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Department of Family  
and Protective Services  
*Prevention & Early Intervention*

# **Bridging the Gap between Family Courts and Family Support Programs**

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**Sarah Abrahams**

**Deputy Chief Officer of Prevention and Early Intervention  
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**

# Prevention and Early Intervention



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- Funding community level programs designed to promote positive outcomes for children, youth and families and create thriving communities;
- Working with communities to implement programs that address community level needs;
- Helping normalize the challenges of parenting and encourages seeking help through parenting tips, articles, information, and resources; and
- Recommending best practices and policies for building on the strengths of both caregivers and children to promote strong families and resilient children.



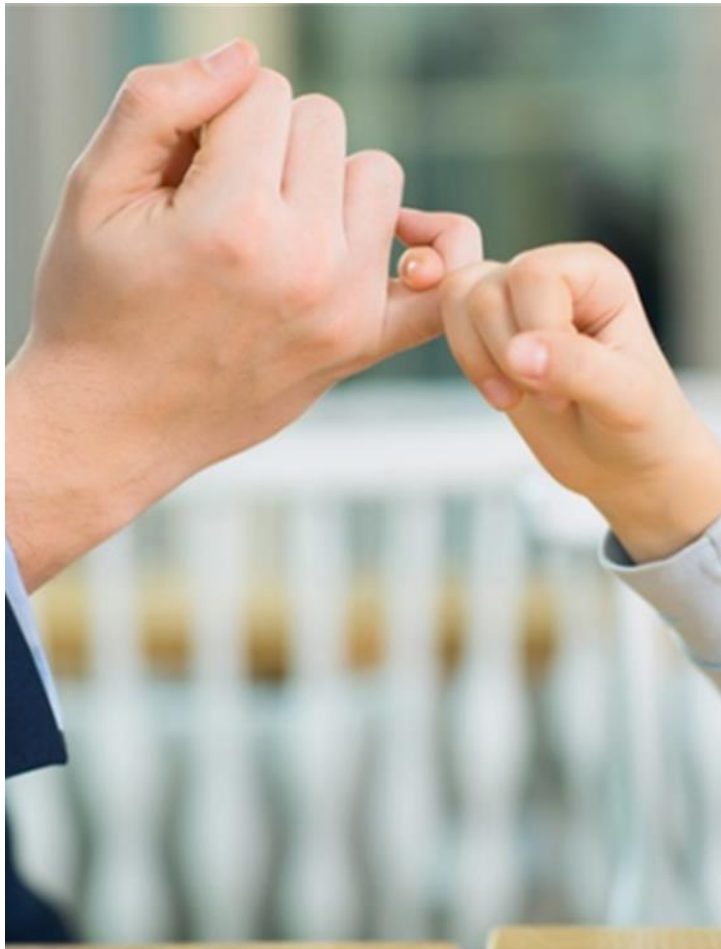
# Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)



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- Supporting Prevention Services for:
  - Mental Health;
  - Substance Abuse Treatment; and
  - In-Home Parenting Skills.
- Supporting Kinship Placements in lieu of non-familial substitute placement's; and
- Reducing the number of children in congregate care.

