***CONGRATULATIONS***from the **Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards (TCCWB)** and the **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)!**

You have accepted the challenge from your County Commissioners Court to assist in meeting the needs of the children and families in your County who are or have been in a crisis situation. In order to be an effective board member, you will want to have an understanding of Child Protective Services (CPS), the needs of families served, and the role of a child welfare board (CWB). This knowledge will assist you in making informed decisions.

For more information about the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, go to: [***http://www-.tccwb.org***](http://www-.tccwb.org) For more information about CPS, go to: [***http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\_Protection***](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection) And, thank you for your interest and your dedication in serving the children of Texas!

***LOCAL CWB:***

Section 264.005 of the Texas Family Code provides for the appointment of county residents to a CWB by the County Commissioners Court. In some cases, with the approval of DFPS, two or more counties may establish a joint CWB. The CWB is a self-governing entity of the county and DFPS for the purposes of *"providing coordinated state and local public welfare services for children and their families, and coordinating the use of federal, state, and local funds for those services."* Since CWB members are appointed by their Commissioners Court, a CWB is also an extension of county government. Most every CWB is also a subject of the contract between the county and DFPS.

***APPOINTEES:***

The Commissioners Court and DFPS determine the size of each CWB and the qualification of its members. The law provides that a CWB be comprised of no less than seven (7) nor more than fifteen (15) members. At Commissioners Court discretion, a CWB may provide guidance to the Court concerning potential board candidates. All members are volunteers and may be removed by their Commissioners Court at any time. Members serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the fulfillment of their duties.

***OPEN GOVERNMENT TRAINING:***

Within 90 days of appointment, every CWB member is required to take and complete certification of Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act training through the Office of the Attorney General. Additional information may be obtained at: [***https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/governmental-bodies/pia-and-oma-training-resources***](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/governmental-bodies/pia-and-oma-training-resources)As a part of this training, you will understand the *requirements* regarding conducting your public business in a public forum, keeping records, and posting specific agenda notices of each meeting. Please take this requirement seriously, as violations may be punished as a Class B misdemeanor.

***CPS VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION:***

Each member should complete the following forms as a part of the DFPS volunteer registration process:

* Form C-105-0250, Volunteer Application and Background Check Authorization
* Confidentiality Statement (Form 251)

Copies of these forms are available in the TCCWB Operations Manual online or from your regional Community Initiatives Specialist (CIS).

In addition, members should be aware that they are entitled to shield from disclosure their home address, home telephone number, emergency contact information, social security number, or information that reveals the identity of family members. The privilege of this election is provided under Texas Government Code §552.024 and should be exercised within 14 days of each appointment.

***ANNUAL BACKGROUND CHECKS:***

CWB members are authorized to receive confidential consumer information and, at times, may come into contact with children and families receiving services from CPS. For this reason, it is highly recommended that each member authorize both criminal and social service system background checks prior to appointment by the Commissioners Court, and annually thereafter. It follows that even CWB members should be removed from contact with children and families when there are pending or confirmed allegations showing abuse, neglect, or exploitation against a child, an adult with disabilities, or an elderly person; a crime involving an offense against the family; public indecency; or violation of the Texas Controlled Substance Act. Evidence of an allegation/finding involving a CWB member should be reported decorously in writing to the Commissioners Court.

***MEMBERSHIP ROSTERS:***

Each CWB should assign the duty of maintaining a roster of current members. Upon a change in membership or contact information, the designated member will update the board roster and send copies to their DFPS CIS, their Regional Council Secretary, the Commissioners Court, and the TCCWB Secretary. This allows for appropriate and timely transfer of information.

***PARTICIPATION OF NON-MEMBERS:***

Individuals who are not CWB members may assist with planning, preparation, and implementation of CWB sponsored activities. However, non-members who have contact with children in care must also comply with the requirement of DFPS Volunteer Registration and background checks.

