



TRANSFORMING TOGETHER

A Guide to Community-Based Care in Texas Edition 2, June 2022



TEXASCASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

MISSION

Texas CASA's mission is to support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system.

VISION

Texas CASA envisions a safe and positive future for all Texas children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Texas CASA Workgroup

Vicki Spriggs, CEO
Amanda Arriaga, General Counsel & Chief External Relations Officer
Sarah Crockett, Director of Public Policy
Bryan Mares, Health Policy Associate
Ann Strauser Palmer, Legislative Advocacy Coordinator
Abe Louise Young, Communications Director
Caitlyn Perdue, Communications Manager
Emma Ledford, Communications Specialist

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Recspec



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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second edition of the Texas CASA guide to Community-Based Care (CBC). The guide details how CBC works and how it will affect the work of CASA programs in Texas. As the model is updated and implementation progresses, Texas CASA will continue to update this resource.



KEY CONCEPTS TO KNOW

What Is Texas CASA?

Texas CASA is the statewide membership organization of the 72 local CASA programs. In FY 2021, the 72 local programs provided a volunteer corps of 10,920 Court Appointed Special Advocates who served 28,543 children in foster care across the state.

What is the legacy system?

The term “legacy system” refers to the areas and functions of the foster care system that are not yet part of a Community-Based Care contract. In the legacy system, DFPS has full responsibility for placement and case management. Simply put, the term refers to the way things were done in the Texas foster care system prior to CBC and those areas where CBC has not been introduced.

What is a catchment area?

A catchment area is a geographic region in which a single contractor (an SSCC) provides foster care services. Texas is currently divided into 16 catchment areas, based on boundaries drawn by DFPS. DFPS selects catchment areas for CBC implementation in a staggered process over time, subject to legislative funding. Inside each catchment area, the SSCC will provide all contractually required foster care services to local children, youth and families.

What is Community-Based Care (CBC)?

In 2017, in an effort to improve the outcomes of children in the conservatorship of the state, the 85th Texas Legislature redesigned foster care, creating the change model known as Community-Based Care. CBC progresses in stages, moving responsibility for foster care placement, case management and services from state of Texas employees to private contractors. The 87th Legislature continued to fund, evolve and support the statewide rollout of the CBC model.

What is a Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC)?

A Single-Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) is a contractor selected by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in a competitive bidding process to provide foster care services in a specified region of the state. These services range from foster home and kinship services to case management and preparation for adult living for adolescent youth. Under state law, an SSCC is required to be a governmental entity or a nonprofit entity that has a majority of its board members residing in Texas and an organizational mission focused on child welfare.



Note: A full glossary of terms and acronyms is available at the end of this guide.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CASA: COMING TOGETHER TO BUILD A BETTER SYSTEM



The hopeful vision of CBC is a transformed child welfare system in which children can stay geographically close to their home communities and can be supported by a comprehensive network of local services overseen by providers that are held accountable for positive outcomes.

The word “community” in the name “Community-Based Care” refers to keeping placement local, but also refers to all of us—the people of Texas. For CASA programs, the transition calls for being flexible, creating new relationships and supporting efforts to improve the services that each of our local areas have to offer children and families.

To meet the needs of all children and families in our own communities, what needs to happen first? What resources can we leverage? What is most urgent to initiate? Who can we pull into the effort? Where are the best ideas being generated? Success in these efforts will require deep collaboration as historic changes are made to Texas’ foster care system.

Though the role of CASA in the legal process will not change, the partners that CASA works with will now vary across the state, by catchment area. We will need to learn new names and build new partnerships.

Full implementation of CBC will be staggered over an extended timeframe – it is predicted to be implemented statewide by 2029. Therefore, CASA programs will continue working with both CPS and SSCCs for some time, which may add an element of confusion. Providing learning opportunities for staff and volunteers will reduce uncertainty about the roles and responsibilities of each party. Employees of the SSCC will assume many of the powers, duties and responsibilities of CPS as CBC progresses. However, the SSCC is not a legal party to the case: DFPS will still be the child’s legal parent. CPS will not be going away; rather, its focus will instead be limited to abuse and neglect investigations and contract oversight.

As the new system comes into being, CASA staff and volunteers will be called upon to engage and support a wider range of stakeholders and processes. The most important people to support during the transition, of course, are the children and families we are appointed to advocate for in foster and kinship care. CASA advocates will remain serving as a consistent figure in a child’s life—regardless of changes happening behind the scenes.

“

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

—CHARLES DARWIN



WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE?





CBC was established as a response to persistent, long-term challenges in the Texas foster care system. The goals for CBC set a standard for everyone involved. Texas CASA believes that these goals are attainable, and that the quality of our collaboration with SSCCs and our participation in the transition is a vital aspect of CBC's success.

The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) will contract with an SSCC to implement CBC in three stages in each of the 16 catchment (service) areas.

Initially, the 85th Legislature established 12 goals for CBC, outlined in Senate Bill 11.¹ These goals were updated by the 87th Legislature, which added four broad priorities for CBC:

