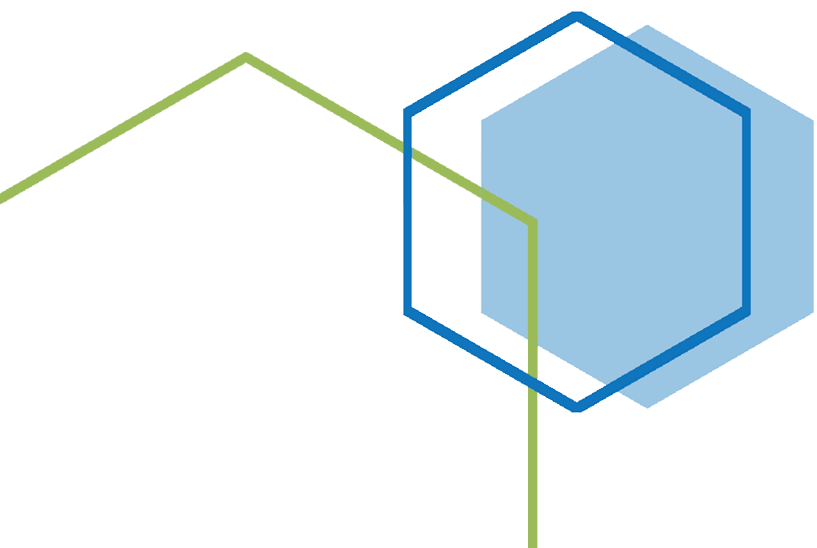
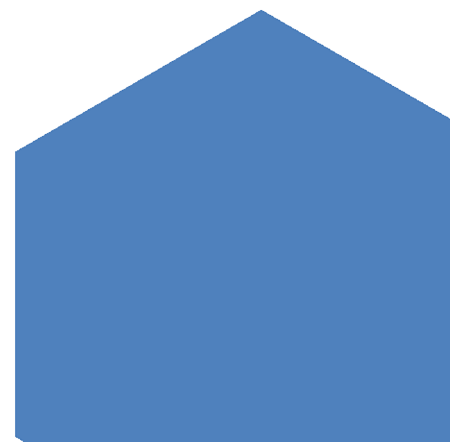
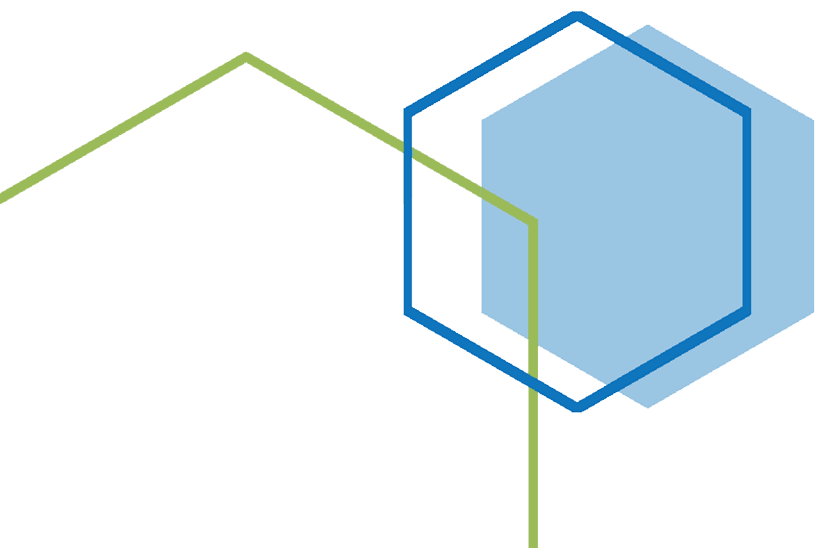




Regional CPS Education Consortia: The Building Blocks to Engaging Community Stakeholders

Improving the Educational Outcomes for Students in Foster Care







Improving the Educational Outcomes for Students in Foster Care

Preface:

There is no singular way to build a regional or local consortium. The Regional CPS Education Consortium model reflects the unique needs and goals of local communities and their commitment to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care.

