one in each DFPS region. Transition centers are a central clearinghouse for community partners to serve the diverse needs of older youth, ages 15½ to 25, who are aging out or have aged out of care. The centers provide services such as PAL classes, job readiness, career preparation, summer youth employment programs, job search classes, youth leadership trainings, activities, and mentoring. Transition Centers may partner with providers of substance abuse and mental health counseling and with local housing authorities. Centers are located in Austin, Beaumont, Central Texas (Belton, Killeen and Temple), Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Kerrville, San Antonio, Fort Worth, San Angelo, Tyler, Longview, McAllen, Lubbock, Amarillo, and Abilene. The newest center is located in Harlingen.

The Texas Workforce Commission financially supports Workforce Advocate positions in 17 Transition Centers with a goal of improving employment outcomes for youth currently and formerly in care and helping develop a comprehensive long-term career path. The Texas Workforce Commission is seeking funding to support a Workforce Advocate at the newest Transition Center. DFPS supports Transition Centers at the state and local levels and encourages the expansion and sustainability of transition centers, including

referencing Transition Center as models for best practices. DFPS does not fund Transition Centers, although some of the Transition Center operators' contract with DFPS to provide PAL Services.

Mental Health

The Transitional Living Services team addresses empowerment and normalization when preparing youth to age out of care by seeking input from youth currently and formerly in foster care and providing technical assistance to create opportunities for normalcy in placement settings. The most significant challenges are a lack of resources, behavioral health services, and providers in both rural and urban communities. Enhancements by STAR Health have emphasized youth and young adult's empowerment in well-being appointments, such as a well woman's annual exam or dental check-up. An online application is available for a youth or young adult's smart phone or computer, which promotes the youth meeting his or her healthcare needs.

Preparation for Adult Living Services and Data

DFPS continues to review policies and procedures related to Chafee funded services to determine how services meet the needs of youth and young adults statewide. As contracts are procured, opportunities become available to ensure DFPS is providing quality services that meet the needs of the youth and young adults. Contractors are required to meet certain performance measures tied to outcomes. DFPS is available to cooperate with any national evaluations on the effects of the programs in the achieving the purposes of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. DFPS will provide information that is requested and will be available to respond to questions related to a national evaluation.

Current Chafee services provided statewide by the PAL program include the following:

- Life Skills Assessment (www.caseylifeskills.org) starting at 14 for youth in Permanent Managing Conservatorship and at age 16 for any youth in foster care to assess the strength and needs in life skills attainment. Caregivers provide input on the youth's assessment and are invited to an interpretation of the youth assessment results;
- Life Skills Training classes (ages 16-18) and Independent Study Guides in the following core elements: Health and Safety, Housing and Transportation, Job Readiness, Financial Management, Life Decisions and Responsibilities and Personal and Social Relationships;
- Supportive Services to address youth expenses such as graduation expenses, tutoring, driver's education fees, mentoring;

- Transitional Living Allowance of up to \$1,000 (to help with initial start-up costs of adult living) distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who meet the DFPS criteria, including participating in Life Skills Training and living in a DFPS-paid or Medicaid paid placement within the 24-months before the allowance is initiated;
- After Care Room and Board Assistance (ages 18-21) based on need of up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, food (not to exceed \$3,000 of accumulated payments per young adult); and
- Case Management to help young adults with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

Youth and young adults who are potentially eligible for services statewide are as follows:

- youth who are at least 16 and in DFPS conservatorship;
- youth who were emancipated by a court order while in DFPS conservatorship (up to age 21);
- young adults who aged-out of DFPS conservatorship at age 18 (up to age 21); and
- young adults enrolled in the DFPS extended care program and those who exit the DFPS extended care program (up to age 21).

Life Skills Assessments are provided to youth (www.caseylifeskills.org) starting at 14 in Permanent Managing Conservatorship and at age 16 for any youth in foster care. When funding is available, youth as young as age 14 may receive the above services.

In addition, youth who are placed in foster care in a Title IV-E placement by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department or a county juvenile probation department are eligible for PAL Life Skills training if they are ages 16 through 17, receiving Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments, and will stay in that placement until they turn age 18. Such youth may also be eligible for PAL Aftercare Room and Board payments and case management.

In FY2018, 7021 youth and young adults ages 16-20 and 960 youth ages 14-15 participated in the Preparation for Adult Living program. There was an increase in the number of youth ages 14-15 who received a Preparation for Adult Living service due to the new requirement to provide a life skills assessment at a younger age. Due to increased permanency efforts, there has been a gradual decrease of youth who emancipated from foster care. In FY 2018, 1,211 youth exited DFPS conservatorship through emancipation.

Life Skills Training is part of a continuum of learning youth in care receive starting at age 14. Foster parents and residential providers are required to include training in experiential life skills by providing an opportunity to practice daily living skills, such as grocery shopping, meal preparation and cooking, use of public transportation, financial literacy, and performing basic household tasks. The resource guides and Residential Requirements Guide were updated in FY18 to include enhancements to experiential life skills and normalcy activity requirements in the youth's placement.

The Casey Life Skills Assessment is provided to youth prior to the start of Life Skills Training Classes. Caregivers are asked to complete the assessment on the individual youth in their care so that a Caregiver Comparison Report can be generated which includes both the youth and caregiver responses. An Individual Youth Report is generated when caregiver responses are not available. Youth and their caregivers or providers are invited to the interpretation of the completed life skills assessment results and are provided copies of the scored assessment. During the interpretation the youth's strengths and needs are discussed. The youth's caseworker receives a copy of the report and incorporates specific service needs into the child's plan of service from the assessment. PAL staff determined that in FY2018, 2002 Casey Life Skills assessments were completed. Statute requires DFPS to conduct an independent living skills assessment for youth in DFPS Permanent Managing Conservatorship who are age 15 starting in FY 2018 and age 14 starting in FY 2019. If a youth was not eligible to receive the assessment at age 14 or 15, an assessment will be provided to all youth in DFPS conservatorship at age 16 or older. As a result, youth will be assessed only one time, which is the youth preference according to feedback from youth. DFPS will conduct an annual update of the independent living skills the youth learned the preceding year to ensure the youth is being prepared for his or her successful transition to adulthood. The annual update will be conducted through the youth's plan of service in coordination with the youth, the youth's caseworker, PAL staff and youth's caregiver. The annual update includes a review of the original assessment responses and documentation of the youth's progress and continued needs.

Transition plans are used to determine needs and to make informed choices regarding the provision of services. Preparation for Adult Living staff participate in Circles of Support meetings where Transition plans are reviewed.

Starting at age 16, youth either attend at least 30 hours of Life Skills Training Classes or complete an Independent Study Guide (paper or web version). A curriculum outline is available for statewide use. Youth have the opportunity to provide feedback through an evaluation along with a knowledge assessment at the end of class sessions or completion of the independent study guide as a measure of the life skills learned. Additionally, PAL contractors assist youth with services to develop skills in food preparation and in nutrition education that promotes healthy food choices in addition to providing financial literacy

education. In FY2018, 1360 youth received life skills training classes, 140 youth received training through the web based Independent Study Guide, 157 youth received training through the paper Independent Study Guide, and 90 youth received training at school and was documented in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Efforts are underway to increase the number of youth who complete life skills training and are 18 or older and leave substitute care. A logic model was -created for this effort and includes 5 main objectives:

- Increase the life skills training completion rate to at least 85% statewide and for every region by the end of FY18. Increase to at least 92% in FY19.
- Improve communication and education to state office, regional staff and kinship providers. Monthly support calls are held with regional PAL staff to discuss successes, needs and status of completion. A memo was sent to kinship providers with information about life skills training and benefits to participation.
- Develop new training options for youth. A paper version of the Independent Study Guide was created for use with youth who do not have computer access.
- Conduct youth surveys and gather information to improve training options for youth. A survey was conducted with youth about their preferred method of training, which resulted in a high number of youth preferring classroom training over other methods because it provides an opportunity for interaction with their peers.
- Residential contract providers support and provide life skills training as outlined in contract requirements. Regions are offering some classes at Residential Treatment facilities. CPS PAL staff report youth to the Residential Contract Manager if youth who are scheduled to attend the class do not attend.

DFPS exceeded their life skills training completion goal and ended in FY18 with a 91% completion rate. DFPS is on track to meet their goal of a 92% completion rate in FY19.

Youth ages 16 and older have the opportunity to participate in a statewide or regional event where they receive information and participate in experiential activities to enhance their knowledge of life skills. Youth age 14 and 15 are invited when funding is available. The youth's experiential learning while in care and through PAL program activities complement one another and are addressed in each core life skill area in the youth's service and transition plan. Additional state funding was received to add an additional teen conference per region, increase the number of youth who participate in Aging-out Seminars, and add an additional statewide vocational/college conference with emphasis on youth who live in Residential Treatment Centers. A College, Career and Technical Conference will be held at Austin Community College on June 20-21, 2019.

DFPS was legislatively required to collaborate with stakeholders in 2018 to develop a plan to standardize the curriculum for the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program that ensures that youth 14 years of age or older (but younger than age 21) enrolled in the program receive relevant and age appropriate information and training. Workgroup meetings were held to develop the plan which resulted in a report that was submitted to the legislature December 1, 2018. DFPS will take action to meet recommendations in their plan with continued collaboration with stakeholders in FY19 and beyond. DFPS actions to meet recommendations include the following:

- 1) DFPS will review the current Knowledge Assessment to either make needed revisions or determine if an alternate method should be used to assess what the youth learned in the classes and to measure the PAL contractor's ability to effectively train the materials.
- 2) DFPS will explore high school or college credit for the entire series of life skills training classes while being mindful youth must meet certain criteria to be eligible for the tuition fee waiver.
- 3) DFPS will look at other available life skills assessment tools and assess any costs associated with changing the tool.
- 4) DFPS plans to review the Aging-out seminar curriculum outline and materials to update the information and to ensure more experiential activities are included.
- 5) DFPS will explore with the Child and Family Services Review Team and DFPS monitoring staff ways to assess and report to the agency if youth receive experiential and normalcy activities.
- 6) DFPS will determine the costs associated with hiring curriculum development experts to make changes to the PAL Life Skills Training curriculum and costs associated with extending the number of classroom hours and adding specific training for 14 and 15 year old youth.

Aging-out Seminars

At age 17, youth participate in a one-day regional Aging-out Seminar where they receive information about human trafficking, healthy relationships, financial literacy, nutrition, self-advocacy, transitional living services resources and benefits. Aging-Out Seminars are currently being rebranded based on feedback received from youth and staff participants. In addition, materials and tools will be updated to ensure more experiential learning activities are included. Aging-Out Seminars will now be called Youth Take Flight for Success beginning FY2020. In FY2018, Aging-out Seminars were provided to 667 youth.

Youth and young adults ages 16 to 21 may participate in contracted Case Management Services. Through these services, the case manager works with the youth or young adult to update or develop their individual transition plan. Aftercare Room and Board assistance is provided through case management to eligible young adults who have established through their financial plan there is a need and who are no longer in DFPS

conservatorship or a DFPS extended care placement. In FY2018, 2942 youth and young adults received case management services and 925 young adults received Aftercare Room and Board assistance. In FY2018, PAL staff report a Transitional Living Allowance was provided to 1033 young adults to help with basic start-up costs in adult living.

Services provided to youth and young adults are reviewed to determine what types of services are provided and by what frequency. DFPS analyzes the data by region to help identify patterns or trends in certain parts of the state and to determine if services need to be strengthened. The National Youth in Transition Database data can be used to run additional reports tailored to the specific information we would like to review. Currently, data is pulled to determine what Life Skills training core elements were provided to youth prior to leaving care, to help meet the statewide goal of a 92% completion rate for youth age 18 or older exiting substitute care in FY19. Each region completes and submits an annual report that includes service data and a description of services provided. Data from these regional reports is disseminated and incorporated into the state plan.

National Youth in Transition Database outcomes have motivated regions to offer more services either through PAL contract providers or through community organizations around housing, employment and education. Region 1 opened a Supervised Independent Living (SIL) program at the beginning of FY2018. Children's Home of Lubbock is the only SIL program in Region 1 and will offer older youth the opportunity to remain in extended foster care. In Region 2, PAL youth are referred to the Texas Workforce Commission Advocate through Baptist Child and Family Services to provide training and employment assistance to youth. The Texas Workforce Commission creates partnerships with local businesses in efforts to provide youth entry level positions that allow for growing opportunities within the business. The Region 3 Fort Worth Housing program was able to use five vouchers for young adults to secure housing and improved the outcome of young people exiting foster care. In Region 5, The Beaumont Housing Authority reserved several vouchers for foster youth needing housing. In Region 6, The Houston Alumni and Youth Center continues to pair youth age 16 and older with transition coaches who serve as friend and guide to help them in their successful transition to adulthood. - Region 7 coordinated 11 tours for youth at different colleges and universities to explore higher education options. Region 8 regularly meets with the Housing Coalition to develop strategies to decrease the homeless population of foster care youth. Region 9 entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Concho Valley Workforce Solutions and the Permian Basin Workforce to assist youth with employment opportunities. Region 10 partnered with the University of Texas El Paso to hold a Resource Fair for youth that included dorm room tours. Region 11 partnered with Cameron County Workforce to host a Job Readiness conference for youth.

Service data is entered into IMPACT by PAL staff and reported to the National Youth in Transition Database. Regular training and reminders are provided to PAL staff to ensure statewide consistency of service data entry. PAL staff educate contract providers to clarify

service definitions and other documentation needs. A report is available to determine how many youth received training prior to leaving care and is shared with each region to look for any discrepancies and determine if improvements are needed on the provision of life skills trainings. Regional case reviews have been conducted periodically on an informal basis and at the end of a reporting period to ensure statewide consistency of data entry and collection of high quality data. The review consists of a cross check of what has been entered into the DFPS system as compared to service documentation received from contract providers. Feedback and technical assistance is provided to staff entering information depending on the results of the review. Regional PAL Staff were provided with tools to help them understand data entry requirements such as the National Youth in Transition Database Manual for PAL staff. Regular training, case reviews and reminders to PAL staff have helped to have more accurate and consistent data statewide. A workgroup of PAL staff participated in modernization efforts to improve the DFPS electronic reporting and case recording system (IMPACT). Improvements will result in a more user friendly system and include additional details about services and training provided to youth and young adults. Roll out was in April of 2019.

DFPS has provided information regarding the National Youth in Transition Database outcomes and service data results at a variety of venues and events, such as PAL staff meetings, internal DFPS meetings, Youth Leadership Council meetings, Aging-Out Seminars, and regional or statewide presentations to the community, including to CASA, PAL contract providers, and Child Placing Agencies. DFPS continues to look at ways to branch out to other stakeholders to provide this information. The Youth Leadership Council made suggestions for updating the survey instrument in FY18 to include Texas specific information in the descriptions which will help youth to better understand the questions and more accurately provide a response. Updates to the descriptions will added as part of the DFPS electronic reporting and case recording system (IMPACT) modernization efforts. One region provides this information at youth service review hearings. DFPS continues to collect high quality data using existing staff positions, tools, and processes known to be effective for DFPS in the past. The state plan is posted on the public DFPS website, which includes National Youth in Transition Database data. DFPS continues to explore the best ways with youth and young adults to post data on the youth friendly website www.texasyouthconnection.org. National Youth in Transition Database survey data is posted publicly in a Health and Human Services report, "2018 Report on Customer Service" at this link: <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/reports-and-presentations/all>.

