



Texas Center for Child and Family Studies

Request for Applications

Strengthening Child Welfare Services in Region 7 through Consultation, Training, and Technical Assistance

The Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (the Center), in collaboration with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, seeks applications from community child welfare service provider organizations in Region 7 who need consultation, training, and/or technical assistance to 1) improve or sustain organizational performance, 2) improve or sustain programming through program evaluation and/or identifying best practices, and/or 3) improve or sustain a healthy and adequately-trained workforce of child welfare professionals.

Who are we?

The Texas Center for Child and Family Studies (the Center) focuses on supporting all child welfare community service providers in Texas. The Center is a 501(c)(3) and a supporting organization of Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS). The Center strives to support and initiate the development of high-quality child welfare services to ensure appropriate care for all Texas children. Our mission is to provide education, research, and training to strengthen the capacity of organizations and systems of care to deliver high quality services to children and families in Texas. Please visit www.tacfs.org/thecenter for more information.

TACFS is a network of mission-driven organizations that have embraced the call to serve at-risk children, youth, and families. These organizations are working together to improve care, services, and outcomes in their communities and statewide. TACFS works to achieve these goals through education and training, collaboration, and advocacy. The strength of TACFS is attributable to its diverse, high quality, and collaborative membership. Please visit www.tacfs.org for more information.



Background: Community Child Welfare Service Provider Needs in Texas

Employing a dedicated and talented workforce, child welfare organizations provide services and supports to the most vulnerable Texans - children who have been abused or neglected, children at risk of abuse or neglect, and their families.

Child welfare service providers operate within a uniquely complex space. Their work is affected by local, state, and national trends, including: competition for philanthropic funding, fluctuating demand for services, the continued rollout of Community Based Care (CBC), the upcoming implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), the reform requirements associated with the federal lawsuit, responses to COVID-19, and the complicated tapestry of regulatory oversight.

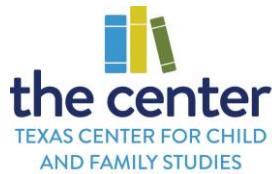
Through our experience working with and talking to service providers throughout Texas, we have learned that child welfare organizations often need assistance answering these questions:

- How can my organization stay viable?
- What can my organization do to fit into the child welfare system, given the scope of system changes and reforms that are currently taking place? (i.e.: [Community Based Care](#))
- How do I know if my programs are effective at promoting the desired outcomes for children and families?
- How do I ensure my workforce is trained in the most current and effective practices?

Larger, more well-resourced organizations may have the means to answer these questions on their own. But many organizations have fewer resources available to address these relevant questions. This represents a gap in information and assistance available to the child welfare service provider community. If this gap is not addressed, it may lead to circumstances in which service capacity is insufficient to meet demand, or in which services do not have the desired impact. This is where the Center can help.

Request for Applications and Project Objectives

The Texas Center for Child and Family Studies seeks Applications from community child welfare service organizations providing services in Department of Family and Protective



Services (DFPS) Region 7 who want to engage in consultation, training, and/or technical assistance to:

1. Improve or sustain organizational performance,
2. Improve or sustain programming through program evaluation and/or identifying best practices, and/or
3. Improve or sustain a healthy and adequately trained workforce of child welfare professionals.

The Center will provide awardees with one-on-one consultation, training, and/or technical assistance toward one or more of the objectives stated above. The Center's technical assistance services are grounded in a solution-focused and tailored approach and communicated clearly with actionable recommendations to help organizations maximize their impact in their communities.

While project timelines may differ from organization to organization, we anticipate engagements to begin in October of 2020 and end in April of 2021.

The following are examples of the services that the Center can provide to project awardees, based on the needs articulated in the application. This list is not exhaustive and is provided to give applicants an idea of the services available under this award. Services provided to awardees will be determined cooperatively based on the needs stated in the application, as well as the Center's assessment of organizational needs.

Objective 1: Improving or Sustaining Organizational Performance

- *Organizational and Programmatic Change Management* - For child welfare organizations, change is the only constant. Organizations must effectively manage change to ensure that they survive and thrive. Our services can provide a framework designed specifically for child welfare organizations to identify needed changes and successfully implement changes from the organizational level to the practice level. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Strategic planning
 - Managing the implementation of new initiatives
 - Improving the outcomes for existing initiatives,
 - Enhancing how the organization uses data through analysis and/or Continuous Quality Improvement.



