



Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

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CPS Transformation

Happy New Year! Typically, the new year brings with it a new outlook and a promise of change. CPS got a head start on the new year and began its transformation during 2014.

What is CPS Transformation?

Transformation is a rigorous self-improvement process CPS is currently undergoing to transform itself into a better place to work and the most effective program possible. It's a field-driven effort built on the knowledge and insights of frontline staff and led by both regional and state office staff. Transformation will improve child safety, build community collaboration, create a stable workforce, and build leadership.

How Transformation Will Affect You

It is the goal of Transformation to increase your satisfaction through improvements in service delivery, procedures, and in our interactions with you. You will experience enhancements in productivity, communication, and accessibility to services so that you are provided support timely and particularly in times of crises.

For more information about CPS Transformation, please visit our [website](#).

A Labor of Love

"Special Needs" is an umbrella underneath which a staggering array of diagnoses can be wedged. Children with special needs may have mild learning disabilities or profound cognitive impairment; food allergies or terminal illness; developmental delays that catch up quickly or remain entrenched; occasional panic attacks or serious psychiatric problems. The designation is useful for getting needed services, setting appropriate goals, and gaining understanding for a child and stressed family.



Fostering Self-Determination in Children with Disabilities
by Kristen Jones, Disability Specialist

Children with disabilities often need help with daily living activities, but many children with disabilities can become fairly independent with the right teaching and support. Fostering self-determination in children with disabilities improves self-esteem and allows them to take a more active role in making choices in their lives. Skills and behaviors children develop early in life lay a strong foundation for their adolescence and adulthood. For this reason, caregivers need to think about how they can begin early to promote self-determination in children with disabilities.

Basically, self-determination is about making choices and decisions that affect one's own life. It's about a child knowing who he/she is, what he/she wants, and how to go about getting it. Some examples of self-determination are choosing who to play with, where to play with toys, or setting the dinner table.

For children with disabilities, acquiring skills related to self-determination is especially important. This is because their freedom to move around, express themselves clearly or interact with others may look different than what other children typically do. Some caregivers may mistakenly provide more support for a child with disabilities than the child might actually need. Sometimes when children are consistently overprotected or prevented from taking even small risks, they may learn to feel helpless or dependent, rather than self-reliant.

Self-determination is not about letting children make every single decision that affects their lives, such as what time to go to bed or deciding not to wear a coat in the winter time. We know that children need clear expectations, protection from harm, and loving guidance from the adults. Self-determination is about providing opportunities so children develop skills to become independent as well as to interact freely and joyfully within their environment.

When children grow up to be adults, we want them to have the necessary survival skills, such as speaking up and voicing opinions. Self-advocacy, the ability to speak on one's own behalf, is an important and powerful outcome for children and adults, especially those with disabilities.

By learning skills that promote self-determination as a young child, we begin paving the way for them to effectively use their voice or other means to speak up on their own behalf.

Just like we need to practice the guitar to become proficient, children need ongoing practice to gain skills related to self-determination. When children have numerous opportunities to practice making basic choices or solving simple problems, they build confidence and trust in their own abilities. Children also build the competence and ability to master new skills that can last a lifetime.

A few important ways caregivers can promote self-determination in children and youth include:

- Foster choice-making
- Support decision-making
- Encourage problem-solving
- Promote goal setting and planning
- Reinforce self-directed behaviors
- Support self-awareness and self-knowledge
- Encourage self-advocacy

By Trellanie E. Bostic, ECI

Did you know that a baby's hearing is screened in the hospital when he or she is only a few days old?

As a caregiver of an infant and toddler, it is important that you are aware of the results of the newborn hearing screening, which occurred when the baby you are caring for was born. If the baby passed the hearing screening, nothing more is needed. However, if the baby did not pass this "birth screening," there will be follow-up for additional screening and possibly a hearing test conducted by an audiologist to confirm a hearing loss. It is important that you act on all recommendations.

Hearing loss is a "silent" condition because a newborn with hearing loss looks like every other infant. The delays in a baby's development that are a result of the hearing loss are not visible in a young infant. When concerns about development occur, it is common for the family or caregiver to have a "wait-and-see" approach. This is not poor caregiving, but a natural response. Because many people have never encountered someone with a hearing loss, it is sometimes difficult to think that it might be occurring in a baby. Most people are not aware of how unidentified hearing loss can impact development.

Why is early identification important?

Early identification is important because babies learn by listening and interacting with their caregivers. If a baby is born with hearing loss, and it is undetected, many sounds and voices are not heard. Their attention is not as easily drawn to the sounds in their environment or the voices of their families who are engaging with them. Babies that don't fully participate in these experiences are less likely to engage with their caregivers, the objects around them or begin to learn words and attach meaning to those words.

Infant and early childhood hearing loss, if left undetected, can negatively impact social and emotional development, speech and language acquisition, and academic achievement. If detected early, however, these negative impacts can be diminished and even eliminated through early intervention. "Early" means a baby's hearing loss is identified by three months of age and he or she is enrolled in early intervention by six months of age.

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What should you know as a caregiver?

It is important to understand the process for testing a baby's hearing. In Texas, babies' hearing is screened before they are discharged from the hospital. If they do not pass the "birth" screening, they are referred for an outpatient screen approximately two weeks after they leave the hospital. If they do not pass the outpatient screen, they must have a diagnostic evaluation with an audiologist. This test will determine if the baby has hearing loss. It is important that the hearing test be completed by the time the baby is three months old because a baby's learning begins at birth.

Now that you are aware of the process, check with the baby's physician to see the results of the birth screen. If the records show that the baby was referred for further testing, make sure this occurs. The doctor should help you get the required testing. If there is a hearing loss, he/she should be enrolled in early intervention by six months of age.

The Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Division for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) can talk with you about the options that are available for the baby. They work with the local education agency to provide deaf education services for children birth to three. ECI can also help you connect with other parents who have children with hearing loss.

For more information about DARS-ECI, contact the DARS Inquires Line at (800) 628-5115 or email at dars.inquiries@dars.state.tx.us.

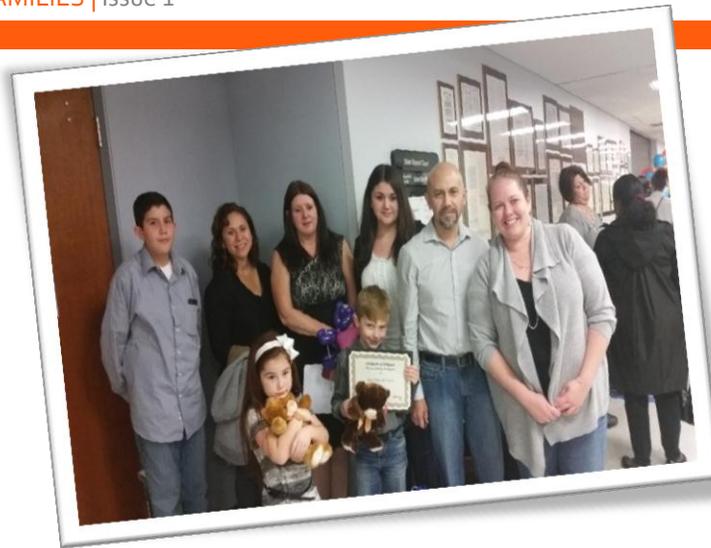
If you have questions about the newborn hearing screening process, contact the Texas Department of State Health Services Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (TEHDI) program. Use their [webpage](#) to email questions and find a person to talk to.



Region 7- Nail Painting



Region 7-Face Painting



Above: **Region 3** Nava Family with Kinship Worker Veronica Martinez and CVS Supervisor Tamara Hanson on National Adoption Day.

Community Engagement

Region 7- Travis County Kinship workers coordinated with community partners like Bikers Against Child Abuse, Foster Angels, Partnerships for Children, Casey Family Programs, Travis County Sherriff's Department, and child placing agencies in Austin. There were costume contests, a raffle for themed gift baskets for caregivers, pumpkin painting, face painting, and lots of food. Families had a wonderful time and we were blessed by the community to offer this event free to caregivers.



LINKS TO RESOURCES

[Fostering Self-Determination Among Children and Youth with Disabilities-Ideas From Parents for Parents](#)

[A Parent's Guide to the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction](#)

[Self-Determination Strategies](#)

[Benefits for Children with Disabilities](#)

[Easter Seals](#)

[Support for Families with Children with Disabilities](#)

SAFETY TIPS

- If you are hosting a New Year's Eve party and serving alcohol, closely supervise children or opt for non-alcoholic beverages.
- If you celebrate in crowded public areas, always know where your children are and be mindful of others that appear to be unruly.
- Kids should never play with fireworks. Firecrackers, rockets, and sparklers are just too dangerous.
- Buy only legal fireworks and don't attempt to make your own.
- Don't allow kids to pick up pieces of fireworks after an event. Some may still ignite and explode.
- Always use fireworks outside and have a bucket of water and a hose nearby in case of accidents.

GREAT RESOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN

- I won't tease dogs or other pets – even friendly ones.
- I will talk with a trusted adult when I need help, am scared, angry, stressed or faced with tough decisions.
- I will wear my seat belt every time I get in a car and never use a cell phone or text message while driving.
- I'll be nice to other kids. I'll be friendly to kids who need friends or who may have a hard time making friends.
- I'll never give out private information such as my name, address, school name or phone number on the Internet. Also, I'll never send a picture of myself to someone I chat with on the computer without asking my parent.
- I will resist peer pressure to try tobacco, e-cigarettes, drugs or alcohol.

Kinship Worker Spotlight

Alina Jones, Region 6



Maggie Stewart, Kinship Supervisor, "I first met Alina Jones after she started working in the Kinship Program on June 2, 2014. My unit was short-staffed when Ms. Jones was hired and she was assigned two workloads and became acclimated with the Kinship Program in a short time. Alina is always one of the first to respond when I request volunteers for Basic Skills Development trainings and other community events. Currently, Alina is the kinship specialist for a caregiver who has seven children in her home. Alina responds to daily, if not weekly, communication ensuring the placement of these children remains stable. Alina provided a food card, bikes, and other needed items for this family. She takes the initiative and works independently without much supervision. Alina is indeed a great asset to the Kinship Program and to Unit KE. Alina Jones exhibits such dedication as it relates to providing any and all resources available to our caregivers. Our agency is truly benefiting from the type of work being done by Alina Jones. I am extremely proud to be the supervisor for Alina Jones."

Kristina Belcher, Kinship Program Director, "I first met Alina Jones at a grandparents expo. The Kinship Program was co-hosting the event and we were on hand to help. She impressed me from the start by taking the initiative to register the grandparents. She worked non-stop with a smile on her face providing services to our caregivers until the end of the day. She truly was a team player. I again saw her in action when one of our families needed respite care for seven cousins placed in their home. She took the lead to

explore how we could find placements while allowing them to continue to attend the same school for nine days. Ms. Jones' passions for providing quality service to our kinship caregivers lead her down a path of great team work.



The Kinship Program has a new Facebook Page! The Kinship Page will provide you with more up to date information regarding community activities, resources and much more. So, please visit us at www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers and don't forget to like us!



Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities at (800) 252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org.