Eligibility for both Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services and other transitional living services is outlined in the CPS policy handbook and cites both federal and state eligibility criteria. This information is updated periodically based on new federal and state legislation. DFPS uses objective criteria for determining eligibility for services

and the DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs is available to respond to complaints about unfair treatment and provides objective unbiased investigations on complaints filed. This same office has outreach efforts at regional and statewide PAL events to inform youth about their services. Information about how to file a complaint is posted on the Texas Youth Connection website and in the newly revised Texas Foster Care Handbook for Children, Youth and Young Adults. Contract language includes assurances that providers will provide fair and equitable treatment that meets the individual needs of each youth or young adult.

PAL staff monitor for quality and content of services provided by a contractor and contract managers monitor for contract compliance (programmatic and fiscal). Monitoring tools (forms) and a process guide are utilized.

Employment, Career Exploration, Vocational Training and Job Placement and Retention

Preparation for Adult Living staff, contractors, and workforce partners in all regions and statewide continue to help youth gain job opportunities and work experiences while in care and upon exiting care. The most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available (FFY 17) indicate 16% of foster youth age 17 were either working full or part-time.

DFPS and the Texas Workforce Commission have a formal Memorandum of Understanding, which renewed for five years from September 2016 to August 2021. Some changes to the agreement included reporting on the number of youth currently and young adults formerly in foster care served by the Texas Workforce Commission-funded Workforce Advocates who are located in Transition Centers. The agreement ensures that PAL objectives are met and youth currently and formerly in care receive priority for workforce services through other formal agreements between regions and local workforce boards. DFPS and the Texas Workforce Commission continue to collaborate and partner statewide. With the involvement of the Texas Workforce Commission, PAL staff are informed of workforce services, including summer youth employment opportunities offered through the local workforce centers, make referrals for workforce services, and determine how these services benefit and assist youth to become self-sufficient when transitioning from care. The Texas Workforce Commission plans to host a youth conference for youth currently and formerly in foster care in -October 2019. Invitees will be representatives of each Transition Center, regional CPS Preparation for Adult Living staff, CPS State Office staff, and local Workforce Boards.

DFPS established a legislatively required summer internship pilot which began in the summer of 2018. The purpose of the internship is to provide youth and young adults with an opportunity to develop marketable job skills and obtain professional work experience. DFPS collaborated with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas and Plano Marshall's Department store to provide the internship in 2018. With a goal of 5 youth

participants, 2 of the 4 youth who participated in the internship completed it in 2018. The internship was 6 weeks with the option to continue for a total of 17 weeks. DFPS is again collaborating with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas and Marshall's to provide a summer internship pilot in 2019. Youth and young adults who participate are paid wages through Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas. Participants were paid \$8 in 2018 and will be paid \$9 an hour in 2019 to help increase interest of potential participants. Additional previously established internships for youth who are or were in foster care in Texas included a paid internship through the Houston Alumni and Youth Center and another through the El Paso County Attorney's office. In 2018, 15 youth participated in the Houston Alumni and Youth Center internship and 12 youth participated in the El Paso County Attorney's office internship. DFPS worked with Consumer Value Stores (CVS) and Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas to provide a spring internship in 2019.

Preparation for Adult living staff refer youth to AmeriCorps and Job Corps, as well as refer youth to job skills trainings and enrollment in summer employment programs, job readiness and career exploration classes, and other services administered through the workforce development boards, Goodwill Industries, and the Salvation Army, for youth with disabilities to receive job training and employment. Transition Centers continue to offer career exploration, job readiness, and job search assistance in collaboration with the Workforce Advocates. CPS expects more out-of-school youth will receive services provided under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act for work experiences, such as summer and year round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing. The Texas Workforce Commission has a variety of resources, posted on their website <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/>, to include career and education tools, work preparation information, market data, educational requirements to obtain a high demand job in Texas and vocational rehabilitation services. Youth and young adults are informed about these resources through their Workforce Advocate and various PAL activities.

DFPS uses the calendar year reports provided by the Texas Workforce Commission to identify how many youth or young adults received a workforce service. In calendar year 2018, a total of 656 of 821 (80%) referred unduplicated youth and young adults received workforce services through either the Workforce Solutions offices or from the workforce advocates located at the Transition Centers. Youth continue to be referred for Workforce services in FY19.

In April 2016, a memo to Residential Child Care providers was sent as a reminder that providers are to inform, provide, and facilitate access for youth to employment opportunities, support services and activities, including job readiness and skills training opportunities. The memo included a handout of an overview of Transitional Living Services and contact information and is still part of the contract.

Chafee funds are used to help youth obtain clothing for employment or interviews and case management services to help youth get connected to the community resources they need to obtain or maintain employment. In FY2018, there were 816 youth and young adults, as reported by PAL staff, who received educational or vocational Chafee services. These services included vocational assessments, vocational training, tutoring, graduation items (cap, gown), high school completion supports, and fees for GED tests.

Community resources provided are not reported to the National Youth in Transition Database as they are not provided or paid for by the state agency. However, both quarterly and annual data is exchanged with the Texas Workforce Commission as part of an agreement between DFPS and the Commission to determine which youth are receiving workforce related services from the referrals provided.

Employment Services Youth and Young Adults with Special Needs

DFPS developmental disability specialists coordinate with schools, the Texas Workforce Commission, and Health and Human Services to obtain vocational training and employment services for youth and young adults with disabilities. The Texas Legislature created the Employment First Policy and Task Force related to promoting competitive employment opportunities that provide a living wage for individuals with disabilities. The task force is comprised of DFPS, the Health and Human Services agencies, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Workforce Commission. To date, Health and Human Services has adopted the Employment First policy and agencies involved have developed a work plan to incorporate this policy into their own policies and rules.

As a requirement of the interagency memorandum of understandings between DFPS and the Texas Workforce Commission and local DFPS offices and local workforce boards to address the challenges facing youth currently and formerly in care youth, the Commission designated a point of contact at the local workforce boards for youth, PAL staff, foster care providers and other DFPS staff to access assistance and services. The agreement also directs local workforce development boards to ensure that workforce services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of eligible youth. DFPS ensures that interested youth and young adults have access to workforce services available at the Texas Workforce Solutions offices and at the Transition Centers.

Transition Centers serve youth and young adults formerly in foster care up to age 25 using various funding sources. In addition to providing other supportive services for young adults there is a designated Workforce Advocate funded by the Texas Workforce Commission at all Transition Centers who offers career exploration services, job readiness and job search programs and job placement assistance.

Texas Workforce Commission and Transition Center Data

The Texas Workforce Commission, through an interagency agreement with DFPS state and regional offices and local workforce development boards, matches data records

submitted by DFPS for both quarterly and calendar year reports. These data reports include the number of youth referred for workforce services at local Workforce Solutions offices and the number of those youth who received a workforce service. Annual data collected and reported by the Texas Workforce Commission includes how many youth were employed, the average wage earned each quarter and the number of youth and young adults who received a service at one of the Transition Centers funded by the Texas Workforce Commission. As reported by the Texas Workforce Commission from January to December 2018, a total of 656 of 821 (80%) unduplicated youth and young adults received workforce services through either the Workforce Solutions offices or from the workforce advocates located at the Transition Centers.

Help youth prepare for and enter postsecondary training and educational institutions.

Chafee funding is used to provide educational and vocational services such as vocational assessments, vocational training, tutoring, high school completion supports, and fees for General Educational Development tests. In FY2018, PAL staff reported there were ~~840~~ 816 youth and young adults who received educational or vocational Chafee services.

PAL staff collaborate with community organizations to provide graduation celebrations for high school and General Educational Development Certification achievements. Certificates signed by the Governor were provided in FY2018 and Governor's certificates will be requested again in FY2019 as a way to recognize each youth or young adult's high school or General Education Development Certification completion. In FY2019, Graduation celebrations occurred in all 11 regions. Many community organizations provide independent living supplies, such as cookware, sheets, towels, microwave ovens, and other household supplies or gift cards, as recognition of the youth or young adult's accomplishments.

Tours to universities, community colleges, and vocational/technical schools are conducted annually. PAL staff and contractors provide help to youth in completing forms needed for postsecondary training and education programs. DFPS partners with colleges and universities across the state to help students. Several universities including the University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at Pan-American, and Texas State University continue to provide residential housing scholarships for former foster care youth. PAL college conferences are held at different colleges or universities annually. A statewide college conference was held at Texas A&M Commerce in November 2018 and another is planned for November 2019. Austin Community College held its first statewide conference August 16-17, 2018 and another is planned in June 20-21, 2019. The annual statewide teen conference will be held at Texas Woman's University in Denton in July 8-10, 2019.

The most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available (FFY 17) indicated 5% of youth age 17 sampled completed high school or a General Education

Development Certification and 92% were enrolled in and attending high school, GED classes, post-high school vocational training, or college. DFPS staff reviewed comparisons of the data across the first cohort of youth from ages 17 to 21 provided by the Administration for Children and Families in a data snap shot and have shared with staff and the community. National Youth in Transition Data Base Data was shared during an interim hearing with state legislators in March 2018 and periodically when data is requested.

State Tuition and Fee Waiver

College tuition and fees are waived for students who were in DFPS conservatorship:

- On the day preceding their 18th birthday;
- On or after the day of the student's fourteenth birthday, and the student was eligible for adoption on or after that day;
- On the day the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- On the day the student is adopted if that date is on or after September 1, 2009;
- On the day permanent managing conservatorship of the student was granted to an individual other than the student's parent, if that date is on or after September 1, 2009;
- If a youth was returned to the legal responsibility of the parent t on or after June 1, 2016 (effective for the Fall 2016 semester)
 - at age 14 and older and were in DFPS's permanent managing conservatorship; or
 - at age 16 and older and were in DFPS's temporary managing conservatorship; or
- On the day, the student enrolls in a dual credit course or other course for which a high-school student may earn joint high school and college credit.

The student must enroll, no later than their 25th birthday, in an institution of higher education as an undergraduate student.

Tuition and fees are waived for youth enrolled in dual credit courses or other courses for which a high school student may earn joint high school and college credits, if the student is in the conservatorship of DFPS at the time of enrollment in these courses. Dual credit courses include both academic courses as well as technical courses that are covered by

the tuition waiver. Additionally students enrolled in dual college credit courses must be attending school full-time to be able apply for the Education and Training Voucher program to cover certain college costs such as a computer and books.

Annual Higher Education Data Report-Foster Care Students

DFPS has a collaborative partnership and an interagency agreement with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to collect college data on current and former youth and young adults that attend state-supported universities and colleges. Data also includes the number of youth that utilized the tuition and fee waiver.

The agreement outlines data elements to be exchanged to facilitate DFPS's evaluation of educational outcomes of students formerly in DFPS's conservatorship. The agreement between DFPS and the Board includes the following:

- The exchange of information will facilitate the evaluation of educational outcomes for former foster care students;
- CPS will provide annual demographic information to the Board of former foster care students enrolled in state colleges/universities;
- The Board will provide CPS aggregate data on the identified educational outcomes with demographic information received;
- CPS and the Board will determine educational outcomes that will include student's academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance, and others to be identified and relevant to the purpose of the evaluation.
- CPS may authorize the Board to provide education research centers demographic information that allows the centers to perform additional analysis for educational outcomes only for youth in foster care.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board submits an annual report to DFPS showing the number of adopted youth and youth that have utilized the tuition waiver each academic year by school. This report is used for the federal match requirement for the Education and Training Voucher program. For the 2017-2019 academic year, the Board reported that there were 3,547 tuition exemptions granted to foster care students. DFPS consults regularly with the Coordinating Board on issues or questions about the tuition and fee waiver. The Board posts a list of state colleges and universities who are required to appoint foster care student liaisons, on the Colleges for All Texans webpage.

The Children's Commission facilitates the Foster Care and Education Postsecondary Education workgroup. The members of the workgroup consist of youth, colleges and universities, Technical school, PAL staff and providers, CASA, Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, Transition Center, the Higher Education Coordinating

Board, and legal advocates. The workgroup has created a comprehensive resource guide for college foster care student liaisons, high school counselors, caseworkers, caregivers, and students. It identifies a website or online tool that provides a one stop resource of helpful links to CPS programs and other important information for former foster care students and identify available data to track post-secondary outcomes of youth and young adults in foster care. The members met quarterly in 2017-2018 to discuss the progress of projects identified by the members. A Tuition Fee Waiver Activation Process Chart, Tuition Fee Waiver video, and input into the Apply Texas application question to determine if a youth was in foster care were completed in 2018. The next planning meeting is set for June 28, 2019 in Austin.

Education and Training Voucher Program

Youth and young adults potentially eligible for the program are as follows:

Eligibility for ETV includes the following criteria:

- youth at least 16 and in DFPS foster care until turning 18; or
- youth who have aged out of DFPS foster care and are not yet age 21; or
- youth who have been adopted from DFPS foster care after turning age 16 and not yet age 21; or
- youth who have entered the Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) program after age 16 and are not yet age 21.
- youth placed in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department AND in a Title IV placement when turning age 18; or
- tribal youth or young adults in tribal foster care.

Additionally,

- Students participating in the ETV program on their 21st birthday can remain eligible up until the month they turn age 23 as long as they are continuously enrolled in school and remain in good standing with the school towards completing their degree.
- Eligible youth enrolled in dual college credit course(s) where joint high school and college credits are earned can apply to the ETV Program for college related expenses such as books, computers and related software, transportation to and from the college, and tutoring services.

The Education and Training Voucher Program is a statewide program that is contracted to Baptist Child and Family Services Health and Human Services of San Antonio. The contractor has an Education and Training Voucher Lead staff and four staff members to administer the program statewide and the current contract is in place through FFY23. The contractor's staff collect certain demographic information (gender, age, and race),

which higher education institution the students are enrolled in and track student spending. The Education and Training Voucher program will serve youth who age out of from another State's foster care system and move to Texas to attend school, if federal funding is available. Students who move to Texas and were previously receiving funds from another state need to continue to receive funds from the original state. Out-of-state students are provided contact information for their states Independent Living Coordinator if they were previously receiving funds in that state to inquire about continuing in the Education and Training Voucher program in the new state.

When students live with a parent or guardian, Baptist Child and Family Services will verify whether DFPS adoption or permanency care assistance payments are being paid to the parent or guardian. This is to ensure that Education and Training Voucher funds are not being used for the same services currently funded by DFPS. Upon approval for the Education and Training Voucher program, these individuals are required to enter into a rental agreement with the parent or guardian that describes each party's financial obligations for living expenses (housing, room and board and utilities). Once the agreement is signed, the youth or young adult is paid directly and is responsible for paying the parent or guardian as agreed to in the rental agreement. Parents or guardians are not directly being paid Education and Training Voucher funds, which are meant for the youth, or young adult, and youth and young adults learn financial management and responsibility. The PAL staff, regional youth specialist, and Baptist Child and Family Services staff help youth and young adults applying for the Education and Training Voucher program.

The Education and Training Voucher program follows the federal fiscal year schedule to report data including the unduplicated number of Education and Training Vouchers awarded for academic years (Fall to Summer) since the vouchers are primarily used during this time period and for the school year (July 1st to June 30th). DFPS reports Education and Training Voucher services provided to youth and young adults to the National Youth in Transition Database each reporting period. Service data is reviewed for continuous quality program improvement. For the 2016-2017 School Year (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016), 543 vouchers were awarded and 258 were new program participants. For the 2017-2018 School Year, 542 vouchers were awarded and 229 were new program participants.

In an effort to increase enrollment, improve services and outcomes for Education and Training Voucher participants, the contractor is required to increase awareness, promote opportunities, report retention, recruit participants, expedite processing, identify common trends regarding barriers, and perform other quality assurance activities. In January and March 2017, Baptist Child and Family Services hired two additional personnel to meet the expectations of this amendment.

