



Empowering, Strengthening, and Supporting Families

DFPS ANNUAL PLAN | 2026



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Safe children and adults. | Strong families and communities. | Stronger Texas.

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A Letter From the Commissioner



As we move forward into the next chapter of our mission at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), we remain steadfast in our commitment to improving the lives of children and vulnerable adults across Texas, so they thrive. With the successes of the previous year's accomplishments, we continue our efforts to empower families and strengthen the communities and services that support them. This year's plan, Empowering, Strengthening, and Supporting Families, reflects our dedication to fostering stronger, healthier families through meaningful engagement, compassionate support, and enhanced services and technology.

This plan also comes at a time when DFPS is undertaking some of the most significant, multi-year initiatives in our agency's history. From transforming service delivery through Community-Based Care and implementing the Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C) model, to modernizing our technology platforms and improving workforce support, DFPS is advancing a broad portfolio of long-term efforts that together will shape the future of child and family well-being in Texas. These major initiatives represent our continued investment in system-wide improvement and our commitment to delivering the highest quality services for the Texans we serve.

Strengthen Families Through Engagement, Services, and Support

We are committed to strengthening families by promoting family well-being through encouraging purposeful engagement, facilitating access to quality services, and delivering reliable, compassionate support. Our goal is to empower families to create safe, nurturing environments where children and families can thrive, and to support vulnerable adults in living with dignity and independence. Through collaboration with communities and service providers, we aim to address challenges early, preserve family unity when possible, and ensure the well-being of every Texan we serve.

Develop and Refine Case Management Services

We are dedicated to delivering case management and support services that prioritize safety, stability, and well-being. Our system connects children, families, and adults to community partners and service providers to address specific needs to improve the safety and well-being of families and vulnerable adults. Central to these efforts is the use of quality assurance processes to enhance accountability, ensure consistency, and drive improved outcomes across all areas of service. The expansion of Community-Based Care and the implementation of the T3C model further support this work by creating a more responsive and effective system for those we serve.

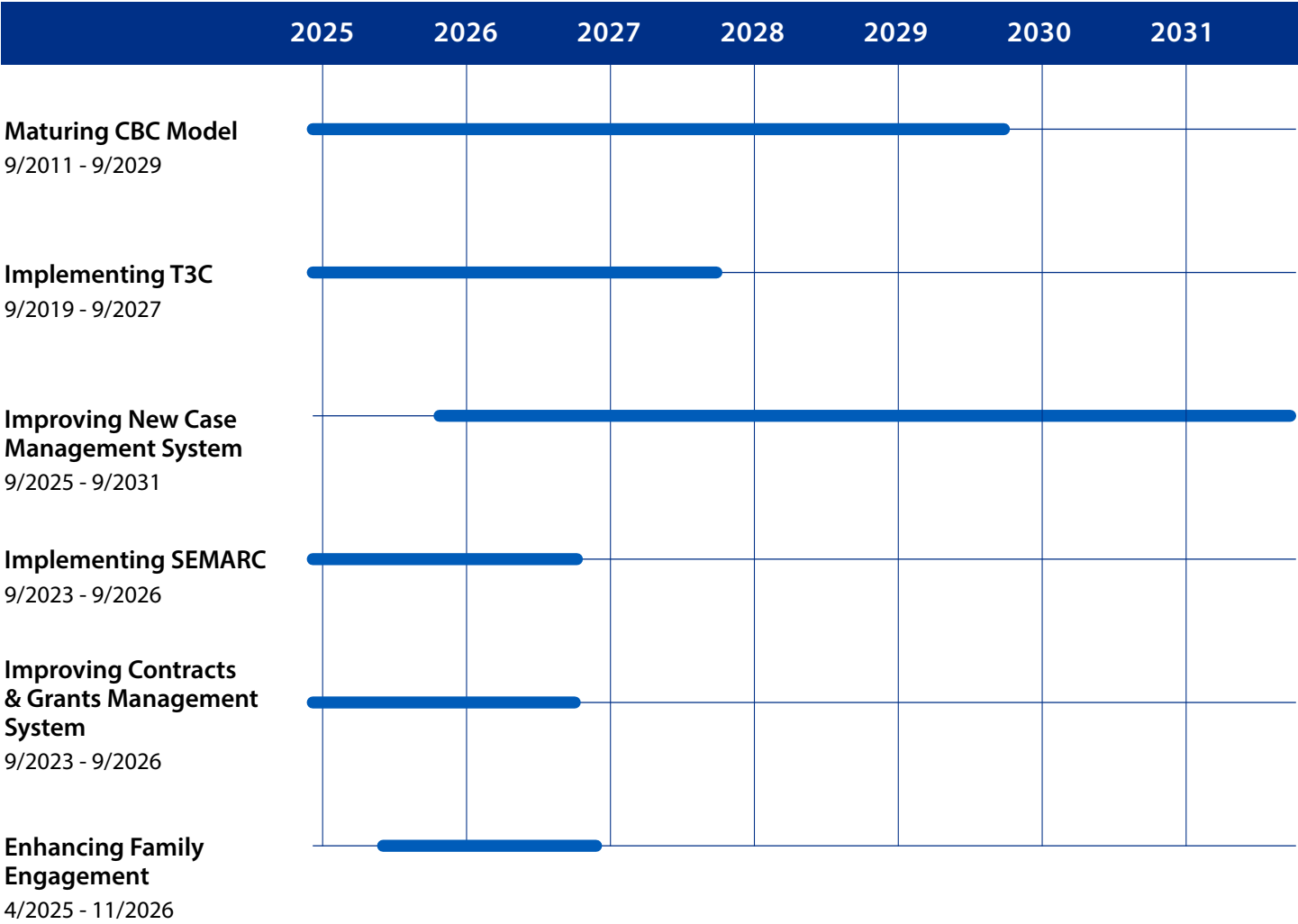
Transform Workforce and Infrastructure to Enable Better Outcomes

DFPS is transforming its workforce and infrastructure to drive better outcomes for children, families, and adults. By investing in staff development and well-being and modernizing our technology and operations, we're building a more efficient, responsive, and resilient system that empowers our teams, supports informed decision-making, and meets the evolving needs of Texas communities.

I am honored to be a part of an agency that values family and community connections.

Commissioner Audrey O'Neill

Major Initiatives



Executive Summary

The Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Annual Plan provides a strategic framework that guides and prioritizes agency work throughout the year. It outlines key initiatives and goals, while also highlighting the progress and accomplishments achieved in 2025. This plan supports continued efforts to partner with communities in protecting Texas's most vulnerable populations.

Mission

We build on strengths of families and communities to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, so they thrive.

Vision

Safe children and adults.
Strong families and communities.
Stronger Texas.

Empowering, Strengthening, and Supporting Families allows DFPS to share our vision and priorities with employees, legislators, external partners, and communities across Texas.

The plan is built around three core goals:

- 1. Strengthen Families Through Engagement, Services, and Support**
- 2. Develop and Refine Case Management Services**
- 3. Transform Workforce and Infrastructure to Enable Better Outcomes**

Together, these priorities guide DFPS in delivering responsive, equitable, and effective support to those we serve.

Strengthen Families Through Engagement, Services, and Support by providing meaningful engagement, effective services, and ongoing support. This goal includes:

- Family Engagement
 - » Connect Children to Kinship
 - » Strengthen Family Engagement Across DFPS Programs
 - » Expand Alternative Response and Screening Practices
 - » Advance Implementation of Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)
- Community Engagement
 - » Implement Baby Moses Hotline and Outreach
 - » Support Family and Community Advocacy
 - » Strengthen APS Partnering to Protect
- Behavioral Health
 - » Improve Access to Behavioral Health Services
 - » Strengthen Oversight of Psychotropic Medication Practices
 - » Strengthen Post-Adoption Support Services for Adoptive Families

Develop and Refine Case Management Services through community partnerships, capacity building, and continuous improvement. This goal includes:

- Support Long-Term Success of the Child Protection System
 - » Strengthen Community-Based Care Collaboration, Accountability, and Operation Structure
 - » Advance Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C)
 - » Stabilize and Build Provider Capacity and Mitigate Child Watch
- Quality Assurance
 - » Implement a Comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework
 - » Improve Case Disposition Accuracy for Family and Child Care Investigations
 - » Strengthen Processes Regarding the Central Registry and Identify Opportunities to Further Expand Due Process

Transform Workforce and Infrastructure to Enable Better Outcomes by investing in staff, modernizing systems, and improving service coordination. This goal includes:

- Using Technology to Improve Systems
 - » Execute Business Process Redesign (BPR) Implementation
 - » Implement a New Case Management System
 - » Integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) Capabilities
 - » Implement the Search Engine for Multi-Agency Reportable Conduct (SEMARC)
 - » Implement the Contracts and Grants Management System (CGMS)
 - » Establish a Data Governance Program
- Workforce
 - » Advance the Employee Wellness and Safety Roadmap

Goal 1:

Strengthen Families Through Engagement, Services, and Support

Strengthening families is at the heart of DFPS efforts, recognizing that the well-being of children, families, and vulnerable adults is best supported when families are active partners in the process. DFPS has prioritized three key areas of focus in the year 2026: enhancing family engagement, strengthening community involvement, and addressing behavioral health needs.

Texas serves one of the largest child populations in the nation while maintaining one of the lowest foster care entry rates nationally. The DFPS approach reflects a deliberate focus on early engagement, timely access to community-based services, and collaboration with families and partners to address safety concerns before removal becomes necessary. These efforts reinforce a commitment to preserving family connections whenever children can be safely supported in their homes or communities, while ensuring that removal remains an essential and decisive intervention when safety cannot otherwise be assured.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Connect Children to Kinship

Initiative

DFPS is committed to strengthening kinship connections by prioritizing kinship placements, kinship involvement in case planning and visitation, and permanency outcomes with relatives, while enhancing comprehensive support for kinship caregivers.

Lead Division

Child Protective Services

Partners

Child Protective Investigations and Office of Behavioral Health Strategy

Background

DFPS remains committed to increasing placements with kinship caregivers. By prioritizing kinship placements as the first choice when children cannot safely remain at home with parents, DFPS aims to ensure children in care are more quickly connected with family, thus fostering permanency within their family network. To achieve this, DFPS program areas are actively collaborating with internal and external stakeholders to increase the number of children placed with kinship caregivers.

DFPS continues to advance efforts to prioritize kinship placements immediately following removal, thereby reducing trauma for children who must be separated from their parents and reliance on foster care settings. These efforts aim to secure kinship placements prior to the adversary hearing, which is required by statute within 14 days of removal. Additionally, DFPS is working to establish statewide consistency in Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) practices and structures, ensuring timely, family-centered placements that support children's long-term well-being.

Recognizing the critical importance of behavioral health support in kinship placements, the Legislature allocated additional funding to support children and families in kinship care. DFPS renewed funding for the Kinship Behavioral Health Grant Program in the four existing Community-Based Care (CBC) Stage II regions (Regions 1, 2, 3W, and 8B) while extending grants to three additional regions (Regions 3E, 4, and 5). These grants are designed to improve access to specialized behavioral health services, strengthening kinship placements and fostering long-term family stability.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS strengthened kinship care through a range of family-centered initiatives, caregiver supports, and staff development efforts focused on elevating kinship as the preferred placement option from the earliest stages of a case. DFPS emphasized kinship as the first placement choice and advanced work to better identify and support kinship placements at the beginning of the case, including educating caregivers about verification and licensing benefits, Permanency Care Assistance (PCA), and access to available resources.