What is a consortium?

Loosely defined, a consortium is a group of people from a cross-section of community stakeholders who identify and collaborate to address and resolve specific issues. A Regional CPS Education Consortium focuses on improving educational outcomes of students in foster care.

What population are we talking about?

Students in foster care, from early education to Grade 12, represent a small percentage of the 5 million students enrolled in Texas public schools. However, students in foster care all share a couple of unique trauma identifiers:

- with very few exceptions, they are victims of neglect or physical and/or sexual abuse, and
- they have been removed by court order from their familiar, but unsafe, home environments to another home, sometimes without their siblings, which separates them from their school friends and neighborhoods.

What's the issue?

Students in foster care have poor educational outcomes compared to the general student population. Fewer students in foster care in Grade 12 graduate from high school compared to those not in foster care. According to national studies, less than three percent receive a four-year college degree even though many want to go to college. Frequent placement moves disrupt course completion and grade promotion for these students.



Who should be included in your consortiums?

- Members from the **Education** system may include:
 - Education Service Center foster care champions,
 - School district superintendents,
 - Principals,
 - School counselors,
 - Special education directors,
 - PEIMS coordinators,
 - District foster care liaisons,
 - Post-secondary career and technical colleges,
 - Community colleges, and
 - Four-year universities.

- Child Protective Services (CPS) is part of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Members from **Child Welfare** staff may include:
 - Regional Education Specialist,
 - Program directors,
 - Caseworkers,
 - Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) staff, and
 - Other staff who can offer insight and add to the discussion.

- Some key **Legal** participants may include:
 - The local judge presiding over child welfare cases who is always an interested participant, and
 - Members of the legal community who serve as attorneys and guardians ad litem and CASA.

- **Community** Stakeholders may include:
 - Community leaders,
 - Members of professional associations and groups, such as:
 - Counselors,
 - Occupational therapists,
 - Resource groups,
 - Service organizations,
 - Church and faith-based organizations,
 - Early childhood centers (including Head Start),
 - Youth organizations including the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and
 - Small business owners who are interested in child welfare issues.



Where do you meet?

Depends on the community membership and the size of the group. Consortia regularly meet at locations such as:

- Church meeting rooms,
- School conference rooms,
- One of the 20 Education Service Centers,
- CPS offices,
- Community centers, and
- Auditoriums.

How often do you meet?

This is a choice of each consortium and may depend on the breadth of issues the consortium wishes to address. Some groups meet 2 or 3 times a year, one group meets every month, and most of the groups schedule meetings every 3 months.

How long is the meeting?

Usually about 2 hours, as determined by the group.

What's on the agenda?

Topics vary according to the community needs. For example, at recent consortium meetings throughout Texas, topics have ranged from:

- Transportation challenges to meet federal law to maintain students in foster care in their schools of origin,
- Transition planning,
- Computer safety and cyberbullying,
- Student confidentiality,
- Absenteeism,
- The court system, and
- CPS 101- how the foster care system works and the stages of service.

Are there other good agenda topics?

- Decision-making for students in foster care,
- DFPS Form 2085-E and student identification,
- Making connections and knowing who to contact for help,
- The Education and Training Voucher, and
- The Tuition and Fee Waiver.

Topics should be rotated over the years to provide interesting content for new and longer-term participants.



Who takes the lead?

The “lead” person varies from group to group throughout Texas. The consortium may start off with a CPS Regional Education Specialist as the organizer. One consortium rotates “leadership” every year with a different person representing a different discipline. It is important to establish who will take the lead for each consortium meeting early in the planning process.

What can the Regional CPS Education Consortium accomplish?

- Supporting a better understanding of the effects of trauma on students in foster care.
- Encouraging members to always keeping the best interest of the child and youth at the forefront of decision-making.
- Forging a positive working relationship among caregivers, caseworkers, providers, and school staff.
- Developing some creative solutions which do not require money or great amounts of time but do require a strong group commitment to make them work.
- Identifying shared community resources to strengthen and support students in foster care.

What is the goal of the Regional CPS Education Consortium?

Each consortium should identify its own goals. Some potential goals include:

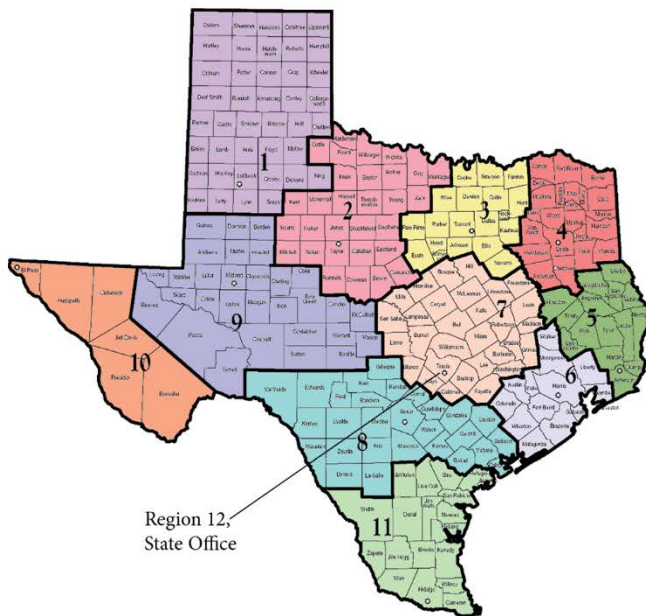
- Build a network among stakeholders interested in foster care and education,
- Discover local resources and opportunities to build capacity to support students in foster care,
- Find opportunities to reduce redundancy and operate more efficiently,
- Innovate and brainstorm new ideas,
- Problem-solving tailored to the needs of your local area,
- Elevate youth voice and focus on opportunities to engage children and youth in the decisions that impact their education and their lives,
- Identify training needs, and
- Engage in cross-training between systems.



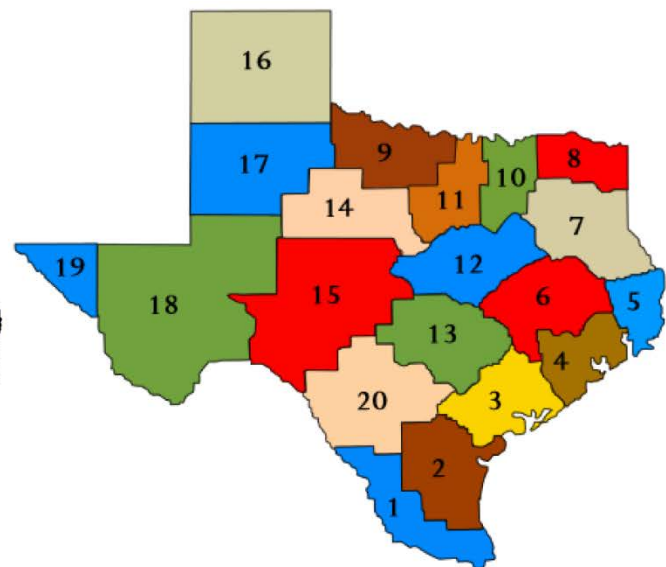
What are some tips for successful collaboration?

- The education and child welfare systems are organized differently. CPS is a state-run agency with centralized policies and procedures. In contrast, there are many school districts with local leadership, with guidance established at the state level. Nonetheless, both systems must comply with federal and state law.
- The child welfare, education, and court systems are each divided into different regions, so it's important to reach out the key stakeholders in the applicable region. The consortium members should establish what school districts or areas to include.

