

**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**February 12, 2016**  
**9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center**  
**Austin, Texas**

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b>Did Not Attend</b>
Chair, Hon. Eva Guzman, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas, Austin	✓	
Chair Emeritus, Hon. Harriet O’Neill, Justice, retired, Law Office of Harriet O’Neill, Austin		✓
Vice Chair, Hon. Rob Hofmann, Judge, 452nd District Court, Mason	✓	
Hon. Jo Ann Battise, Council Chairwoman, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Livingston		✓
Paula Bibbs-Samuel, Parent Representative, Slayton	✓	
Allison Billodeau, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Lisa Black, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Hon. Jean Boyd, Judge (ret.), 323rd District Court, Fort Worth	✓	
Hon. Gary Coley, Judge, 74 <sup>th</sup> District Court, Waco	✓	
Sheila Craig, Associate Commissioner, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin	✓	
Hon. Helen Giddings, Texas House of Representatives, District 109, Dallas		✓
Hon. Bonnie Hellums, Judge (ret.), 247th District Court, Houston	✓	
Dr. Andrew Keller, Chief Operations Officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Dallas	✓	
Dr. Octavio Martinez, Executive Director, The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, The University of Texas, Austin		✓
Hon. Michael Massengale, Justice, 1st Court of Appeals, Houston	✓	
Hon. Mary Murphy, Presiding Judge, First Administrative Judicial Region, Dallas		✓
Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer, Meadows Foundation, Dallas	✓	
Hon. Ronald Pope, Judge, 328 <sup>th</sup> District Court, Richmond	✓	
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
Hon. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese Galveston-Houston	✓	
Hon. Michael Schneider, Judge, 315 <sup>th</sup> Juvenile Court, Houston		✓
Luanne Southern, Senior Director of Texas Strategic Consulting, Casey Family Programs, Austin	✓	
Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA, Inc., Austin	✓	
Terry Tottenham, Of Counsel, Fulbright and Jaworski, L.L.P., Austin	✓	
Hon. Carlos Villalon, Associate Judge, Child Protection Court of the Rio Grande, Edinburg	✓	
Lt. Col. Travis Walters, State Public Affairs Officer (FTUS), United States Air Force, Fort Worth	✓	
Hon. Judy Warne, Judge, 257th Family Court, Houston	✓	
Hon. Royce West, (by proxy Graham Keever), Texas Senate, District 23, Dallas	✓	
<b>Senior Judicial Advisor</b>		
Hon. Darlene Byrne, Judge, 126th District Court, Austin	✓	
<b>Collaborative Council</b>		
M. Lynn Chamberlin, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney’s Office	✓	
Irene Clements, President, National Foster Family Association, and Consultant, Butterfly Marketing, LLC, Pflugerville		✓

	Attended	Did Not Attend
William B. Connolly, Attorney, Connolly & Shireman, L.L.P., Houston		✓
De Shaun Ealoms, Parent Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin	✓	
Barbara Elias-Perciful, President, Texas Lawyers for Children, Dallas	✓	
Debra Emerson, CPS Director of Permanency, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Laura Figueroa, The Arbitrage Group, Inc., Katy		✓
Mike Foster, Assistant Director of Outreach, TCU Institute of Child Development	✓	
Mara Friesen, Deputy Director for Child Support, Office of the Texas Attorney General, Austin		✓
Sadie Funk, Executive Director, Texas Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Austin		✓
Helen Gaebler, Senior Research Attorney, William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin		✓
Teal De La Garza, Attorney, Bill De La Garza & Associates, P.C.	✓	
Christina Green, Director of Public Affairs, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Austin	✓	
Hon. Diane Guariglia, Guariglia & Placzek, PLLC, Houston		✓
Sandra Hachem, Senior Assistant County Attorney, Harris County Attorney's Office, Houston		✓
David Halpern, Director, Promise Mentor Program, Seedling Foundation, Austin		✓
Ashley Harris, Child Welfare Policy Associate, Texans Care for Children, Austin		✓
Bruce Kendrick, Director of Outreach, Embrace Texas, McKinney		✓
Knox Kimberly, Vice President for Advocacy and Education, Lutheran Social Services of the South, Austin	✓	
Kelly Kravitz, Foster Care Education and Policy Coordinator, Texas Education Agency, Austin		✓
Richard Lavallo, Legal Director, Disability Rights Texas, Austin	✓	
Tracy Levins, Manager, Prevention/Early Intervention, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Austin		✓
Madeline McClure, Executive Director, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, Dallas		✓
Hon. F. Scott McCown, Clinical Professor and Director of the Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law, Austin		✓
Gabriela McDonald, Pro Bono and New Projects Director, Texas Appleseed, Austin	✓	
Pamela McPeters, Director of Public Policy, TexProtects, Austin	✓	
Dr. Anu Partap, Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, Southwest Medical Center, Dallas		✓
Judy Powell, Communications Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Mary Christine Reed, Director, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Austin	✓	
Johana Scot, Executive Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin	✓	
Janet Sharkis (by proxy Angela Morales), Executive Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin	✓	
Andrea Sparks, Executive Director, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Austin	✓	
Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Charles A. Dana Center, Austin	✓	
Gloria Terry, (by proxy Brooke King), Coalition President, Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin		✓
Kenneth Thompson, Fatherhood Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin		✓
Arabia Vargas, Chair, Bexar County Child Welfare Board, San Antonio		✓
Kelly White, Executive Director, LIFT Alliance		✓

**Attending Committee Members and Special Guests**

Hon. Mark Atkinson, Executive Director, Texas Center for the Judiciary  
Lisa Berkman, Williamson County Commissioner  
Hon. Jeff Brown, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas  
Kathleen Buckley, Nurse, San Antonio  
Bruce Esterline, Vice President for Grants, Meadows Foundation  
Rebecca Lightsey, former Executive Director, Texas Appleseed  
Kris Mohajer, State Education Program Specialist, Department of Family and Protective Services  
Andrew Murr, State Representative, District 53  
Katie Olse, Associate Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Jon Olson, State Disproportionality Specialist, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities, Health and Human Services Commission, Austin  
Daniel Perez, Caseworker, Laredo  
Raphael Ramos Sifuentes and family  
Tanya Rollins, State Disproportionality Manager, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Hon. John Specia, Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Rachel Yates, Child Therapist

**Attending Staff**

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director, Children’s Commission  
Jessica Arguijo, Administrative Assistant, Children’s Commission  
Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney, Children’s Commission  
Anissa Johnson, Program Specialist VI, Office of Court Administration  
Tim Kennedy, TexDECK Project Manager, Office of Court Administration  
Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant, Children’s Commission  
Patrick Passmore, Grant Manager, Children’s Commission  
Mena Ramon, General Counsel, Office of Court Administration  
Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney, Children’s Commission  
Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director, Children’s Commission  
Honorable Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence, Children’s Commission  
Honorable Robin Sage, Jurist in Residence, Children’s Commission  
David Slayton, Administrative Director, Office of Court Administration  
Kristi Taylor, Project Manager, Children’s Commission

**CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING REMARKS, Justice Eva Guzman**

Justice Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

**Recognition of Guests**

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Bruce Esterline, Vice President of Grants with the Meadows Foundation in Dallas, Texas, Rebecca Lightsey, former Executive Director of Texas Appleseed in Austin, Texas, and Lisa Birkman, County Commissioner in Williamson County, Texas.

### **Commissioner Membership Changes**

Justice Guzman announced that the Supreme Court added five new Commissioners: Judge Gary Coley of the 74<sup>th</sup> District Court in McLennan County; Frank Rynd, former District Judge of the 309<sup>th</sup> District in Harris County and the current general counsel to the Archdiocese of Galveston and Houston; Paula Bibbs-Samuels, a parent representative in Slaton, Texas, currently with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court as an Operations Support Specialist; Cindy Patrick, Senior Program Officer with Meadows Foundation; and Dr. Andrew Keller, Chief Executive Officer of the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

Justice Guzman announced that Allison Billodeau replaced Kara Crawford as the *ex officio* commission member appoint by the Office of the Governor.

Justice Guzman announced Lisa Black's retirement as Associate Commissioner for Child Protective Services (CPS) on March 31, 2016. Justice Guzman also announced that Commissioner Jo Ann Battise was recently elected as Tribal Council Chairwoman of the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas.

### **Collaborative Council Membership Changes**

Justice Guzman welcomed Ms. Mary Christine Reed with Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid to the Collaborative Council.

### **Committee Member Changes**

Justice Guzman announced that Judge Lamar McCorkle has transitioned off the Training Committee.

### **Staff Member Changes**

Justice Guzman announced the newly hired staff of the Commission: Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant, and Patrick Passmore, Grants Manager.

### **Adoption of September 18, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 1, noted that members had the opportunity to review the minutes, and asked if there were any corrections or discussion. There were no corrections or discussion points raised.

**ACTION:** Justice Guzman asked for a motion to adopt the meeting minutes of the September 18, 2015 meeting. Judge Peter Sakai motioned to adopt the minutes. Ms. Luanne Southern seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the meeting minutes unanimously.

### **COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES**

**Ms. Sheila Craig** reported on the Poverty Simulation put on by the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionalities and Disparities (CEDD) in partnership with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the Children's Commission on February 5, 2016. The Poverty Simulation was attended by several child welfare judges and their court staff, as well as other child

welfare stakeholders. Ms. Craig emphasized the importance of this training to those who work closely with child welfare issues and the importance of the involvement of the judicial community.

**Lt. Colonel Travis Walters** reported on a recent observation of Judge Darlene Byrne's courtroom. Lt. Col. Walters also expressed his interest in holding a military summit in Texas in the near future.

**Mr. Terry Tottenham** reported on the work being done by Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans, noting that the organization has helped over 18,000 veterans since its work began. Mr. Tottenham discussed the book by former State Bar of Texas President Richard Peña, *The Last Plane Out of Saigon*, as a potential educational resource for those that come into contact with members of the military and their families. Mr. Tottenham reported on two projects of the Texas Young Lawyers Association and presented brochures targeted towards youth on tips for interacting with police officers during traffic stops and bicycle safety.

**Dr. Andrew Keller** reported the work being done with veterans at the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI). Dr. Keller directed Commission members to visit the veteran's page of the MMHPI website for more information on the pilot grant administered by the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) regarding the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance.

<http://texasstateofmind.org/focus/veterans/>

**Hon. Jean Boyd** reported on several activities in Tarrant County: 1) The county will launch the Safe Babies Program in April under the leadership of Judge Ellen Smith and an attorney training for the program on March 29, 2016; 2) Judge Smith started a second track in the current Drug Court Program, called the Recovery Support Program; 3) efforts are underway to create an annual CPS CLE program with the help of the Tarrant County Bar Association; 4) new appointees to the CPS wheel will be required to complete the CLE program, as well as three additional training videos; and 5) Judge Boyd further noted some concerns of Tarrant County judges regarding CPS home studies and Parental Child Safety Placements (PCSPs).

**Hon. Ronald Pope** reported on the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) work being done at the Fort Bend County Infant and Toddler Court in collaboration with CPS and Texas CASA. Fort Bend was selected as one of three sites in Texas to begin the CFE initiative. Ms. Vicki Spriggs, Chief Executive Officer of Texas CASA, commented that Texas CASA requested funding for the CFE project be included in the DFPS budget to further enhance collaboration efforts with CPS, noting that CASA works with a staff member designated by CPS on this pilot project and that CPS chose the regions in which the pilot should be first introduced.

**Hon. Darlene Byrne** gave her report as the Senior Judicial Advisor to the Commission. Judge Byrne reported that she participated in the recent Poverty Simulation and that she was able to relate a recent case in her courtroom to her experience at the simulation. Judge Byrne also reported on the current work of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), noting that she will be travelling to Washington, D.C. in the coming weeks with DFPS Commissioner John J. Specia to discuss

the Family First legislation, which will incentivize states to use federal foster care dollars for prevention efforts and services. Judge Byrne noted that she will be advocating on behalf of the NCJFCJ on various legislative issues surrounding juvenile justice and child welfare while in Washington, including the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Prevention Act. Judge Byrne announced that NCJFCJ will hold a conference in March 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada focused on juvenile justice that includes a probation track, creating a multi-disciplinary training for judiciary and public defenders. Judge Byrne also announced the Annual NCJFCJ Conference will be held in Monterey, California in July 2016.

