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

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

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September 23, 2016

Meeting Notebook

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The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center

1414 Colorado Street

Austin, Texas 78701



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

**September 23, 2016  
Meeting Notebook**

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**Supreme Court of Texas**  
**Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families**  
**State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center**  
**Austin, Texas**  
September 23, 2016  
9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Commencement / Opening Remarks – The Honorable Eva Guzman
- 9:45 First order of business – The Honorable Eva Guzman  
1. Adopt Minutes from June 10, 2016, Tab 2
- 10:00 Commissioner Updates
- 10:50 Break
- 11:05 Commissioner Updates cont'd
- 11:45 Break / Lunch
- 12:00 Working Lunch / Presentation by Children's Commission Staff
- 12:30 Collaborative Council Input
- 12:45 Executive Director Report
- 1:30 Jurist In Residence Report
- 2:00 DFPS/CPS Update
- 2:30 Office of Court Administration and Report on Weighted Caseload Study
- 3:00 New Business

2017 Meeting Schedule  
February 10, 2017 at State Bar of Texas  
Adjourn



**INSERT - TAB 1**



## CHILDREN'S COMMISSION MEMBERS

Hon. Eva Guzman, Chair  
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill, Chair Emeritus  
 Hon. Rob Hofmann, Vice Chair  
 Hon. Jo Ann Battise  
 Paula Bibbs-Samuels  
 Allison Billodeau  
 Kristene Blackstone

Hon. Jean Boyd  
 Hon. Gary Coley  
 Sheila Sturgis Craig  
 Rep. Helen Giddings  
 Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums  
 Dr. Andy Keller  
 Dr. Octavio Martinez

Hon. Michael Massengale  
 Hon. Mary Murphy  
 Cindy Patrick  
 Hon. Ronald Pope  
 Hon. Frank Rynd  
 Hon. Peter Sakai  
 Hon. Michael Schneider

Luanne Southern  
 Vicki Spriggs  
 Terry Tottenham  
 Hon. Carlos Villalon  
 Lt. Col. Travis Walters  
 Hon. Judy Warne  
 Sen. Royce West

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### EXECUTIVE

Hon. Eva Guzman,  
*Chair*  
 Hon. Harriet O'Neill,  
*Chair Emeritus*  
 Hon. Rob Hofmann  
*Vice Chair*  
 Hon. Darlene Byrne,  
*Sr. Judicial Advisor*  
 Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums  
 Hon. Michael Massengale  
 Hon. Dean Rucker  
 Vicki Spriggs

*Staff: Tina Amberboy  
 Monica Mahoney*

### BASIC PROJECTS

Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums  
*Chair*  
 Mary Christine Reed  
 Carolyne Rodriguez  
 Tanya Rollins  
 Hon. Peter Sakai

*Staff: Kristi Taylor  
 Monica Mahoney*

### TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS

Vicki Spriggs, *Chair*  
 Jason Hassay  
 Hon. Gilford Jones  
 Elizabeth Kromrei  
 Octavio Martinez  
 Robert Nolen  
 Hon. Virginia Schnarr  
 Hon. Carlos Villalon

*Staff: Patrick Passmore  
 Monica Mahoney*

*OCA Advisory:  
 Darrell Childers  
 Anissa Johnson  
 Casey Kennedy  
 Tim Kennedy  
 Mena Ramon  
 David Slayton*

### TRAINING PROJECTS

Hon. Michael Massengale, *Chair*  
 Hon. Mark Atkinson  
 Timothy Belseth  
 Cathy Cockerham  
 Barbara Elias-Perciful  
 Debra Emerson  
 Hon. Richard Garcia  
 Tracy Harting  
 Pam Kemp  
 Tanya Rollins  
 Fairy Davenport Rutland  
 Hon. Ellen Smith  
 Elizabeth Watkins

*Staff: Milbrey Raney  
 Andrea Vicencio*

### FOSTER CARE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Hon. Rob Hofmann, *Chair*  
 Joy Baskin  
 Hon. Alyce Bondurant  
 Edna Ramón Butts  
 Briana Dovi  
 Lori Duke  
 Loretta Edelen  
 Dr. Monica Faulkner  
 Maya Guerra Gamble  
 Dr. David Gardner  
 Dr. Deena Hill  
 Jenny Hinson  
 Andy Homer  
 Kelly Kravitz  
 Kristine Mohajer  
 Hon. Cathy Morris  
 Jon Olson  
 Wanda Peña  
 Shannon Ramsey  
 Michael Redden  
 Ian Spechler  
 Julie Wayman  
*Staff: Jamie Bernstein  
 Andrea Vicencio*

## COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

M. Lynn Chamberlin  
 Irene Clements  
 Bill Connolly  
 De Shaun Ealoms  
 Barbara Elias-Perciful  
 Debra Emerson  
 Laura Figueroa  
 Mike Foster  
 Mara Friesen  
 Sadie Funk

Helen Gaebler  
 Teal de la Garza  
 Christina Green  
 Sandra Hachem  
 David Halpern  
 Ashley Harris  
 Bruce Kendrick  
 Knox Kimberly  
 Kelly Kravitz  
 Richard Lavallo

Tracy Levins  
 Madeline McClure  
 Hon. F. Scott McCown, ret.  
 Gabriella McDonald  
 Susan McDowell  
 Pamela McPeters  
 Anu Partap  
 Judy Powell  
 Mary Christine Reed  
 Carolyne Rodriguez

Johana Scot  
 Janet Sharkis  
 Andrea Sparks  
 Jeanne Stamp  
 Gloria Terry  
 Kenneth Thompson  
 Arabia Vargas  
 Kelly White

## STAFF

Tina Amberboy, Executive Director  
 Kristi Taylor, Assistant Director  
 Jessica Arguijo, Communications Manager  
 Jamie Bernstein, Staff Attorney  
 Monica Mahoney, Administrative Assistant  
 Patrick Passmore, Grant Administrator  
 Milbrey Raney, Staff Attorney  
 Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant

Hon. Darlene Byrne, Senior Judicial Advisor  
 Hon. Robin Sage, Jurist in Residence  
 Hon. Dean Rucker, Jurist in Residence  
*Office of Court Administration*



**INSERT - TAB 2**



**PERMANENT JUDICIAL COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**June 10, 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	✓	
Kristene Blackstone, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services, Dept. 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, (by proxy Ashley Harris), 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. Frank Rynd, General Counsel, Archdiocese Galveston-Houston	✓	
Hon. Peter Sakai, Judge, 225th District Court, San Antonio	✓	
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, Norton Rose Fulbright US 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	✓	

	Attended	Did Not Attend
Irene Clements, President, National Foster Family Association, and Consultant, Butterfly Marketing, LLC, Pflugerville		✓
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	✓	
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, State Development Specialist, Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health, The University of Texas, 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	✓	
Susan McDowell, Executive Director, Life works, Austin	✓	
Pamela McPeters, Director of Public Policy, Texas Association for the Protection of Children, 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 Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Austin	✓	
Johana Scot, Executive Director, Parent Guidance Center, Austin		✓
Janet Sharkis, Executive Director, Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, Austin		✓
Andrea Sparks, Child Sex Trafficking Unit Administrator, Office of the Governor, Austin	✓	
Jeanne Stamp, Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office, Charles A. Dana Center, Austin	✓	
Gloria Terry, (by proxy Maggie Agras), 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 Guests**

Valinda Bolton, Community Affairs Liaison for CPS, Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Courtney Davis, Intern, Office of the Governor, Austin  
Emily Eby, Intern, Texas Appleseed, Austin  
David Feigen, Staff, Office of Representative Helen Giddings, Austin  
Hon. Richard Garcia, Associate Judge, Bexar County Children's Court, San Antonio  
Brooke Goodlett, Attorney, Helping Hand Home for Children Foster Parent, Austin  
Christine Harbach, CASA Volunteer, New Braunfels  
Andrew Homer, Director of Public Affairs, Texas CASA, Austin  
Maureen Metteauer, Legislative Director, Office of Representative James Frank  
Hon. Cathy Morris, Associate Judge, South Texas Child Protection Court, Boerne  
Doris Parker, CASA Volunteer, New Braunfels  
Wanda Peña, Senior Director, Casey Family Programs, San Antonio  
Shannon Ramsey, Team Lead Transitional Living Services, Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Tanya Rollins, State Disproportionality Manager, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin  
Barbara Schafer, Court Coordinator, 225th District Court, San Antonio  
Hon. John Specia, former Commissioner, Department of Family and Protective Services, Austin

### **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  
Tiffany Roper, Assistant Director, 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  
Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant, Children's Commission

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

Justice Guzman called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

### **Recognition of Guests**

Justice Guzman welcomed special guests Susan McDowell, Executive Director of Lifeworks, Judge Cathy Morris of the South Texas Child Protection Court, and Judge Richard Garcia of the Bexar County Children's Court.

The Commission had a moment of silence for Dr. Karen Purvis who passed away in May 2016.

### **Commissioner Membership Changes**

Justice Guzman announced that Kristene Blackstone, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services (CPS), was appointed as a Commissioner.

### **Collaborative Council Membership Changes**

Justice Guzman welcomed Ms. Susan McDowell, Executive Director of Lifeworks to the Collaborative Council, and announced that Judge Diana Guariglia has transitioned off the Collaborative Council.

### **Committee Member Changes**

Justice Guzman announced that Ms.Carolyn Rodriguez, Ms. Mary Christine Reed, and Ms. Tanya Rollins have joined the Basic Committee. Justice Guzman announced that Ms. Colleen McCall and Judge Olen Underwood have transitioned off the Basic Committee, and that Ms. Alice Emerson has transitioned off the Training Committee.

### **Staff Member Changes**

Justice Guzman introduced Andrea Vicencio, Administrative Assistant at the Commission.

### **Adoption of February 12, 2016 Meeting Minutes**

Justice Guzman directed members to Tab 2, noted that members had the opportunity to review the minutes, and noted one correction to show Judge Frank Rynd as attending the February 12 meeting. Justice Guzman asked if there were any other 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 February 12, 2016 meeting. Ms. Vicki Spriggs motioned to adopt the minutes; the motion was seconded. The attending members voted to approve and adopt the meeting minutes unanimously.

Justice Guzman announced the Strategic Planning Committee, to be chaired by Judge Dean Rucker. Justice Guzman announced the members of the Strategic Planning Committee: Judge Darlene Byrne, Ms. Sheila Craig, Judge Rob Hofmann, Dr. Andrew Keller, Dr. Octavio Martinez, Justice Michael Massengale, Judge Scott McCown, Judge Frank Rynd, Judge Robin Sage, Judge John Specia, Ms. Vicki Spriggs, and Lt. Col. Travis Walters. Ms. Tina Amberboy presented the Committee's goals and approach regarding the CIP Strategic Plan to the Commission.