Child Protective Services Regions



Education Service Center Regions



- Establishing a common language will help avoid confusion. For example, “placement” refers to “living arrangement” in the CPS context and it often means the “classroom setting” at school.
- Collaboration is critical to improving educational outcomes and each consortium member brings a critical voice and valuable expertise to the table.



Who can I contact with questions?

There are points of contact at CPS, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Supreme Court of Texas Permanent Judicial Commissioner for Children, Youth, & Families (Children's Commission):

- Kristine Mohajer, CPS, Kristine.Mohajer@dfps.state.tx.us
- Kelly Kravitz, TEA, Kelly.Kravitz@tea.texas.gov
- Natalie Coffey, THECB, Natalie.Coffey@theccb.state.tx.us
- Jamie Bernstein, Children's Commission, Jamie.Bernstein@txcourts.gov

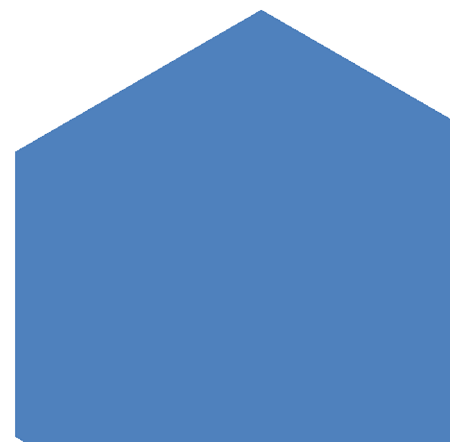
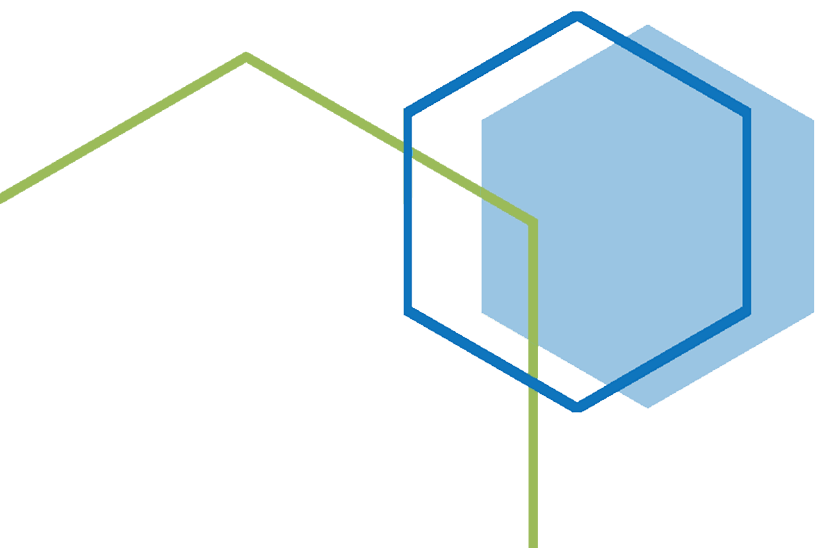
How can I access local contacts?

- Regional education specialist contact information is available online at:
 - https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/State_Care/education_specialists.asp
- Local school district liaisons and Education Service Center foster care champion contact information can be found online at:
 - <https://tea.texas.gov/FosterCareStudentSuccess/liaisons/>
- Liaisons at Texas institutions of higher education contact information is located online at:
 - <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/apps/financialaid/tofa2.cfm?ID=429>



What links and resources could be helpful?

- Children's Commission Foster Care & Education resources:
 - <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/foster-care-education/foster-education-committee.aspx>
- Texas DFPS Education page:
 - https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/State_Care/education.asp
- Texas Education Agency Foster Care and Student Success website:
 - https://tea.texas.gov/index4.aspx?id=2147512292&menu_id=2147483761
- Foster Care and Student Success Resource Guide:
 - <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=25769807334&libID=25769807337>





Texas Department of
Family and Protective Services

