

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#); [Brittany Roberson](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Friday, June 06, 2014 4:08:13 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Friday, June 06, 2014 3:06 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Friday, June 6, 2014 - 15:05

Agency: DEPARTMENT FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES DFPS

First Name: ann

Last Name: drake

Title: citizen

Organization you are affiliated with: CASA of Williamson County

City: Georgetown

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I oppose closing residential treatment centers adamantly. I was working in mental health in the 1960's and saw how confused and disabled people were left to their own resources; how community based treatment was either unavailable, inaccessible, incompetent, or ill understood by people with psychiatric and developmental disabilities. I see the sad results of these decisions in the homeless populations today. We can do better.

I support retaining case workers in the Department of Family and Children Services. How do this is the question. Working conditions must be improved, respect in the form of decent pay provided to these people who face horrendous situations on a daily basis, and punitive management tactics ended. People do not perform well under conditions that are remind one of jail conditions, and are subjected to arbitrary discipline that does not have staff development as its end goal. Case workers perform in dual roles. One is almost a policing function: investigating criminal actions towards children. The other is supposed to be a nurturing one: of caring for the children in their care. Unrealistic work loads make this impossible, irrational travel demands add to the unreality of their tasks, pressure to close cases adds an additional stress and quite frequently cases are delayed by difficulties in the courts: holidays, lack of emergency judges, lawyers with other commitments, court delays that are out the control of the workers. In the one case with which I can speak with some authority, court dates were arbitrarily cancelled with no notice. This was an inconvenience to me several

times but a disaster for parents who work hourly jobs where frequently they are disciplined for missing work, docked pay which they can ill-afford to lose, or even terminated as unreliable. May I also add that I thought some of the requirements put on parents for expensive drug-testing were more burdensome than necessary...exactly where are people supposed to get hundreds of dollars on minimum wages?

I support services for parent to help them become more effective in their responsibilities toward their children, for drug treatment options, for personal counseling. I question how poor and struggling people, who far too frequently have only chaotic access to transportation, are supposed to get to these services?

I support efforts to underwrite college for children who are qualified as they age out of foster care. I question the insanity, for that is how I must characterize it, of paying on a reimbursement basis. Just where are these kids supposed to get the money to lay out up front...and while I am on this, where is the help for them negotiating the morass of paperwork they must get through for this reimbursement? I understand that the process is so difficult that caseworkers don't attempt it and specialized caseworkers consult with further levels of expertise. Come, come. The barriers suggest that the help is not really there.

I suggest that the Department needs a culture change; from penny pinching, in a state with an annual budget into the trillions, to a culture of facilitating excellence and best practices. This will mean more money...not spent willy-nilly but wisely, to retain the competent, train the trainable, and develop rational goals in a non-punitive, supportive atmosphere.

I am most concerned with outsourcing in the name of saving money. The Department should be concerned with saving lives not money. We all know it is cheaper in the long run that incarcerating, which is the fate of far too many of these children and costs a fortune. It is not cost effective to squeeze pennies at the beginning and toss pot-loads of money in the end in an attempt to appear tough on crime. Far better be tough on the causes of crime: poverty and ignorance.

I support monetary assistance to motivated parents who want to regain custody of their children and are prevented from doing so by lack of money. We all seem to agree that kiddos are better off with their parents, why not facilitate this with some outright grants and follow-up to see how many kids are thereby kept out of the system; which should really be the goal of us all.

These are, I must say, my private opinions..

And to end, I support efforts to stop obsessing about saving money in the short term and start thinking of innovative ways to save it in the long term.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

I recommend that change agents be brought into this department to facilitate a culture change from punitive to supportive.

I recommend that management be thereby enlightened in modern techniques.

I recommend that working conditions for caseworkers be improved drastically and rationally.

I recommend that motivated parent receive stipends to allow them to be more effective parents.

I further recommend that mandated drug tests/and transportation costs be underwritten by the courts so that parents are able to participate in their treatment plans.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree