



Administering Justice for Children and Families in the Texas Child Protection System

Every child in foster care deserves to have a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible. Far too often, however, foster children linger in the system, facing multiple disruptions in their caregivers and schools. That is why in 2003, The Pew Charitable Trusts launched The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care—a national blue-ribbon panel of experts dedicated to improving outcomes for foster care youth. One of those experts was Texas' own Judge Patricia Macias of the 388th District Court of El Paso County. The commission recommended ways to strengthen court oversight over foster care cases. You can learn more about the Pew Commission's recommendations on children and foster care at www.pewfostercare.org.

This year, The Pew Charitable Trust launched **Home At Last (HAL)**, an initiative to support outreach and educational efforts that encourage action on the Pew Commission's recommendations. Learn more at www.fostercarehomeatlast.org. Partnering with HAL, the Center for Public Policy Priorities (www.cppp.org), a Texas nonprofit research organization, has designed this short publication to introduce Texas judges, lawyers, child advocates, and child welfare professionals to the Pew Commission's recommendations.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Judicial Champions



"Judges make life-altering decisions for the foster children in Texas, such as whether they will remain in foster care, return to their families, or have parental ties terminated. Having been given this great responsibility, the Judiciary must ensure that the system works for children and families."

The Honorable Wallace B. Jefferson, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas



"All children deserve a safe and nurturing home to realize their full potential; failure to protect the most vulnerable among us from abuse and neglect is not an option. The Texas Supreme Court is committed to seeing that our system of justice serves the needs of children and families."

The Honorable Harriet O'Neill, Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas and Liaison to the Task Force on Foster Care



Chief Justices and the state courts must act as the foremost champions for children in their court systems by promoting and enhancing judicial and other leadership.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Judicial Management



“As members of the Task Force on Foster Care, we commend Pew’s recommendations, which will only improve the quality of justice for children, youth, and families in the Texas child protection system.”

The Honorable John Specia, Judge of the 225th District Court of Bexar County and Chair of the Texas Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care



Carole Hurley, Executive Director of the Texas Court Improvement Project and the Texas Children’s Justice Act



“My office strongly supports and is engaged in efforts by the Texas judiciary to implement the Pew Commission’s recommendations. We hope to play a role in elevating this issue, strengthening collaboration, and ultimately improving the system of justice for children and families.”

Carl Reynolds, Administrative Director, Texas Office of Court Administration



“Through our judicial education curriculum, we seek to support today’s child welfare judicial champions while developing tomorrow’s leaders.”

Mari Kay Bickett, Executive Director of the Texas Center for the Judiciary



“Texas is well represented in the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). We invite you to join us as we work to strengthen our system and make the Pew recommendations a reality.”

The Honorable Patricia Macias, Judge of the 388th District Court of El Paso County, Pew Commission Member, and Treasurer of the NCJFCJ

Resources for Texas Judges

Texas Supreme Court Task Force on Foster Care

www.yourhonor.com

Appointed by the Supreme Court of Texas to administer the federally funded Texas Court Improvement Project, works to improve the judicial system regarding child abuse and neglect cases.

Texas Office of Court Administration

www.courts.state.tx.us/oca/index.asp

Provides leadership and service to the Texas judiciary, including maintaining comprehensive court activity statistics, supporting associate judges who hear child protection dockets, and providing information technology services.



Courts are responsible for ensuring that children’s rights to safety, permanence, and well-being are met in a timely and complete manner. To fulfill this responsibility, they must be able to track children’s progress, identify groups of children in need of attention, and identify sources of delay in court proceedings.

Texas Center for the Judiciary

www.yourhonor.com

Provides specialized judicial education and training opportunities for Texas appellate, district, and county court at law judges.

National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges

www.ncjfcj.org

Improves the effectiveness of the nation’s juvenile and family courts, raising awareness of core issues that affect the lives of many of our nation’s children and families, and bringing together colleagues from across the country.

Resources for Texas Attorneys

American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law

www.abanet.org/child/home2.html

Works to improve children's lives through advances in law, justice, knowledge, practice, and public policy, and provides full-service technical assistance, training, and a research program that addresses a broad spectrum of law and court-related topics affecting children.

National Association of Counsel for Children

www.naccchildlaw.org

Provides training and technical assistance to attorneys and other professionals, serves as a public information and professional referral center, and engages in public policy and legislative advocacy regarding child welfare issues.

Texas State Bar Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect

www.texasbar.com

Studies and evaluates the legal profession's role in working to ameliorate child abuse and neglect and recommends any necessary legislation in connection with child abuse and neglect to the State Bar Board of Directors.

Texas Lawyers for Children

www.texaslawyersforchildren.org

Provides state-wide assistance, including a user-friendly online legal resource center and email network to judges and attorneys who handle child abuse and neglect cases. Resources include legal, medical, and psychological information.

