

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO SAFE, STABLE PLACEMENTS IN COMMUNITIES

BACKGROUND

When a child is removed from their home, they often experience considerable grief and loss. In addition to being removed from their parents, the child no longer has access to their belongings, pets, friends, neighborhood relationships, or the familiarity of their surroundings. If the child needs to be placed in a licensed foster home or facility, rather than with a non-custodial parent or kinship caregiver, the trauma the child experiences is compounded because of the numerous changes they may experience. When the State is named temporary or permanent managing conservator of a child or youth, Child Protective Services (CPS) or Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) staff become responsible for selecting a placement which keeps the child safe, supports the child's permanency plan, and best meets the child's needs.¹

In recent years, the state of Texas has experienced challenges in recruiting and maintaining licensed foster homes and facilities that can meet the needs of children and youth in foster care. In addition, the state has responded to reports of unsafe placements through increased investigations, closures of unsafe facilities, and increased surveillance by state officials. Although appropriate, these efforts have significantly decreased the number of foster care placements available for children and youth, particularly those with significant mental and behavioral challenges.

When an appropriate placement is not available, children and youth are temporarily housed in settings such as hotels, offices, and rented spaces that are unlicensed and ill-equipped to keep them safe, let alone address their trauma and help them heal. Texas' foster care capacity crisis peaked in the summer of 2021 when the number of children and youth in these unlicensed placements had grown to 416, and 513 unique episodes of children and youth in unlicensed placements.² Progress has been made since that time, but many children and youth still do not have a safe, licensed placement to meet their needs.

POLICY POSITION

Texas CASA supports funding and policies that provide a child access to safe, stable placements in their community that meet their individual need and support their permanency goals.

Current Position:

Texas CASA joins the Child Protection Roundtable in supporting policies and adequate funding aimed at ensuring safe, stable and trauma-informed placements that meet the health, educational, social-emotional, and permanency needs of children and youth in care within their communities.

¹ Source: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Resource_Guides/Placement_Process_Resource_Guide.pdf.

² Source: <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/tx-foster-expert-panel-report.pdf>.

Texas CASA supports:

1. Increasing the number of Treatment Foster Care Homes, which allow children and youth to receive intensive, trauma-informed mental health services in a family-like setting.
2. Implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act and building upon the Qualified Residential Treatment Program pilot to increase the number of short-term, high-quality treatment beds available to the highest-needs children and youth in foster care.
3. Implementing the recommendations from the Senate Bill 1575 workgroup to improve the quality and oversight of traditional residential treatment centers in Texas.
4. Implementing the newly proposed Foster Care Rate Methodology, which will tie funding to providers based on the services and supports they offer to children, rather than relying on an outdated level of care rating system.

If you have questions or concerns related to this or any other Texas CASA legislative priority, please email: publicpolicy@texascasa.org.