

Foster Care Redesign (excerpt from DFPS document)

Problems with the current foster care system

The current foster care system is structurally flawed. It does not afford placement options close to children's homes or provide incentives that promote improved well-being and shorten the amount of time children spend in foster care.

Change the way DFPS contracts for services

Current system

In the current system, DFPS uses an "open enrollment" process to procure residential child care services for specific placement types. The current residential child care contract includes some performance expectations; however expected outcomes and incentives for achieving outcomes are not included.

Redesigned system

Changes to the contracting and procurement processes in the redesigned foster care system should:

- Include competitively procured Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCC) that provide a full range of paid foster care services in each of several geographic areas;
- Be open to both in-state and out-of-state for-profit and not-for-profit entities with preference given to providers that already offer quality services in Texas;
- Hold contractors accountable for well-being and permanency outcomes using performance based contracts that include financial incentives and remedies;
- Allot other existing purchased services funds to each SSCC to coordinate and deliver services to the families of the children in their care.

Change the way DFPS pays for services

Current system

In the current system, each level of service (basic, moderate, specialized or intense) in combination with each placement type (child placing agency, general residential operation or residential treatment center) determines the reimbursement rate for a day of services.

Redesigned system

The PPP recommends the reimbursement rate in the redesigned foster care system be determined by creating a single blended rate. That rate would then be combined with a case rate to create a *single blended case rate* for each geographic area.

- A blended rate is similar to an average per diem payment rate for all children in paid foster care regardless of service level or placement type.
- A case rate reflects the total number of days a child is expected to remain in paid foster care.
- The single blended case rate is calculated by multiplying the blended rate by the days of service represented in the case rate.

If approved by the Legislature, an SSCC can leverage a percentage of general revenue dollars if the overall number of days children spend in paid foster care is less than the number established by the case rate. Conversely, an SSCC would *return* a portion of

payment for the number of days children's placements exceed the historical number of days.

Stage the implementation of the redesigned system

To minimize risk and maximize opportunities for success, the PPP recommended phase-in of the redesigned system. This proposal includes a staged roll-out of the redesigned foster care system across the state and a staged implementation within each geographic area. The roll-out of the redesigned system should initially occur in one or two areas before expanding to other areas of the state. There should be three stages of implementation within each geographic area. These include:

Stage I

- Implement performance-based Single Source Continuum Contracts in specific geographic areas.
- Pay SSCC the blended rate for each child in paid foster care and require a minimum pass-through of the blended rate to the foster parent.

Stage II

- Allocate funds to the SSCC to coordinate and provide services to the families of the children in its care.

Stage III

- Pay SSCC the single blended case rate for each child in paid foster care.
- "Hold harmless" the SSCC for financial remedies during first year of Stage III.
- Allocate leveraged funds to further improve outcomes.

Improved system outcomes

It is anticipated that implementation of the redesigned foster care system will:

- Increase the number of children and youth placed with their siblings and in their home communities;
- Increase the number of children who remain in their school of origin;
- Decrease the average time children spend in foster care before achieving permanency;
- Decrease the number of moves children experience while in foster care;
- Decrease the duration and intensity of services that children need while in foster care due to improved well-being and behavioral functioning;
- Create incentives for continuous improvement of the services offered by the SSCC, and
- Create robust and sustainable service continuums in communities throughout Texas.

CASA Legislative Advocacy Team Development

Texas CASA will assist with all of these steps.

