



# TRANSFORMING TOGETHER

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A Guide to Community-Based Care in Texas  
Edition 3, August 2023



**TEXASCASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
FOR CHILDREN

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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

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction & Key Concepts to Know	4
What Are the Goals of Community-Based Care?	6
How Community-Based Care Works: Stages & Community Areas	9
Implementation to Date	15
About the Providers	18
What Are Some of the Benefits of Community-Based Care?	19
What to Expect in the Transition to Community-Based Care?	20
How Is Success Being Measured for Community-Based Care?	21
Recent Legislative Changes Impacting Community-Based Care	23
Considerations for CASA: Coming Together to Build a Better System	25
Considerations for CASA: How Can Programs Prepare?	26
Collaborative Family Engagement: A Key to Success	30
Conclusion: Texas CASA Supports Local CASA Programs	32
Glossary of Terms & Acronyms	33
References	36

# INTRODUCTION

**This is the third 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.



## Who Is Texas CASA?

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Texas CASA is the statewide membership organization of the 73 local CASA programs. In FY 2022, the 72 local programs provided a volunteer corps of 9,590 Court Appointed Special Advocates who served 23,943 children in foster care across the state.

# KEY CONCEPTS TO KNOW

## 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 care capacity development and kinship support 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.

## What is a community area?

A community area, formally known as a catchment area, is a geographic region in which a single contractor (an SSCC) provides foster care services. Texas is currently divided into 16 community areas, based on boundaries drawn by DFPS. DFPS selects community areas for CBC implementation in a staggered process over time, subject to legislative funding. Inside each community 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 88th Legislature continued to fund, evolve and support the statewide rollout of the CBC model.

## 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 the Office of Community-Based Care Transition?

In 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature, formally established the Office of Community-Based Care Transition (OCBCT). The OCBCT is a state agency independent of, but administratively attached to DFPS. The OCBCT, DFPS and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), will work together on the statewide implementation of CBC.



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

# 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:

- 1 the safety of children in placements;
- 2 the placement of children in each child's home community;
- 3 the provision of services to children in the least restrictive environment possible and, if possible, in a family home environment;
- 4 minimal placement changes for children;
- 5 the maintenance of contact between children and their families and other important persons;
- 6 the placement of children with siblings;

*(see more on next page)*

- 7 the provision of services that respect each child’s culture;
- 8 the preparation of children and youth in foster care for adulthood;
- 9 the provision of opportunities, experiences, and activities for children and youth in foster care that are available to children and youth who are not in foster care;
- 10 the participation by children and youth in making decisions relating to their own lives;
- 11 the reunification of children with the biological parents of the children when possible; and
- 12 the promotion of the placement of children with relative or kinship caregivers if reunification is not possible.

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.

