Region 1

The Heart Galleries of Texas received funding in the 88th Legislative Session to improve permanency outcomes for youth who have experienced foster care. Over the past year, efforts have focused on expanding the Heart Galleries model across the state, increasing community collaboration, developing online trainings and resources, identifying the post-permanency needs of families, and conducting a Request for Applications (RFA) process to select qualified providers in each region to help meet the post-permanency needs of families.

About the Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains

Heart Gallery Organization: Community Partners of Lubbock
Website: https://www.communitypartnerslubbock.org/heartgallery
Launch Events: April 30, 2024 in Lubbock and September 12, 2024 in Amarillo

In 2023, Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains was established in Region 1 through Community Partners of Lubbock. By the end of its first year, August 2024, this gallery was fully staffed and had launched a website. The gallery hosted two launch events (one in Lubbock, one in Amarillo) that were attended by over 400 people and raised over $60,000. Working hard to build a relationship with Saint Francis Ministries, the Single Source Continuum Contractor in Region 1, they had received 67 youth referrals, with a goal of featuring all 70 eligible children in the region. In August 2024, they were able to feature their first 15 youth on the website. Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains has a strong and engaged community Advisory Committee and tremendous staff expertise, including staff with lived experience as adoptive parents. In addition to the launch event, they have hosted five other community events, reaching another 122 community members, ran 25 collaborative stakeholder meetings with 59 attendees overall, and held eight information sessions with 30 attendees overall. In August, the gallery hosted their first three Heart Gallery exhibits, displaying 17 portraits. Lastly, they have over 12,000 interactions on Facebook and Instagram since creating accounts on those platforms.

Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 1

In March of 2024, researchers from the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing and staff at the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies conducted a statewide post-permanency needs assessment, surveying caregivers and providers about services, needs, and barriers for families after adoption or permanency legal conservatorship. In Region 1, **31 caregivers** and **14 providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 58% of caregivers (*n* = 18) and 23% (*n* = 3) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 16 caregivers reached out to their region's Post-Permanency Services Provider (52%).
- All caregivers who reached out reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (100%).

Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Medical services (77%, *n* = 23)
- Post-permanency services (58%, *n* = 18)
- Respite (57%, *n* = 16)
- School-based services (57%, *n* = 16)
- Developmental services (54%, *n* = 14)
- Childcare (48%, *n* = 12)
- Mental health services (27%, *n* = 7)

Note: Percentages are based on the number of people who answer each question. Please exercise caution when interpreting findings with small sample sizes. Small sample sizes can limit the generalizability of the results, as they may not accurately represent the broader population.

Most Needed Services and Supports

- **Expanded mental health and counseling services** across different settings (inpatient/residential treatment, outpatient treatment, and school-based services). Respondents mentioned needing providers who accept Medicaid and who understand trauma and adoption.
- **Afterschool care, camps, and accessible respite** that does not rely on the family's immediate support system and is inclusive for youth with specific conditions or disability.
- **Information about available services and supports** in their region, specifically for older youth and youth with disabilities.
- **More activities for families** (or financial support to participate in activities), training opportunities, and/or support groups.
- 71% of caregivers also indicated they were also interested in **Parents Night Out** and 55% were interested in having **family resource centers**.

Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Essential supports, such as mental health and respite services, are not available in the region.
- Providers often do not accept Medicaid or there are issues with Medicaid denials.
- Lack of information on available resources and how to access them is a significant barrier to accessing services.

Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Lack of services and providers, such as mental health providers, in the region.
- Not knowing who provides what services in the region.
- Not enough funding and red tape.

Top services that caregivers needed but had difficulty accessing or were unable to get:

- Special Education Services/SPED
- Therapeutic or specialized camps
- Camps (general)
- Respite (overnight)
- Child care or afterschool care (not specialized)

To learn more about this needs assessment, go to: Needs Assessment of Post-permanency Services in Texas Dashboard. You can locate all the data specific to your region.

Looking Ahead

Existing collaborative efforts are strong in Region 1 and include post-permanency supports in major metropolitan areas. The next step to collaborative-building will be to ensure region-wide coverage and resource availability for post-permanency families. Additionally, based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organizations were selected to provide services in Region 1:

- Panhandle Orphan Care Network: Host support groups and family camps.
- Texas Girls and Boys Ranch: Offer counseling services, EMDR, and in-home coaching services.
- The Springs Therapy Group: Provide specialized therapy sessions.
- Lee Ann LeFevre: Offer individual, family, parent, and sibling therapy.
- Heart Gallery of Panhandle Plains: Provide respite, legal services, and support to meet families' basic needs.

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Moritz Center for Societal Impact
Steve Hicks School of Social Work

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