1. Schedule training on the Basics of Legislative Advocacy. Invite staff, board members, but most importantly, volunteers who can tell their specific CASA stories. Volunteers are the most effective advocates in the Legislature because legislators appreciate that they are not paid and have no interests but the children they serve.
2. Identify individuals from this training who are interested in legislative advocacy and building relationships with legislators. Meet with them to plan your strategy.
3. *Choose a volunteer to organize and lead your legislative advocacy team (“LAT”) so that you are not spending lots of staff time (and salary) on legislative advocacy. Staff should be overseeing and supporting the advocacy efforts.*
4. Identify the legislators in whose district your program is located by using the Texas legislature website: www.capitol.state.tx.us
 - a. Go to the home page for the Senate or the House of Representatives
 - b. Click on “Members” in box on left
 - c. In the box on the far right labeled “Search by” (scroll down the page) – click “County”
 - d. Insert county name - all your legislators will be shown with contact numbers, addresses, etc.
5. Match volunteers with their own representatives and senators by doing a zip code or address-specific search at the website. This is important because elected officials are usually more responsive to their constituents.
6. Prioritize legislators according to committee membership, tenure, etc. and schedule meetings with your legislators and volunteers in their district (They will be more responsive to their constituents.)
 - a. to thank them for their support this session and let them know how state funding and other child welfare system improvements have positively impacted your program and the children you serve
 - b. to use the opportunity for volunteers to start building a relationship (or cultivate an existing one)
 - c. and to share their CASA stories.
7. Initial meetings can be at their district office or in your offices. Get business cards from and get to know the staff, their names and titles, so that you can talk to them as well as the legislator when you make future contacts. Bring a packet of information about your program and your contact information. Send a thank you for the Legislator’s time and offer to be a resource for them
8. Capitalize upon and create opportunities to make more contacts with and educational opportunities for legislators. Your goal is to cultivate the relationship and this can be done in a variety of ways:
 - a. Invite them and their staff to observe CASA volunteers in court hearings and to meet with the judge and volunteers;
 - b. Invite them as a special guest to a volunteer appreciation, a swearing in, a public event;
 - c. Invite them to meet with volunteers at your office;
 - d. Send them your newsletter, your annual report, and newspapers clippings about your program; and
 - e. Send them information about child abuse and neglect in your community, including news items, or any specific issues you’ve discussed with them or that are affecting your child welfare system.
9. Meet with them again the summer before session starts in FY 2013. By this time, we will have or will be close to firming up our legislative agenda and you can share that with them. Share a story from one of your cases (use first names only) to make your point about the legislation that means the most to you. The legislators will listen when you make it personal and refer to an actual child you have/are advocating for.

Notes:

10. You and your volunteers do not have to be an expert or have every answer/statistic at your fingertips. The relationship and the reliance on you as a trusted resource and broker of information is the most important thing. Don't make up answers but offer to get back to them with the answers or with a resource they can use to get the answers.
11. Never miss a chance to TELL A SPECIFIC CASA STORY. They meet with people every day all day long about statistics and economics and policies. Stories are what grabs their attention, what they remember and what pulls at their heartstrings. Don't assume they know what CASA is or does just because they already support CASA or because they say they know. They don't. Even our biggest supporters don't really get it. Yet.
12. Developing relationships with the legislator's staff, especially the district director and chief of staff, is very important. They will be your main contact during session. These are also the persons who do the leg work, research the bills, get background information and keep the legislator versed on current issues and/or bills. Explaining your concerns and suggestions to them will get your issue before the legislator.
13. Be very careful around primary and general elections. As a 501c(3), CASA is prohibited from campaigning or appearing to endorse one candidate over another. When your legislator has an opponent, it is usually not a good idea for CASA to invite your legislator to speak in a public venue or receive an award or be given media coverage due to a CASA activity or news event. Please contact Andrea Sparks, asparks@texascasa.org with any questions/concerns about this issue.

Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care

As a child or youth in foster care, I have the right:

1. To good care and treatment that meets my needs in the least restrictive setting available. This means I have the right to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable place. And I am protected from harm, treated with respect, and have some privacy for personal needs.
2. To know
 - Why am I in foster care?
 - What will happen to me?
 - What is happening to my family (including brothers and sisters) and how CPS is planning for my future?
3. To speak and be spoken to in my own language when possible. This includes Braille if I am blind or sign language if I am deaf. If my foster parents do not know my language, CPS will give me a plan to meet my needs to communicate.
4. To be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
5. To fair treatment, whatever my gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, medical problems, or sexual orientation.
6. To not receive any harsh, cruel, unusual, unnecessary, demeaning, or humiliating punishment. This includes not being shaken, hit, spanked, or threatened, forced to do unproductive work, be denied food, sleep, access to a bathroom, mail, or family visits as punishment. I will not receive remarks that make fun of me or my family or any threats of losing my placement or shelter.
7. To be disciplined in a manner that is appropriate to how mature I am, my developmental level, and my medical condition. I must be told why I was disciplined. Discipline does not include the use of restraint, seclusion, corporal punishment or threat of corporal punishment.
8. To attend my choice of community, school, and religious services and activities to the extent that it is right for me, as planned for and discussed by my caregiver and caseworker, and based on my caregiver's ability.
9. To go to school and receive an education that fits my age and individual needs.
10. To be trained in personal care, hygiene, and grooming.
11. To comfortable clothing similar to clothing worn by other children in my community.

12. To clothing that does a good job of protecting me against natural elements such as rain, snow, wind, cold, sun, and insects.
13. To have personal possessions at my home and to get additional things within reasonable limits, as planned for and discussed by my caregiver and caseworker, and based on caregiver's ability.
14. To personal space in my bedroom to store my clothes and belongings.
15. To healthy foods in healthy portions proper for my age and activity level.
16. To good quality medical, dental, and vision care, developmental and mental health services that are at least adequate enough for my needs.
17. To be free from unnecessary or too much medication.
18. To visit and have regular contact with my family, including my brothers and sisters (unless a court order or case plan doesn't allow it) and to have my worker explain any restrictions to me and write them in my record.
19. To contact my caseworker, attorneys, ad litem, probation officer, CASA, and Advocacy, Inc. at any time. I can communicate with my caseworker, CASA, Advocacy, Inc. or my attorney ad litem without limits.
20. To see my caseworker at least monthly and in private if necessary.
21. To actively participate in creating my plan for my services and permanent living arrangement, and in meetings where my medical services are reviewed, as appropriate. To be given a copy or summary of my plan and to review. I have the right to ask someone to act on my behalf or to support me in my participation.
22. To go to my court hearing and speak to the judge.
23. To speak to the judge at a court hearing that affects where I have been placed including status hearings, permanency hearings, or placement review hearings.
24. To expect that my records and personal information will be kept private and will be discussed only when it is about my care.
25. To have visitors, to keep a personal journal, to send and receive unopened mail, and to make and receive private phone calls unless appropriate professionals or a court says that restrictions are necessary for my best interests.
26. To get paid for any work done, except for routine chores or work assigned as fair and/or reasonable discipline.

27. To give my permission in writing before taking part in any publicity or fund raising activity for where I am placed or the agency, including the use of my photograph.
28. To not be forced to make public statements showing my gratitude to the foster home or agency.
29. To receive, refuse, or request treatment for physical, emotional, mental health, or chemical dependency needs separately from adults (other than young adults) who are receiving services.
30. To call the Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 to report abuse, neglect, exploitation, or violation of personal rights without fear of punishment, interference, coercion, or retaliation.
31. To complain to the DFPS Consumer Affairs Office at 1-800-720-7777 and/or Advocacy, Inc. at 1-800-252-9108 if I feel any of my rights have been violated or ignored. To be free from threats of punishment for making complaints and have the right to make an anonymous complaint if I choose.
32. To be told in writing of the name, address, phone number and purpose of the Texas Protection and Advocacy System for disability assistance.
33. To not get pressured to get an abortion, give up my child for adoption, or to parent my child, if applicable.
34. To hire independent mental health professionals, medical professionals, and attorneys at my own expense.
35. To understand and have a copy of the rights of children and youth in foster care.

(Youth 16 and older)

When I am age 16 and older in foster care, I also have the right:

1. To attend Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) classes and activities as appropriate to my case plan.
2. To a comprehensive transition plan that includes planning for my career and help to enroll in an educational or vocational job training program.
3. To be told about educational opportunities when I leave care.
4. To get help in obtaining an independent residence when aging out.

5. To one or more Circle of Support Conferences or Transition Planning Meetings.
6. To take part in youth leadership development opportunities.
7. To consent to all or some of my medical care as authorized by the court and based on my maturity level. For example, if the court authorizes, I may give consent:
 - to diagnose and treat an infectious, contagious, or communicable disease
 - to examine and treat drug addiction
 - for counseling related to preventing suicide, drug addiction, or sexual, physical, or emotional abuse
 - for hospital, medical, or surgical treatment (other than abortion) related to the pregnancy if I am unmarried and pregnant

If I consent to any medical care on my own, without the court or DFPS involved , then I am legally responsible for paying for my own medical care.

8. To request a hearing from a court to determine if I have the capacity to consent to medical care (Sec 266.010).
9. To help with getting my driver's license, social security number, birth certificate, and state ID card.
10. To seek proper employment, keep my own money, and have my own bank account in my own name, depending on my case plan and age or level of maturity.
11. To get necessary personal information within 30 days of leaving care, including my birth certificate, immunization records, and information contained in my education portfolio and health passport.



