



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

2024 Annual Progress & Services Report

**Targeted Plan A – Foster Adoptive Diligent
Recruitment Plan**

2024 Title IV–B Annual Progress and Services Report Targeted Plan

A. Foster/Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

- *Describe the progress and accomplishments in implementing the state’s Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan:*
- *Indicate in the 2024 APSR if there are any changes or additions needed to the plan. In a separate document, provide information on the change or update to the Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan, if any.*

A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) recognizes diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes must generate foster and adoptive families that meet the demographic characteristics of children in care. Demographic data of the characteristics of the children needing foster and adoptive homes is available to all staff through the Data Warehouse reports updated monthly. Current demographic information on children and families is being used to establish recruitment targets and track progress. In 2022, DFPS conducted a study to review current capacity which offered recommendations on how to improve capacity specifically by geographical region.

In collaboration with DFPS and each Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) , the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) developed a plan to increase the placement capacity in each catchment area. A workgroup consisting of DFPS State Office and regional staff, the current SSCCs, Office of Community-Based Care Transition, and HHSC met during the interim to discuss the development of this plan <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/foster-care-capacity-needs.pdf>.

As mandated in Texas Family Code, Section 264.1261, regional Child Protective Services (CPS) management in regions where Community-Based Care has not been implemented must collaborate with regional foster care providers, faith-based entities, and child advocates in that region, must create a plan to address the substitute care capacity needs in the region, using DFPS-collected data on foster care capacity needs and availability of each type of foster care and kinship placement in the region.

Since 2017, an annual statewide *Foster Care Needs Assessment* has been completed. The current needs assessment is posted on the DFPS website at: [Foster Care Needs Assessment Dashboard](#). CPS continues to use this data to project the locations and types of foster care services needed over the next several years. Using the completed 2023 needs assessments and other available data, CPS will develop plans to address the substitute care capacity needs of non-community-based care regions.

The *Fiscal Year 2023 Capacity Building Plan* based on the *Foster Care Needs Assessment* is published on the DFPS website ([Capacity Building Plan](#)). DFPS involves external stakeholders in placement discussions, and their input is included in the development of strategic planning for recruitment efforts. Stakeholder meetings are held in all legacy regions, and include by invitation the judiciary, political advocates, universities, faith-based groups, child welfare advocates, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), childcare providers, and staff.

As of August 2022, the following demographic information was available for youth ages 0 to 17 years in substitute care.

Demographic Data for Youth in Substitute Care Age 0 to 17 years as of August 2022

Demographic Category	Percentage
Age	
0-2 Years	29.76 %
3-5 Years	17.66%
6-9 Years	18.30%
10-13 Years	15.57%
14-17 Years	18.70%
Gender	
Male	51.84%
Female	48.15%
Unable to Determine	0.01%
Race and Ethnicity	
African American	22.48%
Hispanic	42.62%
Anglo	27.99%
Native American	0.13%
Asian	0.43%
Multiple	5.34%
Unable to Determine/None Listed	1.00%
Characteristics	
Physical	0.8%
Medical	4.51%
Drug/Alcohol	8.23%
Emotional	13.78%
Learning	15.05%
Sibling	11.38%
Teen Parent	0.19%

Data Source: Data Warehouse cps_sa_04

Race and Ethnicity Data for Foster and Adoptive Youth Age 0 to 17 years as of August 2022

Race and Ethnicity Category	# Adoptive	% Adoptive	# Foster	% Foster	# Foster/Adoptive	% Foster/Adoptive
African American	64	28.7%	15	27.3%	119	17.7%
Hispanic	57	25.6%	9	16.4%	102	15.1%
Anglo	91	40.8%	27	49.1%	399	59.2%
Native American	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	11	4.6%	4	7.3%	54	8.04%

Data Source: Data Warehouse CPS_FAD_03

Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community

DFPS is actively participating in the Children’s Bureau Adoption Call to Action and working with community stakeholders to increase capacity and recruit homes for children awaiting permanency. DFPS participated in Adoption Call to Action state planning meetings with a focus on diligent recruitment and developed an Adoption Call to Action plan, submitted to the Children’s Bureau with action steps to promote awareness, increase capacity, and improve policies and practices surrounding permanency and diligent recruitment.

DFPS remains committed to reaching out to all parts of a community and is collaborating with faith- and community-based organizations to accomplish this goal. DFPS partners with child-placing agencies on information meetings and collaborates with the Advisory Committee on Promoting Adoption of Minority Children to target areas of need in a community. DFPS entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with external partners, such as Children Awaiting Parents and Wendy’s Wonderful Kids, dedicated to finding adoptive placements for children in DFPS care. A workgroup consisting of internal DFPS staff and external stakeholders was established to identify areas in need of diligent recruitment initiatives and work with community partners in those areas to expand recruitment efforts.