DFPS Scholarships

DFPS provides scholarship opportunities to college bound students to cover basic non-tuition related expenses for former youth. The *C. Ed Davis Scholarship* fund provides up to \$1,000 annually for basic non-tuition needs for youth formerly in care who are majoring in government, political science, history, or another pre-law field. One-time grants known as the *Freshmen Success Fund for Youth* allow first time freshmen students (up to age 21) formerly in the conservatorship of DFPS to apply for \$1,000 (\$500 per semester or school term) for their freshmen year to cover basic non-tuition related expenses.

College Collaborations

The DFPS partnership with various Texas colleges and universities and the Texas Education Agency provide outreach and communications services to help eligible youth attend state-supported universities and colleges. As mentioned above, the ninth Education Reach conference was held at the Embassy Suites, Denton on June 1-2, 2018. The next conference will be held June 6-7, 2019 in Austin.

2. Help Children who have experienced foster care at age 14 or older achieve meaningful, permanent connections with a caring adult.

Connection to a caring adult is captured through outcome reporting data to the National Youth in Transition Database each reporting period. The most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available (FFY 17) reported 94% of 17 year olds - have a current positive connection to an adult.

Regions continue to explore potential mentor programs and collaborations for both formal and informal mentors for youth aged 14 or older. Regions report that self-selected or group mentorships and mentoring programs that focus on an independent living topic such as financial management seem to work better for youth. Regions 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 have established mentoring relationships in their communities for youth. In Region 1, Buckner has partnered with the Evangelical Fellowship Church in Amarillo and has provided 2 youth with mentoring services. The Driven Program in Amarillo is an 8-week mentoring program for men ages 18-25 who need help getting reliable transportation and are interested in pursuing a career. These young adults receive training and, after completion of it, are given a vehicle. Reclaimed 43 is another mentoring program. It sponsors a connection night for volunteers to socialize and eat dinner with youth. Through the program, three youth have been matched with a volunteer. In Region 5, the Junior League of Beaumont is currently providing mentoring and educational services and has provided 75 youth with mentoring services. The Region 6 Houston Alumni and Youth - Center provides a transition coach who maintains contact after the youth leaves care. Youth form a bond and connection with a caring adult who they can maintain contact with after they leave care. Mentoring services were provided by the Houston Alumni and Youth Center to 52 youth. ReVision addresses the population of youth with dual status (Texas Juvenile Justice Department and DFPS) and connects them with a mentor to visit

them while incarcerated and provide guidance and support. Region 7 has three Memorandums of Understanding with Up Mentoring in Bryan, Transforming Life Center in Killeen and YES Mentoring in Travis County to provide mentoring to youth in care. In Region 7, 44 youth in care have been matched with mentors. Region 8 has a collaborative effort with Project Thru and mentored 92 youth. In FY19, a directory of contact information for all known mentoring programs for youth currently or formerly in foster care was posted to the DFPS website <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/volunteer/Opportunities/mentor.asp>

PAL staff, contracted providers and other community resources provide case management services to youth before or as the youth is leaving care. Case Management services may begin at age 16, but typically do not begin until just before a youth turns age 18. This service can continue for the youth up to age 21 years old to help identify individual support persons or supportive networks in adult living. In FY2018, 2942 youth and young adults received contracted case management services.

As described above, Circles of Support are youth-driven/focused meetings offered to youth beginning at 16 years old. They enable youth to develop plans for a successful transition to adulthood and connect with supportive and caring adults who can help the youth after the youth leaves care. Circles of Support operate in all regions and are facilitated meetings with participants that youth identify as “caring adults” who make up their support system. Circles of Support participants can be the youth’s birth family members, substitute care providers, teachers, relatives, church members, mentors, and others.

Special consideration is given when a youth wants to reconnect in a healthy way with the youth’s biological family, including after parental rights have been terminated. In these situations, significant preparation with the youth and conference participants takes place to ensure that all participants understand the youth's desire to reconnect with their biological family and that the conference process can be achieved in a safe and supportive manner.

The Texas chapter of the national Foster Care Alumni Association provides alumni contacts who serve as mentors to youth in care in several regions. The PAL program continues to link with the DFPS Texas Youth Hotline (1-800-989-6884) to provide support and outreach to youth living independently after foster care. Youth Hotline volunteers are trained on the needs of youth, such as emergency housing and legal assistance, and sometimes are the only “caring adult” a youth has as a point of contact. Youth who exit care continue to be provided with the toll-free number to call for counseling and to locate services available in their communities. Youth or young adults can call, text, or chat on-line 24 hours a day.

DFPS staff continues to work closely with Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid which works with individual young adults on various legal issues such as receipt of Medicaid, tuition and fee waivers, and accessing other transitional living services benefits.

3. Help children who have experienced foster care at age 14 or older engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities, positive youth development and experiential learning that reflects what their peers in intact families experience.

Positive Youth Development

DFPS engages youth and young adults from all DFPS regions as partners and advisors in many DFPS efforts. They attend leadership trainings with CPS managers, serve on advisory committees, participate in surveys and interviews about program services, and conduct presentations with CPS staff. Youth and alumni meet three to four times a year to address issues and make recommendations for improving services to children and youth in care and preparing to age out of care. DFPS continually requests input from a youth and young adult perspective for policy and practice development, as well as on a particular subject, activity, or service that impacts their time in care or transition to adulthood.

Regional Youth Specialists support youth and young adults while educating the community, stakeholders, and DFPS on issues facing youth as they transition out of care. They more formally infuse the voice of foster care youth in actual practice, as Youth Specialists are former youth. Regional Youth Specialists play a key role in the development and support of Youth Leadership Councils. The state DFPS Youth Specialist/Education and Training Voucher Program Specialist is also an alumna of DFPS foster care.

Each of the DFPS regions are expected to employ either a full time or part-time Youth Specialist to support the ongoing development of local Youth Leadership Councils and act as consultant to DFPS across a continuum of youth services. As of April 2019, 5 Youth Specialist positions are currently filled. Where positions are vacant, the PAL staff ensure Youth Leadership Councils meetings and events are occurring regularly. Options for part-time positions were created to help recruit eligible Youth Specialist candidates who are engaged in post-secondary education opportunities.

The Youth Specialists help to ensure that youth are aware of benefits and services available to them and understand how to access them prior to and after leaving care. In addition, Youth Specialists help inform and educate youth about the Foster Care Bill of Rights.

Youth Leadership Councils

The Statewide Youth Leadership Council includes two elected or appointed youth or young adults (ages 16 to 21) from each region's Youth Leadership Council. Councils identify issues and make recommendations for improving services to children and youth in care, review policies and program initiatives, and give feedback to DFPS. Feedback is incorporated for review and may be incorporated into program policies, best practices, or other program initiatives. DFPS also utilizes the Youth Leadership Council to obtain input on the changes to policy to ensure input is received from youth in care and accurately meet the needs of this population.

Statewide changes in protocol and requirements for all advisory councils changed the Youth Leadership Council structure, scope, and deliverables. Committee changes are intended to ensure that vital constituencies are represented to effectively address the scope of the committee's work. Rules were developed and posted for public comment. Although neither the Youth Leadership Council membership nor purpose changed, the council must compile and submit an annual report of activities and events to the CPS Associate Commissioner. Agency rule, 40 Texas Administrative Code §702.515 formally established the Youth Leadership Council and includes its purpose, tasks, reporting requirements, membership, meeting schedule, decision-making process, and date of abolishment. This rule also exempts the Youth Leadership Council's from the "Open Meetings Act" and requirement to submit names of council members for privacy reasons. Council by-laws, created and approved by a majority of the members, guide the Statewide Youth Leadership Council. Statewide Youth Leadership Council meetings were held in November 2018, and January 2018. A future Statewide Youth Leadership Council meeting will be held in June 2019

All youth and young adults who participated in these meetings were between the ages of 16-21 and from a variety of placement settings, including foster homes, congregate care facilities, kinship placements, and Supervised Independent Living.

Activities for FY 2019

Several meetings have been held across the regions to discuss benefits and services available to youth to increase awareness of where they can receive support while in foster care and when they age out of foster care.

The Texas Legislature appropriated state funds for 2018 and 2019 to support regional and state youth leadership councils and Youth Specialist activities. The primary purpose of the funds is to:

- Assist regional Youth Specialists to coordinate and facilitate youth leadership activities and councils;
- Assist DFPS with the development of services, policies, and procedures for youth;
- Create and coordinate leadership opportunities for youth;

- Assist youth in understanding the foster children's bill of rights; and
- Train state and regional youth specialists.

Funds have allowed staff to seek creative, youth-oriented meeting venues and activities to generate interest and encourage youth participation. Activities and events happen at bowling alleys, holiday gatherings at restaurants, movie nights with snacks, and at multipurpose entertainment and restaurant establishments. This allows for youth to also experience normalcy opportunities. Staff reached out to young adults who recently left foster care and offered them paid-opportunities to discuss the transition process from foster care into independence and provide advice on how to become more successful as they transition into adulthood. In addition, the funds have improved participation at the Statewide Youth Leadership Council by allowing for overnight meetings. The overnight Youth Leadership Council meetings have been successful in reducing travel stress and fatigue, allowing for a longer and more robust meeting time, and promoting bonding between members who otherwise would not have much time to build rapport with each other. If additional funds are needed to supplement state funds to support the Youth Leadership Council meetings, staff seek out community resources such as through CASA, Child Welfare Boards, Transition Centers, Post-secondary Institutions of higher learning and faith based community and other local stakeholders.

Opportunities to Practice Daily Living Skills through experiential learning

Foster parents and other providers are required to include training in daily living skills through practical activities such as meal preparation, nutrition education and cooking, use of public transportation when appropriate, financial literacy training to include money management, credit history, and balancing a checkbook, and performing basic household tasks for youth age 14 and older. If the youth has a source of income, the provider must assist the youth in establishing a savings account. Foster parents and caregivers must connect youth and young adults to community resources such as post-secondary education; employment opportunities; and vocational/technical school opportunities. The youth's opportunities to practice daily living skills through experiential learning while in foster care and the receipt of PAL services should complement one another and are discussed and addressed in each core life skill area within the youth's service and transition plans. Foster parents receive training on normalcy from their Child Placing Agency to understand their role in allowing youth to participate in normalcy activities, such as going on outings with friends, going on dates, taking a driver's education course, participating in extracurricular activities, etc. Updates have been made to the FY2018 Residential Requirements Guide to strengthen the experiential life skills requirement and normalcy activity language and includes an updated link to the DFPS website of recently updated resources to aid foster care providers with access to web-based information about life skills and normalcy activities.

4. Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age to complement their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure that program participants recognize and accept their personal responsibility for preparing for and then making the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

DFPS continues to contract and collaborate at the state and regional levels to provide services and supports to youth aging out of DFPS conservatorship. Approaches include case management to help youth access housing, health care, job training and financial support. Agreements between DFPS regions and local workforce boards include strategies for engaging community interest in developing short term housing referrals for youth in transition in all regions, in addition to streamlined referrals, case management, improved employment readiness, job training, and placement opportunities.

To assist youth under 18 in becoming financially independent, the PAL staff have researched banks and credit unions in each region to find youth friendly financial institutions that allow a minor to open a bank account without an adult co-signor. CPS caseworkers cannot co-sign an agreement, providers can volunteer to co-sign but few of them offer to do this. Banks and credit unions that have flexible adult co-signor policies are listed in the finance section of the Texas Youth Connection website. The information posted on the website is current. Youth are encouraged by CPS staff and providers to enter into employment when appropriate and as schedules permit to begin saving to become more financially independent when they age out of care.

Financial Assistance in coordination with Case Management for Young Adults Ages 18-21.

Youth 18 to 21 years of age who have aged out of DFPS conservatorship or leave the DFPS extended foster care program are eligible for up to \$3,000 (with a limitation of no more than \$500 per month) in Chafee after care "room and board" assistance if there is a need or emergency. In FY 2018, PAL staff report 925 young adults received Aftercare Room and Board assistance. Aftercare Room and Board includes rent, rent deposit, utilities, utility deposit, host home and food. In a host home, a young adult rents a room in a family or single adult's home and agrees to basic rules while being largely responsible for meeting their own needs. Aftercare room and board assistance is coordinated with other services and benefits available to this population, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), Medicaid, subsidized housing and social support.

Aftercare Room and Board services are offered through regional Case Management and After Care services contracts. Through these contracts, services are available to youth both in and out of care from ages 16 to 21. A case manager works with the youth on their budget and individual needs prior to providing financial assistance. Aftercare Room and

Board payments are allowed for young adults living with their parent with the following assurances in place: a determination is required by PAL staff that the parent (if a designated perpetrator) not be a threat to the health and safety of the youth; PAL Staff provide contractors with the names of the parents on the service authorization; a rental agreement is in place between the youth and parent; and payment is made to the youth who is then responsible for paying their parent if there is a not a third party to make payment to.

A transitional living allowance of up to \$1,000 to help with initial start-up costs of adult living is distributed in increments of up to \$500 per month, for young adults up to age 21 who meet the DFPS criteria, including participating in Life Skills Training and living in a DFPS or Medicaid paid placement within the 24 months before the allowance is initiated (this criteria can be waived by the PAL Supervisor). In FY2018, PAL staff report a Transitional Living Allowance was provided to 1,033 young adults to help with basic start-up costs in adult living.

Housing

PAL staff refer young adults ages 18 to 21 to the Texas Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees of the Family and Youth Services Bureau for transitional housing, as appropriate. PAL and other CPS staff of each region work with local housing authorities on behalf of youth aging out of care. Local communities organize efforts to provide short and long-term housing opportunities for young adults. Regions 1 and 9 have Family Unification Program vouchers. Region 3 has a partnership with the Dallas and Fort Worth Housing programs and may receive vouchers for housing. In Region 5, the Beaumont housing authority reserved 12 housing vouchers for youth who were in foster care. Region 7 continues its partnership with Lifeworks and Ending Community Homelessness Coalition.

Texas institutions of higher education are required to assist full-time students formerly in DFPS conservatorship or who have legally emancipated in locating temporary housing between academic terms (Christmas and summer holiday breaks). On campus housing is dependent upon availability and if the school chooses to provide housing for the student. Students must request the housing assistance and are encouraged to inquire at financial aid offices, student affairs offices, admissions offices, or housing/residence life/residential living offices. PAL staff provide this information to youth aging out of DFPS foster care. Housing opportunities do not always meet the housing needs of young adults that attend during regular semesters. Additionally, the cost of student housing has risen and is not keeping pace with the college funds currently available to former foster care students. College is becoming increasingly more expensive, which affects the ability of the student to complete their academic program and goals if there is no stable housing available. The Education and Training Voucher funds housing and room and board but these funds are usually not adequate for sufficient housing.

Young adults are offered the opportunity to stay in foster care after age 18 in the Extended Foster Care program and DFPS provides additional housing options for this through the Supervised Independent Living program. Currently, there are 13 contracted providers offering placements in 8 regions in the state.

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs identified youth as an additional targeted population to be included in the agency's annual housing plan. This plan is required to analyze the housing needs of youth and six other population groups. Young adults are referred by CPS Caseworkers and the PAL staff to the local housing authorities to apply for housing services.

A Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Program makes available both affordable housing and supportive services for low-income people with disabilities. Youth with disabilities exiting care who receive services through DFPS are a targeted population for this project; to be eligible, the individual must receive supplemental security income. Participants in the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Program live in apartments within larger affordable housing properties that are funded by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Once in an apartment, tenants pay the equivalent of 30% of their income for rent and the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance program pays the rest of the rent, making it affordable for tenants. The Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Program is a project-based rental assistance program, meaning that part of the tenant's rent is paid or subsidized only if tenant stays living in the property that receives Section 811 Project Rental Assistance funding. The rental assistance does not follow the person if they choose to leave the property and live somewhere else. Supportive services are available to Section 811 Project Rental Assistance tenants through a partnership that the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs has with the Health and Human Service and DFPS. These agencies rely on local service delivery partners to make these services available to Section 811 Project Rental Assistance tenants and tenants can choose to accept the voluntary service. Units are available in metropolitan areas of Austin, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Dallas-Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston, McAllen, and San Antonio.

