Region 6

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 Greater Houston

Heart Gallery Organization: BE A Resource (BEAR)
Website: http://heartgalleryhouston.org/
Launch Event: March 20, 2024

In 2024, Heart Gallery of Greater Houston was established in Region 6 through BE A Resource (BEAR). This region is unique in that they had previously existing Heart Gallery efforts that launched in early 2020, but lost traction during the pandemic. The Heart Gallery of Greater Houston held a relaunch event in March and has featured 56 new youth on their website since. They feature, on average, 100 youth each month on their website. Overall, this Heart Gallery has been actively engaged in the community. Since January, they organized 98 outreach events, reaching over 7,500 attendees, and held 16 collaborative stakeholder meetings, totaling 161 attendees. Additionally, they have worked with other child-placing agencies to co-host six information sessions, with a total of 229 attendees. On average, they hosted 51 heart gallery exhibits a month with over 500 portraits displayed and have seen a significant increase in their web traffic, growing from 2,883 visits in January to 10,441 visits in August.

Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 6

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 6, **39 caregivers** and **24 providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 36% of caregivers (*n* = 14) and 59% (*n* = 10) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 19 caregivers reached out to their region's post-permanency services provider (49%).
- 11 caregivers reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (58%).

Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Medical services (50%, *n* = 19)
- Post-permanency services (41%, *n* = 14)
- Developmental services (38%, *n* = 12)
- School-based services (35%, *n* = 12)
- Respite (27%, *n* = 7)
- Childcare (23%, *n* = 6)
- Mental health services (18%, *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 services and providers**, particularly trauma-informed therapists and psychiatrists who accept Medicaid.
- **Youth services across a continuum of care** including counseling, in-home therapy, intensive outpatient programs (IOPs), partial hospitalization programs (PHPs), and residential treatment centers (RTCs).
- **Financial assistance to cover out-of-pocket costs** when services are not covered by Medicaid.
- **Affordable respite care** (including overnight) and **camps** for youth, including those with higher needs.
- Information on available services, financial assistance, parent support groups, mentoring, and peer-to-peer support.
- Ensure families are **connected to services earlier** before crises occur.
- 68% of caregivers also indicated they were interested in **Parents Night Out**, 62% were interested in having **family resource centers**, and 57% were interested in having **family meet-ups or events**.

Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Financial barriers including difficulty paying for camps, medication, education, and services not covered by Medicaid.
- Limited access and availability of services, particularly mental health services and developmental supports.
- Long-waitlists or services are too far away for families to access.
- Not knowing where to go or who to reach out for services.

Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Lack of services and supports available to refer families to, specifically those who accept Medicaid.
- Difficulty finding a residential treatment program that will accept post-adoption contracts and payment levels.
- Insufficient funding to provide or cover the costs of services that families need.
- Families are often connected with services when they are in crisis rather than before a crisis occurs.

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

Respite (overnight) • Respite or babysitting (not overnight) • Individual therapy (non-specialized) • Individual therapy (specialized) • Therapeutic or specialized camp

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

Efforts have been made to work with existing collaboratives to ensure post-adoption resources are available region-wide. Additionally, BEAR is developing an additional collaborative with post-adoption funding to help support future efforts to unify the region, which is highly populated, geographically large, and split into sub-regions A and B. Based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organizations were selected to provide services in Region 6:

- Monarch Family Services: Expansion of virtual IOP program for adolescents, parent coaching, support groups, caregiver and couples therapy, respite care and support for concrete needs.
- Spaulding for Children dba Arms Wide: Provide therapeutic camps, respite services, and childcare.
- The Sanctuary: One clinician to serve post-permanency families.
- BE A Resource: Start a Foster Community collaborative network for all of Region 6; hire a director and cover the cost of meeting supplies, post-permanency activities, and other supports for families.

The University of Texas at Austin
Moritz Center for Societal Impact
Steve Hicks School of Social Work

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Steve Hicks School of Social Work

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