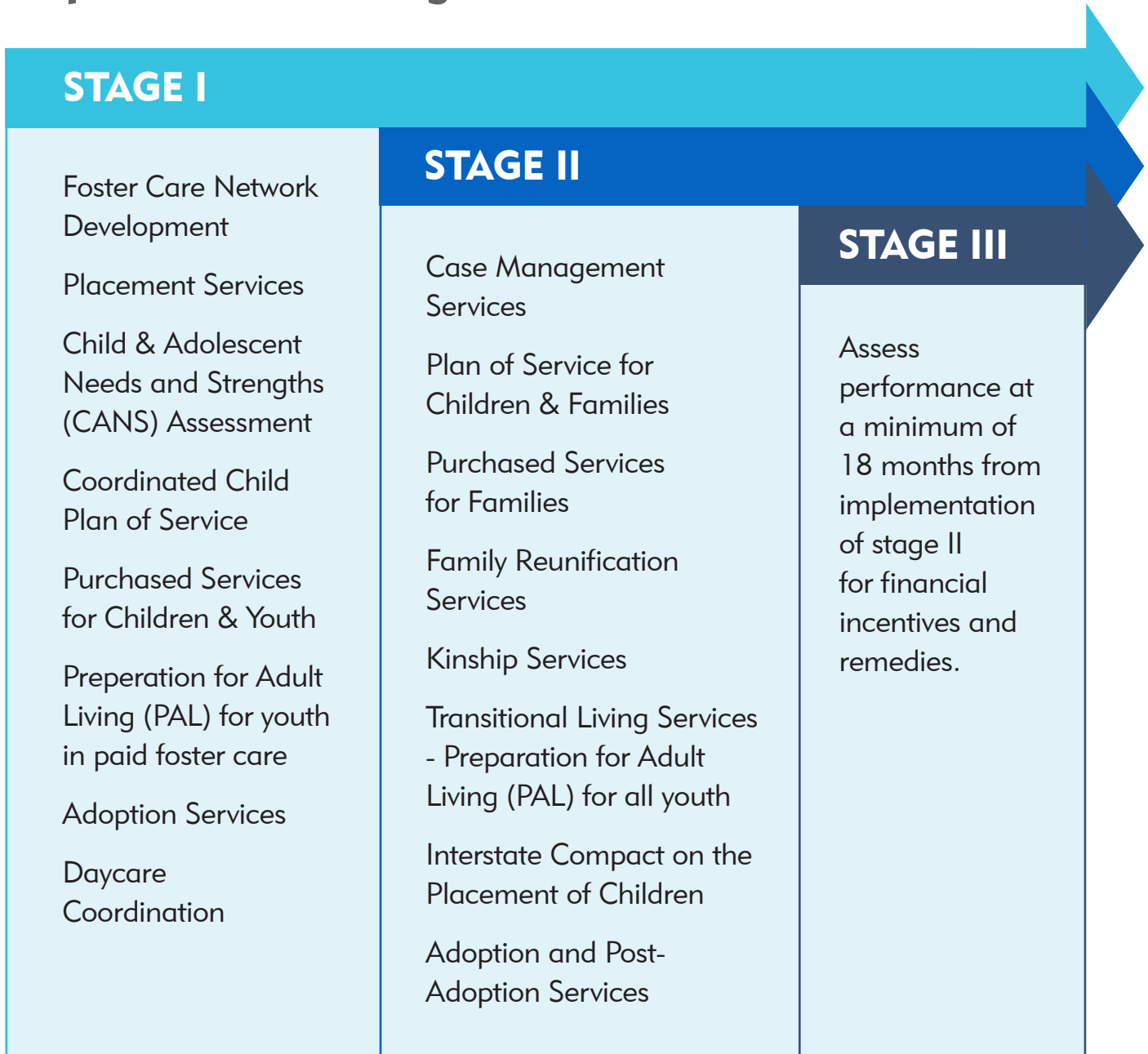
- 1 Prevent entry into foster care.
- 2 Reunify and preserve families.
- 3 Ensure child safety, permanency and well-being.
- 4 Reduce future referrals of children or parents to the Department.

¹ Acts 2017, 85th R.S., ch. 319, General and Special Laws of Texas

HOW COMMUNITY-BASED CARE WORKS: STAGES & CATCHMENT AREAS



Implementation Stages



Understanding the Stages of Community-Based Care

STAGE I

In this stage, the SSCC will:

- ▶ Develop a network of services, including the full range of paid foster care placement capacity: foster homes, residential treatment centers, emergency shelters and other verified, paid substitute care placements;
- ▶ Provide foster care placement services;
- ▶ Provide Preparation for Adult Living (PAL), foster care, daycare and adoption services; and
- ▶ Share some aspects of the case coordination function with CPS.

The focus of this stage is on:

- ▶ Keeping children closer and more connected to their home, community and family; and
- ▶ Improving the well-being of children in foster care.

Once the contract is in place in a catchment area, the SSCC will take responsibility for all new cases while working with DFPS to transition existing cases to the SSCC, which may take up to two years.

STAGE II

In this stage, the SSCC will:

- ▶ Become solely responsible for case management;
- ▶ Provide kinship services, working with children and families under the state's relative caregiver program; and
- ▶ Provide reunification services, such as service plans and other supports to help parents reunify with their children.

The focus of this stage is on:

- ▶ Expanding the continuum of services to include community supports and resources for families, and
- ▶ Improving permanency outcomes for all children in foster care.

STAGE III

In this stage, the SSCC will become subject to financial remedies or incentives, depending on its ability to meet the permanency outcomes defined in its contract with DFPS. Stage III financial incentives will occur after the SSCC has been providing all case management services for a minimum of 18 months.

The Department of Family and Protective Services will contract with a Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) to implement Community-Based Care in three stages in each of the 16 catchment (service) areas.

Readiness Review Required Before Going to Stage I or Stage II

The Office of Community-Based Care Transition (OCBCT) and the Department of Family and Protective Services must complete a readiness review before an SSCC can begin to provide services in Stage I or move into Stage II. Before an SSCC enters Stage I, the OCBCT/DFPS are required to determine that the SSCC has the systems and staff in place to assume responsibilities required under the contract and that they are meeting performance measures.

STAGE I READINESS REQUIREMENTS

The SSCC must submit and have approved the following:¹

- ▶ Management Plan
- ▶ Administration Plan
- ▶ Community Engagement Plan
- ▶ Conflict of Interest Plan
- ▶ Complete list of network contracted and credentialed providers
- ▶ Training curriculum for staff and providers
- ▶ Utilization Management Process
- ▶ Case Management Manual
- ▶ IT Security Review
- ▶ Complaint and Appeals Processes



STAGE II READINESS REQUIREMENTS

In order to assess an SSCC's ability to provide all substitute care and case management services, the OCBCT and DFPS require the SSCC to demonstrate their ability to preserve the safety of children and continuity of services for children and families.

Depending on the findings of this readiness review, OCBCT/DFPS may adjust the timeline for implementation.

¹ Implementation Plan for the Texas Community-Based Care System, December 2021.

Understanding Catchment Areas

A catchment area is a geographic area designated by DFPS. There are currently 16 catchment areas across the state in which DFPS intends to secure contracts with SSCCs. CBC is rolling out across the state by expanding to one new catchment area at a time.