- *Responding to Regulatory Challenges.* The volume and intensity of the state’s regulatory oversight can be overwhelming. Organizations may not know their options for making improvements and maintaining compliance. We can help organizations develop sustainable strategies for managing contract and regulatory issues.
- *Community Engagement and Communication Planning.* Effectively bringing an organization’s community closer to their mission is key for long term success and sustainability. By increasing supporter engagement organizations will see more time volunteered, more funds donated and a stronger commitment to the mission. A critical part of this success is understanding how to effectively communicate with your staff, clients as well as community leaders and stakeholders. Our services provide a wide variety of specified strategies around communications and engagement. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Increasing community engagement through targeted outreach
 - Enhancing and improving donor relations
 - Improving social media presence through marketing and best practices
 - Developing an organizational communications plan or pitch packet

Objective 2: Improving or Sustaining Programming through Program Evaluation and/or Identifying Best Practices

- *Support in Planning for the rollout of Community Based Care (CBC).* While there are no known, immediate plans for CBC to come to Region 7, there are steps organizations can take now to ensure that they are ready to thrive in a community-based model of child welfare service delivery. Support in this area will be focused on helping organizations understand the link between their programming and the community's needs, and working to bridge any gaps. (Note: Planning for CBC will be informed by the ongoing community needs assessment underway now and managed by Mission Capital.)
- *Aligning Services with Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Requirements.* FFPSA represents the largest shift in federal child welfare funding in more than two decades. To remain viable when the new law takes effect in October 2021, child welfare service providers of all types must ensure their services meet the requirements of FFPSA. For example, the Center can assist providers in understanding and using the FFPSA Evidence Based Clearinghouse, match evidence-based intervention to populations served, or provide resources about the process of becoming Qualified Residential Treatment Provider (QRTP).



- *Program Evaluation.* Evaluating effectiveness is a critical organizational task in the current era of child welfare services. Program evaluation can help organizations determine whether existing efforts are leading to desired outcomes so that effective efforts can be amplified and programs not operating as intended can be reviewed. Program evaluation can help organizations utilize resources most effectively to maximize intended outcomes for children and families. Well-designed and executed evaluations can also help build evidence of effectiveness for an organization's specific model or practice approach. The Center can provide training and coaching on a full range of program evaluation tasks, including evaluation design, data collection, data analysis, and data visualization.

Objective 3: Improving or Sustaining a Healthy and Adequately Trained Workforce of Child Welfare Professionals

- *Clinical Coaching.* Keeping current on the latest clinical practices can be challenging for child welfare professionals. Best practices change as new research emerges. We can assist organizations with skill building and knowledge expansion for existing clinical staff with specific attention given to emerging research on best practices, selecting the appropriate mix of child welfare specific interventions, and effective implementation.
- *Online and In-Person Trainings.* The Center already organizes and offers a variety of trainings for service providers around the state. We can connect organizations to one or more of our existing trainings, or we can develop unique trainings to meet specific organizational needs.

Application Requirements

Organizations must meet the following minimum eligibility requirements to apply. Applications from organizations not meeting these requirements will be disqualified.

1. Agencies must be providing direct services to children or families involved with, or at risk of involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS). This could include agencies providing direct prevention services as well as agencies providing residential services to children in state conservatorship. Preference will be given to organizations that contract with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
2. Agencies must be providing these services in DFPS Region 7.



3. The proposed project must impact the portions of the organization's operations that serve DFPS Region 7.

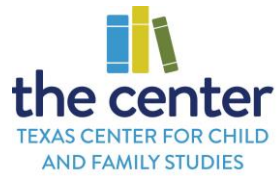
Applications must be submitted online [here](#) by 09/09/2020 and will be selected based how well the applicant completes the application. Preference will be given to organizations who can demonstrated how the project aligns with the needs of the local community and could contribute to improved outcomes for [DFPS Region 7](#).

Applications must include these required sections:

1. Description of your organization: history, programs/services offered, the structure of your leadership team and any relevant background for the organization's leadership (500 words or fewer).
2. Description of need to include relevant background information, efforts your organization has already taken to address the stated need, and any outcomes from work that has already taken place (1000 words or fewer)
3. Anticipated deliverables within the first six months of the project (300 words or fewer)
4. Identify which leaders within your organization will be responsible for engaging in the proposed work (300 words or fewer)
5. Potential obstacles that could arise during the course of this project (200 words or fewer)
6. Explanation of how you see this project promoting the success of your organization and contribution to community-based child welfare services in Region 7 (300 words or fewer)

Within these sections, applicants must clearly outline a vision of your organization's goals, articulate how the Center's expertise can support the identify goals, as well as your leadership's commitment to engagement and accountability throughout the life of the project. Whether this includes your board members, directors or donors, it is critical that all have a voice and have pledged commitment to the identified goals.

The Center will create MOUs for services with awardees and jointly determine the project timeline.



When considering if your organization should apply, here are some critical questions to ask:

- Is our project clearly defined and have we outlined what it will require from our staff?
- Does our project need link to larger goals or priorities we are aiming to achieve or compliance requirements of some kind?
- Is our leadership in agreement of this need and willing to sustain the outcomes after the project is completed?
- Will solving this problem advance a priority or goal that the organization is currently pursuing?
- What additional work needs to be done to fully define this problem and solve it?