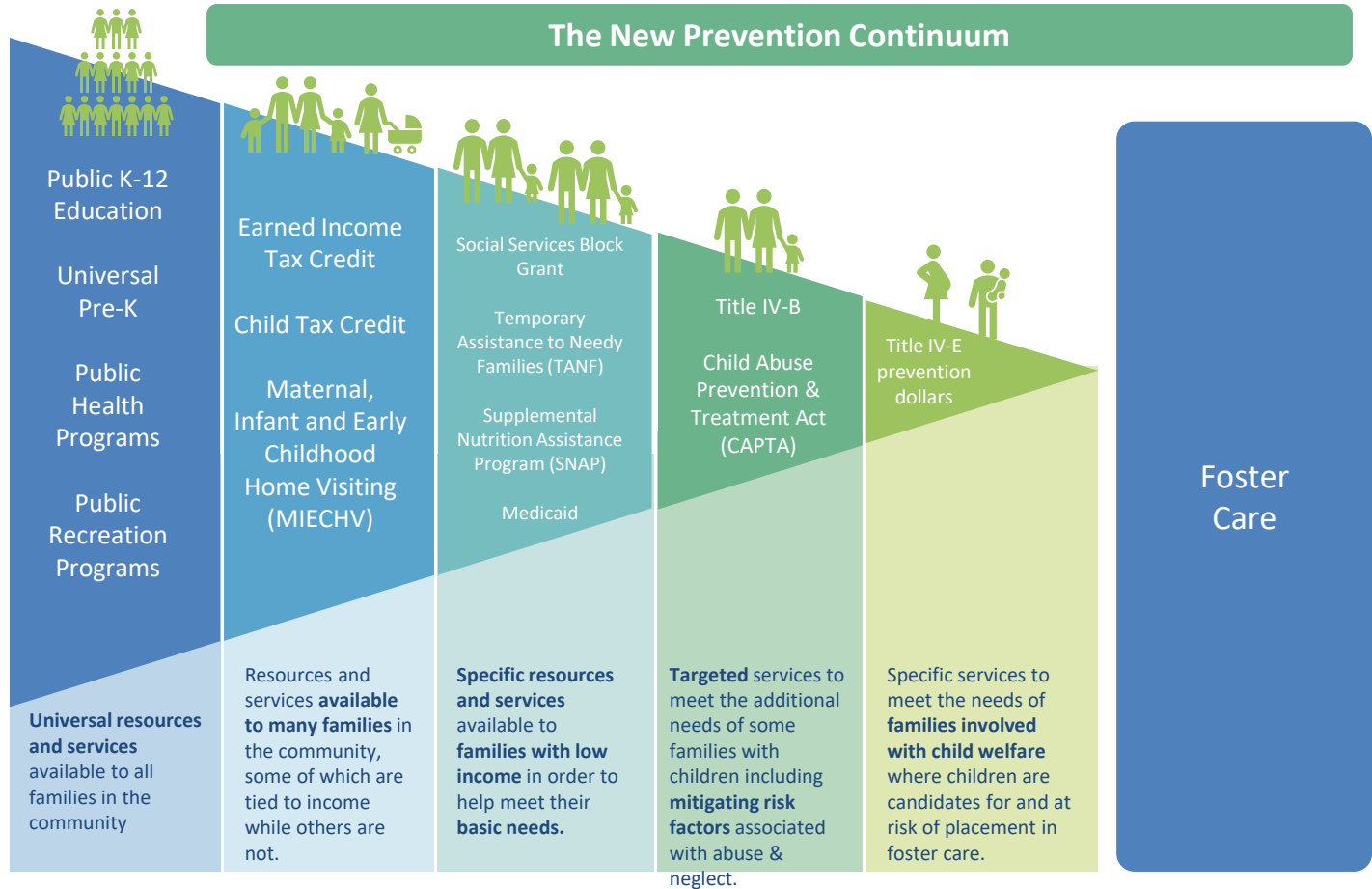
# Prevention Continuum



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# Started with a Question

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## 1. Gained Stakeholder Input

- i. Judges – Desired more up-to-date information of local resources and capacities.
- ii. Community-Based Family Support Programs – experienced a disconnect from the legal side of child welfare.

2. **QUESTION:** How could we support increased partnership between family court judges and local family support programs?

3. What partners do we need to accomplish this?



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- **Project Origination**
- **Funder**
- **Ongoing Project Management**



- **Evaluation**
- **Communication with Judges**



- **Project Implementation**
- **Supervision for Positions**
- **HR Oversight**

# Texas Children's Commission

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- Established by Supreme Court of Texas order in November 2007.
- Mission:
- To strengthen courts for children, youth, and families in the Texas child protection system and thereby improve the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.
- Administer federal Court Improvement Program Grant.
- Educate judges and attorneys on law, policy, and practice in handling child welfare cases.
- Convener and project manager for several child welfare system issues and reform efforts.

# Office of Court Administration

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- The OCA is a unique state agency in the Judicial Branch that operates under the direction and supervision of the Supreme Court of Texas and the Chief Justice pursuant to Texas Government Code Chapter 72. Their mission is to provide resources and information for the efficient administration of the Judicial Branch of Texas.
- This project is within the Research and Court Services Division, which provides technical assistance, training, research, and support on issues related to:
  - Court management
  - Collection and use of court statistics
  - Language access services
  - Children's Courts
  - Domestic violence
  - Specialty courts
  - Judicial Council committee activities



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# Early Intervention Court Liaisons

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- Working with the Children's Commission, conceived idea that a position was needed to help bridge partnership between family courts and family programs.
- PEI identified \$300K state GR funding to support (3) 1.0 FTEs to serve as Early Intervention Court Liaisons.
- The Children's Commission worked with county-level family courts to identify locations with capacity and will to participate.
- Used the PEI Maltreatment Risk Maps to identify counties of need.