Texas CASA's Recommendations for Interim Charges

Child Protective Services

Evaluate the management structure and supervision of CPS caseworkers in rural areas. Identify any legislative changes that could assist the Department of Protective and Family Services in maximizing efficiency, quality casework and supervision, and caseworker retention in these areas.

Foster Care

- 1) Monitor the progress of the Department of Family and Protective Services efforts, including but not limited to the foster care redesign, to place children in safe, stable placements within their home communities and with their siblings. Identify any legislative changes that could enhance these efforts.
- 2) Evaluate the recruitment, assessment, hiring, training, and monitoring requirements for caregivers of children in foster care, including foster parents and staff of residential treatment centers and group homes. Identify any legislative changes that could improve the quality of the care children receive while in child protective services custody.

Court Processes in Child Protection Cases

- 1) Study court processes in child protection cases, in Texas and in other jurisdictions, and identify any legislative action that would increase timely permanency and better outcomes for children in CPS cases. Specifically, examine whether the Family Code should be amended to:
 - Encourage the use of court-ordered and monitored family services in family based safety services cases to enhance the effectiveness of those services, to keep the child safe at home instead of removing the child, and to increase the alternatives available to courts in achieving good outcomes for children and families.
 - Broaden the focus of Status Hearings (Tex. Fam. Code Subchapter C) to promote the participation of extended family and potential relative caregivers in the hearings. Evaluate whether such changes would increase the number and timeliness of safe, appropriate relative placements in lieu of paid foster care.
 - Require more frequent placement review hearings (Tex. Fam. Code Subchapter F) in some or all cases. Evaluate whether this change would increase permanency and the timeliness of permanency for children who are in the managing conservatorship of the state indefinitely.
- 2) Delays in criminal child abuse cases can further traumatize child victims, compromise evidence, especially child testimony, and deny justice in child abuse cases. HB 2236 81 (R) requires

criminal courts to consider the impact of a continuance on a child victim in criminal child abuse cases. Evaluate the impact of HB 2236 81 (R), specifically where there is a companion Child Protective Services case in civil court, and make recommendations to decrease delays in criminal child abuse cases.

Post-Adoption Services

Study post-adoption needs of children and adoptive families and the services available to meet those needs. Identify any legislative action that could increase adoptions, improve adoption stability, and prevent adoption disruptions and failures.



82nd Legislative Session Bill Summaries

Bills noted with an asterisk (*) were a CASA Priority
 A: Bill Author S: Bill Sponsor

Resources for CASA and CPS

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
HB 1* A: Pitts, S: Ogden	Effective 9/1/11	<p>Increased CASA funding by \$4 million (to \$17 million total for FY 2012/2013) to provide more volunteer advocates for more of the almost 50,000 children projected to be in CPS custody by end of 2014.</p> <p>Restored many of the previously proposed cuts to CPS – adoption subsidies, relative caregiver assistance, foster care rates and most caseworkers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention: Prevention and Early Intervention Division (PEI) cut by 30% (STAR cut 11%, CYD cut 32%, Texas Families cut 31%, and 74% cut for other at-risk prevention programs) (initially 84% cut) • Protective Day Care: Funded at 2010/2011 levels (initially 23% cut) • Relative Caregiver Program (financial assistance, daycare, home assessments): Funded at 2010/2011 levels (initially eliminated) • Substance Abuse Services: Funded at 2010/2011 levels, 21% less than requested • Employees: Reduction of 236.2 FTEs in CPS, 117 of which are caseworkers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected Caseloads in 2013:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigative – 27.7 (5% growth) ▪ FBSS – 18.9 (22% growth) ▪ CVS - 29 (4% growth) ○ Denial of request for additional FTEs to maintain average hold time of 8.9 minutes/reporting call and 33% call abandonment rate. Projected increase in hold time to 10 minutes/call and projected 18% increase in call abandonment rate in FY 2012/2013) • Permanency Care Assistance: Fully funded, including caseload growth • Foster Care Rates: Fully funded, including growth, allowing foster care redesign to move forward • Adoption Subsidies: Fully funded (initially eliminated) • Post Adoption Support Services: Eliminated state portion but allow others to provide the 25% match needed to draw down federal funds • PAL services: Cut by 6%
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Improvements to Foster Care System