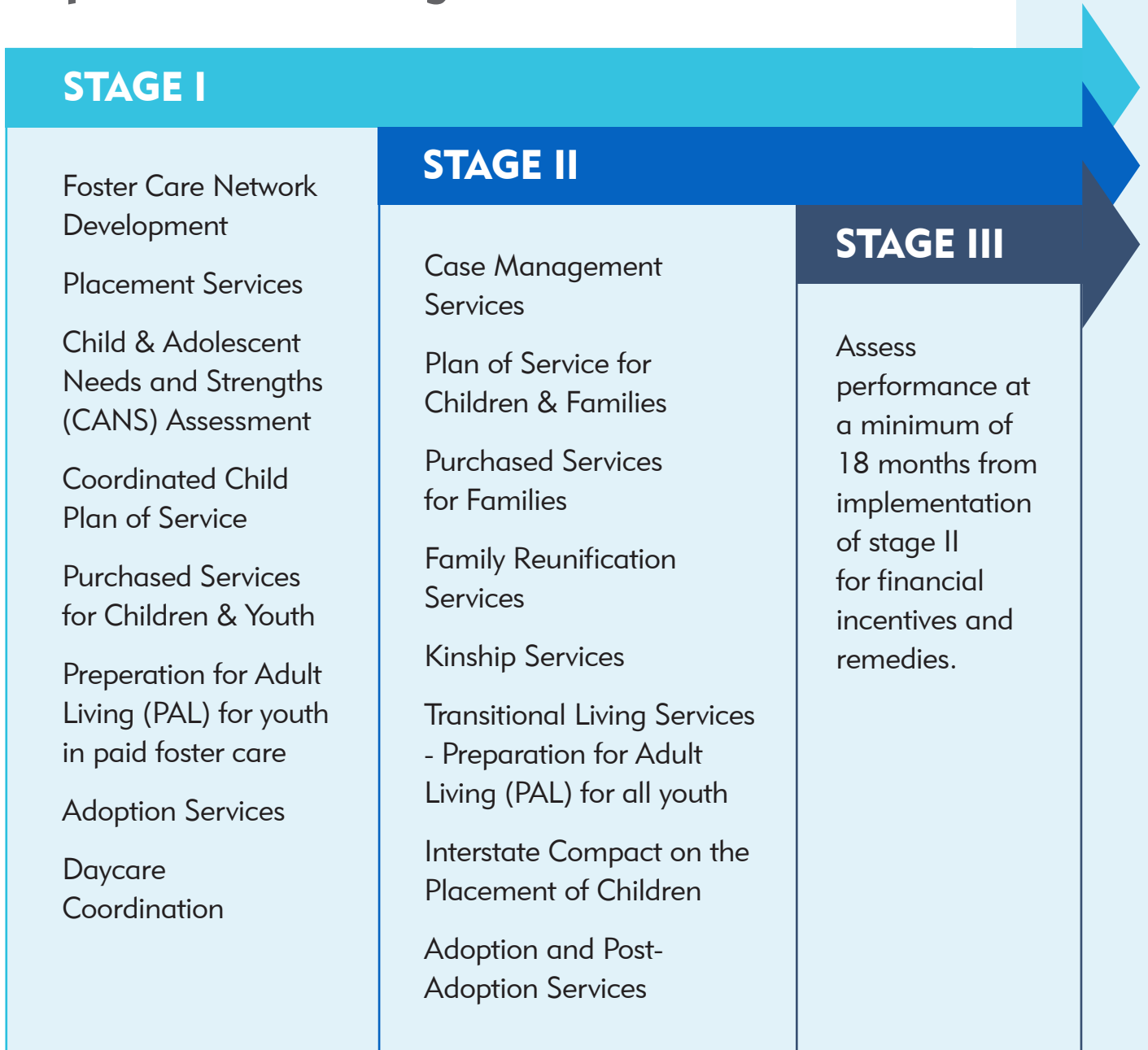




# HOW COMMUNITY-BASED CARE WORKS: STAGES & COMMUNITY AREAS



## 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 community area, the SSCC will take responsibility for all new cases while working with DFPS to transition existing cases to the SSCC. This may take up to twelve months following contract execution, including the six-month start-up period.

## 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:<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ 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.

<sup>1</sup> Implementation Plan for the Texas Community-Based Care System, December 2021.

# Understanding Community Areas

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A community area is a geographic area designated by DFPS. There are currently 16 community 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 community area at a time.

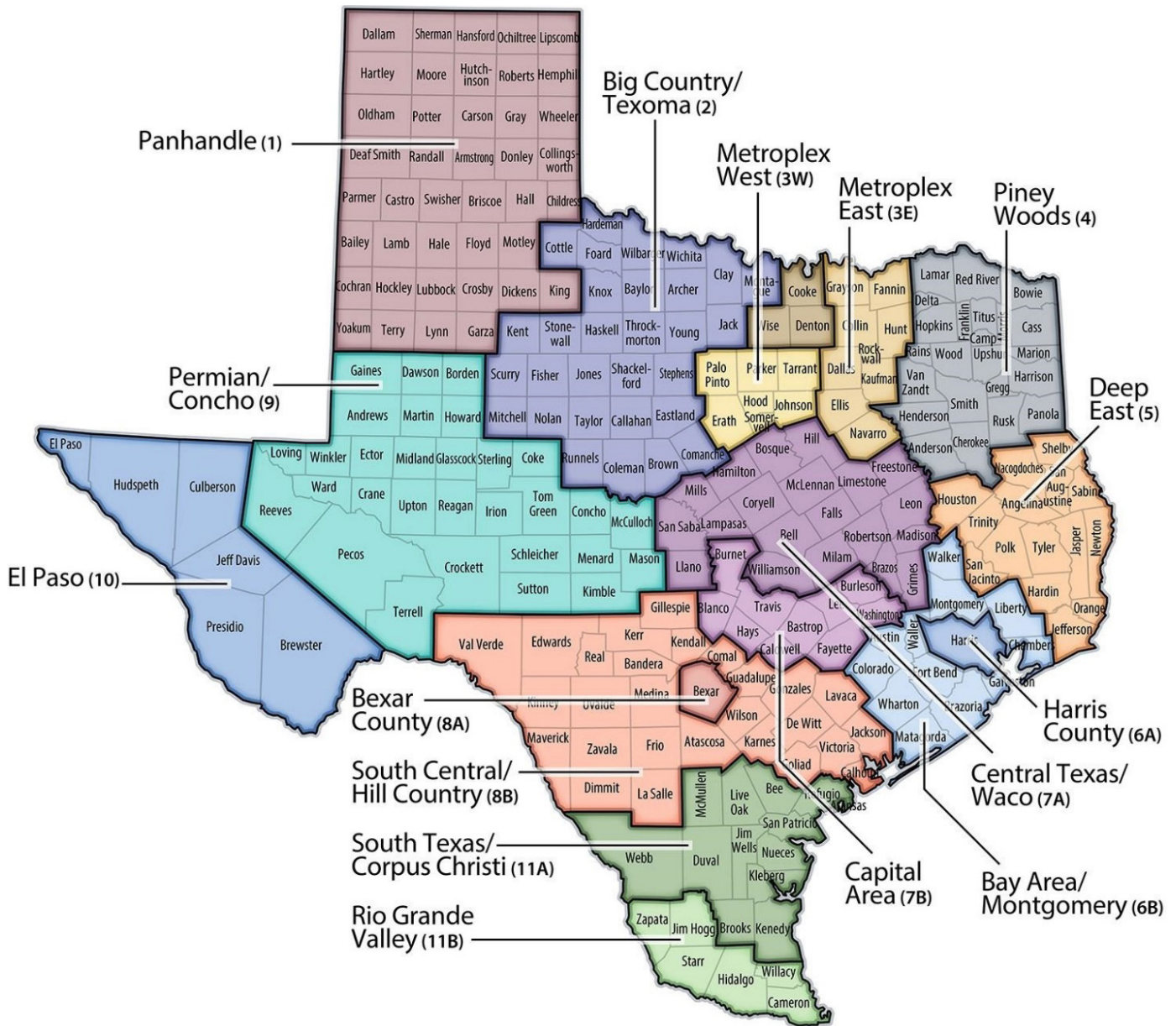
The boundaries for community areas were developed according to county and DFPS regional lines. They were structured to have a minimum of 500 new children entering into foster care annually in every community area, in order to pool financial risk. This pooling of risk is intended to make the rate structures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

Once the legislature provides funds for the community 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 community 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 community 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 16 community areas. However, the boundaries in Region 3A, Region 3B, and Region 3C were changed to be just two community areas, Region 3W/Metroplex West and Region 3E/Metroplex East. Following the procurement of Region 3E, Region 3W/Metroplex West was reprocured to include the additional counties: Denton, Cooke and Wise.**