Judge Byrne also reported on the legislative issues in Texas regarding indiscriminate shackling of young people in the courtroom. The Judge further noted that NCJFCJ is advocating for a more trauma-informed care focus on this issue than the one currently in place and that she is working with the states of Delaware and Ohio for solutions to this issue. Judge Byrne reported on a military summit in Fort Benning, Georgia, noting that NCJFCJ is interested in partnering with a state that has a high number of children in military families to hold a similar summit.

**Ms. Lisa Black** gave a high-level overview of the current work of CPS, noting that DFPS Commissioner John J. Specia would give a more detailed report to the Commission. Ms. Black reported that CPS has enhanced its policies and practices surrounding PCSPs and that all staff across the state have been notified by memo of the policy changes. Ms. Black also announced that CPS has developed a tool to help staff assess potential caregivers in a PCSP, which has led to both a decrease in the number of PCSPs and better placements for children. Ms. Black reported on the series of Permanency Summits held across the state until February 2016 and the continuing work being done at CPS to focus on permanency. Ms. Black reported that the second phase of the CPS Transformation has begun, which focuses on the Supervisor role and its impact on turnover, retention and case decisions. Ms. Black also reported on the work being done at CPS to focus on safety.

Justice Guzman welcomed special guest Dr. Lindsey Harris Massengale from Houston, Texas.

**Hon. Rob Hofmann** reported an increase in removals in his court's district. Judge Hofmann also reported that his district court has had two shadow caseworkers successfully present in the court as part of the CPS new model for caseworker training. Judge Hofmann noted the recent trend of collaboration between Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) and CPS in his jurisdiction, and also announced that he has asked the CASA director in his area, as well as the health probation chief and juvenile probation chief, to attend an upcoming meeting at the Center for Life Resources in Brownwood, Texas as part of the collaboration between mental health and CPS.

**Ms. Vicki Spriggs** expanded on the Collaborative Family Engagement pilot as one of Texas CASA's overall initiatives for growth. Ms. Spriggs reported that Texas CASA updated its Strategic Plan to serve 100% of children in CPS by 2020, noting that Texas CASA currently serves 78% of children in CPS. Ms. Spriggs announced that Texas CASA has sent two specialists to local programs across the state to work on the recruitment, retention, and reengagement of volunteers in an effort to increase the number of

CASA volunteers. Ms. Spriggs reported that Texas CASA recently received a certification from the Human Rights Commission for its work on inclusion of LGBTQ youth. Also that Texas CASA's marketing pilot was executed on January 1, 2016 to inform the public about the CASA program and find the best method to recruit volunteers. Ms. Spriggs updated the Commission on the PMC project, which is in the second year of implementation and expanded to eight counties; the project will produce a toolkit to share best practices with other counties in the future. Ms. Spriggs provided an update on the Child Outcomes & Volunteer Effectiveness (COVE) Project in collaboration with the University of Texas and Child Protective Services. Ms. Spriggs announced the Volunteer Recruitment Strategies Conference to be held on February 18-19, 2016 in Fort Worth, Texas, and the Texas CASA Primer and Luncheon to be held on February 23, 2016 in Austin, Texas.

**Hon. Bonnie Hellums** announced that the Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) Conference is scheduled for June 2016. Judge Hellums reported that she is drafting a Power Point presentation to train caseworkers and lawyers who handle CPS cases on compassion fatigue. Judge Hellums reported on her collaboration with Justice Evelyn Keyes on a proposal for community and child protection court coordination. Judge Hellums suggested that the bicycle safety brochure from the TYLA include information on the Road ID service available at <http://www.roadid.com/>. Judge Hellums offered to assist the Commissioners with work surrounding military families and children from military families.