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
SB 218* A: Nelson S: Dukes	Effective 9/1/11	<p>Authorizes Foster Care Redesign, Strengthens Certain Sexual Abuse Investigations, Drivers license fee waivers for youth under CPS care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFPS will collect and report outcome info on certain current and former foster youth for the National Youth in Transition Database. • Texas Department of Public Safety must waive driver’s license fees for youth under 18 YOA in managing conservator ship of DFPS or who is between 18 and 21 YOA and lives in a foster care placement paid for by DFPS. • In child prot. cases, DFPS may not enter into a written agreement with a parent or posesory conservator requiring the person to take action after the case is closed unless the agreement is

		<p>entered into after the removal of the child or a court orders the agreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child younger than 11 tests positively for an STD DFPS must file an emergency order for possession unless sexual abuse is not supported by medical evidence or the perpetrator was not living in the home. If DFPS believes abuse occurred, DFPS must work with law enforcement to obtain a search warrant requiring suspected individuals to undergo STD diagnostics. • DFPS must develop the original service plan and all amendments with the child’s parents and agency representative, inform the parents of their rights in connection with the service plan and note if a parent is not able or is unwilling to participate in the plan development. • DFPS must improve caseworker training by providing blended learning environments, structured field experience and core curriculums for all caseworkers. DFPS must require transferring caseworkers to complete new core curriculums, centralize accountability and require training on protective orders. • DFPS must implement a Foster Care Redesign according to the December 2010 Foster Care Redesign report within a reasonable time. HHS may use performance based payment rates, including funding for additional services not traditionally including in 24 hour care rates, not to exceed the FY 2012 appropriations. DFPS must provide a status report to Senate Finance by December 1, 2012. • DFPS may obtain criminal history info from anyone who is an employee or volunteer with an entity that provides supervised independent living services to young adults receiving extended foster care services or a person 14 or older who will be working at or staying at a host home which is a supervised independent living location. (adds these 2 additional parties to existing list)
<p>SB 219* A: Nelson, Van De Putte S: Gonzales</p>	<p>Effective 9/1/11</p>	<p>Requires trauma informed training for persons interacting with foster youth and encourages the use of telemedicine in Star Health contracts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands trauma informed training by requiring an annual refresher course for caseworker and supervisors and requiring DFPS to annually evaluate trauma informed training provided to foster and adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, caseworkers, and supervisors. To the extent resources are available, DFPS must also assist CASA’s, children’s advocacy center staff, therapists at DADS and domestic violence shelter staff in developing and finding resources for trauma informed care training. • The Commission shall explore and encourage Star Health to use telemedicine.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star Health doctors must be offered training in trauma informed care and in post-traumatic stress disorder and ADD. • The Commission shall encourage Star Health to ensure compliance with Texas Health Steps including the requirement to provide a mental health screening during exams.
HB 753* A: Raymond S: Zaffirini	Effective 9/1/11	Requires DFPS to screen applicants to determine the best position for the applicant, study salaries of caseworkers to determine the role of salary and to make recommendations regarding recruitment and retention. DFPS shall file a report by December 1, 2012 with any recommendations.
HB 807 A: Parker S: Nelson Zerwas	Effective 9/1/11	Requires DFPS to provide 48 hours written notice to residential child care facilities or child placing agencies before moving a child except in an emergency or Court order situation. DFPS must provide residential child care facilities and any child placing agencies involved with a child 48 hours written notice before changing a child's placement unless there is a case of emergency, the move is otherwise provided for by a court order or the move is agreed to by the facility.
HB 826* A: Farias S: Zaffirini	Effective 9/1/11	Requires school districts to provide liaison officers to facilitate enrollment of children in cons. of the state. Each school district must appoint at least 1 employee liaison to facilitate the enrollment of or transfer or enrollment for children in the cons. of the state.
HB 943* A: Dukes S: Nelson	Effective 9/1/11	Requires DFPS to give notice if a child is missing or has run away, take continued action to find the child, give notice if the child is found and interview the child when back in custody. If a child in DFPS's managing cons. goes missing, DFPS must notify the police, the Court, the Child's ad litem, and the Child's parent unless the parent cannot be located, the parental rights are terminated or the parent has relinquished rights within 24 hours. DFPS must notify all parties within 24 hours if the child is found. DFPS must make continuing efforts to find the child including contacting the police, relatives and former caregivers monthly, by conducting reviews to determine if sufficient efforts are being made and by documenting the child's case record of all efforts. After a Child returns, DFPS must complete an interview to determine why the child went missing and where the child went.
HB 2170* A: Raymond,	Effective 9/1/11	Establishes a foster child bill of rights and requires DFPS to help children obtain a credit report. Each child in foster care must be informed of their rights relating to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and harassment; Food, clothing, shelter and education; medical treatment including their