Education and outreach efforts were expanded through policy updates, training, newsletters, social media communications, manuals, flyers, forms, and discussions during initial contacts and visits, ensuring consistent messaging and support for kinship caregivers statewide. DFPS also strengthened caregiver support by advancing initiatives that addressed practical barriers to kinship placement and stability.

During the 89th Legislative Session, eligibility for kinship day care assistance was expanded to include children cared for by kinship caregivers who are 65 years old or older, have a documented disability, or work at least 20 hours per week, reflecting the state's commitment to meeting the diverse needs of kinship caregivers. In addition, DFPS worked in partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to implement updated federal guidance from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which allows states to adopt streamlined licensing processes for kinship foster homes, while ensuring kinship caregivers receive the same level of financial assistance as other foster care providers. Final rules were published in November 2025.

DFPS also continued collaboration with the Kinship Collaboration Group, which works in partnership with the agency to strengthen understanding of caregiver needs and effective support strategies. This group played a key role in developing practical resources and materials to help families provide stable, high-quality kinship care.

Collectively, these efforts demonstrate DFPS's continued commitment to supporting kinship caregivers, improving kinship placement practices, and enhancing children's well-being and long-term family stability.

2026 Key Actions

- ***Strengthen Early Identification, Engagement, and Kinship Placement.*** DFPS will continue prioritizing early identification and engagement of relatives and fictive kin to support kinship placements as the first placement option whenever children cannot safely remain at home. This includes conducting dedicated FGDM sessions to identify and locate potential kinship placements before or after removal and prior to the initial adversary hearing. These efforts strengthen family finding, early engagement, and consistent kinship placement practices statewide, helping reduce reliance on higher levels of care and ensuring children remain connected to family.
- ***Strengthen Supports to Ensure Kinship Placements Are Successful and Sustainable.*** DFPS will continue strengthening supports that promote stability and permanency for kinship families. This includes supporting CBC providers participating in the Kinship Behavioral Health Grant Program to ensure children and caregivers have access to behavioral health services that stabilize placements and promote permanency. DFPS will also continue expanding caregiver education, guidance, and

tools to help kinship caregivers navigate available programs, access resources, and maintain stable placements. In addition, DFPS will strengthen support for kinship foster home verification by assisting caregivers with meeting verification requirements and accessing the benefits available through licensed foster care, including implementing support of the rollout of the new kinship foster home verification standards issued in November 2025.

- ***Expand Information Sharing and Awareness of Kinship Supports.*** DFPS will continue promoting consistent information sharing and staff development related to kinship care by offering monthly Kinship Corner updates through Meeting in a Box and building on prior success through the 2026 Kinship Summit, which will deliver enhanced resources, training, and learning opportunities for staff. In alignment with 89th Legislature Rider 40, DFPS will also launch and promote a statewide kinship awareness campaign that includes a coordinated media strategy, educational materials, newsletters, family-focused training, and the *Kinship Chronicles* podcast to improve awareness and understanding of available kinship supports.

Strengthen Family Engagement Across DFPS Programs

Initiative

Strengthen family engagement principles and practices across all DFPS divisions to create a collaborative approach that values families and empowers them to participate in decisions affecting their children and family.

Lead Division

Child Protective Services and Child Protective Investigations

Partners

Adult Protective Services and Statewide Intake

Background

Research and state practice models demonstrate that when families and their support networks are meaningfully involved, children experience fewer placement disruptions, faster permanency, and stronger relational connections. Initiatives such as the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) model and the Texas Permanency Outcomes Project (TXPOP) have shown that family involvement enhances belonging, reduces trauma, and supports resilience. By expanding family engagement strategies agency-wide, DFPS aims to empower families to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives, strengthen natural support networks, and ensure that every child has a sense of connection and continuity.

DFPS will focus on clearly defining what meaningful family engagement looks like throughout a family's involvement within DFPS and Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs), while identifying practice and policy enhancements that promote family stability and positive outcomes. As part of this initiative, DFPS will develop and implement comprehensive training for both internal staff and external partners to ensure consistent, effective, and family-centered engagement practices statewide.

2026 Key Actions

- **Ensure Child Safety and Prevent Removals.** Focuses on early family engagement to address safety concerns, reduce unnecessary removals, and improve stability for children. Key areas for improvement include strengthening family engagement during investigations, enhancing the timeliness of safety planning, and increasing early coordination across case stages.
- **Increase Kinship at First Placement.** Aims to strengthen the identification and engagement of relatives and fictive kin early in the process, ensuring that when children must be placed, they can remain connected to family. DFPS is working to strengthen diligent search practices, maximize the use of available tools, and establish consistent standards across all regions.
- **Improve Services to Families.** Enhancing services focuses on improving communication, collaboration, and consistency throughout all stages of service, ensuring families receive a coordinated and supportive experience. DFPS is enhancing support for families by promoting clear communication, standardizing engagement tools, and modernizing training to reflect current best practices.
- **Collaborate with Community Partners.** Focuses on promoting collaborative approaches to service planning, permanency, and court engagement, including the appropriate use of limited service plans.

Expand Alternative Response and Screening Practices

Initiative

Increase and expand Alternative Response to serve more families to include children under the age of 6 years old through collaborative, non-investigative engagement, while enhancing screening processes to identify and direct eligible cases to Alternative Response.

Lead Divisions

Child Protective Investigations and Statewide Intake

Background

Texas first implemented Alternative Response (AR) statewide in phases beginning in 2014 through 2021, focusing on helping families meet their children's needs while maintaining safety. AR emphasizes collaboration, family, and community support, as cases do not include an alleged perpetrator, disposition, or Central Registry entry. The ongoing expansion builds on this foundation to reach more families and sustain a culture of partnership and prevention in child protection.

DFPS is expanding the AR model to serve more families through a collaborative, family-centered approach that prioritizes child safety through family engagement. The expansion extends AR eligibility to families with children 5 years old or younger and is enhancing screening for Priority 2 (P2) intakes to strengthen review processes for younger children. Currently, approximately 20 percent of investigation cases are assigned to the AR pathway.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS leveraged expanded AR data to evaluate program effectiveness, strengthen staff training, and enhance family service connections statewide. This included increasing capacity by adding 30 new screener positions, screener supervisors, and program administrators to support AR advancement. System updates to IMPACT were completed in September 2025, and to support this rollout, the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) was updated.

2026 Key Actions

- **Advance Statewide AR Implementation.** Continue the statewide AR implementation plan for advancement in Regions 9, 3W, 3E, and 11. These regions will be fully implemented by the end of January 2027, utilizing updated TAC changes, updated policies, and information system (IMPACT) updates.
- **Update AR Policy.** Update and publish AR policy to include screening of children 5 years old or younger for AR.
- **Evaluate AR Pilot Outcomes.** Evaluate and report data from AR pilots in Regions 4, 5, and 10.
- **Enhance AR Web Resources.** Publish new AR websites to include updated videos, information on the advancement of AR, and resources for families and staff.
- **Strengthen Stakeholder Education and Collaboration.** Collaborate with statewide and local organizations to host regional educational sessions for external stakeholders (law enforcement, schools, attorneys, etc.) to build understanding of AR processes and practices.
- **Implement Updated Investigator Training Curriculum.** Implementation of an updated training curriculum for newly hired investigators that combines traditional and AR training, emphasizing family engagement and community collaboration, is scheduled to begin January 2026.

Advance Implementation of Family First Prevention Services Act

Initiative

Explore options for Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) eligible populations and evidence-based models to support development of the Texas FFPSA prevention plan and continued support of the Texas Family First (TFF) pilots.

Lead Division

Office of Strategic Operations

Background

FFPSA, enacted in 2018, allows states to receive a Title IV-E reimbursement to provide evidence-based prevention services, including mental health programs, substance use programs, and in-home parenting support to families with children at imminent risk of entering foster care. In Texas, DFPS is aligning state initiatives with FFPSA goals by reducing foster care entries and increasing the use of evidence-based prevention services.

Successes in 2025

The 89th Legislature allocated state funding to continue the TFF program for the 2026–2027 biennium and expanded who can receive services. Two legislative actions, Senate Bill 1398 and Rider 41, began to broaden eligibility so the program can support more families at risk of removal. This investment sustains prevention services that help keep children safely with their families and reduces the need for foster care placements.

To receive federal reimbursement, Texas must maintain a federally approved FFPSA prevention plan and deliver services using models rated and approved by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. In 2025, DFPS submitted the FFPSA Title IV-E Prevention Plan to ACF.

2026 Key Actions

- **Expand TFF Services in Region 3W.** Expand services in Region 3W to include Denton, Cooke, and Wise counties.
- **Identify and Implement Expanded Target Populations for TFF.** Identify and implement expanded target populations for TFF in alignment with Senate Bill 1398 and Rider 41.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Implement Baby Moses Hotline and Outreach

Initiative

Implement the Baby Moses Hotline and awareness campaign to increase public knowledge and connect families to resources.

Lead Division

Statewide Intake

Background

During the 89th Legislative Session, DFPS was funded to establish the Baby Moses Hotline and a coinciding public awareness campaign. The hotline provides information, resources, and location services related to the Baby Moses/Safe Haven Law.

The Baby Moses/Safe Haven Law, enacted in 1999 through House Bill 3423, allows parents who are unable to care for an infant 60 days old or younger to safely and legally surrender the child to designated emergency

infant care providers, such as hospitals, fire stations, or emergency medical services (EMS) facilities, without fear of prosecution, provided the child shows no signs of abuse or neglect. This law protects infants from abandonment while offering parents in crisis a safe and anonymous alternative. DFPS, in collaboration with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), will work to establish hotline operations and promote awareness of the law statewide.

2026 Key Actions

- **Strengthen Staffing Capacity for Hotline Implementation.** DFPS will finalize personnel resources for the two Rider-allocated positions to support implementation and ongoing operation of the Baby Moses Hotline.
- **Integrate the Preexisting Baby Moses Hotline into DFPS Systems.** DFPS will integrate the preexisting Baby Moses Hotline number into the agency phone system and staff the line with designated personnel to ensure timely, coordinated response.

- **Launch and Evaluate a Statewide Awareness Campaign.** Launch a comprehensive advertising campaign promoting the Baby Moses Hotline, in collaboration with HHSC and community stakeholders, and monitor its effectiveness, including social media ads, radio and television spots, billboards, transit advertising, and the development of professional toolkits.

Support Family and Community Advocacy

Initiative

Strengthen engagement by creating clear, consistent, and meaningful avenues for client, family, and community voices to shape and improve child protection investigations in Texas.

Lead Division

Child Protective Investigations

Background

Advisory committees play a vital role in shaping and improving Texas's child protection system by providing expert insight, stakeholder perspectives, and informed recommendations. DFPS continues to strengthen these advisory bodies to ensure decisions reflect diverse perspectives and promote better outcomes for children and families.