An increase in transitional living opportunities, particularly in rural communities, is needed to help meet growing needs for safe and affordable housing and provide stability for youth aging out of care.

According to the most recent National Youth in Transition Database data available (FFY17), 19% of 17 year old respondents reported having been homeless in their lifetime. PAL staff reviewed the comparison of the National Youth in Transition Data full cohort of surveys 17-21 provided by the Administration for Children and Families and shared with staff and community.

The PAL staff and contractors partner and coordinate with several Runaway and Homeless Youth Act grantees on the prevention of homelessness through the provision

of aftercare case management services. Some of these Transitional Living programs include Lifeworks/Youth and Family Alliance in Austin, Central Texas Youth Services Bureaus in Belton, and Roy Maas Youth Alternatives in San Antonio.

Extended Foster Care Program

Texas has administered different versions of the Extended Foster Care program since 2006. Under the current policy, a young adult who ages out of conservatorship at age 18 can stay in Extended Foster Care provided the young adult signs a voluntary extended foster care agreement and meets of the eligibility requirements below:

The young adult can stay up to the end of the month of the 22nd birthday if regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or school equivalence certificate (GED); or 21st birthday if:

- regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester);
- actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- is incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition.

Services for young adults participating in the Extended Foster Care program include placement, monthly casework, continued work on Transition Plan goals, Circles of Support, access to the college tuition and fee waiver, use of the Education and Training Voucher funds to assist with educational expenses not related to housing (such as books, supplies, and transportation), and access to PAL classes and staff for assistance with transitional living services. With the exception of After Care Room and Board financial assistance, young adults continue to receive other Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services as noted. Implementation of the Extended Foster Care program optimized the ways that Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services are utilized. Caseworkers and providers ensure young adults are aware of and have access to all services and benefits needed to transition to self-sufficiency.

While in Extended Foster Care, the court continues jurisdiction but DFPS does not maintain legal custody (managing conservatorship in Texas). This allows the court to continue permanency hearings every six months to review progress on transition plan goals and services.

Data to track participation in the Extended Foster Care program is extracted from IMPACT reports that track living arrangements and types of placements. As of February 2019, there were 608 young adults in the Extended Foster Care program. In state fiscal year

2018, there were 1,455 young adults that participated in the Extended Foster Care program. The average stay in Extended Foster care in fiscal year 2017 was 16.6 months. Data collected assists in continuous quality improvement for delivery of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services, particularly in relationship to the growth of the Supervised Independent Living program.

The foster care reimbursement rates are determined by a Health and Human Services rate setting committee and approved by the Texas Legislature. Texas continues to pay a foster care reimbursement rate to a contracted provider rather than paying an amount directly to the young adult in the approved placement.

Regular providers serve all ages of youth and young adults in their programs and are required to be licensed through DFPS or another state agency. Young adults have expressed dislike of the continued use of the term foster care for their situation, continued levels of supervision and restrictions on their activities, and limitations due to licensing restrictions. As a result, DFPS has changed the terminology in policy to reflect that these are young adults, not children or youth. A guide was developed by CPS program and contract staff and by Licensing for providers to encourage age-appropriate activities and to delineate the options currently allowed. DFPS developed a Supervised Independent Living program to allow a young adult more independence while still in care.

Young adults leave or never enter extended foster care because they want to begin making their own decisions free of governmental oversight or they do not agree with the provider restrictions. Young adults who leave prematurely tend to have poor outcomes. When extended foster care placements break down, it is difficult to find another provider willing to accept the person for placement, especially when they have other children and youth in their placement setting.

Unfortunately, some young adults stop meeting the eligibility requirements related to education or work. Since extended foster care is voluntary and conditioned upon eligibility requirements, DFPS does not continue the foster care placement unless the young adult meets eligibility requirements.

Information about Extended Foster Care is updated regularly and posted on the Texas Youth Connection and DFPS public websites. DFPS regularly monitors an Extended Foster Care e-mail account for young adults and others interested in knowing more. CPS staff, PAL program staff, and Youth Specialists continuously encourage youth and young adults to consider staying in Extended Foster Care to complete their education and employment goals.

Supervised Independent Living Placement Program

Texas developed a Supervised Independent Living placement program that utilizes providers obtained through the state's procurement process. Young adults are able to live in age appropriate, non-traditional foster care settings that are regulated by contract.

These settings may include apartments, shared housing, college and non-college dorms, and host homes. As of March 2019, DFPS has thirteen contracted providers in eight regions. In March 2019 there were 117 young adults in Supervised Independent Living placements. Since Supervised Independent Living placements began in May 2013, a total of 554 young adults have participated in a Supervised Independent Living placement (as of February 2019). Information about the program is posted on the DFPS Web site. DFPS continues procurements to increase the number of providers and placements and encourages faith-based organizations and other organizations that serve other at-risk young adults to apply to be providers. DFPS hosts monthly conference calls with current providers to discuss best practices, issues and barriers encountered with young adults enrolled in their programs. This fiscal year DFPS added two new Supervised Independent Living settings at Texas A&M Corpus Christi and Texas A&M Kingsville. These two providers are the first Supervised Independent Living programs that are in college/university settings (Dorms) and are contracted directly with DFPS to be SIL providers.

The Supervised Independent Living program foster care reimbursement rates are determined by the Texas Health and Human Services rate setting committee and approved by the Texas Legislature. Texas continues to pay a foster care reimbursement rate to a contracted Supervised Independent Living program provider rather than paying an amount directly to the young adult. Housing costs are an issue, especially in some areas of the state where the cost of living is high and need to be balanced with the need for the provider to pass along sufficient funds to the young adult so he or she can get experience managing finances to address basic needs (purchasing food, etc.). The current foster care rate is described as a factor that discourages some providers from applying to become a DFPS Supervised Independent Living provider.

Trial Independence Period

After federal law authorized young adults to have a trial independence period after leaving care that would allow them to return for Extended Foster Care if needed and resume their foster care eligibility, the Texas Legislature amended the statutes on extended court jurisdiction. Under current Texas law, young adults turning 18 years in DFPS conservatorship may have a six-month trial independence period that may be changed to a twelve-month trial independence period, if court ordered. During this period, the young adult can still contact their former caseworker for limited assistance, if needed. They can also contact their PAL staff for other transitional living services. In Texas, the court jurisdiction continues during the six or twelve-month trial independence period and issues can be presented to the court, as needed.

Education

The most recent National Youth in Transition Database data available (FFY17) indicated 5% of surveyed 17 year olds finished high school or a GED Certification and 92% were

attending school currently (high school, GED Certification classes, post-high school vocational training or college). DFPS staff will also analyze data such as patterns across the full cohort of youth from ages 17 to 21 snapshot provided by the Administration for Children and Families to find other opportunities to improve.

PAL staff and other DFPS staff ensure that young adults are aware of post-secondary education programs and resources are available for those wanting to pursue higher education goals, including the Education and Training Voucher program, Texas college tuition and fee waiver, and two DFPS scholarships. DFPS staff and providers encourage youth and young adults to explore opportunities available through vocational/technical classes and career schools where the young adult can learn a skill and receive a certification in a shorter period of time than it would take to receive a two or four year degree and that would fit with the goals of the young adult.

Employment and Other Services to Youth with Disabilities

Services to youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs are provided through the team effort of specialized CPS staff in coordination with the child's primary caseworker. CPS employs Developmental Disability Specialists across the state to improve well-being outcomes for children in DFPS Conservatorship. DFPS Developmental Disability Specialists coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission and Health and Human Services to obtain vocational training and employment services for youth and young adults with disabilities. Texas offers supported employment services through programs such as the Medicaid Waiver programs, and the Texas Workforce Commission provides training and support with finding and maintaining employment for youth with disabilities. Additionally, DFPS is a member of the Employment First Task Force that is focused on creating statewide opportunities and policies for individuals with disabilities of working age to obtain and maintain competitive employment and to earn a living wage.

DFPS Developmental Disability Specialists work with the Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authorities to identify and obtain long term services and supports for transitioning youth and young adults with disabilities. DFPS is also represented on Community Resource Coordination Groups, along with the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Education Agency and local community leaders. Community Resource Coordination Groups ensure every youth transitioning from care, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, have an opportunity to prepare and be equipped for a job or become more independent. The intent of the Community Resource Coordination Groups is to promote cross-agency partnering and resource sharing in support of youth transitioning from foster care and from school. The DFPS goal, through coordination of all of these efforts by various specialized staff, is to ensure the individual needs of youth and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs are met.

DFPS Development Disability Specialists assist youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to access long-term services and supports such as obtaining a determination of disability eligibility, accessing local employment assistance, day habilitation or acquiring daily living skills, accessing transportation and other housing assistance, if needed. Other assistance includes obtaining adaptive assistance aides or equipment, specialized therapies, and referrals to help young adults transition from care. DFPS works closely with other state agencies that may include offering long-term supports through Medicaid waiver programs such as Home and Community-based Services that provide a comprehensive array of services that include residential services to support their success in the community.

Texas Youth Hotline

The Texas Youth Hotline is a resource for youth up to 21 years of age, including those who have aged out of care. Youth may contact the hotline for toll free telephone counseling, information and referrals. The hotline can also help young adults locate services available in their communities. The Texas Youth Hotline provides a number where youth or young adults who need assistance can send a text instead of calling the hotline. DFPS Transitional Living Services staff makes regular efforts to ensure The Texas Youth Hotline resource information is current.

Outreach

Outreach efforts to youth and young adults includes flyers, newsletters, brochures, training, local and statewide teen and college conferences, Aging-Out Seminars, youth development events and activities, memos to foster care providers and program updates to external partners, and networking with homeless shelters and transitional living facilities. Regional Youth Leadership Councils assist in getting the word out about Aging-Out Seminars to eligible youth. DFPS staff, stakeholders, youth and young adults contribute to updating information, on the youth-friendly Web site (www.texasyouthconnection.org). This website was recently updated to reflect a more current updated look. Content has been condensed into a more user-friendly format. Additional updates to enhance the website are underway in FY19 to include new sections and adding additional LBGTQ resources.

The National Youth in Transition Database survey is no longer located on the Texas Youth Connection website, due to infrequent use. DFPS identified the phone, in person or mail to be the most frequently used methods to complete the survey. DFPS no longer has a Texas Youth Connection Facebook page, as the majority of youth identified Instagram as their preferred social networking choice. As a result of youth feedback, DFPS launched their Instagram page called Youth Take Flight in FY19 which is located at <https://www.instagram.com/youthtakeflight/>

DFPS does not have a singular awareness campaign on the needs of youth in care but instead relies on regular Instagram postings, the newly revised Texas Foster Care

Handbook for Children, Youth and Young Adults, website stories on "DFPS Delivers", fliers and brochures for specific programs such as the Supervised Independent Living Program, Extended Foster Care program, Circles of Support, the Education and Training Voucher program, and the National Youth in Transition Database. Updates to the Transitional Living Services program section of the public website are made regularly and include updates to the Texas Youth Connection webpage. DFPS staff meet with the agency's Media department to maintain the webpages.

- States or tribes that have amended their title IV-E plan to offer extended foster care to eligible youth to age 21 or are operating a comparable program for youth up to age 21 through state or tribal funding may offer services outlined in purpose #4 to youth up to age 23.

DFPS is currently exploring options and will obtain guidance during the 86th Texas Legislative Session during the spring 2019. At this time there has not been a decision to extend services up to the age of 23.

5. Make available vouchers for education and training, including postsecondary education to youth who have aged out of foster care.

The Education and Training Voucher Program, as described above, is administered statewide through a DFPS contract with Baptist Child and Family Services Health and Human Services of San Antonio. A five-year renewal on this contract was entered into in October, 2018 ending in September 2023.

The contractor works closely with each region and the Transition Centers. The contractor operates a personalized, individualized model with special attention to youth and timely distribution of information and awards. An electronic Education and Training Voucher application is available at <http://discoverbcfs.net/texasetv> to further streamline services for students. Baptist Child and Family Services also has paper applications that can be filled out and submitted and a toll free number for individuals to inquire about the program. The contractor uses informational services provided by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to maintain current information of post-secondary education schools cost of attendance, collects demographic information and tracks youth spending.

From the FFY 17 to FFY18 period, there was a slight increase in enrollment and new applications in the Education and Training Voucher program. Baptist Child and Family Services has attributed some of the issues student may have with enrollment as follows:

- Not meeting the school policies for satisfactory academic progress with a drop in the GPA affecting continued receipt of financial aid;
- Exceeding the cost of attendance for students applying for loans and then applying for Education and Training Voucher funds without understanding the impact;
- Not accessing all funding available even when reminders are sent from staff; or

- Not sending all documents that are needed to complete the application despite follow up from the staff.

Additionally,

- Per outreach surveys conducted by the contractor, some youth are unaware of the program and are not applying.
- Baptist Child and Family Services attributes the following program improvements in FY18 and FY19 to the estimated slight increase:
 - More social presence by updates to the Education and Training Voucher website to make it more user friendly and the addition of an Education and Training Voucher Facebook page;
 - More flexibility with application deadlines and quicker processing times;
 - Addition of monthly follow up to pending applications in an effort to enroll youth sooner in the program; -
 - Increased outreach and communication with youth, staff and the community;
 - Partnered with Transition Centers to host ETV days;
 - Implementation of sending out mass email reminders for application open dates, deadlines, documents needed, etc. to both youth and staff;
 - Implementation of new Chat feature on the ETV website; and
 - Implementation of texting youth for follow up purposes.

Baptist Child and Family Services staff outreach these students to discuss the effects of loans and receiving the voucher, refer underperforming students to the appropriate college offices to sign up for tutoring and mentoring, and notify students to access the remainder of their funds and submit the missing documents to complete the application. If the student is still living with their parent or guardian upon approval for the Education and Training Voucher program, these individuals are required to enter into a rental agreement with the parent or guardian that describes each party's financial obligations for living expenses (housing, room and board, and utilities). Once the agreement is signed, the young adult is paid directly and is responsible for paying the parent or guardian per the rental agreement. This ensures that parents are not directly being paid Education and Training Voucher funds, which are meant for the young adult, and young adults learn financial management and responsibility.

The ETV program will serve youth who were in foster care from out of state that move to Texas to attend school if funding is available. Students who move to Texas and were previously receiving funds from another state will need to continue to receive funds from that state. Out of state students are provided contact information for their states Independent Living Coordinator if they were previously receiving funds in that state to inquire about continuing in the ETV program in their state of origin. If students are unable to access funds in their state of origin, the ETV Program will still serve these students as long as funding is available.

The DFPS Transitional Living Services Team Lead and ETV Specialist assumes certain responsibilities related to individual inquiries received about the program, monitors monthly data entry requirements, clarifies policy, provides training and technical assistance and organizes and disburses information packets to educate and inform communities and assists in the recruitment of youth participants. DFPS uses a handout, in English and Spanish, as an additional tool to inform individuals of the ETV program. These are handed out at various conferences, meetings, and venues to youth, staff and stakeholders. Baptist Child and Family Services created additional marketing materials for youth, providers, colleges, and other stakeholders. Baptist Child and Family Services recently added a Chat feature to their website in FY19 to provide youth with another method of contact.

6. Provide services to youth who, after attaining 16 years of age, have left foster care for kinship guardianship or adoption.

