

Texas Council *of* Child Welfare Boards

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 193 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. Child Welfare Boards are instrumental in bringing community involvement and investment into protective services for children and families. Informed by our work at the local level, we offer the recommendations below in support of improving the Texas Child Welfare system.

Legislative Priorities for the 88th Session

- a. **Maintain and increase funding for community-based prevention programs** within the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division of DFPS to divert families safely and effectively from the child protection system. Collaborate with local child welfare boards to promote community awareness of these programs within each county. Support DFPS LAR Exceptional Item to expand Community Youth Development (CYD), Family and Youth Success (FAYS), HOPES and home visiting program by 50 percent, and 15 FTEs to manage the resulting increase in contracts. \$2,325,229 All Funds and 5 FTEs to support marketing and prevention campaign for the Texas Parent Hotline and Texas Primary Prevention Strategies and Parent Helpline.
- b. **TCCWB supports the implementation of the federal Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)**. Children thrive in safe, stable, nurturing families and communities. The implementation of FFPSA will allow DFPS to transform the Family Based Safety Services to evidenced based services for substance abuse disorder, mental health, and in-home parenting and skills building services for families in their own homes and/or relative homes for up to twelve months with title IVE Foster Care Funds. 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 receiving evidenced based services in order to prevent the removal of children. Ensure Texas begins to use Family First Prevention Act (FFPSA) Title IVE funds to support ongoing or new family preservation efforts to keep families together.
- c. **The Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) also provides matching federal funds for the development and implementation of a kinship navigator program**. Child Welfare Boards can assist with the development of the Kinship Navigator Programs through financial support with items such as clothing vouchers, school supplies, etc. families.

- d. **To recruit and support kinship and relative placements** by providing training to those recruited. Additional, provide up to \$1000 to meet immediate and concrete needs related to the child's placement; reimbursement up to \$750 for costs incurred during the licensure process, enhanced Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) payment, similar to Adoption Assistance payment, for long term supports for children with higher needs.
- e. **We Support the Continued 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. Reinforce that SSCs should 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.
- f. **We Support Office of Community Based Care Transition funding of \$97,054,017** All Funds to implement CBC Stage I in four catchment areas and to continue expansion of CBC into four catchment areas to Stage II, and funding for 55 FTEs to provide oversight, contract management, and support timely implementation.
- g. **We Support services 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. Restore recent funding cuts made to the PAL grantees across the state. Also, work with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, the Health and Human Services Commission and the General Land Office on the development and implementation of housing and wrap around supports for youth and young adults exiting the state foster care system.
- h. **We support Department of Family and Protective Services as a stand-alone Department separate from the Health and Human Services Commission.** HB-5 from the 85th Legislative Session 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 and to be responsive to the changing needs of the child and youth serving system.
- i. **We support salary equalization for all DFDPS direct services positions** across the board to address the recruitment and retention of front-line field staff.

Questions?

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