



Recommended Issues for Subcommittee Consideration
Taskforce on Children with Special Needs
February 17, 2010

Texans Care for Children is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to the children of Texas. We look to our broad base of community-based experts—our partners who together represent thousands of Texas children—to inform our work and help us in developing our legislative agenda. We also co-facilitate the **Texas Children’s Mental Health Forum** and the **Texas Juvenile Justice Roundtable**, two stakeholder groups which convene monthly to identify and discuss policy solutions aimed at improving the well-being of children and youth in the state. In addition to children’s mental well-being and juvenile justice, our work also focuses on family economic security; infant, child and maternal health; and child welfare.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide suggestions to the Taskforce on issues for its subcommittees to address. Based on priorities identified by the Texas Children’s Mental Forum and the Texas Juvenile Justice Roundtable, **Texans Care For Children recommends the Taskforce consider the following issues within its various subcommittees:**

- Addressing mental health and behavioral challenges in early childhood [Mental Health, Education, Early Diagnosis/Intervention]
- The role of schools in identifying and addressing the mental health needs of students [Mental Health, Education]
- How school discipline practices funnel kids, especially those with unmet behavioral health needs and those eligible for special education services, into the juvenile justice system [Mental Health, Education, Juvenile Justice]
- Availability of, affordability of, and disparities in access to mental health services for children and youth [Mental Health]
- Expanding and improving the state’s children’s mental health workforce [Mental Health]
- Promoting a systems of care approach to providing services to children with mental illness [Mental Health]

- Promoting trauma informed care across state child-serving systems [Mental Health, Crisis Prevention, Juvenile Justice]
- Preventing parental relinquishment of children with special needs into state custody [Mental Health, Crisis Prevention, Juvenile Justice]
- Utilizing Front-End Diversion strategies to divert youth with special needs away from the juvenile system [Juvenile Justice]
- Assessing the effectiveness of the Texas Youth Commission's new treatment approach, CoNEXTions, for youth with special needs [Juvenile Justice]
- Improving Juvenile Legal Representation for youth with special needs [Juvenile Justice]
- Expanding services and supports to youth with special needs transitioning out of state systems [Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Transitioning Youth]
- Getting children and youth out of the adult criminal justice system [Juvenile Justice]
- Reducing disproportionate minority contact (DMC) within the juvenile justice system [Juvenile Justice]
- Impact of Juvenile Records Sealing on youth with special needs [Juvenile Justice]
- Impact of community corrections funding from 81st session on youth with unmet mental health needs [Mental Health, Juvenile Justice]

Thank you again for your time and commitment to the children of our state. If you have any questions about the above recommendations, or if our organization can be a resource to the Taskforce, please feel free to contact us or the staff of Texans Care for Children at 512-473-2274.

Respectfully,

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