



SUPPORT CHILD- AND FAMILY-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH COVID-19 AND BEYOND

The ongoing pandemic has posed unique challenges for TACFS member organizations as they serve at-risk children, youth and families. Children and youth in care have often experienced severe trauma before coming into the child welfare system and are now coping with the pandemic and compounding trauma. This impacts efforts to provide necessary services, restore stability, and create a sense of normalcy. Families are struggling in a number of ways. The state is now reckoning with delays in services and care needed to provide for positive outcomes for children and youth and strengthen families. **It is critical to invest in the full continuum of care -- prevention, youth services, family preservation, foster care, adoption and beyond -- that will keep the state's safety net strong and reinforce the child and youth-serving caregivers and professionals.** In addition, the quick and widespread vaccination of the child welfare workforce is a necessary step toward providing the full range of needed services.

Invest in:

- ***services and care that will keep the state's safety net strong***
- ***quick and widespread vaccination of the child welfare workforce***

EXPAND MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

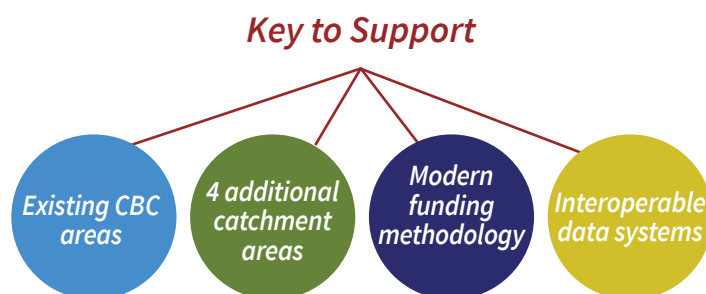


Mental health services are a critical component to support the children, youth and families served by TACFS members - across the full continuum. From prevention and family preservation to keep families strong and kids safe at home, to those in foster care aimed to heal trauma and provide for bright outcomes, all the way to adoption, post-adoption and post-permanency - qualified, trauma informed mental health services are essential. However, organizations struggle to recruit and retain qualified clinicians. A concerted effort and additional resources are needed to recruit and retain more mental health service providers into the child welfare system. This investment can eliminate systemic issues such as families entering or re-entering the child welfare system, children in foster care without a home, and strong, thriving families after leaving the child welfare system.



CONTINUE IMPLEMENTATION AND GROWTH OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

TACFS supports the DFPS plan to move forward with Community-Based Care in four new catchment areas and while funding the next stages of implementation in existing catchment areas. This will require the state to adopt an updated rate methodology to reflect modern practices and support each individual community. It is also necessary to invest in smart, interoperable data system and technology that will further support CBC and innovation.



INCREASE AND IMPROVE FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES



20,000 families received family preservation services in 2020

It is important for the Legislature to build on community resources and services aimed to keep families together and keep children safe at home, as supported by the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Building a robust array of community family support programs, including but not limited to FFPSA eligible programs, will allow for more families to receive help and supports to avoid foster care. The state will rely on community organizations to carry out FFPSA, and the state should invest in this area of services and align with ongoing implementation efforts.

ENSURE CLEAR AND EQUITABLE OVERSIGHT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Texas is implementing reforms resulting from a nearly decade-long foster care lawsuit. Part of the reform process should be ensuring that oversight is clear and constructive and that it does not disproportionately pull resources away from direct care. In fact, it is through investments in direct care that the state can most effectively respond to the concerns the lawsuit raises.

Improved system alignment among agencies

Better data sharing and systems

Equitable investments



The Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (Alliance) is a statewide association whose members provide the full continuum of child welfare services - from family preservation to foster care to post-adoption services - and everything in between. Alliance members are the mission-based organizations that are the primary caregivers for the children in paid foster care. Our diverse group of members are committed to the safety, permanency, and well-being of each child and family.