

September 30, 2020

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: Request for Information - Interim Charges 3

Texas House Human Services Committee:

Saint Francis Community Services in Texas, Inc. (Saint Francis) is the community-based care provider in Region 01 serving 41 counties and 1,100 children and their families in the foster care system. Our services include recruiting targeted capacity and providers, community development, case management, and supporting over 160 partner agencies, while ensuring safety, well-being, and permanency for our communities' children.

Saint Francis began the intake and transfer process of the DFPS legacy children into the Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) system in collaboration with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on January 6, 2020. Although this year has proven challenging due to COVID-19 and loss of capacity across the state, Saint Francis has made progress in our work with children. During the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, the Legislature made child welfare a priority, which was clear on the expansion of community-based care in various areas across the state.

Saint Francis would like to highlight our work thus far:

- **Safety of Children** – Saint Francis maintained 100% compliance ensuring children are safe.
- **Least Restrictive** – Saint Francis increased the DFPS legacy historical average from 69.1% to 76.5%, which means more children are being placed in home like settings.
- **Sibling Placements** – Saint Francis increased the DFPS legacy historical average from 61.2% to 65.1%, meaning more children are being placed with their siblings.
- **Placement Stability** – Saint Francis has reduced the number of moves children are making from the DFPS legacy system from 1.48 to 1.18, which ensures our children are staying in stable environments.

Saint Francis strongly advocates in the continuance of community-based care implementation across Texas and would like to see funding approved for Stage II services in Region 01 along with other SSCC areas. We feel Stage II is vital to improving the lives of children and families, as it will give Saint Francis the opportunity to work directly with biological and kinship families, court systems, attorneys, CASA, and our communities to ensure children are successfully and safely reunified with their biological parents.

### **Interim Charge #3:**

As community-based care moves forward in the State of Texas, we would like to share some insight into how Saint Francis can strengthen and remove barriers during implementation to ensure success for our children, families, and communities:

- **Staged Implementation** - Saint Francis is in alignment with the staged approach of implementation, as it has brought value to our partnership with DFPS. Saint Francis is currently in Stage I of services, and the intentional need to pause and reflect in our region has allowed us to focus on new opportunities, increased capacity, and building greater partnerships. Saint Francis in

this time has been able to seek and work with contractors and agencies who historically have not contracted with DFPS. Saint Francis has also been able to shore up gaps in Supervised Independent Living (SIL) through community providers, while looking at the best way to serve our 41 counties.

- **Communication and Alignment** – A challenge during our implementation has been in differences in ideologies and a need for DFPS to let community-based care providers work through their best practices to establish permanency for children. At a senior level, community-based care and DFPS leadership can often find common ground, but at Regional level there is inconsistent messaging and confusion in negotiated agreements with DFPS wanting to hold onto traditional practices and oversight.
- **Inoperability** – Although there has been progress in the inoperability of state systems (CLASS, IMPACT, IMPACT 2.0) and community-based care operations systems (CareMatch and Texas Provider Gateway), there are still many challenges in community-based care organizations working in duplicate systems. It is not an efficient use of time for either team, as it has caused a lot of confusion in our work. Saint Francis believes community-based care organizations need to work in their own operations systems with state oversight and clarity in regard to contract management.
- **Community-Based Care Implementation** – Saint Francis is grateful for the oversight and legislative requests to DFPS for the road map and plan for community-based care roll-out in Texas. As communities and providers assess their ability to do this work well and work within the community, we would request more clarity as to which DFPS Regions will be moving towards a community-based care model. This will allow agencies the opportunity to best prepare ahead of time to have success in building resources and infrastructure to support their communities. This would include private non-profit entities, communities, and stakeholders working together in years prior to ensure success of this important component of our work.
- **Readiness and Review Process** – The readiness and review process by DFPS is subjective in nature and does not have clear direction. It has no consistency on a pre-determined road map for community-based care organizations to move toward being certified ready to assume the transition of services. Saint Francis, through the process of implementing Stage I, did not have guidance or a target to ensure success of our readiness by DFPS. The process began in mid-December of 2019 with our initial start-date of January 6<sup>th</sup>. A formal process as defined by statute would be a strong recommendation to remove barriers to the subjectiveness this can cause.

As we have become an integral part of the communities we serve, we would love to meet with you during this interim and further discuss the work we do. Our hope is that in the future we can invite you to tour our facilities and meet with our local partners to see the important work we are doing to keep our communities' children safe.

Thank you for your service. Please know that Saint Francis is a resource to you all now and in the future, and please to do not hesitate to call on me with any questions.

Sincerely,



**Cristian Garcia, MS, LCPAA**  
Regional Vice President