



Council on Children and Families Legislative Report

**As Required by
S.B. 1646, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009**

Health and Human Services Commission

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1. Executive Summary

The Texas Council on Children and Families (Council), created by Senate Bill (S.B.) 1646, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, provides this biennial report to the Legislature on the work of Council member agencies and committees. The report includes recommendations for further developing and maintaining a statewide system of quality health, education, and human services for children and families.

Recommendations from the 2012 Council report were updated with the current status of those initiatives to illustrate the forward movement and positive impact that the work of the advisory councils and committees have had on services for the children of Texas (Appendix A).

Continuing its support and coordination with children- and youth-focused state workgroups, Council inventoried relevant and related committees and workgroups to track progress and provide updates on the status of efforts that support the three overarching goals of the Council. This process included review of current legislative reports or strategic plans from relevant interagency groups. The information gathered by the Council during this process assisted in developing their recommendations for the 84th Legislature.

The Council has three overarching goals that form the basis of its work. These goals – strong families, healthy communities, and successful youth – are the framework within which the Council determines its recommendations to the Legislature. The strategies and initiatives below are those that Council recommends for continued or enhanced support.

Goal 1: Strong Families

Recommendation 1: Support funding for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs to maintain current services and meet forecasted levels for the 2016-2017 biennium.

Recommendation 2: Support new information technology resources for families to identify and support the special needs of their families. This recommendation can be accomplished through continued funding of the Task Force for Children with Special Needs and its forthcoming website for families, as well as the [Little Texans Big Futures](#) website.

Recommendation 3: Increase the number of residential treatment center beds for the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)/Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Residential Treatment Center Project. The relinquishment slots component of the request will allow DSHS to increase the number of funded beds in private residential treatment centers from 10 to 30 for children/youth with severe emotional disorders who are at risk of parental relinquishment of custody to the DFPS due solely to a lack of mental health resources where the family lives.

Recommendation 4: Support DFPS in creating a Child Safety Office which would allow for a centralized, independent review of child abuse and neglect fatalities and serious/near fatal injuries under DFPS' purview and sharing these statistics with other data collection entities, such as the State Child Fatality Review Team.

Recommendation 5: Support Expansion of Project Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES). Additional funding for HOPES would allow DFPS to expand access to community-based projects, including evidence-based support services for more than 1,500 military families adjusting to deployment. Funding would also enable HOPES to provide community-based services to families dealing with substance abuse, domestic violence, parenting challenges, and other issues. Such services would reach 850 monthly clients in fiscal year 2016 and 1,080 monthly clients in fiscal year 2017.

Goal 2: Healthy Communities

Recommendation 1: Support the Texas System of Care Consortium (SOC) as a means to serve children with complex mental health needs. Several Texas communities are implementing this proven practice and efforts are underway to expand its use across the state.

Recommendation 2: Provide for expanded cross-agency collaboration to address systemic issues and family-specific needs.

Recommendation 3: Support establishment of a statewide network and delivery system for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to ensure that children with special needs and their families receive supports and services that prevent and reduce challenging behaviors and related crises.

Recommendation 4: Support expansion of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and DSHS Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver which allows for more flexibility in the funding of intensive community-based services and supports for children with serious emotional disorders and their families. The YES waiver services are instrumental in treating the mental health needs of children and helping their families to no longer consider relinquishment as a potential solution

Goal 3: Successful Youth

Recommendation 1: Support development of a comprehensive manual to help students, families, and caregivers participate effectively in the process of youth transitioning to independent living as adults.

Recommendation 2: Support funding for Accelerate Texas to integrate high-demand occupational training with literacy and numeracy education to prepare youth and other individuals for the workforce.

Recommendation 3: Continue funding for expansion of youth prevention and intervention programs and services that have demonstrated success at reducing the likelihood that youth will engage in delinquency, truancy, or dropping out of school.

This report reflects the Council member agencies' and committees' work toward a common vision of strengthening families, promoting healthy communities, and ensuring that youth become successful adults.

2. Introduction

The Texas Council on Children and Families (Council) was created by S.B. 1646, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009. Council membership comprises executive leadership or their delegate from health and human service agencies, education, juvenile justice departments, the workforce commission, and two family representatives who are parents of children who have received services from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and two youth who also have received services from HHSC (see Appendix B).

The Council was established to coordinate the state's health, education, and human services systems to ensure that children and families have access to needed services. This is accomplished by working with other advisory councils and state agencies to address issues affecting children throughout the state. The Council structure, by its nature, allows the different entities to share information regarding services and promote an integrated approach to providing those services to children and families.