# Community-Based Care Catchment Areas Map



Community Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
<p><b>1</b> <b>Panhandle</b></p>	<p>SSCC: <i>Saint Francis Ministries</i>                      Contract Awarded: 6/13/19                      Stage 1 Live: 1/1/20                      Stage 2 Live: 3/2/22                      Stage 3 Live: Anticipated FY24</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Amarillo Area CASA, Inc.; CASA of the Rolling Plains (territory in Community Area 2); CASA 69, Inc.; Great Plains CASA for Kids; CASA of the South Plains; CASA of the High Plains, Inc.</p>
<p><b>2</b> <b>Big Country &amp; Texoma</b></p>	<p>SSCC: <i>2INgage</i>                      Contract Awarded: 5/4/18                      Stage 1 Live: 12/1/18                      Stage 2 Live: 6/1/19                      Stage 3 Live: Anticipated FY24</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Big Country CASA; CASA in the Heart of Texas (territory in Community Area 7A); CASA of the Rolling Plains (territory in Community Area 1); CASA of Wise &amp; Jack Counties (territory in Community Area 3W); North Star CASA; Children’s Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas (territory in Community Area 9); CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Community Areas 3W &amp; 7A); Child Advocates CASA of Red River</p>
<p><b>3E</b> <b>Metroplex East</b></p>	<p>SSCC: <i>EMPOWER</i>                      Contract Awarded: 2/23                      Stage 1 Live: 9/1/23                      Stage 2 Live: Anticipated FY24</p>	<p>Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, Rockwall</p>	<p>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</p>
<p><b>3W</b> <b>Metroplex West</b></p>	<p>SSCC: <i>Our Community Our Kids</i>                      Contract Awarded: 12/16/13                      Stage 1 Live: 9/1/14                      Stage 2 Live: 3/1/20                      Stage 3 Live: Anticipated FY24  <i>Note: The contract for Region 3B will be resolicited 9/23 to encompass all of Region 3W.</i></p>	<p>Cooke, Denton, Erath, Hood, Johnson, Palo Pinto, Parker, Somervell, Tarrant, Wise</p>	<p>CASA of Johnson County; CASA of Wise &amp; Jack Counties (territory in Community Area 2); CASA of Denton County; CASA of Tarrant County; CASA of North Texas; CASA of Hood &amp; Somervell Counties; CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Community Areas 2 &amp; 7A); CASA – Hope for Children, Inc.</p>
<p><b>4</b> <b>Piney Woods</b></p>	<p>SSCC: <i>4Kids4Families</i>                      Contract Awarded: 2/23                      Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 11/23                      Stage 2 Live: Anticipated FY24</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>CASA of Trinity Valley; East Texas CASA; CASA of Harrison County; CASA of Titus, Camp &amp; Morris Counties; CASA for KIDS; Lake Country CASA; CASA of Northeast Texas; CASA for Kids of East Texas</p>

## Community-Based Care Catchment Areas by Texas County

Community Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
<b>5 Deep East</b>	SSCC: <i>Texas Family Care Network</i> Contract Awarded: 3/23 Stage 1 Live: Anticipated 10/23 Stage 2 Live: Anticipated FY24	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 Community Area 6B); CASA of the Pines; CASA of Deep East Texas; CASA of the Sabine Neches Region
<b>6A Harris County</b>	Funded by the 88th Legislature  RFA Anticipated 9/23	Harris	Child Advocates, Inc.
<b>6B Bay Area/ Montgomery</b>	Funded by the 88th Legislature  RFA Anticipated 9/23	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 Community Area 7B); CASA Child Advocates of Montgomery County; CASA of Walker, San Jacinto & Trinity Counties (territory in Community Area 5); CASA of Liberty/Chambers Counties; Child Advocates of Fort Bend
<b>7A Central Texas/Waco</b>	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 Community Area 2); Voices for Children, Inc.– CASA of the Brazos Valley (territory in Community Area 7B); CASA of Williamson County; CASA of Hill County; CASA for the Highland Lakes Area (territory in Community Area 7B); CASA for the Cross Timbers Area (territory in Community Areas 2 & 3W); CASA of Bell & Coryell Counties; CASA of McLennan County
<b>7B Capital Area</b>	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 Community Area 6B); Voices for Children, Inc. – CASA of the Brazos Valley (territory in Community Area 7A); CASA for the Highland Lakes Area (territory in Community Area 7A); CASA of Central Texas (territory in Community Area 8B)
<b>8A Bexar County</b>	Funded by the 88th Legislature  RFA Anticipated 9/23	Bexar	Child Advocates San Antonio, Inc.