The Partners for Children and Families Committee (PCFC) serves as a key advisory body to DFPS, providing strategic guidance on modernizing the child protection system and supporting the transition to Community-Based Care (CBC). PCFC advises the DFPS Commissioner on matters affecting services for youth in care, recommends improvements that are family-centered and outcome-driven, and fosters collaboration across agencies and community partners. Its membership includes a range of perspectives, including service providers, caregivers, advocates, youth with lived experience, and members of the legal community, supported by six standing subcommittees addressing critical priorities.

Building on this foundation, the 89th Legislature enacted House Bill 140, establishing the Child Protective Investigations (CPI) Advisory Committee. This committee will focus on improving investigation accuracy and consistency and advising DFPS on related policy, training, and interagency coordination. It will utilize a broad and varied membership, including representatives from the judiciary and legal communities, DFPS

leadership, frontline investigators, and individuals with lived experience.

Together, these advisory bodies will help to ensure the voices of families, youth, and partners directly shape the evolution of Texas's child protection system.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, PCFC strengthened its governance structure and expanded stakeholder engagement to advance continuous improvement across the Texas child welfare system. The committee finalized draft bylaws and administrative rules establishing formal governance and submitted them for approval, marking an important milestone in institutionalizing PCFC's role. Throughout the year, DFPS leadership and PCFC members collaborated on key issues, including CBC implementation, capacity-building, contracting, intake procedures, and caregiver supports. Many of the subcommittees advanced targeted initiatives aligned with statewide priorities, with several recommendations developed for review and adoption.

2026 Key Actions

Partners for Children and Families Committee (PCFC)

- **Strengthen Community Engagement and Collaboration.** DFPS will engage community partners through monthly and quarterly meetings to support system improvement efforts and enhance collaboration across the continuum of care.
- **Advance System Improvement Through Targeted Committee Discussions.** DFPS will meet with committee members to examine CBC implementation and expansion, review capacity data to identify needed services, streamline contracting processes, address intake-related issues, and identify supports needed for children and caregivers.

CPI Advisory Committee

- **Finalize Governance and Membership.** DFPS will finalize committee membership, adopt operating rules, and establish the governance structure necessary to guide the CPI Advisory Committee's work.
- **Launch Quarterly Meetings and Annual Work Plan.** DFPS will initiate quarterly meetings and adopt an annual work plan focused on reviewing investigative policies, practices, and data.

- **Assess Investigative Practices and Identify Improvement Opportunities.** DFPS will execute the work plan by analyzing statewide investigative practices and engaging committee members and community partners to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Develop Recommendations and Set Strategic Priorities.** DFPS will develop initial recommendations and establish priorities related to investigative practice, standardization, family engagement, due process, and training.
- **Produce the First Annual Advisory Report.** DFPS will publish the committee's first annual report, including mandated data trends, stakeholder feedback, and recommended operational improvements.

Strengthen APS Partnering to Protect

Initiative

Continue, in close partnership with Faith-Based and Community Engagement (FBCE), building and growing community partnerships to improve outcomes for people served by Adult Protective Services (APS).

Lead Division

Adult Protective Services

Partner

Office of Strategic Operations (Faith-Based and Community Engagement)

Background

APS, in collaboration with the FBCE team, continues to strengthen partnerships that enhance services and improve outcomes for vulnerable adults. Guided by the APS Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022–2026, the agency developed a strategic framework to build and sustain relationships with key community partners.

These partnerships span a broad network of agencies and organizations from law enforcement and first responders to home health providers, financial institutions, and community-based organizations such as food banks and residential care providers. Each contributes unique expertise and resources that help ensure APS clients receive the coordinated support they need to remain safe and independent. APS engages these partners through joint training, shared resources, and coordinated response strategies that promote effective communication and integrated service delivery.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, APS enhanced community engagement and professional development statewide. The program strengthened collaboration with law enforcement and mental health partners through updated district engagement plans and awarded over 100 scholarships at its 42nd annual conference, which featured notable speakers and recognized leaders in adult protection. The APS Speakers Bureau broadened its impact by engaging hundreds of community organizations through presentations delivered at state and national conferences, as well as local events. Additionally, APS established a workgroup to develop performance measures that will guide ongoing quality improvement and accountability efforts.

2026 Key Actions

- **Enhance Statewide Community Engagement.** Implement statewide engagement plans that strengthen relationships with community organizations, increase awareness of APS services, and enhance coordinated responses for vulnerable adults.
- **Assess Resource Development Needs.** Assess long-term resource development needs within APS and determine the most effective approach to supporting statewide partnership efforts.
- **Expand Community Involvement in APS Prevention Efforts.** Continue partnership with FBCE to expand community involvement in APS prevention and support efforts.
- **Monitor Performance Measures for Engagement Initiatives.** Monitor key performance measures to evaluate the impact of Partnering to Protect and other APS engagement strategies.
- **Strengthen National Collaboration Through Conference Partnership.** Finalize an agreement with the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) to co-host the 2026 Texas APS/NAPSA Joint Conference, supporting national collaboration and enhancing professional development for APS staff and community partners.
- **Support Partner Participation in APS Conferences.** Provide scholarship opportunities for community partners to participate in the 2026 Texas APS/NAPSA Joint Conference, supporting shared learning and strengthening local response networks.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Improve Access to Behavioral Health Services

Initiative

Improve access to medically necessary, trauma-informed behavioral health services for children and youth currently in DFPS conservatorship and prevent entries into DFPS due to parental custody relinquishment to access services.

Lead Division

Office of Behavioral Health Strategy (OBHS)

Background

Addressing the behavioral health needs of youth in DFPS conservatorship remains a top priority. Many DFPS-involved children have experienced considerable trauma, which can significantly impact their overall health and well-being.

Successes in 2025

Throughout 2025, DFPS continued its partnerships with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI), and other state and local agencies to enhance behavioral health services for youth involved with DFPS. OBHS supported DFPS staff and Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs) by providing training, technical assistance, and guidance on programs such as Youth Crisis Outreach Teams, Multi-systemic Therapy, and Children's Crisis Respite. OBHS also participated in HHSC's review of the Texas Administrative Code, Texas Resilience and Recovery (TRR) Utilization Guidelines, and monitored Senate Bill 58 (83rd Legislative Session) implementation to improve service continuity, family choice, and access to care.

DFPS also promoted the system of care framework, engaged in multi-agency initiatives, and facilitated youth and caregiver involvement to ensure comprehensive, coordinated support. Additionally, DFPS focused on high-acuity youth at risk of custody relinquishment, juvenile justice involvement, or foster care placement, participating in clinical review teams, critical case staffings, and collaborations with family partners and post-adoption providers to strengthen care coordination and support complex behavioral health needs.

Additionally, the 89th Legislature appropriated funds to HHSC to establish a specialized residential treatment facility at the Terrell Center for Youth for up to 30 youth in DFPS conservatorship, ages 13–17 years old, with behavioral health conditions or intellectual and developmental disabilities. DFPS is working closely with HHSC and agency leadership to support implementation and ensure coordinated, high-quality care for high-acuity youth.

2026 Key Actions

- ***Strengthen Cross-System Coordination for High-Needs Youth.*** Continue collaborating with HHSC, STAR Health, TJJD, and a broad network of community, academic, and state partners to strengthen care coordination, address challenges affecting youth well-being and permanency, and prevent entries due to refusal to accept parental responsibility.
- ***Support Kinship Behavioral Health Services Through Grant Oversight.*** Continue overseeing the Kinship Behavioral Health Grant, supporting kinship families who care for children/youth with behavioral health needs by funding evidence-based behavioral health services through Community-Based Care agencies in Stage Two implementation.
- ***Advance Implementation of the Terrell Center for Youth.*** Continue ongoing collaboration between DFPS and HHSC to support implementation of the Terrell Center for Youth, providing specialized behavioral health treatment for high-acuity youth and helping reduce children without placement.

Strengthen Oversight of Psychotropic Medication Practices

Initiative

Advance safe, appropriate psychotropic medication practices for children and youth in conservatorship by improving oversight, provider guidance, and access to evidence-based and non-pharmacological behavioral health services in coordination with partner agencies.

Lead Divisions

Office of Behavioral Health Strategy and DFPS Medical Director

Partner

Child Protective Services

Background

DFPS is committed to ensuring that children and youth in state conservatorship receive individualized, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health care. In partnership with medical and behavioral health professionals, the agency continues to implement strategies to safely and strategically reduce the use of psychotropic medications and to promote comprehensive treatment approaches that extend beyond medication alone.

These efforts focus on strengthening oversight of prescribing practices, improving monitoring and consent processes, and ensuring that youth prescribed psychotropic medications receive appropriate care and regular clinical reviews. DFPS is working to establish a sustainable, standardized process for safely reducing psychotropic medication use among youth in conservatorship, supported by data-driven analysis and expert review to identify and address concerning prescribing trends.

In addition, DFPS and Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) teams are increasing their awareness of potential side effects and risks associated with psychotropic treatment to ensure careful evaluation of each case. Youth receiving psychotropic medications will continue to benefit from ongoing monitoring and utilization reviews that assess safety, effectiveness, and alignment with best practices. Medical consenters will also receive continuous training and technical assistance to support informed, evidence-based decision-making.

Through these combined efforts, DFPS aims to promote safer, more effective behavioral health care and improved outcomes for children and youth in its conservatorship.

2026 Key Actions

- **Establish a Psychotropic Medication Oversight Team.** Create a team that is responsible for evaluating how to safely and strategically reduce the use of psychotropic medications among children in DFPS conservatorship.
- **Strengthen Early Childhood Behavioral Health Oversight to Prevent Polypharmacy and Acute Psychiatric Hospitalizations.** DFPS will use targeted reporting and multidisciplinary review to identify

young children receiving psychotropic medications or experiencing psychiatric hospitalizations, assess service patterns and gaps, and advance early interventions that promote appropriate care and prevent unnecessary or high-risk treatment.

- **Strengthen Psychotropic Medication Utilization Monitoring.** Continue assessing Psychotropic Medication Utilization Monitoring and implementation of the revised Internal Psychotropic Medication Utilization Review (PMUR) protocol, and plan a future assessment of its effectiveness.
- **Implement Updated Policies and Training.** Implement updated psychotropic medication policy guidance and training to ensure DFPS and SSCC staff and partners understand best practices related to psychotropic medication oversight.

Strengthen Post-Adoption Support Services for Adoptive Families

Initiative

Increase awareness, availability, and coordination of post-adoption supports through strengthened partnerships with contracted providers and community organizations to better meet the behavioral, emotional, and developmental needs of adoptive families.

Lead Divisions

Child Protective Services and Office of Behavioral Health Strategy

Background

Behavioral health services play a vital role in supporting post-adoptive families by helping children and caregivers navigate the emotional and psychological challenges that can arise after adoption. Many children adopted from foster care have experienced trauma, neglect, or multiple placements, which may impact their social, emotional, and behavioral development. Access to trauma-informed counseling, crisis intervention, and other behavioral health supports help strengthen family relationships, prevent adoption disruptions, and promote long-term well-being for both children and parents.

DFPS provides Post-Adoption Services to support families after adoption finalization, helping ensure stable, successful placements for children from foster care. Recognizing the ongoing behavioral, emotional,

and developmental needs of adoptive families, DFPS is committed to increasing awareness, accessibility, and coordination of these supports. Strengthening partnerships with providers and community organizations will enhance service delivery and promote long-term family stability and well-being.

In 2024, Heart Galleries of Texas conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of post-adoption and post-permanency services, gathering insights from 388 caregivers across all 11 DFPS regions. This assessment identified critical needs and unique barriers to accessing services in each area. Using these findings, Heart Galleries of Texas and DFPS collaborated in 2025 to strategically allocate funds for post-adoption and post-permanency services. DFPS remains dedicated to its partnership with Heart Galleries of Texas and other organizations and nonprofits to ensure children and families continue to receive high-quality, needs-based support beyond case closure.

2026 Key Actions

- ***Strengthen Partnerships to Expand Family Supports.*** Strengthen partnerships with contracted providers, state agencies, and community organizations, including Heart Galleries of Texas, to identify service gaps and enhance access to post-adoption and post-permanency supports.
- ***Strengthen Cross-Agency Coordination for Residential Treatment Access.*** Collaborate with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to ensure eligible families can access residential treatment as an alternative to returning children to DFPS custody.
- ***Enhance Outreach and Engagement for Post-Adoption Services.*** Expand awareness and engagement in post-adoption services through targeted outreach, enhanced visibility, and improved communication with families.
- ***Evaluate Service Effectiveness to Guide Strategic Investment.*** Continue collaborating with the National Center for Enhanced Post-Adoption Support to assess the effectiveness of post-adoption supports and inform strategic use of available funds for ongoing program improvements.
- ***Enhance Collaboration with Heart Galleries of Texas to Strengthen Statewide Support for Adoptive Families.*** Leverage the expertise of Heart Galleries of Texas to evaluate the full range of services offered in communities, identify gaps in the service continuum, and develop targeted solutions to better serve adoptive families across Texas.
- ***Develop Pre-Permanency Training for Prospective Adoptive Parents.*** Develop and implement pre-permanency training for prospective adoptive parents to improve readiness and increase understanding of available supports.
- ***Strengthen Crisis Intervention Supports for Families.*** Identify and strengthen crisis intervention options to ensure timely assistance for post-adoptive and post-permanency families experiencing acute challenges.

Goal 2:

Develop and Refine Case Management Services

Refining our services to better serve families is essential to meeting the evolving needs of children and families within the DFPS system. Given the complexity and critical nature of the work we do, continuous improvement is vital to ensure that we are providing the best possible support at every stage of a family's journey through the system. By examining and refining our processes and services, we can better support families and work toward stronger, more positive outcomes for the families we serve.



SUPPORT LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

Strengthen Community-Based Care Collaboration, Accountability, and Operations Structure

Initiative

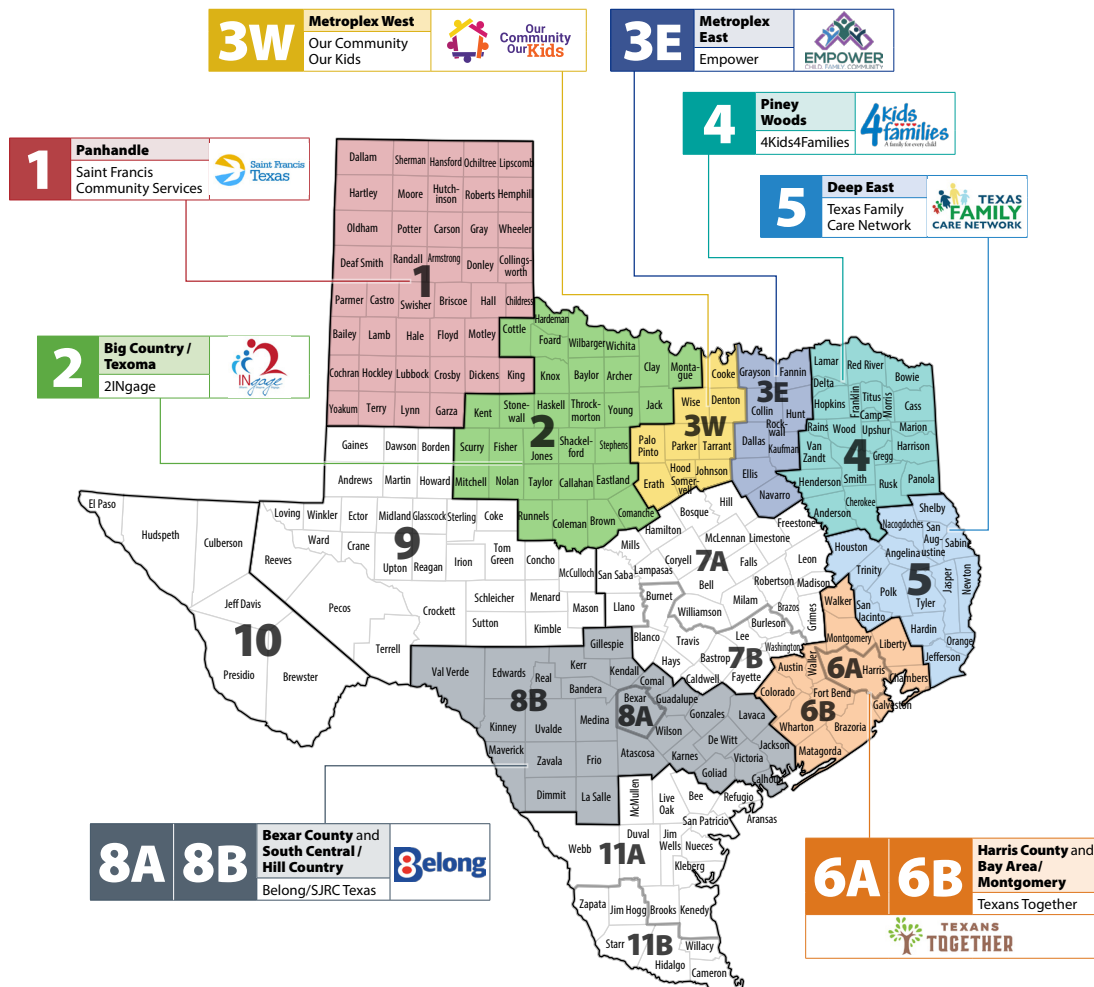
Refine and align Community-Based Care (CBC) operations to strengthen internal and cross-divisional coordination and accountability and ensure consistent, effective oversight of CBC expansion.

Background

CBC was established by the Texas Legislature in 2017 through Senate Bill 11 to transition the state's child protection system from a centralized model to one led by community-based organizations. CBC seeks to strengthen the child welfare system by increasing placements with siblings and within home communities, reducing the time to achieve permanency, minimizing placement moves, and improving overall well-being through community-driven, sustainable networks of support.

Geographic Information for Community-Based Care

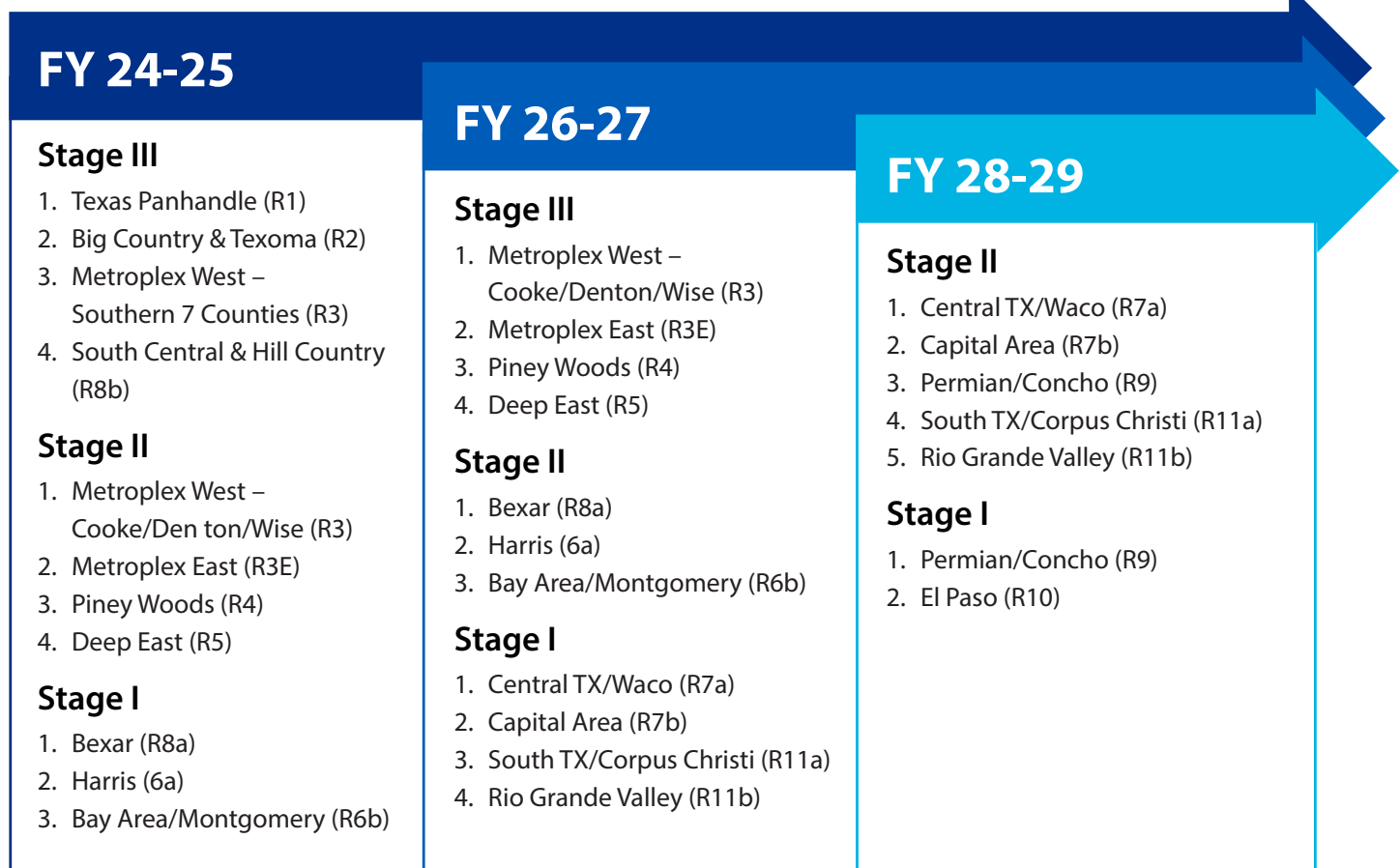
The map below depicts the implementation of CBC across the state as of January 1, 2026:



Designated Community Area	Counties
Panhandle <i>SSCC: Saint Francis Ministries</i>	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
Big Country/Texoma <i>SSCC: 2INgage</i>	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
Metroplex East <i>SSCC: EMPOWER</i>	Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Fannin, Grayson, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, Rockwall
Metroplex West <i>SSCC: ACH/Our Community Our Kids</i>	Cooke, Denton, Erath, Hood, Johnson, Palo Pinto, Parker, Somervell, Tarrant, Wise
Piney Woods <i>SSCC: 4Kids4Families</i>	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
Deep East <i>SSCC: Texas Family Care Network</i>	Angelina, Hardin, Houston, Jasper, Jefferson, Nacogdoches, Newton, Orange, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler
Harris County <i>SSCC: Texans Together</i>	Harris
Bay Area/Montgomery <i>SSCC: Texans Together</i>	Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, Wharton
Central Texas/Waco	Bell, Bosque, Brazos, Coryell, Falls, Freestone, Grimes, Hamilton, Hill, Lampasas, Leon, Limestone, Llano, Madison, McLennan, Milam, Mills, Robertson, San Saba, Williamson
Capital Area	Bastrop, Blanco, Burleson, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Travis, Washington
Bexar County <i>SSCC: Belong</i>	Bexar
South Central/Hill Country <i>SSCC: Belong</i>	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

Designated Community Area	Counties
Permian/Concho	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
El Paso	Brewster, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Presidio
South Texas/Corpus Christi	Aransas, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, Webb
Rio Grande Valley	Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Starr, Willacy, Zapata

Community-Based Care Expansion by State Fiscal Year



Note: This chart represents the planned CBC rollout schedule. However, changes during implementation may alter the depicted schedule.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS advanced the implementation and oversight of CBC through a set of strategic initiatives designed to strengthen readiness, communication, and accountability. A change management framework was developed and implemented to guide and support regional staff through the ongoing expansion of CBC, which focused on targeted communication efforts to increase staff awareness of the CBC model and their role through implementation. Communication plans for each stage of CBC implementation were developed to further support this effort and ensure that regional staff understood the impact of each stage of CBC.

