



SUPPORTING ACCESS TO SAFE, STABLE PLACEMENTS IN COMMUNITIES

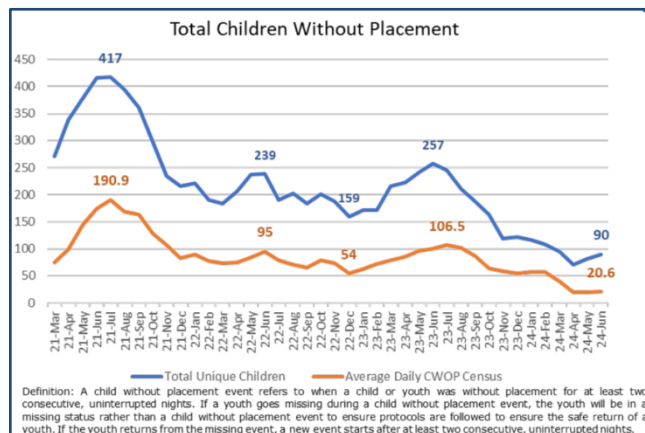
BACKGROUND

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

Current Challenges

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 oversight and monitoring by state officials. 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 and rented spaces that are unlicensed and ill-equipped to keep them safe, let alone address their trauma and help them heal. The Department of Family and Protective Services has made great strides in reducing the number of young people without placement, but the challenge is on-going.² Children and youth without placement are at the greatest risk of running away from care, which makes them incredibly vulnerable to trafficking and other negative outcomes.



Increased Risk for Human Trafficking

Research from The University of Texas at Austin estimated that 25% of those in foster care are considered at risk for sex trafficking.³ Other national studies have put that number anywhere from 25% to 90%, which highlights the scale of the problem and the need to provide education and intervention for youth in foster care. Due to the circumstances of out-of-home placements, youth in the child welfare system are often the targets of sex traffickers.⁴ Youth experiencing homelessness, poverty, substance abuse, neglect, physical

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

² Source: https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/State_Care/default.asp

³ Source: Busch-Armendariz PhD, LMSW, MPA, N., Nale MSW, N., Kammer-Kerwick PhD, et al. (2016). Human trafficking by the numbers: The initial benchmark of prevalence and economic impact for Texas. The University of Texas School of Social Work.

⁴ Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017, July). Human trafficking and child welfare: A guide for caseworkers. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of





violence, sexual abuse and/or involvement in the juvenile justice system are also at greater risk of exploitation, and each of these factors also increases a youth's likelihood of involvement in the child welfare system.

Recognizing the need to increase the number of safe and appropriate foster care placements, the Texas Legislature made a historic investment in foster care rates during the 88th Legislative Session. The Texas Child-Centered Care System (T3C) represents a complete transformation of the foster care system. It replaces the Service Level System, with a universal child assessment tool and placement process, twenty-four clearly defined Service Packages and three Add-On Services, new fully funded rate methodology, and new opportunities to claim federal funds for foster care services.⁵ Most importantly, T3C is designed to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes, offer continued opportunity for foster care system improvement through a robust Continuous Quality Assurance and Improvement Process, and lessen the need to look outside the established foster care continuum for services.

POLICY POSITION

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

Texas CASA Supports:

1. Policies and funding to support the successful implementation of the Texas Child-Centered Care System (T3C)
2. Ongoing monitoring of the number of children without placement and the policy solutions being implemented by the Department of Family and Protective Services
3. Efforts to keep children placed close to their home communities
4. Policies aimed at improving processes and increasing resources to locate at-risk youth who run away from their placements
5. Efforts to prevent case dismissal when children are on runaway status

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

Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/trafficking_caseworkers.pdf

⁵ Source: https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Texas_Child_Centered_Care/documents/2024_04_t3c_blueprint.pdf

