

## Appendix C: Key Themes From Harris County Focus Groups and Interviews

FOCUS GROUP & INTERVIEW THEMES	QUOTES
<i>Workforce Issues Within DFPS Lead to Poor Practice and Delay Permanency for Many Children/Youth</i>	"[Y]ou have a lot of new social workers who need support and need it from a supportive, trained supervisor."
	"[They] have a revolving door with workers..."
	"[T]here is not enough experienced supervisors to support caseworkers; often supervisors now only have one year of experience before becoming supervisors."
	"I just feel that everyone at CPS is under such pressure, I have never seen this sense of angst with everyone."
	"If you've got [turnover and caseworkers starting over] it's going to delay the length of time it takes to get to permanency."
<i>Poor Coordination and Workflow Within DFPS Delay Permanency for Many Children/Youth</i>	"The FBI fingerprint check currently occurs after the case has been transferred to adoption prep... Often... fingerprint check[s] reveal criminal history that prevents the adoption from occurring. If the FBI fingerprints checks occurred earlier, this could be avoided."
	Risk evaluations [of prospective caregivers with criminal history] are performed at state headquarters and take "anytime from three months to like years."
	Lack of geographic districting within the county means that "social workers spend large amounts of time driving at the expense of seeking permanency for children."
	A bottleneck in records redaction has lead to "some cases where it was taking over seven to eight months to get cases de-identified."
	"So [a case] could sit there [in CVS] for a year until they pull the case together to get it over there [to Adoption Prep]."
<i>DFPS Often Does Not Communicate or Collaborate Well With Community Provider Agencies</i>	"They don't appreciate us showing up in court as team members... I think there's just a basic distrust between them and us..."
	"We could help them a lot more if we were allowed to."
	"The two systems don't talk very often."
<i>DFPS Staff Lack a Clear Mission and Understanding of Organizational Values</i>	"I think the sense of urgency [about permanency] just isn't there..."
	"[I]f you know that they're safe [in foster care] then they go to the bottom of the list and you don't have to worry about them."
	"Managers and administrators [do] not communicate clear, consistent guidance to supervisors and workers...there is no direct communication between supervisors/workers and leadership; rather everything is passed through program directors or managers so that message sometimes get garbled."
	"[W]e need to stop focusing on numbers and focus on children and youth and on healing the kids so they can achieve permanency."
<i>Limited Availability and/or Accessibility of Services Keep Some Children Separated From Families</i>	"I see a lot of failed adoptions" [due to inadequate post-adoption support.]
	"[T]hey also need to have more post reunification programs as well. They can't just give the kids back and then expect everything to be okay. Parents need help afterwards as well."
	"[T]hey should let us know about our options, the kinds of services that we can participate in, that my kids could have gone with my relatives."
	"[I]t's almost like the system is designed to keep children in foster care" [rather than paying for preventive or in-home services.]