The boundaries for catchment areas were developed according to county and DFPS regional lines. They were structured to have a minimum of 500 new children entering into foster care annually in every catchment area, in order to pool financial risk. This pooling of risk is intended to make the rate structures for reimbursement workable for contractors.

Once the legislature provides funds for the catchment areas that DFPS has selected to be the next areas for CBC to roll into, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) issues a Request for Applications (RFA). A bidding organization must be either a nonprofit with a child welfare mission with a majority of its board members residing in Texas, or a governmental entity. In addition, DFPS must consider whether bidders have experience providing services to children and families in their respective catchment areas. Once HHSC recommends an applicant, a contract is negotiated that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the SSCC and creates a timeline for implementation.

The 87th Legislature made changes to the Texas Family Code to allow catchment area boundaries to be changed by DFPS. At the time of the printing of this edition, however, no boundaries have been changed.

When initially rolled out, the state was divided into 17 catchment areas. However, the boundaries in Region 3A, Region 3B, and Region 3C were changed to be just two catchment areas, Region 3W/Metroplex West and Region 3E/Metroplex East. It is anticipated that when the state reprocures the contract for what was Region 3B, they will roll in the new counties so that the contract covers all of the new Region 3W/Metroplex West.



Community-Based Care Catchment Areas by Texas County

Implementation to Date

Catchment Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
1 Panhandle	SSCC: <i>Saint Francis Ministries</i> Contract Awarded: 6/13/19 Stage 1 Live: 1/1/20 Stage 2 Live: 3/4/22	Armstrong, Bailey, Briscoe, Carson, Castro, Childress, Cochran, Collingsworth, Crosby, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Dickens, Donley, Floyd, Garza, Gray, Hale, Hall, Hansford, Hartley, Hemphill, Hockley, Hutchinson, King, Lamb, Lipscomb, Lubbock, Lynn, Moore, Motley, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Robert, Sherman, Swisher, Terry, Wheeler, Yoakum	Amarillo Area CASA, Inc.; CASA of the Rolling Plains (territory in Catchment Area 2); CASA 69, Inc.; Great Plains CASA for Kids; CASA of the South Plains; CASA of the High Plains, Inc.
2 Big Country & Texoma	SSCC: 2INgage Contract Awarded: 5/4/18 Stage 1 Live: 12/1/18 Stage 2 Live: 6/1/20	Archer, Baylor, Brown, Callahan, Clay, Coleman, Comanche, Cottle, Eastland, Fisher, Foard, Hardeman, Haskell, Jack, Jones, Kent, Knox, Mitchell, Montague, Nolan, Runnels, Scurry, Shackelford, Stephens, Stonewall, Taylor, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger, Young	Big Country CASA; CASA in the Heart of Texas (territory in Catchment Area 15); CASA of the Rolling Plains (territory in Catchment Area 1); CASA of Wise & Jack Counties (territory in Catchment Area 3E); North Star CASA; Children's Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas (territory in Catchment Area 9); CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Catchment Areas 3W & 7A); Child Advocates CASA of Red River
3E Metroplex East	SSCC: TBD Contract Awarded: Anticipated 8/22 Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 2/23 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated 2/24	Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, Rockwall	Fannin County Children's Center; CASA of Navarro County; Dallas CASA; CASA for Hunt County; CASA of Collin County; Lone Star CASA; CASA of Grayson County; CASA of Ellis County
3W Metroplex West	SSCC: <i>Our Community Our Kids</i> Contract Awarded: 12/16/13 Stage 1 Live: 9/1/14 Stage 2 Live: 3/1/20 <i>Note: The contract for Region 3B will be resolicited in FY 22-23 to encompass all of Region 3W.</i>	Cooke, Denton, Erath, Hood, Johnson, Palo Pinto, Parker, Somervell, Tarrant, Wise	CASA of Jackson County; CASA of Wise & Jack Counties (territory in Catchment Area 2); CASA of Denton County; CASA of Tarrant County; CASA of North Texas; CASA of Hood & Somervell Counties; CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Catchment Areas 2 & 7A); CASA – Hope for Children, Inc.
4 Piney Woods	SSCC: TBD Contract Awarded: Anticipated 8/22 Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 2/23 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated 2/24	Anderson, Bowie, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Delta, Franklin, Gregg, Harrison, Henderson, Hopkins, Lamar, Marion, Morris, Panola, Rains, Red, River, Rusk, Smith, Titus, Upshur, Van Zandt, Wood	CASA of Trinity Valley; East Texas CASA; CASA of Harrison County; CASA of Titus, Camp & Morris Counties; CASA for KIDS; Lake Country CASA; CASA of Northeast Texas; CASA for Kids of East Texas

Catchment Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
5 Deep East	SSCC: TBD Contract Awarded: Anticipated 8/22 Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 2/23 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated 2/24	Angelina, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler	CASA of Southeast Texas; CASA of Walker, San Jacinto & Trinity Counties (territory in Catchment Area 6B); CASA of the Pines; CASA of Deep East Texas; CASA of the Sabine Neches Region
6A Harris County	Not yet funded	Harris	Child Advocates, Inc.
6B Bay Area/ Montgomery	Not yet funded	Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, Wharton	Golf Coast CASA; CASA for Kids of South Central Texas (territory in Catchment Area 7B); CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County; CASA of Walker, San Jacinto & Trinity Counties (territory in Catchment Area 5); CASA of Liberty/Chambers Counties; Child Advocates of Fort Bend
7A Central Texas/Waco	Not yet funded	Bell, Bosque, Brazos, Coryell, Falls, Freestone, Grimes, Hamilton, Hill, Lampasas, Leon, Limestone, Llano, Madison, McLennan, Milam, Mills, Robertson, San Saba, Williamson	CASA in the Heart of Texas (territory in Catchment Area 2); Voices for Children, Inc. – CASA of the Brazos Valley (territory in Catchment Area 7B); CASA of Williamson County; CASA of Hill County; CASA for the Highland Lakes Area (territory in Catchment Area 7B); CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Catchment Areas 2 & 3W); CASA of Bell & Coryell Counties; CASA of McLennan County
7B Capital Area	Not yet funded	Bastrop, Blanco, Burleson, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Travis, Washington	CASA of Travis County; CASA of Bastrop County; CASA for Kids of South Central Texas (territory in Catchment Area 6B); Voices for Children, Inc. – CASA of the Brazos Valley (territory in Catchment Area 7A); CASA for the Highland Lakes Area (territory in Catchment Area 7A); CASA of Central Texas (territory in Catchment Area 8B)
8A Bexar County	Not yet funded	Bexar	Child Advocates San Antonio, Inc.

