

Assess the State's Minimum Standards and Regulatory Functions for Child and Family Welfare Providers

ISSUE

Texas' foster care system has undergone important shifts on both a state and federal level over the last decade. Ongoing efforts include the implementation of Community Based Care and a shift toward evidence based, high quality services. Providers are taking proactive steps toward quality and accountability through national accreditation, risk mitigation training and policies, building evidence-based treatment models, and using innovative techniques to help youth advocate for their own needs and become successful young people.

Safety is the highest priority for child serving organizations. **However, as the state shifts toward new and more progressive models of care, these reforms are layered with years of outdated and rigid infrastructure and rules that are impacting the ability of organizations to recruit and retain high-quality caregivers, workforce, and leadership.**

The complex nature of licensing standards and oversight requirements are cumbersome and at times, duplicative. The sheer volume of standards acts as a deterrent to development of foster and kinship families and impacts the ability to focus on core safety and needs of child, shifting the focus instead to compliance. And regulation is not just about licensing. There are also investigations, contract monitors, CPS policies, court orders and other entities with oversight responsibilities, which can overwhelm and frustrate caregivers.

Further, many have also shared that there is growing concern that the various regulations and requirements often do not relate to the placement and child's needs. Licensing standards should maintain a core focus on child safety and adapt based on the type of type of treatment and care required to meet a child's needs. This also may impact the ability of a caregiver to provide normalcy for children.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

As the direction for the state moving forward has solidified, the time is right for a comprehensive review and recommendations to improve the state's regulatory and oversight structure. These changes should have a core focus on child health and safety, while also seeking to improve the quality and resiliency of the state's foster care capacity.

SB 593 requires the state hire a third party to do a comprehensive assessment of the state's minimum standards and regulatory functions. SB 593 specifically seeks to:

- Remove unnecessary requirements that act as a barrier to recruiting and retaining high quality kinship and foster care homes
- Consider federal model licensing standards
- Make recommendations to update standards that act as a barrier to recruiting administrators and agency leadership
- Ensure standards can adapt to respond to the unique needs of children in care, and
- Clarify the functions of oversight and contracting entities, clearly defining roles and eliminating duplication.



We have confidence the approach provided in SB 593 will provide the right information and direction for state's regulatory leadership to contract for and execute the intent of this bill, and establish a cohesive, transparent regulatory system that advances foster care in Texas.