

## Child Abuse and Neglect

Governor Perry believes that protecting the innocent and vulnerable is one of government's most important roles. Our state's future depends upon young Texans growing up in loving and nurturing environments in which they are encouraged to succeed. Texans must work to prevent child abuse and neglect outright. When it occurs, we must move diligently to protect its victims and offer them hope and help.

The Governor supports recent reforms in Texas that have helped to improve child safety and to assist Child Protective Services staff. He has supported additional funding for foster care and early intervention and prevention services. In addition, the Governor is committed to ensuring that young Texans who are unable to return to their families move into adoptive families as soon as possible through a streamlined adoption process.

**In 2001, Governor Perry supported a series of budget initiatives to improve Texas' Child Protective Services (CPS). The final 2002-03 budget invested more than \$151 million in new funding for CPS and other initiatives at the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS). The final budget signed by the Governor:**

- Maintained the average CPS caseload per worker by funding 87 additional FTEs (Full-Time Equivalent positions) in FY 2002 and 50 additional FTEs in FY 2003. [\$9.6 million].
- Maintained the current caseload per child care licensing worker (41 new FTEs) [\$2.3 million].
- Provided laptop computers and cellular phone reimbursement for CPS workers and supervisors so they can better coordinate service and provide instant access to vital information while in the field [\$3.5 million].
- Funded computer systems improvements to enhance access to case information over the web for staff and providers [\$5.8 million].
- Increased funding for foster care caseload growth and \$20.1 million to increase foster care reimbursement rates for families that open their homes to abused and neglected youth.
- Increased funding for adoption subsidy caseload growth and \$5.6 million to increase adoption subsidy payments for those families who adopt kids in PRS conservatorship permanently into their families.
- Provided targeted salary increases for CPS field staff [\$11.7 million].

- Included more funding to purchase foster day care to assist more working parents to serve as foster parents [\$3.4 million]
- Included budget riders (HHSC number 33 and TDH number 14) that require these agencies to ensure that all recipients of appropriated funds “show good-faith efforts to comply with all child abuse reporting guidelines and requirements set forth in Chapter 261 of the Texas Family Code.”

**Governor Perry also signed a series of laws in 2001 that will further assist in protecting children from abuse and neglect:**

- HB 706 [the “baby Moses” law] will provide parents considering abandoning their child with better options that focus on child safety
- SB 51 provides health care insurance (Medicaid) assistance to most foster care youth who age out of the system without other health care benefits until they turn 21
- SB 55 created a statewide infant mortality education program at the Texas Department of Health
- SB 875 requires that all health and human services agencies consider how to ensure that all policies and procedures encourage fathers’ participation in all appropriate programs that serve children and families
- SB 961 allows counties and municipalities to supplement the salaries of CPS staff in order to encourage retention of front-line staff
- SB 962 set up a pilot project to provide additional training to bring on more CPS caseworkers in areas where a shortage of workers exists
- SB 1064 clarified that when possible, TDPRS should place siblings together when making an adoptive placement

**Governor Perry and the First Lady support the statewide child abuse prevention campaign. The Governor has taken other steps to build awareness about the scope of child abuse and inspire action by all Texans.**

- The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) is sponsoring the third year of a statewide public awareness campaign under the theme of “It’s Up to You.” The campaign features English and Spanish language public service announcements. The web site [www.itsuptoyou.org](http://www.itsuptoyou.org) offers important information showing how parents (and all Texans) can become involved in preventing child abuse and neglect.
- Governor Perry declared April 2002 as Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month in Texas to highlight the responsibilities all Texans have to eliminate the scourge of child abuse. We must focus on ways to not only protect children from abusive environments, but also to prevent abuse from ever occurring. We can help protect the children in our neighborhoods, our communities and our state.

**The Governor’s Criminal Justice Division (CJD) has funded more than \$11 million to support more than 130 community-based initiatives designed to help stop child abuse and/or deal with its effects [between April 2001 and March 2002], including:**

- Supporting the National Fatherhood Initiative of Texas (NFIT) in its efforts to build public awareness of the tremendous value of involved fatherhood and to promote community and personal action. NFIT pursues these goals through a public service announcement campaign, by operating a Fatherhood Resource Center, by regional fatherhood forums, and by encouraging local fatherhood initiatives.
- Supporting the vital work of state and local CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) offices that advocate for abused and neglected children in the court system.

**In April 2002, the Governor kicked off the innovative “Texas Five Promises Checklist” available through the internet to match volunteers with opportunities to serve children in need.**

- The Governor said that “[t]he best way to cultivate our promise as a people is to invest in the lives of children in need.”
- The web site can be found through a link from the Texas Online web portal at [www.texasonline.state.tx.us/NASApp/amerpromise/AmerPromiseMgr](http://www.texasonline.state.tx.us/NASApp/amerpromise/AmerPromiseMgr).
- On the site, parents and other Texans can identify dozens of ways they can help in their own community that match their interests and skills.
- Texas developed the checklist and web site in conjunction with America’s Promise, the volunteer organization founded by Secretary of State Colin Powell.

**Child Abuse/Neglect Statistics in Texas**

	<b>FY 96</b>	<b>FY 97</b>	<b>FY 98</b>	<b>FY 99</b>	<b>FY 00</b>	<b>FY 01</b>
<b>CPS Investigations</b>	99,780	75,725	111,147	99,929	121,732	111,970
<b>Confirmed Cases</b>	27,489	22,582	29,766	26,265	30,698	28,224
<b>Confirmed Victims</b>	44,704	33,961	44,532	39,488	46,817	42,813
<b>Child Deaths due to abuse/neglect</b>		103	171	135	156	195