Catchment Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
8B South Central & Hill Country	SSCC: <i>Belong</i> Contract Awarded: 3/29/21 Stage 1 Live: 10/27/21 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated 10/22	Atascosa, Bandera, Calhoun, Comal, De Witt, Dimmit, Edwards, Frio, Gillespie, Goliad, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Jackson, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kinney, La Salle, Lavaca, Maverick, Medina, Real, Uvalde, Val Verde, Victoria, Wilson, Zavala	Hill Country CASA; Bluebonnet CASA (territory in Catchment Area 9); CASA of Central Texas (territory in Catchment Area 7B); CASA of South Texas; Tri-County CASA; Golden Crescent CASA, Inc. (territory in Catchment Area 11A)
9 Permian/ Concho	SSCC: TBD Contract Awarded: Anticipated 8/22 Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 2/23 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated 2/24	Andrews, Borden, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Dawson, Ector, Gaines, Glasscock, Howard, Irion, Kimble, Loving, Martin, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Midland, Pecos, Reagan, Reeves, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Terrell, Tom Green, Upton, Ward, Winkler	Frontier CASA (territory in Catchment Area 10); Bluebonnet CASA (territory in Catchment Area 8B); CASA of West Texas; CASA of the Permian Basin Area; Children's Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas (territory in Catchment Area 2)
10 El Paso	Not yet funded	Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Presidio	Frontier CASA (territory in Catchment Area 9); CASA of El Paso
11A South Texas/ Corpus Christi	Not yet funded	Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Webb	CASA of Bee, Live Oak & McMullen Counties; CASA of the Coastal Bend; Brush County CASA; Golden Crescent CASA, Inc. (territory in Catchment Area 8B); Voz de Niños
11B Rio Grande Valley	Not yet funded	Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Starr, Willacy, Zapata	CASA of Cameron & Willacy Counties; CASA of Hidalgo County

About the Providers

In region 1: *Saint Francis Ministries* is a Kansas-based, nonprofit child and family services ministry serving more than 31,000 people in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and other states.

In region 2: *21Ngage* is a partnership between Texas Family Initiative (TFI) and New Horizons. New Horizons is a Texas-based nonprofit that's been working with children for nearly 50 years. Texas Family Initiative is an affiliate of TFI Family Services, a nonprofit with over 50 years of experience strengthening families and serving Kansas and Nebraska.

In region 3B: *Our Community Our Kids (OCOK)* is a division of ACH Child and Family Services, which is a Fort Worth-based nonprofit with over 100 years of experience serving children, youth and families.

In region 8B: *Belong* is a division of SJRC Texas, a nonprofit organization with nearly 40 years of experience in the child welfare arena. SJRC was established in 1983 as St. Jude's Ranch for Children when the Hamilton Family purchased several acres in Bulverde, Texas to provide a safe haven for children in need.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE?

No Eject, No Reject

SSCCs are contractually required to place all children in foster care from their catchment area (a concept known as “No Eject”) and cannot deny placement for any child due to behaviors, mental health or other needs (a concept known as “No Reject”). The legacy system has long struggled to find suitable placements for children with higher needs or behavioral health problems and could not offer assurance that a provider would accept placement for a particular child. Providers could easily “eject” or “reject” children under the old protocol. Under CBC, the SSCC is required to find a suitable placement for all the children in their catchment area.

Placement Proximity

One of the major shortcomings of the legacy system has been the inability to keep children in their home communities and schools, or in close proximity to their home and family. While CBC does not solve this problem, state data clearly shows that, on average, children in care under an SSCC are significantly more likely to be placed closer to home than under the legacy system. For example, in Fiscal Year 2018, 74.3% of children in Region 3B (served by the SSCC Our Community Our Kids) were placed within 50 miles of their home, as compared to 61.7% for non-CBC areas statewide, according to the August 2019 Rider 21 Report. However, a statewide placement shortage in FY 2021 impacted both the legacy system and the SSCCs.¹

Intentional Development of Placement Capacity

Another benefit of CBC is the ability of an SSCC to identify specific placement capacity needs in a catchment area and recruit, contract for and otherwise build capacity to meet these needs. To date, all of the SSCCs have developed recruitment and support plans to expand the number of foster families in their regions. They are also addressing capacity needs for residential treatment and therapeutic foster care.

Region 3B has continued to see progress in the percentage of children in family-like settings (foster family homes and kinship homes), which are considered to be the least-restrictive environment for a child in foster care.

Funding Structure Will Better Serve Children & Youth

Each CBC catchment area has a rate paid to the SSCC for each day of service provided to a child or youth in paid foster care. This rate is known as a “blended rate.” Blended rates are specific to each catchment area and set in the Appropriations Act. In the legacy system, the amount paid to a provider changes as the level of service required for that child changes.

The new funding structure in CBC is already providing positive outcomes. The blended foster care rate creates much more alignment between the desired outcomes for children and the structure of payment than the historic use of the level-of-care system as the basis for provider payment. The blended rate creates incentives to keep children in the least-restrictive and most family-like setting whenever possible.

¹ [Quarterly Report on Implementation Status, Office of Community-Based Care Transition, March 2022.](#)

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE?

Capacity Issues in Adjacent Regions

The transition during Stage I can create challenges for adjoining or nearby areas. When the SSCC assumes responsibility for children in foster care in their catchment area, it also inherits the current placement capacity in that area. To help the SSCC meet its requirements around keeping children closer to home, DFPS has agreed not to place children from outside the catchment area into placements within the SSCC's catchment area, unless there is a compelling need. The SSCC, however, may contract with foster homes in nearby areas. In practice, the process of locking capacity in a catchment area has resulted in loss of access to foster homes that had historically been used for children from adjoining or nearby areas. Children from these surrounding areas may be placed further away, at least at the beginning of the transition.