DFPS teams implemented new procedures for escalating and addressing contract non-compliance, enabling timely corrective actions to ensure child safety and well-being. Furthermore, the Office of Data and Systems Improvement (ODSI) established a Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) Performance Measures Workgroup to review and refine existing metrics in collaboration with SSCC and DFPS leadership. To ensure statewide consistency in all standard policies and practices, CBC staff developed and implemented a universal SSCC Joint Operations Manual (JOM) for Stage I. The Stage II JOM is nearing completion for deployment in 2026. This will ensure that communities still have the flexibility to tailor non-standard practices to meet local needs.

Operational and oversight improvements were further strengthened by legislation passed during the 89th Legislative Session, which expanded DFPS's statutory tools to support accountability and continuity within CBC. Collectively, House Bill 4129, Senate Bill 1589, Senate Bill 2032, and Senate Bill 2034 enhanced DFPS's authority to intervene when performance concerns arise, including the ability to require quality improvement plans, implement financial or operational interventions, reclaim or transfer case management responsibilities in emergency situations, extend contract termination notice periods to support orderly transitions, and, when necessary, seek court-appointed receivership to stabilize SSCC operations.

Additionally, Senate Bill 1398, an omnibus child welfare bill that expanded the definition of family preservation services, added restrictions to the placement of children in temporary emergency supervision, and modified several CBC contract provisions in statute. Specifically,

Senate Bill 1398 requires DFPS to implement formal measures to ensure quality services are being provided by the SSCCs, including quality improvement plans, financial interventions, and other interventions as necessary. Senate Bill 1398 also requires DFPS to publish certain contract monitoring information to the DFPS website to support transparency and public confidence in CBC. DFPS was also authorized by Senate Bill 513 to develop a rural CBC pilot in regions experiencing challenges launching CBC as currently operated. The pilot will be designed and implemented by a lead entity in partnership with DFPS.

2026 Key Actions

- **Refine Roles and Responsibilities Across CBC Teams.** Through the Future State Initiative, DFPS will continue to clarify and align the functions across DFPS divisions as the agency modernizes how work is organized to support child welfare service delivery in Texas. Various workgroups, which include leadership from the Office of Community-Based Care Transition (OCBCT), the Community-Based Care Operations (CBCO) division, Child Protective Services (CPS), and DFPS Contracts, aim to reduce duplication, address gaps, and strengthen team cohesion in support of the agency's CBC vision.
- **Improve Contract and Programmatic Monitoring and Oversight of CBC.** Through the CBC Agency Monitoring Critical Project, DFPS will improve its monitoring of SSCC subcontractors and continue to identify potential gaps and further strengthen current monitoring processes.
- **Strengthen Agencywide Coordination and Communication on CBC.** DFPS will enhance communication, cooperation, and collaboration across all divisions to promote a shared understanding of CBC, clarify roles and responsibilities, and reinforce the agencywide impact of successful CBC implementation.
- **Implement a Standardized After-Action Review Process for CBC Initiatives.** DFPS will adopt a consistent after-action review process to evaluate major CBC initiatives, capture lessons learned, assess stakeholder feedback, and apply insights to improve future planning and implementation.

- **Assess and Refine the CBC Financial Model.** DFPS will work with stakeholders and the SSCCs to assess and refine the current CBC financial model, including participating in a financial feasibility study of the model. DFPS will continue to partner with the SSCCs in addressing barriers and finding solutions through the SSCC Financial Model Workgroup. Additionally, SB 513 and SB 1398 direct DFPS to assess the feasibility of a capitated funding model for the rural CBC Pilot and for CBC statewide, respectively; DFPS will engage with stakeholders for this assessment throughout the reporting period.
- **Implement the CBC Rural Pilot.** DFPS will support the implementation of SB 513 in partnership with the selected Lead Entity to design and build the CBC Rural Pilot model. This will include supporting the internal and external stakeholder engagement needed to create the rural pilot model, with consideration to the specific needs of rural regions. DFPS and the Lead Entity will submit a report to the Legislature regarding the proposed model for CBC in rural regions prior to the commencement of the 90th Legislative Session. Additionally, as mentioned above, DFPS will work with the Lead Entity in the assessment of the feasibility of a capitated funding model for the pilot.
- **Gather Feedback from Stakeholders Engaged with SSCCs.** DFPS will conduct targeted surveys to reach families and professional stakeholders who interact with SSCCs to gather valuable feedback. This effort aims to ensure stakeholder perspectives are fully integrated into the planning and refinement of CBC practices, promoting a more responsive and community-driven approach to child welfare service delivery.

Advance Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C)

Initiative

Complete implementation of the Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C) system, which integrates the evidence-based, trauma-informed Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) 3.0 assessment, a comprehensive foster care service array with 24 clearly defined packages, and a standardized provider credentialing process.

Lead Divisions

Office of Chief Financial Officer and Child Protective Services

Background

The T3C system is a comprehensive modernization of the state's foster care system. T3C is designed to enhance outcomes for children, youth, and young adults by establishing a clear, evidence-informed continuum of care that ensures services are matched to individual needs and that caregivers are appropriately compensated for delivering high-quality services. The model includes a standardized assessment of child needs, clearly defined service packages, and an updated rate methodology that aligns payments with the actual cost of care.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS achieved significant milestones in implementing the T3C system. The agency finalized credentialing guidelines, established a trained Credentialing Team, and processed 415 credentialing applications. Of those, 314 applications were eligible for review (excluding those that were rejected or withdrawn). As a result, DFPS issued 160 total awards, including 111 interim awards (both active and inactive) and 49 full awards. Overall, 234 unique providers were credentialed through the T3C system in 2025. DFPS and SSCCs also completed the CANS 3.0 tool, updated policy guides, and trained over 50 assessors who conducted 1,382 assessments by August 2025.

To support implementation, DFPS and Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs) updated protocol manuals, adopted 36 new or amended administrative rules, and awarded \$5.4 million in transition grants to 51 foster care providers. The agency, in partnership with the SSCCs, provides ongoing training and support. Major information technology enhancements were also deployed, including updates to the DFPS case management system (IMPACT) and the SSCC Auto Transfer process.

Statewide T3C training reached thousands of DFPS staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates volunteers, and judiciary members through webinars and regional sessions. By the close of Fiscal Year 2025, approximately 2,591 children, about 30 percent of those in paid foster care, had transitioned to receiving services under the new T3C model.

2026 Key Actions

- **Enhance IMPACT Functionality to Support T3C.** DFPS will continue enhancements of IMPACT to support T3C.
- **Develop the T3C Oversight and Monitoring Structure.** DFPS will finalize the Annual Credential Provider Report and establish processes, protocols, and tools for SSCC monitoring of T3C services and providers, as well as DFPS monitoring of SSCCs within the T3C system.
- **Update T3C Model Assumptions and Rates.** DFPS will review and adjust T3C model assumptions for general residential operations and child placing agencies based on regulatory and contractual revisions and will work with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to update the pro-forma modeled rate methodology accordingly.
- **Explore Opportunities to Enhance Federal Claiming.** DFPS will explore potential options for improving federal claiming for select T3C service packages.
- **Develop T3C Re-Credentialing Requirements for Providers.** DFPS will develop T3C re-credentialing requirements and processes for providers.
- **Continue Provider Outreach and Engagement.** DFPS will continue outreach efforts with providers not yet operating under the T3C system to support understanding, readiness, and system-wide alignment.

Stabilize and Build Provider Capacity and Mitigate Child Watch

Initiative

Continue advancing the DFPS and Community-Based Care (CBC) placement capacity strategy to ensure safe, appropriate placements that meet each child's individual service needs in the least restrictive setting.

Lead Divisions

Child Protective Services and Community-Based Care Operations

Background

DFPS is committed to ensuring that every child in foster care has access to placements that provide services that meet their unique and evolving needs. To achieve this, the agency continues to expand and strengthen the range of placement options across the foster

care continuum, recognizing the growing need for specialized care for children with complex behavioral, emotional, and medical needs.

Many youth without appropriate placements have significant mental and behavioral health challenges requiring highly specialized care settings. DFPS's capacity development efforts are focused on building a continuum that includes programs capable of serving older youth and those with the most complex needs. By strengthening provider networks, supporting workforce development, and creating more therapeutic and community-based options, DFPS is working to ensure that every child in its care has access to a safe, stable, and supportive environment.

Through the expansion of CBC and the implementation of Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C), DFPS is creating more opportunities for children to remain in their home communities, strengthening their connections and enhancing their overall well-being.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS continued to strengthen placement capacity and ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like settings that meet their individual needs. The Reduction of Children in Congregate Care initiative was launched in March 2024 and continues to identify youth ready to transition from congregate care to less restrictive placements. Through a pilot in Regions 7 and 8, DFPS successfully transitioned multiple children into family home environments, improving stability and well-being.

DFPS enhanced collaboration and support for new residential providers by conducting quarterly check-ins, monitoring the operation's performance, and addressing operational concerns through direct engagement and technical assistance. The implementation of staggered admissions and temporary capacity limits for new providers promotes stability and ensures providers can safely manage the complexity of youth needs.

To further build and maintain capacity, DFPS continued the Provider Clinical and Programmatic Support Program with additional funding from the 89th Legislature and expanded collaboration through the Partners for Children and Families (PCFC) Placement Subcommittee to develop strategies addressing high-acuity youth needs and strengthening peer support.

The agency also evaluated specialized placement programs to improve service quality and expand

availability, including psychiatric stabilization and Treatment Foster Family Care (TFFC). Additionally, DFPS worked closely with Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs) to monitor performance measures that offer insight into capacity needs and ensure each region's placement development efforts align with local needs.

