



# TACFS SUPPORTS

## Strengthening Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Children and Families

### *HB 1716 (Darby) / SB 469 (Sparks)*

Children and families in Texas' child welfare system endure immense mental and behavioral health challenges, reflecting the profound impact of trauma and instability on their lives. Over 60% of children in the child welfare system nationwide grapple with mental health issues, a stark reminder of the system's duty to offer care and healing. Systemic inefficiencies magnify these struggles leaving children and families without the critical support they need. These shortcomings increase placement disruptions and prolong the uncertainty of children's lives, undermining their chances for stability and growth.

### Policy Focus Areas

#### Allow Licensed Associates to Bill Medicaid

- **Context:** Licensed associates, including Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Associates (LMFT-As), Licensed Professional Counselor Associates (LPC-As), and Licensed Master Social Workers (LMSWs), have completed rigorous training and are already serving children and families under supervision. However, they cannot bill Medicaid for their services during this required supervision period, creating a barrier to their full participation in the Medicaid network.
- **Benefits**
  - **Immediate Workforce Expansion:** Enabling these associates to bill Medicaid would effectively add thousands of qualified providers to the workforce without requiring additional training or certification.
  - **Cost Neutrality:** This policy requires no additional funding since supervision arrangements and reimbursement rates remain unchanged. Medicaid would simply reimburse services already being provided.
  - **Improved Access to Care:** By allowing these providers to bill Medicaid, Texas could reduce wait times for mental health services, particularly in underserved areas, and ensure children receive timely care.
- **Comparison with Other States:** States including Colorado and Oklahoma already allow associates to bill Medicaid during their supervision period, demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of this approach. Adopting similar policies would position Texas as a leader in leveraging its existing workforce to address mental health needs.

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