Workforce Issues

In Stage II, as all conservatorship functions transfer from DFPS to the SSCC, the assumption has been that many DFPS staff would transfer to the SSCC as well. However, in catchment areas that have entered Stage II, SSCCs have seen high turnover among staff. For example, 2INgage experienced 49.7% turnover in the third quarter of FY 2021.¹ Recognizing the importance of addressing this issue, workforce stabilization has been included in capacity building efforts being led by Texas SSCCs.² 2INgage is leading the effort with a consultant to research supervision models that can increase the stability of the workforce.

Potential Unexpected Termination of Services by SSCCs

The termination of the contract with an SSCC could create turmoil and impact care for children and families. This is particularly true after CBC implementation has moved into Stage II, case managers for the SSCC have replaced CPS staff, and the case management function has been completely assumed by the SSCC. Because of this risk, each SSCC is required to provide a turnover plan and contingency plan within 12 months of executing their contract. Unfortunately, this process had to be implemented to terminate the SSCC contract for Region 8A during Stage I of their contract. That transition was handled fairly smoothly between Family Tapestry (the SSCC) and DFPS.



1 DFPS Rider 15 for Community-Based Care, September 2021.

2 Building Capacity for Children and Families: A Community-Based Care Approach, a Joint Plan by Texas Single Source Continuum Contractors, August 2021. <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/handouts/C3102021101300001/a00589ee-38a1-4979-9cfe-9faecfd48d87.PDF>

How Will Success Be Measured?

The legislature requires quarterly reports on SSCC performance compared to performance of the legacy system prior to the implementation of CBC. CASA program leadership should stay abreast of the information about their region by accessing these publicly available reports through the DFPS website.¹

CBC ties contract extensions and renewals to the achievement of measurable performance standards, outcomes and requirements. The contracts utilize the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) approach to management that defines performance as an ongoing process, as opposed to an end in itself. Performance targets are adjusted on an agreed-upon schedule to account for progress made toward goals. The state and the SSCCs will reflect on what is working and adjust performance targets based on lessons learned through implementation.

Beginning in Stage III, a portion of the SSCC's payment will be tied to meeting specified objectives.

The following contract performance measures are in place for each SSCC. The performance measures are derived from the CBC guiding principles initially proposed by the DFPS Public Private Partnership. They also align with state and federal requirements. Below are the SSCC performance measures as outlined in the implementation report released by the Office of Community-Based Care Transition in December 2021:²

- ▶ The percentage of children/youth who do not experience a validated incidence of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- ▶ Foster care placements per child/youth.
- ▶ The percentage of days that are in a least-restrictive placement.
- ▶ The percentage of children/youth in foster care placements within 50 miles of their home.
- ▶ The percentage of sibling groups placed together in foster care.
- ▶ The percentage of youth age 16 or older who have a driver's license or state identification card.
- ▶ The percentage of youth who turned 18 and have completed required PAL Life Skills Training.
- ▶ The percentage of approved service plans where children/youth age 5 or older participated in development of the service plan.
- ▶ The percentage of court hearings attended by children/youth, when not excused by the court.
- ▶ The percentage of school-age children who are attending their school of origin.
- ▶ The percentage of children placed in kinship care. (Stage II)
- ▶ The percentage of classified regular full- and part-time SSCC caseworkers who voluntarily and involuntarily separate from the SSCC agency. (Stage II)

¹ https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Foster_Care/Community-Based_Care/default.asp

² Implementation Plan for the Texas Community-Based Care System, Office of Community-Based Care System, December 2021.

Other Ways SSCCs Are Held Accountable

The contract between the state and the SSCC is the primary vehicle to assure that the goals of CBC are achieved. SSCCs are also subject to oversight by the State Auditor's Office and DFPS Internal Audit. In addition, the Texas Legislature mandated additional accountability and transparency provisions. Some of the most significant are:

- ▶ The state must require in the contract that the SSCC obey court orders affecting children in their care.
- ▶ Senate Bill 1896 (87th Legislature) created a Legislative Oversight Committee for CBC.
- ▶ The state must require the SSCC as part of its contract to obey court orders affecting children in their care.
- ▶ The SSCC assumes the statutory duties of DFPS related to foster care in their catchment area.
- ▶ The SSCC must provide hiring preference to CPS employees displaced by CBC expansion.
- ▶ SSCC records are subject to the Texas Public Information Act to the same extent as records maintained by DFPS.
- ▶ After the SSCC has assumed case management responsibilities, DFPS retains authority to approve or disapprove permanency goals in individual cases.
- ▶ The SSCC is required to develop a Community Engagement Plan for each stage of CBC.
- ▶ Each SSCC is required to develop a Provider Manual for their region that is a guiding document for the SSCC and its network in that catchment area.
- ▶ Each SSCC is required to develop an Operations Manual at least 60 days in advance of Stage II start-up that explains its procedures, processes and protocols for all aspects of case management.



Recent Changes Impacting Community-Based Care

Since the 1st Edition of the Texas CASA Guide to Community-Based Care, the Texas Legislature has passed several pieces of legislation affecting the model and its rollout.

The Office of Community-Based Care Transition (OCBCT)

Senate Bill 1896, passed by the 87th Legislature, created the Office of Community-Based Care Transition, or OCBCT. The OCBCT, though administratively attached to DFPS, is led by a statewide director separately appointed by the Texas Governor. In June 2021, Gov. Abbott appointed Theresa “Trish” Thomas as the Statewide Director of the OCBCT. Through FY 2023, the OCBCT and DFPS will work together to move staff and CBC functions and oversight from DFPS to the new office.

