

Community-Based Foster Care

The Issue

For decades, the government-run Texas foster care system systematically placed children in its care at substantial risk of harm and even death. In 2015, a federal judge found that the foster care system operated by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) was so flawed that it often resulted in children leaving the system more damaged than when they entered.

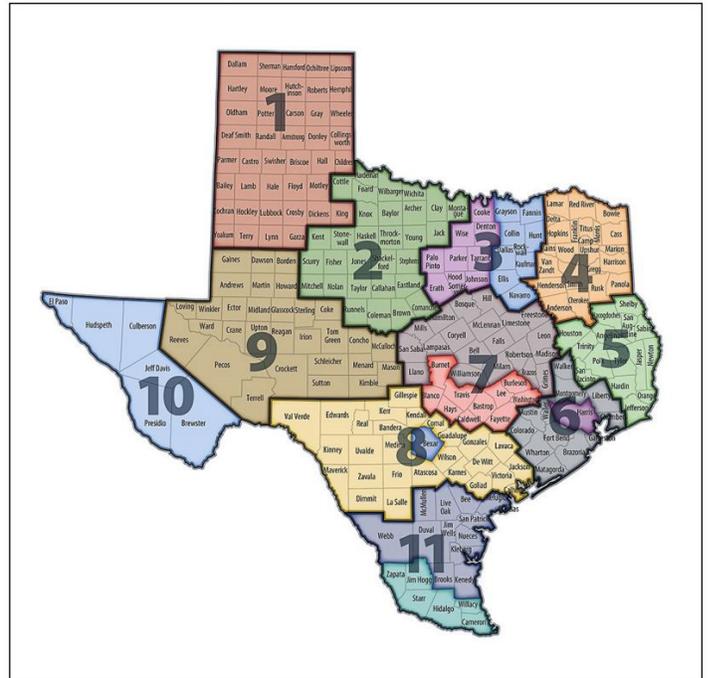
The 85th Texas Legislature enacted transformational reforms designed to cure the failures of the former centrally managed system by localizing control of foster care services. This new locally controlled model, known as community-based care (CBC), shifted primary responsibility for foster care placement and case management to local private and nonprofit charitable organizations with the goal of making the foster care system more responsive to children's needs. Those providers, known as Single Source Continuum Contractors (SSCC), are responsible for providing all foster care services within the limited geographical area they serve.

Currently, four regions of the state—Region 1 (Lubbock/ Amarillo), Region 2 (Abilene/Wichita Falls), Region 3b (Fort Worth), and Region 8a (San Antonio/Bexar County)—are operating under the new CBC model. A fifth region, Region 8b (Region 8 counties surrounding Bexar County) is scheduled to launch by early 2021.

In each region, the transition to CBC takes place in three stages: placement, case management, and performance review.

During Stage 1, the SSCC is responsible for identifying placements for children removed from their families by DFPS, overseeing adoptions, and providing all other services necessary for meeting the needs of children in care and those who are aging out. In this stage, the SSCC does not have oversight of children placed with relatives or responsibility for managing the trajectory of a child's case.

Community-Based Care Catchment Areas



Source: [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#) (p. 11)

In Stage 2, the role of the SSCC expands dramatically. At this point, the SSCC takes over primary responsibility for case management services, which includes coordinating the family's service plan, conducting face-to-face visits with children and parents, handling court activities, and making key decisions regarding reunification and termination of rights.

Stage 3 begins 18 months after the implementation of Stage 2. During this stage, the SSCC's performance at achieving specified outcomes for children will be assessed and financial incentives will be in place for safely moving children out of foster care and into permanent placements with their parents, other relatives, or adoptive placements.

Region 3b (Fort Worth) entered Stage 2 on March 2, 2020, followed by Region 2 (Abilene/Wichita Falls) on June 1, 2020. Region 8a (San Antonio/Bexar County) will transition to Stage 2 by the

Stage I

- Foster Care Network Development
- Placement Services
- Child & Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment
- Coordinated Child Plan of Service
- Purchased Services for Children & Youth
- Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) for youth in paid foster care
- Adoption services
- Day care coordination

Stage II

- Case Management Services
- Plan of Service for Children & Families
- Purchased Services for Families
- Family Reunification Services
- Kinship Services
- Transitional Living Services - Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) for all youth
- Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children
- Adoption and Post-Adoption services

Stage III

- Assess performance at 18 months from implementation of Stage II for *financial* incentives & remedies

end of the year. Region 1 (Lubbock/Amarillo) entered Stage 1 in January 2020. Proposals for Stage 1 operations in Region 8b (Region 8 counties surrounding Bexar County) are currently being evaluated by DFPS.