***NON-PROFIT STATUS:***

Although a CWB, as a governmental entity, is exempt from federal income taxation, its funds must be delivered to and administered by the proper county official, usually the County Auditor or Treasurer. A CWB may choose (with consent of the Commissioners Court) to create a separate State recognized non-profit or an IRC§501(c) (3) recognized non-profit entity to secure eligibility for certain donations and grants. If so, the CWB must ensure that it has conducted business as two separate entities. The meetings for each entity should be held separately, but they may be held consecutively; and, if the memberships of both groups are essentially the same, there is a similar agenda posting requirement for each. The CWB must keep separate minutes and financial records for each entity. Creation of a federally recognized dual identity financing organization will automatically trigger additional Secretary of State and annual IRS reporting requirements.

***ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS:***

An active and effective CWB possesses a clear sense of purpose and a strong organizational framework. Members are well-informed and able to commit the time required for CWB meetings and activities. It is recommended as helpful that each CWB have:

* A mission statement
* An annual goal setting meeting
* Bylaws (approved by the Commissioners Court)
* An annual budget
* A current roster of members
* Job descriptions for officers, members, and committees; and
* Timely orientation for new members

***JOB DESCRIPTIONS:***

The Texas Family Code mandates that, at a minimum, each CWB have a presiding officer. Other officers and their duties, as well as the responsibilities of the general membership are generally established in CWB bylaws.

**Chair/President**

The Chair/President generally oversees the CWB affairs and ensures the effectiveness of the CWB in completing its responsibilities. Duties may include:

* Developing meeting agendas
* Presiding over CWB meetings
* Appointing committee chairs and any needed special committees and/or liaisons
* Coordinating work and communications between committees
* Serving as CWB spokesperson and representative to the county, DFPS, and community
* Presenting the annual report, budget, and goals to the Commissioners Court; and
* Providing leadership to the CWB

**Vice- Chair/Vice –President**

The Vice-Chair/Vice-President typically assists the Chair/President as needed. Duties may include:

* In the absence of the Chair/President, performing all duties pertaining to such office
* Performing other duties as designated by the Chair/President and or bylaws; and
* As Chair/President Elect, preparing to be the CWB Chair/President

**Secretary**

The Secretary is the recording officer of CWB business. Duties may include:

* Posting a timely and sufficient agenda
* Recording the minutes for each CWB meeting
* Retaining an attendance record for each CWB meeting
* Reporting CWB volunteer activities and hours to other interested parties, including the Commissioners Court, CPS, regional council, and TCCWB

**Treasurer**

The Treasurer manages CWB financial activities. Duties may include:

* Reporting to CWB the status of all funds and assets
* Tracking and dispersing funds according to CWB policies and procedures
* Recording/tracking donations and providing reports; and
* Preparing for and assisting in any budgeting or audit

**Parliamentarian**

The Parliamentarian generally maintains order; ensures fairness to minorities, allowing all opinions to be voiced; and is the arbiter of proper parliamentary procedure

**Committees**

Each CWB determines if standing or *ad hoc* committees are needed to meet its needs. CWB bylaws should identify and govern all standing committees. Committees may include volunteer non-board members as needed. Examples of CWB committees include: Membership, Public Information, Hospitality, Awareness/Advocacy, Fundraising/Special Events, *etc.*

***CWB RESPONSIBILITIES:***

**To County Commissioners Court:**

Advocate for the needs of local children, including county budget items

Present periodic and annual reports about local CPS statistics and CWB activities.

**To Itself:**

Maintain a strong organization through selection of officers and committees, and an appropriate schedule of meetings

Set annual and long range goals for the CWB

Orient new members and provide continuing education for all CWB members

**To CPS Staff:**

Advise CPS staff on board policy and activities

Help CPS staff relate to your county residents and find support for their required actions; perhaps showing support to frontline workers through appreciation events

Make resources for children and families in crisis available to prevent removals and stabilize placements

Work toward recruiting local foster and adoptive parents

Participate in projects for foster children, foster parents, and adoptive parents

**To the Community:**

Educate your community on the special needs of abused, neglected, aged-out foster and homeless children; on child welfare policies and emerging issues; and on current CPS and related programs

Encourage community and individual involvement in child welfare matters, where appropriate