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# PEI Maltreatment Risk Maps

<https://www.maltreatment-risk.txsafebabies.org/>

Data presented in these maps are the estimated risk of maltreatment in communities across Texas at the zip code level.



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[Home](#) [Variable Definitions](#) [Data Sources](#) [About](#)

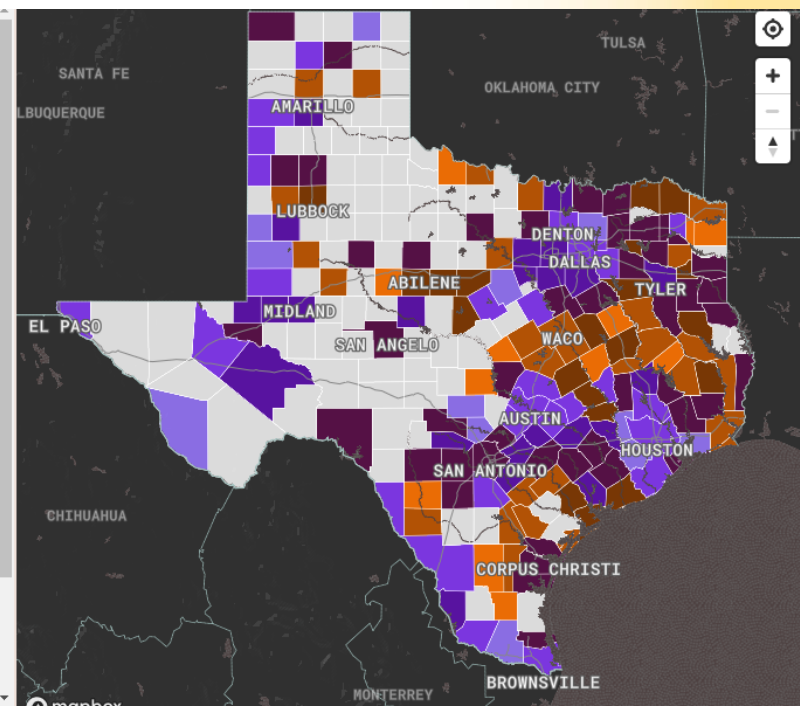
## Maltreatment Risk

Data presented in these maps are the estimated risk of maltreatment in communities across Texas. Data are not presented for communities with small child populations as these estimates are not reliable.

Learn more about a community's maltreatment risk by selecting it on the map and clicking "search" or by typing in the ZIP Code or county in the search bar.

Year:  Age group:  Geography:

Search by ZIP Code or county:



# Project Goals

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## Locations: Bell, Galveston, and Lubbock Counties

1. **Increase connectivity** between Child Protection Courts and local resources;
2. Develop **prevention service capacity, focusing on FFPSA eligible services**, in targeted communities through partnerships with local referral networks in order to better connect and inform families of services available;
3. Bring a **judicial and legal voice to local community collaborations** around family support and prevention work;
4. **Increase alignment between community services with Family First Prevention and Services Act** requirements so that those programs can draw down federal funds;
5. **Conduct readiness and local needs assessments** to determine feasibility for implementation of specialty courts, like infant/toddler or family drug treatment courts; and
6. Help courts **identify opportunities for parent navigation, kinship navigation, and other peer leadership** and support programs.



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# Early Intervention Court Liaisons

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## Progress and Next Steps

- Interagency contract executed between DFPS and OCA in November 2021.
- First EICL hired for Galveston County, started March 2022.
- EICL hired for Bell County, started in April 2022.
- Still hiring for Lubbock County.
- EICLs are working to create a network of family support program contacts. This will lead to community mapping of resources.



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# How are we doing?

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## Project Evaluation

- The Children's Commission is funding a project evaluation through the University of Texas A&M.
- We will be measuring the efficacy of EICL position to increasing family support across the judicial and support program systems.
- Specific evaluation questions are currently in draft form.
- Evaluation work to start in summer 2022.



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# Thank you

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**Sarah Abrahams**

**[Sarah.Abrahams@DFPS.Texas.gov](mailto:Sarah.Abrahams@DFPS.Texas.gov)**