



**To:** Texas Judges Hearing Child Protective Services Cases

**From:** Hon. John Specia (ret.), Jurist in Residence  
Office of Court Administration

**Date:** February 3, 2012

**RE:** CPS realigns staff in response to state budget cuts

I've recently spoken to several judges who expressed concern about the increase in caseloads on their Child Protective Services (CPS) dockets. The increase in individual Conservatorship caseloads is both the result of the vacancy rate for Conservatorship caseworker positions and the increased number of children in foster care. Although the CPS part of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) budget survived the 2011 legislative session better than predicted and with fewer drastic cuts than the budgets of most other agencies, the 2012-2013 biennium budget does not include funding for caseload growth. Considering Texas' projected child population growth, CPS faces the challenge of providing protection to more children and services to more families than ever before.

**Q: How is CPS responding to the 2012-2013 biennium budget?**

**A:** CPS focused on maintaining as many front line staff as possible. The decisions made resulted in a 21 percent reduction in regional infrastructure positions, many of which reported to state office; Conservatorship and Family Based Safety Services units changed from a supervisory ratio of 1:6 to 1:7. Investigative units remain at a 1:6 ratio, but each unit will only have one support position.

**Q: Were any front-line caseworker positions cut?**

**A:** No, however, judges may see a reduction in caseworkers in their jurisdictions. To cover those areas of the state with a higher number of removals and/or caseload growth, DFPS moved some positions from areas with less need to those with higher need. What this means is that you may have a jurisdiction where caseworker positions are pulled to supplement the workforce in another area of the state.

**Q: What does this mean for caseworker caseloads?**

**A:** Conservatorship caseworkers are now carrying, on average, 33 cases.

**Q: What about other positions at CPS?**

**A:** As mentioned above, subject matter expert positions such as Substance Abuse Specialists, Law Enforcement Liaisons and Legal Liaisons were eliminated. State office CPS also reduced their positions in an effort to keep as many front line workers as possible.