Each biennium the Council is required to report on what is needed to build and maintain a statewide system of quality health, education, and human services for children and families. The report includes updates on the implementation of earlier recommendations, including whether the implementation has proceeded in accordance with the timeline, outcome, and benchmarks identified by the Council (Appendix A).

The Council is also required to analyze the biennial legislative appropriations requests (LARs) of its member agencies for services provided to children and their families, and to prepare and present a report to the Legislature each biennium. Statutorily, the report is to identify appropriations that, through coordination by Council members, could be modified in the next LAR to eliminate waste or increase available services, and recommend those modifications for consideration during the development of the next biennial LAR. The [appropriations report summary for fiscal year 2014](#) is available on the HHSC website.

The Council's priorities – strong families, healthy communities, and successful youth – are the basis for the following questions and guide the recommendations in this report.

1. How can the State of Texas help families become stronger?
2. How can the State of Texas help communities meet their obligations to ensure children and families are nurtured and healthy?
3. How can the State of Texas best support its youth and help them become successful adults?

Recognizing the state's investment in these priorities, the Council has highlighted strategies and initiatives from committees, councils, and agencies that it believes should be continued or enhanced to support these goals.

3. Recommendations and Strategies

The Council held quarterly meetings, received input at a public hearing, and surveyed stakeholders representing more than two dozen children’s advisory committees to gather feedback on goals and strategies for addressing its three priority areas: strong families, healthy communities, and successful youth. Cross-cutting themes identified from the survey and public testimony centered on the following:

- Promoting prevention and early intervention.
- Ensuring a family-centered approach to services.
- Developing a more qualified, better trained workforce.
- Providing better access and coordination of mental health and substance abuse services.
- Improving coordination of services for youth transitioning to adulthood.
- Improving data sharing.
- Ensuring better coordination among agencies and providers.

The three overarching goals also provide a framework for organizing the Council's initiatives, strategies, and recommendations in this report.

3.1 Goal 1: Strong Families

1. How can the State of Texas help families become stronger?

Families are the most important factor in promoting their child’s development. The early years of a child’s life are the most crucial for future success in school and life. Families and policymakers alike must understand the importance of early childhood; promote healthy childhood development; and intervene early when developmental, health, or behavioral issues arise. Prevention and early intervention are the least costly and most effective approaches.

Specific factors, including poverty, child maltreatment, parental mental health, substance abuse, and family violence, endanger a child’s development, often leading to behavioral and learning problems. Evidence of the linkages between poverty, levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and poor math skills, for example, can be found in a 2012 statement from the [National Institutes of Health](#).

Stakeholders called on the Council to address the whole family, supporting parent education, and promoting peer support programs. Agency programs that serve children and their families should partner with parents and caregivers to provide needed supports and build on family strengths. Research shows that families are strong when the following conditions are present:

- Parents are resilient.
- Families have social connections and are part of a community.
- Parents have knowledge of healthy child development and parenting approaches.
- Families have concrete supports in times of need.
- Healthy social and emotional development is promoted.

Child-serving systems must support and strengthen families by addressing factors that promote strong families and healthy children. Coordination across family-serving systems is essential for

supporting and strengthening families. Continual support for families, in respectful partnership with them, begins with early childhood services and programs and continues through childhood and adolescence. Many families need only information, but some need more tangible supports when they are vulnerable, stressed, or caring for a child with behavioral, developmental, or health issues.

Goal 1 Collaborations

The following state and community-based initiatives strengthen and support families.

Texas Home Visiting Program

The [Texas Home Visiting](#) program provides evidence-based home visiting services to enhance the health and well-being of children in high-risk communities. Texas Home Visiting uses four evidence-based programs proven to support families from pregnancy to kindergarten. The programs are Nurse Family Partnership, Early Head Start – Home Based, Parents as Teachers, and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters. This program operates in 39 counties selected through a rigorous assessment of needs and available resources.

Task Force for Children with Special Needs

[Task Force for Children with Special Needs](#) is developing a website by and for parents of children with special needs that will span ages birth to 22 years. Seven agencies are working with stakeholders and families to create a comprehensive website for families of children with special needs. The site will help families gain access to accurate and timely information relevant to their child's development and diagnosis. Roll out is scheduled for July 2015.

