

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Description of Exceptional Item Requests
FY 10-11 Biennium
(As submitted in LAR on September 9, 2008)

ITEM 5.
DIRECT DELIVERY STAFF TO MEET FEDERAL STANDARDS

- \$21.2 Million General Revenue
- \$25.0 All Funds
- 240.6 FTEs for FY 10; 242.3 FTEs for FY 11

Additional Substitute care and FBSS workers are needed to help the agency achieve face-to-face monthly contacts with 95% of children and parents.

National data shows that regular, meaningful contact is directly related to positive outcomes such as increased child safety and quicker permanency for children. More frequent contact by workers with children in foster care and those that receive services in their own homes, and with the parents of these children, improves the likelihood of a good outcome for each child.

CFSR

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a federally established process that identifies strengths and deficiencies in state child welfare systems. Caseworker visits is one specific area of agency practice that is reviewed in this process.

If a state does not meet certain goals and is not able to complete a program improvement plan, a financial penalty is assessed. Due to DFPS not achieving two items under one outcome area (the well-being outcome), a \$4 million penalty was assessed. The two items not achieved were worker visits with the child and worker visits with the parent.

The additional workers DFPS is requesting will allow the agency to make monthly visits with 95% of children in care and in an FBSS case, and their parents, and conduct the visits in a meaningful way. This will enhance the agency's ability to meet the federal Child and Family Services Review compliance standards of 95 percent and federal Title IV-B legislation that requires a 90 percent visitation achievement by 2011. Noncompliance could result in a financial penalty.

The request includes 50 FBSS caseworkers and 102 Substitute care caseworkers, 27 supervisors, 27 case aides and 27 administrative assistants—this would provide 10 new FBSS units and 17 new Substitute care units.

- Would reduce average daily caseload per FBSS worker to 17.1 in FY 11
- Would reduce average daily caseload per Substitute care worker to 29.6 in FY 11

ITEM 7.
ADDRESS CASELOAD GROWTH FOR KINSHIP PROGRAM

- \$10.9 Million General Revenue
- \$10.9 All Funds
- No FTEs

The Relative and Other Designated Caregiver Placement Program, also known as the Kinship Program, was authorized in SB 6, 79th Legislature and implemented in 2006. This program provides assistance to relatives and other designated caregivers for children in DFPS conservatorship who are placed in their care. The goal of the Kinship Program is to promote continuity and stability for these children by placing them with a person who has a longstanding and significant relationship with the child

Services to kinship caregivers include:

- a one-time integration payment of \$1,000 to a family upon placement to be used to purchase beds, bedding, furniture, clothing and other items needed to support the placement
- an annual reimbursement for flexible expenses incurred by the kinship family up to a maximum of \$500 per year
- daycare services to qualified children and kinship care-giving families
- other services such as supportive family counseling services not covered by Medicaid

DFPS has requested the funding to address the forecasted caseload growth for monetary assistance and day care services. The forecasted caseload growth rate is 4.4% for children placed in kinship care.

This request includes:

- \$7.2 million in monetary assistance to provide assistance for 328 more children per month in FY 10 and 372 additional children each month for FY 11.
- \$3.6 million GR for an additional 6,505 days of day care in FY 10 and 8,131 in FY 11.

ITEM 8.

ADD'L PURCHASED CLIENT SERVICES AND PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR CASELOAD GROWTH

- \$20.7 Million General Revenue
- \$22.7 All Funds
- 84.5 FTEs for FY 10; 89.5 FTEs for FY 11

Purchased Client Services

DFPS is requesting \$10.9 million GR to be able to provide purchased client services for forecasted increase in clients.

For CPS, the provision of purchased client services reduces the risk of abuse and/or neglect so that children can remain safe in their home, and in many cases allows children who have been removed from their home to be reunited with their families in a shorter timeframe.

For APS, purchased client services are critical in helping reduce or prevent further abuse and/or neglect.

Support Staff

This request is for \$9.8 million GR for 88 additional program support staff—the behind-the-scenes folks who are so critical to what DFPS does. Workload does not just affect DFPS caseworkers, it takes its toll on support staff as well.