Children's Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law

www.utexas.edu/law/academics/clinics/childrens

Represents abused and neglected children in Travis County.

Juvenile Dependency Clinic, The University of Houston Law Center

www.law.uh.edu/clinic

Represents abused and neglected children in Harris County.

W. W. Caruth, Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic, Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law

<http://clinics.law.smu.edu>

Represents abused and neglected children in Dallas County.

Children's Justice Center of El Paso, Inc.

www.law.utep.edu/cjc/behero.htm

Represents abused and neglected children in El Paso County.

Court Appointed Family Advocates (CAFA) Section of the Austin Bar Association

www.austinbar.org/sectioncafa.shtml

Provides attorneys who represent children and parents in Child Protective Services (CPS) cases with training, resources, and contacts to assist them in representing their clients, and collaborates with child welfare professionals in Travis County. Members of CAFA would be happy to talk to you about starting a CAFA group in your county.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Strong, Effective Voices for Children and Parents



“Our most precious resource in Texas is the health and well-being of our children. This session we passed a series of reforms to protect children and other vulnerable citizens from neglect and abuse with invaluable input from the foster care community. Thank you for all you do on behalf of Texas children.”

Senator Jane Nelson, Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee and Author of Senate Bill 6



“As a former CPS caseworker and as a lawyer, I understand the importance of effective representation for both children and parents. In Senate Bill 6, we took steps to strengthen legal representation.”

Representative Vilma Luna, Vice-Chair, House Appropriations and Co-Sponsor of Senate Bill 6

THE PEW COMMISSION Recommendation

To safeguard children’s best interests in child abuse and neglect proceedings, children and their parents must have a direct voice in court, effective representation, and the timely input of those who care about them.



“Attorneys are advocates. It is our duty to provide effective representation to each and every one of our child clients.”

Fairy Rutland, Vice-Chair, State Bar Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect



“We can improve outcomes for Texas children—our most vulnerable resource—by enhancing the quality of the legal representation they receive.”

Barbara J. Elias-Perciful, Founder and Director of Texas Lawyers for Children



“As the Pew Commission recognized, it is critical to attract and maintain bright, qualified attorneys in the child protection field. Texas children deserve the most effective legal representation.”

John J. Sampson, William Benjamin Wynne Professor, The University of Texas School of Law and Founder of the Children’s Rights Clinic



“Children in the Texas child protection system deserve advocates who will voice their needs when permanent decisions are made about their future.”

Jessica R. Dixon, Director, W. W. Caruth, Jr. Child Advocacy Clinic, Southern Methodist University School of Law



“We’re passionate about preparing law students for careers in child advocacy.”

Gail Lutz, Supervising Attorney, Juvenile Dependency Clinic, The University of Houston Law Center



“The border presents a unique challenge for child advocates. We commend the lawyers committed to championing for those most vulnerable.”

Carmen Perez, Volunteer Attorney, Children’s Justice Center of El Paso



“CAFA is a model for working together as lawyers and for collaborating between historically adversarial parties, which gives rise to a family approach in court. I applaud the Pew Commission’s efforts.”

Lucie Jones Guajardo, Member of CAFA and Attorney for Parents and Children

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Collaboration to Protect Children and Promote Their Well-Being

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS)

www.dfps.state.tx.us

Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children, provides services to children and families, places children in foster care and adoptive homes, and helps youth in foster care transition to adulthood.



"Texas is fortunate to have so many wonderful advocates for families. Collaboration offers us all the opportunities to make better decisions on behalf of abused and neglected children."
Joyce James, Assistant Commissioner for Child Protective Services, TDFPS

Texas CASA

www.texascasa.org

Advocates for abused and neglected children in the court system through the development, growth, and support of local CASA programs.



"We at CASA firmly agree with the Pew Commission recommendation that collaboration among family advocates will result in better outcomes for children in the Texas foster care system."
Megan Ferland, Chief Executive Officer, Texas CASA

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc.

www.cactx.org

Supports the children's advocacy centers of Texas in partnership with local communities and agencies that investigate and prosecute child abuse.



"Collaboration among organizations involved in child protection cases can potentially save children's lives and prevent further abuse or neglect from occurring."
Cathy Crabtree, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas

Resources for Texas Collaboration

Children's Defense Fund of Texas

www.cdf-texas.org

Council on Adoptable Children of Texas, Inc.

www.texas-coac.org

Greater Texas Community Partners

www.gtcp.org/index.asp

Judith Granger Birmingham Center for Child Welfare, The University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work

www2.uta.edu/ssw/ccw

National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter

www.naswtx.org

THE PEW COMMISSION Recommendation

To protect children and promote their well-being, courts and public agencies must be required to demonstrate effective collaboration.

