Region 4

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 East Texas

Heart Gallery Organization: 4Kids4Families
Website: https://heartgalleryetx.org/
Launch Event: August 20, 2024

In 2024, Heart Gallery of East Texas was established through a partnership with 4Kids4Families (the region's Single Source Continuum Contractor) and Fostering Collective. They have a very strong referral process and by August 2024, they had launched a website, received 113 new referrals, and featured 61 new youth, 87% of whom had complex medical and/or behavioral health needs. Fourteen of the youth featured were also adopted. In terms of community engagement, the gallery hosted a launch event in August and organized 35 outreach events, reaching over 1,500 attendees. They also held 64 collaborative stakeholder meetings with a total of 368 attendees, and 27 information sessions attended by a total of 228 people. On average, they hosted five Heart Gallery exhibits per month. The Heart Gallery of East Texas also has regular TV news segments, resulting in steadily increasing web traffic, from 338 visits in May 2024 to 20,000 visits in August 2024.

Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 4

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 4, **59 caregivers** and **eight providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 34% of caregivers (*n* = 20) and 29% (*n* = 2) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 22 caregivers reached out to their region's Post-Permanency Services Provider (39%).
- 13 caregivers reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (59%).

Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Medical services (62%, *n* = 31)
- Developmental services (56%, *n* = 24)
- Post-permanency services (46%, *n* = 26)
- School-based services (45%, *n* = 18)
- Respite (36%, *n* = 14)
- Childcare (32%, *n* = 12)
- Mental health services (13%, *n* = 6)

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

- **Mental health providers** that accept Medicaid, are trauma-informed, and do not have a long waitlist.
- **Financial assistance** to cover out-of-pocket therapy costs.
- **Specialized therapeutic services** (play therapy, attachment therapy, equine or animal-assisted therapy, behavior management, in-home counseling, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment, and residential care).
- **Accessible, trauma-informed respite and childcare.**
- **Virtual or local support groups** for adoptive parents and youth.
- **Support navigating complex relationships** with the child's birth family.
- 64% of caregivers also indicated they were interested in **Parents Night Out**, 58% were interested in having **family resource centers**, and 56% were interested in having **family meetups or events**.

Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Limited access and availability of services, particularly mental health services, medical services, and childcare.
- Providers have long waitlists, are located far away, and/or do not accept Medicaid.
- Lack of trauma-informed and adoption-competent providers.
- Unable to afford out-of-pocket costs.
- Being unsure where to go for support.

Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Lack of mental health providers, particularly those who provide alternative therapy including equine, art, and music therapy.
- Lack of medical specialists.
- Challenges with family engagement after adoption or permanency.
- Limited options for childcare and respite, particularly for children with complex behavioral health needs.

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

Individual therapy (specialized) • Respite (overnight) • Respite or babysitting (not overnight) • Psychological or trauma assessments • Special education services (504 plan/IEP)

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

Region 4 has strong collaboration involving a Single Source Continuum Contractor, DFPS, and community providers. In their post-adoption efforts, this collaboration has developed an individualized plan for all counties in the region to help ensure families across the region are covered. Based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organization was selected to provide services in Region 4:

- Fostering Collective: Collaborate with Centers to increase services and support for 190 post-permanency families in Region 4. This involves engaging with families to identify service gaps and connect families to local support services. Additionally, they plan to expand existing therapy and services for families, including respite care, meals, EMDR therapy, and normalcy activities. They have a robust plan to integrate post-permanency services in 20 of the 23 counties in the region (the other three counties already have strong collaboratives). The post-permanency funding and collaboration will create access to region-wide comprehensive services, supports, and collaborations.
- Fore the Sake of One: Post-permanency services to be provided for 2 counties in Region 4 focused on facilitating support groups, conducting trainings, and other normalizing activities.

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