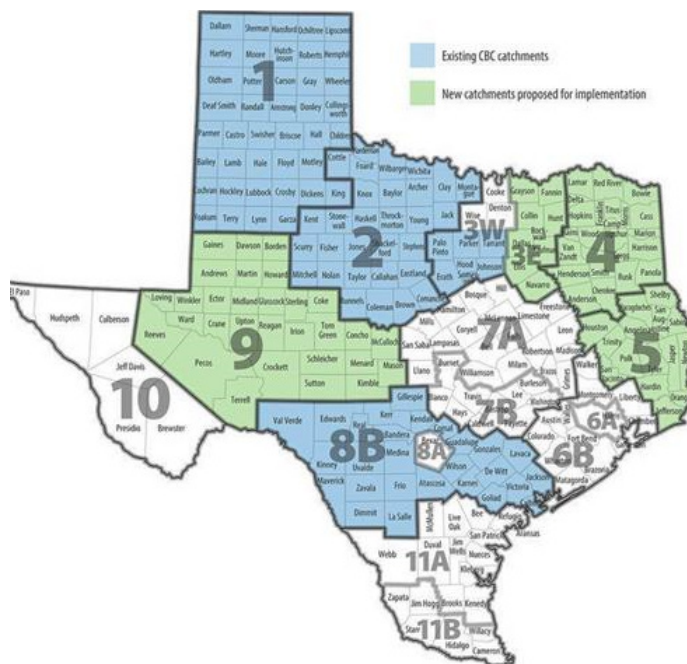
Community-Based Care Roll-out¹

The 87th Texas Legislature funded the expansion of CBC into four additional catchment areas: Region 3E – Metroplex East, Region 9 – Permian/Concho, Region 4 – Piney Woods and Region 5 – Deep East. In addition, funding was appropriated to expand CBC to Stage II in Region 1 – Panhandle, Region 8B and Region 3W – Metroplex West. Senate Bill 1896 also allows for the submission of unsolicited proposals for CBC contracts and allows catchment area boundaries to be changed without the input of the Legislature. At this time, however, these two options have not been pursued.



¹ Quarterly Report, Office of Community-Base Care Transition Implementation Status, December 2021

Existing & Proposed Catchment Areas for CBC Implementation, FY 2021 Existing & Proposed Catchment Areas¹



New CBC Contract Requirements

Additional provisions in Senate Bill 1896 allow SSCCs to apply for regulatory waivers with the goal of increasing innovation and granting SSCCs more flexibility to create their own policies and procedures rather than adopting those used by DFPS.

Capacity Building

Senate Bill 1896 directs the relevant state agencies and each SSCC to develop a plan to increase placement capacity across the state in an effort to keep children within their counties of origin. The 87th Legislature appropriated additional funds for the OCBCT and DFPS to work with SSCCs and their subcontracted providers to increase placement capacity.²

Family Preservation Pilots

House Bill 3041 requires DFPS to implement a pilot program in at least two DFPS regions (one urban and one rural) focused on family preservation services that align with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The bill also requires that at least one of the pilots be implemented in a CBC region. DFPS issued the RFP for these pilots in April 2022.

Family Preservation Study

Senate Bill 910 requires DFPS to study and develop options for moving the responsibility for providing family preservation services to SSCCs as part of CBC, and requires a report to be released by Oct. 1, 2022. In September 2021, DFPS entered into a contract with Texas A&M University to conduct a study of family preservation services with a focus on operations, implementation, financial modeling, contract provisions, statutory changes and service delivery issues.

¹ Implementation Plan for the Texas Community-Based Care System, December 2021.

² Building Capacity for Children and Families: A Community-Based Care Approach, A Joint Plan by Texas Single Source Continuum Contractors, August 2021.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CASA: HOW CAN PROGRAMS PREPARE & SHARE?

For CASA programs where CBC has not yet begun, staff and volunteers have time to get ready for expansion into their area. This time can be used to get the groundwork in place by building relationships with providers who may consider becoming an SSCC in their area. CASA programs in regions that have already begun operating within CBC can offer insight and lessons learned.



The most critical way to prepare for the transition is to reach out to providers and other participants in the child welfare system and begin working collaboratively to identify how capacity can be built and what issues, needs and opportunities are most pressing. This is an arena in which CASA can offer leadership and serve as a strong partner. To succeed, CBC relies on a network of service providers and deep collaboration between everyone involved—judges, caseworkers, advocates, attorneys, health providers, faith-based organizations and many others. These networks and partnerships are emerging in some regions of the state but are yet to be created in many others. Getting them going will take a focused effort in each locality, and CASA can help.

Before Your Area Is Selected for CBC Implementation

CASA programs should identify potential SSCCs in their service areas or nearby. Consider which child placing agencies may have the capacity to enter into this kind of contract. Begin to engage and build collaborative working relationships with the leadership of any potential or likely SSCCs.

Review the Foster Care Needs Assessment information for your area and identify the needs and strengths of your community. Use CASA's respected position in the community to sponsor public conversations or create a working group to identify needed local capacity and services. Nonprofit groups outside of the child welfare system might not be aware of the coming changes.

Consider what needed services are routinely hard to access, or nonexistent. Does your region need more trauma-informed therapists to serve children? Do you need a Battering Intervention and Prevention Program (BIPP) or quality parenting classes in order to serve families? Now is the perfect time to launch an all-hands-on-deck effort to make your community's safety net stronger by initiating conversations early.

Once Your Area Is Selected for CBC Implementation

Participate in CBC stakeholder meetings. Once a provider is chosen, participate in meetings as the SSCC develops their implementation and community engagement plans. Schedule frequent meetings with the SSCC leadership and staff to build trusted relationships. Make friends, tell the CASA story and invite them to events at your offices. Networking is critical in this stage.

CASA programs will need a new agreement to clarify roles between CASA and the SSCC and its employees and agents in the legal process. Work with Texas CASA to prepare for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with your SSCC.

Support development of needed capacity in the region in collaboration with the SSCC. For example, SSCCs initiate campaigns to build new foster family capacity in their regions, and CASA can bolster these awareness efforts.

After the SSCC Has Begun Services in Your Area

CASA will continue in its role to ensure children are placed appropriately. Under state law, CPS and SSCCs are supposed to consult with CASA on placement decisions. CASA programs can also support SSCCs in developing and maintaining a quality provider network. CASA often knows the providers in their region and can offer the SSCCs feedback about particular placements.

