



texas council *of* child welfare boards

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Founded in 1978, the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards' (TCCWB) mission is to support a statewide network of volunteers concerned with the welfare of children, especially those suffering from abuse and neglect. Our nonprofit organization is led by a board of directors representing 11 regional councils and 190 county child welfare boards. Child welfare boards strengthen the Department of Family and Protective Services Child Protective Services program at the county level through the provision of local funding, collaboration, advocacy and community awareness.

Legislative Priorities for the 86th Session

- Maintain and increase funding for community-based prevention programs within the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division of DFPS to safely and effectively divert families from the child protection system. Collaborate with local child welfare boards to promote community awareness of these programs within each county. Support DFPS Exceptional Item request for targeted increases in the following PEI Programs:
 - 1). Services to At-Risk Youth (STAR) contracts with local agencies to provide services to families needing crisis intervention, conflict resolution, help with school attendance, as well as emergency short-term respite care. The program serves youth ages 6 to 17 with the goal of children remaining safely in their homes.
 - 2). Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES), a community-based program, targets families with children ages 0 to 5 with home visiting services, child education, and other services to reduce the likelihood of abuse.
 - 3). Community Youth Development (CYD), through community-based organizations, provides programs and recreational activities to youth, ages 6 to 17, in 15 targeted Texas zip codes to prevent juvenile delinquency.
 - 4). Scale Nurse-Family Partnership to serve an additional 550 families - \$5.5 million

- Increase funding for Family Based Safety Services through expansion of the Nurturing Parent Evidenced Based Program (NPP) already implemented in Lubbock, Potter, Val Verde and Smith Counties. Harris County has implemented this program in FBSS through HOPES. NPP is a home based, trauma- informed program to prevent, intervene and treat child abuse and neglect. Evidenced-based programs like NPP will strengthen families and prevent entry or reentry into the foster care system. Child welfare boards play a critical role in assisting DFPS with funds and resources for families involved in the system. DFPS should collaborate with their local welfare boards for assistance with emergency needs for families in FBSS in order to prevent the emergency removal of children.

- Continue the transformation of the child protective services system by fully funding Community-Based Care efforts and continued expansion in order to strengthen the quality and capacity of the foster care system. Mandate the SSCC to work with local child welfare boards, where available, on the development of preliminary and ongoing community engagement plans to ensure communication and collaboration with local stakeholders.

- Increase rates for emergency shelters and supervised independent living facilities that did not receive an increase in the 85th session. Shelters are an essential resource as safety nets for emergency placements due to placement breakdowns, temporary placement needs and emergency removals when family cannot be immediately located, as well as keeping siblings together. Supervised Independent Living provides an opportunity for young people to live on their own, while still receiving casework, education and support services to help them become independent, self-sufficient and successful.

- Support services and supports for youth transitioning from the state child welfare system to independent living by addressing current funding, policy and licensing provisions that prevent youth from securing housing and obtaining the life skills necessary to be independent.
 1. Develop a comprehensive continuum of housing and supports designed to guide youth aging out of care in the achievement of their educational and occupational goals, while developing a system of natural supports in the community. Continuum to focus on more dedicated resources to prepare youth for housing while still in care

and housing programs with intensive wrap around twenty-four-hour support on the front end.

2. Provide funding to establish and maintain a transitional living services program for youth ages 14-15 years of age and special populations. The program would include life skills education, transitional living services, and case management by regional PAL or contract staff.
 3. Continue the four-year pilot summer internship program for current or former foster care youth, ages 15 and older, and look to expand to other areas of the state. Collaborate with county child welfare boards for identification of potential businesses to participate in the program.
 4. Add an identification question regarding homeless students and foster students to the Apply Texas Common College Application. There is approximately a 40% crossover between homeless and foster youth both during their K-12th grades and once foster youth age out of the system. A low percentage of these students actually access college, (The report is between 13-15%: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwoway/2018/04/03/599197919/hunger-and-homelessness-are-widespread-among-college-students-study-finds>), an even smaller percentage complete their degrees. Many of these youth would benefit from additional supports once at their institution of higher learning. Identification of these students is a first step. This also allows for data collection on how many students enter and how many actually complete their higher education programs.
- HB 5 from the 85th Legislative Session named the Department of Family and Protective Services as a stand-alone Department separate from the Health and Human Services Commission. The legislation required DFPS and the Health and Human Services Commission to enter into a contract for the provision of shared administrative services, including payroll, procurement, information resources, and rate setting, purchasing and contracting to be administered by the Commission. TCCWB recommends that DFPS be allowed to handle certain procurement activities separate from the Commission to achieve greater efficiencies within the agency.