Additionally, in 2025, DFPS enhanced its focus on expanding Supervised Independent Living (SIL) and Transitional Living Program (TLP) capacity to better serve youth transitioning out of foster care. The Transitional Living Services Division continued referring interested providers to the capacity-building specialist, who led outreach initiatives and connected potential providers with Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) licensing representatives. Additionally, DFPS and the Capacity-Building team hosted regional informational meetings to educate prospective providers about the licensing process and the unique needs of transition-aged youth. These efforts activated communities to address capacity needs at the local level. Notably, in Region 3E, a collaborative effort led by the SSCC resulted in the formation of the Next Chapter Consortium, which focuses on addressing the needs of foster youth preparing for independent living.

To enhance program visibility, DFPS rebranded the SIL program, incorporating valuable input from current and former foster youth, to ensure resources and materials reflect their needs. Quarterly SIL Open House events were introduced to promote program awareness, provide clarity on its purpose and benefits, and engage with the community. Input from young people actively participating in SIL programs has been central to these efforts, as their experiences are shared to inspire and inform others considering the program. Participants have consistently highlighted the program's role in helping them stay in school, pursue their goals, and maintain stability while benefiting from extended foster care services.

At the same time, DFPS engaged in targeted outreach to existing transitional living programs not currently contracting with the state to explore potential collaborations, identify barriers, and provide support to facilitate future partnerships. These efforts led to growth in 2025 with 14 new providers signing contracts with DFPS, resulting in the addition of 63 beds to expand program capacity.

TFFC is a short-term, intensive program focused on stabilizing children with intense and complex needs to support a successful transition to a less restrictive and permanent placement. TFFC placements are in highly structured home environments with specialized foster parents. DFPS continued to promote and strengthen the TFFC program by regularly presenting updates at regional provider meetings, increasing program awareness at provider information sessions, and collaborating with contracted providers to expand Kinship TFFC through earlier identification of eligible families. The State Office Placement Team is developing a campaign to highlight Kinship TFFC experiences, providing ongoing training to kinship staff, and meeting quarterly with TFFC providers to address barriers and support capacity growth. Additionally, the team is improving data collection and quality assurance to better understand caregiver needs, evaluate outcomes, and guide program improvements.

2026 Key Actions

- ***Use Data to Increase Family-Like and Least Restrictive Placements.*** DFPS will apply data analytics to ensure children are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like settings and will continue building on the Reduction of Children in Congregate Care initiative to support transitions from congregate care to family-centered placements.
- ***Continue to Enhance Oversight of New Providers.*** DFPS will continue strengthening collaboration with new providers by monitoring performance and collaborating with operational leadership to address challenges in program management, staffing, and service delivery.
- ***Develop Capacity-Mapping Tools to Guide Statewide Planning.*** DFPS will create and refine capacity-mapping tools to strengthen statewide monitoring and identify areas where additional placement resources are needed.
- ***Support SSCCs Through Performance Monitoring to Strengthen Placement Networks.*** DFPS will continue monitoring how SSCCs perform on key measures and use these insights to guide strategic capacity planning and strengthen the ability of SSCCs to meet the needs of children and families in their communities. DFPS will develop strategies for transitioning youth back to their home regions as CBC expands.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implement a Comprehensive Quality Assurance Framework

Initiative

Advance implementation of the DFPS Quality Assurance Framework to promote consistent, data-driven quality assurance practices that drive practice improvement throughout all DFPS divisions.

Lead Division

Office of Quality Assurance

Background

DFPS is advancing a comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) Framework designed to strengthen accountability, promote consistency, and improve outcomes across all programs. This effort reflects the agency's commitment to continuous learning and excellence in service delivery.

Consistent with the requirements of Rider 39 of the General Appropriations Act passed during the 89th Legislative Session, DFPS established a new Office of Quality Assurance to evaluate the consistency and quality of services across programs and to publish quarterly results beginning in November 2026.

Through systematic review and analysis, QA provides insights into what is working well and where improvement is needed. Using clearly defined performance indicators and assessment tools, QA validates results, drives data-informed decision-making, and highlights best practices that enhance outcomes for children, families, and adults served by DFPS.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS developed a comprehensive QA framework aligned with Rider 39 and initiated early implementation efforts to support a more unified, agencywide approach to quality assurance. This work included defining core QA principles, identifying priority functions for transition into a centralized structure, and piloting elements of the framework in key areas of the agency, including Child Protective Investigations (CPI) and the Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA). These efforts established the organizational and operational groundwork for the formal creation of the Office of Quality Assurance.

2026 Key Actions

- **Assess Current QA Activities Across Program Areas.** Evaluate existing QA practices across the agency to promote alignment, consistency, and full implementation of the QA Framework.
- **Conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment for QA Activities.** Conduct a needs assessment to evaluate current and future QA reviews and ensure the agency's QA approach remains responsive, consistent, and aligned with organizational priorities.
- **Develop and Refine Quality Indicators and Key Performance Measures.** Develop and refine quality indicators and performance measures to support consistent monitoring and assessment of QA activities.
- **Transition Quality Assurance Functions into the QA Division.** Transition Child Protective Services (CPS) and CPI program-specific QA functions into the new division by April 2026 to strengthen alignment, reduce duplication, and ensure a consistent QA structure across program areas.
- **Strengthen QA Processes and Feedback Mechanisms.** Refine QA processes by strengthening guidance for delivering feedback, providing clear and actionable recommendations, and supporting continuous improvement efforts across program areas.
- **Publish Quarterly QA Results.** Publish quarterly QA results beginning in November 2026 to promote transparency and inform data-driven decision-making across the agency.

Improve Case Disposition Accuracy for Family and Child Care Investigations

Initiative

Continue implementation of case disposition accuracy and consistency reviews statewide with Family Investigations and Alternative Response to improve the accuracy and consistency of case dispositions, including findings of Reason to Believe, severity codes, and Unable to Determine outcomes.

Lead Division

Child Protective Investigations

Background

DFPS Child Protective Investigations is advancing a statewide effort to strengthen the accuracy and consistency of case dispositions across Family Investigations and Alternative Response (FIAR) and Child Care Investigations (CCI). Ensuring that findings are fair, evidence-based, and aligned with statute and policy is foundational to the integrity of child protection work and public trust in the agency's decisions.

Building on the groundwork laid in 2025, DFPS is implementing a formal secondary review process for Reason to Believe (RTB) dispositions in FIAR cases. This work, supported by the 89th Legislature, establishes a specialized unit of case readers dedicated to reviewing investigations prior to making a substantive finding of abuse or neglect. The effort enhances statewide consistency, strengthens due process protections, and ensures that determinations reflect both statutory intent and agency policy. The initiative continues efforts launched in 2025, including policy reviews, interstate benchmarking, process mapping, and data analysis to identify opportunities for improvement and refine guidance on disposition findings such as RTB and Unable to Determine, as well as associated severity codes in the IMPACT case management system.

In 2025, CCI reinforced quality controls through mandatory secondary reviews of all residential and day care investigations prior to closure, followed by QA and leadership reviews to ensure dispositions align with current standards. Together, these efforts are building a more consistent, transparent, and defensible decision-making framework that supports child safety, fairness, and accountability across DFPS programs.

2026 Key Actions

Family Investigations and Alternative Response

- **Establish and Operationalize the RTB Reader Team.** Establish the RTB Reader Team, hire team members, and develop standardized processes—including case routing, case review protocols, metrics, and investigator feedback procedures—to ensure consistent and high-quality case reviews.
- **Implement Training, Communication, and Phased Rollout.** Develop training and communication for

field staff, coordinate implementation with relevant divisions, and launch a phased rollout of RTB case reads in select regions before expanding statewide.

- **Continuous Quality Improvement.** Evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of the newly implemented RTB Case Review process to ensure established protocols and standards consistently achieve the desired positive impact on case outcomes.

Child Care Investigations

- **Maintain Consistency and Accuracy.** Continue monitoring child care investigations to ensure consistent application of policy, accurate findings, and strong investigative quality across programs.

Strengthen Processes Regarding the Central Registry and Identify Opportunities to Further Expand Due Process

Initiative

Strengthen due process protections across DFPS investigations by enhancing up-front due process, implementing legal sufficiency reviews, and assessing Central Registry practices, including expunction and retention considerations.

Lead Divisions

Office of General Counsel, Child Protective Investigations, and Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

Improving due process as it relates to an abuse and neglect determination made by DFPS is essential to protecting the rights of children, parents, and caregivers while maintaining the integrity of investigations and interventions.

When a Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Child Care Investigations (CCI), or Residential Child Care Investigations (RCCI) case concludes that an individual is responsible for abuse or neglect, the individual is identified as a designated perpetrator in the DFPS confidential Central Registry, which is part of the IMPACT database. A common misconception is that the Central Registry is a public “list” of individuals. In reality, the registry is an internal record accessible only to DFPS and Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)

authorized users for specific statutory purposes such as background checks for certain child- or adult-serving roles. It is not a searchable public database, nor is it intended for general disclosure.

DFPS recognizes the need to periodically review Central Registry-related policies, including retention and expunction practices, to ensure they remain aligned with statutory intent and due process principles. DFPS continues to explore opportunities to assess how long individuals remain included in the Central Registry, under what circumstances records may be expunged, and whether additional safeguards or review points could strengthen fairness while preserving child safety.

Most DFPS abuse and neglect determinations do not result in litigation or administrative hearings. Instead, these determinations are subject to notice and internal administrative reviews, including Administrative Reviews of Investigation Findings (ARIF) and second-level ARIFs in certain CPI cases. In addition to existing appeal pathways, DFPS continues to evaluate how due process protections are experienced earlier in the investigation lifecycle, particularly as they relate to inclusion in the Central Registry. Because a substantiated finding may have long-term implications for certain employment, licensure, and caregiving roles, DFPS recognizes the importance of ensuring individuals clearly understand investigative outcomes, appeal options, and the implications of Central Registry placement, and the need to evaluate additional options for individuals to access external due process.

In a small subset of cases involving employment in child care operations or fostering/adopting children in DFPS conservatorship, due process is afforded through formal administrative hearings conducted by the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH), which independently reviews certain contested DFPS determinations of abuse and neglect. DFPS received additional staff funding

in the 89th Legislative Session to handle the SOAH hearing function, as it relates to abuse and neglect determinations, that was transferred to DFPS from HHSC in March 2025. As part of this function, a triage team was developed to reduce the number of pending SOAH matters by first reviewing the oldest matters involving findings of neglectful supervision to determine whether they should be dismissed.

To further enhance consistency and timeliness, DFPS is implementing attorney legal-sufficiency reviews for all SOAH cases. This attorney review function will ensure that cases presented at a SOAH hearing have sufficient evidence available and satisfy the appropriate legal standard to persuade the trier of fact. DFPS will explore strengthening collaboration with SOAH to help streamline case processing wherever possible to improve the efficiency and fairness of appeal resolutions for DFPS clients and providers.

2026 Key Actions

- **Explore Up-Front Due Process.** Assess potential options to expand access to up-front due process protections for consideration by the 90th Legislature.
- **Review Central Registry Practices.** Identify opportunities to assess expunction and retention timelines for individuals included in the Central Registry for consideration by the 90th Legislature.
- **Refine and Streamline SOAH Procedures.** Update internal procedures following the transition of SOAH responsibilities back to DFPS, ensuring consistent and accurate outcomes.
- **Assess the External SOAH Process.** Identify opportunities to improve efficiency and streamline procedures.

