

**Background:** With increasing costs of living and lingering struggles after the pandemic, many youth, young adults, and families are in need of additional supports and interventions to prevent becoming involved with the foster care or juvenile justice systems. Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs at the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) strengthen families, support youth development, and prevent youth from becoming system-involved. Increased investment in prevention today would save taxpayer dollars and prevent worsening the capacity crises in foster care and youth services, all while keeping families safely together. This will effectively cut costs for the state in the future.

### ***Family and Youth Success Program***

The Family and Youth Success Program (FAYS) is the only PEI program available at no cost to youth and families in all 254 Texas counties. Through evidence-based and promising practices, including individual and family counseling and parenting classes, FAYS helps to address family conflict, everyday struggles, and youth behavioral challenges before they develop into more serious concerns. FAYS services are designed to prevent child abuse, neglect and delinquency as well as prevent and address youth runaway and school absence. In FY 2022, 20,098 youth and their families received FAYS services at a cost of only \$1,429.86 per family. During that time, 97% of youth who went through FAYS programming were not referred to juvenile probation and 97% remained safe from abuse and neglect. Due to a reduction in federal funding, the House and Senate filed budgets for the 2024-2025 biennium propose a 10% reduction in funding for FAYS compared to the current biennium.<sup>1</sup>

**TNOYS Recommends** increasing FAYS funding by at least \$20,000,000 (a 26% increase over current funding) to serve more youth and families and ensure the state's service provider-partners have the resources necessary to recruit and retain quality staff.

### ***Community Youth Development Program***

The Community Youth Development program (CYD) prevents juvenile delinquency and promotes positive youth development in Texas' communities with the highest rates of juvenile crime. CYD programs support youth through a variety of activities, including mentoring, leadership development and promoting educational and workforce opportunities. In FY 2022, 98% of youth participating in CYD programming were **not** referred to juvenile probation.<sup>2</sup>

**TNOYS Recommends** increasing CYD funding by \$8,000,000 to serve youth in more communities and ensure organizations partnering with the state to provide these services have the resources they need to recruit and maintain quality staff.

#### **Sources**

1. DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention Outcomes Rider 20 Outcomes Repor. December 1, 2022. Available at [https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About\\_DFPS/Reports\\_and\\_Presentations/Rider\\_Reports/documents/2022/2022-12-01\\_Rider\\_20\\_Report%20.pdf](https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/Rider_Reports/documents/2022/2022-12-01_Rider_20_Report%20.pdf)

2.Ibid.



## ***Family First Prevention Services Act - Preventing Foster Care Involvement***

The Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) is a federal initiative passed in 2018 that allows states to draw down a federal funding match for evidence-based programs and services for families and children at imminent risk of entering foster care. These highly effective family preservation services are proven to prevent family separation and foster care by supporting mental health, reducing substance use, and promoting healthy parenting.

**TNOYS Recommends** maximizing federal funds under FFPSA to keep more families safely together and out of the foster care system. To do this, the legislature must take a number of steps:

1. Require DFPS to submit a Title IV-E Prevention Plan to the federal government,
2. Invest state dollars in eligible evidence-based family-preservation services, and
3. Expand the state's criteria of who is eligible for FFPSA prevention services.

## ***Address Staffing Shortages by Investing in all Youth Services***

Like many other fields, the youth services sector is experiencing staffing shortages due to providers' inability to offer competitive wages and retain high-quality staff. It is crucial for the Texas Legislature to increase funding and pay across all youth-serving systems and provider types. Since staff in these fields possess transferable skills for supporting youth with behavioral challenges, there is a risk of losing experienced, tenured staff to better-funded providers or systems if the budget for one group is increased but not another. For instance, if pay increases are only funded for juvenile probation but not foster care, foster care providers may lose staff to probation departments in their community, or vice versa.

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