Community Area	CBC Contractor and Status	County or Counties	CASA Program(s)
<b>8B South Central &amp; Hill Country</b>	SSCC: <i>Belong</i> Contract Awarded: 3/29/21 Stage 1 Live: 10/27/21 Stage 2 Live: 10/1/22 Stage 3 Live: Anticipated FY24	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 Community Area 9); CASA of Central Texas (territory in Community Area 7B); CASA of South Texas; Tri-County CASA; Golden Crescent CASA, Inc. (territory in Community Area 11A)
<b>9 Permian/ Concho</b>	Funded by the 87th Legislature  No proposal submitted	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 Community Area 10); Bluebonnet CASA (territory in Community Area 8B); CASA of West Texas; CASA of the Permian Basin Area; Children’s Advocacy Center of Greater West Texas (territory in Community Area 2)
<b>10 El Paso</b>	Funded by the 88th Legislature  RFA Anticipated 9/23	Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Presidio	Frontier CASA (territory in Community Area 9); CASA of El Paso
<b>11A South Texas/ Corpus Christi</b>	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 Community Area 8B); Voz de Niños
<b>11B Rio Grande Valley</b>	Not yet funded	Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Starr, Willacy, Zapata	CASA of Cameron & Willacy Counties; CASA of Hidalgo County



## About the Providers

**Region 1 - Panhandle:** *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.

**Region 2 – Big Country & Texoma:** *2INgage* 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.

**Region 3W – Metroplex West:** *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.

**Region 3E – Metroplex East:** *EMPOWER* is a child welfare collaborative led by Texas Family Initiative and is supported by local providers in North Texas, including CK Family Services, Jonathan’s Place, The Bair Foundation and Pathways Youth and Family Services.

**Region 4 – Piney Woods:** *4Kids4Families* is a division of Arrow Child & Family Ministries, a nonprofit Christian organization established by a former foster child in 1992.

**Region 5 – Deep East:** *Texas Family Care Network* is a component of Pressley Ridge Texas, a nonprofit corporation established in Texas. Pressley Ridge is an organization with over 190 years of history serving over 70 programs in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

**Region 8B – South Central & Hill Country:** *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 SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE?

CBC gives local communities the flexibility to leverage their strengths and local resources and find innovative ways to meet the unique needs of each child and family. CBC is designed to give children more stability by keeping them closer to home and connected to their schools, friends, and families as much as possible.

## **No Eject, No Reject**

SSCCs are contractually required to place all children in foster care from their community 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 who come into foster care in their community 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, the SSCC Our Community Our Kids reported that 72.8% of children were placed within 50 miles of their removal address on the last day of FY23 Q3<sup>2</sup>. However, a statewide placement shortage remains a concern for both the legacy system and the SSCCs<sup>3</sup>.

## **Intentional Development of Placement Capacity**

Another benefit of CBC is the ability of an SSCC to identify specific placement capacity needs in a community 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.



2 [DFPS Rider 15 for Community-Based Care, March 2023.](#)

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

# WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE TRANSITION TO 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 community 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 community area into placements within the SSCC's community 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 community 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 community areas that have entered Stage II, SSCCs have seen high turnover among staff<sup>4</sup>. DFPS has recognized the potential for a more significant proportion of the workforce made up of new hires early on during CBC implementation, dependent on the ability to attract and retain staff<sup>5</sup>. Recognizing the importance of addressing this issue, workforce stabilization has been included in capacity building efforts being led by Texas SSCCs<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> [DFPS Rider 15 for Community-Based Care, March 2023.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Building Capacity for Children and Families: A Community-Based Care Approach, a Joint Plan by Texas Single Source Continuum Contractors, August 2021.](#)

## **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.



# How Is Success Being Measured?

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**The legislature requires quarterly reports on SSCC performance.** CASA program leadership should stay abreast of the information about their community area by accessing these publicly available reports through the Community-Based Care website.<sup>6</sup>

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 evaluate 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.

Below are the SSCC performance measures as outlined in the implementation report released by the Office of Community-Based Care Transition in December 2022:<sup>7</sup>

- ▶ 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)

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dfps.texas.gov/CBC/>

<sup>7</sup> Implementation Plan for the Texas Community-Based Care System, Office of Community-Based Care System, December 2022.

# 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 community 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 community area.
- ▶ Each SSCC is required to develop and publicly publish 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 Legislative Changes Impacting Community-Based Care

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Since the 2nd Edition of the Texas CASA Guide to Community-Based Care, the Texas Legislature has funded several new areas for roll-out.

## *Community-Based Care Roll-out<sup>8</sup>*

The 88th Texas Legislature funded the expansion of CBC into four additional community areas: Region 6A – Harris County, Region 6B – Bay Area/Montgomery County, Region 8 – Bexar County and Region 10 – El Paso. In addition, funding was appropriated to expand CBC to Stage III in Region 1 – Panhandle, Region 8B, Region 2 – 2Ingage, Region 8B – Belong and Region 3B – OCOK, as well as the re-procurement of Region 3B – Metroplex West.

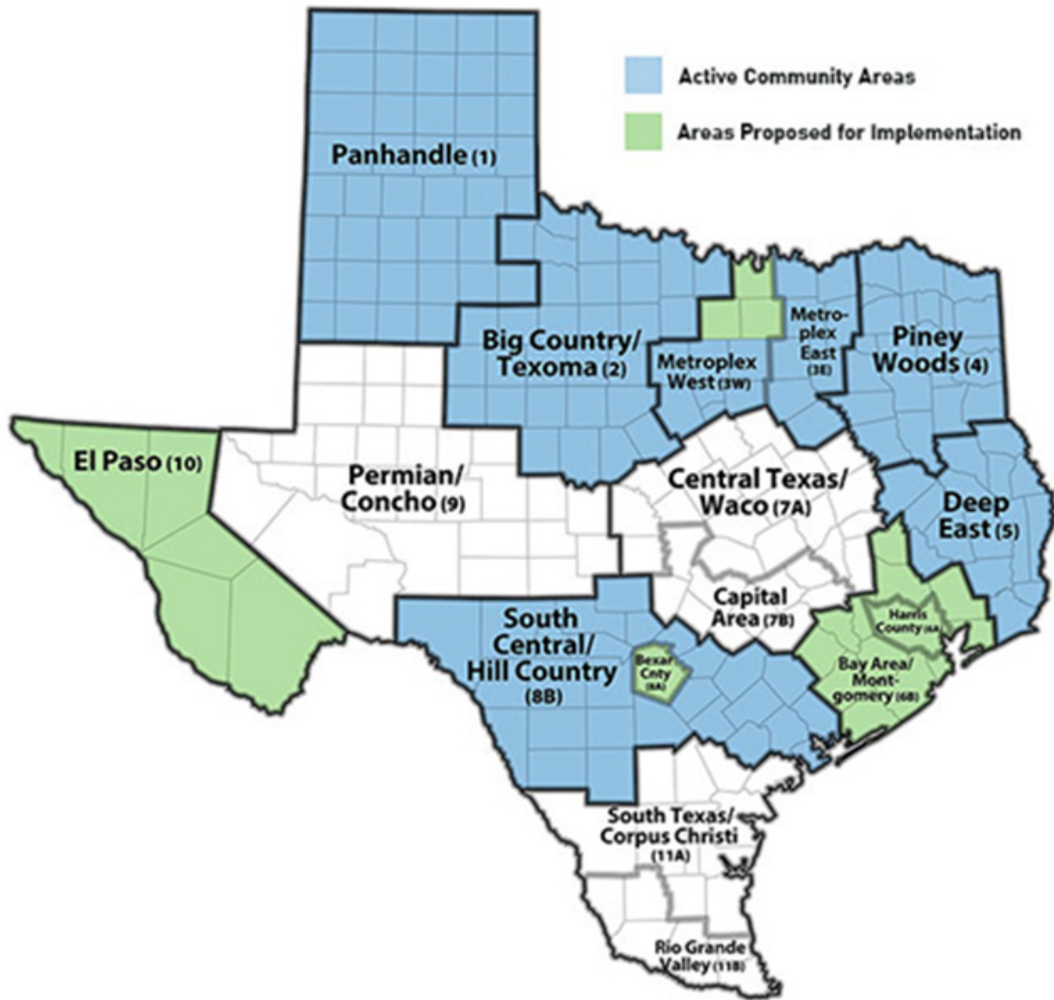
**Note:** Senate Bill 1896, passed by the 87th Legislature, allows for the submission of unsolicited proposals for CBC contracts and allows community area boundaries to be changed without the input of the Legislature. At this time, however, no unsolicited bids have been accepted.