CASA may face a logistical challenge in Stage I, when a program is working with two agencies and two sets of contacts: the SSCC for placement and CPS for case management. It will be important that volunteers are supported in managing this additional layer of complexity and understand who is responsible for what when it comes to decision-making and advocacy for children and families.

CASA must also work with the SSCC and other local partners to prepare for Stage II of CBC. SSCCs are required to develop a community engagement plan and an implementation plan for Stage II. Local CASA program leadership or staff should reach out to the SSCC and offer to participate in the development of these plans. SSCCs are also required to develop an operations manual for their service area 60 days prior to beginning Stage II. CASA programs should request a copy of this manual and help staff become familiar with new case manager practices and protocols.

Community Engagement Requirements

It's impossible to overstate how important community engagement is to a successful rollout of CBC. Immediately after beginning Stage I or Stage II, an SSCC must create a Community Engagement Plan in collaboration with local stakeholders in an effort to form an advisory committee. The Plan must include strategies for engaging each of the following entities:

- ▶ Children and youth in foster care, as well as alumni;
- ▶ Families of children in foster care, including non-custodial parents;
- ▶ Relative or kinship caregivers;
- ▶ Alumni families who have DFPS services in the past;
- ▶ Members of the judiciary;
- ▶ Attorneys representing parents, children and DFPS;
- ▶ Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA);
- ▶ Child advocacy centers;
- ▶ Child welfare boards, if applicable;
- ▶ Foster parents;
- ▶ Residential child care providers;
- ▶ Purchased client service providers;
- ▶ Local community service providers;
- ▶ Universities;
- ▶ Faith-based organizations; and
- ▶ Other county and/or community stakeholders.

As this process unfolds, CASA should pursue a seat on the SSCC's local community advisory committee.

As CBC Transitions to Stage II in Your Area

CASA can provide significant support to children and their families, and to the SSCC during the transition from Stage I to Stage II, when case management services are transitioning from CPS to the SSCC. This could be the most vulnerable point in the CBC transition process. Monitoring how it goes, and making sure families and children don't fall through the cracks, is crucial. We want to be right there, and gladly take on the responsibility we have as the child's advocate in contributing to the success of the transition.

CASA programs will benefit from staying flexible, open and positive during the time of transition. Confusion is an element to be expected during any major change, so it will benefit everyone to stay focused on the goal of improved care and outcomes for children and families, which CASA can help articulate clearly.

CASA can support both the SSCC and the DFPS caseworkers during the transition time. In some cases, SSCCs will hire CPS caseworkers or entire CPS units, since current CPS workers have priority in the SSCC hiring process. In these instances, there may be beneficial continuity.

Evergreen Goals for Programs, Regardless of the CBC Timeline

Consider Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Status

Court practice is varied around the appointment of a CASA volunteer. Some courts appoint CASA as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and others as a Friend of the Court. Statutory duties for GALs are laid out in Texas Family Code Chapter 107¹, whereas Chapter 202² outlines responsibilities for Friends of the Court. The framework around GAL appointments provides greater access to information in Chapter 107 and provides legal immunity for volunteers acting in this capacity, which is a positive factor in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

For programs not appointed as GAL, consider the benefits of GAL status and any barriers to being granted GAL status by local judges. CASA's position in the case is stronger when appointed as GAL. While we do not anticipate many changes to our role, it can only benefit programs to be in a stronger position backed by statute, rather than solely by agreements with the court. For programs appointed as GAL, review the powers and duties in the Texas Family Code (Section 107.002) and incorporate these into your volunteer training and coaching.

1 <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/FA/htm/FA.107.htm>

2 <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/FA/htm/FA.202.htm>

Strengthen Your Advocacy

Take opportunities to strengthen your advocacy. Set a growth goal for your program, if needed, to serve on more cases over the next three to five years. In addition to quantity, evaluate the quality of your volunteer advocacy for every child to ensure positive outcomes are occurring. This can be measured and supported by training, coaching, policies, procedures and practices throughout the organization.

Evaluate Program Operations

Evaluate every area of your program's operations to ensure you continue to employ best practices. Our credibility is our CASA commodity, so strengthening your organizational practices ahead of CBC coming to your area is crucial.

Utilize Data to Tell Your Story

For those not fully utilizing Optima or another data management system, explore what data measures will be most valuable to you and what data entry procedures will ensure accuracy. Data can help you craft your story, identify trends and needs, and inform your advocacy and program practices.

COLLABORATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: A KEY TO SUCCESS



As a community-based organization and an important participant in the child welfare system, CASA should partner with SSCCs on mutually beneficial projects. Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) is a prime example of a key way to partner with an SSCC. This partnership could increase children's well-being, help SSCCs meet their performance goal of helping children maintain relationships with their families of origin, connect CASA to the SSCC in a meaningful way and serve CASA's mission—all at the same time.

Texas CASA plans for CFE to be adopted across Texas by the end of FY 2023 and hopes it will be integrated into the casework model for both CPS and SSCCs. CASA programs involved in CFE should work collaboratively with SSCCs in the same way they worked with CPS.



CFE in Phase I

The CFE team consists of the CASA volunteer, CASA supervisor, CPS caseworker, CPS supervisor, family meeting facilitator and other professional helpers. This team sets goals and action plans for engaging and/or finding family, fictive kin and naturally occurring connections for the young person in foster care by inviting these people (known as the network) into the planning and decision-making process.

SSCCs in areas that are already implementing CFE should have caseworkers, care coordinators or other staff become a part of the CFE team. Existing SSCCs have taken on the coordination of CFE team meetings by ensuring CASA is invited to the initial coordination session (or post-removal staffings) and have enthusiastically assisted with ongoing activities.

CFE in Phase II

In Stage II, as case management moves from CPS to the SSCC, the new SSCC caseworker will hopefully be a full and active participant on the CFE team. The federally and state-required activities of relative notification within 30 days, as well as the initial and ongoing search for relatives for placement and involvement, can all be done through CFE. Family meetings are a best practice tool to build meaningful connections. Texas CASA CFE Coaches will work with each catchment area to best determine how CFE activities can be integrated into new and existing practice.

CONCLUSION

Texas CASA stands ready to be a resource and provide assistance as CBC rolls out across Texas.

