



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

COMMISSIONER
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Evaluation of Foster Care Redesign

Evaluation of Foster Care Redesign is on-going. Both process and outcome components are included. DFPS will use evaluation findings to assist in identifying performance, trends, changes, and any problems and issues in the redesign catchment areas.

To date, a process evaluation on the initial implementation of the redesigned system in the first catchment area was completed by the University of Texas-Austin (UT) Institute for Organizational Excellence (IOE) and the Child and Family Research Institute (Research Institute). The original process evaluation plan included making multiple assessments over several months of implementation. However, delays in procuring and contracting with the first SSCC, together with the funding limitations for the process component of the evaluation, significantly limited the time with which UT had to conduct the initial process evaluation. Rather than evaluate the first 6-9 months of implementation, the process evaluation was limited to assessing the first two months of implementation. Regardless, the evaluation made an early assessment of employee engagement and collaboration among DFPS catchment area staff, SSCC staff and the staff of service providers who were contracting with the SSCC. In addition, the process evaluation made an early assessment of implementation barriers, infrastructure development and challenges that might impact the SSCC's ability to meet performance expectations. Major findings from that evaluation report, submitted to DFPS in February 2014, included the following:

- Additional time was needed by the SSCC to develop its infrastructure
- The SSCC successfully halted competition among residential service providers for foster homes
- Hiring former DFPS staff and staff who had never worked for DFPS was viewed both positively and negatively
- Additional training was needed to prepare staff for the changes made to technology systems
- Collaboration between the SSCC and its network of service providers was perceived as generally good
- Collaboration between the SSCC and DFPS was initially perceived as challenging
- Lack of available services, technology challenges and financial solvency concerns were identified as potential barriers for the SSCC in meeting its performance expectations
- Initial successes included the placement of sibling groups together and a redesigned system that was working despite the challenges and issues identified during the early stages of implementation.

Many of the findings in the UT process evaluation report corroborated issues identified by DFPS and the SSCC during the "start-up" period and the first few weeks of implementation. Notably, issues related to automation, communication, structure and organization, and some of the original recommendations for the redesign model led DFPS to make recommendations to address and remove barriers when implementing redesign in the subsequent catchment area. Those recommendations were presented at the November 2013 Public Private Partnership (PPP) meeting. Briefly, DFPS recommendations to the PPP included the following:

Automation:

- Increase training and "on-the-ground" support for child protective services (CPS) staff

- Increase testing prior to the start-up phase and allow SSCC early access to automation system
- Expand parameters to search for information in the system
- Require SSCCs to have trained and dedicated resources to manage information technology (IT) issues

Communication:

- Conduct early and frequent information meetings in the catchment area and include foster parents, providers, courts, advocates (CASA) and staff
- Partner with SSCCs in the development of a meaningful communication plan and develop and deliver joint presentations to key stakeholders
- Ensure regular communication with PPP (quarterly meetings at a minimum)

Structure and Organization:

- Ensure that the SSCC staff and the DFPS staff responsible for developing catchment plans and protocols are well informed decision-makers
- Establish very clear communications channels within and between DFPS and the SSCC
- Strengthen Cultural Change Teams
- Implement formal monthly face-to-face meetings between SSCC's and CPS catchment area leadership

Foster Care Redesign Model

- Re-visit the "exceptional care rate" given the difficulties in understanding, tracking and applying
- Re-visit the allocation and billing processes to ensure allocations cover costs and billing processes are simplified

Prior to the November 2013 PPP meeting, DFPS and the SSCC began resolving some of the issues weeks before the process evaluation was completed. Resolution of those issues may not have been reflected in the UT process evaluation report because once identified by DFPS and/or the SSCC, a resolution may have occurred during the time evaluation data were analyzed or during the time UT was preparing the evaluation report.

Moving forward, DFPS has continued a process evaluation of Foster Care Redesign. The PDF Group is conducting a third-party process evaluation of start-up and implementation activities has been underway in catchment 3b since the execution of the SSCC contract with ACH Child and Family Services on January 1st 2014.

On August 1st 2014, DFPS received formal notice from Providence Service Corporation of Texas of the intent to terminate the SSCC contract in Regions 2&9. DFPS has added an evaluation of the transition process and activities in Regions 2&9 to the scope of work for the PDF Group's process evaluation in 3b.

In June 2014, DFPS contracted for a third-party cost analysis of Foster Care Redesign with the Public Consulting Group. The purpose of this evaluation includes an analysis of the tasks and costs associated with start-up and implementation of an SSCC. The results of all evaluations will continue to be shared publicly with the PPP and other stakeholders in an effort to jointly assess and evaluate the best manner in which to implement Foster Care Redesign.