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8 [Quarterly Report, Office of Community-Base Care Transition Implementation Status, June 2023](#)

Existing & Proposed Community Areas for CBC Implementation,  
 FY 2023 Existing & Proposed Community Areas







# 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 has 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 utilize? What is most urgent? 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 community 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 continue to serve as a consistent figure in a child’s life—regardless of the systemic changes happening behind the scenes.

# CONSIDERATIONS FOR CASA: HOW CAN PROGRAMS PREPARE FOR CBC?

**For CASA programs where CBC has not yet been funded, 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. Texas CASA and local 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 in your area. 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.

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 Funded for CBC Implementation

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Participate in CBC stakeholder meetings as soon as they begin. Once a provider is chosen, participate in community meetings as the SSCC develops their implementation and community engagement plans. 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. CASA should advocate to be a part of that advisory committee. 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.

## As CBC Transitions to Stage I in Your Area

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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.

## As CBC Transitions to Stage II in Your Area

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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 and publicly post 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. CASA programs should offer to host meetings, create cross-training opportunities and offer other types of support as the SSCC transitions to Stage II.

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 shift from CPS to the SSCC. This stage can be a very 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 can 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.

CASA can support the SSCC, the DFPS caseworkers and judges during the transition time, ensuring a familiar presence for the child and family. A successful CBC model depends on everyone working together to promote positive outcomes for children and families experiencing the foster care system.



## Evergreen Goals for Local CASA 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 107<sup>9</sup>, whereas Chapter 202<sup>10</sup> 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.

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

10 <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.

In FY 23, Texas CASA expanded CFE to 72 of the 73 local CASA programs 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 community 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 mutual partnership and collaboration. As the statewide representative for CASA, Texas CASA is poised to serve as the information hub for the network and is continuously monitoring developments on the statewide level. We communicate these quickly to programs.

No local CASA 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, CASA programs and our 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](mailto: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.

### **4Kids4Families**

The SSCC serving Region 4 – Piney Woods. 4Kids4Families is a division of Arrow Child & Family Ministries, a nonprofit Christian organization established by a former foster child in 1992.

### **Belong**

The SSCC serving Region 8B – South Central & Hill Country. BELONG is 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 73 local CASA programs that recruit and train these volunteers.

### **Community Area (formerly Catchment Area)**

Each SSCC will serve children and families residing in a community area, a geographic area designated by DFPS. There are currently 16 community 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.

### **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.



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## Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

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### **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.

### **Empower**

The SSCC serving Region 3E – Metroplex East. EMPOWER is a child welfare collaborative led by Texas Family Initiative and is supported by local providers in North Texas, including CK Family Services, Jonathan’s Place, The Bair Foundation and Pathways Youth and Family Services.

### **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 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 rolled out.

### **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.

### **OCOK (Our Community Our Kids)**

A division of ACH Child & Family Services dedicated to the deployment and management of the SSCC contract in Region 3W. 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.



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## Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

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### **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.

### **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.

### **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 community 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.

### **Texas Family Care Network**

The SSCC serving Region 5 – Deep East. Texas Family Care Network is a component of Pressley Ridge Texas, a nonprofit corporation established in Texas. Pressley Ridge is an organization with over 190 years of history serving over 70 programs in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.



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# Notes



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STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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