The Benefit Bank of Texas

[The Benefit Bank of Texas](#) helps individuals and families more easily access services for which they are eligible. The web-based system simplifies and centralizes the process of applying for programs and resources such as food assistance, health coverage, home energy assistance, and more. Texas is one of five participating states.

Texas Early Learning Council

The [Texas Early Learning Council](#) has recommended Infant and Toddler Learning Guidelines; developed an Early Childhood Professional Development System; furthered the use of the Early Development Instrument in Texas; and worked on other initiatives including a quality rating and improvement system.

Texas Rising Star

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) Workgroup, created by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in response to H.B. 376, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, considered and incorporated many of the recommendations of the Early Learning Council in its recommendations for modifications to the standards for TRS quality certification for child care providers in the subsidized child care program.

Participants in the TRS Workgroup and its subcommittees include relevant state agencies, child care providers, local workforce development board members and staff, and other early childhood education stakeholders. The Workgroup has developed recommendations for revisions to the TRS program to strengthen the standards used to assess and certify high-quality child care

providers. In making its recommendations for modifications to the standards and administration of the TRS program, the Workgroup considered and addressed:

- Texas Quality Rating and Improvement System recommendations.
- Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines.
- Texas Core Competencies for Early Practitioners and Administrators.
- Minimum licensing requirements for TRS providers.
- Structure and scoring of TRS program standards.
- Minimum requirements for assessing and monitoring providers on the TRS program standards.
- Regulation of nationally accredited facilities and facilities regulated by the military.

Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force

Chaired by Attorney General Greg Abbott, the [Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force](#) works in collaboration with state and local agencies to combat human trafficking. In 2014 the task force published *Human Trafficking: a Guide for Texas Education Professionals* to help education professionals recognize and report instances of suspected human trafficking.

Goal 1 Recommendations

The Council continues to support screening of children from birth to age eight to identify and address any medical, behavioral, developmental, or learning issues as early as possible so that families can obtain needed supports. The Council will continue to support efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of screening. In addition, the Council is making the following recommendations and strategies to promote strong families for consideration during this legislative session.

Recommendation 1: Support funding for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs to maintain current services and meet forecasted levels for the 2016-2017 biennium.

Recommendation 2: Support new information technology resources for families to identify and support the special needs of their families. This recommendation can be accomplished through continued funding of the Task Force for Children with Special Needs and its forthcoming website for families, as well as the [Little Texans Big Futures](#) website.

Recommendation 3: Increase the number of residential treatment center beds for the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)/Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Residential Treatment Center Project. The relinquishment slots component of the request will allow DSHS to increase the number of funded beds in private residential treatment centers from 10 to 30 for children/youth with severe emotional disorder who are at risk of parental relinquishment of custody to the DFPS due solely to a lack of mental health resources where the family lives.

Recommendation 4: Support DFPS in creating a Child Safety Office which would allow for a centralized, independent review of child abuse and neglect fatalities and serious/near fatal injuries under DFPS' purview and sharing these statistics with other data collection entities, such as the State Child Fatality Review Team.

Recommendation 5: Support Expansion of Project Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES). Additional funding for HOPES would allow DFPS to expand access to community-based projects, including evidence-based support services for more than 1,500 military families adjusting to deployment. Funding would also enable HOPES to provide community-based services to families dealing with substance abuse, domestic violence, parenting challenges, and other issues. Such services would reach 850 monthly clients in fiscal year 2016 and 1,080 monthly clients in fiscal year 2017.

Goal 1 Legislative Activities

Tables 1 and 2 below outline the Legislative Appropriations Requests (LARs) and other recommendations related to developing strong families.

Table 1: 2014-2015 LAR Exceptional Item Requests Promoting Strong Families

Agency	LAR Exception Item Request
Department of Aging and Disability Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting Independence will continue to move individuals into the Home- and Community-based Services waiver program. ● Reducing Community Program interest lists would result in an increase of 15,780 slots for community-based services and 1,646 slots for STAR+PLUS (medical assistance only).
Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an Office of Autism Services. Expand comprehensive and focused services in the Autism Program, and pilot innovative treatment models. ● Maintain Early Childhood Intervention services at fiscal year 2015 levels for eligible children and fund fiscal year 2016-2017 forecasted caseload growth. ● Invest in independence and blindness prevention/children’s blindness services.
Department of Family and Protective Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create Child Safety Office at the agency level, allowing for a centralized, independent review of child abuse and neglect fatalities and serious/near fatal injuries under DFPS’ purview. ● Increase support of military families and high-risk families. ● Support expansion of HOPES.
Department of State Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased funding to reduce the number of individuals with special needs who are receiving uncompensated care in their communities. ● Additional funding for Primary Healthcare Program for Women to promote early detection of breast and cervical cancers, help clients avoid preventable hospitalizations, avert Medicaid births, and reduce the number of preterm births.
Health and Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase capacity of existing family violence providers.

