

Rebecca Allen
TACPA

My name is Rebecca Allen, President of the Texas Association of Child Placing Agencies. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony about the Sunset Staff Recommendations for the Department of Family and Protective Services. Our membership of agencies have long served our community's children, have recruited community families to provide foster care and adoption services, and have engaged community partners to help supplement agency resources. We also wholeheartedly support changes in the child welfare system which will support better outcomes for the children we serve. Toward that end, we wish to comment on the current attempt by DFPS to redesign the foster care system.

ISSUE 3: DFPS faces significant challenges and risks in its efforts to reform the state's foster care system.

We support Issue 3, Key Recommendation 3.2: "DFPS should evaluate system data and cost before broader implementation of foster care redesign."

This re-contracting model was intended to ensure better outcomes for children; including keeping siblings together in a least restrictive environment, place children close to their home community, maintain stability in their foster placements, and achieve permanency sooner. At this time, there is no data to support improved outcomes on those issues, nor are we seeing a paradigm shift in how service delivery is actually changing. We do not believe it is wise to continue this project until we can see how this re-contracting model actually benefits children and maintains ongoing services they need.

Agencies provide a number of services to children, additional to the pass-through rate to foster parents. That includes paying for recreational activities, clothing vouchers at the time of a child's placement in a foster home, summer camps, back to school clothing and supplies, Christmas parties and gifts, respite care to foster parents, travel expense reimbursement for foster parents, and ongoing wrap-around services to support child and family stability. Wrap-around services help children maintain their placement in the foster home until a permanency plan is achieved. Additionally, we believe that frequent home visits are critical to maintaining "eyes on" the children to ensure children's needs are met and that the foster home is safe. We believe that all these services are important to children and critical for their well-being. These services are at risk.

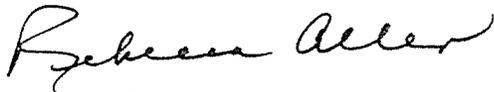
Rebecca Allen
TACPA

Currently, agencies are evaluating which services they will have to cut to children and families in order to accommodate for the loss of revenue.

While we do not know whether better child outcomes are being achieved through the foster care redesign project, one thing we do know is that there are consequences to this model of service delivery. Providers who are involved in the redesign projects are experiencing much higher expenses due to additional administrative and technology functions, redundant paperwork, and increased travel. In addition to higher expenses, agencies are also receiving a rate cut due to the collapsed levels of service. As an example, my agency will experience an approximate 12% cut in revenue due to the blending of moderate and basic care rates. The higher expenses and reduced revenues to the agencies serving the children will diminish the resources necessary for quality care. The redesign model is supposed to be cost-neutral, however, for agencies serving the children in care, the model is costly. The SSCC has to use the current money available for foster care to pay for their administrative costs, and those funds come out of money available for services. Currently, agencies are evaluating which services they will have to cut to children and families in order to accommodate for the loss of revenue.

Again, we ask that you pause the foster care redesign roll out until we have better information on benefits and consequences to the children we serve.

Thank you again for hearing our concerns.



Rebecca Allen, LCSW
President

Texas Association of Child Placing Agencies