Identify local gaps in children's services and seek out resources to fill those gaps

Advocate for the immediate reporting of child abuse or neglect was well as the prevention of child abuse and neglect

***CWB MEETINGS:***

CWB meetings must be conducted according to the Open Meetings Act, Government Code Sec. 51. Any gathering that involves a majority of CWB members discussing or transacting public business is subject to the open meeting requirements in this statute. Telephone calls, conference calls, videoconferences, and email may also be subject to the open meetings requirement. EACH MEMBER MUST HAVE COMPLETED THE OPEN MEETINGS TRAINING which is available online at [*www.oag.state.tx.us*](http://www.oag.state.tx.us). Upon completion, you should file a copy with the County Clerk's office and send a copy to the Community Initiatives Specialist at DFPS.

**Frequency:**

Most CWB's have fixed meeting dates and usually meet monthly. CWB members must receive adequate notice of meetings.

**Agenda:**

Agendas and basic background material are sent to the full board membership, usually a week before the meeting. To comply with the Open Meetings Act, the time, date, location, and subject matter of the Meeting must be POSTED in a location accessible to the public at least 72 hours prior to the meeting time. Generally, the County Clerk posts the notice on a bulletin board convenient to the public at the county courthouse. (See example attached)

**Minutes:**

The Open Meetings Act requires that minutes or tape recordings be kept of all meetings. The minutes must include the subject of discussion and the outcome of any vote, order, decision, or other action taken.

Minutes of business conducted in open meetings are considered public records. Separate minutes or tape recordings are required for meetings that are closed for confidentiality reasons and business conducted as a non-profit 501(c) (3) entity.

**Closed Meetings:**

CWB meetings are generally open to the public, but a CWB may conduct a closed meeting under Government Code Sec. 551.101, to discuss, consider, or act on a matter that is confidential under Human Resources Code, Sec. 40.005, or Family Code Sec. 261.201. Information relating to the identity of a reporter of alleged abuse or neglect, a recipient of DFPS service, or an investigation DFPS conducts in performing its duties and responsibilities may not be disclosed in an open meeting. When conducting a closed meeting, the CWB must first convene an open meeting and identify the statutory authority that allows them to go into a closed meeting.

Confidential information may sometimes need to be shared during a CWB meeting in order that members can make an informed decision regarding expenditures. If confidential information is to be shared during a meeting the following steps are taken:

* The board announces it is going into a closed session and invites guests and non-voting members to step out of the room.
* The board receives the confidential information needed to take action.
* After the information is given, the board goes back into open session to vote on a motion regarding the situation.
* The board will word the motion in such a way as not to breach confidentiality.

**The full name of a child or family served by DFPS is NOT to be used in CWB documents that are subject to the Open Meetings Act or in documents that may be viewed by others who do not have the legal right to view the confidential information.**

***DONATED FUNDS, GOODS, AND SERVICES:***

If a CWB sponsors a Rainbow Room, the board must adhere to DFPS's guidelines when providing resources and support for the children and families they serve. An inventory log must be kept, recording donated items received, date received and the donor's name. An inventory log must also be kept for items when removed from the Rainbow Room indicating the case number, client's name, caseworker's name, and a full account of items that were given to the child/family. If Gift Cards are available to workers to shop for specific items for a specific family, then the CWB should have a tracking procedure, showing a record of the receipts after the purchases are made.

***CWB FINANCES:***

**Income Tax Reporting:**

A CWB that does not have nonprofit 501(c)(3) status is not required to file an annual report with the Internal Revenue Service even if the CWB has received charitable donations during the year. As an affiliate of a governmental unit, a CWB is exempt from filing a Form 990.

For tax periods beginning after December 31, 2006, all 501(c)(3) organizations **ARE** required to file an annual report with the IRS. The type of report depends upon the organization's gross receipts in the tax year.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If gross receipts are normally:** | **Then, the organization is required to file:** |
| $25,000 or less, | Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations not Required File Form 990 or 990-EZ |
| Greater than $25,000 but less than $100,000 or total assets at the end of the year are less than $250,000, | Form 990-EZ |
| Greater than or equal to $100,000 or total assets are greater than or equal to $250,000 | Form 990. |

You can access Forms and filing deadlines for filing requirements on the IRS website at [www.irs.gov/charities](http://www.irs.gov/charities.) (Always consult your board's tax accountant.)