Youth who are the subjects of adoption assistance or permanency care assistance agreements after turning age 16 years old are eligible for the ETV Program. The ETV Program allows eligible youth ages 16 years through the date up to the month the youth turns age 21 or 23 to receive up to \$5,000 annually to cover the cost of attendance for higher education or vocational training. This assists students in achieving their post-secondary educational goals. The caregiver may receive the permanency care assistance monthly benefit of up to \$400 for youth whose authorized service level need is basic. These youth are also eligible for Medicaid. Youth who have left foster care after age 16 through adoption can also qualify for extended adoption assistance. This helps to defray some of the costs associated with adopting a youth with special needs. Other benefits include Medicaid coverage until age 21.

Any person adopted from DFPS conservatorship on or after September 1, 2009 and youth in DFPS conservatorship for whom permanent managing conservatorship was awarded to an individual other than the student's parent on or after September 1, 2009 is eligible for the Texas college tuition and fee waiver.

Information and resource materials related to both the Texas college tuition and fee waiver and the Education and Training Voucher program are provided by DFPS staff, as well as posted on the DFPS Texas Youth Connection, DFPS public, and Education and Training Voucher contractor websites.

7. Ensure children who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18 years of age have regular, on-going opportunities to engage in age or developmentally-appropriate activities as defined in section 475(11) of the Act.

Youth are offered various opportunities both in the region and statewide to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities necessary to transition to successful adulthood. The PAL program provides optional services such as age-appropriate activities and trainings for youth who are ages 14 and 15; independent living supplies; graduation

expenses when not available from other sources. Life skills trainings include age appropriate activities and normalcy opportunities.

The PAL program contracts for statewide conferences such as the Teen Conference at Texas Woman's University, Texas A&M University College Conference, and Austin Community College, Career and Technical conference to provide youth the opportunities to learn about life skills, interact with their peers and have fun while learning. The PAL staff provide Aging-out seminars to youth at age 17 to further enhance what they learned in PAL life skills training classes and provide another opportunity to learn and engage with their peers. The PAL Staff work with community providers to ensure youth celebrate their achievements by offering graduation celebrations, prom events, holiday events, and back to school nights. These events target promoting normalcy in addition to being informative. The CPS state and regional Youth Specialists regularly speak to youth and caregivers about the importance of youth being able to engage in age appropriate activities. DFPS was appropriated state funds support regional and statewide Youth Leadership Council activities. As a result, an additional statewide college conference at Lone Star College-Montgomery was added and regions added an additional regional teen conference each year to include youth ages 14 and older and youth in Residential Treatment Facilities.

DFPS amended rules to strengthen the minimum standards for normalcy. The amendments added definitions for babysitting, normalcy, and unsupervised activities. Additional changes are under way adding a normalcy training requirement for licensed child placing staff and caregivers. Staff and caregivers are required to have two hours of pre-service and annual normalcy training. DFPS has added the requirement to discuss normalcy in the transition plan as well as the permanency hearings for the youth. In September 2015 CPS policy was updated to state that the caregiver can approve all activities unless specifically stated in the child's plan of service.

The DFPS Committee for Advancing Residential Practices meets regularly to discuss strategies to increase training and awareness for residential providers, including normalcy activities. Throughout the past several months, the committee has provided feedback on proposed license types, single case plan and the performance measures as part of the Demonstration Project.

Report activities to coordinate services with other Federal and State programs for youth (especially transitional living programs funded under Part B of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, abstinence programs, local housing programs, programs for disabled youth (especially sheltered workshops), and school-to-work programs offered by high schools or local workforce agencies in accordance with section 477(b)(3)(F) of the Act.

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department and DFPS state office staff participate in quarterly meetings with regional DFPS staff to better coordinate federal Chafee Foster

Care Independence Act programs and other services for older youth and those aging out of care. Special management level meetings are held if needed. DFPS, as the state's IV-E agency, coordinates with Texas Juvenile Justice Department for the pass through of IV-E funds for Texas Juvenile Justice Department and local/county juvenile probation department placements that qualify for IV-E funds.

DFPS contracts with the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to provide Life Skills training for up to 25 youth placed in Title IV-E foster care by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department or a local/county juvenile probation department and have a Child Service Plan which includes a permanency goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, Another Planned Living Arrangement Independent Living, or Another Planned Living Arrangement Community Care. Additionally, DFPS coordinates and provides After Care Room and Board services for eligible young adults that have been placed by local/county juvenile probation department in Title IV-E placements. A monthly list of eligible youth is sent to the Statewide PAL Specialist by the Statewide Texas Juvenile Justice Department Specialist, and forwarded to regional PAL staff to refer to PAL Contractors to provide Life Skills Training. Texas Juvenile Justice Department decided not to post the DFPS Independent Study Guide on their webpage, since a paper version of the DFPS Independent Study Guide is now available as an alternative to attending classes.

DFPS works with local/county juvenile probation departments as needed to support efforts to coordinate service planning regarding youth and families that interact with both systems.

DFPS staff and PAL staff inform youth before they leave care about the Extended Foster Care and Supervised Independent Living programs and the positive advantages of staying in care past age 18 in order to meet their educational or employment goals before they are on their own. Youth and young adults are also informed about the option to return to care, in case this is needed to help with preventing homelessness, to achieve other goals or to access other immediate services. DFPS has discussed with youth how to rebrand the Extended Foster Care program that would not directly associate a young adult with being in "foster care".

The PAL contract case managers refer youth and young adults to community housing services such as homeless shelters, local housing authorities, and other Transitional Living programs offered by providers that may contract with DFPS. A list of available housing resources is maintained in each region. Additionally, DFPS involves other state agencies such as the Department of Aging and Disability Services to staff the more difficult cases where the risk of homelessness is greater because of the needs and challenges to a young adult.

In FFY2017, the most recent National Youth in Transition Database data available, who took the survey at age 17, was 19% reported having been homeless in their lifetime which may include couch surfing.

DFPS has collaborative relationships with the Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (school transition program, transition counselors, and developmental disabilities staff) to ensure youth transitioning from care and from secondary school have the help and support they need to obtain skills for adult living, increased independence, and employment experience and jobs. The Texas Education Agency offers learning support and programs on career and technical education programs with a sequence of courses that provides students with coherent and rigorous content. This content is aligned with challenging academic standards and relevant technical knowledge and skills needed to prepare for further education and careers in current or emerging professions. Youth are offered the opportunity to participate in these programs if interested and as appropriate.

One of the more successful and ongoing initiatives involve building community consortia, which address and resolve barriers students in foster care face as they meet graduation requirements and move into the workforce or continue in completing their post-secondary opportunities.

DFPS and the Texas Workforce Commission share data regarding youth and young adults for the purpose of increasing the number of youth receiving employment and supportive services. For calendar year 2018 80% of youth and young adults referred to local workforce offices or Transition centers received a workforce service. The eleven DFPS regions renewed local agreements with the 28 workforce boards. These agreements will improve educational, training and employment outcomes for youth through effective workforce collaborations. DFPS submits both a quarterly and annual data report of the number of PAL eligible youth referred to workforce centers and transitions and receives a report back from the Texas Workforce Commission of those same youth that received a workforce service or transition center service from the Workforce Advocate. DFPS staff, providers and caregivers provide encouragement to youth and young adults to access local Workforce Solutions offices for employment and training related opportunities, benefits and resources and to register in the Texas job search system, Work in Texas.

DFPS coordinates with the Texas Education Agency, local school districts, and local workforce agencies to introduce youth to employment opportunities and trainings offered. Since Texas law prioritizes workforce services for youth, CPS works to ensure youth are enrolled in employment programs offered by local workforce centers. CPS has a point of contact list for each local workforce board in case youth are having difficulty in accessing workforce services. This point of contact list was recently updated and shared with the PAL staff. Having access to these contacts is beneficial to CPS staff and providers who assist youth with information about workforce programs and other employment services.

If a youth runs from care, DFPS tracks the event in IMPACT and reports the runaway to law enforcement. DFPS revised policy and developed new protocols that have special staff assisting the caseworkers with efforts to locate youth who runaway. The Regional Director Assistant serves as the Missing Child Regional Liaison to coordinate runaway issues between the special investigators and conservatorship staff and ensure regional protocols are in place for completion of regional reports. Staff notify the liaisons when a youth goes missing. The liaisons track this data and report it to state office weekly. This information is reviewed monthly with the liaisons to ensure substantial efforts are made to locate the children. CPS makes efforts to ensure PAL services are available to youth who return from runaway.

DFPS collaborates with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the Texas Department of Public Safety to promote a safe transition to adulthood by reducing the risk that youth and young adults will be victims of human trafficking. The Texas Youth Connection website contains a section that provides youth information about human trafficking that includes the National Human Trafficking Hotline, YouTube public service announcements, and regional resources and contacts. This information is shared through the PAL program at Aging-out seminars, statewide and regional teen conferences, and Circle of Support meetings. Staff are required to complete a webinar training on human trafficking.

As mentioned above, all child-placing agency administrators, treatment directors, child placement staff, child placement management staff, and full-time professional service providers, except those exclusively assigned to provide adoption services must receive 2 hours of pre-service and 2 hours of annual training regarding normalcy (including the prudent parent standard). This must be completed before the person can be a designated person that makes decisions regarding a child's participation in childhood activities. DFPS staff (caseworkers, FAD staff and Kinship Development staff, are required to provide Preparation to Adulthood experiential training. Providers are expected to utilize the following newly updated guides and tools. Youth

CPS provides training to unverified relative and kinship caregivers through Kinship Development Workers. Training includes, but is not limited to defining permanency, recognizing the importance of participation in normalcy activities, supervision and applying reasonable and prudent parent standard, and assessing age appropriate activities. Since this is state mandate, licensing standard, and DFPS policy, each child-placing agency offers this as a part of its pre-service training and annual training requirement. DFPS delivers this training through classroom, webinar, and face-to-face training throughout the year.

Youth in DFPS conservatorship obtain contraceptive services through Medicaid-approved programs. PAL staff and contractors refer and provide youth and young adults to resources available in the community in which they live. Information is provided in PAL Life Skills Training classes about sexual responsibility, healthy relationships and

resources. A sexual responsibility workshop is offered at Texas Teen Conference. The DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention program offers pregnant and parenting teens in DFPS foster care parenting education and basic needs support through the Helping through Intervention and Prevention program. This is an initiative that began in 2014 and is designed to provide services to high risk families with newborns. A young adult over age 18 who is pregnant or parenting may be referred from the Extended Foster Care program and the PAL program to the Helping through Intervention and Prevention program. This program provides home based assessments and a home visiting program. https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/About_Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/programs.asp#hip This program is offered in a limited number of DFPS regions and counties in Texas.

Describe any activities undertaken to involve youth (up to age 21) in the CFCIP plan and other State agency efforts such as the CFSR/PIP process and agency improvement planning efforts.

DFPS engages youth and young adults in all aspects of their work including the development of policy and best practices at the local, state and national levels. Youth in care and alumni participate as partners and advisors. These youth and young adults attend leadership trainings with CPS managers, participate on advisory committees, and conduct presentations with CPS staff. The statewide Youth Leadership Council representatives meet at least three to four times a year via conference calls or in face-to-face meetings to address issues and formulate recommendations for improving services to children and youth in care and those preparing to age out of care. This information is used to development or modify action steps/strategies in the agency's Child and Family Services Plan.

DFPS receives ongoing input from youth and young adults through evaluations provided at the conclusion of contracted service and events, from Aging-Out Seminars and through one on one contact with DFPS staff and CPS leadership. During these meetings and events, DFPS staff receive input from youth and young adults about ways to improve activities related to the National Youth in Transition Database, Child and Family Services Review and Chafee Foster Care Independence Program efforts. Normalcy activities are a part of quarterly structured case readings. Regional and statewide Youth Leadership Council members provide input into the continuous quality improvement of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, National Youth in Transition Database and Child and Family Services Review activities and services. National Youth in Transition Database data is shared with youth during regional and statewide events, Aging-out seminars and regional and statewide Youth Leadership Council meetings.

Describe, if applicable, how the State utilizes, or plans to coordinate with the state Medicaid agency to implement provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) that requires mandatory medical coverage to individuals who are under the age of 26, were in foster care under at age 18.

DFPS and the Health and Human Services Commission developed a process for youth to access Medicaid coverage as seamlessly as possible. In January 2014, the *Former Foster Care Children* program became effective. It provides continuous healthcare coverage through age 25 to young adults who age out of Texas foster care and who were receiving Medicaid when they aged out of care. These young adults receive services in two separate programs based on age. Young adults aged 18 through 20 are enrolled in STAR Health and young adults aged 21 through 25 receive Medicaid through the STAR plan of their choice. The Medicaid for Transitioning Youth continues to be available for young adults up to age 21 who were otherwise not eligible for the Former Foster Care Children healthcare program. This category covers youth who age out of foster care and are not receiving Medicaid, such as youth who at age 18 still had an immigration application pending with the USCIS. DFPS continues to ensure that information is available to Medicaid-eligible older young adults that do not have regular contact with DFPS staff, such as young adults that are at 21 years and older. Information about the STAR and STAR Health Services is available on the DFPS and Texas Youth Connection websites:

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional Living/medical_benefits.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/Transitional_Living/medical_benefits.asp).

Current and former youth in DFPS conservatorship who reside in another state are covered under the Medicaid for Transitioning Foster Care Youth healthcare program if there is an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children in place.

Health and Human Services opted out of providing Medicaid services to both young adults who aged out of care from another state and moved to Texas and to young adults that aged out of Texas foster care and moved to another state. These young adults are advised by DFPS staff to apply for other Medicaid services available in the state they were residing in and are also provided 2-1-1 information to find out if other Medicaid or healthcare programs are available to them in Texas.

The National Youth in Transition Database outcome data provides DFPS with Medicaid coverage data at ages 17, 19 and 21. In FFY2017, the most recent National Youth in Transition Database results available, reported 92% of 17 year olds served had Medicaid coverage. Revisions are underway to the youth survey explanations as part of the IMPACT modernization project. Release is anticipated in 2019. Input was received at the July 2017 statewide Youth Leadership Council Meeting, to ensure the terminology is more youth friendly and Texas specific, which may affect outcome responses about Medicaid coverage.

Information about the Former Foster Care Children healthcare program is provided to youth during Circles of Support, Transition Planning meetings, during PAL services, in Aging-out Seminars, to young adults participating in the Extended Foster Care program, and through the Texas Youth Connection and DFPS public websites. Young adults access the 2-1-1 system and the Your Texas Benefits (www.YourTexasBenefits.com)

Self Service Portal to make changes and apply or re-apply for benefits. Individuals can now download the Your Texas Benefits Mobile App to their phones in order to find an Health and Human Services office, create an account, report changes such as addresses, check status of their case, upload documents, and sign up for alerts.

A two-page Medicaid healthcare coverage chart is used as a handout for young adults. Health and Human Services has developed a power point to be used as a training guide for PAL staff, other DFPS staff and individuals in the community.

