



Travis County
Children's Protective Services Board

2006 Annual Report

Executive Summary

A Summary of the Status of Children in Travis County and the Goals and Accomplishments of the Travis County CPS Board

Purpose of the Annual Report

This report provides an overview of child abuse and neglect statistics for Travis County, primarily for the Travis County Commissioners' Court but also for the community. The report also reviews the goals and accomplishments of the Travis County Children's Protective Services (CPS) Board during the past year. Compared to previous annual reports, this year's report shows more trends across time.

Travis County is the largest of the 30 counties that comprise Region 7 of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). In FY 2006, more than 210,000 children were living in Travis County, which made its child population the 7th largest in the state.

Reports of Abuse or Neglect and Investigations

- In the decade from 1997 to 2006, the number of children ages 0–13 increased by 24 percent, and the number of all children 0–17 increased by 24 percent as well.
- There were slightly more than 11,000 cases of alleged child abuse or neglect during the year, or about 30 cases of *alleged* abuse or neglect per day in Travis County.
- There were almost 2500 cases of *confirmed* abuse or neglect, or about 6–7 cases per day.
- Almost 500 children were removed from their homes upon completion of the investigation, or about 1–2 per day.
- The prevalence rate of confirmed victims *per 1000* in the county's child population was 11.5. Compared to five other large counties in Texas, this rate is second only to Bexar County.
- The prevalence rate of children *in DFPS legal responsibility* per 1000 in the child population has increased steadily since 1999 from 6.5 to 8.7. A prevalence rate factors out the effects of population growth because it is a rate *per 1000* children. Risk factors, such as increased substance abuse, may be compounding the effects of population growth, making Travis County children more vulnerable.
- Since 2000, the number of fatalities has remained stable, from 6 to 9, with 8 in FY 2006.

Foster Care

- The number of children in substitute care has increased 56 percent in the decade since 1997, with an average yearly increase of more than 6 percent.
- Slightly more than 1,800 children were in substitute care in FY 2006.
- DFPS foster care expenditures for Travis County totaled \$15,813,647.32.
- DFPS spent \$1,250,731.70 on substitute-care purchased services.
- DFPS finalized 234 adoptions in Travis County in FY 2006.

In-home Services

- DFPS spent \$41,528.57 on in-home purchased services.

Other Costs of Child Abuse or Neglect

- Outside of the DFPS system, it is estimated that each incidence of child abuse or neglect costs \$75,000.
- High percentages of abused or neglected children suffer school-related problems, and conversely, high percentages of adults with a history of substance abuse, crime, and even murder were abused or neglected as children.

Most Common...

- Type of Abuse or Neglect Confirmed
Neglectful Supervision
- Perpetrator Confirmed
Parent
- Source of Report
School

A Long-term Case

- An *Austin American Statesman* article on 6-17-2007 publicized the case of “Victoria,” who was severely neglected until she was removed from her home at the age of 9. The Travis County CPS Board has provided funding for “Victoria” for several years.
- As children grow up, their need for after-school care, summer day care, and parental supervision usually diminish, but not so for Victoria, who is now 19. As her case illustrates, DFPS programs are often not flexible enough or not adequately funded to address unusual needs like Victoria’s.
- Her case also illustrates why certain members of the Travis County CPS Board have become increasingly concerned about the plight of foster care youth who age out of the system. The program called PAL (Preparation for Adult Living) does not have enough caseworkers to address all the needs of aging-out youth, and aftercare services are very limited. The Travis County CPS Board may make some funding recommendations to the County Commissioners’ Court for consideration during the FY 2009 budget process.

Travis County CPS Board

- Expenditures approved or overseen by the Travis County CPS Board in FY 2006 totaled \$394,416, of which 55 percent was spent on clothing for children in foster care.
- The original and revised budgets overseen by the Travis County CPS Board have generally decreased since FY 2000, while the number of alleged and confirmed cases and even prevalence rates per 1000 children in the county’s child population have increased during the same period. Clearly, the Travis County CPS budget has not kept up with the increasing need for services to Travis County children.
- The Travis County CPS Board has the following four committees: (1) Executive Committee, (2) Budget Committee, (3) Yearly Events Committee, and (4) Advocacy Committee. Much of the Board’s work is done in collaboration with DFPS, county staff, or other organizations, including the Region 7 Council of Child Welfare Boards and the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards.
- Yearly events included the Prom Project, recognition of outstanding DFPS staff on a quarterly basis, and activities during Child Abuse Prevention Month in April and Foster Parent Appreciation Month in May.

Capital Area Safe Kids Fund (SKF)

- The Capital Area Safe Kids Fund (SKF) is the nonprofit arm of the Travis County CPS Board.
- The Safe Kinds Fund is used for items that (1) may not be eligible for state or county funding, or (2) meet urgent needs that must be paid or reimbursed quickly.
- The Safe Kinds Fund spent \$5,914 during the year on such items as: (1) gifts for PAL program graduates, (2) travel for a foster teen to attend a national PAL conference, and (3) travel for parents to visit Travis County children placed out of the county.