

TEXAS CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE



MEETING NOTEBOOK

September 09, 2010



**Texas Children's Justice Act Project Task Force
Texas Center for the Judiciary, Austin, TX
September 9, 2010**

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TEXAS CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE
Texas Center for the Judiciary · 1210 San Antonio, Ste. 800 · Austin, TX

AGENDA

September 9, 2010

10:00 Welcome & Announcements – Fairy Rutland

10:15 Approval of meeting minutes – May 21, 2010

10:20 Task Force Member and Officer Elections

- **Members' Nominating Committee Report**
- **Officers' Nominating Committee Report**

10:45 Budget

- **2010 Status**
- **2011 Preliminary**

11:30 Lunch/Conflict of Interest Forms

12:30 Undoing Racism Update

12:45 Review 2011 Grant Process & Approval of 2011 Grant Awards

1:45 Review of Next Steps/Future Meeting Dates/Adjourn

4098392376



CHAMBERS OF
JUDGE LARRY THORNE

SUSIE O'QUINN
COURT COORDINATOR

317TH FAMILY LAW COURT
JEFFERSON COUNTY
COURTHOUSE
BEAUMONT, TEXAS 77701
409-835-8588

TRACEY D. BURK
COURT REPORTER

JULIE PANTALLION
BAILIFF

September 7, 2010

Dear Board Members:

It has been my honor and privilege to serve on the Juvenile Justice Act Board these last several years. Thank you for your trust and support by allowing me to serve as chairman.

Over the past 30 years, I have served on several state boards and numerous other boards dealing with abused and neglected children. You, individually and collectively, have been the most dedicated, hardworking and wonderful advocates of children I have ever had the pleasure and privilege to work with.

I deeply regret and apologize for my absence over the past six months. At this time, I seem to have gotten a handle on my illness which was finally diagnosed as fibromyalgia.

I am aware that Judge Dean Rucker will replace me as the judicial representative. Many of you may already know Judge Rucker personally or by reputation as a bright light in the darkness of abuse of children. Judge Rucker is a friend of mine and I feel fortunate that he is available and able to serve on the Board.

Finally, I want the staff of the Texas Center to know there are no better, more knowledgeable, or helpful staff anywhere. I feel extremely fortunate that you were by my side and carrying me the whole way. I owe all of you a debt of gratitude for your loyalty and interest in the Texas Center and the Board. I owe several of you lunch and drinks, which I hope to pay in the future.

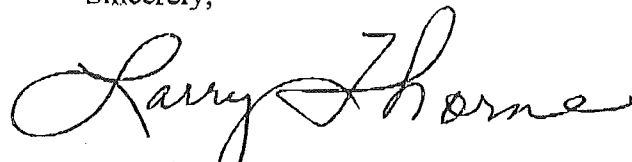
A special thanks to Ginny who has persevered through the good times and the bad and made me at least appear to know what I was doing.

4098392376

September 7, 2010
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I miss all of you but I am confident you will continue to excel as children advocates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Thorne". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

LARRY THORNE

Members' Nominating Committee Report – August 24, 2010

A meeting of the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force Members' Nominating Committee was held August 24, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. via teleconference.

Members present: Margaret Lalk, Committee Chair; Jon Evans; Dan Powers; and Fairy Rutland. **Members absent:** Rolf Habersang. **Also present:** Ginny Woods; Heidi Penix

Background: The Task Force general election is scheduled for September 09, 2010. Task Force members forwarded potential nominees to the Members' Nominating Committee. The nominating process closed July 31st.

There are currently three vacancies on the Task Force for new members. One vacancy must be filled with a civil court judge to remain in grant compliance. The remaining two vacancies are "at large" and may be filled by either, both, or none of the proposed nominees.

In accordance with the requirements and restrictions set out by the federal grant program and the CJA Task Force bylaws, the committee proposes the following slate of nominees:

NOMINEES TO MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES REQUIRED BY THE GRANT

Civil Court Judges

1. Honorable Dean Rucker, District Judge, 318th Family District Court, Midland*

AT LARGE NOMINEES

2. Cathy Crabtree, Director of Chapter Development, National Children's Alliance, Washington D.C. – residing in Austin
3. Kristen Zingaro Foster, Associate, Henslee Schwartz, Houston – residing in Austin

* Must be elected for grant compliance.