Describe the results of the Indian Tribe consultation (Section 477(b)(3)(G)), specifically, as it relates to determining eligibility for benefits and services and ensuring fair and equitable treatment for Indian youth in care:

DFPS entered into a Title IV-E agreement for the purposes of IV-E eligibility with the Alabama Coushatta Tribe on April 12, 2012, although it was not renewed after FY2016. DFPS continues to discuss Title IV-E Tribal/State agreements with the other two Tribes. PAL staff or other DFPS staff coordinate and conduct biannual face to face meetings with the three federally recognized Native American Tribes in Texas (the Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo/Tigua, Kickapoo, Traditional Tribe of Texas and Alabama-Coushatta Tribes) to discuss the provision of transitional living services, including Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services, to eligible Native American youth. PAL staff provide each Tribe with updated information about eligibility for benefits and services of the PAL programs and the Education and Training Voucher program as needed and upon request. The PAL staff are available to train the tribal staff about how tribal youth can apply for the Education and Training Voucher program through the Education and Training Voucher website at www.texasetv.com. Baptist Child and Family Services is available to meet with tribal representatives and tribal youth to assist in applying for the Education and Training Voucher program. Baptist Child and Family Services outreached to each of the federally recognized tribes through email July 2018, November 2018 and April 2019 -to ask if they needed any information or assistance. Contact information is available on the program website or from the PAL staff. On an annual basis, DFPS State Office staff present updates on Chafee benefits to the three Tribes in Texas during biannual Tribal-State meetings and seek their consultation on the adequacy of services provided to tribal youth. Contacts for Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services this year include the following:

- In Region 5, DFPS -PAL staff met with Michelle Thompson-Janis who is the Social Service Director with the Alabama Coushatta Tribe on May 2, 2018. Information was shared regarding transitional services including those offered through the -Preparation for Adult living the Education and Training Voucher Programs. This included sharing information regarding life skills training in addition to the importance and use of the Casey Life Skills Assessment as a tool and resource.

- In Region 8, DFPS staff met with the Kickapoo tribe on July 10, 2018 and have another meeting scheduled April 1, 2019. The DFPS PAL Supervisor and Program Director, met with tribal social work staff Arianna Perez (Program Director), Sydney Rabago (Caseworker) and Selena Gonzalez (Caseworker). DFPS presented and discussed PAL benefits and resources available to tribal youth who meet eligibility. DFPS PAL staff contact information was provided during the meeting. Region 8 provided services to one youth from the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. Verification was received from the tribe. This young adult aged out of foster care and travels to Arizona to visit the Tribe. They receives financial assistance from the tribe to include a monthly stipend. This young adult has been in contact with DFPS PAL staff and is accessing benefits through the state. This young adult has decided to remain in San Antonio and is pursuing his education in Culinary Arts. He continues to work part time while attending school and received DFPS Transitional Living Allowance financial assistance on December 29, 2017 and February 7, 2018.
- In Region 10, the DFPS PAL staff continue to work with the Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo (Tigua Tribe) to help youth continue their heritage and have access to the programs that are available to them through the Tribe. DFPS met with the ICWA-Program Specialist, Nahomi Martinez on September 20, 2017. DFPS Transitional Living Services to include those offered through the Preparation for Adult Living and Education and Training Voucher programs were discussed. NYTD information was also shared with Ms. Martinez during the meeting. DFPS learned the Tigua Tribe has many employment and educational opportunities available. Region 10's Regional Director, Georgina Martinez meets with the Tigua Tribe on a regular basis to discuss tribal needs. Region 10 does not currently have any youth who are of age to receive services who are tribe members. During future meetings with the Tribes, the National Youth in Transition Database data will be discussed. PAL staff keep in contact with the Tribes about youth and young adults eligible to take the National Youth in Transition Database survey and request their participation.

The tribes have not expressed any concerns about accessing the PAL or the Education and Training Voucher programs. Baptist Child and Family Services reports no tribal students applied for the Education and Training Voucher for the -2017-2018 fiscal year.

Report on the state's CFCIP specific accomplishments achieved since the 2015-2019 CFSP and 2016 APSR submission.

DFPS provides statewide Chafee Foster Care Independence and state-paid program services and benefits through its Transitional Living Services Program, which incorporates Preparation for Adult Living, Education and Training Vouchers, and other related services in support of young people 16 to 22 years of age, and in some cases 23,

who are currently or formerly in foster care, or transitioning out of care. In addition, the life skills assessment is provided to youth in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship at age 15 starting in FY18 and age 14 starting in FY19. Other services are provided as funding or resources are available to youth 14 and 15 years of age.

DFPS updated policy and other documents to include the language “transitioning to a successful adulthood”. When information is identified with the former language used (“independent living”), efforts are made to update the materials.

As a result of internal audit recommendations, the Life Skills Training Curriculum Outline has been published in the CPS Policy Resource Guide to meet the auditors’ recommended changes to the Financial Management and Life Decisions/Responsibilities core element sections. A standard quality review process for Life Skills Training Class observations was implemented in for consistency and uniformity statewide to include ratings criteria and separate evaluations for trainers or guest speakers. PAL staff share results of the completed reviews with contract staff and state office for contract performance monitoring. The audit recommendations formalized a review process for life skills training and case management services when the contract is on the statewide monitoring plan. PAL staff now monitor for quality and content of services provided by a contractor and contract managers continue to monitor for contract compliance (programmatic and fiscal). Monitoring tools (forms) and a process guide are being utilized.

In an effort to increase completion of life skills training by youth who are 18 and older and leave substitute care, the Independent Study Guide was revised and a paper version for those youth who do not have computer access was completed in the summer 2017.

Foster Care Bill of Rights Updates

There have been no substantive changes to the CPS Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care that became effective September 1, 2015.

Personal Documents-Federal and State Legislation DFPS currently provides certain personal documents and other information to a youth:

- when a youth exits DFPS conservatorship,
- when the youth ages out, or
- before age 16 and before the youth turns age 18.

DFPS provides a copy and the *original* (or certified copy) of the youth's birth certificate, social security card, and a state identification card at age 16. At age 18 and older, DFPS provides the youth their birth certificate, social security card, and state identification card 30 days before leaving care, unless youth already has these documents. The youth and caregiver now sign a form and indicate they are in receipt of these documents.

Credit Reports

Youth ages 14 up to age 18, are notified by their caseworker when their credit report was processed. These reports are batch processed annually, until the youth is discharged from DFPS care or turns 18. An email address is available for staff to submit individual credit report requests or seek technical assistance. The address is: CPSCreditReports@dfps.state.tx.us.

Post-Secondary Education Event

The 2018 *Education Reach for Texas* conference was held June 1-2, 2018 at Embassy Suites, Denton. Another conference is planned for June 6-7, 2019. DFPS Transitional Living Services staff helps plan these annual conferences and conducts workshops to inform the college foster care student liaisons about youth and transitional living services.

Human Trafficking

The CPS PAL policy contained in the CPS Handbook includes human trafficking requirements as it relates to the federal legislation. The PAL Life Skills Training Curriculum includes training on what services and supports are available to victims of human trafficking, including reporting alleged abuse to local law enforcement. Life Skills training contracts and PAL contracts for case management services include this same information.

DFPS has information on the Texas Youth Connection website about how to find out more about human trafficking and where to go to get help.

In the contract, sections on the Education and Training Voucher website resources about Human Trafficking were added to include contacting the PAL staff for help or to call the 800 number posted.

College Foster Care Student Liaisons and Memorandum of Understanding-State Legislation

State colleges and universities are required to appoint foster care student liaisons. Legislation also requires DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to enter into a memorandum of understanding to:

- Exchange information to facilitate the evaluation of educational outcomes for former foster care students;
- CPS will provide annually a demographic information to the Board of former foster care students enrolled in state colleges/universities;

- The Board will provide CPS aggregate on the identified educational outcomes with demographic information received;
- CPS and the Board will determine educational outcomes that will include student's academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance, and others to be identified and relevant to the purpose of the evaluation;
- CPS may authorize the Board to provide education research centers demographic information that allows the centers to perform additional analysis for educational outcomes only for youth in foster care.

This Memorandum of Understanding was finalized in January 2016 and data exchange occurred between DFPS and the Board in December 2016. Data from that exchange is still being analyzed and a final annual report is in process. The report will be shared with CPS staff, stakeholders and members of the Commission and the Post-postsecondary and Secondary education workgroup.

Homeless Youth Survey-State Legislation

DFPS is currently working with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the lead agency to assist in implementing legislation, which requires defining homeless children or youth that were involved with DFPS. Implementation efforts are done in conjunction with the Texas Interagency Council for the Homeless and the Texas Network for Youth Services to conduct a survey on homeless youth in Texas and analyze the data collected.

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard-State Legislation

Statute empowers substitute caregivers to approve or disapprove a child's participation in activities based on a caregiver's own assessment and availability to help facilitate a child's access to these activities, using reasonable and prudent parent standards, without prior approval of DFPS. CPS policy specifies that, unless indicated on the child's plan of service, the caregiver may make decisions regarding normalcy activities based on the use of the reasonable and prudent parent standard. Webinars were used for staff to ensure they understand the importance of normalcy for all foster children and youth and staff receive refresher training on an annual basis.

Public Private Partnership

The Public Private Partnership was appointed as the group to assist with Foster Care Redesign and the new model, Community Based Care. The partnership includes participation by a foster care alumni, as well as members of the judiciary, foster care providers, advocates, provider associations, a DFPS Advisory Council member, and DFPS executive staff.

Improve activities related to National Youth in Transition Database, Child and Family Service Review, and Chafee Foster Care Independence Program

- During Aging-Out seminars and other youth events, DFPS staff receive input from youth and young adults about ways to improve activities related to National Youth in Transition Database, Child and Family Service Review and Chafee Foster Care Independence Program services. Normalcy activities are now a part of structured quarterly case readings. Regional and statewide Youth Leadership Councils are other venues where youth and young adults provide input into the continuous quality improvement of Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, National Youth in Transition Database and Child and Family Service Review activities and services. The National Youth in Transition Database FFY17 survey -results were discussed at the January 31, 2019 statewide Youth Leadership Council Meeting. During this meeting, the youth offered the following comments:
 - Data is interesting because it represents real people and real things;
 - Data snapshot chart is liked because it is self-exploratory;
 - Encouraged to see the high number of youth enrolled in college; and
 - A good mentor would be someone younger and more relatable to youth. They could have been through the system or not, prefer the mentor only have one mentee.

National Youth in Transition Database data is shared with youth during regional and statewide events, Aging-out seminars, Circle of Support meetings, and regional and statewide Youth Leadership Council meetings. Use of the data snap shot materials provided by the Administration for Children and Families has helped with the discussions as youth have stated it is easy to follow. PAL staff have been increasing their efforts to share the National Youth in Transition Database data with stakeholders. Information is shared in a variety of ways such as during community meetings with Court Appointed Special Advocates, meetings with tribal representatives, internal DFPS foster parent trainings, internal unit meetings with DFPS caseworkers, meetings with Child Placing Agencies, court hearings and during PAL contract provider meetings. As a result of these discussions, efforts have been made to increase employment opportunities and relationships with Workforce Boards, increase the number of youth who go onto post-secondary education, increase the number of youth who complete life skills training, and increase the number of mentors available since caring adults are an essential piece to a youth's success. The Annual Report template, which is filled in by regional PAL staff, includes progress on these efforts. Here are questions that are asked in the Annual Report template:

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD). Describe regional efforts made with the following:

- discussion of NYTD data with stakeholders to include youth, courts and other stakeholders;

- service improvements made as a result of NYTD data results; and
- break down of any NYTD data with other system data available to region and use to determine any local patterns and trends for example in the areas of housing or education.

The following represent some regional examples of improvements that are in process. Region 1 led discussions about NYTD data unit meetings. Region 2 continues to share NYTD data and information as follows: Circle of Support meetings and Aging-out Seminars. CASA, Child Placing Agencies, PAL Contract Providers and CPS staff. The region is placing more emphasis on obtaining youth's email addresses, cell phone numbers and encouraging youth to utilize aftercare services. Region 3 continues to discuss the data results with the PAL contract provider through contract meetings to tailor services to better suit the needs of youth and young adults. Region 3 has strengthened its relationships with local Workforce Boards and continues to bring all the boards together for regular meetings to share ideas and resource information to help youth to gain employment. Region 4 has ensured that youth that were surveyed in their region have consistent access to Medicaid and staying connected to PAL aftercare services. Region 5 continues to work on increasing awareness of the Workforce Center and employment opportunities for youth and awareness of PAL services. Region 6 continues to discuss NYTD data and identify areas for improvement with residential providers, foster parents, child-placing agency staff, caregivers and other stakeholders throughout the fiscal year. Region 7 has an emphasis on assisting youth with filling out paperwork for post-secondary education. They are also working to increase the number of youth who access Medicaid and pursue higher education. Region 8 continues to use NYTD feedback and results to increase housing community partners. In Region 9, the Ector County Child Protection Court Judge has developed a "community committee" which meets on a quarterly basis in the Odessa area. The committee is made up of community stakeholders, CPS staff, teachers and professors from the local education facilities, as well as local child placing agencies, etc. During these meetings, the survey results are discussed to identify resources within the region to better assist youth. As a result of the NYTD data results regarding the low percentage of youth utilizing post-secondary education, Region 10 provided youth in attendance with post-secondary information at their Regional Teen Conference. Region 11 is working on normalcy improvement and employment. Its contract provider has added a new Transition Center in Harlingen, which has some of the highest unemployment rates in the state. They are also working with Cameron County to get housing vouchers.

All regions are working to increase life skills training completion rates for the number of youth who leave substitute care at age 18 or older. Youth were surveyed to get input on their preferred method of training, incentives, and whether they get the opportunity to practice life skills in their placement. Results of these surveys have been shared with internal staff to help with locating potential incentives to provide youth who complete the

training. General results have been shared with a statewide workgroup in FY18 who are working on recommendations to enhance life skills training. A high percent of youth surveyed prefer classroom training over on line training which will be considered during the workgroup discussions.

National Youth in Transition Database data collection has continued to improve. Regular technical assistance is provided by State Office to staff who input the information into our IMPACT system. Additionally, a NYTD Manual is available to staff to utilize when they have questions or need details about the data collection. State Office continues to review PAL contract provider documentation as compared to what is entered in IMPACT prior to NYTD submissions. Feedback is provided to the staff on what is working and areas for improvement which they in turn make efforts to correct or educate their provider on needed changes to documentation on forms. These efforts have improved the accuracy and consistency of data entry statewide. Texas continues to offer an incentive to youth ages 19 (\$50) and 21 (\$100) to complete the survey and maintains regular contact with the random sample of youth selected to take the survey, which has contributed to in a high survey completion rate. Also, Texas continues to utilize the statewide PAL staff to enter service data and collect survey outcomes data. Having a well-trained, small group to enter this data has contributed to our success. Texas has been in compliance with National Youth in Transition Database reporting requirements since data collection started in 2010.

Texas is not currently on the federal review schedule for NYTD during 2019. Texas volunteered and successfully participated in a federal review in 2013. Since the review, Texas has made efforts to make improvements based on site visit recommendations such as correcting how some data is reported and mapped in the system. Once Texas is notified about a review date, general and personal notifications will go out to appropriate parties both within and outside the agency to outline how input will be helpful to the review. Since Texas has experienced a prior review, lessons learned will carry forward with any future reviews.

PAL staff continue to provide recent Texas NYTD data results and have discussions about the data with DFPS staff, youth and community partners such as CASA, Post-secondary institutions, Judges, and contract providers. Staff will assess input they receive and incorporate suggestions to improve services or data collection going forward.

Education and Training Voucher program for Tribal Youth

The PAL staff inform and are available to train tribal staff about how tribal youth can apply for the Education and Training Voucher program through the Education and Training Voucher website at www.texasetv.com. Baptist Child and Family Services is available to meet with tribal representatives and tribal youth to assist in applying for the Education and Training Voucher program. From the FY17 contract amendment, the Education and Training Voucher staff began outreach and marketing activities to tribes in 2017. Contact

information is available on the programs website or from the PAL staff. DFPS has not received any suggestions from tribes for improvement of National Youth in Transition Database data collection. PAL staff will keep in contact with the tribes about youth and young adults eligible to take the National Youth in Transition Database survey and request their participation. As reported by Baptist Child and Family Services (as of April 2019), no tribal youth have applied for the Education and Training Voucher program.

