



## Real-time Child Abuse Data

Texas has been moving towards a community-based approach to child protection, where each individual community is tasked with meeting the needs of the children and families in their area. It is imperative to ensure that local communities and providers have access to the accurate and real-time data needed to protect children both in and out of the child welfare system.

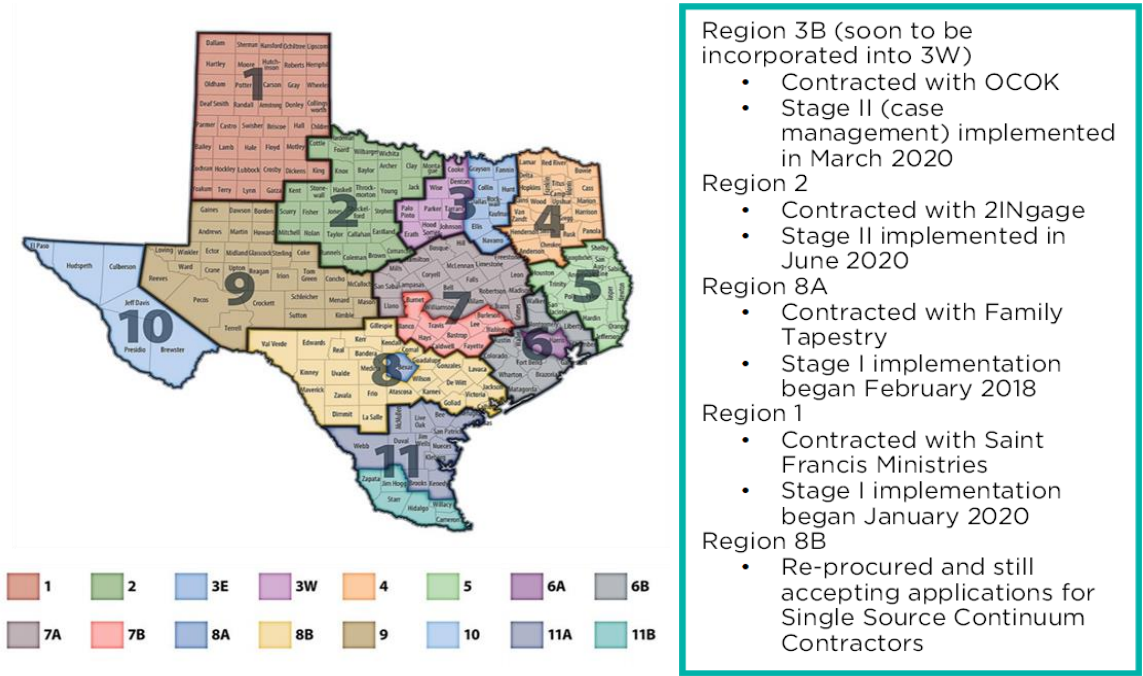
### The Need for Timely Data

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, key stakeholders have been unable to obtain critical information regarding reports of abuse and neglect or the safety and needs of children because most data is only made available annually. Without access to real-time child abuse data, providers and community could not appropriately adjust to the changing needs in their community to better protect children and resource families.

### Shifting Responsibilities to Communities

With the shift away from a state-wide approach for caring for families, where one size fits all, local contractors are now empowered to be innovative and flexible to pursue what works best for their community. At the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division makes available grants to community providers to deliver effective prevention strategies to keep families together.

In addition, DFPS has also been gradually rolling out Community Based Care (CBC) by contracting with providers across the state to carry out foster care services. The end goal is implementation in all 16 different catchment areas in the state. Each biennium, new catchment areas are brought on board, subject to legislative approval and appropriations. Currently, the state operates CBC in four catchment areas, with one more awaiting procurement and two having already taken on case management responsibilities. In this upcoming biennium, DFPS has requested to expand CBC in four new catchment areas (3E, 9, 4, and 5) and continue developing case management in two existing catchment areas.



## Availability of Child Protection Data in Texas

DFPS collects, analyzes, and publishes data in house, and with the exception of a few rider reports made available quarterly or biannually, data is only available annually. Historically, the only monthly data currently available has been for children in substitute care, which includes information such as levels of care and placement types.

In October 2020, DFPS began publishing a monthly Executive Dashboard. While the information included in the Executive Dashboard is a great step forward, some information is still missing that should be included. Outlined below is the information available now and what is missing to ensure that children are adequately protected.



### Examples:

- Number and sources of calls to Statewide Intake
- Priority levels for investigations
- Number of families and children served by Family-Based Safety Services
- Disproportionality information
- Community Based Care metrics

### Examples:

- Staffing and caseloads
- Volume of reports to Statewide Intake
- Number of stages opened, closed, and average time to closure for each program
- Timeliness of investigations
- Percentages of children placed in county

### Examples:

- Sources of Statewide Intake reports
- Total reports that do not meet the statutory definition of abuse/neglect
- Total of each type of allegation
- Total and type of exits from state custody

## Recommendations

Ensure that accurate and timely data is available to the providers and communities on the frontlines of child protection.



1. Support [SB 1079](#) (Senator Donna Campbell) that will make annual information available monthly to ensure communities have what they need when they need it to meet children's and families' needs;
2. Include the information made available in the monthly Executive Dashboard in statute; and
3. Allow third party entities, like a university, to help DFPS collect, analyze, and report data by providing vital resources to strengthen efficiency without increasing the burden on the agency.

### For More Information

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