- Services Commission
 - Maintain cost trends for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Texas Education Agency
 - Continue literacy and language development initiative for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

Table 2: Legislative Report Recommendations Promoting Strong Families

Committee	Recommendation
Texas System of Care Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing financial support for communication efforts around mental health awareness, promotion, and the elimination of stigma. • Explore the feasibility of implementation of high-fidelity wraparound services for all children with intensive behavioral health needs who require intensive care coordination across multiple child-serving systems. • Share key data elements among public mental health, education, juvenile justice, and child welfare systems in order to better assess child-level outcomes across systems. • Partner with Texas Health Steps and medical associations to explore the use of standardized mental health screening tools by pediatricians and encourage referrals to early intervention services.
Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of <i>Act Early Texas</i> as a child development screening tool.
Interagency Task Force for Children with Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a statewide network and delivery system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to ensure that children with special needs and their families receive supports and services that prevent and reduce challenging behaviors and related crisis. • Help the system better inform and empower families.
Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement strategies that address the needs of families in crisis to prevent the unnecessary placement of children in an institutional setting. • Ensure that the planning process for individualized education services and supports for students with disabilities is centered on and directed by the individual and family.
Texas Human Trafficking Prevention Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services for child victims of human trafficking. • Improve data collection and intelligence sharing among law enforcement agencies. • Develop a list of key indicators to identify a person likely to be a victim of trafficking.

Committee	Recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and train professionals to identify and assist victims.
Children’s Policy Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Family Partner pilot program to promote families helping families.
Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage existing community and state resources and service providers to educate and increase the awareness of parents and caretakers regarding the need for proper nutrition.
State Blue Ribbon Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and expand home visitation as a strategy for child abuse prevention.
Texas Statewide Health Coordinating Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote prevention, high-quality early care and education, and intervention, including parent education that includes child development and nutrition.
Texas Early Learning Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among federally funded and state-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including among state agencies responsible for administering such programs.

3.2 Goal 2: Healthy Communities

2. How can the State of Texas help communities meet their obligations to ensure children and families are nurtured and healthy?

Continuing its focus on children’s mental health, the Council recognizes that (1) mental health is interconnected with physical health; (2) many systems address children’s mental health needs; and (3) children are generally best served in community-based services that are family-focused and coordinated. Stakeholders shared with the Council the need for teachers, school nurses and counselors, and primary health care physicians to learn and screen for signs of mental illness.

Of special interest is the need for an integrated health care approach that addresses both behavioral health and primary care issues. Integrated health care approaches that align behavioral health expertise with early childhood care and education settings, along with health care settings such as pediatric and primary care office environments, can holistically address a child’s developmental, emotional, mental health, and physical health needs. Integrating services and supports with a proactive focus on prevention and early intervention (rather than a reactive approach later in life) is less costly and less stigmatizing because they take place in routine settings that people interact with on a regular basis.

To identify ways Texas can help communities improve the well-being of children and youth, the Council examined efforts at the state and community levels that bring together partners to

address the needs of children and youth. The Council also sought input from public and private stakeholders and reviewed recommendations from other legislative and advisory committees.

Goal 2 Collaborations

The following collaborations reflect the resources available in communities throughout Texas to promote healthy communities:

Regional Healthcare Partnerships

[Regional Healthcare Partnerships](#) are part of the Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program 1115 Waiver that creates a regional plan to voluntarily improve regional access, quality, cost-effectiveness, and collaboration in the delivery of health care services.

Healthy Texas Babies

In collaboration with HHSC and the Texas Chapter of the March of Dimes, DSHS developed an initiative called [Healthy Texas Babies](#) to help Texas communities decrease infant mortality using evidence-based interventions involving community members, health care providers, and insurance companies.

Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies

Texas Collaborative for Healthy Mothers and Babies is a Healthy Texas Babies initiative whose membership comprises 203 members, 156 of whom are non-Health and Human Services agency staff. The group's work is focused on promoting community health, neonatal care, and obstetrical care.