CJA Budget

Fiscal Year: October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2010

9/8/2010

Income			
GY 09 Remaining Funds:	\$	336,198.65	Total Grant Income \$ 1,692,530.65
GY 10 Grant Income:	\$	1,356,332.00	Operating Expenses \$ 250,241.54
Program Income:	\$	-	Project Expenditures \$ 824,094.56
			GY 10 Unexpended Funds: \$ 618,194.55
Total Grant Income	\$	1,692,530.65	
Budget Reserve	\$	50,000.00	
Operating Expenses	\$	265,599.96	
Total Budgeted	\$	1,376,930.69	
Funds Remaining for New Projects	\$	-	

Expense Category	Budget	Expenses to Date	Balance
Projects			
Fatherhood Roundtable	\$ 3,158.33	\$ 3,158.33	\$ -
Undoing Racism	\$ 20,841.67	\$ 21,102.64	\$ (260.97)
Subgrants			
Dallas CAC	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 697.63	\$ 24,302.37
TRIPLE	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 27,641.53	\$ 47,358.47
CAC of Smith County	\$ 34,735.00	\$ 27,862.38	\$ 6,872.62
CAC of Texas	\$ 249,566.00	\$ 179,912.80	\$ 69,653.20
CASA of Travis County	\$ 43,000.00	\$ 35,898.69	\$ 7,101.31
DFPS	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00
East Texas Child Advocates	\$ 44,599.00	\$ 34,975.22	\$ 9,623.78
Greater Dallas Council	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 65,415.49	\$ 14,584.51
Harris County	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 7,248.57	\$ 12,751.43
OCA	\$ 117,614.00	\$ 41,335.70	\$ 76,278.30
TCU Institute of Child Development	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 54,609.58	\$ 25,390.42
Texas CASA	\$ 249,531.00	\$ 189,905.51	\$ 59,625.49
UTHSCSA	\$ 98,872.00	\$ 28,517.63	\$ 70,354.37
Small Training Grants	\$ 18,913.00	\$ 18,913.00	\$ -
Scholarships	\$ 96,100.69	\$ 65,976.79	\$ 30,123.90
CJA Task Force	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,923.07	\$ (923.07)
Total	\$ 1,376,930.69	\$ 824,094.56	\$ 552,836.13

INCOME

Anticipated GY11 Award	\$	1,322,453.00
Estimated GY10 Rollover	\$	20,000.00

Total Grant Income	\$	1,342,453.00
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Operating Expenses	\$	(319,320.00)
Task Force maintenance	\$	(28,500.00)

Available Funds	\$	994,633.00
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Projects	Budget
Training and Technical Assistance for TX CACs (A.1.1)	\$ (200,000.00)
Child Abuse and Neglect Training for Law Enforcement (A.2.1)	\$ (195,440.00)
FASD Online Training (B.1.3)	\$ (50,000.00)
CPC Enhancement (B.2.1)	\$ (119,999.00)
Harris County Infant and Toddler Court (B.2.2)	\$ (40,000.00)
Undoing Racism (B.3.1) - Participant Support	\$ (5,000.00)
Fatherhood Roundtable (B.3.1)	\$ (6,000.00)
Texas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (C.1.1)	\$ (90,000.00)
CASA Volunteer Development (C.2.1)	\$ (200,000.00)
Transitioning Youth Advocacy (C.2.1)	\$ (49,242.00)
Kids in Court (C.2.2)	\$ (33,930.00)

Total Budgeted	\$	(989,611.00)
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Funds Remaining for New Projects	\$	5,022.00
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PENDING AVAILABLE FUNDING:

Bridge to Permanency - Phase 2 (C.2.1)	\$	56,942.00
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A. Activities to improve investigative, administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation...in a manner which reduces trauma to the child victim...

Recommendation A.1.: Provide MDTs with training to enhance coordination of investigation, intervention and prosecution and/or work with local communities to establish MDTs.

- Desired outcome/effect: Improved case quality in the best interest of the child.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Provide multidisciplinary teams and team members with specific and targeted professional development training, formal networking opportunities, cross-training, and technical assistance designed to enhance their professional skills and knowledge and support the collaborative model of service delivery for child victims of abuse.