2015 – 2019 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) Final Report & 2020 - 2024 CFSP Requirements

VII. Chafee and ETV

ii. Education and Training Vouchers Program (ETV)

► *Describe the methods the state uses to operate the Education and Training Voucher program efficiently. Information includes involving youth and young adults in assessments, improvements, and evaluations of the Education and Training Voucher Program.*

Education and Training Voucher program operations are provided on a statewide basis by Baptist Child and Family Services of San Antonio under a five-year contract (FFY 2018-2023). Baptist Child and Family Services Health and Human Services employs an Education and Training Voucher Lead staff and four Education and Training Voucher staff members to administer the program statewide Baptist Child and Family Services Health and Human Services has two staff that specifically provide case management activities, outreach, and marketing services for the Education and Training Voucher program in an effort to increase enrollment in the program, retain more students in the program, and to promote and introduce more students to short term vocational/technical certification programs to learn a specific skill. In addition the primary responsibility of Baptist Child and Family Services is to verify Education and Training Voucher eligibility, collect certain demographic information (gender, age, and race), track which institutions of higher education the students are attending, process applications and issue voucher payments either to the student or to vendors. Policies, processes, and forms are continually fine-tuned with Baptist Child and Family Services and solutions for improvements are discussed. The program continues to receive regular feedback from the Texas Statewide Youth Leadership Council, Education and Training Voucher participants, DFPS staff, providers, partners and other public and private organizations. DFPS Transitional Living Services and Legal staff submit questions to the Administration for Children and Families to obtain additional guidance on the Education and Training Voucher program.

Baptist Child and Family Services provides information to students and providers on the Education and Training Voucher Program through their website at <http://discoverbcfs.net/texasetv>. A Chat feature was added to their website in FY2019. The Education and Training Voucher Facebook page provides reminders, updates and other pertinent information at <https://www.facebook.com/texasetv>. The contractor offers both paper and electronic versions of the Education and Training Voucher application on this website, which further streamlines services for applicants. This webpage is linked with the Texas Youth Connection Web site to provide additional information about the Education and Training Voucher program and other educational resources such as the state college tuition and fee waiver, college housing information and information about two DFPS Scholarships. Both websites have links to the [College for All Texans](#) website,

sponsored by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and offer information about paying for college, finding the right college, and college costs. The Board approved adding whether the student was a dependent or ward of the court on the Apply Texas application which helps schools with outreach and support efforts. This common application is used by students to apply to higher education institutions in Texas and is currently available to applicants.

Baptist Child and Family Services maintains and updates a toll-free number (877-268-4063) to provide information and answer questions about the Education and Training Voucher programs. On the Education and Training Voucher website is a section about Human Trafficking resources and where an applicant or the staff can call for assistance.

Report on the state's specific accomplishments achieved since the 2015-2019 CFSP submission.

Baptist Child and Family Services provided case management activities, outreach, and *marketing services for the Education and Training Voucher program as an effort to increase enrollment in the program, retain more students in the program, and promote and introduce more students to short term vocational/technical certification programs to learn a specific skill.* The contract states that Baptist Child and Family Services is to:

- Increase awareness of the Education and Training Voucher program statewide through outreach, marketing and training;
- Promote opportunities and awareness to eligible students and others about vocational/ technical schools and certification programs;
- Explore efforts to retain existing Education and Training Voucher participants and recruit new Education and Training Voucher participants;
- Explore options with students on how to expedite processing the Education and Training Voucher application by allowing Education and Training Voucher Coordinators access student enrollment records;
- Explore any common trends explaining why students are not completing or fully utilizing the Education and Training Voucher program;
- Report on the "Outreach, Market, and Training" activities including efforts to increase contacts;
- Track an increase in the number of new Education and Training Voucher participants associated with the expectations of the amendment; and

- Request that Education and Training Voucher applications be reviewed and approved if appropriate (meet ETV program criteria and attending school), if submitted after the deadline period.

Baptist Child and Family Services employs two personnel (Education and Training Voucher Specialists) to meet the expectations of the Education and Training Voucher contract. DFPS continued to introduce and promote to youth and young adults' vocational/technical training opportunities available through community college where the college tuition waiver can also be utilized and which can lead to more employment opportunities in a shorter time frame.

In addition to assisting and supporting Education and Training Voucher participants with 2 or 4 year degree plans, the Education and Training Voucher Specialist promoted vocational/technical programs to current and former foster care students and others as another post-secondary education option. This included:

- Researching and visiting colleges, universities, etc. to determine the types of vocational/technical training program opportunities available;
- Informing students and other interested parties on how to locate and enroll in these programs;
- Providing the schools program contact information to interested parties;
- Posting on the ETV webpage examples of training programs available by school and region;
- Developing or using existing material related to vocational/technical skills training programs;
- Informing entities listed in **Outreach, Market, and Training** about vocational/technical school opportunities either individually or at conferences and events;
- Creating a separate section on the BCFS ETV webpage with the above information; and
- Other activities associated with promoting vocational/technical opportunities.

The Education and Training Voucher Specialist provided support services as needed to students in an effort to maintain existing participation. The specialist reviewed student files each semester to determine who may be at risk of dropping out or losing federal financial assistance and/or Education and Training Voucher funds, how many incomplete applications were received and finding out why, how many are showing a grade point average below 2.0, and situations where a student may need assistance to stay in school

or need a new evaluation of their educational goals. The Education and Training Voucher Specialist may also contact students and provide referrals or information about the appropriate school or community support services or school resources that a student may need.

When necessary, programmatic and policy updates were provided at the Statewide Preparation for Adult Living staff meetings throughout the year and at Chafee or state funded College and Teen conferences and other events such as at the Education Reach for Texas conferences where youth, young adults, DFPS staff, providers, community partners and institutions of higher education are in attendance

Since 2016, a post-secondary education committee has been led or attended by the Transitional Living Services Team Lead staff and a University of Texas at Austin staff with the assistance of the Children's Commission, stakeholders and staff, addressed foster youth and young adults as they achieve higher education goals, as part of recommendations identified in the Texas Blueprint report. This committee distributed the "Texas Higher Education Foster Care Liaisons Information and Resource Guide" to schools and stakeholders in summer 2017. In FY18, the following deliverables were finalized: Tuition Fee Waiver Activation Process Chart, Tuition Fee Waiver Video, and input on the Apply Texas application question to determine if a youth was in foster care. Most workgroup members from the post-secondary education committee and several other community experts participated in a workgroup in FY2018 to implement new legislation which requires DFPS to create a Career Development and Education Program that assists youth in obtaining a high school diploma or equivalency certificate and industry certifications, provides career guidance, and informs youth about the Tuition Fee Waiver in Texas. Workgroup members contributed information about known services, gaps, solutions and recommendations. A report was submitted to the Texas Legislature September 1, 2018 outlining the program and recommendations. DFPS plans to meet with workgroup members bi-annually to discuss updates to the program. A meeting is planned for summer 2019. DFPS is in process of posting information about the Career Development and Education Program on the DFPS website under Transitional Living Services, as the workgroup agreed that Texas has many career and education resources but identified the need to place them in one central location.

The Education and Training Voucher state office program staff continue to work with DFPS Legal, Purchased Client Services and the Finance/Budget departments, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to refine and streamline program operations, practices and policies and to promote the Education and Training Voucher program. Currently, when a foster care student fills out the Free Application for Federal Assistance, the student is directed to the lead state Independent Living Coordinator to verify whether the student was in foster care at the age 13 to qualify for federal student aid and to determine what other CPS benefits may be available to the student such as the Education and Training Voucher and Tuition Fee Waiver. DFPS staff

and providers are regularly encouraging youth and young adults to explore opportunities available through career and technical classes or schools where the young adult can learn a skill and receive a certification in a shorter period of time than it would take to receive a two or four year degree and that may fit with the goals of the young adult.

The Education and Training Voucher program contract follows the federal fiscal year schedule and reports data including the unduplicated number of Education and Training Vouchers awarded for each semester, academic years (Fall to Summer) since the vouchers are primarily used during this time period and for the school year (July 1st to June 30th). This information is available from the Baptist Child and Family Services upon request. Each year the goal of the Education and Training Voucher program is to increase the number of students that can access these funds. Funds have been appropriated to cover a portion of the administrative costs for the Education and Training Voucher program and were incorporated into the new amended contract.

DFPS reports Education and Training Voucher services provided to youth and young adults to the National Youth in Transition Database each reporting period. Service data is reviewed for continuous quality program improvement.

The Education and Training Voucher program serves youth who were in foster care from out of state and moved to Texas to attend school, when funding is available. Students who move to Texas and were previously receiving funds from another state will need to continue to receive funds from that state. Out of state students are provided contact information for their state's Independent Living Coordinator if they were previously receiving funds in that state to inquire about continuing in the Education and Training Voucher program in their state of origin.

Education and Training Voucher funds are not used to pay for any living costs of youth ages 16 through age 17 who are in DFPS conservatorship and living with a parent/guardian or if they are young adults enrolled in the Extended Foster Care or Supervised Independent Living program. If a student (over age 18) is living with a parent and attending school, a rental agreement between the parent and student is strongly recommended with each party agreeing to pay their share of living expenses like rent and utilities. The student receives the funds and is responsible for paying the parent the expenses agreed to in a rental agreement. In addition to Baptist Child and Family Services monitoring how funds are spent, this payment method also teaches the student about financial management and responsibility.

The Education and Training Voucher program website has information to assist staff and victims of human trafficking on how to receive assistance. Additionally the home page was revised to promote and encourage students to explore vocational and technical schools for skills trainings and certifications.

Describe the methods the state will use to: (1) ensure that the total amount of educational assistance to a youth under this and any other federal assistance program does not exceed the total cost of attendance (as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965); and (2) to avoid duplication of benefits under this and any other federal or federally assisted benefit program. (See sections 477(b) (3) (J) and (i) (5) of the Act, and Attachment C of this PI.)

Baptist Child and Family Services Health and Human Services, the Education and Training Voucher program provider, ensures that educational assistance to students who have applied for the Education and Training Voucher program and other federal financial assistance do not exceed the total cost of attendance. A student must submit a budget worksheet, along with the school's financial aid award letter/notification or a school payment voucher, which indicates the amounts and sources of any financial aid (federal and state) the student is receiving for the academic year. All eligible students are required to submit a Free Application for Federal Assistance to determine the federal student aid program to which the student may be eligible. Students must submit a renewal Free Application for Federal Assistance each year they enroll in school.

In Texas, the state college tuition and fee waiver is factored into the costs of attendance. The Education and Training Voucher staff uses this information to calculate the amount of Education and Training Voucher funds the student is eligible for each academic or school program year. If the student's cost of attendance, as set out by the institution the student is attending, is fully covered through other funding sources Education and Training Voucher funds cannot be awarded. In cases like this, students are advised to visit the financial aid office to see if a cost of attendance adjustment can be made if there is proof that class costs cannot be met with existing funds, for example a required specialized software program is needed for a class. If approved, the student can resubmit a revised financial aid letter and budget sheet with a request to have Education and Training Voucher funds pay for these additional costs if funds are available to the student.

From the FFY 17 to FFY18 period, there was a slight increase in enrollment and new applications in the Education and Training Voucher program. Baptist Child and Family Services has attributed some of the issues student may have with enrollment as follows:

- Not meeting the school policies for satisfactory academic progress with a drop in the GPA affecting continued receipt of financial aid;
- Exceeding the cost of attendance for students applying for loans and then applying for Education and Training Voucher funds without understanding the impact;
- Not accessing all funding available even when reminders are sent from staff; or
- Not following through with sending all documents that are needed to complete the application despite follow up from the staff.

- Per outreach surveys conducted by the contractor, some youth are unaware of the program and are not applying.
- Baptist Child and Family Services attributes the following program improvements in FFY18 and FFY19 to their estimated slight increase:
 - More social presence by updates to the Education and Training Voucher website to make it more user friendly and the addition of an Education and Training Voucher Facebook page;
 - More flexibility with application deadlines and quicker processing times;
 - Addition of monthly follow up to pending applications in an effort to enroll youth sooner in the program;
 - Increased outreach and communication with youth, staff and the community;
 - Partnered with Transition Centers to host ETV days;
 - Implementation of sending out mass email reminders for application open dates, deadlines, documents needed, etc. to both youth and staff;
 - Implementation of new Chat feature on the ETV website; and
 - Implementation of texting youth for follow up purposes.

Baptist Child and Family Services staff will continue to outreach to these students to discuss the effects of loans and receiving the voucher, refer underperforming students to the appropriate college offices to sign up for tutoring and mentoring, and notify students to access the remainder of their funds and to submit the missing documents to complete the application.

Baptist Child and Family Services staff will continue to contact all students who do not receive the full, allowed fund amount to return to the financial aid office to discuss having the cost of attendance adjusted so that the student can receive the full amount of the benefit. Information on how students can request an adjustment is posted on the website. In the Extended Foster Care or Supervised Independent Living programs where student's housing or room and board expenses are paid for from these programs, Baptist Child and Family Services ensures that Education and Training Voucher funds are not duplicating these same expenses. The Education and Training Voucher eligibility form requires the Preparation for Adult Living staff to indicate if a student is in the Extended Foster Care program or if the student is living with a parent.

Collaborations with Tribes (section 477 (b) (3) (G), Social Security Act.

Preparation for Adult Living staff provide each of the three federally recognized Tribes located in Texas with updated information about eligibility for benefits and services of the Preparation for Adult Living programs and the Education and Training Voucher program as needed and upon request, including where tribal youth can go to apply for the Education and Training Voucher program which is at www.texasetv.com. The

Preparation for Adult Living staff are available to provide training to tribal staff in order to better inform tribal youth about Chafee Foster Care Independent Program benefits. Baptist Child and Family Services will meet with tribal representatives and tribal youth to assist in applying for the Education and Training Voucher program. Contact information is available on the program website or from the Preparation for Adult Living staff and meetings are coordinated with these staff. Preparation for Adult Living staff, regional directors or the CPS Tribal Liaison consult annually or upon request with the tribes. Consultations include which tribal member was contacted, location, dates, and information about what was discussed, including child specific cases if necessary. As of April 2019, no tribal youth have applied to the Education and Training Voucher program.

Report on the state's postsecondary specific accomplishments achieved since the 2015-2019 CFSP submission.

For the FFY 2018 contract period Baptist Child and Family Services provided case management activities, outreach, and marketing services for the Education and Training Voucher program in an effort to increase enrollment in the program, retain more students in the program, and promote and introduce more students to short term vocational/technical certification programs to learn a specific skill. These services were included in the contract renewal.

DFPS staff and providers encourage youth and young adults to explore career or technical class opportunities available through community colleges where the young adult can learn a skill and receive a certification in a shorter period of time than it would take to receive a two or four year degree and that may fit with the goals of the young adult.

In 2017, general revenue funds were appropriated for the biennium to cover a portion of the administrative costs for the Education and Training Voucher program. These funds were incorporated into the FY 18 and FY 19 contract period.

The Preparation for Adult Living staff are available to provide training to tribal staff in order to better inform tribal youth about Chafee Foster Care Independent Program benefits. Baptist Child and Family Services is available to meet with tribal representatives and tribal youth to assist in applying for the Education and Training Voucher program. Contact information is available on the programs website or from the Preparation for Adult Living staff.

