



Lower caseloads to improve services and outcomes

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services continues to operate with high caseloads that prevent staff from spending the time they need with each child, family, or vulnerable adult. As a result, Texans in need of help often fall through the cracks, sometimes with tragic consequences.

In December 2015, the ruling from US District Judge Janis Graham Jack focused even more attention on the systemic problems that prevent DFPS from effectively protecting children that are in custody of the State of Texas. The Special Masters appointed by Judge Jack released their recommendations to the court on how to correct numerous issues with the agency. Among their recommendations is to lower caseloads with CPS Conservatorship to a range of 14-17 cases in each county and each office.

In addition to the Federal Court Ruling, DFPS's 2020-2021 LAR and the DFPS 2019-2023 Strategic Plan cite high caseloads as a cause of workforce instability and increased risks to clients:

• FY 2020-2021 LAR

“Caseload per worker is an important factor in retaining caseworkers. Experience shows increasing caseload can reach a point at which caseworkers begin to resign, leaving their caseload for the remaining workers, which further increases the caseload per worker and causes more caseworkers to leave. If the caseload per caseworker rate grows, there will be an increased risk to children, youth, adults, and their families.”

“Staff leaving APS places additional stress on the staff who remain at APS, as remaining staff work abandoned caseloads from peers who leave. New hires are quickly faced with high caseloads due to the constant turnover, soon become stressed, and often quit before they have been with APS for a year.”

• DFPS FY 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

“Staff turnover threatens client outcomes as well as agency effectiveness and efficiency. It is in the best interest of both the agency and our clients to attract and retain the most qualified employees possible.”

Numerous internal and external reviews, reports, and studies have also indicated the need to reduce caseloads in DFPS, including Casey Family Program, Texas Adoption Review Committee, Texas Applesseed, the Texas Comptroller, the Sunset Advisory Committee, and the Stephen Group.

A chart comparing recommended caseload levels to what DFPS has requested is below. We ask that you support legislation to establish caseload standards in DFPS and to clarify how these caseloads are measured. The recommendations from the Special Masters only apply to children in the permanent managing conservatorship of the state. The caseload crisis in our agency is not limited to conservatorship. Waiting for the next crisis to hit before taking action to lower caseloads will cause more Texans to fall through the cracks.

	2020-21 FPS Requested Caseload <i>(including Exceptional Items)</i>	Recommended Caseload Level <i>(from DFPS Caseload Advisory Committee)</i>
CPS Investigations	13.9	12
CPS Family Based Safety Services	10.4	12
CPS Conservatorship	23.1	14-17* <i>(Special Masters recommendations)</i>
CPS Kinship	29.2	15
Foster and Adoptive Development (FAD)	17.3	15
APS In Home	30.9	22
State Wide Intake	8.5 minutes	5 minutes

We ask legislators to support HB 988 by Rep. Armando Walle to establish caseload standards in FPS. We also ask for funding enough positions to make these standards a reality along with funding a real pay raise for all FPS employees. Without taking significant steps to lower caseloads and increase retention rates, the same systemic problems will continue to hamper DFPS's ability to function.

Previous Legislatures have significantly increased funding levels for DFPS, however these increases have not kept up with the needs of Texas' growing population. Also, previous funding increases have not been combined with the establishment of caseload standards, which are needed to hold our agency accountable.

Support HB 988 by Representative Armando Walle to establish caseload standards in DFPS