### **COMMISSION MEMBER UPDATES**

**Ms. Vicki Spriggs** reported the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) project and the Permanent Management Conservatorship (PMC) project will continue into the next fiscal year. Programs that focus on the recruitment, retention, and reengagement of volunteers will expand to reach the Texas CASA goal to provide 100% of children with a volunteer. Ms. Spriggs reported the Texas CASA marketing campaign continues in phase one, and the collected data will be analyzed to verify what efforts are most successful

to begin implementation of phase two. Ms. Spriggs reported on the National CASA Conference held in June 2016, which featured Texas Judge Darlene Byrne as the closing keynote speaker. Ms. Spriggs announced the Texas CASA Annual Conference scheduled for November 3 -5, 2016 at Westin Dallas Park Central in Dallas, Texas.

**Justice Michael Massengale** directed members to Tab 3 for a thorough update of the Training Committee and highlighted some events and projects. Trial Skills Training (TST) was held in April 2016 and the next TST is scheduled for December 2016. Justice Massengale announced the Advanced Family Law (AFL) Conference is scheduled for August 2016 and that the Commission will award up to 100 scholarships to attend the Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) workshop on August 3. Justice Massengale continued to report the Training Committee is working with the State Bar of Texas to film a series of child welfare webinars on August 23, 2016, and is currently planning the Child Welfare Judges Conference (CWJC), scheduled for November 14-16, 2016 along with the release of the 2016 edition of Child Protection Law Bench Book.

**Hon. Carlos Villalon** reported on the events in the Rio Grande Valley area to promote Child Abuse Awareness Month in April. Judge Villalon reported on the Foster Care Consortium on Education Meeting on February 23, 2016 presented by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and attended by numerous local school districts and other stakeholders. DFPS plans to hold another Consortium meeting in the summer of 2016. Judge Villalon hosted a training on testifying for CASA volunteers in March 2016. Judge Villalon further reported on a coalition meeting between DFPS and Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) in the Rio Grande Valley area to bridge the gap in services in regards to psychiatric care for both parents and children. Ms. Elizabeth Thornton from the U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) agency made a presentation on April 21, 2016 on the agency's parental interest, directive and outreach. Ms. Thornton spoke on ICE's efforts to facilitate participation with parents who are currently detained or going through deportation proceedings in child welfare cases, including introducing parent-child visits, court attendance, and other methods to keep the parents involved. Judge Villalon announced the new National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Implementation Site Project manager, Zadora Bolin, and the release of the NCJFCJ Enhanced Resource Guidelines in May 2016, available for download online at <http://www.ncjfcj.org/ncjfcj-releases-enhanced-resource-guidelines>.

Justice Guzman encouraged Judge Villalon to work with the Commission's Jurists in Residence (JIRs) to communicate the processes and protocols that have proven successful in his court to judges across the State.

**Hon. Frank Rynd** reported an idea from Justice Evelyn Keyes regarding a child-community coordination project, with an overall goal to ensure the children and youth of Harris County receive tailored and appropriate services until they exit foster care. Judge Rynd noted he will interface with Justice Keyes and evaluate the proposal in more depth with Justice Guzman.

**Hon. Jean Boyd** updated the Commissioners on the Safe Babies Program in Tarrant County, which launched in April 2016, and the efforts of National Adoption Day Committee for next year's National Adoption Day. Judge Boyd also noted there have been some issues around CPS staffing in Dallas.

**Hon. Ronald Pope** announced the Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe (KITS) Conference on June 16 – 17, 2016 in Houston, which will include presentations from a state wide committee on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

**Ashley Harris** reported on behalf of Sheila Craig. Ms. Harris announced the upcoming Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Cross Systems Summit on August 16 – 17, 2016 in San Marcos. This year's Summit will focus on the history of equity work in Texas. Ms. Harris reported on a report recently published by the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights.

**Hon. Mary Murphy** reported on a new process for Presiding Judges to evaluate Associate Judges, passed in legislation last year, to ensure Texas courts are getting the best services and the best judges. Judge Murphy noted that the Presiding Judges recently met at a retreat in April to discuss how to make courts more accessible and evaluate the need for more judges across the state.

**Hon. Peter Sakai** noted that he will present later on today's agenda, and introduced the Bexar County Court Coordinator Barbara Schafer and law intern Crystal Johnson.

**Hon. Robin Sage** reported as the Jurist in Residence (JIR) for the Commission. Judge Sage announced that Texas has received national recognition for its JIR program, and that she recently facilitated a JIR training with Tina Amberboy and Judge John Specia for a judge from Georgia in April 2016. Judge Sage gave an update on the status of the Protect Our Kids Commission's (POK) final recommendations, which were issued in a report to State leaders in December 2015. Judge Sage reported that some of the POK Commissioners met with Senators Nelson and Schwertner about carrying the recommendations in the upcoming legislative session. Judge Sage reported on a new Trial Skills Training (TST) evaluation tool that will survey the judges who see the attorneys who have attended a TST to determine if the judges note any difference in the attorney's practice as a result of the training. Judge Sage continued to note the Commission's work on the update to the Child Protection Law Bench Book for the 2016 CWJC in November and the recent Kids in Court Roundtable. Judge Sage also announced that the American Bar Association (ABA) has published a new parent representation guide.

**Allison Billodeau** introduced Andrea Sparks, the new Director of the Child Sex Trafficking division at the Governor's Office and reported on efforts of the Governor's Office to collaborate with DFPS and other agencies to better identify and better serve the victims of child sex trafficking. Ms. Billodeau noted that the Governor's Office is beginning to discuss legislative appropriations requests for the agency and how to address the resource needs of the agency.

**Cindy Patrick** reported that the Meadows Foundation has received a number of proposals regarding child welfare issues. The Foundation funded the early intervention program in Bexar County and is

looking at a second year proposal for the Safe Babies program in Tarrant County, as well as proposals regarding strengthening kinship care projects, residential treatment centers, and various types of foster parent and foster child organizations. Ms. Patrick discussed a current proposal to fund the Commission's feasibility study for a child welfare institute. Ms. Patrick announced an upcoming meeting with a group of foundations in North Texas in mid-June to learn about current processes, possible changes, and how funders can better coordinate and fund projects together. Ms. Patrick also reported that the Meadows Foundation board will review the Texas CASA program with permanent managing volunteers and the Texas CASA evaluation study.

**Dr. Andrew Keller** reported on his work with Justice Harriett O'Neill to address the Texas judiciary about mental health issues in Texas, and on the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute's (MMHPI) new public awareness campaign, "Okay To Say," a toolkit to promote awareness of the need for mental health treatment and the option for mental health treatment in Texas. More information about the campaign is available online at <https://www.okaytosay.org/>. Dr. Keller reported on MMHPI's focus on increasing leadership in 2016, noting that Michelle Harper is the incoming Vice President for Child and Family Policy and that Kate Bolti will also join the MMHPI team. Dr. Keller discussed two large projects to produce in-depth assessments of children's intensive mental health treatment capacity in Dallas County and Harris County, with particular focus on children at risk of suspension or exclusionary discipline in schools. The projects will assess capacity in communities and assess readiness of schools to address intensive mental health services issues. Dr. Keller also reported on MMHPI's participation on a mental health consortium with the Commission, DFPS, Texas CASA, and other child welfare stakeholders to look at range of trauma informed care, trauma specific treatments, and trauma specific supports. Dr. Keller reported on the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance, a grant administered by MMHPI to fill gaps in care for veterans and their families, and a new initiative with Dr. David Lakey of the University of Texas and the Chairs of Psychiatry at all of the academic institutions in Texas to discuss how to leverage scarce psychiatry resources in Texas and connect psychiatric expertise across the state.

**Hon. Michael Schneider** gave an update on the juvenile records sealing program, which started five years ago in Harris County in partnership with the Houston Bar Association. The program produced trainings for lawyers in Harris County, and to date Harris County has sealed juvenile records for over 200 youth. Judge Schneider reported that the University of Houston Law Center is working with the nonprofit group The Way Home to expand the Juvenile & Capital Advocacy Project (JCAP) to start a clinic to train law students as guardians ad litem, beginning in 2017. Judge Schneider reported on his work as chair of Harris County's My Brother's Keeper initiative to start a Dual Status Youth Task Force, which focuses on youth dually involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems in certain zip codes areas of the county. Judge Schneider further reported on the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases in Harris County, noting that since 2014 the three juvenile courts have handled 950 SIJS cases and that family and civil judges have started hearing SIJS cases to alleviate the backlog of pending cases.

Justice Guzman suggested that Judge Schneider consider producing webinar with the State Bar to train on sealing of youth records and collaborating with the Commission to disseminate information on the issue to judges and attorneys across the state.

**Hon. John Specia** announced that he is serving on the Commission's Strategic Planning Committee.

**Kristene Blackstone** introduced herself to the Commission, noting that she became the Assistant Commissioner for CPS at DFPS on May 1, 2016. Ms. Blackstone reported on initiatives at CPS to focus on ensuring timely, quality contacts with children and to promote critical thinking training in all levels of management. Ms. Blackstone reported that an accelerated hiring push in Dallas resulted in 100 new CPS Investigators, and a meeting is scheduled for mid-June with Regional Directors. Ms. Blackstone noted that the CPS Parental Child Safety Placement (PCSP) policy was updated and training is forthcoming. Safety Summits are scheduled throughout the summer for supervisor and above-level staff around the state. Ms. Blackstone is scheduled to meet with placement providers across Texas to discuss capacity issues.

**Hon. Rob Hofmann** reported on a presentation with Justice Guzman and Jamie Bernstein at the Special Education Juvenile Justice and Law Conference in Austin in early June. The judge also attended the Education Reach for Texans Conference in El Paso. Judge Hofmann reported on the Region 9 Coalition meeting on June 9, 2016 in San Angelo, which was attended by five judges, CPS staff, members of the faith-based community, disproportionality specialists, and staff from CPAs across state to focus on issues regarding capacity in Region 9. Judge Hofmann also briefly reported that the work of the Foster Care and Education Committee is ongoing.

**Paula Bibbs-Samuels** reported that the Parent Collaboration Group participated with six birth parents in the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in May. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels submitted a call for proposals for presentations at the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, Texas Foster Family Conference and Prevention and Early Intervention. Ms. Bibbs-Samuels announced the Parent Collaboration Group Statewide Meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2016 to discuss the upcoming legislative review.

**Hon. Darlene Byrne** presented data collected in Travis County regarding the efficiency of transferring cases from 2014 to 2016, noting that the transfer of cases has improved since 2014. Judge Byrne reported on a collaboration with Representative Lloyd Doggett to find funding for the Court Improvement Program (CIP) for the next 5 years. Judge Byrne also discussed the placement crisis in Travis County and an emergency meeting held in early June with DFPS and the Child Welfare Board to discuss the issue. Judge Byrne announced the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Conference on July 17 – 18, 2016 in Monterey, California. Judge Byrne updated the Commission on the early appointment project her court began in September 2015, and on initiatives related to teen parents in child welfare.

Dr. Keller offered an extension of MMHPI's analysis regarding capacity in North Texas to Travis County.

**Justice Harriett O'Neill** commended the Commission on its continued efforts towards collaboration. Justice O'Neill announced her position on the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute Board, and her work to establish the Mental Health Committee, formed at the Judicial Council's last meeting.

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

Ms. Amberboy reminded the Commission that the budget has been adjusted to reflect the \$25,000 grant for the feasibility study, which was approved by an email vote by the Commissioners in April 2016. Ms. Amberboy updated the Commission on phase one of the feasibility study: 1) setting up structure to pursue the concept; 2) working to ensure the exploratory funds; and 3) beginning to get input from stakeholders. Ms. Amberboy reported that a small advisory committee has been formed to help guide the study, and that Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) will serve as the fiscal agent. An application is being considered by the Meadows Foundation, and the Houston Endowment has invited the Commission to submit an application for funding. Rebecca Lightsey has conducted twenty interviews with stakeholders. Ms. Amberboy noted that phase one is expected to continue throughout the summer.

Kristi Taylor updated the Commission on a project to focus on Trauma-Informed Care work in Texas that will aim to develop a statewide strategy, beginning with a scan of current TIC work in Texas and transitioning to a larger review to bring stakeholders together to discuss TIC and bring more education about TIC to all parts of state.

### **Presentation from Susan McDowell**

Susan McDowell, Executive Director of LifeWorks, gave a presentation entitled “Vulnerabilities & Opportunities: Profiles of Foster & Non-Foster Youth Served by LifeWorks.” The presentation is available at <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/73253/Lifeworks-Presentation-6-10-16.pdf>. To download the 2016 Vulnerabilities & Opportunities Report, please visit: <http://www.lifeworksaustin.org/>.

### **Presentation from Hon. Peter Sakai**

Judge Sakai presented on Bexar County Children’s Court Division and Programs Redesign.

**DFPS UPDATE, Assistant Commissioner for CPS Kristene Blackstone** reported on DFPS initiatives, including the upcoming rollout of the Child and Adolescents Strengths and Needs Assessment and Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, and staff trainings for both assessments in August. Ms. Blackstone noted the assessments are intended to improve service plans and, ultimately, help produce better outcomes. Ms. Blackstone reported that DFPS will begin Phase 2 of Foster Care Redesign in the Ft. Worth area. DFPS is working to install performance-based contracting with the provider community. The Department is also looking to design metrics around child characteristics to help stay informed about which youth are at risk for placement disruption and to offer an individualized case assessment. Ms. Blackstone reported that a Request for Information will go out in mid-June regarding a placement initiative to reach high acuity needs kids. DFPS is participating in a meeting on June 10, 2016 regarding residential child care licensing and discussing new rules around emergency behavioral interventions. Ms. Blackstone reported that DFPS is finishing up an assessment of the child care provider community that will inform the Department on the placements available and help identify gaps. DFPS recently completed the CFSR federal review and a preliminary report is expected in the fall of 2016. Ms. Blackstone reported that Commissioner Whitman and all of the Assistant Commissioners from DFPS are

going to take a Proud to Protect Tour this summer to meet with management teams and staff, and plan to hold stakeholder meetings.

Ms. Blackstone noted that Jean Shaw is the new Assistant Commissioner of the Residential Child Care Licensing division. The Residential Child Care Licensing division has proposed rules for child placing agencies that are open for public comment, and plans to open proposed rules for general residency occupancy for public comment in July 2016. Ms. Blackstone reported on the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program initiatives, including the “Help for Parents. Hope for Kids” ad campaign, targeted towards connecting parents to resources, with instructional videos for at-risk families available at: <http://www.helpandhope.org/>. PEI launched a military and veterans program in El Paso, Bexar, and Bell counties to better serve at-risk families in those communities. Ms. Blackstone also reported that nine new Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES) programs have been contracted for Dallas, Harris, Taylor, Lubbock, McLennan, Nueces, and Wichita counties to provide family support services such as home visitation, depression screenings, and new parent education. PEI recently merged with HHSC Home Visitation Program.

**OFFICE OF COURT ADMINISTRATION UPDATE, Mr. David Slayton** updated the Commission on the Weighted Caseload Study that was conducted to determine actual time spent on CPS cases. Mr. Slayton noted that the final report has not yet been issued, but highlighted the increase from the 2016 study finding that CPS cases require an average of 293 minutes per case in comparison to the previous estimate from 2007 of 48 minutes per case. OCA will begin to assess the need for judges and courts based on the Weighted Caseload Study’s findings, and is currently looking at areas to establish new Child Protection Courts, including areas surrounding Taylor, Hood, Somervell, and Williamson counties. Mr. Slayton reported on the work of the Judicial Council regarding truancy since its work with the Governor’s Office and the Legislature during the last session to pass a bill to decriminalize truancy. From September 2015 to April 2016 the rate of filings against youth for truancy offenses dropped 91.5% in comparison to those filed from September 2014 to April 2015. Mr. Slayton also reported that the Judicial Council voted to approve the establishment of the Mental Health Committee, which currently has two main goals: 1) to look at any legislative changes the Judicial Council wants to support with regard to mental health; and 2) to conduct a feasibility study to determine if a mental health commission should be established. The legislative report is expected by October and the results of the feasibility study are expected in February 2017.

#### **COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL REPORT**

**Mary Christine Reed, Texas Foster Youth Justice Project, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA)** announced the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Aging Out Guide, available online at <http://texasfosteryouth.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/5th-Edition-Foster-Youth-Guide-Web-Final.pdf>. The guide is distributed for free upon request. Ms. Reed also reported on TRLA’s work regarding barriers to the former foster youth Medicaid program and announced to the Commissioners that former foster youth under age 26 who are having problems accessing Medicaid can call 211 to get assistance. Ms. Reed also noted the opening of the Ombudsman for Foster Care at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. More information on the Ombudsman is available at <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/office-ombudsman/foster-care-help>.

Justice Guzman recognized all attending members of the Collaborative Council and Committees.

**NEW BUSINESS**

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:16 p.m.



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

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

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Report to Commission  
September 23, 2016

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The State Bar of Texas – Texas Law Center  
1414 Colorado Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

I. Goal: Encourage judicial leadership, accountability, and appropriate oversight of child protection cases to improve safety, permanency and well-being of children and families.	
I.A. Objective: Participate and provide resources to statewide collaborative efforts to improve child safety.	
I.A.1. Strategy: Collaborate and support agency and partner efforts to examine, secure, assess and improve child safety.	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Serve on the DFPS Prevention Advisory Committee</li> <li>- Support implementation of the recommendations issued by the Protect Our Kids Commission</li> </ul>	<p>The Prevention Advisory Committee convened by the Prevention and Early Intervention Division of DFPS was a key recommendation from the Protects our Kids Commission (POK). The POK Commission was established by Senate Bill 66 during the 83rd Legislative Session and was charged with identifying promising practices and strategies to address and reduce fatalities from child abuse and neglect, and recommending a comprehensive statewide strategy for reducing those fatalities. The PAC includes representatives such as pediatricians, judges, agency representatives, prosecutors, medical examiners, provider groups, and policy experts in prevention and community advocacy.</p> <p>The CC will also continue to collaborate with other stakeholders focused on preventing child fatalities such as the Department of State Health Services, the State Child Fatality Review Team and local Child Fatality Review Teams.</p>
I.B. Objective: Support the improvement of education outcomes for children in the conservatorship of DFPS to increase opportunities for educational progress, leading to a more productive and stable adult life.	
I.B.1. Strategy: Implement the Texas Blueprint.	Progress Report
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff the standing Foster Care and Education (FC&amp;E) Committee</li> <li>- Ensure the committee meets periodically to assess progress of implementation of the Texas Blueprint</li> </ul>	<p>The Foster Care and Education (FC&amp;Ed) Committee was established in 2014 to continue the implementation of the Texas Blueprint recommendations, issued in 2012, aimed at improving education outcomes for children and youth in foster care.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote continued collaboration between education, child welfare, and the courts</li> <li>- Seek guidance of top-level judicial, education, and child welfare leadership, as necessary</li> <li>- Develop and promote cross-system training opportunities to increase awareness about the educational needs of students in DFPS conservatorship and develop capacity to respond to those needs</li> <li>- Facilitate use of data to inform systems improvements in both education and child welfare systems, including data related to higher education</li> <li>- Create and monitor workgroups or subcommittees to carry out charge or purpose of the FC&amp;E Committee</li> </ul>	<p>There are four FC&amp;Ed subcommittees: Data, Postsecondary, Special Education, and Local Collaboration. The Data Workgroup focuses on improved information-sharing and data collection between DFPS and the Texas Education Agency. The Postsecondary Workgroup focuses on issues of college or career readiness, identification of students currently or formerly in care, supports to encourage better outcomes beyond high school, developing resources to assist new foster care liaisons at institutions of higher education, and data exchange between DFPS and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The Special Education Workgroup focuses on the over and underrepresentation of students in foster care in special education as well as transition planning in the child welfare and special education contexts, training and designation of surrogate parents, and best practices surrounding confidentiality. The Local Collaboration Workgroup focuses on strategies to promote collaboration at the local level.</p> <p>The CPS Bench Book also includes a chapter and checklist on education issues which have been updated for the 2016 version.</p>
<p><b>I.C. Objective: Promote awareness of and embed a culture and practice among the judiciary and legal community around Trauma Informed Care so that the legal and judicial community is aware, educated and supportive of the concept and application.</b></p>	
<p><i>I.C.1. Strategy: Partner with Trauma and Mental Health advocates and agencies to ensure the legal and judicial community is aware, educated, supportive of, and implementing and applying principles of Trauma Informed Care in the respective disciplines.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight importance of child well-being among judiciary and other stakeholders</li> <li>- Liaise with and participate as a partner in the various trauma-informed workgroups and collaborative groups</li> <li>- Monitor the trauma informed care trainings, workgroups, meetings, strategies, timelines and provide reports to the CC and other stakeholders as appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>In 2015, the CC partnered with Texas CASA on a project to survey child welfare stakeholders about the various types of trauma training and programs being offered and utilized around the state. Texas CASA issued a comprehensive report in October 2015. In 2016, Texas CASA worked with the CC to develop an Attorney ad Litem training on trauma, which will occur on September 27, 2016, and collaborated on efforts to provide attorney scholarships to CASA’s annual conference being held in November (See III.A.6).</p> <p>The CC also continued to support DFPS’s shift to a trauma-informed care system and in addition to developing and promoting an attorney training about trauma-informed care, will include a session on Trauma Informed Courts at the annual judicial conference in November 2016.</p>

	<p>The Child Protection Law Bench Book also includes an updated chapter on trauma. Pursuant to SB125 from the 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature, DFPS launched a comprehensive assessment that includes a trauma screening on September 1, 2016. The CANS (Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment) will be used in conjunction with a Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) to provide a comprehensive assessment for family service planning. The CC will issue a JIR in late September to apprise judges of these new tools and best practices for monitoring and use.</p>
<p><b>I.D. Objective: Promote awareness of and provide training, resources and support for addressing Human Trafficking and specifically Child Sexual Exploitation so that the judicial system can assist in preventing the commercial sexual exploitation of children in DFPS’ conservatorship.</b></p>	
<p><i>I.D.1. Strategy: Collaborate with state and local partners to prevent and address commercial sexual exploitation of foster youth.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate with Office of Attorney General and Statewide Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force as well as the Office of the Texas Governor</li> <li>- Work with Child Welfare Agency on identification and assessment of children from child welfare system who are victims or at high risk of becoming victims of human trafficking</li> <li>- Gain understanding of existing data collection efforts and identify additional or new data collection elements or efforts needed</li> <li>- Coordinate and collaborate with child welfare agency and other child welfare partners on various programs and efforts to combat HT</li> <li>- Understand, participate, and help identify HT placements and services available to foster children who are trafficked or at risk of being trafficked</li> <li>- Identify training needs for judges, attorneys, and other stakeholders</li> <li>- Collaborate on prevention efforts at state, regional, and local levels, as appropriate</li> <li>- Examine the connection between HT and crossover youth population</li> </ul>	<p>The CC is focused primarily on providing information to judges and attorneys responsible for child welfare cases to raise awareness of human trafficking as it impacts children involved with the child welfare system.</p> <p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored a training at the annual Department of Family and Protective Services Attorney Conference that included a session on “Human Trafficking 101 for Lawyers,” with a panel from the Department of Public Safety, Allies Against Slavery, and the Bexar County District Attorney’s office. The CC and TCJ sponsored a training on the “Tricks and Tips of Human Trafficking Trials” presented by the Office of the Texas Attorney General at the January 2016 Family Justice Conference.</p> <p>The Children’s Commission Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book has been updated to include recent legislation regarding human trafficking and a one page checklist on human trafficking will be added to the Bench Book as an additional resource for judges.</p> <p>Through Jurist in Residence correspondence, the CC also relayed important information to judges hearing child welfare cases about the intersection of child welfare and human trafficking.</p>

	<p>The CC also participates in the nationwide Capacity Building Center for Courts PL 113-183 Constituency Group to learn about best and current practices to prevent and respond to trafficking of children and youth in foster care.</p> <p>CC staff attends local, state, and national trainings, including the Family Focused Treatment Association conference sessions on human trafficking to stay informed about successful strategies to combat trafficking and develop expertise to relay information to judges and attorneys as needed.</p> <p>In addition to serving on the Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force, the CC also works with the Office of the Texas Governor’s Child Sex Trafficking Team and the Office of Court Administration to develop strategies to improve judicial handling of child welfare cases where children or youth are at high risk of becoming trafficking victims.</p>
<p><b>I.E. Objective: Promote the value of mediation in CPS cases, which may in turn help children and families exit the CPS system more quickly.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>I.E.1. Strategy: Establish an understanding and framework regarding availability, quality, support, cost, training, and usefulness of mediation in CPS cases.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with the University of Texas at Austin to understand recent data analyses related to mediation cost effectiveness and outcomes for Travis County and how those outcomes can be applied statewide</li> <li>- Assess mediator training availability and needs</li> <li>- Assess potential costs, resources spent by counties, and funding sources for CPS mediation</li> </ul>	<p>In September 2014, UT applied for a grant to help determine the best practices and cost-effectiveness of mediation for Travis County, Texas. This project also aimed to develop a cost formula that could be applied to other counties in the state and to provide a research framework and questions that can be used by other counties. One goal of the project was to determine the costs of mediation measured by the full costs associated with cases that are resolved prior to mediation, at mediation, and at trial and include all real costs paid by the courts and departments to prepare and service the case, in addition to the cost of mediation, foster care placement, and any other relevant costs. Due to data delays associated with the SACWIS / child welfare system, the project was unable to be completed. UT produced a cost benefit report, however (linked here: <a href="http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/54517/Model-Court-Cost-Analysis-Memo-FINAL.pdf">http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/54517/Model-Court-Cost-Analysis-Memo-FINAL.pdf</a>)</p> <p>In April 2016, the CC surveyed 85 judges about the availability, frequency, usefulness, funding options and benefits of mediation in CPS cases. That survey was analyzed by UT and the results will be presented at the child welfare judicial conference in November. Preliminarily, 88% of the respondents indicated that mediation is used in</p>

	<p>their jurisdiction, but training and funding issues present significant barriers. In FY2017, the CC hopes to explore further the barriers to using mediation, possible funding sources, training availability, and practice standards for mediators, and will share this information with judges and attorneys.</p>
<p><b>I.F. Objective: Collaborate with the full continuum of providers, including health and mental health providers, to identify ways to enhance effective and efficient services and supports for children in foster care and their caregivers.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>I.F.1. Strategy: Partner and collaborate with the residential provider community.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CC Staff will serve on the Public-Private Partnership for Foster Care Redesign</li> <li>- Confer and attend meetings of the Texas Chapter of the Family Focused Treatment Association and other child placing collaboratives</li> </ul>	<p>CC Executive Director will continue to serve on the DFPS Public Private Partnership, which is the DFPS committee that oversees Foster Care Redesign.</p> <p>CC staff will also attend the Family Focused Treatment Association meetings and annual conference to stay informed about provider concerns and look for opportunities to connect the provider community to the judiciary and legal communities to help improve placement stability and capacity concerns.</p>
<p><b><i>I.F.2. Strategy: Lead a Child Welfare Trauma Consortium to create a trauma-informed child welfare system that better meets the needs of children who have experienced trauma.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify best practices in TIC both in Texas and nationally</li> <li>- Identify key TIC players in Texas and catalog their efforts and activities to provide a more comprehensive picture of what organizations are already doing to address TIC training and services, including an analysis of how Texas can leverage existing models</li> <li>- Assess the need for a statewide coordination plan regarding TIC</li> <li>- Examine payment and coordination barriers to serving foster care children who have experienced trauma</li> <li>- Assess data regarding how TIC practices affect systems with respect to costs and level of care</li> <li>- Partner with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to create a report reflecting the TIC research</li> </ul>	<p>The CC has established a small working group with Texas CASA, DFPS, MMHPI, Hogg Foundation and others to develop a comprehensive trauma-informed care state strategy and practice model for all of child welfare.</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Assemble a multi-disciplinary Consortium to develop an implementation plan for creating a TIC child welfare system</li><li>- Facilitate collaboration to implement plan to create a TIC child welfare system</li><li>- Evaluate and apply findings</li></ul> |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

<p><b>II. Goal: Promote, expand, and share best and promising child welfare and court practices and resources to improve judicial administration and strengthen the child welfare system.</b></p>	
<p><b>II.A. Objective: Create opportunities to bring together subject matter experts, judicial and executive branch leaders, and key policy makers so that important and urgent issues are examined and recommendations and solutions are identified.</b></p>	
<p><b>II.A.1. Strategy: Work with DFPS and other stakeholders to identify topics for Round Table discussions.</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Form workgroup to define the purpose and goal of each Round Table and solicit participation from experts to promote substantive discussion</li> <li>- Develop meeting materials and agendas</li> <li>- Secure facilitator and location</li> <li>- Handle RSVPs and travel reimbursements</li> <li>- Produce a written report within 4-6 months</li> <li>- Consider implementation strategies based on the report and recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>There are no FY2017 RT meetings scheduled at this time.</p>
<p><b>II.B. Objective: Ensure availability of quality judicial resources such as the Bench Book, Jurist in Residence (JIR) support and JIR correspondence and communiques to ensure judges are equipped to make informed, educated decisions, and use best practices in in conducting hearings that will contribute to better outcomes for children and families.</b></p>	
<p><b>II.B.1. Strategy: Maintain, update, and support a high-quality Child Protection Law Bench Book for CPS Judges (Bench Book).</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain a Bench Book that outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judges handling child protection cases, including topical sections and checklists</li> <li>- Include tips and best and promising practices throughout Bench Book</li> <li>- Annually update Bench Book with new information, as needed</li> <li>- Disseminate updated Bench Book at annual child welfare judicial conference, annual college for new judges, and upon request</li> <li>- Maintain an updated Bench Book on the CC's website</li> <li>- Ensure all statutory citations are maintained and connected to an online resource</li> </ul>	<p>The CC is updating the 2016 CPS Judge Bench Book with a completion date of November 2016. The Bench Book will be distributed in hard copy at the Annual Child Welfare Judicial Conference to all attendees, and will be posted online with LawBox for FY2017.</p> <p>Throughout the year, the CC staff will monitor additional distributions of the book and will maintain a list of potential topics and edits for the 2017 edition.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Track distribution of Bench Book</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>II.B.2. Strategy: Provide JIR support to the judiciary and child welfare system.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partner with retired judges with child welfare experience to serve as JIRs</li> <li>- JIRs will participate in conference calls, meetings, and conferences as requested/needed</li> <li>- JIRs will release communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to judges hearing CPS cases</li> <li>- JIRs will market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities</li> <li>- Publish JIR letters with CC drafting and research assistance</li> <li>- With CC assistance, distribute to CPS judge listserv, and post JIR letters on the CC website</li> <li>- JIRs will provide judicial technical assistance to Children’s Commission, as needed</li> <li>- JIRs will help recruit, retain, and advance judicial leaders</li> </ul>	<p>The Jurist in Residence (JIR) position was created to foster judicial leadership and promote greater expertise among child protection judges. The JIR acts as a consultant, trainer, and speaker to provide expert and seasoned judicial advice on matters affecting courts and legal system handling of child welfare cases and issues. Additionally, informational letters and “blasts” concerning items of interests, such as training events, are routinely issued.</p> <p>Additionally, the JIRs assist with the development of curriculum for the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and moderate several sessions of the conference. The JIRs also review updates to the Child Protection Law Bench Book and attend and participate in events on behalf of the CC, including Round Tables and Trial Skills Trainings.</p> <p>The JIR activities will remain much the same for FY2017, but additional emphasis will be placed on recruiting judges to serve on subcommittees and workgroups that oversee short-term and long-term projects, and elevating judicial leaders with particular expertise and interests related to child and family wellbeing and improving the child welfare system.</p>
<p><b>II.C. Objective: Ensure availability of high-quality attorney resources such as Attorney Resource Letters, an attorney webpage on the CC website, and other relevant events to improve court-related outcomes for children and parents through legal representation that is trained and informed.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>II.C.1. Strategy: Develop and distribute Attorney Resource Letters (ARLs) that communicate or announce changes in law, policy or practice and inform attorneys of training and other events.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and maintain a distribution list of any / all attorneys known to the CC to work on child protection dockets throughout the State of Texas</li> <li>- Publish communiqués and letters on emerging, pertinent, and changing policy, laws, and practice of interest to attorneys handling CPS cases</li> </ul>	<p>In May 2016, the CC created a distribution list of more than 3,000 attorneys to inform legal practitioners of training and scholarship opportunities and to relay information about issues related to child welfare.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post ALRs on the CC website</li> <li>- Provide shorter communications (Attorney Blasts) with attorneys regarding specific training opportunities and other matters of interest</li> </ul>	<p>In May, the CC has distributed information regarding scholarships to State Bar of Texas Advanced Family Law One-Day Child Abuse and Neglect Track held on Wednesday, August 3, 2016 with video replays in Dallas on September 23, 2016 and South Padre Island on October 21, 2016. 100 attorneys applied for scholarships to attend or view these training events.</p> <p>The CC also sent out an attorney compensation survey to gather information about compensation rates, timing of, and duration of appointments. The CC received 299 responses.</p> <p>In June, the CC sent out an Attorney Resource Letter advising attorneys about the new Foster Youth Ombudsman’s Office that launched on May 2, 2016. The establishment of an Ombudsman’s Office was mandated by the 84th legislature and is intended to assist children and youth in foster care who report maltreatment, and may also assist foster youth with complaints regarding issues that are within the authority of the other Health and Human Services agencies.</p> <p>In July, the CC advertised its one-day live webcast taping produced in partnership with SBOT and detailed in Item III.A.3.</p> <p>Finally, in July, the CC announced via the Attorney d-list an invitation for up to 10 attorneys to attend the 2016 Texas CASA Conference in Dallas on November 3-5<sup>th</sup> at no cost. On Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be a special presentation for attorneys and guardians ad litem on Trauma-Informed Advocacy.</p>
<p><b><i>II.C.2. Strategy: Create and maintain an Attorney Resource webpage.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create an Attorney Resource page and link from CC homepage</li> <li>- Post relevant links, pages, reports, resources on the page</li> <li>- Maintain and update the page periodically</li> </ul>	<p>In FY2017, the CC will establish an attorney resource page that can be linked to from the CC home page.</p>
<p><b>II.D. Objective: Maintain and enhance the Children’s Commission website to provide an easily accessible, user friendly resources for the judiciary, attorneys and the child welfare community to obtain information and best practices in their interactions with children and families.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>II.D.1. Strategy: Maintain and enhance usability and function of the Children’s Commission website.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On a regular basis, update the website with recent, up-to-date, and pertinent content and work with OCA for website support</li> <li>- Provide links and resources related to each of the projects outlined in the Strategic Plan</li> <li>- Provide a portal for website visitors to submit inquiries or sign up for CC mailing lists and notification features</li> <li>- Use technology, such as Twitter, to communicate important news announcements and spread awareness about key events</li> <li>- Provide CIP grant application information and updated applications and forms</li> </ul>	<p>The FY2017, the CC will update features of the website to improve its look as well as reconfigure certain features to improve functionality and usefulness.</p>
<p><b>II.E. Objective: Support county, state, and national child welfare leaders to enhance the opportunity to gain knowledge and competency and share experience and expertise with Texas.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>II.E.1. Strategy: Provide assistance to local jurisdictions, DFPS, and other state and national partners.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure speakers and/or provide funds for meeting support and facilitation</li> <li>- Make presentations at training events, as requested</li> <li>- Evaluate the effectiveness of the assistance</li> </ul>	<p>In FY2016, the CC sponsored the keynote speaker for the Advanced Family Law One-Day, and may fund similar requests or activities in FY2017. CC staff also provided training on child welfare topics at a number of local training events and will continue to do so as requested in FY2017.</p>
<p><b>II.F. Objective: Support the use of best practices in court case management.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>II.F.1. Strategy: Evaluate the quality, impact and usability of the Office of Court (OCA) Child Protection Case Management System (CPCMS).</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with OCA on the management, programming, and testing services for CPCMS</li> <li>- Monitor bug fixes or enhancements required based on input from CPCMS users</li> <li>- Participate in the CPCMS Advisory Group to determine the nature and priority of CPCMS enhances and bug fixes</li> </ul>	<p>CPCMS is a case management system that is unique to Child Protection Courts. It has been in use since 2009. OCA provides project management, programming and testing services for CPCMS. OCA staffs a CPCMS Advisory Council of CPC judges, OCA staff and CC staff to evaluate bug fixes or enhancements. CPCMS underwent a major upgrade of the CPCMS infrastructure and primary judge page in FY2015. Overall, these changes have made CPCMS more efficient and easier for judges and court coordinators to use. CPCMS is currently in maintenance mode, but OCA continually</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor equipment and software purchases required for proper and efficient operation and maintenance</li> </ul>	<p>works on the architecture to streamline how CPCMS functions and serves the needs of the CPC judges and court staff who it. Part of CPCMS management includes staffing an Advisory Committee that oversees the governance structure and work to continue enhancing the system as needed by the governance committee. OCA will conduct semi-annual governance meetings to establish priorities for CPCMS enhancements and to report status of governance activities, and will provide at least four software releases during the fiscal year.</p> <p>Another feature of CPCMS is data collection, which may be useful in monitoring outcome measures which in turn provide judges with meaningful feedback regarding court practices that affect safety, permanency and well-being.</p>
<p><i>II.F.2. Strategy: Explore feasibility of providing support for specialty courts such as family treatment, crossover youth, permanency dockets.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with judges who handle specialty court dockets</li> <li>- Develop and provide resources and tools helpful to specialty court judges</li> <li>- Assess the effectiveness of the assistance, resources and tools</li> </ul>	<p>No activity to report at this time.</p>

III. Goal: Facilitate and institutionalize collaboration, communication, and respect between the judicial system and child welfare partners.	
III.A. Objective: Promote and support institutional collaboration among high-level state, legislative, and judicial leaders, as well as among multi-disciplinary child welfare stakeholders so there is open and continuous dialogue between and among the various child welfare partners.	
<i>III.A.1. Strategy: Provide a forum and opportunity for child welfare stakeholders to collaborate, communicate, and share information about child welfare practices, policies, needs and strengths.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain a statewide multidisciplinary judicial commission</li> <li>- Hold regular CC meetings that will include child welfare stakeholders</li> <li>- Promote active participation by judges, the CC Executive Director, and DFPS in the federal review process</li> <li>- Ensure the visible and joint involvement of a Supreme Court of Texas Justice and the DFPS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner of CPS, and Deputy Assistant Commissioner of CPS</li> <li>- Maintain a collaborative council of child welfare advocates, stakeholders, and state agencies to promote collaboration in development and implementation of CIP initiatives</li> <li>- Conduct bi-weekly collaborative calls involving a variety of stakeholders and participants</li> <li>- Share information through CC website, judge and attorney distribution lists, and commission meetings and commission-sponsored events</li> </ul>	<p>The CC and DFPS will continue to work together toward developing and achieving shared goals and activities detailed in the CC Strategic Plan. The partnership over the past nine years has resulted in institutional changes that have led to improved outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>Current collaboration efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DFPS leadership has a standing position on the Children’s Commission.</li> <li>- At least one state-level DFPS staff member is on every CC committee.</li> <li>- Participation in a bi-weekly collaborative conference call with child-welfare stakeholders, including executive staff of DFPS, OCA, CASA, and other child welfare stakeholders.</li> <li>- DFPS and the CC will renew efforts to collaborate on the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP and CIP-SP.</li> <li>- DFPS members have the opportunity to present at each CC meeting to provide information regarding DFPS initiatives and efforts.</li> <li>- The CC ED serves on the State PIP Team, the statewide Foster Care Redesign Public Private Partnership Committee, the Prevention Advisory Council and many other DFPS-sponsored workgroups and subcommittees.</li> <li>- Joint Court/DFPS attendance at the CIP Annual Conferences.</li> <li>- DFPS leadership attends the annual child welfare judicial conference.</li> </ul>

IV. Goal: Promote high quality court proceedings that safeguard due process, child and family involvement, and effective legal representation of parties.	
IV.A. Objective: Improve legal representation so that parents, children, and the State of Texas experience high-quality court hearings.	
<i>IV.A.1 Strategy: Work locally and nationally to improve all aspects of legal representation for parties.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participate with Casey Family Program, ABA, and other CIPs to reform Texas legal representation system</li> <li>- Maintain a Legal Representation Committee and relevant, pertinent subcommittees, as appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>The CC will serve on the advisory committee of the Family Justice Initiative, which is a national group of key legal experts focused on improving legal representation nationwide. At a meeting in Denver in July, the group identified action steps to positively impact permanency through improved representation, how to build consensus on how to define permanence, removal avoidance, reunification, and strengthening families, and to identify what professionals in the legal system do that impacts permanency and strengthening families.</p>
<i>IV.A.2 Strategy: Work through the Legal Representation Committee and Training Committee to identify training needs, develop and host training events, and support efforts to ensure high quality legal representation for parties.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please see activities under Section III.A for training activities</li> <li>- LRC will convene at least twice each year to examine issues related to legal representation, due process, local community relationships, financial impact of legal representation, and legislative and policy considerations</li> <li>- Target subjects and opportunities for additional training focused on improving legal representation</li> <li>- Support the efforts of the TBLS Advisory Committee as described in IV.B.1</li> <li>- Oversee the development of Standards of Representation as described in IV.C.1</li> </ul>	<p>The CC will maintain a Legal Representation Committee for FY2017. The LRC last met in July to discuss AAL Training, the new Attorney distribution list and Attorney Resource Letters, as well as the work of its two subcommittees: DFPS Representation and County Commissioners Court Relationships. The DFPS subcommittee focuses on improving the relationship between prosecutors and regional attorneys and collaboration on training for all attorneys representing the state and the County Commissioner subcommittee focuses on strengthening relationships with county organizations.</p> <p>The DFPS subcommittee created a practice guide for new prosecutors, and the CC-CR subcommittee published a guide in May to help judges in gathering information, assembling data, and presenting case to commissioner's courts regarding what is a sufficient budget to pay for court appointed attorneys as well as what data would be useful and persuasive to underscore the need for and the importance of legal representation with particular emphasis on early appointment.</p>

	<p>On June 3rd, the CC sent a survey related to compensation rates, timing of, and duration of appointments to over 3000 attorneys. The survey closed on July 6th with 299 responses. Attorneys representing children and parents made up the vast majority of respondents, 87 percent, and attorneys representing the Department made up about 13 percent. Pertinent survey results included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In response to the question about the timing of parent attorney appointments, the vast majority (247) reported that the appointments occur before and no later than the 14-day hearing. In fact, 171 attorneys (or 57%) responded that parent attorney appointments occur prior to the 14-day hearing.</li> <li>- In response to the duration of attorney ad litem appointments for children, 84% of the attorneys representing children responded that their appointment continued until the child exited the foster care system.</li> <li>- In response to the question of what attorneys considered to be challenges in providing representation to either DFPS, children or parents in CPS cases, the responses indicate that caseworker turnover and caseworker inexperience were most significant, followed by compensation.</li> <li>- The survey also included information on how much time attorneys spent preparing for hearings, mediation and trial as well as how much time attorneys spend with clients outside of court. The average was one to two hours for hearings, and varied from two to over twenty hours for trial preparation.</li> <li>- Similar to the 2011 study, the majority (44%) reported being paid between \$51.00 and \$75.00 per hour, followed by 33% reporting payments of between \$76.00 and \$100.00 per hour. About 50% of respondents paid by the hour reported being reimbursed for travel related expenses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IV.B. Objective: Develop, adopt and promote standards of practice for attorneys representing parties in child protection cases so that attorneys are encouraged to gain a higher level of expertise and provide high-quality legal representation.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>IV.B.1. Strategy: Work with the Legal Representation Committee to develop, adopt and promote Standards of Practice.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work within the Legal Representation Committee to consider the development of Standards</li> <li>- Draft Standards of Practice for consideration</li> </ul>	<p>The LRC discussed Standards of Representation at its July 29, 2016 meeting, and the committee discussed the many practice, competency, compensation and accountability issues that beg the question of whether there are other issues that must be addressed before Standards are adopted. Before moving forward, the CC will</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determine appropriate avenue for adoption</li> <li>- Develop a plan for promoting Standards</li> </ul>	<p>place additional emphasis on judicial and attorney training and awareness. TCJ's 2017 Family Justice Conference child welfare track will focus on the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys in CPS cases, the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do, how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding, and the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p>
<p><b>IV.C. Objective: Establish a specialization through the Texas Board of Legal Specialization so that attorneys who wish to achieve a higher level of understanding and expertise can provide higher caliber of legal representation.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>IV.C.1. Strategy: Staff and support a Texas Board of Legal Specialization Advisory Committee.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff and support TBLS Advisory Committee meetings and activities</li> <li>- Draft a TBLS exam for child welfare specialization, if requested</li> <li>- Work with TBLS Staff to offer the board specialization exam, if appropriate</li> <li>- Work with TBLS Staff to administer exam, if appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>The CC submitted a full application for legal specialization in child welfare law to the Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) in April 2015 and a revised application in September 2015. As directed by the TBLS staff, the CC identified and then named an Advisory Committee to oversee the development of testing standards and to assist in writing the exam. TBLS circulated the proposed standards for comment by the advisory commissions of other legal specializations and other stakeholders, with the public comment period in March 2016 with a closing date of May 31, 2016.</p> <p>On July 8, 2016, the TBLS Board met to discuss the proposed standards and the comments received. On July 11, 2016, TBLS forwarded all comments received to Judge Rucker and the CC. Most comments were positive and in favor of establishing a specialization. However, there were several worthy comments pointing out that the standards, as written, would preclude many experienced and dedicated attorneys from qualifying. The TBLS Advisory Committee will meet on September 30<sup>th</sup> to revise the standards.</p> <p>The TBLS Board may consider the revised standards in December 2016.</p>
<p><b>IV.D. Objective: Create, distribute, maintain, support, and evaluate resources for parents involved in CPS cases so that parents can gain more equal footing and support for their rights once they become involved with CPS.</b></p>	

<b>IV.D.1. Strategy: Support a Parent Resource Hotline and Parent Resource Guide.</b>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain and update the Parent Resource Guide on the CC website and online (LawBox, Reprints)</li> <li>- Establish, support, and evaluate a Parent Resource Hotline through a partnership with the Texas Legal Services Corporation</li> <li>- Staff a committee focused on improving Parent Representation in CPS cases</li> </ul>	<p>The Parent Resource Guide was completed in May 2015 and is accessible in print and online on the CC website as well as many on other CC partner and advocate websites. The PRG is currently being translated from English to Spanish and this should be completed by the end of September.</p> <p>For FY2017, the CC will partner with Access to Justice and the Children’s Justice Act to fund the Texas Legal Services Corporation to establish a helpline for parents. The helpline will provide easy, statewide access for parents to basic information, education, and resources addressing the following issues, which may extend to family members under certain circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parental rights as they relate to CPS Investigations, the provision of Family Based Services, Parental Child Safety Placements, Chapter 34 non-parent agreements, termination of parental rights, custody, access, visitation, service plans, the court’s role in conducting hearings and oversight, permanency planning, mediation, and final trials on the merits.</li> <li>- CPS process and working with CPS, service plans, paternity establishment, voluntary relinquishment, and other options at court.</li> <li>- How to gain access to a court-appointed lawyer (free, court-appointed counsel, cooperation).</li> <li>- Special topics (non-offending parents, minor parents, incarcerated parents, survivors of family violence, intergenerational issues, and other variations).</li> </ul>
<b>IV.E. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of families and caregivers in court hearings so that court hearings are higher quality and more meaningful for the families and children involved.</b>	
<b>IV.E.1. Strategy: Promote and improve availability and use of the CPCMS Notice and Engagement tool.</b>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Market OCA web tool that allows establishing a user ID, searching for a child / case, and setting timely email alerts</li> </ul>	<p>The project involves using non-confidential case data to provide email notice to users about upcoming hearings. All parties involved in CP cases continue to struggle with securing consistent and timely notice of scheduled hearings from the Texas</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Periodically re-issue announcement to various audiences</li> <li>- Develop a survey tool to assess the usefulness, effectiveness and accuracy of the system</li> <li>- Monitor the number of users and hearings included in alerts sent by the system</li> </ul>	<p>Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This issue includes the foster placements and DFPS service provider facilities where the children/youth are in placement and results in many parties not being able to attend scheduled court hearings. OCA will monitor the system login and search information, Notices will be monitored to evaluate whether the correct hearing data is populating according to search criteria, and reports/data will be produced and provided to the CC.</p>
<p><b>IV.F. Objective: Improve and expand engagement of youth in court hearings so that youth feel more involved and assured that their voice is heard and important to the decisions being made about their lives.</b></p>	
<p><i>IV.F.1. Strategy: Elevate the importance of youth voice, youth presence and youth input in the outcome of their case.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasize the importance of youth voice and youth presence in court</li> <li>- Provide training about the importance of youth voice</li> <li>- Include foster youth and former foster youth as part of judicial training events</li> <li>- Promote bench cards and other resources and tools that judges can use to appropriately involve youth in court hearings and permanency planning</li> </ul>	<p>On May 20, 2016, the CC hosted a Round Table to discuss how to improve involvement and consideration of our youths’ voices and views in court hearing. The discussion focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Texas law governing the child’s appearance at and participation in hearings,</li> <li>- the pros and cons of the child being present in court,</li> <li>- the physical and cultural barriers, attitudes, and practices that affect how well courts accommodate the child’s presence</li> </ul> <p>At the conclusion of the Round Table, most participants expressed that generally every child should appear at every permanency hearing. The group also supported the expectation that the court will excuse a child on a case-by-case basis and not operate under a blanket order or rule.</p> <p>The final report includes recommendations regarding: Training Issues, Practice and Court Changes, Using Technology, Development of New Resources and Tools, Possible Legislative Changes. Pertinent recommendations included training to ensure judges, attorneys, guardians, caseworkers, foster parents, parents, and caregivers understand what the current law requires, as well as each person’s role in ensuring the law is followed. Also, training was recommended for courts to encourage courts to make an individual decision, per child, per hearing before excusing a child from a permanency review hearing. Other recommendations deal with docketing, trauma audits, and video conferencing resources, and automated notice for all parties,</p>

	The 2016 Bench Book now includes ABA Bench Cards on interviewing children.
<p><i>IV.F.2. Strategy: Promote and improve the availability and use of the Video Conferencing (VTC) hosted and maintained by the Office of Court Administration (OCA).</i></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide funding for OCA to host and support the hardware and software required to facilitate VTC between courts and residential placements</li> <li>- Work with OCA to refine and publish the procedures and protocol between OCA, DFPS, Courts, and other users</li> <li>- Monitor OCA's efforts to maintain an updated set of instructions for participation and provide to end-users, a list of Residential Treatment Centers, courts, and other facilities with internet infrastructure and capability</li> <li>- Monitor OCA hearing logs that include the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality or technological barriers</li> <li>- Work with OCA and others to expand capability and feasibility for use beyond court hearing</li> </ul>	<p>The video conferencing project enables children involved in child abuse and neglect cases to participate in permanency and placement review hearings without them being physically present in the courtroom. OCA hosts and supports the hardware and software required to facilitate video conferencing between courts and residential placements. OCA maintains a list of courts, Residential Treatment Centers and local CASA offices with video conferencing capability. OCA maintains a log of all hearings conducted, including the date, time, participating court, type of hearing, participating placement, length of hearing, any problems with the transmission quality, or technical difficulties.</p> <p>OCA upgraded the video conferencing platform in 2016 and the configuration now provides conferencing capability from mobile devices, multiparty video conferencing and email and calendar invitation capabilities.</p>