**Hon. Peter Sakai** announced the report on Bexar County's redesign project is currently being printed and notified the Commission that he would present on the redesign at the next Commission Meeting. Judge Sakai announced that Bexar County will establish an early intervention program (EIP) to focus on infants, toddlers and young children to operate in conjunction with the Bexar County Family Drug Court. Judge Sakai noted the EIP is grant funded and Bexar County will continue to seek additional funding through public-private partnerships. Judge Sakai reported on his participation on the community panel to interview the new DFPS Regional Director for Region 8, and that he served as a moderator on a judicial panel of rural and metropolitan judges from Region 8 regarding CPS Transformation at a recent Permanency Summit hosted by DFPS. Judge Sakai also reported on the Bexar County CASA program's focus on permanency for children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC). Judge Sakai noted that he presented at the Family Juvenile Justice Conference in January 2016.

**Hon. Judy Warne** reported that at the end of December 2015 there were 750 unaccompanied minors cases (UACs) waiting to be heard. Also, that UAC cases were distributed among 33 Harris county courts, including family, juvenile, and civil courts, to address the extensive backlog issue. Judge Warne announced that Harris County has completely shifted into a paperless system, commented on the success of the CPS Project Court in Harris County, and noted that Judge Katrina Griffith has asked Presiding Judge Olen Underwood to review the statute to determine if the project court may take on other cases in addition to the post judgment review cases currently heard. Judge Warne also mentioned the one-day child welfare track at the Advanced Family Law Conference in August 2016. Justice Guzman announced that scholarships will be available to judges to attend the one-day event.

**Hon. Carlos Villalon** reported that Tiffany Roper made a presentation at the multi-disciplinary child welfare conference in Harlingen in October 2015. Also that his court recently completed its report for the Weighted Caseload Study, wherein the court tracked time and effort over 30 days to determine the number of judges necessary to handle child welfare cases. Judge Villalon reported on the NCJFCJ Implementation Site Project, noting that the project is transitioning to a new NCJFCJ site manager. Judge Villalon continued to report that the Site Project has begun identifying and scheduling meetings with child welfare stakeholders. Judge Villalon announced that he will speak at an education consortium on February 23, 2016, and ended his update noting that his court has seen the more CASA volunteers recently, noting the impact of CASA's new recruitment strategies.

Justice Guzman welcomed Justice Jeff Brown of the Supreme Court of Texas. Justice Guzman also announced that there would be a special presentation from Raphael Sifuentes and his family following the Commissioner Updates.

**Ms. Luanne Southern** reported on the work Casey Family Programs related to permanency, safety, prevention, and Title IV-E Waiver. Also that a permanency summit was held on February 8-9, 2016 to discuss each region's continued work around permanency. Ms. Southern reported that Casey is supporting implementation of the Signs of Safety training across the state and sent a team to San Diego, California to hear about their safety effort, Safety Organized Practice, and see the rollout process in an urban area, as well as to northern California to see the effort in a rural county setting. Ms. Southern announced that Casey will attend the first meeting of the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division in Laredo, Texas on February 16, 2016 to assist with PEI's strategic plan and, ultimately, the report to the legislature. Ms. Southern reported on the Title IV-E efforts in Harris County, noting that Dr. John Lyons led the staff training related to conducting the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment and on Business Process Mapping, which will help determine areas in Harris County where CANS is being used and where to decrease duplication. Ms. Southern reported that a team from Texas recently attended the National CANS Conference in Seattle, Washington. Ms. Southern announced that Dr. Peter Pecora will meet with Sasha Rasco and Sarah Abrahams of DFPS on March 3-4, 2016 regarding the research and evaluation protocols in relation to prevention work in Texas.

**Justice Michael Massengale** noted his enthusiasm to work with the new Commissioners, deferring to give his report during the Training Committee report.

**Ms. Paula Bibbs-Samuels** introduced herself, noting that she works with CPS as parent collaborator and on the statewide Parent Collaboration Group. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels reported that the Parent Collaboration Group is focused on establishing a parent in every region who can share their experiences with families new to CPS.

**Hon. Frank Rynd** introduced himself and noted he would like to collaborate with CASA regarding volunteers with his work as chair of program committee for Child Advocates.

