Region 7

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 Central Texas

Heart Gallery Organization: Partnerships for Children
Website: https://partnershipsforchildren.org/heartgallery-home/
Launch Event: November 2024 in Waco

Heart Gallery of Central Texas was started by Partnerships for Children in 2014 and is the model for statewide expansion, setting the standard for adoption outreach and improved outcomes. In 2023, they received additional funding to support expansion for region-wide coverage and addressing backlogged postings of children to be featured on the Heart Gallery. The Heart Gallery of Central Texas had 97 youth featured on their website at the beginning of the year. Since then, they have featured 61 more youth. Additionally, 40 of the youth featured this year have been adopted. Overall, Heart Gallery of Central Texas has been actively working to build community support across the region and has expanded their team in Waco, where they plan to host a launch event in November. Since January, they have organized 11 outreach events reaching 471 attendees, held 15 collaborative stakeholder meetings totaling 208 attendees, and hosted 16 information sessions with a total of 513 attendees. On average, they hosted 19 Heart Gallery exhibits a month with 326 portraits displayed and have seen a significant increase in their web traffic, growing from 5,210 visits in January to 10,347 visits in August.

Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 7

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 7, **51 caregivers** and **9 providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 40% of caregivers (*n* = 20) & 29% (*n* = 2) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 29 caregivers reached out to their region's Post-Permanency Services Provider (57%).
- 18 caregivers reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (62%).

Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Medical services (58%, *n* = 26)
- School-based services (47%, *n* = 20)
- Developmental services (45%, *n* = 18)
- Post-permanency services (44%, *n* = 21)
- Respite (38%, *n* = 14)
- Mental health services (29%, *n* = 12)
- Childcare (27%, *n* = 10)

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 services**, particularly for adolescents and children who are neurodivergent, including behavioral therapies for the entire family, residential treatment, and specialized therapy modalities.
- **Qualified mental health providers** who accept Medicaid or funding to cover out-of-pocket costs for therapeutic services not typically covered by Medicaid.
- **Trauma-informed professionals** to provide childcare, respite, camp, and afterschool services for youth, especially for those with more complex needs.
- **Funding and support groups** to assist families as needs arise.
- 60% of caregivers reported they were interested in **Parents Night Out** and 47% were interested in **family resource centers**.

Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Lack of providers, particularly those who accept Medicaid, take new patients, and offer convenient times or locations.
- Difficulties finding trauma-informed, adoption-competent therapists and psychiatrists.
- Financial barriers to covering out-of-pocket mental healthcare costs, respite, extracurriculars, and education.
- Not knowing where to go for support.

Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Funding barriers to providing needed services or providing financial assistance to families to help cover out-of-pocket costs.
- Lack of options for referring families to community resources and supports.
- Administrative barriers including paperwork and eligibility restrictions.
- Limited residential treatment and crisis support options.

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

Behavior support services • Individual therapy (non-specialized) • Residential treatment center (RTC) • Individual therapy (specialized) • Respite (overnight)

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

This region has resources and an existing collaborative working to strengthen coordination and communication across the region to help meet the post-permanency needs of families. Based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organizations were selected to provide services in Region 7:

- Nurturing Change: Provide parent TBRI training and support groups with childcare.
- Foster Village: Serve an additional 15-20 post-permanency families each month for support gatherings; increase existing therapeutic support services.
- Fostering Hope: Focused on Williamson County; offer TBRI family support groups with childcare, one-on-one mentoring, respite care, and additional services as needed.
- Learning Bridge: Expand tutoring services for post-permanency families.
- The Settlement Home for Children: Add therapist to increase therapy sessions to 25-28/week.
- Foster Angels of Central Texas: Open existing services to post-permanency families, assist with basic needs and camps.
- Methodist Children's Home: Expand post-permanency support to McLennan and Bell Counties
- Helping Hand Home: Offer therapy to their families. Train two staff on TBRI and EMDR.

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