The Fostering Connections Act: Texas Implementation

Title IV-E Roundtable
T Bar M
New Braunfels

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Guiding Principal: We should resolve issues that have been past barriers to success (good outcomes) for youth exiting care/achieving permanency.
What is Fostering Connections?

Legislation that promotes permanency and extends services for children and youth with an emphasis on adoption, relative care, and aging out of care:

- **Federal**: Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
- **State**: House Bill 1151 and Senate Bill 2080
Fostering Connections: Multiple Components

- Education
- Medical
- Adoption
- Extended Care
- Grants
- Kinship
- Permanency Care Assistance
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Fostering Connections Act Optional Components

The 81st Texas Legislature passed:

- Relative Guardianship Assistance ("Permanency Care Assistance") Program for relatives who take legal custody of a CPS foster child for whom the relatives have been verified foster parents for six months.

- Extension of permanency care assistance benefits up to the youth’s 21st birthday if agreements were signed after the youth turns 16.

- Extension of adoption assistance benefits up to the youth’s 21st birthday if agreements were signed after the youth turns 16.
Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program

What is it?

A new option for youth who are in DFPS conservatorship and would otherwise grow up in foster care because going back home and adoption are not possible.
Permanency Care Assistance is a “new way of doing business” for Texas.
Permanency Care Assistance (PCA) Program

- PCA positively impacts children and youth:
  - It provides true permanency in the eyes of the child and family because they have their resolution and the CPS case is closed
  - Children/youth exit care more quickly
  - Fewer placement disruptions
  - Children/youth maintain family connections

- PCA positively impacts the child welfare system:
  - Stems the rate of caseload growth
  - Reduces caseworker time spent on face-to-face visits
  - Avoids administrative costs
  - Removes CPS cases from over-crowded court dockets and relieves counties of attorney ad litem costs
The primary focus of this new program is to help move more children and youth towards permanency, especially those who would otherwise grow up in foster care.

- Not for youth who can be adopted.
- Not for youth who can be reunified.
Using PCA to Help Children Exit Care to Permanency

Strategies include

• Promotion of the new program,
• Coordination of efforts within CPS and among other DFPS programs,
• Collaboration with community partners,
• Kinship notification after removal,
• Diligent searches,
• Recruitment of verified kinship placements with the focus on permanency,
• Case mining,
• Special effort to address children where DFPS has PMC and the permanency plan is “stuck”.
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Promotion of the new program
• Ensure information is known and available about PCA
• Remember PCA as an option when reviewing cases
• Get enthusiastic…this really is a good thing!
• Eliminate myths

Coordination of efforts among CPS programs
• Communicate to ensure completion of the requirements
• Communicate to resolve barriers

Collaboration with community partners
• Bring them into the loop; make them part of the plan
• Share information and answer questions
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Kinship notification after removal
- Identify, notify, involve
- Use/Build family support system
- Start from the first day

Diligent searches
- Use new agency resources
- Broaden search as needed
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Recruitment of verified kinship placements with the focus on permanency

• Encourage kinship families to become verified when possible to facilitate permanency efforts
  - Waiver of non-safety standards
  - Mini Pride
  - DFPS or CPA
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Recruitment of verified kinship placements with the focus on permanency

• Help keep kinship family focused on child achieve timely permanency
  - Notification of permanency options at placement
  - Letter of Intent when ready to pursue PMC/PCA
  - Only 6 months are needed
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Case mining

• Read/review case for family information
• Use new forms in Smiley
• Talk to youth, they often have relative options
Using PCA to Address Permanency

Special effort to address children where DFPS has PMC and the permanency plan is “stuck”:

– Target cases
– Ask youth about relatives
– Hold special staffings
– Request Family Group Conferences
Permanency Care Assistance Program

Example

- Sibling group of four, ages 2, 5, 8 and 11 years
  - There are 16, 13, 10, and 7 years (respectively) remaining before they each become adults. This is a total of 46 years of DFPS conservatorship without the PCA option.
  - If not placed together, 46 years of conservatorship would require 552 monthly caseworker visits.
  - Typically they would experience poor outcomes.
## Average Placement Cost Per Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Foster Care</th>
<th>PCA</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 1</strong></td>
<td>$21,593</td>
<td>$15,548**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Years 2 - 5.3</strong></td>
<td>$92,312</td>
<td>$23,524</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total 5.3 years</strong></td>
<td>$113,905</td>
<td>$39,072</td>
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**PCA Cost Avoidance= $74,833**

*average length of time in long-term care is 5.3 years

**includes 6 months of foster care payments

Note: costs above do not reflect cost avoidance in PCA from closing CPS cases.
PCA Nuts and Bolts

- Checklist for eligibility for PCA program
- Verified kinship placement required for six months
- Letter of Intent when PMC/PCA becomes plan; update of Child’s Plan
- PCA application: beginning 9/1/10, request in IMPACT and submit paperwork
- PCA negotiation; if 16, may extend to 21st birthday
- Court names kinship family as PMC
- PMC payments start first of following month
IMPACT Changes

Computer Based Training on Fostering Connections and IMPACT changes

IMPACT roll out: August 22
IMPACT Changes

- Automated Kinship notification letter
- Documentation of kinship waiver or variance requests
- Documentation of reasons for withdrawal from process
- Placement Page to have kinship information
- Child’s Plan Updates: Goals, Permanency
- PCA Tab will have PCA Application
- PCA may extend to 21st birthday if PCA agreement signed after youth turns 16
For More Information:

Fostering Connections Intranet Site:
http://intranet/CPS/Fostering_Connections/

Questions can be e-mailed to:
Fosteringconnections@dfps.state.tx.us
Questions?