**Hon. Gary Coley** reported on the new Child Protection Court in his court's district led by Associate Judge Nikki Mundkowsky. Judge Coley announced a community awareness event on human trafficking, "Not in My City," in Waco, Texas on February 12, 2016.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, Ms. Tina Amberboy**

Ms. Amberboy reported that Court Improvement Project (CIP) funds were received in the amount of \$1.7 million and that the Commission submitted the year-end report to the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) on December 16, 2015, available on the website at: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/48790/FINAL-2015-Self-Assessment.pdf>. Ms.

Amberboy reported on projects that the Commission is currently focused on, including an upcoming roundtable regarding children in court on April 22, 2016 (later rescheduled for May 20, 2016) in Austin, and the Hearing Timeliness Project, a project that examines the timeliness in which permanency hearings are held in temporary managing conservatorship (TMC) cases to better understand which cases are being extended, the reason for the extension, and the impact the extensions are having on children and families.

#### **Presentation from Judge Rob Hofmann**

Justice Guzman welcomed the Sifuentes family and others, including Raphael Sifuentes, parents Daniel and Teresa Sifuentes, Daniel Perez, the adoption caseworker assigned to the Sifuentes family's case, Rachel Yates, the therapist to Raphael, Kathleen Buckley, the nurse at the hospital in San Antonio, and State Representative Andrew Murr, District 53. Judge Hofmann invited the Sifuentes family and those in contact with them during their case to share their success story with the Commission.

Justice Guzman and Judge Specia presented Ms. Lisa Black with a certificate of service from the Supreme Court of Texas and thanked her for her service to children and families.

#### **Presentation from Bruce Esterline and Rebecca Lightsey**

Mr. Esterline and Ms. Lightsey presented on a possible child welfare policy institute in Texas and the phases of establishing the institute. The Commissioners discussed the project.

**ACTION:** Justice Guzman asked Ms. Lightsey to articulate the motion to be reaffirmed by the Commission. Rebecca presented a motion to the Commission to approve a formal project of researching the feasibility of creating a child welfare policy center or institute that would use research and analysis to strengthen the State's ability to make significant reform in child welfare. Justice Massengale moved that the Commission initiate a formal project to investigate the feasibility of a new child welfare policy center or institute. Ms. Vicki Spriggs seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and the request unanimously.

#### **Basic Committee Update**

Ms. Kristi Taylor updated the Commission on the Basic Committee projects and noted that the Committee met on January 22, 2016. Ms. Taylor reported on the Poverty Simulation Seminar held on February 5, 2016 hosted by the Committee's Judicial Workgroup Addressing Disproportionality (JWD)

with the CEDD and DFPS. Six judges, court teams from five different counties, attorneys, advocates and other child welfare partners assumed the roles of families facing poverty during the seminar. Ms. Taylor also reported on the report on the Parental Child Safety Placements (PCSPs) Roundtable held in August 2015, available at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/47987/PCSP-ROUND-TABLE-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>, a project with the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs regarding mediation in CPS cases, and the upcoming DFPS Tribal/State Meeting to be held at the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas in Eagle Pass, Texas on March 31, 2016.

### **Training Committee Update**

Justice Massengale reported that the Training Committee met on January 12, 2016. Justice Massengale updated the Commission on judicial education projects: 1) the 2015 version of the Child Protection Law Bench Book was released at the Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC) in August and the 2016 version update is in progress and will be released at this year's CWJC; 2) the Family Justice Judicial Conference was held on January 25-26, 2016 in Bastrop, Texas and included presentations on Child Safety and Domestic Violence by Judge Scott McCown, Child Fatalities by Judge Robin Sage, and Tricks and Traps of Human Trafficking Trials by Kirsta Melton of the OAG; 3) the Committee has budgeted to award twenty-five judicial scholarships to attend the NCJFCJ in Monterey, California and will open the application process by April 2016; and 4) planning is in progress for the 2016 Child Welfare Judges Conference, scheduled for November 14-16.

Justice Massengale also updated the Commission on attorney education projects: 1) 94 scholarships were awarded in fiscal year 2015 to attend the Advanced Family Law (AFL) CLE 1-Day Workshop on Child Abuse and Neglect and 4 scholarships were awarded to attend the NACC Annual Conference; 2) the scholarship application process for the 2016 AFL CLE 1-Day Workshop and the NACC Annual Conference will begin in April; 3) the Commission is scheduled to tape child protection webinars on August 23, 2016; 4) a revised application was submitted to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) in September 2015 and the proposed standards are currently being circulated for feedback from the advisory commissions of existing specializations; and 5) the Trial Skills Training (TST) was held on November 4-6, 2015 in a new venue and trained two new faculty members, Judge Melissa DeGerolami of the Child Protection Court of South Texas and Charles Griffin of the District Attorney's Office in Brazos County. Justice Massengale also announced the next TST is scheduled for April 20-22, 2016 in Austin.

Ms. Amberboy discussed the first voting matter to increase the TST budget. At the November 2015 TST, unforeseen travel expenditures from inclement weather and added audio/visual costs not included in the original contract increased costs, resulting in the need to increase for the budget for the April 2016 TST.

**ACTION:** Justice Guzman asked for a motion to approve the Training Committee request for a budget increase of \$14,199.00. Judge Rynd motioned to approve the request; Judge Hofmann seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and the request unanimously.

Ms. Amberboy discussed the second voting matter to confirm the approval of the Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) conference that was brought to vote at the September 18, 2015 Commission meeting and was approved under condition that the Commission present a final amount at the February meeting.

**ACTION:** Justice Guzman asked for a motion to approve the Training Committee request of \$13,060.00. Judge Hofmann motioned to approve the request; Judge Warne seconded the motion. The attending members voted to approve and the request unanimously.

### **Technology Committee Update**

Ms. Spriggs reported that the Technology Committee met on February 3, 2016 and updated the Commission on the Committee's current projects: the Notice & Engagement Web Application now has 250 users that include 99 caseworkers, 77 attorneys, 32 foster parents, 30 advocates, 3 adoptive parents and 3 relatives; the Notice & Engagement Web Application generated 882 notifications related to 558 different hearings from September 1, 2015 to mid-January 2016. Ms. Spriggs continued with an update on the Video Conferencing project, notifying the Commission that for the months of October 2015 through January 2016 over one hundred video hearings were conducted with 112 children and/or youth, 11 courts, and 32 placement facilities participating. There are 28 courts and 72 placement facilities that are video enabled to participate in the collaborative video conferencing project, and the Office of Court Administration (OCA) will upgrade the hardware to improve the reporting capability and enable use from any hand-held device by the end of February 2016.

Ms. Spriggs also reported that a new project is underway for the Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS) that involves matching the attorneys in the CPCMS system with the State Bar of Texas database so that judges can more easily identify and appoint attorneys from the State Bar database. OCA will also assist the Commission with the creation of an interactive map or website where outcome data for children can be displayed by clicking on or hovering over a particular county.

### **Foster Care and Education Committee Update**

Judge Hofmann discussed the new federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act, signed in December 2015 and its statutes regarding students in foster care. Judge Hofmann reported that the Foster Care and Education Committee met on December 14, 2015 and presented an infographic from the Committee's Data Workgroup, available at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/46343/Texas-Blueprint-Data-Workgroup-Infographic.pdf>. Judge Hofmann reported the projects for 2016 include a joint TEA/DFPS education data report, reviewing surrogate parent laws, developing strategies to clarify confidentiality for students in foster care, examining the parallel foster care and special education transition planning processes, creating resources for new foster care liaisons at TX institutions of higher education, exploring a data match between DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and improving information sharing and collaboration at the local level. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2016. Judge Hofmann also reported on the Success in Schools initiative implemented by Friends of Wednesdays Child and the outreach from other states regarding the implementation efforts of the Texas Blueprint.