***SUGGESTED FUNDING SOURCES:***

A CWB may receive funding from several sources:

* County general funds
* County juror donations
* County Title IV-E match revenues
* Municipal funds
* School district funds
* TCCWB specialty license plate fees (see [www.tccwb.org](http://www.tccwb.org))
* CWB fundraisers and donations, and
* Corporation or foundation grants

At the county's discretion, county funds may be provided, usually for the care of children in DFPS conservatorship who are not eligible for Title IV-E foster care, state-paid foster care, or Medicaid, and for medical care not covered by Medicaid.

***SUGGESTED CWB PROJECTS***

**Education Projects:**

* Operate information booths for county fairs and other community events
* Arrange public service billboards which support reporting child abuse and neglect or the recruiting of foster and adoptive parents
* Distribute bumper stickers, posters, and other items encouraging the reporting of child abuse and neglect as well as the prevention of child abuse and neglect
* Hold seminars for the public and foster parents on learning or improving parenting skills
* Arrange presentations to school students on all phases and forms of child abuse
* Furnish church bulletin inserts on foster parent recruitment, unmet local needs, and/or awareness of abuse and neglect
* Furnish bank statement or utility company inserts on issues related to child abuse and neglect

**Fundraising Projects:**

* Organize and sell tickets to events such as a pancake supper, hamburger fry, casino night, tennis/golf/frisbee tournament, purse bingo, authorized raffle, talent show, community circus, street dance, style show, or musical revue. Be creative – get sponsors – have fun!
* Request United Way or similar community chest funding
* Obtain contributions for participants in outdoor events such as a walk-a-thon, weight-a-thon, rock-a-thon, or fun run with Holi festival gulal powder balls
* Ask churches to set aside a special Sunday collection day each year, or each quarter, to support your Rainbow Room needs

**Appreciation Projects:**

* Arrange a foster parent appreciation and awards banquet
* Send letters of appreciation to the County Commissioners Court, CPS judges, juvenile judges, CPS caseworkers, police, and other officials who affect child welfare
* Host a luncheon for prospective donors such as businesses, community groups, individuals, and churches
* Host a reception on Adoption Day
* Host a luncheon for a graduating foster child or children

**Holiday Projects:**

* Obtain merchant and citizen donations for an "empty stocking" Christmas program
* Arrange Easter or Hanukkah baskets for foster children
* Invite civic, religious, and school groups to purchase gifts for foster children

**Miscellaneous Projects:**

* Hold picnics to raise awareness and recruit new board members
* Sponsor foster or at-risk children at day camp or summer camp
* Send birthday cards and gifts to foster children
* Arrange Sunday School class projects supporting the Rainbow Room

*SAMPLE OPEN MEETING AGENDA*

**COUNTY CHILD WELFARE BOARD MEETING NOTICE** *(EXAMPLE)*

The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County Child Welfare Board will hold a regular meeting on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_, at o’clock \_\_\_. m. in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Room of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Texas

**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Quorum Determination
3. Public Comment/Information from the Community
4. Approval of Minutes of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ meeting
5. Approval of Financials
6. Committee Reports
7. Officer Reports
8. Child Protective Services Report (closed session)
9. CPS Report on children in conservatorship
10. County cases, investigations, etc.

(*Return to Open Session*)

*Action required, if necessary, following Executive Session*

c. CPS funding requests

9. Unfinished business (*list any tabled items*)

10. New Business (*list new items with identifiable specifics*)

11. Adjourn

[This body is subject to the Texas Open Government laws. Under these laws, however, the Board may, at appropriate times, convene in executive or closed sessions pursuant to Texas Government Code §§ 551.071 (consultation with attorney), 551.072 (deliberation regarding real property), 551.073 (deliberation regarding prospective gift), 551.074 (personnel matters), 551.075 (conference with employees), 551.076 (deliberation regarding security devices), or 551.078 (Medical Board or committee);

and/or under the Texas Human Resources Code §§40.005 or 261.201 (CPS confidential data).]