CASA's success as a network will rely on our partnership and coordination. As the statewide representative for CASA, Texas CASA is poised to serve as the information hub for the network and is monitoring developments on the statewide level. We will communicate these quickly to programs.

No program is expected to go through this transition alone. We will gather information and best practices from those who have gone before and create opportunities for knowledge sharing. We invite ideas and information from leadership, staff and volunteers: everyone's voice is important in this transformative process.

We have no doubt that as we enter this uncharted territory, the CASA programs and the powerful corps of volunteers will continue to diligently serve and lead. If you or your program have questions or need support related to CBC, please email the Texas CASA Public Policy team at publicpolicy@texascasa.org.





Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

2INgage

A partnership between Texas Family Initiative LLC and New Horizons Ranch and Center Inc. 2INgage is the Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) in Region 2 – Big Country & Texoma.

ACH Child and Family Services

A nonprofit child welfare organization that is the parent organization of Our Community Our Kids (OCOK), the SSCC in DFPS Region 3B.

Belong

The SSCC serving Region 8B – South Central & Hill Country. On April 1, 2021, DFPS awarded the Community-Based Care contract in Region 8B to Belong, a division of SJRC Texas.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)

When a child enters the foster care system, a judge may appoint a committed volunteer to advocate for the child's best interests both in and outside the courtroom. These individuals are called Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA volunteers.

Texas CASA is the statewide membership organization of the 72 local CASA programs that recruit and train these volunteers.

Catchment Area

Each SSCC will serve children and families residing in a catchment area, a geographic area designated by DFPS. There are currently 16 catchment areas across Texas. SSCC boundaries were developed according to county and DFPS regional lines. They were structured to have a minimum of 500 new children entering foster care annually to pool risk, which is intended to make the reimbursement rate structures workable.

CBC (Community-Based Care)

A new way of providing foster care and case management services. Within a geographic service area, a single contractor (the SSCC) is responsible for finding foster homes or other living arrangements for children in state care and providing them a full continuum of services, as determined by contract.

CFE (Collaborative Family Engagement)

CFE is a team-based approach between local CASA programs and CPS, as well as SSCCs, to engage, find and work with family members and fictive kin in the creation and development of a lifetime network for young people in the foster care system. One of the goals of CFE is to help children achieve strong connectivity and permanency faster, preferably with relatives or other trusted loved ones. In collaboration with the Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS), local CASA programs and community partners, we are working to ensure that every child in foster care has the opportunity for lifelong connections.

CPA (Child Placing Agency)

A licensed organization that coordinates the placement of a child in a childcare facility, agency foster home, agency group home or adoptive home.

CPS (Child Protective Services)

The division of DFPS that protects children from abuse and neglect through services, foster care and adoption.



Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services)

The Texas state agency that works with communities to promote safe and healthy families and protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Department does this through investigations, services and referrals, and prevention programs. Within DFPS there are five programs: Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, Investigations, Prevention and Early Intervention, and Statewide Intake.

HHSC (Health & Human Services Commission)

HHSC is the state agency that manages programs that help families with food, healthcare, safety and disaster services. One of the major programs operated by HHSC is the Texas Medicaid program. Child Care Licensing is also operated within HHSC.

Legacy System

Terminology that refers to areas and functions of the Texas child welfare and foster care systems that are not under a CBC contract. Simply put, refers to the way things were done prior to CBC and those areas where CBC has not been introduced.

OCBCT (Office of Community-Based Care Transition)

The OCBCT is responsible for providing direction and making critical decisions to support CBC implementation with the assistance of DFPS. The office is administratively attached to DFPS, and along with HHSC, will work together with DFPS on the implementation of CBC. The 87th Legislature, as part of Senate Bill 1896, formally established the OCBCT and on June 29, 2021, Gov. Greg Abbott appointed the first Statewide Director of OCBCT.

OCOK (Our Community Our Kids)

A division of ACH Child & Family Services dedicated to the deployment and management of the SSCC contract in Region 3B. It is supported by ACH, but operates independently from ACH programs and services, with a specific focus on developing, supporting and managing the network of providers that will be developed to support the SSCC contract.

Open Enrollment Contracting

A procurement process where all applicants who meet the stated eligibility requirements can enter into contracts to provide services.

PAL (Preparation for Adult Living)

A program implemented in 1986 to ensure that youth in substitute care ages 14 and older are prepared for life after foster care. The goal of the PAL program is to provide youth with skills and resources they will need to be healthy, productive adults.

PPP (Public Private Partnership)

An advisory committee appointed by the DFPS Commissioner that represents Texas stakeholders on issues related to Community-Based Care. The PPP includes foster care alumni, the judiciary, residential childcare providers, trade associations, advocates and CPS leadership. The group developed the initial model for Foster Care Redesign (now referred to as CBC) and continues to advise DFPS on CBC.

RFI (Request for Information)

A formal method of soliciting information, suggestions and responses from interested individuals or organizations to questions relating to a planned procurement.



Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

RFP (Request for Proposal)

A formal, advertised, competitive method of purchasing defined services used to solicit proposals from interested entities. An RFP includes a statement of the factors that will be considered in determining the best proposal. Contract awards under an RFP are determined following the formal evaluation of proposals received, and after conducting any appropriate negotiations with one or more of the respondents to the RFP.

SJRC Texas

Established in 1983, SJRC Texas – formerly known as St. Jude’s Ranch for Children – cares for children and families who have been affected by trauma, abuse and neglect, and have been removed from their homes by DFPS. BELONG, the SSCC for Region 8B – South Central & Hill Country, is a division of SJRC.

SSCC (Single Source Continuum Contractor)

The entity with which DFPS enters into a contract for the provision of the full range of foster care services in a catchment area under the CBC model. By statute an SSCC is required to be a nonprofit entity with an organizational mission focused on child welfare, or a governmental entity. In addition, a majority of the board members for the entity must reside in Texas.

Saint Francis (Saint Francis Ministries)

Saint Francis Ministries is a Kansas-based, nonprofit child and family services ministry serving more than 31,000 people in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas and other states. Saint Francis Ministries is the SSCC serving Region 1 – Panhandle.



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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE
