

# Restructuring and Changes within the Department of Family and Protective Services

DFPS Staff



Texas Department of  
Family and Protective Services

On September 1, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) became an independent state agency, separate and apart from the Texas Health and Human Services System. The Texas Legislature passed and Governor Gregg Abbot signed House Bill 5 in order to cut red tape and give DFPS the agility to make rapid changes to improve protective services in Texas. DFPS now reports directly to the Governor, removing a significant layer of bureaucracy from efforts to protect children, people with disabilities, and the elderly from abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.

DFPS Commissioner Henry “Hank” Whitman, Jr. has wasted no time. On September 1, the former chief of the Texas Rangers created a new DFPS Investigations program, led by Jim Sylvester, who was a Chief Deputy for the Travis County Sheriff’s Department and head of the DFPS Special Investigator program. DFPS Investigations now conducts all child abuse and neglect investigations in Texas, whether in homes, daycare, or foster care. Special investigators (who are former law enforcement officers), former CPS investigators, and former Child Care Licensing investigators are now consolidated into one program.

“Consolidating child abuse and neglect investigations will bring consistency and make it possible for us to improve and cultivate the skills of our investigators – to totally focus on quality investigations no matter where allegation occurs,” said Sylvester.

The Legislature also gave DFPS more investigator and CPS caseworker positions

and significantly increased their salaries to help stabilize the workforce, which has suffered from high turnover for decades.

Another major change at DFPS is the shift to [Community Based Care](#) for children and youth in foster care as directed by the passage of Senate Bill 11. Community Based Care is a new way of providing foster care and case management services. It’s a community-based approach to meeting the individual and unique needs of children, youth, and families. Within a geographic service area, a single contractor (a Single Source Continuum Contractor or SSCC) is responsible for finding foster homes or other living arrangements for children in state care and providing them a full continuum of services. This is an expansion of the Foster Care Redesign efforts the agency was already doing. The new system will encompass not only children in paid foster care but also Kinship Care – those living with relatives but still in state legal custody. Eventually, DFPS will also transfer case management for these children to the SSCC.

Since September 1, DFPS released a request for application for an SSCC for [30 counties](#) in DFPS region 2 and will release another for Bexar County soon.

The pace of change is rapid at DFPS and the agency has already made a lot of progress with improved training, more competitive salaries, lower caseloads, higher standards for hiring frontline supervisors, and more. However, the changes are just beginning and there is still much to be done.