# Region 8

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 South Central Texas

**Heart Gallery:** THRU Project
**Website:** https://heartgallerysctx.org/
**Launch Event:** October 23, 2024

In 2023, Heart Gallery of South Central Texas was established in Region 8 by the THRU Project. This region is unique in that it is split between the DFPS legacy system model and the Single Source Continuum Contractor community-based care model. This split has created challenges to streamlining the referral process; however, the Heart Gallery has now received 43 referrals. By the end of the first year, August 2024, the gallery was fully staffed, had launched their website, and hosted 36 community events with a total of 835 attendees. They also held 16 community stakeholder meetings, attended by 161 community members, and one information session with 25 attendees. This gallery has featured 23 youth on their website and on average hosted two Heart Gallery exhibits a month displaying 19 portraits. Five of the youth featured this year were adopted.

## Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 8

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 8, **48 caregivers** and **16 providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

### Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 60% of caregivers (*n* = 29) and 55% (*n* = 6) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 31 caregivers reached out to their region's Post-Permanency Services Provider (65%).
- 26 caregivers reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (84%).

### Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Post-permanency services (68%, *n* = 32)
- Medical services (65%, *n* = 30)
- Developmental services (50%, *n* = 19)
- School-based services (44%, *n* = 19)
- Childcare (45%, *n* = 17)
- Respite (45%, *n* = 18)
- Mental health services (29%, *n* = 13)

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

- **Trauma-informed providers**, specifically therapists and psychiatrists who accept Medicaid and do not have long waitlists.
- **Comprehensive continuum-of-care services** including therapy for youth and caregivers, crisis support, partial hospitalization programs, and residential treatment centers.
- **Services tailored to specific issues** like substance use, challenging behaviors, and transition-age needs.
- **Funding or reimbursement** for respite care, educational supports, case management, parent training, kinship support, and summer camps.
- **Improved communication** around available resources and where to go for help.
- **Trainings, support groups, and activities** to strengthen family relationships.
- 67% of caregivers also indicated they were interested in having **family resource centers** and 63% were interested in **Parents Night Out**.

## Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Lack of local providers, long waitlists for services, and a lack of developmental and educational supports.
- Lack of funding to cover out-of-pocket mental healthcare costs, respite, and childcare services.
- Difficulties finding providers who are trauma-informed and adoption-competent, and who can meet their child's complex needs.

## Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Lack of funding to provide respite, mental health services, and post-adoption support.
- Lack of adoption-competent mental health providers, particularly those who accept Medicaid.
- Lack of specialized services for substance use, residential care, and crisis intervention.
- Lack of knowledge about what's available.

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

Behavior support services Individual therapy (specialized) • Special Education Services/SPED • Therapeutic or specialized camp • Alternative therapies (art, play, equine)

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

Collaborative partners in this region are reorganizing after a previously failed Single Source Continuum Contractor transition. The Heart Gallery will be working with Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services, who has previously done organizing work in this community, to provide leadership around collaborative building. Additionally, based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organizations were selected to provide services in Region 8:

- Respite Care of San Antonio: Expand respite care for children with complex medical needs.
- SJRC Texas: Expand services to kinship providers who are granted permanent managing conservatorship (PMC), provide supplemental funds for post-adopt families, and offer trauma-informed training and education.
- Helping Hand Home for Children: Train two staff in TBRI and EMDR, provide services to 60 families in Region 7 and Region 8, and expand services to offer therapy to families.
- Artvango Therapeutic Services, Inc: Provide trauma informed counseling, art therapy, advocacy, and case management.
- THRU Project: Establish a Foster Community collaborative network for Region 8. Hire a director, cover supply costs, and connect BreakTHRU families to post-permanency services and supports.

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