Dukes S: Davis, Uresti		right to consent to treatment; emergency intervention; placement with their siblings and contact with family members; privacy and searches; participation in school related extracurricular or community activities; interaction with persons outside of foster care; contact with caseworkers, attorneys, GALs and CASAs; religious activities; record confidentiality; preparation for adulthood; participation in court hearings; participation in service plans; advocacy for persons with a disability; any other matter affecting a child's ability to receive care in the least restrictive environment available. DFPS must promote the education of rights and provide written copies to all children. DFPS must ensure each child 16 years or older in managing conservatorship receives a free credit report each year until the child is discharged, receives info on interpreting the report and the procedure for correcting inaccuracies in the report.
HB 2488* A: Scott S: Harris, Nelson, Davis, Huffman	5/30/11 Effective Immediately	Requires the custodian of a medical, mental health, drug or alcohol record to release the record to a child's attorney ad litem, guardian ad litem or amicus attorney. Where an appointment has been made for an attorney ad litem, a guardian ad litem or an amicus attorney for a child, the custodian of a child's medical, mental health, drug or alcohol treatment records must release the records to the ad litem or amicus attorney if requested. The disclosure of drug or alcohol treatment records may only be provided under federal law. The disclosure does not affect the confidentiality of the record and the person provided access to the record may not disclose the record except as provided by law.
HB 3531* A: Strama, Marquez, Dukes, Naishtat S: Nelson	Effective 9/1/11	Requires the commission to implement a system using Medicaid data to monitor the prescription of psychotropic drugs to children in the conservatorship of DFPS and enrolled in Star Health. The system shall include a trigger to indicate a medical review of the prescription is appropriate.

Legal Representation for Children and Parents

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
SB 1026*	Effective	Requires AALs assigned to parents in termination cases to investigate each case appropriately,

A: Harris S: Naishtat	9/1/11	meet with parents before each hearing and complete a minimum of 3 hours of CLE. In a DFPS initiated suit to terminate the parent child relationship, an attorney ad litem appointed to represent the parents must interview the parents unless location is unknown, each person with knowledge of the case and all parties to the suit. The attorney must also meet with the parent before each court hearing. The attorney must complete at least 3 hours of CLE unless waived by the court.
HB 906 A: Thompson S: Rodriguez	Effective on 9/1/11	Allows for the presumption of indigence thorough the pendency of a Department initiated suit, for the appointment of an ad litem through all appeals and requires language specifying that the right to appeal follows accelerated appeals guidelines be included in final orders. A parent who is determined indigent is presumed to remain indigent during the pendency of a suit unless the Court determines that the parent is not longer indigent due to a material and substantial change in financial circumstances. An attorney appointed to represent a parent or child in a suit filed by DFPS seeking termination or cons. shall continue to serve until the case is dismissed, all appeals are exhausted or waived or the attorney is relieved and replaced by the Court on record. Final orders must include a statement in boldface capital letters stating that an appeal must be filed in accordance with the accelerated appeals guidelines.
HB 3311* A: Carter S: Nelson	Effective 9/1/11	Requires AALs to meet with child clients in sufficient time before a hearing to allow the ad litem to prepare in accordance with the child’s objectives and requires meetings to be held in private settings.
HB 3314* A: Carter S: Nelson	Effective 9/1/11	Requires AALs to meet with child clients before each hearing and file a written statement indicating compliance if the child does not attend the hearing.

Relative Caregivers

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
SB 993* A: Uresti S: E.	Effective 9/1/11	Requires a written agreement for voluntary placements (“parent child safety placements”) and notice to relatives within 30 days of removal of a child into CPS legal custody. When a child is placed in a temporary out of home placement during an investigation or while a