The Facts

- In 2019, there were 51,417 children in the care of the Department of Family and Protective Services.
- Approximately 1,200 children each year will age out of the Texas foster care system when they turn 18 without ever finding a permanent home.
- Children in foster care are less likely to graduate college and experience higher rates of poverty, incarceration, and mental health issues.
- Approximately 3,000 children—roughly 6%—of the state’s foster care population are currently being served by the community-based care model.
- Regions operating under the community-based care model are already generating positive results, often outperforming the state-run legacy system, for children in their care. According to data released by DFPS, in regions operating under community-based care:
 - ▶ 100% of children are safe in their foster care placements.
 - ▶ 75% of children are in the least restrictive placement setting.
 - ▶ Placement stability is meeting or exceeding goals.
- In CBC Region 3b (Fort Worth):
 - ▶ Foster home capacity has increased by 36% for the region as a whole and as much as 300% in traditionally underserved rural areas.
 - ▶ 81% of foster care days are spent in a foster family or kinship placement (compared to a 75% historic baseline).
 - ▶ Placement of kids in shelters decreased by 55% and use of residential treatment centers decreased by 17% in just one year.
- The 86th Texas Legislature funded the expansion of CBC into two regions—Region 1 (Lubbock/Amarillo) and Region 8b (Region 8 counties surrounding Bexar County)—and Stage 2 implementation in three regions—Region 2 (Abilene/Wichita Falls), Region 3b (Fort Worth), and Region 8a (Bexar County)—during the 2020-21 biennium.

Recommendations

- Expand community-based care to every region of the state by the end of FY 2025 through full funding of implementation efforts and setting deadlines for transitioning responsibilities from DFPS to the local community-led providers (SSCCs).
- In preparation for the October 2021 deadline for compliance with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, transfer primary responsibility for services or programs intended to prevent children from entering foster care, such as prevention and early intervention services and family-based safety services, to SSCCs.
- Facilitate innovation in programs and services by increasing flexibility in funding provided to SSCCs.
- Provide for greater predictability and consistency in CBC implementation by requiring DFPS to publish and abide by a uniform set of guidelines by which to assess each SSCC’s ability to satisfy the responsibilities and administrative requirements for delivering services.
- Ensure good governance in CBC regions by granting preference to prospective lead agencies (SSCCs) that are based in Texas and have demonstrated substantial community connections and investment.

Resources

- [*The Texas Two-Step: Community-Based Care and the Family First Prevention Services Act*](#) by Andrew C. Brown and Charissa Huntzinger, Texas Public Policy Foundation (July 2020).
- [*DFPS Rider 15 Report for Community-Based Care*](#) by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (March 2020).
- [*“Community Based Care is Answer to Unsafe Foster Placement”*](#) by Nicole Pressley, *Austin American-Statesman* (Jan. 31, 2020).
- [*“Community-Based Care”*](#) by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (2020).
- [*“Local Control, Not Government Control, Will Fix Texas Foster Care”*](#) by Andrew C. Brown, *Dallas Morning News* (Nov. 29, 2019).
- [*Community-Based Care: Bringing Kids Home*](#) [Status Report] by Our Community Our Kids (Feb. 2019).
- [*Community-Based Care, Testimony before the Texas Senate Finance Committee*](#) by Andrew C. Brown, Texas Public Policy Foundation (Feb. 6, 2019).
- [*“CPS Conservatorship: Children in DFPS Legal Responsibility”*](#) by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, DFPS Data Book (2019).
- [*“CPS Conservatorship: Children Exiting DFPS Legal Custody”*](#) by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, DFPS Data Book (2019).
- [*The Community-Based Solution for Texas Foster Children*](#) by Brandon Logan, Texas Public Policy Foundation (March 2017).