Texas Home Visiting Program

The Texas Home Visiting Program, administered by the Office of Health Coordination and Consumer Services within HHSC, is working with public and private partnerships to help targeted communities develop a comprehensive early childhood system that promotes maternal, infant, and early childhood health, safety, and development, and strong parent-child relationships. The program includes behavioral health consultations in pediatric and early child care settings.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The Texas Behavior Support Initiative is designed to build capacity in Texas schools for providing [\(PBIS\)](#). Schools that have implemented school-wide PBIS have seen fewer disciplinary problems, less bullying, a greater sense of safety on campus, improved academic performance, increased attendance, and reduced staff time spent on disciplinary issues.

Safe Schools, Healthy Students

Fifteen Texas school districts have participated in this national initiative to develop communitywide approaches to creating safe schools and promoting healthy childhood development.

Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council

While a number of programs address obesity in school-aged children, few reach children earlier in life. S.B. 395, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, created the Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council to coordinate state efforts to prevent obesity in younger children, particularly those in day care, foster care, or early supplemental nutrition programs.

Texas Early Learning Council

The [Texas Early Learning Council](#) aims to improve school readiness in Texas through targeted strategies stemming from its four priority areas: parental outreach and communications; early childhood workforce and professional development; collaborations and standards; and data systems, and quality rating and improvement systems.

Medical Home Workgroup

A medical home is a partnership with a child, the child's family, and the place where the child receives primary health care. The Medical Home Workgroup is a forum for members to share goals and objectives, report on their organizations' progress, and increase knowledge of the philosophy and effectiveness of medical homes.

Texas Suicide Prevention Council

The [Texas Suicide Prevention Council](#) is a group of local suicide prevention coalitions and statewide agencies joined together to implement the Texas Suicide Prevention Plan. There are multiple promising practices within Texas addressing suicide prevention.

Community Resource Coordination Groups

[Community Resource Coordination Groups](#) are local interagency groups composed of public and private providers and families who together develop individual service plans for children, youth, and adults. More than half of youth and families served by Community Resource Coordination Groups need mental health services.

Wraparound Practice

Child-Family Wraparound Teams are a means to keep youth with the most serious emotional and behavioral problems in their homes and communities. The [wraparound practice](#) is being implemented in Texas through the System of Care framework, especially within the local mental health community centers.

Texas System of Care

[Texas System of Care](#) (SOC) works with local child- and youth-serving systems, such as child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and mental health, to provide a shared vision and framework for improved children's mental health outcomes in the community.

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) has [awarded \\$1.3 million in grants](#) to 24 counties as part of the agency's PEI initiative. This funding was awarded to programs and services across Texas that prevent or intervene in juvenile behaviors that lead to delinquency, truancy, school drop-out, or referral to the juvenile justice system. Examples of services funded include school-based truancy intervention officers, counseling services, parent mentors, parenting classes, bullying prevention, afterschool programs, and programs linking youth referred to disciplinary alternative education programs to needed services, supports, and resources.

Goal 2 Recommendations

The following recommendations focused on healthy communities are grounded in the core values of family-driven and youth-guided practices, cross-system approaches and data-driven strategies.

Recommendation 1: Support the SOC as a means to serve children with complex mental health needs. Several Texas communities are implementing this proven practice and efforts are underway to expand its use across the state.

Recommendation 2: Provide for expanded cross-agency collaboration to address systemic issues and family-specific needs.

Recommendation 3: Support establishment of a statewide network and delivery system for PBIS to ensure that children with special needs and their families receive supports and services that prevent and reduce challenging behaviors and related crises.

Recommendation 4: Support expansion of the Youth Empowerment Services (YES) Waiver which allows for more flexibility in the funding of intensive community-based services and supports for children with serious emotional disorders and their families. The YES waiver services are instrumental in treating the mental health needs of children and helping families avoid custodial relinquishment as a means to access critical services.

Goal 2 Legislative Activities

Tables 3 and 4 below outline budgetary requests and other recommendations related to promoting healthy communities.

Table 3: 2014-2015 LAR Exceptional Item Requests Promoting Healthy Communities

Agency	LAR Exception Item Request
Department of Family and Protective Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restore PEI Services.• Increase number of beds for children at risk of relinquishment due to mental health care needs.
Department of State Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase number of beds for children at risk of relinquishment due to mental health care needs.• Increase funding to reduce children on waiting lists for mental health services for children and children with special health care needs.• Enhance funding for substance abuse services.
Health and Human Services Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand family violence prevention and victim services.

Table 4: Legislative Report Recommendations Promoting Healthy Communities

Committee	Recommendation
Children's Policy Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support expansion of the YES waiver. • Promote Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support in schools and communities throughout Texas. • Provide parents and young adults with disabilities a listing of their rights and responsibilities including rights under Scooter's Law; Admission, Review and Dismissal and Individualized Education Program participation at age 18; graduation options and alternatives to guardianship.
Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the waiting lists for the Medicaid Waivers by at least ten percent per year. • Expand the number of service providers offering evidence-based autism spectrum disorder interventions. • Offer universal screening for autism spectrum disorder and developmental delays. • Fund 12 pilot Texas Community-Based Autism Diagnostic Partnerships.
Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebalance the system that serves persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities by expanding cost-effective policies that allow individuals to live in the most integrated setting that meets their needs. • Prevent the unnecessary placement of children in institutional settings by developing and implementing strategies that address the needs of families in crisis.
State Child Fatality Review Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass distracted-driver legislation to address the risk of using wireless communication while driving.
Interagency Coordinating Council for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Hepatitis B immunizations among children and adults.
Interagency Task Force for Children with Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an interagency, community-based approach to crisis prevention and early intervention.
Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the health of children under the age of six by centralizing efforts among state agencies to combat childhood obesity and address malnutrition and undernourishment involving children, parents, families, caretakers, and communities.

Texas Early Learning Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive early learning cross-sector guidelines to improve collaboration and coordination across early childhood education and care programs in Texas.
Texas Statewide Health Coordinating Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement, and provide incentives for medical home and integrated health care models.

3.3 Goal 3: Successful Youth

3. How can the State of Texas best support its youth and help them become successful adults?

To become productive members of society, youth transitioning from state custodial care should be connected to community systems and resources, such as mentoring and case management focused on educational and career outcomes. Systems need to share information and be responsive to the needs of transitioning youth, to ensure they have the supports and resources they need.

Education, healthy social connections, minority status, and adequate employment opportunities affect outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood. The following information underscores the importance of services and supports for youth transitioning to adulthood.

Goal 3 Collaborations

The following collaborative efforts promote positive youth experiences and outcomes:

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides transition services for school-age youth with disabilities and must promote or facilitate an employment outcome as identified in the student's individualized plan for employment. Through the program, DARS counselors play an important role in transition planning as partners in the student's Individual Education Program by working with them, their families, and school professionals from the local education agency.

Foster Care & Student Success

The [Texas Education Agency](#) (TEA) provides information, resources, and tools to increase awareness of and support for the education of students in DFPS managing conservatorship. Included on the website is a [comprehensive resource guide](#) developed by TEA, DFPS, and the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families to help Texas schools and communities advancing the education of students in foster care.

Own Your Own Future

The [Own Your Own Future](#) website provides resources to youth, families, and educators to promote higher education. The website is sponsored by TEA and [Texas GEAR UP](#).

Texas Youth Connection

[TexasYouthConnection.org](#) is a project of DFPS. The website provides easy access to information on services available to foster youth who are transitioning to adulthood.

Transitioning to Independent Living

The DFPS holds independent living classes, conducts transition meetings with youth (Circles of Support), and assists with transitions to adult living. It also hosts a state conference, PEAKS (Physical and Environmental Activities for Knowledge and Skills) Camps, regional activities, and a two-day college conference to assist transitioning youth with skills ranging from communication and independent-living skills to making decisions about going to college. The DFPS created the Supervised Independent Living program for voluntary extended foster care placement so young adults can live on their own, while still receiving case management and support services to help them become independent and self-sufficient.

Goal 3 Recommendations

The Council makes the following recommendations to support transitioning youth.

Recommendation 1: Support the development of a comprehensive transition manual to provide information to students, families, and caregivers to prepare them to participate effectively in the transition planning process for youth.

Recommendation 2: Support funding for Accelerate Texas to integrate high-demand occupational training with literacy and numeracy education to prepare youth and other individuals for the workforce.

Recommendation 3: Support funding to continue the expansion of state support for Prevention and Intervention programs and services that have demonstrated success at reducing the likelihood that youth will engage in delinquency, truancy, or dropping out of school.

Goal 3 Legislative Activity

Tables 5 and 6 below outline budgetary requests and other recommendations related to promoting successful youth.