Support staff includes additional regional attorneys, contract specialists, travel accountants, consumer affairs staff, and automation support staff. Included in this request are CPS program support positions such as eligibility determination, billing coordination, adoption assistance

negotiation, day care coordination, policy development, and placement coordination that directly support the program.

ITEM 9.
CPS CAPPED CASELOAD PILOT

- \$2.9 Million General Revenue
- \$3.4 All Funds
- 27.6 FTEs

DFPS is requesting funds for a pilot to evaluate the effectiveness of a capped caseload for CPS Substitute care workers. This Capped Caseload Pilot would target youth who have been in care for at least two years, who have major behavioral health needs, and have had multiple placements. The pilot will evaluate whether the intensive services being offered these youth ultimately result in better outcomes.

The Pilot would consist of 3 functional units and include 18 Substitute care workers who maintain a capped caseload of 8 to 10 clients, thus allowing more time to work with each youth. This request also includes a supervisors, case aide, and administrative assistant for each of the functional units.

Region 6 is the proposed location for this pilot due to the concentration of Residential Treatment Centers in Harris County. This will provide a good population of clients for the pilot and will be more cost effective for workers than traveling to make weekly visits. The evaluation of the effectiveness of this pilot would be based on a comparison of the outcome measures for the pilot site to the control group that did not receive this model of service.

ITEM 11.
INCREASE FUNDING FOR PREVENTION SERVICES

- \$6.2 Million General Revenue
- \$6.2 All Funds
- No FTEs

The Services to At-risk Youth (STAR) program was established in 1983 to help fill the gap in services to youth who are runaways, truant, at risk of running away, or at risk of abuse who did not meet the criteria for Child Protective Services or services of county juvenile probation programs.

The program has grown since its inception and now provides services to all 254 Texas counties. STAR services are provided to 7 to 17 year old youths who are runaways and/or truants, 7 to 17 year-olds living in family conflict, 7 to 9 year-olds who have allegedly been involved in, or committed, delinquent offenses, and 10 to 16 year-olds who have allegedly committed misdemeanor or state jail felony offenses but have not been adjudicated delinquent by a court. Community agencies provide STAR services under state contract. Services provided include family crisis intervention counseling, short-term emergency residential care, and individual and family counseling. The program's highest priority is to support youths remaining at home. If their safety is in question they can be placed in emergency residential care for up 60 days. The STAR program serves more than 25,000 youths annually.

For Exceptional item 11 in DFPS' LAR, we are requesting \$4.2 million GR — a 10% increase in STAR funding — to expand services in satellite and outlying counties. It would serve an additional 621 youth per month.

The Community Youth Development (CYD) program provides contracted funding to communities with high incidence of juvenile crime for the purpose of developing comprehensive juvenile delinquency prevention approaches that support families and enhance positive youth development. Approaches used by communities to prevent delinquency have included mentoring, youth employment programs, career preparation, and alternative recreation activities. Communities prioritize and fund specific prevention services identified as needed locally. CYD services currently are available in 15-targeted Texas ZIP codes.

DFPS is requesting \$2 million GR to enable an expansion of CYD services in two communities with high incidences of juvenile crime. It would serve an additional 539 youth per month.

ITEM 13. STRENGTHEN CPS SERVICES TO FAMILIES

- \$14.4 Million General Revenue
- \$16.9 All Funds
- 112.9 FTEs for FY 10; 113.9 FTEs for FY 11

To support ongoing efforts to divert children from foster care and strengthen services to families, additional family group decision making, kinship, and foster and adoption development resources are being requested.

FGDM

Family group decision making (FGDM) is a model where DFPS staff facilitate family group meetings that engage families in problem solving and develop strategies to achieve safety, permanency and well being for the children. \$4.9 million GR is requested for the following:

- 15 additional FGDM facilitators and 1 supervisor are requested to address caseload growth.
- 6 additional facilitators to increase coverage for Family Team Meetings in the investigation stage
- 9 facilitators and 1 supervisor in order to begin providing Family Group Conferences in 10 percent of FBSS cases

Kinship Program

DFPS has created a Kinship stage of service and to strengthen and support the Kinship program, \$2.8 million GR is requested for the following:

- 13 new caseworkers to lower caseloads from 49.8 projected for FY 09 to 42.4 in FY 11.
- 7 new supervisors and 7 new administrative assistants are requested to create the functional units.