### **Jurist in Residence Update**

Hon. Dean Rucker reported on capacity issues in Region 9 and an upcoming meeting with Judge Hofmann, the three child protection court judges, DFPS Commissioner John Specia, and DFPS Assistant Commissioner for CPS Lisa Black in Midland on February 25, 2016 to identify the problems regarding capacity and discuss solutions. Judge Rucker discussed an interim charge on the reinstatement of parental rights as well as a possible pro bono project for law students that will be presented to the Commission's Parent Resource Group on February 19, 2016. Judge Rucker also reported on the Legal Representation Committee meeting held on January 29, 2016 and announced two subcommittees formed: one subcommittee will focus on the relationship between judges and commissioners courts regarding budgets for court appointed attorneys; the other will examine the relationship, communication and cross training between DFPS attorneys and county and/or district attorneys.

Hon. Robin Sage reported on her work with Judge Rucker regarding the 2016 update of the Child Protection Law Bench Book and with the Training Committee to implement an evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of Trial Skills Training. Judge Sage presented at the New Mexico Child Law Symposium in Albuquerque in January 2016 with Jenny Hinson of DFPS and Gabriella McDonald of Texas Appleseed about the changes in the Texas child welfare system since 2009. Judge Sage discussed the recent Jurist in Residence (JIR) letters on topics such as the CANS evaluation, human trafficking, and a recent ICWA decision from the Eighth Court of Appeals in El Paso, which can be found online at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/jir/jir-letters.aspx>. Judge Sage announced the Protect Our Kids (POK) Commission released its final report on December 1, 2015. The report is available at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/46100/PDF-Report-POK-Commission-December-2015.pdf>.

**DFPS Update, Commissioner John Specia** introduced Katie Olse, Associate Commissioner of DFPS. Judge Specia reported on the Department's Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division and an increase in funding from the legislature for PEI services. Judge Specia announced DFPS will expand the Health Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES) program to 16 counties in Texas to focus prevention services on families with children under 5 years of age. Judge Specia also announced the Military Families Initiative to provide prevention services to military families in Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, and the San Antonio area. Judge Specia will meet with the Garrison Commanders of each military base in the coming months. Judge Specia related the success of LifeWorks to establish twenty apartments for young adults who have aged out of foster care, thirteen apartments for homeless young mothers, and fifteen more to offer affordable housing options. Judge Specia announced that DFPS has filed an appeal to the order issued in the United States Southern District Court in Corpus Christi, Texas and that DFPS continues with its efforts of Foster Care Redesign. Judge Specia noted that DFPS is working closely with the Governor's Office on issues related to PCSPs and looking for ways to improve placements, including the implementation of a screening tool that assists DFPS staff in examining misdemeanor offenses. Judge Specia announced a possible new licensing process that aims to regulate family detention centers in South Texas and allow DFPS to assess health, safety, and wellbeing issues of children and families at the centers.

**Office of Court Administration**, Mr. David Slayton reported that OCA will release the annual statistical report from the judiciary next week for fiscal year 2015, noting a 6.3% increase in the number of CPS cases filed in Texas last year to total 11,700 cases filed. Mr. Slayton announced a recent study that surveyed the workload of judges in Texas with regard to CPS cases and the upcoming meeting of the Judicial Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC) on February 24, 2016 to analyze the data. Mr. Slayton reported an increase in UAC cases in fiscal year 2014, noting that OCA expects to see more Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) filings this year. Mr. Slayton also reported on a decreasing trend in the number of truancy cases filed against Texas children, from 22,300 total in fiscal year 2014 to 900 in the first quarter of fiscal year 2015. OCA made an announcement in early 2016 that it is releasing a system to access court documents online by early summer 2016 for Texas judges and attorneys of record.

#### **COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL REPORT**

**Jeanne Stamp, Texas Homeless Education Office** reported that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued its certified numbers of homeless youth from last school year to be 113,294 youth identified as homeless through Texas school system. Ms. Stamp noted that of those youth identified, 40% are associated with CPS or the juvenile justice system, and 16,000 are classified as unaccompanied homeless youth. The Texas Homeless Education Office is working with schools to identify youth vulnerable to human trafficking and signs of trafficking.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Justice Guzman announced the dates for the remaining 2016 Commission Meetings: May 13 and September 23.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.