- [Training and Technical Assistance for Texas Children’s Advocacy Centers – YR 2](#)

Recommendation A.2.: Provide statewide and local professional training to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

- Desired outcome/effect: Improved decision making through better trained judges, law enforcement, attorneys and CPS workers.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Improve law enforcement’s response to child abuse and neglect by administering a comprehensive and free training program that combines an overview of effective response to the abuse, with instruction on the benefits of a multidisciplinary approach.

- [Child Abuse Training Program for Texas Law Enforcement – YR 2](#)

2. Focus on building and supporting support for critical decision making related to safety in child protection cases.

- Task Force to determine next steps

3. Provide periodic/intensive training for prosecutors.

- Task Force to determine next steps

Recommendation A.3.: Support CACTX and Texas CASA. *See A.1.1 & C.2.1.*

B. Experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases...

Recommendation B.1.: Develop and implement programs that address the unique challenges faced by victims of child abuse with mental or physical disabilities

- Desired outcome/effect: Children with disabilities will have an advocate who, along with investigative and intervention personnel, are trained on issues related to child victims with mental and/or physical disabilities

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Sponsor a nationally recognized speaker at the annual training program for all judges hearing CPS cases on the unique challenges faced by child victims with mental or physical disabilities.
2. Add information related to children with disabilities to existing law enforcement and school personnel training.
3. Provide training to attorneys and judges to create an FASD-informed court system to recognize and respond to the special needs of children in the child welfare and criminal justice systems with FASD.
 - [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Online Training](#)

Recommendation B.2.: Increase use of specialized courts and/or attorneys to handle child abuse and neglect cases.

- Desired outcome/effect: Improve decision making by judges and attorneys handling child abuse and neglect cases.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Establish a child protection specialty court (CPC) office to provide research and analysis, program direction, and legal and technical support to the CPCs in Texas with the goal of maximizing CPC court performance, particularly in the areas of safety, permanency, wellbeing, timeliness, and due process.
 - [Child Protection Court Enhancement Project – YR 2](#)
2. Provide judges and attorneys handling child abuse/neglect cases with specialized training.
 - [Harris County Infant & Toddler Court](#)

Recommendation B.3.: Develop and implement programs that increase cultural competency in relation to decision-making processes in the handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.

- Desired outcome/effect: Safely reduce disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color who are victims of child abuse/neglect.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Provide judges, attorneys and MDTs with specialized cultural competency training.
 - Provide support for professionals to attend Undoing Racism workshops.
 - Partner with DFPS to implement ongoing fatherhood initiatives, such as Fatherhood Roundtable event.

C. Reform of State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to protect children from abuse, particularly child sexual abuse.

Recommendation C.1.: Develop and implement best practices and/or model protocols for identification of child abuse and neglect which can be used and disseminated state-wide.

- Desired outcome/effect: Initiatives promote consistent, replicable, model protocols statewide.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Build and sustain the network of Drug Endangered Children Alliances throughout Texas to encourage agency personnel from across disciplines to coordinate and leverage their mutual interests, resources and responsibilities to address the needs of children living in dangerous drug environments.
 - [Texas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children Project – YR 2](#)
2. Develop and implement training for mandated reporters on recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect (including training related to children with disabilities and cultural competency.)
 - **Task Force to determine next steps based on recommendations from school personnel training project**

Recommendation C.2.: Reform state laws and create and/or expand programs that ensure all children and youth have continuing access to advocacy and the judicial system.

- Desired outcome/effect: Initiatives will develop/support advocacy for elevating the youth voice in the judicial system (criminal & civil) to affect decisions made about the youth's life.

Activities/Initiatives:

1. Strengthen CASA advocacy through training, increased volunteer recruitment and pilot programs.
 - [CASA Volunteer Development – YR 2](#)
 - [Transitioning Youth Advocacy](#)
2. Court preparation programs for children to de-stigmatize the courtroom experience for child victims/witnesses to ensure that they are able to testify in court.
 - [Kids in Court Program](#)
3. Review/evaluate existing state laws related to child abuse and child safety.
 - Bring in speakers to Task Force meetings to educate Task Force and inform upcoming Three-Year Assessment

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas

Project: Training and Technical Assistance for Texas CACs

Grant Budget: \$200,000

Project Summary: The objectives of this program include the following:

- To provide children's advocacy center executive directors, program directors, forensic interviewers, family advocates, team coordinators/facilitators and MDT members with specific and targeted professional development training, formal networking opportunities, cross-training and technical assistance designed to enhance their professional skills and knowledge and to support the collaborative model of service delivery for child victims of abuse.
- To provide additional support for forensic interviewers through regional and Spanish-language peer review offerings.

Activities during the grant year will include:

- Spanish language peer review sessions targeted to forensic interviewers working with primarily Spanish speaking populations and who conduct forensic interviews in Spanish regional peer review sessions for forensic interviewers throughout the state
- Forensic Interview Block IV session to strengthen coordination between the prosecutor, criminal or civil investigator and forensic interviewer in child abuse cases
- Pilot offering of "Exploring Innovations in the Forensic Interview Field" for tenured forensic interviewers
- Pilot offering of a one-day training designed to address the special issues involved in the supervision of forensic interviewers and mental health professionals
- MDT Team Facilitation
- MDT Team Assessment and Training for MDTs experiencing challenges
- Family Advocate training
- MDT Team Leadership Training
- Networking forums for forensic interviewers, family advocates, executive and program directors and other members of the MDT

The project will target an estimated 600+ child protection professionals working within the children's advocacy model in 64 CACs throughout the state.

Training and Research Institute for Professional Law Enforcement (TRIPLE)

Project: Child Abuse and Neglect Training Program for Law Enforcement

Grant Budget: \$195,440

Project Summary: The goal of the Child Abuse & Neglect Training Program for Law Enforcement is to improve law enforcement's response to child abuse and neglect by administering a comprehensive and free training program that combines an overview of effective response to the abuse, with instruction on the benefits of a multidisciplinary team approach.

Objectives include:

- Improve and update current Child Abuse and Neglect Training curriculum
- Identify and contract with experts to teach at the Train the Trainer Instructor Course
- Identify at least 15 new instructors to attend the 2011 Train the Trainer Instructor Course
- Contract with and train at least 15 new instructors at the 2011 Train the Trainer Instructor Course
- Hold 50 classes and train at least 500 officers on the Child Abuse and Neglect curriculum

Major activities in support of these objectives will include identifying experts to teach at the 2011 Instructor Course, setting training dates and contracting with presenters, identifying training locations/areas where child abuse training is currently lacking, recruiting new instructors, assisting with class set-up, creating a website for online resources for the students and for the instructors, creating marketing tools to promote the training, and providing instructors with all necessary materials.

Office of Court Administration

Project: Child Protection Courts Enhancement Project

Grant Budget: \$119,999

Project Summary: The goals of this project include:

- Improving both qualitative and quantitative information about CPC practices, procedures, and effectiveness;
- Assuring a standard of quality among all CPCs by providing a level of practice and procedural consistency; and
- Increasing the capacity of the CPCs by offering additional legal research and resources to the CPC judges.

Some of the key objectives of the second year of this project are to:

1. Identify and develop one “model” CPC – During the first year of this project, considerable variation was discovered in docket management and workflow between the 17 CPCs. This project aims to identify a court with successful practices and work with that court to develop a “best practices” model.
2. Improve data collection processes and implement a continuous review process- The project will develop a plan for periodic reporting of outcome data and a plan to improve data collection in all 17 courts.
3. Provide support to the CPCs through legal research and resources related to best practices – The project will coordinate and facilitate communication among the courts regarding “what works” and begin communicating with the courts via a monthly newsletter that will include frequently asked question as well as updates on case law and best practices.

Proposed activities in the upcoming year include analyzing CPCMS data and reports to identify courts with promising practices, scheduling observational court visits, providing ongoing support in the implementation of best practices, and analyzing CPCMS data from previous year in order to set data collection goals for each court.

The primary outcomes of the project in year two will be:

1. Establishment of a model CPC, including observational visits by the other 16 CPCs
2. Significantly increased data-collection, allowing for meaningful outcome measure reporting to courts
3. Publication of monthly CPC newsletter

Greater Dallas Council on Drugs and Alcohol

Program Title: Texas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (TADEC)

Grant Budget: \$90,000

Program Summary: TADEC's project this year has two main objectives. First, it will increase its total number of alliances in Texas from 26 expected at the close of 2010 grant year to a total of 39 alliances. Prospective alliances are identified through community requests, regional needs assessments, and TADEC driven survey responses. The development of the alliance occurs through (1) informational "buy-in" meetings with key local stakeholders to increase community readiness, (2) general trainings for larger, multi-disciplinary audiences to build community capacity for change and (3) protocol development meetings with a mix of local leadership and front-line first responders and professionals who respond daily to the needs of local children.