With the additional caseworkers, supervisors, and administrative staff, there would be 16 kinship functional units, each unit consisting of 8 caseworkers, 1 supervisor, and 1 administrative assistant

FAD

The current 29 Foster and Adoptive Home Development (FAD) units have been restructured to specialize positions for caseworkers, recruiters, faith-based recruiters, and trainers. However, the existing number of positions will not provide complete FAD units. \$6.7 million is requested to

continue the restructuring of this program to perform these agency services more efficiently and effectively.

- The requested FAD functional unit would consist of 1 supervisor, 5 FAD caseworkers, 1 trainer, 1 recruiter, 1 faith-based recruiter, and 1 administrative assistant.
- 16 new caseworkers, 22 new recruiters, and 7 new administrative assistants are requested to complete the transition to FAD functional units.
- Request also includes 6 additional FTEs for matching of children to families registered on national adoption websites, as well as IMPACT changes to improve the functionality of online inquiries and reporting.
- Benefits include shortening the time frame for verifications of DFPS homes from 6-12 months to 120 days and increasing the quality and number of homes.

ITEM 14.

STRENGTHEN SERVICES TO YOUTH TRANSITIONING FROM FOSTER CARE

- \$7.7 Million General Revenue
- \$7.8 All Funds
- 55.2 FTEs

The population of older youth who may age out of foster care has grown over the years without a corresponding growth in staff. In order to strengthen services that help these youth transition successfully to adulthood, additional workers are being requested.

PAL

The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program was implemented in 1986 to ensure that older youth in substitute care are prepared for their inevitable departure from DFPS care. PAL program staff strive to provide each of these youth with skills and resources they will need to be healthy, productive adults.

Preparing youth for adulthood is much more than teaching them how to balance a checkbook and sign a lease. PAL services include involvement in programs aimed at improving youths' self-esteem and improving their ability to make responsible decisions. PAL helps youth face the challenges of adulthood and independence.

PAL workers ensure referral and utilization of services such as PAL Life Skills training and support, Circles of Support, Return to Care, Extended Care and STAR Health Medical Services, and they oversee assistance provided by contractors for youth ages 18 to 21, such as delivery of transitional living allowances for youth, aftercare services, and educational/vocational assistance.

19 new Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) workers are requested to reduce the current monthly caseload of 246 open PAL cases per worker to 150, and 4 supervisors to achieve a supervisor to worker ratio of 1 to 11.

Circles of Support

Circles of Support is a process used to support and assist young people 16 years of age and older in developing a transition plan for when they age out of care. This model, based on the family group decision making model, also includes specific identification of an individual who will commit to be a caring adult in the life of a youth as they age out of care.

This request includes 28 family group decision making staff to perform two annual Circles of Support conferences for 16 year olds and one conference for 17 year olds, and 3 supervisors to achieve a supervisor to worker ratio of 1 to 11.

Transition Centers

\$200,000 one-time funds are being requested for eight new transition centers. The goal of this request is to have a minimum of one transition center per region as well as one transition center for each of the ten largest urban areas in Texas.

The request includes \$25,000 seed money for each of the 8 communities who are getting new centers in order to help them develop a center that provides comprehensive services such as apartment locator services, employment services, and college prep or GED assistance, to these older youth.

The 8 communities would be getting new centers would be in Regions 1, 2, 4, and 9 – and in Tarrant, Lubbock, Cameron and Hidalgo Counties.

Currently, there are transition centers in Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Kerrville, Kingsville, San Antonio, El Paso, Central Texas (Killeen, Temple and Belton), and Beaumont/Port Arthur.

ITEM 15.