DFPS regional staff work with local media outlets to provide recruitment information to local communities. Campaigns included activities such as A Forever Family, Wednesday's Child, The Gift of Love, Children are a Gift, and Heart Galleries displayed across the state. Giveaways (e.g., pens, and magnets) are provided at different events to community stakeholders. DFPS participates in contracted provider and trade organization meetings across the state. Information regarding the type of placement needs is shared with these coalitions and organizations. These efforts are effective and continue to be the

emphasis for recruitment. DFPS is working with community partners to identify areas of the state with gaps in local recruitment and expand recruitment efforts to these areas.

DFPS has a reinvigorated collaboration between the faith-based community and the child welfare system in Texas. Further supported by DFPS' Adoption Call to Action plan, DFPS is emphasizing this approach by collaborating with external stakeholders and community partners. Representatives from both systems pledged to work jointly and differently than before in providing service to children, youth, and families. The approach developed for collaboration reflects both the faith-based community's mission and the state's commitment to safely reduce the need for foster care through a clearly articulated prevention to permanency model. Another notable recruitment effort is the use of the adoption forums facilitated by the Advisory Committee on Promoting Adoption of Minority Children. These forums are held three to four times a year in different locations across the state. DFPS will continue to participate in these forums by sharing local, regional, and state data to provide a profile of placement needs.

Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child specific information

DFPS uses information sharing methods to communicate the ongoing need for additional foster and adoptive parents and provide general information to the public. DFPS increased its collaboration with faith- and community-based organizations to share general information. One such collaboration is between DFPS and private child-placing agencies conducting joint information meetings. DFPS maximizes the use of internet resources such as the DFPS public website, Facebook, and the DFPS YouTube channel. The DFPS social media policy has been revised to provide staff with additional guidance on the use of social media sites. Data is posted on the public website to share the demographics of children in local areas and educate the general public about placement needs. Through the Adoption Call to Action, DFPS is working with community partners to identify areas of the state with gaps in awareness to the need for homes for children in foster care and expand recruitment efforts to these areas.

The Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE) is a primary recruitment avenue for specific children, and each child registered on the exchange is simultaneously registered with Children Awaiting Parents, Adoption.com, Adoption.net, AdoptUSKids, and the local Heart Gallery, if applicable. In alignment with the DFPS Adoption Call to Action plan, DFPS partnered with AdoptUSKids to improve the TARE manual and discussed improvements for the TARE website and application. The partnership with AdoptUSKids focused on providing tools and training to DFPS staff for creating strength-based narratives. Another focus is to have youth engagement in their own recruitment and profile writing. The TARE website is currently undergoing a revamp to improve the application and provide a better customer experience for DFPS internal users (e.g., administrator/publisher, TARE coordinator, caseworker) and external users (e.g., public view, registered family view). This request is a way to ensure TARE meets DFPS electronic accessibility policy standards, as well as comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Texas Administrative Code, Chapters 206 and 213.

Completion of these changes are anticipated for 2025.

DFPS staff participate in recruitment activities during existing national recognition months, such as Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, Foster Care Month in May, and National Adoption Month in November. As part of the increased faith-based collaboration, DFPS emphasized participation in special events such as Go Blue day and Blue Sunday, and these efforts will continue to expand. Community recruitment activities, including information meetings, adoption fairs and expositions, match parties, and print and electronic media stories on television and radio, continue. A video depicting foster and adoptive children wishes was developed for use in future events to encourage families to consider fostering and adopting. The video is on the TARE website home page and the DFPS You Tube channel for ease of access.

DFPS created strategies to ensure all prospective foster and adoptive parents have access to agencies they can utilize to become verified and approved, including the expansion of locations and hours of services accessed by all members of the community. Contact information, designated by region, for partner child-placing agencies and CPS recruitment staff are shared on the TARE website, maintained and accessible to the general public. Prospective families who contact the tollfree Foster and Adoption Inquiry line will be informed of child-placing agency information. Information packets provided to prospective foster and adoptive families include a list of partner child-placing agencies in the area. DFPS staff and child-placing agencies have a shared commitment to continue collaborative information meetings.

Strategies to build capacity and achieve permanency for children in foster care through the Children's Bureau Adoption Call to Action.

