



HB 2400 by Rep. Sylvester Turner

Adolescent behaviors should be addressed appropriately.

We believe that adolescent behaviors should be addressed appropriately. Challenging behaviors including running away from home and failing to attend school may be normal adolescent responses to troubling situations including mental health conditions, substance abuse, and abuse or neglect.

It is important that juvenile courts have the tools they need to address adolescent behaviors and their underlying causes appropriately. In addition, every young person and family is different. It is also important that judges have options available to meet the varying and complex needs of families.

The “FINS (Family In Need of Services)” designation is an important tool for juvenile courts.

Several states have added the FINS (Family In Need of Services) designation to their statutes to provide youth and families with the services they need. The FINS designation recognizes that challenging behaviors exhibited by a child often are symptoms of stressors and challenges faced by the larger family unit. The FINS designation provides juvenile courts with the tool needed to assist the entire family unit by giving the court jurisdiction over caretakers as well as the child. States that are successfully using the FINS designation include Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico.

There are already services in place in Texas for families that receive the FINS designation.

Texas already has services available for youth and families given the FINS designation. For example, Services to At-Risk Youth (“STAR”) services are available to youth and families at no cost through community-based organizations contracted by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in every county of Texas. STAR services include crisis intervention, family counseling, conflict resolution, parenting classes, support groups, and emergency shelter or respite care. Additionally, services are available in many communities through local Community Resource Coordination Groups (CRCGs).

HB2400 by Representative Sylvester Turner offers juvenile courts a practical tool to appropriately meet the complex and varied needs of young people exhibiting challenging behaviors and their families.