CREATE HIGHER ADOPTION SUBSIDY CEILINGS FOR CERTAIN CHILDREN

- \$2.9 Million General Revenue
- \$5.3 All Funds
- No FTEs

Adoption of children in the State's care is an important goal for the agency. The current adoption subsidy program provides monthly payments using a two-tiered payment ceiling for children who meet certain criteria.

Among those criteria is the requirement that the child be "special needs." Children qualifying as "special needs" must be younger than 18 years old and meet one of the following criteria when the adoptive placement agreement is signed:

- The child is at least six years old;
- the child is at least two years old and a member of a minority group that traditionally has barriers to adoption;
- the child is being adopted with a sibling or to join a sibling; or
- the child has a verifiable physical, mental, or emotional handicapping condition, as established by an appropriately qualified professional through a diagnosis that addresses: (a) what the condition is; and (b) that the condition is indeed handicapping.

The current adoption subsidy ceilings are:

- \$400 a month for children with a basic service level in foster care
- \$545 a month for children with a moderate or higher service level

In order to encourage the adoption of children who have been in care for three or more years, are legally free for adoption, have a plan for adoption, and are not in a placement intended to be permanent, funds are requested for three higher adoption subsidy ceilings based on their service level in foster care.

- \$500 a month for children with a basic service level

- \$700 for moderate
- \$900 for specialized and intense

The amount of the adoption subsidy payment cannot exceed the amount the child would have received had they remained in foster care, cannot exceed the payment ceiling set by the department, but otherwise must be determined through agreement between the adoptive parents and DFPS. The payment that is agreed upon should combine with the parents' resources to cover the ordinary and special needs of the child projected over an extended period of time and should cover anticipated needs such as child care.

Since the average cost of an adoption subsidy is significantly less than the average cost of foster care, there is an economic benefit to the State when the adoptions of children with special needs increase.

It is anticipated that 171 more children will be adopted in FY 10 and 342 in FY 11. It is also anticipated that this initiative will therefore result in foster care savings.

ITEM 17. ENHANCE CPS RISK MANAGEMENT

- \$3.3 Million General Revenue
- \$3.9 All Funds
- 24.5 FTEs

Family based safety services are provided in three intensity levels: regular, moderate, and intense. Families receiving moderate services have higher risk for abuse or neglect and the alternative to providing these moderate services may be to obtain a court order to remove the child from the home. Intensive services are provided to families that need the most assistance to protect a child from abuse or neglect in the immediate or short-term future. The alternative to providing intensive services is to obtain a court order to remove the child from the home. The increase in resources that allowed more intense cases to be managed than before, there is an inherent risk that must be assessed appropriately to ensure that all children in family based safety services remain safe.

Risk Managers for Family Based Safety Services

- Additional CPS staff are being requested in order to strengthen risk management activities.
- Ensuring that proper risk assessments are made and appropriate services are provided will help prevent some children from entering out-of-home care and allow others to be reunited more quickly.
- With the increased resources provided for family based safety services during the current biennium, this stage of service has seen an increase in high risk cases.
- Request includes 9 new Risk Managers, 1 position for each administrative region, to provide expertise, guidance, and oversight that will strengthen risk assessments in this stage to help prevent poor outcomes.

Child Safety Specialists

- There has been an increase in the workload for Child Safety Specialists since they were created by the 79th Legislature as part of the first CPS Reform effort to enhance safety decisions made during investigations.

- These specialists must read all cases meeting certain criteria to analyze them for quality and compliance with agency policy.
- 7 additional Child Safety Specialists are being requested to address increased workload so that high risk cases can continue to be handled timely.

Substance Abuse Specialists

- Substance Abuse Specialists educate, collaborate, and improve access to substance abuse services.
- In FY 07, 60% of removals were due to caretaker substance abuse and 44% of FBSS cases had a least 1 principal with a characteristic of drug or alcohol abuse. It is critical to provide access to services early in the abuse/dependency/addiction cycle for improved outcomes for children.
- Substance abuse specialist positions were not increased in CPS Reform or CPS Reform Continued.
- 8 additional Substance Abuse Specialists are being requested to allow the agency to focus resources in the more heavily populated areas while still ensuring a baseline level of services.