Table 5: 2014-2015 LAR Exceptional Item Requests Promoting Successful Youth

Agency	LAR Exception Item Request
Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the Independent Living Services general waiting list. • Increase funding for vision screening and treatment; eye health and disease education activities; a new online eligibility application; and two full-time equivalent employees for the Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment Program.
Department of Family and Protective Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Preparation for Adult Living Service.
Department of State Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase behavioral health treatment options for children.
Texas Juvenile Justice Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand probation and aftercare programs. • Add staff to support the most challenging students, enhance school climate, and provide supervised on-campus work programs for students who have graduated from high school. • Expand probation training and support.
Texas Workforce Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund Accelerate Texas to integrate industry aligned, high-demand occupational skill training with literacy and numeracy education to equip individuals for employment. • Increase contact rate and the number of individuals trained through apprenticeship program.

Table 6: Legislative Report Recommendations Promoting Successful Youth

Committee	Recommendation
Children's Policy Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HHSC should provide a transition consultant or community support navigator as a new Medicaid waiver benefit to guide youth and family through the transition planning process. • Increase the availability of medical homes for youth transitioning to adult services. • Develop a comprehensive transition manual to provide information to students, families, and caregivers to prepare them to participate effectively in the transition planning process for youth.
Texas Council on Developmental Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of employers interested in hiring persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. • Address the workforce shortage by collecting and analyzing trends regarding workforce demographics.
Interagency Task Force for Children with Special	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide youth transitioning to post-school life with services and supports.

Needs

- Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders
- Provide young adults with autism, who are transitioning from an educational setting, with individualized services to help them meet their employment capacities and goals.

4. Conclusion

The Council recognizes the work that has been accomplished throughout Texas to form a coordinated effort of services for children and families. While Council agencies still have much to achieve, a number of goals have been met and next steps have been identified and outlined in this report.

The Council began 2015 by reviewing its charge and identifying areas for the Council to focus on for the upcoming biennium. The areas that are identified will be used to develop an action plan for future efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration and improve coordination of services and policy resources through more effective communication among its members. An additional focus will be to continue spotlighting and promoting innovative and effective strategies for meeting the needs of children and families.

The Council and its member agencies are committed to supporting and developing efforts to ensure that Texas continues to thrive and prosper on a foundation built upon strong families, healthy communities, and successful youth.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
Council	Council on Children and Families
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
DARS	Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
DFPS	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
DSHS	Texas Department of State Health Services
ECI	Early Childhood Intervention
HHSC	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOPES	Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support
LAR	Legislative Appropriations Request
MIECHV	Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PEAKS	Physical and Environmental Activities for Knowledge and Skills
PEI	Prevention and Early Intervention
RHP	Regional Health Partnerships
SOC	Texas System of Care Consortium
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TFCSN	Interagency Task Force for Children with Special Needs
TJJJ	Texas Juvenile Justice Department
TOPDD	Texas Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities
TRS	Texas Rising Star
TWC	Texas Workforce Commission
YES	Youth Empowerment Services

Appendix A

Status of the 2012 Recommendations

The Council for Children and Families' (Council) 2012 biennial report supported and promoted many projects and initiatives of other child-serving agencies, advisory councils, task forces, workgroups and committees. Below is an update on their work.

Recommendations and Strategies to Promote Healthy Families

1. Task Force for Children with Special Needs (TFCSN or Task Force)

The Council supports the work of member agencies serving children with special needs in the context of the family; providing high-quality, cost-effective, individualized services that maximize healthy development and successful educational achievement; and establishing a strong foundation for future independence and success. The Council supports the continued work of the Task Force.

Status: During the last biennium TFCSN established two priorities: (1) informing and empowering families, and (2) improving crisis prevention and intervention processes. As described below, progress was made toward both goals.

- To connect families with local resources and providers, TFCSN contracted with TradeMark Media, Inc. to design, develop, and deploy a cross-agency website for families of children with special needs. The website is scheduled to launch in June 2015, commencing a comprehensive, integrated, and systemic deployment. Initial funding was provided by the Balancing Incentive Program under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act created by H.R. 3590, 111th Congress, Regular Session, 2009. New funding will be required to maintain the site after August 2015.
- To improve crisis prevention and intervention processes, TFCSN formed the Task Force Crisis Prevention and Intervention Subcommittee. The committee issued its final report in January 2014 with two recommendations for statewide implementation.
 - Implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports as a statewide prevention and intervention strategy with core fidelity.
 - Re-envision strategies and approaches to local community coordination to better meet communities' individual needs through a prevention and mitigation approach.

These recommendations were approved by the TFCNS with direction to staff to move forward with an implementation plan.

2. Home Visitation

The Council recommends continued state investment in evidence-based home visiting for at-risk families.