Rodriguez Thompson, Parker		parent is receiving services from DFPS, an agreement must clearly state the duties of the caregiver, the conditions under which the parent may have access to the child, the DFPS duties, the date the agreement will terminate and any other necessary terms in writing. DFPS must provide a written copy to all parties. DFPS must develop procedures to evaluate the criminal history of the proposed placement, any allegations of abuse or neglect against proposed placement and the proposed placements home environment. If DFPS declines to place a child at the proposed placement, DFPS shall notify the placement and provide the reason for the decision. DFPS must notify relatives w/in 3 rd degree of consanguinity (grandparents, aunts, uncles, adult siblings) and appropriate fictive kin of removal of the child within 30 days and include next court hearing information. (codifies federal Fostering Connections notice requirements)
HB 848* A: Guillen, Raymond S: Zaffirini	Effective 9/1/11	Allows for a parent under investigation to enter into an agreement with a relative or other person to make decisions with regards to the child. A parent may enter into an agreement with a relative or other person with whom a child is placed under a safety plan to allow the person to make decisions with regards to the child during an investigation of the parent for abuse or neglect or while DFPS is providing services to the parent.
HB 2370 A: Dukes S: West	Effective 9/1/11	Requires DFPS to notify applicants for the permanency care assistance program about background checks including criminal history information. DFPS must notify a person applying to become licensed or verified under the Permanency Care Assistance Program that a background check, including a criminal history check, will be conducted and of any criminal convictions that may preclude an individual from becoming a foster home or that may be considered in evaluating the application.

Transitioning Youth

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
SB 1/HB 79 A: Duncan,	Effective 9/1/11	Codifies requirements for federal funding for post 18 foster care , including extension of court jurisdiction for youth over 18 in foster care and court reviews every 6 months in such cases.

Shapiro, Lewis, Jim Jackson S: Pitts, Duncan		Creates a trial independence period in which a youth may leave and then return to foster care.
HB 452* A: Lucio III, Raymond, Dukes S: Lucio II	Effective May 25,2011	Allows former foster youth to request assistance in housing between academic semesters. A student who was previously under cons., who is currently a full time college student and does not have housing available between academic semesters, may request assistance from the university or college in locating temporary housing. The school may provide a stipend to cover reasonable cost of temporary housing or provide housing directly to the student, and may use any available funds to cover the costs. The receipt of a stipend does not prohibit the student from receiving additional future stipends.
HB 3234* A: Hernandez Luna, Naishtat, E. Rodriguez S: Davis	Effective 9/1/11	DFPS must establish guidelines that prioritize requests to release case records, including those made by adults previously in DFPS managing conservatorship. Case records include files, reports, records, communications and working papers in DFPS control, but DFPS is not required to release a copy of the case record except as provided by law.

New and Continued Taskforces

Bill # and Author	Status and Effective Date	Summary
SB 434* A: Nelson, Uresti S: Raymond	Effective 9/1/11	Provides for the creation of a Domestic Violence and Child Abuse and Neglect Task Force to examine the relationship between family violence and child abuse/neglect, address identified issues and develop a statewide best practices guideline for CPS and Family Violence shelters by September 1, 2012.

SB 501* A: West S: Dukes Coleman, Walle	5/21 Effective Immediately	Creates an interagency council addressing disproportionality of children in the juvenile justice system, the child welfare system and education and mental health systems. Representatives of TEA, Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities in HHS, DADs, DFPS, TYC, Juvenile Probation Commission, AG. Council shall review data, funding appropriations, best practices and recommend appropriate action in report by December 2012.
SB 717* A: Harris, Van de Putte S: Truitt, Naishtat	Effective 9/1/11	Expands the duties of the Council on Children and Families to promote information sharing. The purpose and duties of the Council on Children and Families is expanded to promote the sharing of information regarding children and families among state agencies. The Council must identify technology to ensure efficient and timely information sharing among state agencies providing health, education or other services to children and families.
SB 1154* A: Uresti S: McClendon	Effective 6/17/2011	Provides for the creation of a child abuse and neglect task force. Provides for the creation of a 9 member task force appointed by the governor; lieutenant governor and speaker of the house to identify existing problems in reducing child abuse, create policy goals to improve child safety and submit a strategic plan. The TX Department of State Health Services, The TX Dept of Criminal Justice, TYC and the TX Juvenile Probation Commission will provide administrative support and share in the task force cost.

Miscellaneous

HB 253 A: Hildebran S: Nelson	Effective 9/1/11	Increases penalties and statute of limitations for sexual abuse and bigamy; requires that when DFPS seeks temporary restraining order to remove a perpetrator of child abuse instead of the child it must state facts sufficient to satisfy the court that the other adult will protect the child and report perpetrator's attempts to return.
HB 2560 A: Sheffield, Driver, Legler, White S: Estes	Effective 9/1/11	Allows foster parents to carry handguns in vehicles while transporting foster children.