



TEXAS

**Department of Family
and Protective Services**

Child Protective Services

**Regional Parent Support
Groups (PSGs) Resource
Guide**

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Resource Guides

The purpose of Resource Guides is to provide information that helps you do your job better. This information includes reference material, procedures, and guidelines that help you complete the tasks you are required to do by policy.

It's important to remember that the information in Resource Guides **does not substitute for policy**. We may sometimes include policy statements, but only to show you the policy to which the information is related. We will highlight any policy that actually appears in the Resource Guide, and will almost always include a link to the actual policy. For example:

Per [4222.2 Re-Allowing Placement](#):

If the caseworker learns of a detailed justification for changing the status of and considering placements in a foster family that is on Disallowed Placement status, the caseworker must elevate this consideration through the regional chain of command to the regional director.

The policy in the handbook always takes precedence over what is in the Resource Guide. We try to keep policy and Resource Guides synchronized, but sometimes there is a delay. **If you have questions, always follow the policy in the Policy Handbook.**

Resource Guides provide important information on a range of topics, for the purpose of assisting and guiding staff to:

- make essential decisions
- develop strategies to address various issues
- perform essential procedures
- understand important processes
- identify and apply best practices

The information in the Resource Guides is not policy (except where noted), and the actions and approaches described here are not mandates. You should adapt the way you perform critical tasks to the individual needs and circumstances of the children and families with whom you work.

State office and field staff are working together to identify Resource Guide topics, define the content, and develop the appropriate guides. CPS will regularly post Resource Guides as they are developed and update them as needed. Check the Resource Guides page, in the CPS Handbook, to see new or revised Guides.

We hope these Guides provide useful information to guide and assist CPS staff in effectively performing their job tasks. These Guides, combined with clear and concise policy in the Handbook, should help staff provide a high level of service to children in Texas.

PURPOSE

The regional Parent Support Groups (PSGs) are informational support groups for parents receiving investigations (INV), family-based safety services (FBSS) or conservatorship (CVS) services. These groups are led by a parent who has successfully navigated the CPI and/or CPS system and a CPI/CPS staff person.

Most regional PSG meetings are held at least once a month in communities around the state and provide information about the CPI/CPS system and support to parents through engaging with other parents.

PSGs do not discuss details about open cases or provide advice on cases. PSGs are in every region, but not in every community.

THE ROLE OF A CPI/CPS LIAISON

CPI/CPS Liaisons should:

- Have at least two years' experience with CPS;
- Be able to represent regional issues;
- Be able to handle criticism and confrontation;
- Show commitment to the agency mission, vision, and values; and
- Be at a supervisor level or above.

The CPI/CPS Liaison's responsibilities include:

- Attend regional PSG meetings and explain the CPI/CPS process;
- Coordinate with other CPI and CPS subject matter experts;
- Conduct presentations in their regions to provide information about the regional PSGs to garner support for continued referrals to the regional PSGs;
- Conduct presentations to community groups about the regional PSGs;
- Submit completed volunteer application packets to the state office Parent Program Specialist;
- Assist the Parent Liaison with the development, planning and facilitation of the regional PSG;
- Identify other Parent Liaisons as alternates to provide presentations and help with regional PSGs;
- Recruit new parents to attend support groups by presenting information on the PSG to regional CPI/CPS staff;
- Provide caseworkers with Parent Liaison Nomination forms to nominate a parent to be Parent Liaison;
- Present Parent Liaison Nomination forms to the CPS Regional Director for review and approval;
- Provide updated community resources list to support group participants;
- Make arrangements for Parent Liaisons speaking at engagements in a timely manner, including any other logistics associated with the event;
- Submit a Parent Support Group (PSG) Monthly Report ([Form 1793](#)) to the state office Parent Program Specialist by the 15th of each month; and
- Engage and develop supportive relationships with Parent Liaisons.

THE ROLE OF A PARENT LIAISON

A Parent Liaison is an individual who has successfully completed services in a CPI, FBSS or CVS case, with priority given to parents who have had a CVS case. The Parent Liaison must be able to comfortably speak about their past involvement with CPI and/or CPS and understand the need for the interventions that occurred. Parent Liaisons should have a willingness and genuine interest in sharing their experiences, expertise, and wisdom, to help other parents succeed. Additionally, the Parent Liaison serves as a voice to help CPI and CPS staff and members of the community understand how policy and practices may impact parents involved in the child welfare system. Parent Liaisons are committed to help keep children safe.

Parent Liaisons may not offer advice to parents on specific cases or become involved in a parent's case. They do not perform duties such as case analysis, helping to determine case dispositions, or providing input about the appropriateness of case-specific service plans.

While a region may have multiple Parent Liaisons to assist with the regional Parent Support Groups, only two Parent Liaisons will be appointed by the Regional Director to serve as members of the PCG Advisory Committee.