DFPS has developed an Adoption Call to Action plan in partnership with the Children's Bureau with the primary goals of increasing the number of consummations and decreasing the time to permanency through adoption. DFPS is actively participating in state team planning meetings. This allows DFPS to hear strategies from other states recruitment ideas. DFPS is also hosting state team planning meetings with external stakeholders and community partners to identify areas of need and develop an action plan specific to local community needs. DFPS partnered with the National Training Initiative (NTI) to roll out an adoption competency training statewide. This training was implemented in January 2021 and provides staff with better adoption knowledge to assist children in finding permanency through adoptions. Tenured CPS caseworkers completed NTI training as of August 2021. Moving forward, new DFPS staff have been required to complete NTI training within the first year of employment.

Additionally, DFPS partnered with the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS) to implement the adoption competency training through NTI to not only DFPS staff but also child-placing agency staff. This partnership allows all professionals in the child welfare continuum to begin speaking the same language around adoption and permanency. By having both child-placing agency and DFPS involvement, the goal is for children and families to be educated and prepared for adoption.

Other initiatives focus on enhancing recruitment at the local level using a collaborative approach with external stakeholders, community partners, and faith-based organizations, in addition to enhancing training for prospective foster and adoptive parents, internal staff, and community partners. Additionally, DFPS continues to use a data driven approach to identify areas for improvement and gaps in capacity and recruitment.

Treatment Foster Family Care:

The Treatment Foster Family Care Program is designed to provide innovative, multi-disciplinary treatment services to a child or youth in a highly structured family home environment as an alternative to residential treatment. In a number of circumstances, children in DFPS conservatorship with very high needs require treatment services typically not available in the foster home setting. The purpose of the program is to increase capacity in the foster care system, reduce the number of children in residential treatment centers, and prepare/stabilize children for successful, less restrictive placement through multi-disciplinary treatment services. Innovative, multi-disciplinary treatment services offered through Treatment Foster Family Care are designed to:

- Focus on reducing known risk factors and enhancing individual strengths;
- Be delivered in trained treatment foster family homes;
- Be sensitive to the child's age, culture, gender, developmental level, and other socio-economic factors; and
- Build on and support the therapeutic benefits of trauma-informed care, positive parenting, and permanent placements.

A Treatment Foster Family Care home has specialized training in providing services to children with mental health and/or socio-behavioral needs that cannot be met in traditional foster care settings, including:

- 24-hour supervision to ensure the child's safety and sense of security which includes frequent one-to-one monitoring with the ability to provide immediate on-site response;
- Individualized, strengths-based therapeutic services and case management; and
- Time-limited services which include wrap-around services designed to transition children to a permanent and stable placement.

On July 8, 2022, the Open Enrollment for Treatment Foster Family Care was posted for all providers in Texas and solicited application. DFPS identified a continuing need to expand these highly qualified services to children with complex mental health and behavioral needs and is hopeful it will provide more capacity for the children who need it most. This expansion allows current providers to extend their capacity statewide and for new providers to become contracted to serve children who need treatment services in a home like setting.

As of April 27, 2023, there were 112 active Treatment Foster Family Care homes in legacy areas among the four contracted child-placing agencies. As of April 27, 2023, 111 DFPS

children were placed in these homes. There are 66 SSCC youth being served in Treatment Foster Family Care.

Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic variations

DFPS increases the cultural sensitivity of staff through training opportunities and has a sustainable means to continue this practice. CPS is aware of a need for greater exposure to information regarding socio-economic variations in cultures through training. This awareness led to the collaboration between the Office for Addressing Disproportionality, CPS, and the DFPS Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence to develop courses on working with African American and Latino families and a course for child welfare caseworkers. The Office for Addressing Disproportionality will resume with Missouri Community Action Poverty Simulation to be delivered to internal and external stakeholders. CPS developed and implemented a course for caseworkers to enhance knowledge of the Indian Child Welfare Act. The Office for Addressing Disproportionality also works with regional staff to discuss disproportionality and disparity data and needs. Office for Addressing Disproportionality will consult with the program to provide activities and updates through the “meeting-in-a-box” platform

Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers

DFPS recognizes prospective foster and adoptive parents may encounter linguistic barriers. The agency connects families as needed with an interpreter by phone or in person with a staff person who speaks the family's primary language. Information is shared with staff on how to request sign language interpreters as needed, and a message was placed on the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange website to ensure prospective families know that they can contact recruitment staff to request a sign language interpreter. When possible, DFPS continues to seek prospective staff and contract agencies who have the skills to communicate with families in diverse ways and through multiple languages.

Non-discriminatory fee structures

DFPS does not charge a fee to prospective families and only contracts with agencies governed by strict minimum standards requirements related to fees.