<b>V. Goal: Collect and analyze court and child welfare-related data to develop solutions improve outcomes, quality, and sustainability of Children’s Commission strategies.</b>	
<b>V.A. Objective: Ensure data collection, analysis and continuous quality improvement (CQI) is incorporated in each grant and project in order to highlight the success and potential for sustainability of the project or grant.</b>	
<b><i>V.A.1. Strategy: Incorporate data collection and analysis into a continuous quality improvement process for each project and grant.</i></b>	<b>Progress Report</b>
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review each grant application and CC project for possible data collection and analysis opportunities</li> <li>- Identify a manner of data collection</li> <li>- Establish a method for analysis</li> <li>- Apply the results to the project</li> </ul>	This strategy articulates the CC’s effort to use data collection and analysis to inform the benefits and sustainability of projects and initiatives.
<b>V.B. Objective: Use agency administrative data to improve permanency reunification outcomes for children who achieve permanency.</b>	
<b><i>V.B.1. Strategy: Examine agency data to improve outcomes for kids who achieve permanency to ensure permanency in less than 12 months</i></b>	<b>Progress Report</b>
Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examine data (September 2015 – August 2016) for kids who achieved positive permanency to determine:</li> <li>- Reunification data: when did they go home, whether a monitored return was involved, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before reunification</li> <li>- Permanent managing conservatorship data: when was permanent managing conservatorship awarded, to whom (relative or non-relative), child’s placement pattern, and last placement before PMC placement</li> <li>- Adoption data: when was the adoption consummated, child’s placement pattern, and last placement before each child’s adoptive placement</li> <li>- Demographics (age, race, siblings) for each of the above listed permanency exits,</li> <li>- Sort results by region or county, if possible</li> </ul>	Starting in FY2017, CIP programs will be required to be familiar and make use of the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data. All CIPs and Child Welfare agencies must jointly design and implement one project using available child welfare data that focuses on improving a specific safety, permanency or well-being outcome for children and families. Texas CIP and DFPS will focus on the CFSR Outcome related to permanency within 12 months of entry into foster care.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a plan to share information, conduct focus groups, deploy surveys, as appropriate</li> </ul>	
<p><i>V.C. Objective: Engage in CFSP/APSR/CFSR/CIP partnership with DFPS so that CIP and DFPS can better understand and improve the content, processes and uses of the various reports.</i></p>	
<p><b>V.C.1. Strategy: CIP/CFSP/CFSR workgroup</b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meet or hold conference call at least once per quarter</li> <li>- Review and provide input, as appropriate, in the development of the CFSP, APSR, CFSR, PIP, CIP Strategic Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Workgroup made up on CIP staff and child welfare agency staff to confer, evaluate, and inform the development and execution of the Department’s Child and Family State Plan, Annual Progress and Services report, Child and Family Services Review, Program Improvement Plan, and Court Improvement Program’s Strategic Plan.</p>

VI. Goal: Develop, support and fund high-quality, appropriate training for judges, attorneys, and child welfare partners.	
VI.A. Objective: Provide high-quality and easily accessible training resources for judges and attorneys to ensure that attorneys and judges are educated and knowledgeable in order to employ best practices in providing legal representation and in conducting hearings.	
<i>VI.A.1. Strategy: Plan, fund, conduct, and evaluate at least one judicial conference.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partner with TCJ to design curriculum and agenda for conferences</li> <li>- Determine budget, number of attendees</li> <li>- Conduct periodic planning calls, including creation of workgroup to plan agenda</li> <li>- Determine attendee criteria</li> <li>- Coordinate with OCA about inclusion of Child Protection Court staff, space requirements, and agenda development.</li> <li>- Identify topics and speakers</li> <li>- Develop program agenda</li> <li>- Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend</li> <li>- Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback</li> <li>- Evaluate conference planning process, the actual event, and participant feedback</li> <li>- Use feedback into improve future conference planning, as appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>The CC provides specialized judicial education and training opportunities for active, retired and former Texas appellate, district and county court at law judges, as well as associate judges and court personnel through its grant with the TCJ.</p> <p>Each year TCJ plans at least one child welfare judicial conference. The 2016 conference will occur November 14-16, 2016 in Austin. Speakers and topics have been finalized and include a national keynote speaker who will open the conference with a presentation about trauma. Judges will also hear presentations about child safety and domestic violence, results of the OCA/NCSC Weighted Caseload Study, hear from a national speaker on permanency across the U.S., participate in regional breakouts to discuss permanency in Texas, how to address court barriers to permanency, CPS mediations, a case law update, a DFPS panel with new leadership, a session on medically fragile children and related ethics, what judges can do make sure kids get what they need, and a closing presentation by a former foster youth. Expected attendance at the conference is 75-80 judges. Also, the Child Protection specialty courts will hold a half-day meeting immediately prior to the conference and will discuss docketing.</p> <p>As in years past, the CC and TCJ will conduct pre- and post-conference evaluations as part of CQI.</p> <p>Also, in January 2017, the CC will sponsor a half-day track at the annual Family Justice Conference. Last year, approximately 100 judges attended the Commission-sponsored track. The schedule for 2017 will include a sessions on CPS legal representation to help highlight the duties and responsibilities of the attorneys and the importance of holding attorneys accountable for the job they are required to do. Other topics include how judges can work with their county commissioners on securing adequate funding for legal representation, the importance of youth in court and structuring dockets to accommodate children and youth.</p>

<p><b><i>VI.A.2. Strategy: Provide judicial scholarships to state and national conferences and training events.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determine budget, number of attendees</li> <li>- Determine attendee criteria</li> <li>- Approve attendee list to ensure judges with the greatest need and interest are able to attend</li> <li>- Survey participants for increases in knowledge and other feedback</li> <li>- Evaluate scholarship planning process, and participant feedback</li> <li>- Incorporate feedback into subsequent year’s planning, as appropriate</li> </ul>	<p>The CC, through its grant to TCJ, will provide scholarships to 20-25 judges to attend the 2017 annual NCJFCJ conference in Washington D.C. As with previous NCJFCJ conferences, criteria will be established for the scholarships. The application process for scholarships to the conference will open in March/April 2017. All judges attending the conference on CC scholarship are asked to attend the annual Child Welfare Judges Conference and to participate in pre- and post-conference surveys/evaluations.</p> <p>Pre- and post-conference evaluations are reviewed and shared with TCJ and incorporated into subsequent years’ planning, funding, and content development.</p>
<p><b><i>VI.A.3. Strategy: Partner with organizations or independently produce attorney training content and provide scholarships and financial support to attorneys to attend national and state conferences and training events.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>State Bar of Texas (SBOT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with SBOT to develop one day of MCLE content on CPS-related topics for live taping and subsequent archiving in the online CPS classroom</li> <li>- Identify dates, content, speakers for the one-day event</li> <li>- Publicize CLE on CC website and through other methods such as JIR and Attorney Blasts, at Commission meetings, and other events</li> <li>- Provide scholarships based on financial need to attorneys in order to access the SBOT online classroom</li> </ul> <p>ABA/Advanced Family Law/NACC and Misc Attorney Scholarships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Determine which conference scholarships will be awarded in FY2017, criteria for award, and amount of scholarship</li> <li>- Market scholarship and conference attendance opportunities through the Attorney Blast / Resource Letter system</li> <li>- Determine budget, number of attendees</li> <li>- Determine attendee criteria</li> <li>- Approve attendee list to ensure attorneys with the greatest need and interest attend</li> </ul>	<p>In partnership with the State Bar, the CC makes several online courses available to court-appointed attorneys and state and DFPS attorneys, including the one-day Child Abuse and Neglect track from its annual Advanced Family Law conference. Also, once each year the CC works with SBOT to webcast a day-long, 6 MCLE hours’ worth of training for attorneys who represent children, parents, and the state of Texas in CPS proceedings. The SBOT’s online classroom of CPS-related webinars is available at a reduced rate to attorneys representing children and parents, and there are scholarships available through the Commission and through the Bar for attorneys who represent the State of Texas and need financial assistance to access this online training.</p> <p>The CC also administers three different attorney scholarship opportunities: (1) The State Bar of Texas (SBOT) Child Abuse and Neglect 1-Day Workshop; (2) The bi-annual ABA Parent Attorney Conference and Children and the Law Conference held in Washington D.C.; and (3) the NACC Annual Conference.</p> <p>For all scholarships, the CC determines scholarship criteria and deploys an application process that includes pre- and post-conference evaluations to identify or confirm the knowledge gained, new practices attendees plan to implement and/or a current</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create application process, evaluate each scholarship event and process and makes changes, as appropriate</li> <li>- Award scholarships pursuant to defined process, and collect evaluation data from attendees for increases in knowledge and other feedback</li> <li>- Amend scholarship process, as necessary, and make recommendations regarding the 2017 funding</li> </ul>	<p>practice they plan to change. The surveys also inquire about topics of interest to help inform planning for future conferences.</p>
<p><b><i>VI.A.4. Strategy: Reimburse exam and recertification fees for attorneys and judges who pass the NACC CWLS exam or qualify for recertification.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The CC will enter into a grant agreement with NACC to provide reimbursement</li> <li>- NACC will collect the \$300.00 application or \$350.00 examination fee from the applicant</li> <li>- NACC will administer the exam and report to the CC a list of Texas examinees who have passed the certification exam</li> <li>- CC will reimburse NACC funds on a first-come, first-serve basis to applicants that pass the exam through the end of the grant period</li> <li>- NACC will provide the names of the Texas attorneys and judges who are awarded certification or recertified and the total number of Texas attorneys and judges who applied to be certified during the calendar year</li> <li>- NACC will share any information or feedback it receives or solicits about the quality, subject matter, and process of giving the exam</li> <li>- NACC will also provide the passage rate of Texas applicants</li> </ul>	<p>The CC offers reimbursement of the Certification Exam Fee for Texas attorneys and judges who successfully qualify for and pass the Child Welfare Specialist Exam. The cost of the fee to take the Child Welfare Certification Exam is \$350 per attorney.</p> <p>Additionally, assistance is available to Texas attorneys and judges who are seeking recertification of their CWLS every five years, which is reimbursed at \$190. Currently, there are 37 Texas CWLS.</p>
<p><b><i>VI.A.5. Strategy: Support regional and local training events throughout the state, as needed and upon request.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with local sponsor/convener on the conference agenda, audience, budget, marketing, and evaluation</li> <li>- Help ensure notice of the event to judges and attorneys</li> <li>- Ensure the sponsor applies for CLE, if appropriate</li> <li>- Analyze survey results from evaluations distributed by the organizers</li> <li>- Conduct CQI of the process and training content</li> </ul>	<p>There are no activities planned at this time. In the past, the CC has funded the Harris County Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe Conference.</p>

