

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Janet Wood](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Friday, June 20, 2014 1:03:23 PM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Friday, June 20, 2014 10:16 AM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Friday, June 20, 2014 - 10:15

Agency: DEPARTMENT FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES DFPS

First Name: Sarah

Last Name: Crockett

Title: Associate Director

Organization you are affiliated with: Texas Association for Infant Mental Health

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

My name is Sarah Crockett and I am the Associate Director for the Texas Association for Infant Mental Health. I would like to thank you for allowing me to submit written comment on the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission's Staff Report on the Department of Family and Protective Services. The Texas Association for Infant Mental Health (TAIMH) is the only non-profit in Texas that focuses specifically on birth to three year-olds. TAIMH is a statewide organization whose mission is to increase awareness of the critical importance of the first three years of life.

As an advocate for best practice on behalf of very young children, I appreciate all of the time and effort that each of you has put in to carefully evaluate how to improve the Department in order to more effectively protect vulnerable children and families in Texas. I want to focus my comments on recommendations 6.2 and 6.3 in the staff report: "Transfer the Nurse Family Partnership Program to DFPS" and "Direct HHSC to work with DFPS to transfer the federally funded Texas Home Visiting Program to DFPS".

We have several concerns with the recommendations to move these valuable programs from HHSC to DFPS. First, HHSC has a long history of supporting and prioritizing these programs within the agency and has created an infrastructure for home visiting that has received national attention and praise. Under the leadership of Sarah Abrahams, HHSC has restructured its organizational chart and started a strategic planning process to create long-term goals for growth and sustainability for home visiting within HHSC.

Moving Nurse Family Partnership and Texas Home Visiting to DFPS would threaten all of the great work that has gone into this process.

Second, we are concerned about the shift in focus and priority that might occur if these programs are moved to DFPS. As mentioned in this staff report, the Prevention and Early Intervention programs at DFPS have not been

prioritized by the Department and we are concerned that trend will continue, even if the home visiting programs are moved. These programs are strong and thriving at HHSC and it would be a great loss to children and families in Texas if they were weakened and deprioritized at DFPS, which is a significant risk.

Lastly, recruiting children and families for these programs is an ongoing challenge in Texas and across the country. If home visitors are suddenly representing the Department of Family and Protective services, we worry that the stigma associated with the Department would create further recruitment and retention challenges for these programs. Perhaps because of this risk, all other states have chosen to house their home visiting programs in agencies similar to HHSC, rather than the agencies that include child protective services.

The Nurse Family Partnership and Texas Home Visiting Programs are currently achieving exciting outcomes for the most vulnerable children and families in our state. They have been well supported and have continued to grow and expand every year under the leadership of staff at HHSC. Moving these successful and vital programs to a Department that does not currently prioritize prevention and has weak infrastructure in this area does not make sense for communities, families or children in Texas and we urge you to reconsider these recommendations as you move forward in this process.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have or serve as a resource to you at any time.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: Keep Nurse Family Partnership and Texas Home Visiting at HHSC.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree