

Travis County Children's Protective Services Board

2006 Annual Report

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

Purpose of This 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 Fiscal Year (FY) 2006. Protecting children and advocating for their protectors is the primary focus of the Travis County CPS Board. Compared to previous annual reports, this one 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). The local DFPS office, which provides services and protection to abused and neglected children and their families in Travis County, has 18 investigation units, 9 conservatorship units, 2.5 family-based safety services units, and a regional foster and adoptive home development unit.

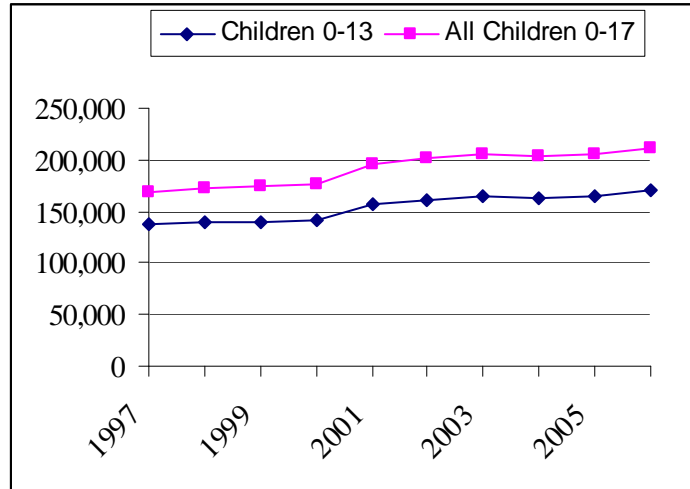
Child abuse and neglect occur every day in our community. Because countless cases of suspected child abuse and neglect remain unreported, the actual number of abused and neglected children is understated. It is generally believed that current data-collection methods produce conservative estimates of the problem.

DFPS aims to keep children within their homes and communities if possible, but when it is not safe for a child to remain at home, DFPS places the child in foster care. In this report, the terms *foster care*, *substitute care*, and *DFPS legal responsibility* are used just as they are in the DFPS FY 2006 Data Book, which is available online. Definitions for these terms, taken from that data book, appear in the appendix to this report.

State of Children in Travis County

The number of children ages 0–13 increased between 1997 and 2006 fairly steadily from about 137,000 to 170,000, which equates to a 24 percent increase. The number of all children ages 0–17 also increased 24 percent, rising fairly steadily during the same period from nearly 170,000 to a little more than 211,000. See Figure 1 below. Travis County's child population is the seventh largest in the state.

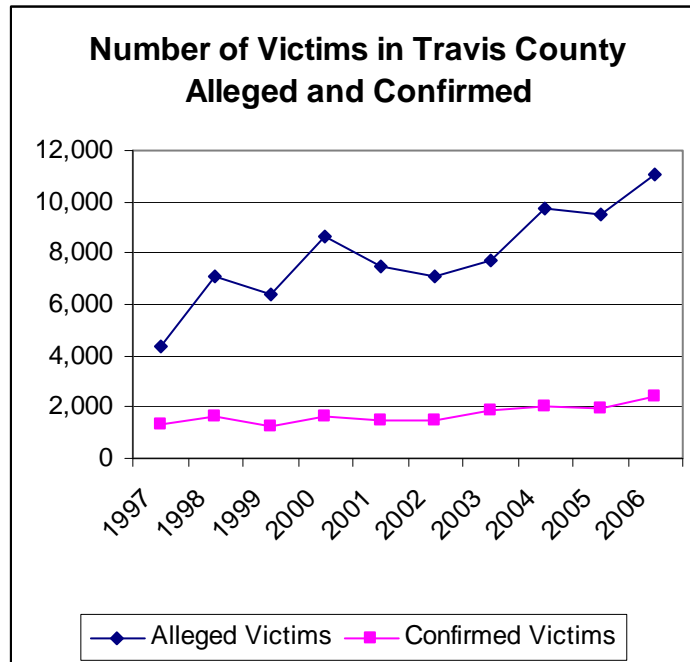
Figure 1
Child Population in Travis County



State of Children in Travis County Alleged to be Abused or Neglected

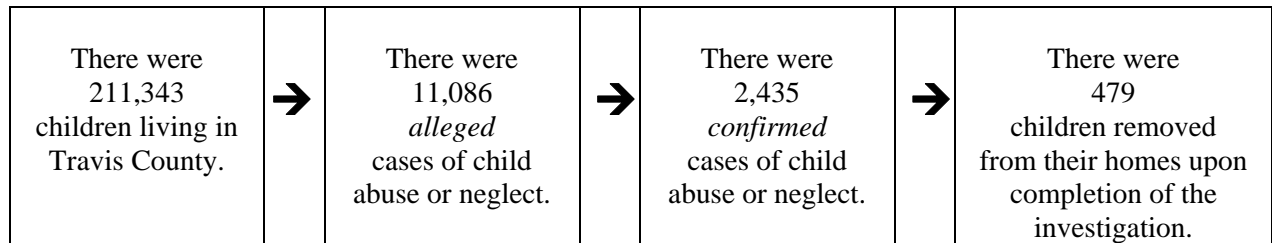
With increases in the county’s child population, one would expect concomitant increases in the number of alleged and confirmed victims of abuse or neglect. Figure 2 below verifies that such increases have indeed occurred across time.

Figure 2
Number of Alleged and Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse or Neglect in Travis County Across Time



In FY 2006, specifically, the exact child population (ages 0–17) in Travis County was 211,343, and of those children, 11,086 were alleged to be abused or neglected and 2,435 were confirmed victims of child abuse or neglect (see Figure 3 below). Of those confirmed, 479 were removed from their homes upon completion of the investigation. On average, then, 30 children per day were alleged to be abused or neglected, 6–7 per day were confirmed to be abused or neglected, and 1–2 per day were placed in foster care. It should be noted that some children alleged but not confirmed actually may have been abused or neglected; not confirming abuse or neglect is not the same as proving that no abuse or neglect occurred.

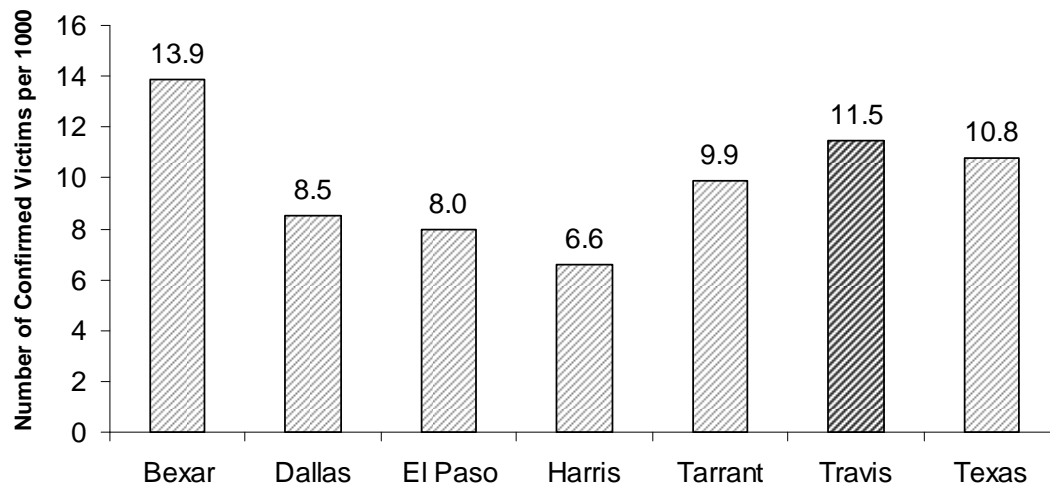
Figure 3
Child Abuse and Neglect in Travis County in FY 2006



(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

When compared to other large counties throughout the state, Travis County has the second-highest number of confirmed victims per 1000 children in its child population. As shown in Figure 4 below, Travis County has 11.5 confirmed victims per 1,000.

Figure 4
**Prevalence of Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse or Neglect per 1,000 Children
for the Six Largest Texas Counties and for Texas as a Whole**

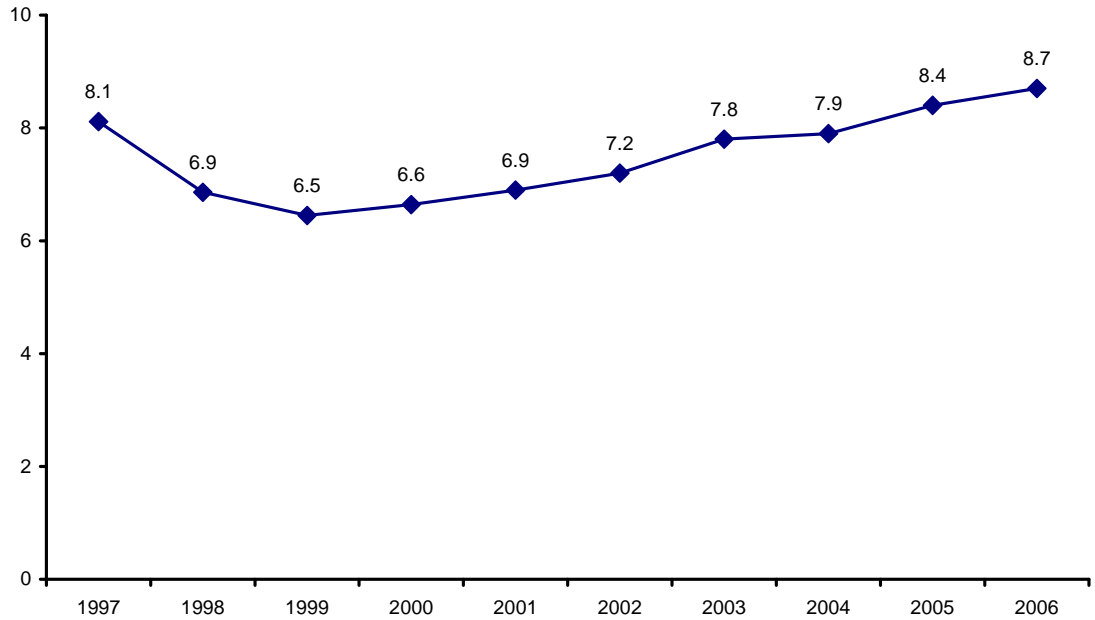


(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

Another prevalence rate, which is the number of children *in DFPS legal responsibility* per 1000 in the child population, has increased steadily in Travis County since FY 1999 (see Figure 5 below). (The number of *confirmed victims* per 1000 did not climb as steadily but generally increased from 7.3 in 1999 to 11.5 in 2006.)

Figure 5

Prevalence of Children in DFPS Legal Responsibility per 1,000 Children in the Child Population



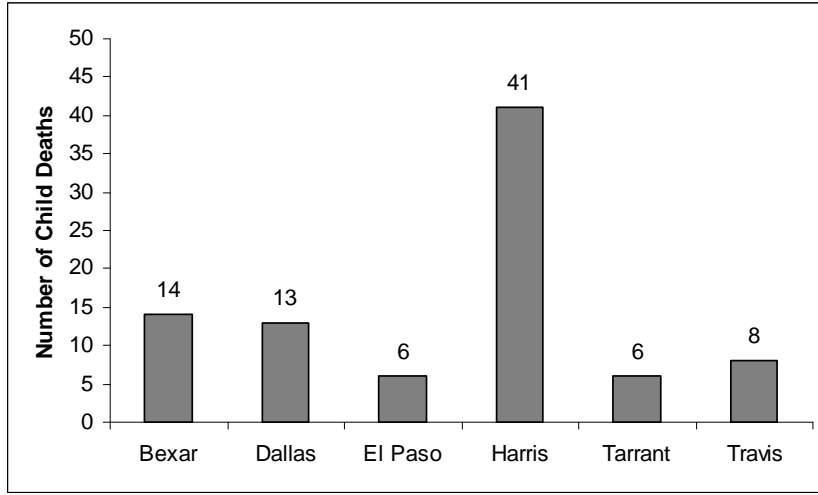
(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

It should be noted that a prevalence rate, by definition, factors out the effects of population growth, because it is a rate *per 1000* children in the population. The steady increase seen in Figure 5 above suggests that risk factors—increased substance abuse, for example—are compounding the increases in the number of alleged and confirmed victims across time that would naturally occur as the population grows.

In 2006, 88 children in Texas died because of abuse or neglect, 9 percent of whom lived in Travis County. Because of the absolute dependence on caretakers to keep them safe, very young children face the greatest risk of death from abuse or neglect in comparison to other age groups. Although child fatalities occur in a small percentage of abuse or neglect cases, they are considered preventable with access to both prevention and intervention services. The impact to the family, the community, and the state can be devastating. From 2000 to 2006, Travis County lost 52 children to abuse or neglect—8 in 2006 alone (see Figures 6 and 7 below). Fortunately, the number of such deaths has remained low with, if anything, a slightly downward trend across time.

Figure 6

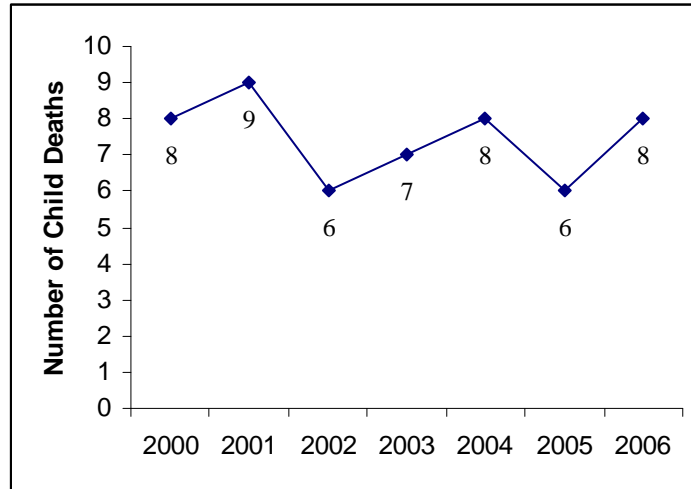
Child Deaths from Abuse or Neglect for the Six Largest Texas Counties



(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

Figure 7

**Child Deaths from Abuse or Neglect for Travis County
FY 2000 to FY 2006**

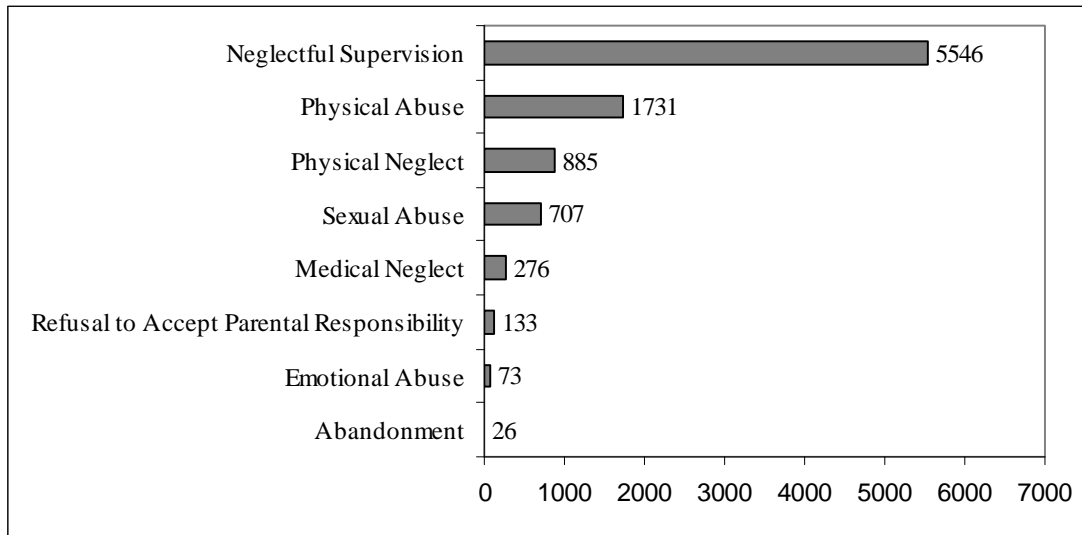


(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

Types of Abuse or Neglect

Figure 8 below shows the most common types of abuse or neglect for Region 7. Neglectful supervision is by far the most common, followed by physical abuse and physical neglect. Neglectful supervision is defined as “placing the child in or failing to remove the child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child.” Being exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child is also included in the definition (DFPS).

Figure 8
Number of Confirmed Victims in Region 7 for Each Type of Abuse or Neglect



(Source: DFPS FY 2006 Data Book)

Perpetrators in Texas

In the vast majority of cases (78.4 percent), the perpetrator of child abuse or neglect was the child’s parent, but in 5.5 percent of the cases, the perpetrator was the parent’s “paramour” or partner. Altogether grandparents, siblings, and other relatives were the perpetrators in 12.6 percent of the cases. The perpetrator was another substitute caregiver in the remaining 3.4 percent of the cases. Contrary to popular belief, a high percentage of perpetrators are married (35.8 percent). The majority of perpetrators are relatively young: 61.9 percent fall in the age range, 18-35.

The incidence of child abuse and neglect has been found to be higher in families characterized by domestic violence than in the general population.¹ Other risk factors include poverty, unemployment, chronic physical and mental disabilities, or substance abuse.²

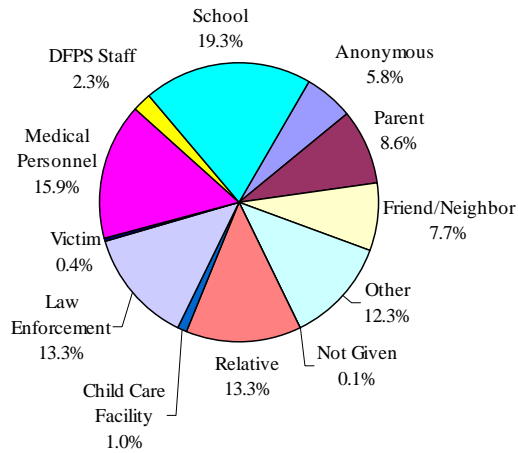
Sources Reporting Abuse or Neglect

As shown in Figure 9 below, schools were the most common source across the state of reports that were investigated in FY 2006. Other frequent sources were medical personnel, law enforcement, and relatives. Somewhat less common sources were parents, friends or neighbors, and anonymous callers. Comparatively few reports that were investigated came from child care facilities, DFPS staff, or the victims themselves.

¹ Groves, Betsy McAlister. Cited March 2002. Mental Health Services for Children Who Witness Domestic Violence. www.athealth.com/Practioner/ceduc/dv_children.html.

² Chalk et al. 2002. The Multiple Dimensions of Child Abuse and Neglect: New Insights into an Old Problem. Trends: Washington, D.C. www.childtrends.org

Figure 9
Source of Report of Abuse or Neglect
for Investigations in Texas in FY 2006

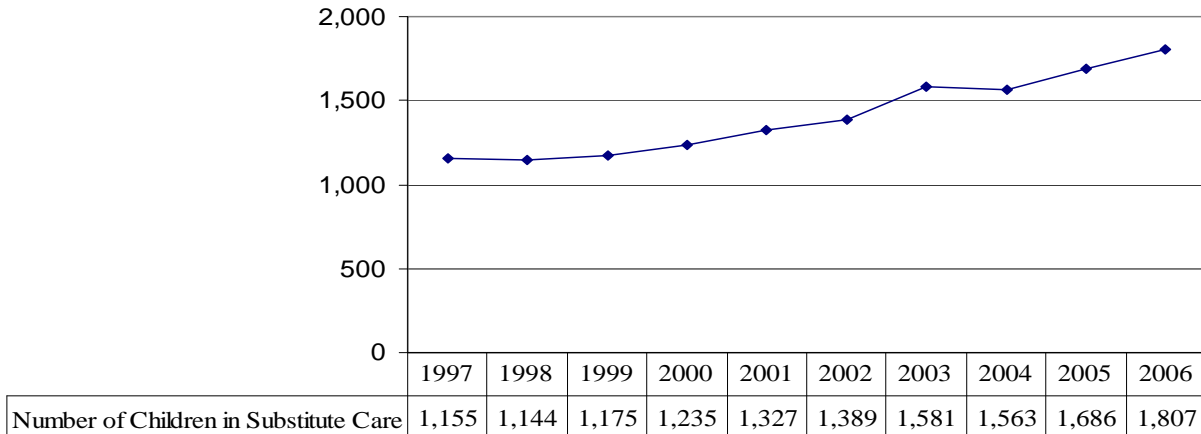


Source: DFPS 2006 Data Book

Children in Substitute Care

As Figure 10 below shows, the number of children in substitute care has been increasing steadily. In the decade since 1997, the number has increased 56 percent from 1,155 to 1,807, with an average yearly increase of more than 6 percent. Within the DFPS system, 234 adoptions were finalized in FY 2006.

Figure 10
Number of Travis County Children in Substitute Care from 1997–2006



Source: DFPS 2006 Data Book

The increases over time in the number of alleged and confirmed victims of abuse or neglect and the number in substitute care affect local resources and, specifically, the Travis County CPS Board budget. In general, the greater the number of investigations and the more children in substitute care, the greater the need for line items such as urine analyses and clothing that usually require county funds.

The Cost of Child Abuse in Travis County

According to DFPS, foster care expenditures for Travis County in FY 2006 were \$15,813,647.32. As Figure 10 above shows, there were 1,807 Travis County children in substitute care in FY 2006. Of these Travis County children, 1,078 children received sub-care *purchased* services at a cost to DFPS of \$1,250,731.70. Although 1,553 Travis County children received in-home services, only 136 received in-home purchased services, which cost DFPS \$41,528.57 (DFPS FY 2006 Data Book).

Outside of the DFPS system, it is estimated that each incident of child abuse costs at least \$75,000. This figure includes medical and mental health care services, police time, lost wages for family members, emergency child care services, and social services. This estimate is conservative, as it does not include costs for investigation, prosecution, incarceration, offender counseling or treatment, or family member services (source: Community Action Network (CAN) Community Assessment – Victim Services, June 2003).

Research confirms that children who are subjected to abuse or neglect are more likely to have problems in the future with drug use, delinquency, poor school performance, and other adjustment-related issues. According to Prevent Child Abuse Texas, 50 percent of abused children have school-related problems, 22 percent suffer from learning disabilities requiring special education, 60–80 percent of adult drug or alcohol abusers have a history of child abuse, and 90 percent of convicted murderers were physically abused as children. Child abuse often creates a “cycle of violence” in which abused children grow up to be abusive adults themselves or pair up with abusive partners.

Travis County’s Role in a Long-term Case

Perhaps you saw the article “Victoria’s Journey” in the June 17, 2007 issue of the *Austin American Statesman*. The Travis County CPS Board has been helping “Victoria” since October 1997 when she was discovered at the age of 9 living with her mother and grandmother in a filthy house. She had never gone to school and had rarely left her house. Victoria’s mother, who had learning disabilities and had attended special education classes, had always been taken care of by her parents, i.e. Victoria’s grandparents. DFPS had received three hotline calls about Victoria between 1994 and 1995, but it was after her grandfather died in 1995 that Victoria was removed from her home and placed into foster care.

Victoria has been blessed with dedicated foster parents, Gladys and Eduardo Venegas, who painstakingly taught her to put on clothes, brush her teeth, and many other daily activities. Although Medicaid has paid Victoria’s bills, her foster parents often fronted the money and hoped to be reimbursed later, a dilemma common to many of the expenditure requests that come before the Travis County CPS Board throughout the year.

According to the *American Statesman* article, people may lose the ability to acquire language after puberty. Born on January 30, 1988 and now 19, Victoria has relied on gestures rather than language to communicate her needs. She and her after-school caretaker even learned a bit of sign language so they could better communicate. Doctors have diagnosed Victoria as autistic and mentally retarded, but Victoria’s poverty, lack of schooling, and little exposure to people early on may have exacerbated these problems.

Over the years “Victoria” has needed support above and beyond what DFPS programs are designed to provide. As children grow up, their need for after-school care, summer day care, and parental supervision usually diminish, but not so for Victoria. Because of developmental delays stemming from severe neglect, her need for constant supervision has lasted well into her teenage years and may continue throughout her adult years. DFPS has often turned to the Travis County CPS Board for help with Victoria’s care. Altogether, Victoria has needed not only DFPS programs and services but also supplemental support from the Travis County CPS Board; from its private, nonprofit arm, the Capital Area Safe Kids Fund; and from the Victoria Fund, a trust fund Mr. Gonzalo Barrientos and others established for Victoria when Barrientos was a Texas Senator.

Aging Out of the Foster Care System

As Victoria's case illustrates, state programs are often not flexible enough and not adequately funded to address the unusual needs that arise when children are young, as they mature, and after they age out of foster care. As reported in the *American Statesman*, Victoria will continue attending Dripping Springs High School, learning life and job skills, until she turns 22. Thankfully, her foster parents want to continue helping her after she ages out of foster care. It is probably safe to say that most foster care "alumni" are not so fortunate. It has been estimated that 40 percent of foster care "alumni" become homeless after they age out of foster care.

Certain members of the Travis County CPS Board have become increasingly concerned about foster care "alumni." At the board's request, DFPS presented information to the Board in April 2007 about the program called Preparation for Adult Living (PAL), which helps prepare older foster youth to live on their own. In June, two board members met with Ms. Carolyn Roberson, PAL program supervisor, and her three staff, one of whom is a foster care alumna herself. They discussed the needs and service gaps for PAL youth and their foster families, with the goal of better understanding how the board might support the PAL program and the youth who age out. The following urgent needs were identified:

1. PAL coordinators. There are only three PAL coordinators for all of Region 7, and their caseloads—up to 300—are huge. PAL and aftercare services are not being used to their full potential simply because not enough staff are available to provide each youth in transition with all the information, resources, and follow-up services they may need. At least one more staff position is desperately needed.
2. *Training on transitional issues for foster parents of older foster youth.* Child-placing agencies (CPAs) vary substantially in the training they offer on transitional issues for foster families caring for older youth who will soon age out. One suggestion was to have a post-PAL workshop on transitional issues in conjunction with the PAL program's quarterly youth conferences.
3. *Residential treatment facilities.* Youth in residential treatment facilities (RTFs) typically get little or no PAL services.
4. *Transitional housing and Transitional Living Services (TLS).* Lifeworks is currently the contracted provider for aftercare services, but funding to serve aged-out youth is inadequate. Moreover, long waiting lists exist for other services, especially for subsidized housing, as documented in a recent *Austin American Statesman* article.
5. *Money and credit.* Aging-out youth have little money for first- and last-month deposits required to rent apartments, and they need help establishing a good credit rating. Secured credit cards were suggested for helping aging-out youth take out loans without the lending institution taking on the risk of default.
6. *Mentoring for PAL-aged youth.* The Assistance League of Austin (AL Austin) currently offers mentoring to several young foster women, but the community could do much more in this regard. AL Austin provides training and background checks and would be open to help with recruiting more volunteers.
7. *Whether youth are college-bound or not.* Some resources and support services are available to college-bound youth, and Austin Community College has endeavored to identify and meet the needs of foster care "alumni" attending ACC. But the youth who are not college-bound do not qualify for these resources. With few, if any, resources available to them, they are much more at risk of homelessness and other negative outcomes after they age out.

The Travis County CPS Board is increasingly concerned about the issues youth face as they age out of foster care. There are not enough PAL caseworkers to give all the youth the attention they may need, and aftercare services are very limited. It is anticipated that the Travis County CPS Board will make some recommendations to the Commissioners' Court for consideration during the FY 2009 budget process.

Duties and Functions of the Travis County Children’s Protective Services Board

The Travis County CPS Board is appointed by the Travis County Commissioners’ Court and has a supplemental budget through the county’s general fund for children and families involved with the CPS system. The Travis County CPS Board has 15 members who must be residents of Travis County, and the four commissioners and the County Judge each have three appointments to the board. Board members serve three-year terms and operate under bylaws approved by the Commissioners’ Court. Ex-officio members include the Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, a youth member, one or more members of the Capital Area Foster Parents Association, and the Executive Manager of Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services. Additionally, DFPS representatives attend board meetings and provide regular reports on the status of the agency and the children and families it serves. County staff regularly attend board meetings as well.

Key Responsibilities of the Travis County Children’s Protective Services Board
Oversee the county-appropriated funding for Children’s Protective Services.
Cooperate with all local, state, and federal agencies in developing and coordinating community child welfare programs.
Assist and cooperate with DFPS in developing local resources for child care, interpreting CPS to the community, and encouraging high standards of casework.
Participate in assessing and planning for the needs of Travis County children and make an annual report to the County Commissioners’ Court.
Advise the Commissioners’ Court and DFPS concerning the welfare of children in Travis County.
Advocate for appropriate services and supports for vulnerable children and families in Travis County.

DFPS, the County, and the Travis County CPS Board

The Travis County CPS Board was established in 1963 under a contract with what is now DFPS. It was created per the state statute that allows counties to create child welfare boards. According to the statute, the board “is an entity of DFPS for purposes of providing coordinated state and local public welfare services for children and their families and for the coordinated use of federal, state, and local funds for these services.” The statute also states that the board “shall work with the Commissioners’ Court.” The structure and bylaws of the Travis County CPS board are similar to those of other county CPS boards across the state.

Originally, the board’s purpose was to oversee Children’s Protective Services and to allow foster care funds from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program to pass through the state to the county by way of the county CPS Board. As of FY 1997, federal foster care reimbursements no longer pass through the county; the funds are paid directly to foster homes. Therefore, county child welfare boards no longer serve as a conduit for these federal funds. The relationship has evolved into a collaborative effort in which DFPS, the county, and the Travis County CPS Board work together to address the needs of Travis County children and families in the CPS system, including children placed in foster care outside of Travis County.

Counties across Texas support their local DFPS departments in various ways: by funding a portion of DFPS staff salaries; by providing flexible funds to support the needs of children and caregivers involved in the CPS system; and by supporting internal county positions and programs that enhance the work of DFPS. DFPS and Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services have a contract to facilitate Title IV-E reimbursement of the county’s general funds spent on behalf of children and families involved in the CPS system. County staff often collaborate with local DFPS staff on

initiatives and issues facing Travis County children and their families. And DFPS staff play an integral role in reporting to the Travis County CPS Board on issues and legislation affecting DFPS and the children and families it serves.

Travis County supports the CPS system through direct funding of legal positions in the Travis County District Attorney’s office that are dedicated to the CPS docket at a cost of \$200,000. (These positions previously were funded as state positions through a match contract with DFPS.) The county also dedicates \$252,944 in general funds to the Children F.I.R.S.T. (Families, Intervention, Referral, Support, and Training) Unit, which provides in-home support to children and families involved in the CPS system and referred by DFPS. Additionally, Travis County supports the CPS system through:

1. local judges who manage the CPS docket,
2. the Family Services Division of the District Attorney’s office, which prosecutes the legal cases,
3. the constable’s office, which facilitates the serving of petitions, and
4. Domestic Relations Office, which provides statistical analysis and oversight of CPS cases.

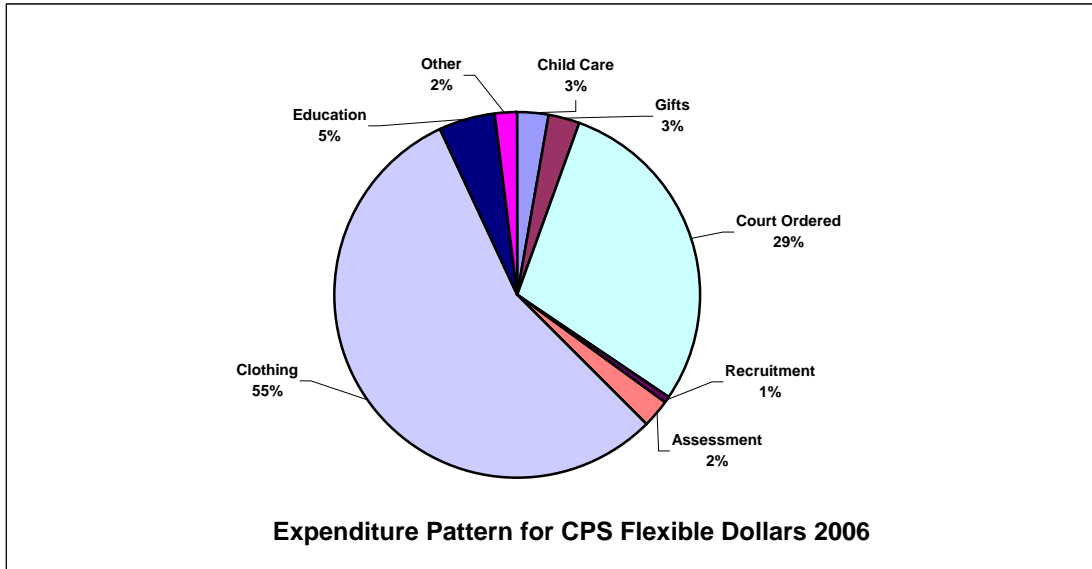
Finally, the county funds a portion of the social service contracts with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and with the Austin/Travis County Children’s Shelter. These agencies provide direct support to children involved in the CPS system.

Travis County is one of 68 Texas counties that invest flexible dollars to support the children and caregivers who are involved with the CPS system. These dollars are spent in various ways (see the table and Figure 11 below), and a percentage of the dollars spent are Title IV-E reimbursable.

Table 1
Expenditures with Travis County Flexible Dollars Ranked by Amount Expended

Clothing, Uniforms	\$215,770
Medical Care - Indigents	\$100,889
Education, Communication, Equipment, and Supplies	\$28,688
Gifts	\$11,311
Psychiatrists/Psychologists	\$9,264
Medical Services	\$8,285
Other Purchased Services	\$6,963
Child Care Discretionary	\$6,372
Childcare Local Funding-Discretionary	\$1,882
Child Care Institutions	\$1,725
Adoption	\$1,489
Transportation-Indigents	\$804
Volunteer Recruitment	\$452
Drug and Pharmaceutical Supplies	\$352
Medical Exams/Victims	\$85
Dentists	\$44
Textiles/Linen Supplies	\$41
Total	\$394,416

Figure 11
Expenditures with Travis County Flexible Dollars in FY 2006



Child Care	Payment for daycare for children DFPS placed in a foster or relative placement; payment for emergency care not funded by DFPS
Gifts	Gift (birthday, holiday, or graduation) vouchers for children in out-of-home placements
Transportation	Bus passes to facilitate parent-child visits and attendance at services
Court-ordered	Drug and alcohol testing for parents or other caregivers in the CPS system
Recruitment	Adoption recruitment activities, including the development of adoption photos for waiting children
Assessment	Specialized mental health assessments and counseling for parents and children in the CPS system
Medical	Dental services; specialized exams for victims of sexual abuse
Clothing	Clothing vouchers for children in out-of-home placements
Education	School supplies for children in out-of-home placements
Other	Bedding, pharmacy, enrichment (camps, drivers' education, specialized activities), specialized equipment