Goal 3:

Transform Workforce and Infrastructure to Enable Better Outcomes

By investing in our staff, modernizing our systems, and enhancing service coordination, we can create more efficient, responsive, and supportive systems for DFPS employees and the families that we serve. A critical component of this transformation is new technology that improves how we operate, making our services more accessible, timely, and effective. Alongside these advancements, investing in our workforce is key to achieving long-term success. Together, investing in technology, modernizing systems, and supporting our workforce will enable us to provide higher-quality services, improve service coordination, and create better outcomes for the children and families who rely on us. Through continuous improvement and innovation, we are building a stronger foundation for the future of children, adults, and families in our community.



USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE SYSTEMS

Execute Business Process Redesign (BPR) Implementation

Initiative

Continue advancing BPR implementation across Residential Child Care Investigations and Day Care Investigations, along with Statewide Intake enhancements such as intake reviews, digital correspondence, updated guidelines, and scheduling pilots.

Lead Divisions

Child Protective Investigations, Statewide Intake, and Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

DFPS is advancing its comprehensive redesign of casework and quality assurance processes to better align with a modern, technology-enabled future. The BPR initiative is identifying opportunities to streamline workflows, reduce administrative burden, and enhance consistency across all program areas. This work is foundational to the development of the new enterprise case management system that will replace the aging case management platform, IMPACT. Building on foundational mapping and design work, DFPS continues this effort by implementing redesigned workflows across Residential Child Care Investigations (RCCI), Day Care Investigations (DCI), and additional enhancements underway in Statewide Intake (SWI) to modernize intake reviews, digital correspondence, guidelines, and scheduling processes. As DFPS programs undergo business process redesign, the agency will continue applying shared standards, tools, and lessons learned to support consistent implementation and modernization.

Through BPR, DFPS mapped current processes end-to-end, from intake and screening through case closure, to uncover inefficiencies and design solutions that improve the daily experience of caseworkers and strengthen outcomes for children, families, and vulnerable adults. Comprehensive reviews of SWI and RCCI identified opportunities to simplify processes, strengthen policy alignment, and better support staff in their daily work. The redesigned workflows developed with input from staff ensure the new system reflects the realities of frontline practice and supports quality decision-making.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS continued its BPR initiative to improve efficiency, consistency, and service quality across investigation programs. Comprehensive reviews of SWI and RCCI identified opportunities to simplify processes, strengthen policy alignment, and better support staff in their daily work.

Within SWI, modernization efforts improved how reports are received and screened, reduced redundant tasks, and enhanced communication with those reporting concerns, increasing accuracy, improving timeliness, and helping ensure investigations begin with clear and complete information. Similarly, in RCCI, process improvements established more tailored review pathways, allowing DFPS to focus resources where they are most needed while maintaining strong oversight of safety and quality of care. Together, these initiatives reflect DFPS's commitment to modernizing operations, supporting employees, and delivering a more consistent, high-quality response to children, families, and providers statewide.

2026 Key Actions

- **Strengthen Accuracy and Consistency in Intake Screening.** Continue refining intake guidelines, questions, and screening pathways to support more accurate decision-making and consistent application of policy.
- **Improve Efficiency of Digital and Electronic Reporting.** Enhance digital reporting processes, streamline correspondence handling, and modernize remaining mail and fax workflows to reduce administrative burden and improve timeliness.
- **Enhance Oversight of Historical Abuse and Neglect Reports.** Strengthen monitoring of historical intakes that qualify for priority downgrades under updated guidelines to ensure statewide consistency and quality.
- **Optimize Screening Operations Through Data-Driven Improvements.** Expand screening pathways and continuously monitor performance data to guide system refinement and improve efficiency across workload streams.

- **Advance Statewide Consistency and Quality in Investigations.** Expand the redesigned RCCI investigative pathways across all regions and use data metrics to guide further improvements in statewide practice.
- **Improve Staff Understanding and Application of Policy.** Enhance training and guidance to support consistent implementation of redesigned processes.
- **Apply BPR Recommendations Across Additional DFPS Programs.** Leverage lessons learned and recommendations emerging from completed BPR efforts to inform implementation in other programs as they undergo redesign.

Implement a New Case Management System

Initiative

Implementation of a new case management system to enhance and improve usability, data quality, records management and information sharing in support of better outcomes for DFPS clients.

Lead Division

Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

DFPS operates in a demanding environment where workforce stability, modern technology, and secure systems are essential to carrying out its mission. In 2025, DFPS received legislative approval and funding from the 89th Legislature to develop a new case management system that will replace the aging IMPACT platform currently used by DFPS, Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs), and partner agencies. The new system will be designed as a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) per the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) guidelines and will qualify for federal reimbursement to offset development costs.

This modernized platform will streamline casework by reducing redundant data entry, improving documentation efficiency, and enhancing staff engagement with children and families. Integration and improvements to other key DFPS systems, such as the content repository, which holds photographs, recordings, and other artifacts, will also further support

casework practice. It will also strengthen data quality, provide supervisors and leadership with improved tools and dashboards to monitor performance, and support data-driven decision-making across all DFPS programs. While planning and design work are underway, full implementation will take place over several years and depend on future legislative appropriations. Once complete, the new system will create a more efficient, mobile friendly, user-centered framework to improve case practice and outcomes for children, youth, and families served by DFPS.

2026 Key Actions

- **Business Process Redesign.** Continue Business Process Redesign efforts for the next series of programs and functions, to include Statewide Intake (SWI), Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS), DFPS Records Management Group (RMG), and Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCCs).
- **Approval from Administration for Children and Families (ACF).** Secure approval from ACF to begin implementation of building the new system.
- **Prepare for System Implementation.** Select an implementation vendor and secure additional support service vendors.
- **Coordinate with the Department of Information Resources (DIR).** Develop a detailed plan for use of DIR's newly executed contract for technology services.
- **Statewide Intake Implementation.** Develop requirements for the new SWI system, further expansion on opportunities for business process redesign, and begin engagement with the vendor to design the new system, pending approval from Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

Integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) Capabilities

Initiative

Launch an AI pilot to develop scalable, agencywide practices for integrating AI into operations.

Lead Division

Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

DFPS is actively advancing a comprehensive, agencywide strategy for the responsible and secure use of AI. One component of this strategy involves identifying ways to integrate AI into the new case management system. Other elements include determining how AI can be used to reduce time spent on routine tasks, allowing staff to focus on work that requires professional judgment and direct engagement with children, families, and vulnerable adults.

To assist with providing guidance and governance to help DFPS maximize AI's potential, DFPS established the DFPS AI Center of Excellence (AI CoE). The AI CoE is a standing governance body composed of cross-functional DFPS representatives. Through the course of the AI CoE work, the team met with multiple divisions across the agency and catalogued over 75 separate AI use cases, many of which will be prioritized into requirements for the new case management system.

In 2025, DFPS launched a targeted AI pilot focused on exploring how generative AI can support the work of the agency. The results of this pilot will guide the agency's broader implementation roadmap and establish the framework for adopting generative AI in a secure and ethical manner.

2026 Key Actions

- **AI Pilot Evaluation.** Evaluate the results of the pilot to identify the next steps. Final evaluation report available February 2026.
- **Expand Generative AI Training and Resources.** Evaluate feedback from the AI Pilot and subsequently design and implement training and resources to address frequently asked questions, effective prompt development, appropriate use, and any other identified gaps.
- **Expand Generative AI Access.** Strategically expand access to and use of generative AI across DFPS.
- **Evaluate and Update Policy.** Continue to evaluate and revise DFPS AI policy in accordance with legislative mandates, Department of Information Resources guidance, and established ethical standards and guidelines for appropriate use.
- **Prioritize Future Use Cases.** Review and prioritize the AI CoE Use Case Inventory for potential future use.

Implement Search Engine for Multi-Agency Reportable Conduct (SEMARC)

Initiative

Implementation of SEMARC will allow partner agencies to access background check screening information and support agencies in protecting vulnerable populations.

Lead Division

Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

The 88th Legislature established SEMARC, and the 89th Legislature provided continued funding for its implementation. SEMARC is a centralized, multi-agency search system designed for authorized users to search for information across multiple agencies on individuals with a history of reportable conduct.

The search engine aggregates reportable conduct data from the following state agencies:

- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)
- Texas Education Agency (TEA)
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)

Participating agencies and other authorized users can access the system to conduct cross-agency background checks. SEMARC results will be used to determine an individual's eligibility for employment, volunteer positions, certification, contracts, or licensure in organizations serving vulnerable populations, such as child care operations, school districts, long-term care facilities, and probation departments.

By linking multiple registries into a single platform, SEMARC improves transparency and strengthens safeguards by preventing individuals with reportable conduct history in one system from having access to vulnerable populations in another setting.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS achieved significant milestones in the implementation of SEMARC. Phase I of the technology project was completed, establishing the foundational functionality of the SEMARC application. DFPS also finalized and implemented a governance structure, including the SEMARC Executive Steering Committee

and supporting subcommittees such as the Technology Oversight Committee, to guide implementation and ongoing oversight. These committees and workgroups advanced key implementation activities, including development of a help desk support plan and identification of remaining technology tasks necessary for full system deployment. In addition, DFPS collaborated closely with partner agencies to develop draft governance documents, communication plans, and SEMARC user guides. The SEMARC Memorandum of Understanding was finalized and executed by all participating agencies, marking a major milestone in interagency coordination and readiness for implementation.

2026 Key Actions

- **Interagency Coordination.** Continue leading interagency coordination to support program implementation and ongoing management.
- **Strengthen User Support Infrastructure.** Collaborate with HHSC to establish a dedicated help desk for SEMARC users and escalated issue resolution.
- **Guide System Rollout.** Coordinate staggered SEMARC go-live dates across partner agencies.
- **Ensure Consistent Communication and Access to Information.** Develop a comprehensive communications plan and standardized processes for distributing and maintaining SEMARC materials for partner-agency use.
- **Update Regulatory Requirements.** Publish new rules in the Texas Administrative Code that support SEMARC implementation.
- **Equip Users for Successful Adoption.** Develop detailed processes and resource guides for SEMARC users.

Implement the Contracts and Grants Management System (CGMS)

Initiative

Implementation of a new Contracts and Grants Management System to centralize the tracking and management of contract inventory and activities, enhancing DFPS's capacity to oversee service delivery and vendor performance.

Lead Divisions

Office of the Chief Operating Officer and Community-Based Care Operations

Background

DFPS is advancing a comprehensive modernization effort to improve the consistency, transparency, and efficiency of contract and grants management across the agency. The Contracts and Grants Management System (CGMS) will automate and standardize key processes throughout the contract lifecycle, enhancing data integrity and operational efficiency.

CGMS will include the implementation of a data governance tool to ensure high-quality, accurate, and consistent data across contracting divisions, supporting better decision-making and providing reporting to both DFPS and contractors. CGMS will also implement infrastructure for a new data lakehouse — an integrated data storage system that improves reporting capabilities and strengthens data quality assurance activities.

The CGMS system will include a new public-facing portal that allows DFPS contractors to manage their contracts, apply for contracting opportunities, and complete Texas Child-Centered Care (T3C) credentialing requirements needed to receive updated foster care rates. In addition, Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) staff will have specialized roles in the system to support coordination of oversight for foster care providers that will help SSCCs provide monitoring information.

