



*Presentation on Senate Charge 14 relating to implementation of the
Fostering Connections Act.*

Presented to:
Senate Health & Human Services Committee

March 10, 2010

Anne Heiligenstein, Commissioner

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

- Nationally, youth who have aged out of foster care have poor outcomes in employment, housing, mental health, physical health and other outcomes. Often, these youth lack supportive, ongoing relationships that will sustain their transition to adulthood.
- The federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* is a comprehensive piece of legislation designed to promote permanency for children and youth with an emphasis on adoption, relative care, and aging out of care.
- There are federal mandatory requirements and state options enacted by the 81st Texas Legislature.

Fostering Connections Act Mandatory Components

All implemented

- Notification of relatives about a child's removal and support options available to relatives (including how to become foster parents)
- Reauthorization of the adoption incentive program for an additional five years through 2013
- Graduated elimination of income related tests for Title IV-E eligibility for adoption assistance
- Reasonable efforts to place siblings together or to have frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between siblings if placed separately
- Oversight and coordination of health care for CPS children

Fostering Connections Act Optional Components

The 81st Texas Legislature passed:

- Relative Guardianship Assistance (“Permanency Care Assistance”) Program for relatives who take legal custody of a CPS foster child for whom the relatives have been verified foster parents for six months.
- Extension of adoption assistance benefits and permanency care assistance benefits up to the youth’s 21st birthday if agreements were signed after the youth turns 16.
- Extension of federal IV-E foster care benefits from age 18 up to the youth’s 21st birthday for a variety of scenarios.

Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program

What is it?

- PCA positively impacts children and youth:
 - A new option for youth who are in DFPS conservatorship and would otherwise grow up in foster care because going back home and adoption are not possible
 - It provides true permanency in the eyes of the child and family because the CPS case is closed
 - Children/youth exit care more quickly
 - Children/youth maintain family connections
- PCA positively impacts the child welfare system:
 - Stems the rate of caseload growth
 - Reduces caseworker time spent on face-to-face visits
 - Avoids administrative costs
 - Fewer placement disruptions
 - Removes CPS cases from over-crowded court dockets and relieves counties of attorney ad litem costs

Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program

How does it work?

- Qualified relative caregivers can sign negotiated PCA agreements with DFPS starting 9/01/10. These caregivers will subsequently obtain legal custody of the child and receive monthly payments similar to adoption assistance.
- To qualify, the relatives have to become verified as a foster family for the child and serve as such for six months before they can assume legal custody and receive monthly support payments for the care of the child.
- Kinship families can become verified either through DFPS or a private child placing agency.

Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program
Children and Youth Impacted

- PCA will help children whom the court has determined:
 - Cannot be safely returned home
 - Are not eligible candidates for adoption and are therefore doomed to grow up in the state system

Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program

Example

- Sibling group of four, ages 2, 5, 8 and 11 years
 - There are 16, 13, 10, and 7 years (respectively) remaining before they each become adults. This is a total of 46 years of DFPS conservatorship without the PCA option.
 - If not placed together, 46 years of conservatorship would require 552 monthly caseworker visits.

Average Placement Cost Per Child*

	Foster Care	PCA
Year 1	\$21,593	\$15,548**
Years 2 - 5.3	\$92,312	\$23,524
Total 5.3 years	\$113,905	\$39,072

PCA Cost Avoidance = \$74,833

*average length of time in long-term care is 5.3 years

**includes 6 months of foster care payments

Note: costs above do not reflect cost avoidance in PCA from closing CPS cases.

Before PCA

- Relatives rarely verified as foster parents.
- Youth remain in state legal custody (average length of time in long term care is 5.3 years.)
- CPS case continues. Required minimum of monthly contact between caseworker and both parents and child. Frequent transportation to and from appointments and family visits.

After PCA

- Increased number of relatives will be verified.
- Verified relatives could become legal guardians for youth who will exit foster care/achieve permanency faster.
- Once permanent managing care is given to the relative, the CPS case is closed just as in adoption cases.

Before PCA

- Resource drain on counties:
 - o regular court reviews,
 - o CASA volunteers,
 - o attorneys ad litem
- Higher Medicaid rate

After PCA

- No further county involvement
- Less expensive Medicaid plan

Fostering Connections

Where are we now?

- Required rules are in progress
- IT/Automation Development is on track
- Targeted recruitment for potential PCA families is underway
- Communication efforts are occurring
- We are moving quickly

Fostering Connections

Where are we now?

- E-mail box is available for internal and external questions (fosteringconnections@dfps.state.tx.us)
- Information bulletin has been sent to Residential Providers and is available on the DFPS website at: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/About_Child_Protective_Services/fostering_connections.asp