Status: Texas has continued its support and expansion of home visiting programs, through passage of S.B. 426, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, which established a new state funded program. This new program joins Texas Nurse Family Partnership established by S.B. 156, 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, which have both expanded the number of sites they serve in Texas. The MIECHV program is funded through federal grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration. The office of Health Coordination and Consumer Services, within the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), oversees the Texas Home Visiting Program.

3. Screening for Alcohol Use in Pregnant Women

The Council supports the Texas Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD) to expand screening and brief intervention for prenatal alcohol exposure so that it becomes a routine component of prenatal care.

Status: The TOPDD continues to facilitate two active task forces, the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Collaborative and the Child Safety and Injury Prevention Task Force to make recommendations regarding screening and intervention needs.

Recommendations and Strategies to Promote Healthy Communities

4. Regional Healthcare Partnerships

The Council encourages Regional Healthcare Partnerships (RHPs) to include integrated health care projects that address children's mental and physical health needs. The Council further recommends RHPs report on projects addressing children's physical and mental health to ensure children and youth benefit from the Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program 1115 Waiver.

Status: Twenty RHPs are operating in the state of Texas. Each of the RHPs created a regional plan as a basis for:

- Improving regional access, quality, cost-effectiveness and collaboration.
- Identifying transformation programs, performance metrics, and incentive payments for each participating hospital consistent with the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment menu of projects.
- Payment of funds (formerly Upper Payment Limit funding) protected under the Texas Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program 1115 Waiver.
- HHSC's facilitation of RHPs will increase as needed to support development of partnerships under the waiver.

5. Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems

The Council supports HHSC and the Texas Early Learning Council with continued efforts to use data-driven processes and tools to create more efficient and effective early childhood comprehensive systems in communities.

Status: The Texas Early Learning Council has been productive in creating tools for families with children birth to three years. These learning and assessment tools have been made available through the www.littletexans.org website, using technology to help parents understand and identify developmental milestones for their children by producing four short guidelines for children birth to four years of age. The website also links to the Act Early Texas screening tool that is to be used by families to conduct developmental screenings. This is a free online tool that allows parent and early childhood providers to conduct developmental screenings on young children.

6. Disproportionality and Disparities

The Council supports HHSC and the Center for the Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities with implementing the Texas model to eliminate disproportionality and disparities among the children and youth in Texas systems.

Status: Twelve equity specialists work with local communities to provide training, analyze outcome data sources, identify disproportionality/disparities, and their underlying causes, and help develop best practices with collaborative partners. The specialists work with local community organizations to provide ongoing guidance for disproportionality planning and implementation work, improve service delivery systems, and ensure people receive timely, appropriate services.

7. System of Care

The Council on Children and Families supports HHSC and the Department of State Health Services in their collaborative leadership roles to implement the Texas System of Care (SOC) Strategic Plan.

Status: A strategic plan for implementation has been developed, and the following five goal areas for ongoing work have been defined:

- Leadership.
- Community capacity.
- Services and supports.
- Financing.
- Accounting systems.

The [2014 SOC Consortium Legislative Report](#) details the progress of the project and its implementation efforts in Texas.

Recommendations and Strategies to Promote Successful Youth

8. Transition Centers

The Council strongly supports the partnership involving the Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Workforce Commission, Casey Family Programs and additional partners to support and expand transition centers.

Status: The [Texas Youth Connection](#) website currently lists 18 transition centers. The centers serve as central locations for services such as Preparation for Adult Living, employment readiness, job search classes and help exploring job options, and mentoring. Some centers provide many other services such as substance abuse and mental health counseling, housing assistance, and leadership training.

9. Youth Voice

The Council recommends that its sub-councils and workgroups explore opportunities and implement strategies to strengthen the youth voice in informing policy and practice.

Status: The Council has two youth member representatives, one of which is currently filled, to work with the Council on making recommendations and creating strategies for the health and well-being of youth in the state.

10. Strengthen Alignments with Other Councils, Workgroups, and Taskforces

The Council recommends developing stronger alliances with specific advisory committees. The Council should strengthen alliances with these and other groups by calling upon their expertise to address issues of mutual interest and to reinforce recommendations or activities by these groups through endorsements or sponsorship.

Status: The Council interacts and coordinates with 24 other councils, workgroups and taskforces. Council meetings have provided regular opportunities to learn about new initiatives and identify opportunities to improve service delivery. The Council continues to build new collaborative relationships, with the goal of improving services to children and families.

Appendix B

Council on Children and Families Membership Roster

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