Changes in other supporting systems, such as IMPACT, will create a more connected, reliable, and user-friendly experience for both DFPS staff and external stakeholders.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, the CGMS project achieved several critical development milestones. DFPS completed a comprehensive needs assessment that incorporated direct feedback from SSCC contracting staff to identify business needs and prioritize system features that support more efficient and streamlined contract oversight across foster care providers. The project also completed a universal design for contracts and grants management that captures core DFPS business processes across all phases of the contract lifecycle. In addition, DFPS developed core system requirements for contract lifecycle management, establishing a strong foundation for continued system build and implementation.

2026 Key Actions

- **Technology Implementation.** DFPS will implement the data governance tool, followed by deployment of the CGMS and the supporting data lakehouse infrastructure to strengthen data quality, reporting capabilities, and contract management processes.

Establish a Data Governance Program

Initiative

Establish a comprehensive framework of policies, tools, and processes to ensure data accuracy, security, and responsible use across the organization. Aligning data management practices with agency objectives enhances decision-making, compliance, and operational efficiency.

Lead Division

Office of the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Operations

Background

Data governance is a critical foundation for DFPS as the agency continues to modernize its systems and strengthen data-driven decision-making. With the volume and sensitivity of information managed across child and adult protection programs, data governance ensures accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the data that drives policy, performance measurement, and reporting. Establishing clear governance structures and ownership enables DFPS to improve transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency while supporting compliance with state and federal privacy and security requirements.

As DFPS transitions to new technology systems and expands data-sharing capabilities, strong data

governance helps eliminate inefficiencies caused by fragmented or inconsistent data management practices. It also enhances the ability to measure outcomes, identify service gaps, and make informed decisions that improve safety, permanency, and well-being for the families and individuals served.

Making data governance a formal initiative positions DFPS to strengthen its data infrastructure, mitigate risks, and foster a culture of data-informed practice. By ensuring data is managed as a strategic asset, DFPS enhances collaboration with partner agencies, supports legislative reporting, and builds public trust through accurate, timely, and transparent information.

2026 Key Actions

- **Data Governance Initiation.** Identify and standardize DFPS data governance policies and procedures to improve consistency and alignment with agency goals, and establish key performance indicators to measure program effectiveness.
- **Data Stewardship Engagement.** Expand data stewardship by working with DFPS data owners and stewards to address data quality issues and establish a stewardship network that promotes best practices, continuous improvement, and data literacy.
- **Data Quality Evaluation.** Implement a Data Governance tool to support stewardship, metadata management, and documentation of data assets.
- **Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) Preparation.** Begin implementing strategies from the CCWIS Data Quality Plan to assess and improve DFPS data quality in preparation for the new case management system.

WORKFORCE

Advance the Employee Wellness and Safety Roadmap

Initiative

Promote employee safety, trauma support, and work-life balance through a coordinated approach to wellness and organizational well-being.

Lead Division

Office of the Chief Operating Officer

Background

The work performed by DFPS staff is challenging and can significantly affect staff well-being, job satisfaction, and retention. Prioritizing wellness and building a safety roadmap are essential to ensuring that staff have the tools, support systems, and organizational culture needed to manage stress effectively and sustain high-quality work over time.

DFPS is advancing a comprehensive approach to employee wellness by promoting safety, trauma

support, and work-life balance across all programs. Through the *Stronger Together* framework, the agency is integrating wellness, safety, and organizational culture initiatives to better support staff in high-stress roles. Efforts include expanding regional wellness coordination, developing standardized workplace incident response protocols, enhancing access to resilience and trauma-informed training, and strengthening communication around mental health resources.

Successes in 2025

In 2025, DFPS advanced its workforce strategy through targeted initiatives that strengthened recruitment, retention, professional development, and staff well-being. The agency expanded partnerships with colleges, universities, and school districts to build a diverse talent pipeline, while leveraging digital platforms and outreach events to attract mission-driven candidates statewide. DFPS reinforced staff retention by embedding performance metrics into daily operations, updating key policies to promote flexibility and wellness, and distributing one-time legislative funding to support direct delivery staff. DFPS introduced enhanced certification tracking, launched innovative training pilots, and expanded professional growth opportunities. To promote a supportive organizational culture, DFPS implemented the *Stronger Together* wellness framework, expanded regional wellness coordination, streamlined engagement surveys, and developed protocols and training to address staff safety, resilience, and mental health.

2026 Key Actions

- **Expand Safety and Wellness Awareness Campaigns.** Increase the visibility of Safety Awareness Month and other safety initiatives through enhanced training, communication, and informational campaigns.
- **Enhance Use of the AlertMedia Safety Tool.** Continue optimizing the use of the AlertMedia platform, a worker safety tool that enables staff to request immediate emergency law enforcement assistance while performing fieldwork. Targeted campaigns and agencywide engagement activities will assess the effectiveness of the tool and identify barriers to use.
- **Implement the Workplace Incident Response Protocol.** Advance and begin implementing the Workplace Incident Response Protocol and related policy to strengthen staff safety.
- **Deliver Statewide Wellness Education and Support.** Promote and host wellness webinars for staff and managers, drawing on resources and expertise from the agency's wellness and benefits partners.
- **Strengthen Regional Wellness Capacity.** Onboard, train, and support new regional wellness coordinators to increase local wellness visibility and engagement across the state.
- **Integrate Safety and Wellness into Daily Operations.** DFPS will embed safety and wellness expectations into supervisory practice and performance management to strengthen support for frontline staff.

Successes From the 2025 Annual Plan

DFPS realized important successes from the 2025 Annual Plan, including initiatives that have concluded or transitioned into ongoing operations and therefore do not appear in the current 2026 plan. These accomplishments strengthened service delivery, enhanced workforce capacity, and informed the agency's strategic priorities. Successes from the 2025 Annual Plan that carry forward into 2026 are reflected throughout this report.

APS Financial Exploitation Specialization

APS expanded its financial exploitation specialization to strengthen investigation quality and consistency. The agency enhanced staff expertise through advanced training in forensic interviewing and financial analysis, certified staff as Fraud Examiners, and implemented new tools to support evidence-driven investigations. APS also launched quarterly roundtables and training sub-groups to improve collaboration and statewide practice. A new Financial Exploitation Guide was developed to support investigative standards, and APS entered into a data-sharing agreement with the Dallas County District Attorney's Office to improve case coordination.

APS Complex Service Delivery Pilot

APS launched the Complex Service Delivery pilot to address the intensive needs of clients requiring coordinated, multidisciplinary interventions. The pilot strengthened partnerships with local entities — including boarding home task forces, emergency services, and the Office of the Attorney General — to improve safety and accountability in high-risk settings. The unit supported successful interventions in unsafe unlicensed boarding homes and advanced collaboration with community partners. APS and Harris County Area Agency on Aging also secured a \$600,000 grant for the RISE project to reduce elder abuse and self-neglect through restorative practices, motivational interviewing, and enhanced support networks.

Improve Mandatory Reporting in the State of Texas Through Training and Resources

DFPS strengthened mandatory reporting statewide by expanding training, outreach, and consistent public-facing guidance for professionals with mandatory reporting responsibilities. The agency focused on improving understanding of reporting requirements, reinforcing appropriate referral pathways, and promoting consistent messaging for professionals most likely to encounter abuse or neglect. Through targeted engagement with education and law enforcement partners, DFPS advanced a more coordinated and informed approach to mandatory reporting across Texas.

Expand Support for Screening Functions

DFPS strengthened screening capacity and cross-program coordination to support timely, consistent intake decision-making. Efforts focused on improving collaboration between Child Protective Investigations and Residential Child Care Investigations, expanding screening coverage to meet evolving program demands, and increasing flexibility within the screening workforce. DFPS also enhanced oversight and quality assurance to support consistent screening practices statewide. Collectively, these actions improved operational resilience, strengthened communication across programs, and supported more effective screening processes.

**APS Retention Effort:
Training While Working Pilot**

APS advanced retention and workforce development by transitioning its redesigned Training While Working pilot into a permanent, competency-based training model. The initiative strengthened early-career support, enhanced supervisory involvement, and expanded training experiences to better prepare staff for the realities of APS casework. These efforts support improved retention, workforce stability, and service quality across the program.

**APS Retention Effort:
Enhanced Support for APS Supervisors**

APS strengthened its leadership capacity by expanding professional development opportunities for supervisors and managers across the program. Through targeted leadership forums, cohort-based learning, and enhanced mentoring and training supports, APS focused on building management consistency, collaboration, and readiness. These efforts emphasized leadership development, effective case oversight, and workforce sustainability, reinforcing APS's commitment to a strong supervisory foundation and long-term organizational effectiveness.

**Statewide Intake Retention Efforts:
Retention Initiative Steering Committee**

DFPS advanced Statewide Intake retention efforts by engaging staff across divisions through coordinated initiatives focused on workforce engagement, morale, and stability. Through cross-functional collaboration and employee-driven input, the agency strengthened mentoring, communication, and leadership connection efforts to support staff retention. DFPS also continued using workforce feedback to inform future priorities and guide continuous improvement in workplace satisfaction. Collectively, these efforts underscore DFPS's commitment to fostering a supportive work environment and sustaining a stable, engaged workforce.

General Information and Resources

DFPS HOTLINES

Hotlines and Information Lines

Texas Abuse/Neglect Hotline:

1-800-252-5400

Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, people who are 65 or older, and people with disabilities, or violations of minimum standards in a child care operation. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Foster Care and Adoption Information:

1-800-233-3405

Learn how to become a foster or adoptive parent and receive information for current foster or adoptive parents.

Child Care Information:

1-800-862-5252

Receive information about child care in Texas.

Texas Youth Helpline:

1-800-989-6884

(chat and texting also available)

Provides peer counseling to youth and family members for family conflicts, delinquency, truancy, abuse, neglect, and running away.

Texas Parent Helpline:

1-833-680-0611

(chat and texting also available)

Assists parents with their individual needs for mental health, family conflict, spouse/partner relationships, and any other parental challenge affecting them.

Office of Consumer Relations:

1-800-720-7777

Make an inquiry or complaint about an existing DFPS case.

DFPS WEBSITES

dfps.texas.gov

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

TxAbuseHotline.org

Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation

AdoptChildren.org

Adopt children through the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange

TexasYouth.org

Texas Youth and Runaway Hotline

TexasParentingHelpline.org

Free and confidential resources for parents

BabyMosesHotline.org

Learn about Texas's Safe Haven Law

ProtectTexasAdults.org

Adult abuse prevention

DFPS ADDRESS

Mailing

P.O. Box 149030
Austin, TX 78714-9030

Physical

4900 North Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78751

Phone

512-929-6900



***Texas Kinship Care –
DFPS Public Website***

Information, support,
and assistance regarding
DFPS kinship care.



Kinship Support Groups

Contact our kinship specialist
to learn more.



Kinship Caregiver Verification

Learn more about how getting
verified as a kinship foster
home could help your family.



***Texas Kinship Caregivers
Facebook Page***

Designed to support and
engage kinship caregivers by
sharing helpful information and
resources across Texas.



***Texas Adoption Resource
Exchange***

An online tool that helps match
adoptive parents and children
awaiting adoption.