Travis County Children’s Protective Services Board Annual Budget

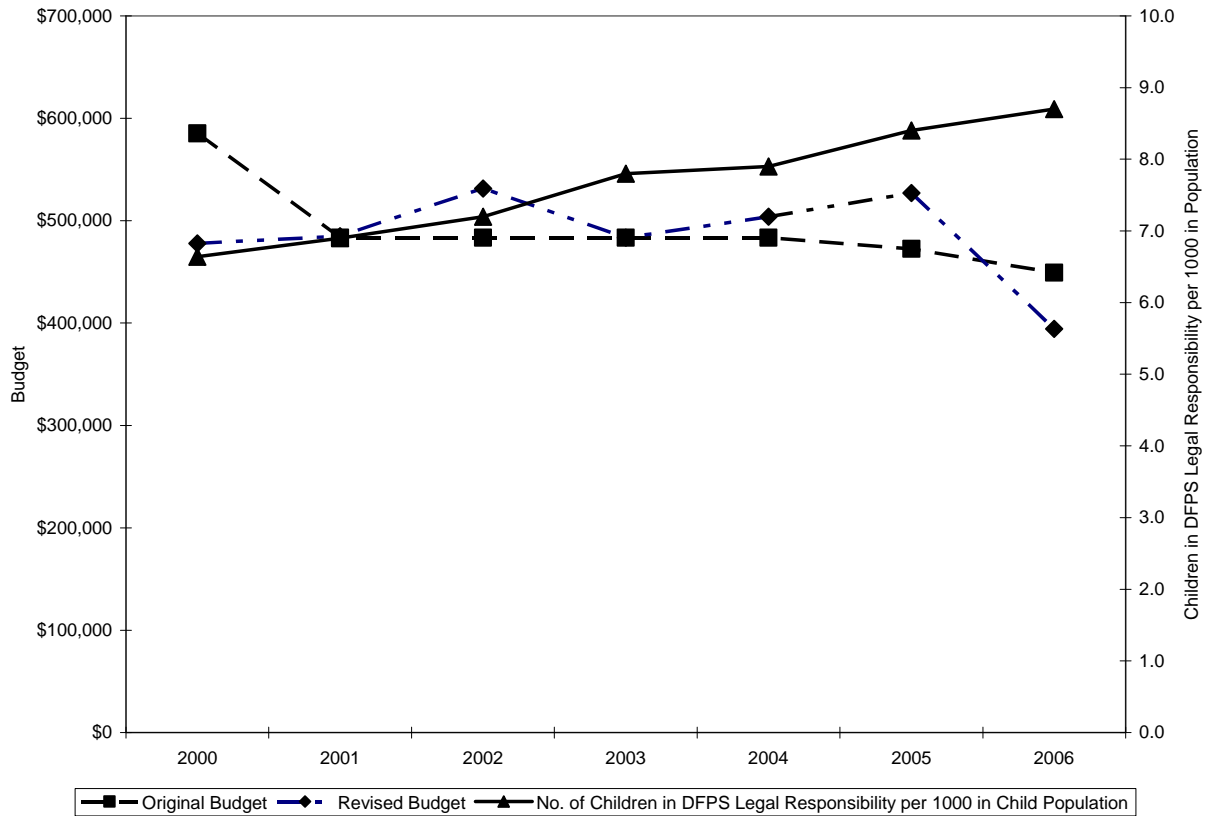
Table 2 below shows the Travis County budget for staff and direct services to children and families involved in the CPS system, overseen by the Board for the last seven years.

Table 2
Original and Revised Budgets Overseen by the Travis County CPS Board since FY 2000

Fiscal Year	Original Budget	Revised Budget
FY 2000	\$585,253	\$477,753
FY 2001	\$483,492	\$484,790
FY 2002	\$483,492	\$531,520
FY 2003	\$483,492	\$483,492
FY 2004	\$483,492	\$503,885
FY 2005	\$472,492	\$527,030
FY 2006	\$449,272	\$394,416

The same budget data in the table above is presented in Figure 12 below so that it is easier to see the trends across time. The prevalence rate over time, which was presented in Figure 5, appears again here along with the budget data. It is clear that the budgets show a downward trend while the prevalence rate shows an upward trend. Clearly the Travis County CPS budget has not kept up with the increasing need for services to Travis County children in the CPS system.

Figure 12
Original and Revised Budgets for Travis County CPS



Goals and Accomplishments of the Travis County Children’s Protective Services Board

The Travis County CPS Board has remained an effective board during the last year, concentrating on service projects, the stewardship of county dollars, and support to the caregivers of children placed in substitute care by DFPS. Board member positions have been about 80 percent filled, with four vacancies currently.

The Board held a retreat in October 2005 but did not have a retreat in FY 2006 because of scheduling difficulties. Instead, the Board met prior to one of its meetings to discuss its goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Four committees comprised of Board members work to address the identified needs of children in Travis County:

Committee	Responsibilities
Executive Committee	Oversee the board, leadership, annual report, and recruitment; serve as officers on the CPS Board and on the board of the Capital Area Safe Kids Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit discussed below; oversee the progress of committees; take emergency action in the absence of the full board.
Budget Committee	Advise the Board on expenditure requests, oversee the budget for the Travis County CPS Board and the Safe Kids Fund concerning accounting, public policy, awards and appreciation, and resource distribution.
Yearly Events Committee	Oversee all events and any corporate campaigns; facilitate the board's progress toward its annual fundraising goal; raise money through private and corporate donations; plan events and fundraising campaigns.
Advocacy Committee	Advocate for support of Travis County children placed in substitute care by DFPS; advocate for support of the caregivers of those children (kinship providers, foster and adoptive parents); educate the community and Commissioners' Court; support legislative efforts that could positively affect children in Travis County; create board messages and materials.

The board continues to be a strong and viable organization. Following are some of the major accomplishments and goals of the Travis County CPS Board:

Yearly Events Committee

1. Collaborated with other community groups in the Prom Project, which provides foster teens with attire and other items they need to attend their high school proms.
2. Conducted quarterly recognition ceremonies for outstanding DFPS staff, and solicited donations from local businesses for staff appreciation.
3. Participated in the Celebration of Families during the month of April with an information booth.
4. Helped organize picnic festivities for Foster Parent Appreciation Month in May.
5. Supported the DFPS Adoption Day in November.
6. Sponsored a holiday luncheon for DFPS staff in December.

Advocacy Committee

7. Participated in the Child Fatality Review Team.
8. Participated in the Region 7 Council of Child Welfare Boards.
9. Participated in the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards.
10. Participated in a collaborative kick-off event to raise awareness that April was Child Abuse Prevention Month.
11. Facilitated the April Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation.
12. Helped prepare and present the 2005 Annual Report.

Budget Committee

13. Reviewed expenditure requests on a monthly basis and made recommendations to the Board as to whether or not the Board should approve the expenditures.
14. Reviewed and updated spending guidelines that guide the Board's spending decisions and determine when expenditures require Board approval.
15. Raised funds for the Capital Area Safe Kids Fund and monitored its expenditures (see below).

Capital Area Safe Kids Fund

Children's Protective Assistance, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation doing business as (dba) the Capital Area Safe Kids Fund, or the Safe Kids Fund for short. It is the nonprofit arm of the Travis County CPS Board, and the members and officers of the Travis County CPS Board comprise the board of the Safe Kids Fund as well. The Safe Kids Fund raises funds to supplement state and Travis County funding for children and families in the CPS system. Its activities are conducted entirely by volunteers.

The funds are used for items that may not be eligible for state or Travis County funding or for payments for urgent needs that must be made quickly. In FY 2006, the beginning balance was \$6,255 and the Safe Kids Fund raised \$4,672. During the year, the Safe Kids Fund spent \$5,914 on such items as:

1. Travel for parents to visit children who are in out-of-county placements
2. Travel for a local foster teen to attend a national conference sponsored by the program PAL (Preparation for Adult Living)
3. Gifts for PAL program graduates
4. Support for the Family Group Conferencing program
5. Support for public awareness events during Child Abuse Prevention month (April)
6. The prom project for foster teens
7. Events to recognize and encourage foster parents and DFPS staff

The ending balance for the Safe Kids Fund was \$5,012.

Summary

With the growth of Austin and Travis County, it is no surprise that the county's child population has increased 24 percent in the last decade, and one would expect the concomitant increases in the number of alleged and confirmed victims of abuse or neglect that have occurred across time, as verified in Figure 2. A prevalence rate, however, should remain stable. It is of some concern, therefore, that the prevalence rate of confirmed victims of abuse or neglect has generally increased since 1999 from 7.3 to 11.5, which is a 58 percent increase. And Figure 5 showed a steady increase since 1999 in the prevalence rate of children in DFPS legal responsibility from 6.45 to 8.70, a 35 percent increase. It is these increases in prevalence rates that are cause for concern. Fortunately, the number of child fatalities related to abuse or neglect has remained low and stable. The number of such deaths has varied from six to nine since FY 2000, and there were eight such deaths in FY 2006.

Neglectful supervision is the most common type of abuse or neglect by far, and the perpetrator was the child's parent in 78.4 percent of the cases. Sources reporting abuse or neglect are most often schools (19.3 percent), medical personnel (15.9 percent), and law enforcement (13.3 percent).

The number of Travis County children in substitute care has increased 56 percent in the decade since 1997, with an average yearly increase of more than 6 percent. An *Austin American Statesman* article on June 17, 2007 publicized the case of "Victoria," who has been in substitute care since she was removed from her home at the age of 9. She is now 19. 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. As her case illustrates, DFPS programs are often not flexible enough or not funded adequately enough 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. DFPS staff made a presentation at a board meeting about the PAL (Preparation for Adult Living) program, and two board members and PAL staff identified seven needs and concerns listed earlier in this report. 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 Children’s Protective Services Board

The table below lists each member of the Travis County Children’s Protective Services Board as of June 19, 2007 plus the precinct the member represents and the current county commissioner for that precinct.

Member and Role	Precinct and Current County Commissioner
Cindy J. Ashby, Chairperson	Precinct 1, Davis
Deborah Risovi, Vice-Chairperson	Precinct 3, Daugherty
Ron Hubbard, Treasurer	At large, County Judge Biscoe
Nancy Bellows, Ph.D., Secretary	Precinct 4, Gomez
Dr. Robert Hendee	At large, County Judge Biscoe
Kirsten Moody	At large, County Judge Biscoe
Milbrey Raney	Precinct 2, Eckhardt
Dr. Laurie Seremetis	Precinct 2, Eckhardt
Nikki Sims	Precinct 1, Davis
Jeanne Stamp	Precinct 3, Daugherty
Nancy Williams	Precinct 2, Eckhardt
Vacant	Precinct 1, Davis
David Williams	Precinct 3, Daugherty
Vacant	Precinct 4, Gomez
Vacant	Precinct 4, Gomez

Ex-officio Members

Estela Medina, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer
 Sherri Fleming, Executive Manager, Travis County Health and Human Services and Veteran Services
 Sherri Fox, Capital Area Foster Parents Association
 Chris Santa Ana, Youth Member

Staff Liaisons

Jim Lehrman, Director, Office of Children Services, Travis County Health and Human Services
 Lisa Hill, Office of Children Services, Travis County Health and Human Services

Kristene Blacktone, Program Administrator, DFPS
 Sharon Berger, Program Administrator, DFPS
 Ingrid Gibbons, Program Director, DFPS
 Karen Cagle, Program Director, DFPS

Appendix

Terms

The following definitions for terms used in this report appear in the DFPS FY 2006 Data Book.

- Children in Foster Care – All children in DFPS legal responsibility who are in a placement paid by DFPS or other public facility. These placements include foster homes, foster group homes, institutions, residential treatment facilities, and juvenile facilities. This is a subset of Children in Substitute Care.
- Children in Substitute Care – Children under 18 years of age in DFPS legal responsibility who are placed outside their own home (home of origin). This includes foster homes, foster group homes, institutions, residential treatment facilities, juvenile facilities, hospitals, adoptive homes, relative home placements, and independent living arrangements. Also included are the youth who age out of DFPS' legal responsibility and continue in foster care placements to complete vocational training by age 19 or to graduate from high school before they turn 20 years old.
- Children in the Legal Responsibility of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – All children for whom the courts have appointed the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services legal responsibility by temporary or permanent managing conservatorship or other court-ordered legal basis. These children may be residing in an out-of-home placement or may have been returned to their own home (home of origin).

When there is an immediate danger to the physical health or safety of a child, the Texas Family Code(TFC) provides three options for intervention by DFPS into a family:

- (1) emergency removal of the child from the home prior to obtaining a court order;
- (2) removal of the child after obtaining an ex parte order; or,
- (3) removal of the child after notice and hearing.

Within 14 days from the date the child is taken into possession, a full adversary hearing is held at which time the child is either returned home or if there is a continuing danger, temporary orders for managing conservatorship are issued. Within 12 months from the order appointing DFPS as the child's temporary managing conservator, the court must return the child to the parent and dismiss the suit; appoint a parent, relative, or DFPS as managing conservator on a permanent basis; or grant a one-time extension of the lawsuit, not to exceed 180 days.

Note:

Substitute care and foster care include children ages 0 to 20. Children age out of DFPS legal responsibility at age 18 but may remain in foster care. Youth ages over 18 who are in foster care are counted in substitute care. It is possible for a client to receive foster care in more than one county. (Source: DFPS 2006 Data Book).

Reference

The FY 2006 Data Book for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) can be found online at:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About/Data_Books_and_Annual_Reports/2006/databook/default.asp