The second objective is to maintain and promote existing alliances through a range of training and networking opportunities for multidisciplinary professionals. A central component of TADEC's success is the increased capacity of local DEC alliances which is achieved through ongoing training of local members. Training and alliance promotion activities include:

- Trainings for MDT members focusing on topics related to current trends, statewide requests, and underutilized community resources for DEC
- Full curriculum on Building and Sustaining DEC alliances focusing on six key stages: 1) Startup and Buy-in, 2) Community Awareness and Education, 3) Protocol Development, 4) Implementation & Adaptation, 5) Growth and Sustainability, and 6) Data Collection, Evaluation, & Accountability
- Webinars onsite trainings as requested
- Train the trainer
- Semiannual meetings for local DEC representatives
- Monthly conference call for local DEC representatives
- TADEC local leaders forum
- Electronic survey on local DEC status, training and technical support needs current local drug trends, and data collection opportunities
- Quarterly e-newsletter
- TADEC website update and maintenance
- Host 2010 NADEC conference in Dallas, Nov. 9-10, 2010

Texas CASA

Project: Quality CASA Advocacy and A CASA for Every Child

Grant Budget: \$200,000

Project Summary: The project has two primary objectives:

- Strengthen CASA advocacy through the provision of training, workshops, technical and media assistance initiatives and the activities of the collaborative statewide volunteer council and
- Increase the number of CASA volunteers serving by improving volunteer recruitment and retention.

Activities during the grant year will include the following:

- Deliver two Recruitment 360° Team Workshops to 20 programs with an anticipated attendance of 10 teams of four at each workshop (80 total participants) to assist local programs in assessing every aspect of their organization as it relates to the volunteer to determine what is working throughout the network and what changes need to be implemented.
- Support activities of statewide volunteer advisory council to impact recruitment and retention of CASA volunteer and affect the level of quality advocacy provided to children.
- Offer 8 regional Knowing Who You Are (KWYA) workshops to provide diversity and cultural competency training to 240 CASA staff, volunteers, board members, DFPS staff, judges, attorney ad litem and other key stakeholders.
- Provide public awareness and outreach to the general public, current and future volunteers, local CASA programs, and in particular African American and Hispanic communities to improve volunteer recruitment and retention rates.

Recruitment 360° Team workshops will enable each team to use key statistical data in the areas of recruitment and retention to arrive at measurable goals for their local programs, as well as to develop recruitment plans to take back to their program and complete.

Project outcomes include an increase in 220 active CASA volunteers.

Goals of the Volunteer Council include working with Texas CASA to (1) enhance resources and tools available through the Texas CASA website and volunteer newsletter; (2) provide insight and feedback regarding useful webinar topics and tools; and (3) create practical tools for working effectively with CPS, AALs and foster care providers.

In addition to the KWYA workshop curriculum, Texas CASA will offer the following post training activities:

- Development of individual plans around diversity and cultural competency,
- Debriefing conference calls

Through its volunteer retention and recruitment activities, Texas CASA anticipates a 15% total increase in volunteers.

Children's Advocacy Center of Smith County

Program Title: Kids in Court

Grant Budget: \$33,930

Program Summary: Kids in Court (KIC) is a court preparation program that is responsive to the developmental needs of children of all ages and the unique requirements of child physical and sexual abuse victims. The goal of this program is to continue to improve the coordination and collaboration between the CAC of Smith County and the Smith County District Attorney's office in order to reduce the potential trauma of the legal process and increase the chance that the child victim will be perceived as a credible witness thereby resulting in effective prosecutions of these cases.

Objectives include:

- Child victims and their families will be better informed about their impending criminal cases with case updates, scheduled hearings, and case information
- Clients will be informed about their rights as crime victims with provided support in the enactment of victim's rights throughout the judicial process
- The KIC Coordinator will provide comprehensive education on the judicial process and will meet with the child victims and their protective caregivers to prepare them for trial.

The KIC program will be administered by a KIC Coordinator who will serve as an advocate for child victims and their families. The Coordinator will be an active participant in the MDT and will be instrumental in providing information to the team on the progression of cases, and facilitating communication between team members and the Smith County District Attorney's Office.

Planned activities include crisis intervention, case information and updates, legal referrals, court preparation using a standardized curriculum entitled: *You're Not Alone: The Child Witness Court Preparation Curriculum*, crime victim's compensation assistance, court accompaniment, address confidentiality program, Texas VINE, subpoena receipt and coordination, preparation of protective orders, and technical assistance to other CACs throughout Texas.

Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities

Project: Fetal Alcohol Disorder Spectrum Disorder – The Hidden Epidemic in the Court

Grant Budget: \$68,508

Project Summary: The goal of this program is to provide research-based training for judges and lawyers that will make it possible for Texas to provide Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) informed court services that recognize and respond to the special needs of children with disabilities associated with FASD.

The following objectives are associated with the project:

- TOPDD and Texas Lawyers for Children will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to inform the development of the training curriculum
- 800 participants will successfully complete the FASD training for judges and lawyers
- 80% of participants will demonstrate success in meeting the learning objectives associated with the training
- TOPDD will develop a thorough program evaluation

The training will be conducted online and thus be both accessible and convenient. Through the development of a highly interactive curriculum, TOPDD can test directly to see if each learning objective is being met, with questions at the end of each workshop segment. The discussion boards available through Texas Lawyers for Children will provide the interactive piece needed for obtaining learning credits and to allow judges and lawyers to share their expertise. The methods used in the training will include didactic presentations, real life case examples as well as personal accounts from respected and knowledgeable peers.

Harris County

Program Title: Harris County Infant Toddler Court

Grant Budget: \$40,000

Program Summary: The Harris County Infant Toddler Court (ITC) is a therapeutic child-family Court program for CPS referred cases of child abuse and neglect involving infants and toddlers aged zero to three. The goal and purpose of the ITC is to increase the opportunities for infants and toddlers to have better outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, timely intervention, early childhood development, and physical and mental health. Secondary aims are to decrease the recurrence of abuse and parental recidivism, support and encourage families, and decrease mental health, physical health and behavioral issues associated with abuse as well as foster home placement.

Specific project objectives are:

- Host a regional conference on the topic of child abuse and the Courts to increase the visibility of the ITC and the notion of leadership from the bench and also present networking and collaboration opportunities for professionals across a broad spectrum of activities.
- Develop use of technology to increase timely and transparent communication between ITC Team members, which will serve as a platform for collaboration and increase the buy-in among community partners to the benefits of the collaborative approach.

Information presented at the training conference will be disseminated through conference literature and materials, as well as a DVD product following the training event. The DVD will be of use as a resource for not only local and regional stakeholders but also as part of a marketing outreach plan to replicate the ITC model in other Courts in Texas and elsewhere. The information and technology component for this project will also impact communications and information and as such is an element of the dissemination plan, as well. Investments in improving the process by which case-related information is accessed, stored, and shared will ensure information will be available in a more uniform, readily accessible, transparent and relevant fashion.

Applicant: CASA of Travis County

Program Title: Expanding Advocacy with a Transition Court Venture Project

Grant Budget: \$49,242

Program Summary: CASA of Travis County seeks support to expand the Transitioning Youth services program, which advocates for youth between the ages of 14-18 who are in permanent managing conservatorship (PMC) and to support CASA's participation in the Transition Court Venture Project, a new initiative in the Travis County courts.

The goal of the Transitioning Youth services program is to provide court advocacy and essential life skills training and support to youth in Travis County at risk of aging out of the foster care system so they are more likely to lead successful, independent adult lives.

The Transitioning Youth Specialists and the specially trained volunteer advocates will assist youth in the care of the State plan for their transition to independent adulthood by focusing on 3 areas:

- Preparation – assist with Transition Planning, help obtain basic documents like social security cards and drivers licenses, and obtain basic skills like balancing a check book, applying for a job and apartment
- Education – encourage finishing high school, help obtain a GED, apply for continuing education
- Connections – conduct a diligent search for family members, identify and establish relationships with other caring adults, host Meetups which offer youth a sense of community amongst their peers

The goal of the new Transition Court is to increase the number of older youth successfully transitioning out of the child welfare system. The Court will consist of informal Permanency Meetings instead of official hearings in the courtroom. Meetings will be held more frequently than typical CPS court hearings and participants will include the judge out of robes and CASA Permanency Team members, as well as the Assistant District Attorney, the youth's attorney ad litem, foster parents/caregivers, the youth's family, and any other individuals of importance to the youth.