Highlights of Chafee Services Provided in FY2015-2019

DFPS provided Chafee services through the Preparation for Adult Living program as described in the required update. Services included the following:

- A Life skills assessment was provided to youth at age 16 or older to assess youth's strengths and needs. DFPS was legislatively required starting in FY 18, to provide assessments to youth who were in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS at age 15 and at age 16 for youth in foster care. Starting in FY19, assessments are provided to youth who were in the Permanent Managing Conservatorship of DFPS starting at age 14 and age 16 for youth in foster care. An annual review of life skills learned is conducted and documented the Child's Plan of Service.
- Life Skills Training classes were provided to youth starting at age 16. An independent study guide was provided as an alternative to classes. Two versions of the independent study guide were offered during this review period-website based and paper versions. The paper guide was added during this review period to accommodate youth who did not have access to a computer. DFPS was legislatively required to collaborate with stakeholders in 2018 to develop a plan to standardize the curriculum for the Preparation for Adult Living program that ensures youth age 14 or older (younger than age 21) are enrolled and receive relevant and age appropriate information and training. A report was submitted to the legislature December 1, 2018. DFPS will take action to meet recommendations in the plan with continued collaboration with stakeholders in FY19 and beyond. In addition, during this period, DFPS made efforts to increase life skills training completion. DFPS increased the life skills training completion rate from 76% in FY16 to 91% in FY18. DFPS is on target to meet the target goal of 92% in FY19.
- Supportive services were offered to address youth expenses such as: graduation expenses, tutoring, driver education fees, etc.
- Transitional Living Allowance up to \$1000 for help with initial start-up costs distributed in up to \$500 increments to young adults up to age 21 who meet the DFPS eligibility criteria such as completion of life skills training.
- After Care Room and Board assistance (ages 18-21) based on need up to \$500 per month for rent, utilities, utility deposits, and food not to exceed \$3000 of accumulated payments per young adult.
- Case Management services were provided to youth and young adults to assist them with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination.

- Regional and statewide conferences and events were provided to include Aging-out seminars for youth age 17 to reinforce information learned in life skills training classes. Plans are underway to rebrand and update Aging-out seminar materials and tools to ensure more experiential activities are included which will go into effect in FY2020.
- Additional Transitional Living Services included: Tuition and Fee Waivers, Youth Leadership Councils, agreements with state office Texas Workforce Commission and local Workforce Development Boards, collaborations with community partners such as post-secondary education, Extended Foster Care Program, Supervised Independent Living, and others.

DFPS provided Education and Training Voucher services in FY2015-2019 through their contract provider Baptist Child and Family Services as outlined in the update. Examples of enhancements to the Education and Training Voucher program during this time period included the following:

- Addition of a Chat feature to the Education and Training Voucher website.
- Updates to forms utilized by the Education and Training Voucher program such as the Evaluation form completed by students.
- Addition of contractor staff to increase outreach efforts. Outreach included a webinar to staff and additional presentations to youth and community partners.
- **Education and Training Vouchers Texas:**

Time Period	Number of Education and Training Vouchers Awarded	Number of New Education and Training Vouchers Awarded
2018-2019 (July 2, 2018-June 30, 2019)	542	229
Time Period	Number of Education and Training Vouchers Awarded	Number of New Education and Training Vouchers Awarded
2017-2018 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018)	581	284

Methodology used to gather and report data includes the following: The contract with Baptist Child and Family Services to provide ETV services outlines how information is to be captured, the methodology, and how monitoring is performed by DFPS contract staff to review their accounting practices, records and how information is captured in their

system. The contractor assigns each youth a unique number when they enter their name into their database. Each of these youth's personal information is entered into their system. If duplicate information is entered, their system notifies the contractor. The contractor is able to provide the number of youth awarded vouchers during certain time periods based on information entered into their system.

The delivery of the Chafee Preparation for Adult Living and Education and Training Voucher services helped DFPS to achieve the strategies and objectives outlined in Sections 2.4 e, 2.4 f and 2.4 g.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

7. Targeted Plans

- i. Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan***
- ii. Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan***
- iii. Disaster Plan***
- iv. Training Plan Part I and Part II***

**(Please refer to attachments 7i, 7ii, 7iii and 7iv. submitted separately)*

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

ACYF-CB-PI-19-02



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

The State of Texas

Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan 2020-2024 CFSP Requirements

- 8. Financial Information
 - i. Title IV-B, Subpart 1
 - ii. Title IV-B, Subpart 2
 - iii. CFS - 101

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

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2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

8. Financial Information

i. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1

Section 424(b)(2)(c) LIMITATION ON USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS FOR CHILD CARE, FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS, OR ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS.—The total amount of Federal payments under this subpart for a fiscal year beginning after September 30, 2007, that may be used by a State for expenditures for child care, foster care maintenance payments, or adoption assistance payments shall not exceed the total amount of such payments for fiscal year 2005 that were so used by the State.

Texas did not expend any title IV-B, subpart 1 funds in fiscal year 2005 for child care, foster care maintenance or adoption assistance. In accordance with this limitation, the state certifies that no title IV-B, subpart 1 funds were expended for these purposes in 2017 or 2018.

Section 424(b)(2)(d) LIMITATION ON USE BY STATES OF NON-FEDERAL FUNDS FOR FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS TO MATCH FEDERAL FUNDS.—For any fiscal year beginning after September 30, 2007, State expenditures of non-Federal funds for foster care maintenance payments shall not be considered to be expenditures under the State plan developed under this subpart for the fiscal year to the extent that the total of such expenditures for the fiscal year exceeds the total of such expenditures under the State plan developed under this subpart for fiscal year 2005.

Texas expended \$8,373,909 non-federal funds for foster care maintenance payments in fiscal year 2005 as required 25% match for title IV-B, subpart 1. For fiscal year 2017, the state certifies that \$8,373,909 of non-federal funds (state general revenue) was expended on foster care maintenance payments per this limitation.

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

8. Financial Information

ii. Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2

For the purpose of applying for FY 2019 funds, States must indicate specific percentages of title IV-B, subpart 2 funds that the State will expend on actual delivery of family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification and adoption promotion and support services, as well as planning and service coordination, with a rationale for each service category whose percentage of funds does not approximate 20%. The State must have an especially strong rationale if the percentage provided is below 20 percent for any one of the four service categories and must include such rationale in the narrative of the APSR. The amount allocated to each of the service categories should only include funds for service delivery. States should report separately the amount to be allocated to planning and service coordination.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, P.L. 105-89, modified the grant allocation requirements for the Child and Family Services Plans for states. The federal legislation acknowledged the importance of services to prevent child abuse and neglect and assist families in crisis, be they birth, foster or adoptive families, by re-authorizing for three years the Family Preservation and Support Services Program (newly named the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program) and expanding the uses of the grant to adoption promotion and support services.

Title IV-B is amended regarding family preservation services to eliminate the requirement of only allowing community based family support services and also allowing time limited family reunification services and adoption promotion and support services. Time-limited family reunification services are allowed during the first fifteen months a child enters foster care and are to be used to facilitate reunification. Adoption promotion and support services may include activities designed to facilitate the adoption process including pre and post adoption services to support permanency for children needing adoptive placements.

Planned allocations for the services categories are:

- Family preservation – 20.00 percent
- Family support services – 24.34 percent
- Time limited re-unification – 23.98 percent
- Adoption promotion/support – 27,93 percent.

Each fiscal year, adjustments may be necessary to meet the needs of the children and families served but are planned to remain within the required percentages.

Provide the estimated and actual amounts of FY 2017 Federal funds expended under title IV-B, subpart 1; for each of the four categories of services in FY 2017 for title IV-B, subpart 2; and for those costs identified as administrative in title IV-B programs. Utilizing the CFS-101-Part III: Annual Expenditures for Title IV-B, Subparts 1 & 2 Funds, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) and Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), the State must compare FY 2017 estimated expenditures with FY 2017 actual expenditures in each category for the title IV-B programs and, at State option, the CFCIP and ETV program (Attachment C). Provide an explanation for any differences between the FY 2017 estimated costs and actual expenditures in the APSR.

The estimated expenditures for Child Welfare Services were \$25,354,562 and actual amount of fiscal year 2017 federal funds expended under title IV-B, subpart 1 were \$25,354,562. The estimated expenditures for fiscal year 2017 for Family Preservation Services were \$6,983,818 and the actual expenditures were \$6,218,874. The estimated expenditures for fiscal year 2017 for Family Support Services were \$7,532,284 and actual expenditures were \$7,221,841. The estimated expenditures for fiscal year 2017 for Time-Limited Family Reunification Services were \$7,214,709 and actual expenditures were \$7,628,081. The estimated expenditures for fiscal year 2017 for Adoption Promotion and Support Services were \$8,191,545 and actual expenditures were \$8,188,720.

Provide State and local share expenditure amounts for title IV-B, subpart 2 programs for FY 2015 for comparison with the 1992 base year amount as required to meet the non-supplantation requirements in Section 432(a)(7)(A) of the Act.

In compliance with the non-supplantation requirement, the Department expends \$4,284,053 Title IV-B, subpart 1, Child Welfare Services, federal funds to support family preservation/reunification direct delivery staff and family preservation contracted purchased client services (including concrete services). This funding level maintains the FFY 1992 baseline level of effort for the State of Texas.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) contracts with a variety of vendors. Current procurement opportunities are posted on:

- The Health and Human Services Open Enrollment Opportunities page at: <https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/pcs/openenrollment.cfm>*External Link*
- The Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD) page at: <http://www.txsmartbuy.com/sp>*External Link*.

CPS Direct Services

Examples of direct services include:

- Evaluation and treatment services
- Substance abuse assessments and treatment (individual, family and group counseling)
- Home study/screenings and assessment reports
- In-state adoption
- Out-of-state adoption
- Supervised visitation services
- Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) services.
- Post-adoption services

Support Services

DFPS enters into Support Services contracts to improve the effectiveness of direct client services and to support organizations that provide indirect assistance to clients. Examples of support services contracts include contracts with:

- Foster parent associations, and eligible councils and organizations who are volunteers.
- Title IV-E county child welfare services.
- Title IV-E county legal services.
- Burial services for deceased children in the managing conservatorship of DFPS.

Policy and protocol for procurement is posted on the agency's public webpage: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Doing_Business/Contract_Handbook/Chapter_2/2-01-contract-procurement-plannin.asp

In order to ensure appropriate organizations are selected for funding, DFPS staff comply with specific policy and protocol. Key excerpts from DFPS contracting policy include the following:

DFPS relies on the Procurement and Contracting Services (HHS-PCS) division of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the procurement of goods and services for our agency. While DFPS provides subject matter expertise for the goods and services it purchases, HHS-PCS provides the subject matter expertise for the procurement process.

DFPS Contracts Legal is an essential stakeholder in procurement planning and development and must be included in this process.

DFPS staff must coordinate with the appropriate internal stakeholders during procurement planning and development which may include:

- program divisions,
- contract divisions,
- contract performance,
- IT, and
- Executive Leadership.

DFPS is responsible for submitting the procurement requisition

Procurement planning requires timelines to ensure that a contract can be in place by the designated start date. DFPS must consider several factors in order to ensure enough time to plan and develop a procurement including dollar amount, scope, type, and complexity of the procurement.

Depending on the type of procurement, there may be external reviews required, which will need additional time factored in to the procurement planning timeline.

Examples of external reviews and coordination that may be required, dependent on type and scope of the procurement, include:

- *Contract Advisory Team (CAT)*, includes members from the Comptroller of Public Accounts, Department of Information Resources, HHSC, Office of the Governor, Texas Facilities Commission, and Department of Public Safety. The CAT reviews and makes recommendations about the procurement documents for contracts with an estimated value of \$5 million or more.
- *Quality Assurance Team (QAT)*, includes members from the Legislative Budget Board (LBB), Department of Information Resources, Comptroller of Public Accounts, and State Auditor's Office. Required for Major Information Resources purchases with an estimated value of \$10 million or more.
- *Department of Information Resources (DIR)*, coordinates and supports the IT and telecommunications needs of the State, which includes procuring and managing statewide cooperative contracts for IT products and services. Reviews of Statements of Work are required for select DIR contract types.

It is important that procurement planning happens in coordination with the key stakeholders in order to ensure that all required elements are included, sufficient time is given to procurement development, and Contracts Legal is consulted throughout the process.

A determination, also referred to as a needs assessment, must be completed to justify the need before DFPS purchases goods or services. Determining the need for a contracted service is done by using a systematic approach to gather and document information about the specific components of the need.

The determination of need should achieve the following results:

- Promote a common understanding of the need to make the purchase.
- Determine the type and level of service required to meet the need.
- Determine how to measure, document, and track performance and quality of service delivery.
- Facilitate prioritization of the funding required to make the purchase.
- Provide a formal review and approval process for committing DFPS resources to a purchase.

The information gathered through the determination of need process is vital for the success of the procurement and the resulting contract(s).

DFPS relies on HHS-PCS for the procurement of goods and services, therefore, having a clearly defined need also serves to inform the HHS-PCS purchaser of the need in order for them to best support and coordinate the procurement.

DFPS staff responsible for entering the procurement requisition into CAPPs FIN 9.2 will be required to include the information gathered through the determination of need process.

Determination of Need Considerations

Services that DFPS purchases may be legislatively mandated. If applicable, the mandate must be noted in the determination of need documentation.

DFPS staff responsible for the determination of need should consider the following in their documentation:

- Type, intensity, and frequency of the need
- Potential benefit to the eligible population
- Accessibility of appropriate resources to meet the need, including cost, location, and eligibility conditions
- Other available goods or services that have already been purchased that may meet need
- Appropriateness of DFPS being the primary purchaser of the service, rather than other community resources providing it
- Collaboration and communication with internal and external stakeholders
- Identification of preliminary funding resources
- Legal issues associated with the purchase

DFPS staff may access the following potential data resources available when documenting the determination of need:

- Objective data: For example, DFPS management and service data, census reports, professional literature.
- Statistical data: For example, management reporting and statistic data, IMPACT data, and data from special projects and surveys and research findings of other agencies and organizations.
- Subjective data: For example, information obtained from clients and persons working in the service area (both inside and outside the agency).

Best Value Considerations

DFPS must comply with best value standards when making a decision to contract for goods or services. Evaluation, determination and documentation requirements for best value differ based on the procurement method.

DFPS staff is responsible for working with HHS-PCS, Legal, program and contract divisions in documenting requirements regarding the determination of need and best value factors.

Factors used to determine best value may vary depending on the procurement method. For competitive procurements these factors must be included in the solicitation. In addition to purchase price and whether the goods or services meet the specifications of the solicitation, other relevant factors to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Installation costs
- Total life cycle costs
- Quality and reliability of the goods and services
- Delivery terms
- Vendors past performance, experience, ability to perform, and financial resources
- Cost of employee training associated with the purchase
- Effect of the purchase on DFPS productivity
- Vendor's anticipated economic impact to the state (i.e. potential tax revenue and employment)

2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan Requirements

8. Financial Information

iii. FFY 2020 Title IV-B Expenditure Report- CFS-101, Part III

Provide actual expenditures of Chafee allocated funds for FY 2017 (final) and FY 2018 (year-to-date). Identify the amount of Chafee funds used to provide room and board for youth ages 18-21 in the last fully reportable year - FY 2017 (CFS-101, Part III at Attachment C).

Actual expenditures of Chafee allocated funds for fiscal year 2017 was \$9,602,069 and actual expenditures of Chafee allocated funds for fiscal year 2018 (year-to-date) is \$9,571,683. \$221,110 of Chafee funds were used to provide room and board for youth ages 18-21 in fiscal year 2017. \$242,221 of Chafee funds were used to provide room and board for youth ages 18-21 in fiscal year 2018 (year-to-date).

Provide actual expenditures of ETV allocated funds for FY 2017 (see CFS-101, Part III at Attachment C) and FY 2018 (year-to-date).

The actual expenditure of ETV allocated funds is as follows:

Fiscal year 2017 - \$3,115,894

Fiscal year 2018 - \$2,288,939 (to date)

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) numbers are provided by the Contractor. Tuition waiver numbers are reported by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Tuition waiver numbers are received near the end of February.