<p><b><i>VI.A.6. Strategy: Develop and support Trauma Informed Care and Practice training for attorneys representing children and families in CPS cases.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support efforts to identify and survey trauma knowledge, training available, training accessed, and results or impact of training</li> <li>- Identify training needs for judges and attorneys and develop and promote training and tools for trauma-informed care</li> <li>- Sponsor and support additional training events for stakeholders with particular focus on attorneys ad litem</li> <li>- Collaborate with interested partners on training content, speakers, budget, marketing and evaluation</li> <li>- Provide notice of any training developed to judges and attorneys</li> <li>- Analyze any survey results obtained</li> <li>- Conduct CQI of the process and training content</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>CASA collaborated throughout much of FY2016 with the CC to develop a trauma training for attorneys. In September 2016, a 3-hour trauma training will be produced by Texas CASA and the CC. The training will be archived and made available through the CC website.</p> <p>Also, the Annual Texas CASA conference on November 3-5, 2016 will include a 3-hour trauma institute. CASA will use a portion of its CIP funds for attorney scholarships to enable more attorneys to attend the event. Judges can attend the event at no charge.</p>
<p><b><i>VI.A.7. Strategy: Help sponsor the DFPS Regional Attorney Training.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with DFPS on the budget, location and event evaluation</li> <li>- Provide notice to judges of the DFPS training event, if appropriate</li> <li>- Analyze any survey results obtained by the organizer</li> <li>- Conduct CQI of the supporting role and process used in deploying the training</li> </ul>	<p>With the CC’s help, DFPS has been able to hold regular, annual regional attorney training events for its approximately 100 attorneys and staff who provide legal representation to the State of Texas.</p>
<p><b><i>VI.A.8. Strategy: Host two Trial Skills Training (TST) events each fiscal year.</i></b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Convene two, 3-day TST events that include lectures, demonstrations, and practice sessions with live witnesses</li> <li>- Include hands-on practice of trial skills with the assistance of professional, live witnesses, videography, and coaching by trained faculty</li> <li>- Allow faculty review of individual attorney’s filmed practice session for additional feedback</li> </ul>	<p>TST is an 18.75 MCLE hour, hands-on training designed to improve the litigation skills of child welfare law attorneys in order to raise the caliber of legal services to children and families in child protection cases. It includes a fictional CPS fact pattern, with a complete case file covering all Texas-specific statutory hearings building up to final trial. It provides parent, child, and state attorneys litigation exercises in the CPS context, including lectures and demonstrations from trained faculty comprised of senior attorneys and judges, followed by personal critiques and coaching. Caseworkers, Pediatricians, and a Parent Therapist serve as live witnesses.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Evaluate each TST event</li><li>- Edit and update TST curriculum and materials, as necessary</li></ul>	<p>Materials are updated and new faculty is recruited and trained with each event. Extensive internal and external CQI is involved with each event. The Children’s Justice Act covers the cost of participants who represent the state in CPS proceedings.</p> <p>To measure long-term effectiveness and impact, judicial evaluations of the TST graduates is being developed. Faculty CLE scholarships are now geared towards registering and covering related travel costs to CLEs which are related to TST topics or to an ongoing project at the Commission.</p> <p>All program elements will be continued in FY2017.</p>
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VII. Goal: Reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in the child welfare system.	
VII.A. Objective: Support efforts to address disproportionality and disparities in the Texas child welfare system so that children of color do not experience disparate effects and outcomes that prolong their stay in foster care.	
<i>VII.A.1. Strategy: Educate judges and consider data in helping address disproportionality and disparities among children and families involved in child protection cases.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and promote judicial and attorney training on how to apply training and tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias</li> <li>- Partner with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups, including one Poverty Simulation Workshop</li> <li>- Help connect judges and lawyers to data about their communities and to experts who can help develop disproportionality efforts at the local level</li> <li>- Liaise with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities</li> <li>- Staff and monitor the Judicial Workgroup Addressing Disproportionality Workgroup (JWD) including conducting quarterly strategy meetings with the JWD Co-Chairs</li> <li>- Include information about Disproportionality and bias in the CC CPS Judicial Bench Book</li> </ul>	<p>The CC’s disproportionality and disparities work is overseen by its Judicial Workgroup to Address Disproportionality (JWD), which works on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing and promoting judicial and attorney training on how to apply tools designed to reduce institutional racism and bias</li> <li>- Partnering with system stakeholders to include disproportionality in cross-systems trainings and in issue-specific workgroups</li> <li>- Helping connect judges and lawyers to their communities to develop disproportionality efforts at the local level</li> <li>- Liaising with the Texas Health and Human Services State Advisory Coalition for Addressing Disproportionality and Disparities</li> <li>- Staffing JWD meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product</li> <li>- Updating the CPS judicial Bench Book.</li> </ul> <p>In 2016, the CC added to the CPS Bench Book bench card three questions related to making culturally aware decisions during child welfare hearings.</p> <p>For FY2017, the CC will offer to sponsor one Poverty Simulation in a jurisdiction and the JWD will meet in November under the leadership of new co-chairs Judge Cynde Wheless from Collin County and Judge David Canales from Bexar County. Judge Wheless and Judge Canales will co-chair with Sheila Craig.</p>

VIII. Goal: Recognize and respect tribal sovereignty, protect the best interests of Native American children and promote stability of Native American children and families.	
VIII.A. Objective: Establish, strengthen and support meaningful and respectful relationships with tribal nations and promote awareness, education, and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act so that Indian children and families experience equitable and respectful treatment in keeping with their customs and beliefs.	
<i>VIII.A.1. Strategy: Continue the mutually respectful and ongoing relationships with Texas' three federally recognized tribes and other tribal nations living in Texas.</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partner with system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance</li> <li>- Work with national ICWA and leading organizations on understanding and implementation of new Federal Rule and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Guidelines</li> <li>- Continue to support the role of Peacemaker or Tribal Judge as Children's Commission member</li> <li>- Staff and monitor the Tribal/State Workgroup meetings, strategies, timelines, and work product for FY2017, including monthly strategy meetings with tribal partners and DFPS</li> <li>- Partner with DFPS to support the biannual tribal/state collaborative meetings</li> <li>- Assist with any CIP grant application, as requested and appropriate</li> <li>- Further connections with Alabama-Coushatta, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, and Kickapoo tribes through the DFPS tribal/state meetings, Annual Conference of the Native American Section of the State Bar, and other networking opportunities</li> <li>- Continue to collaborate with the National Center for State Courts and the participants of the CIP ICWA Constituency Group</li> </ul>	<p>In 2016, the CC continued its collaboration with tribal nations and system stakeholders to promote ongoing knowledge and understanding of the ICWA and its importance. In March, CC staff traveled to the Eagle Pass reservation of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (KTTT) to further establish a relationship with the KTTT.</p> <p>The Tribal/State Collaborative Workgroup meets monthly via conference call and in FY2017 will continue to discuss a new project related to Qualified Expert Witnesses under ICWA as well as monitor the new BIA Guidelines that will become effective on December 1, 2016.</p> <p>The Workgroup will also continue to develop new trainings to education judges and attorneys about amendments to the Texas Family Code that requires judges to ask all parties present at each Adversary, Status, and Permanency hearing whether the child or the child's family has any Native American heritage and identify any Native American tribe with which the child may be associated.</p> <p>CC staff is currently participating in a national consortium of state leaders who work with tribes through their Court Improvement Programs.</p> <p>Staff also updated the ICWA Section and ICWA Bench Card in the Child Protection Law Bench Book being republished in November, along with sharing model ICWA language in the sample pleadings used in the fictional CPS case during the Trial Skills Training.</p>

<p><b>IX. Oversee and administer the Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds to assess current and future needs of the courts, endeavor to increase funding available to the Children’s Commission and leverage funds with strategic and statewide partners.</b></p>	
<p><b>IX.A. Objective: Execute strategies of the Supreme Court Children’s Commission to help strengthen courts to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and wellbeing.</b></p>	
<p><b><i>IX.A.1. Strategy: Engage in activities integral to the Children’s Commission’s functions and operations.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Progress Report</b></p>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop annual strategic plan for Texas</li> <li>- Submit the required application to the Administration of Children and Families for CIP funds</li> <li>- Coordinate pass-through grants to sub-recipients</li> <li>- Oversee project management of short and long-term projects and initiatives</li> <li>- Publish reports, newsletters, judicial directives, policy and data analysis, and Commission website content</li> <li>- Plan and conduct quarterly Commission meetings with detailed progress reports, agendas, presentations, and budgets</li> <li>- Submit regular reports to the federal Administration of Children and Families and to the Supreme Court of Texas</li> </ul>	<p>In September, the Children’s Commission (CC) developed a five-year Strategic Plan for both the CC and the Court Improvement Program (CIP).</p> <p>In 2017, the CC will pass through grants to Texas CASA, Office of Court Administration, Texas Center for the Judiciary, Texas Legal Services Corporation, as well as grants for training events to DFPS, Harris County, State Bar of Texas, American Bar Association, National Association of Counsel for Children, and others.</p> <p>The CC will continue to hold a Commission meeting every four months throughout each year of the five-year plan, and will continue its bi-weekly collaborative call with DFPS and other child welfare stakeholders. CC Staff will continue to serve on the Public Private Partnership, Prevention Advisory Council, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute, Texas Reach, and many other stakeholder workgroups and subcommittees formed under the leadership of its child welfare partners.</p> <p>The CC will publish an updated Report to Commission in advance of each Commission meeting and will continue to publish JIR and ARL letters, project reports, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and follow up reports for all short-term and long-term projects.</p> <p>CC will participate in quarterly calls with ACF, and will conduct quarterly calls with DFPS to discuss the Child and Family State Plan (CFSP), Annual Progress Services Report (APSR), Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), related Program Improvement Plans (PIP), and the CIP Strategic Plan.</p> <p>CC will confer regularly with national organizations and other CIPs, and will submit annual reports to the ACF and to the Supreme Court of Texas.</p>

X. Engage in policy and procedural improvements that advance child welfare system functionality, promote effective and equitable services, and ensure justice for all parties.	
X.A. Objective: Execute strategies of the Supreme Court Children’s Commission to help strengthen courts to improve outcomes of safety, permanency and wellbeing.	
<i>Strategy: In each fiscal year, the Children’s Commission will conduct the following activities and perform CQI evaluations of the same</i>	<b>Progress Report</b>
<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Serve as facilitator and convener of substantive discussions related to child welfare matters, and produce related reports with recommended changes to judicial, attorney, child welfare, and advocate practice, as well as state policy and statute</li> <li>- Monitor, evaluate, and consult on proposed legislation for impact to the judiciary and the child welfare system, and provide research and testimony to the Texas Legislature, as requested</li> <li>- Confer regularly with the Department of Family and Protective Services, federal Administration of Children and Families officials, other CIPs, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, National Center for State Courts, National Association of Counsel for Children, National Conference of State Legislatures, and American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law on issues affecting child welfare policy and practice in Texas and nationally</li> <li>- Speak and present publicly in a variety of settings to audiences including congressional staff, national organizations, private foundations, state leadership, state legislators and staff, attorneys and advocates, and all levels of the Texas Judiciary, including the Supreme Court of Texas</li> </ul>	<p>The CC will serve as facilitator and convener of Round Table discussion, CIP committee and subcommittee meetings, and conference calls related to the short and long terms projects in the strategic plan.</p> <p>In Legislative years, including 2017, the CC will monitor and evaluate legislation filed, and provide testimony and resources papers to the Legislature upon request.</p> <p>At all times, the CC will collaborate regularly with the welfare agency as well as national and state judicial and advocacy organizations.</p>