Prevent Child Abuse Texas

www.preventchildabusetexas.org

Protective Services Training Institute of Texas

www.utexas.edu/research/cswr/psti

Texans Care for Children

www.texanscareforchildren.org

Texas Adoption Resource Exchange

www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/About_Adoption_and_Foster_Care

Texas Association for the Protection of Children

www.texprotects.org

Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards

www.council-connection.com

Texas Foster Family Association

www.tffa.org/home.asp

Texas Network of Youth Services

www.tnoys.org

Additional Resources

Resources for Judges

National CASA Judge's Page
www.nationalcasa.org/judgespage/index.htm
National Center for State Courts
www.ncsconline.org

Resources for Attorneys

American Academy of Adoption Attorneys
www.adoptionattorneys.org
American Bar Association of Family Law Section
www.abanet.org/family
American Bar Association Section of Litigation – Children's Rights Litigation Committee
www.abanet.org/litigation/committee/childrens_/home.html
American Bar Association Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children
www.abanet.org/unmet
Association of Child Abuse Lawyers
www.childabuselawyers.com
Children's Rights, Inc.
www.childrensrights.org
Juvenile Law Center
www.jlc.org
National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse
www.ndaa-apri.org/apri/programs/ncpca/ncpca_home.html
National Center for Youth Law
www.youthlaw.org
National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare
<http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov>
National Child Protection Training Center
www.ndaa-apri.org/apri/programs/ncptc/ncptc_home.html
National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues
www.abanet.org/child/rclji/home.html
National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA)
www.nita.org

Legal Research Resources

FindLaw
www.findlaw.com
Government Guide
<http://mygov.governmentguide.com/mygov/home>
National Children's Alliance
www.nca-online.org/statutes.html
National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Welfare Research
www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/cw.htm
Thomas Legislative Information on the Internet
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Child Advocacy Organizations and Resources

American Humane Association – Protecting Children
www.americanhumane.org
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
<http://apsac.fmhi.usf.edu/index.asp>

Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org
Best Interests
www.childadvocacy.com
CASANet
www.casenet.org
Child Abuse Prevention Network
<http://http://child-abuse.com>
The Child Advocate
www.childadvocate.net
ChildHelp USA
www.childhelpusa.org
Children's Bureau Express
<http://http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>
Children's Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org
Child Welfare League of America
www.cwla.org/advocacy
First Star
www.firststar.org
Generations United
www.gu.org
International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
www.ispcan.org
National Association to Protect Children
www.protect.org
National CASA
www.nationalcasa.org
National Children's Advocacy Center
www.nationalcac.org
National Children's Alliance
www.nca-online.org
National Indian Child Welfare Association
www.nicwa.org
Prevent Child Abuse America
www.preventchildabuse.org
Voices for America's Children
www.childadvocacy.org

Resources for Social Workers

National Association of Social Workers
www.socialworkers.org
National Coalition Building Institute
www.ncbi.org
National Resource Center for Child Protective Services
www.nrcpps.org

Data and Research Sources

A Petition in Behalf of the Forsaken Children of Texas
www.co.travis.tx.us/petition/contents.asp
Texas KIDS Count
www.cppp.org
Child Trends Data Bank
www.childtrends.databank.org
Child Welfare
www.childwelfare.com
Foster Care Statistics
<http://statistics.adoption.com/information/foster-care-statistics.html>
The Future of Children
www.futureofchildren.org
Leadership Council on Child Abuse and Interpersonal Violence
www.leadershipcouncil.org/index.html

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information
<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>
National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect
www.ndacan.cornell.edu
National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data and Technology
www.nrcwdt.org
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (Children's Bureau)
www.acf.hhs.gov

Foster Care/Permanency Planning/Adoption Resources

Adopt US Kids
www.adoptuskids.org
CASEY Family Programs
www.casey.org
The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
www.davethomasfoundationforadoption.org
Foster Care Agency
www.fostercareagency.org
Fostering Results
www.fosteringresults.org
National Adoption Center
www.adopt.org
National Adoption Information Clearinghouse
<http://naic.acf.hhs.gov>
National Association of Foster Care Reviewers
www.nafcr.org
National Council for Adoption
www.ncfa-usa.org
National Foster Care Month
www.fostercaremonth.org
National Foster Parent Association
www.nfpainc.org
National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning
www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp
North American Council on Adoptable Children
www.nacac.org
Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services
www.tacfs.org

Resources for Children and Youth

Connect for Kids
www.connectforkids.org
Foster Care Alumni of America
<http://fostercarealumni.org>
The Free Child Project
www.freechild.org
National Foster Care Coalition
www.natl-fostercare.org
The National Network for Youth in Foster Care
www.fosterclub.com
Youth Communication
www.youthcomm.org



900 Lydia Street
Austin, TX 78702
512-320-0222
www.cppp.org

Contact us for additional copies.

January 2006