Qualifications to serve as a parent liaison include:

- Be a birth parent with a closed CPI or CPS case that is at least a year old. The Regional Director may grant an exception to the one-year case closure requirement on a case-by-case basis. It is recommended that parents in recovery have at least one year of sobriety, although the length of time may be lessened on a case-by-case basis;
- Be referred by a caseworker and approved by the CPS Regional Director;
- Complete the volunteer application process; and
- Be willing to perform the following responsibilities:
 - Work with the CPI/CPS Liaison to arrange, facilitate, and attend regional Parent Support Groups;
 - Represent the voice of the regional PSG in regional and statewide meetings and in communities in the region;
 - Identify ways to gather input and information from other parents to share with CPI and CPS;
 - Develop activities that facilitate open communication with regional groups when needed;
 - Conduct presentations to CPI and CPS staff at community groups, or meetings as requested and able.

Parent Liaisons who are appointed to serve as the regional representative on the statewide Parent Advisory Committee must be willing and able to attend quarterly statewide meetings which may require overnight travel.

How to Nominate a Parent Liaison

To nominate a parent to the statewide Parent Collaboration Group Advisory Committee and regional Parent Support Group, use the Parent Liaison Nomination [Form 1785](#). The caseworker completes the Parent Liaison Nomination form and submits the form to the CPS Liaison in that region. The CPS Liaison forwards the Parent Liaison Nomination form to the Regional Director for review and approval. The Parent Liaison Nomination form is then submitted to the state office Parent Program Specialist. Once the Parent Liaison has been approved to participate on the statewide PCG Advisory Committee or the regional PSG, a Volunteer Application will need to be completed. All Volunteer Applications should be sent to the state office Parent Program Specialist.

SELF-REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR PARENT LIAISON

Within five business days, Parent Liaisons must report the occurrence or existence of any of the following to the CPI/CPS Liaison:

- Arrest
- Indictment
- Adjudication of guilt or no contest plea
- Assessment of probation
- Pretrial diversion or community supervision
- Deferred adjudication of any criminal offense
- DFPS involvement of the parent liaison or his or her family with CPI or CPS

CPI/CPS Liaisons must notify the state office Parent Program Specialist and the CPS Regional Director as soon as they are apprised of any new arrest, conviction, other criminal activity, or CPI/CPS involvement of a Parent Liaison.

Consequences of an Arrest for a New Criminal Charge or New DFPS Investigation

The circumstances of the charges and behaviors will be assessed to determine if the Parent Liaison can continue to serve in their role or become inactive.

A Parent Liaison who has a new DFPS investigation may not continue to serve as a Parent Liaison until the case is closed. Once the case is closed, the CPS Regional Director will determine if the Parent Liaison is able to resume their role depending upon the circumstances and outcome of the case.

SETTING UP PARENT SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

The role of the CPI/CPS Liaison is not to direct or facilitate the PSG meetings, but to assist the Parent Liaison. However, it is likely that the Parent Liaison does not have experience facilitating groups, which will require the CPI/CPS Liaison to model the process. The CPI/CPS Liaison must provide the necessary support to help the Parent Liaison be successful. Remember that the Parent Liaison is a volunteer and as such, has other priorities in their life that they are navigating. It is important that the CPI/CPS Liaison is mindful of the Parent Liaison's other priorities.

The CPICPS Liaison in collaboration with the Parent Liaison should:

- Identify meeting dates, times, and locations;
- Determine how often meetings occur;
- Organize materials and other resources for meetings; and
- Arrange to practice facilitation with the Parent Liaison.

The following documents are provided by the CPI/CPS Liaison at each PSG meeting:

- Parent Support Group Agenda Word Document ([Form 1782](#))
- Parent Support Group Sign-in Sheet Word Document ([Form 1780](#))
- Parent Support Group Certificate Word Document ([Form 1781](#))
- Parent Support Group Feedback Word Document ([Form 1783](#))
- Parent Liaison Nomination Form Word Document ([Form 1785](#))

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENT LIAISONS AND PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Regional Parent Liaisons could be subpoenaed by a parent's attorney to testify regarding the parent's participation in the Parent Support Groups. It is important that the CPS Liaison convey this information to the Parent Liaisons to help them understand the court process. Many Parent Liaisons may not have the personal experience of having a trial or understand the implications of the court process.

If a Parent Liaison receives a request from an attorney about a parent who attended a PSG, the Parent Liaison should inform the attorney that:

- Parent Liaisons are not employees of Child Protective Investigations (CPI) or Child Protective Services (CPS);
- PSGs are not a contracted service. It is a support group where parents offer hope and support to one another;
- Case specifics are not discussed during PSG meetings; and
- Parent Liaisons serve only as a support and are not involved in the individual parent's cases.

If an attorney requests to attend a PSG meeting, the CPI/CPS Liaison or Parent Liaison may allow it if all parents attending agree.

PROMOTING PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Each region should establish at least one Parent Support Group (PSG). Caseworkers and supervisors are responsible for identifying parents who have been involved in a CPI case and/or receive family-based safety services or conservatorship services through CPS and refer them to their regional PSG. Regional fliers may be used as advertisement or a direct invitation to parents.

In addition, CPI/CPS Liaisons may promote PSGs by presenting information at:

- Unit meetings or conferences;
- CPI/CPS Professional Development Training;
- Regional Leadership meetings;
- Child welfare board meetings;
- CASA events; and
- Judicial events.

ENCOURAGING PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE REGIONAL PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

There are various ways for CPI/CPS staff to encourage parent participation in the regional Parent Support Groups (PSGs) including, but not limited to:

- Inform parents that the PSG is a meeting for the support of parents who are currently involved in an open CPI or CPS case.
- Inform parents that knowledge can be powerful, and they will receive information about CPI and CPS, the child welfare system, and available resources.
- Inform parents that they may find other parents from their community who may be having similar experiences.
- Inform parents that there is hope and they may feel motivated when hearing and learning from parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system.
- Share with parents that hearing from others who have successfully reunified with their child could help them better understand the child welfare system and what changes need to occur for them to be successful.

While CPI/CPS staff can provide a parent information about Parent Support Groups (PSGs) at any time, the following opportunities are especially optimal:

- Permanency Conferences
- Family Group Conferences
- Family Team Meetings
- Home Visits
- Attending Court (not during the hearing itself)

FACILITATING VIRTUAL PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Some regions may choose to conduct Parent Support Groups virtually, or supplement in person meetings, in order reach more parents, especially in rural areas. Below are some tips to create a supportive environment in a virtual space:

- Select an online meeting platform, such as GoToMeeting or Zoom. If you do not have access to a GoToMeeting account, please check with your regional leadership. Each region pays for their online meeting platform.
- Write down instructions for yourself and for participants in advance of the meeting. The instructions might include:
 - Links to any downloads they need to access ahead of time;
 - Instructions for testing their software, logging on, and using the microphone, chat, and webcam;
 - How to use a smartphone or call-in option if they don't have a computer; and
 - Basics on how you all plan to participate and what they can expect during the meeting (include screenshots if you are able).
- Limit the group size and expect less participation. Just like in person, too many people in a group setting can make it difficult to facilitate discussion. Any online platform takes some getting used to and people may be less comfortable interacting this way in the beginning.
- Partner with other group leaders or a co-facilitator. Having a co-facilitator can be especially helpful if one person is more technologically savvy and can handle more technical questions as the group learns the platform. Consider having one person monitor chat questions as the other facilitates the conversation.
- Establish group agreements during the virtual meeting. Consider preparing ground rules and sharing them virtually at the start of the meeting. This will help acclimate group members to the meeting format. Questions to consider for your group agreements include:
 - What to do if a lot of people are having trouble getting on the platform?
 - How to handle phone calls or other things that take us away from the meeting space?
 - How to ensure the meeting is still a private space? With everyone participating from their homes, make sure participants use headphones or can be away from others.
- Maintain privacy settings. Do not post meeting links where people outside of the group could see them and consider using a platform where the organizer can control who joins the meeting or that requires an access code. Though this may make it harder for your members to access the group, it's worth it to protect their privacy.
- Use a webcam to see one another but also provide a call-in option. Seeing each other's faces helps to bridge the technological gap and remind each other that this is still your normal support group—just in a different format. But you may have parents with limited or no internet access who will need to access your virtual meeting by phone only. If you know that you have members in this situation, be sure to select a platform that has a call-in option. Stay aware of people on the phone and be mindful of the fact that they cannot see what's displayed on the screen.
- Check in frequently and ask questions of the group. It may be more difficult for people to bring up pressing concerns or needs online. It can also be harder for you as the group leader to gauge how members are feeling because you can't read body language or facial cues as you would in person.

- Ask frequent questions of your group, both about how they are handling the digital format and about the content of the conversation. Sample questions include, but are not limited to:
 - “I know doing this meeting virtually is harder than in person, do you feel like you are missing pieces of the conversation as we talk?”
 - “Are you finding the chat function helpful? If you aren’t sure how to unmute yourself, you can participate by chatting.”

Parent Support Groups (PSGs) do not allow the recording of meetings via virtual platforms.

PARENT LIAISON TRAVEL AND ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Activities that may require travel reimbursement for the Parent Liaison include attending regional Parent Support Group meetings, supervisory meetings, community presentations about PSG, CPI or CPS Professional Development Training presentations, CASA presentations, and presentations to judges.

A Speaker Participation Fee can be paid to Parent Liaison(s) after conducting a presentation or training to CPI and CPS staff or other community stakeholders. The presentation or training must last for at least an hour to qualify for the Speaker Participation Fee of \$50.

The Parent Liaison must complete the Request for Participation Fee ([Form 1799](#)).

Procedures for Requesting Reimbursement

A Parent Liaison facilitating a parent support group completes a Mileage Log (see Appendix) to document activities and signs and submits requests for mileage reimbursement and the Speaker Participation Fee form, if applicable, to the CPS Liaison for review and approval. Travel reimbursement for parent volunteers comes out of the local budget using the regional program activity code (PAC).

The CPI/CPS Liaison reviews, approves, and forwards the forms to the state office Parent Program Specialist to be submitted for payment.

APPENDIX A: MILEAGE LOG

Mileage Log

Region _____

Trip Date	Purpose of Trip	Address of Origination	Address of Destination	Miles
CPI/CPS Liaison Name:			Total Miles:	
Parent Liaison Name:				