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify the above notice of meeting is a true and correct copy of said notice, and that said notice will be posted on the courthouse door of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County, Texas, at \_\_\_: \_\_\_\_ \_\_. m on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_ and said notice will remain posted for at least 72 hours preceding the scheduled time of said meeting.

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 County Clerk

 By \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Deputy

***REGIONAL COUNCILS***

Regional Councils are non-governmental entities (not subject to Open Government rules), which are typically comprised of a limited number of delegates from each active CWB in the DFPS region. Regional Councils advocate for the welfare of children and assist each local CWB in achieving its goals. Regional Councils usually schedule trainings open to all CWB members and provide promotional materials to a CWB which participates in Regional Council activities. They are usually IRC§501(c)(3) entities governed by bylaws, with their own officers elected and committees appointed as needed. Regional Councils operate according to each region's needs and wishes. Active Regional Councils may elect to send two or three delegates to meeting of the TCCWB. Under contracts with DFPS, and upon election of the region, delegates may be entitled to reimbursement for their travel expenses, but typically delegates are reimbursed by the TCCWB under its performance contract.

Duties of Delegates to a Regional Council may include:

* Serving as a liaison between the Regional Council and the local CWB by reporting the local board's activities and concerns and relaying information obtained at Regional Council meetings back to the local CWB.
* Educating oneself and one's local CWB on child abuse and neglect and on available resources for prevention, intervention, and treatment.
* Attending regional meetings regularly and actively participating in the Regional Council's committees and activities.

***TEXAS COUNCIL OF CHILD WELFARE BOARDS, INC.***

The TCCWB represents local CWB’s through its membership of approximately 30 representatives from the eleven Regional Councils. TCCWB officers and members advocate for children through encouraging legislation to provide services to abused and neglected children and to prevent child abuse, working with CPS staff on programs that meet children's needs, and by networking with other agencies and organization to provide the best care for abused and neglected children, while at the same time, striving to prevent such abuse and neglect through public awareness and joint cooperation.

The TCCWB meets in person or electronically, as required. Action on the Council is currently accomplished through the work of four committees: Education, Advocacy, Awards, and Resources.

* Education — seeks to keep the local CWB informed on ways to educate their members and communities on child abuse and neglect [It has produced this training manual and is open to other training suggestions.]
* Advocacy — as a grass roots organization, the committee identifies, interprets, and recommends for support by the TCCWB membership and other allied groups, timely legislative initiatives that support its mission and vision for local, state, and national officials, Regional Councils, and local volunteers.
* Awards — as part of its effort to raise awareness, the TCCWB holds an annual awards event recognizing the efforts of outstanding volunteers, CPS staff, foster parents, foster youth, legislators, and/or businesses who have been nominated for recognition and approved by a local CWB.
* Resources — the funding needs of the Texas Council are met through DFPS agency support and through continuing appeals, grants, and proposals which focus on raising funds to meet Council objectives. Currently, a special sub-committee project is advancing the cause of Fostering Brighter Futures (FBF). It is clear that public perception is strongly influenced by images in the news, on television, and at the movies; and negative images stigmatize both foster children and foster parents. The FBF initiative is to shares positive stories and statistics of children in foster care in order to improve the image of the foster care system in Texas. This committee also compiles a list of recommended advertising firms and items geared to supporting local and regional board activities.

**REGIONAL COUNCILS**



There are Eleven DFPS Regions based upon county boundaries and Region 12 is the State Offices of DFPS

**Important Websites, e-Mail Contacts, and Hotlines**

**WEBSITES**:

Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards www.tccwb.org

Fostering Brighter [Futures www.fbfutures.org](http://FUTURES-FBFutures.org)

Texas Department of Family &

 Protective Services (DFPS) [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

Child Protective Services (CPS)

 Community Engagement Staff

 <http://intranet.dfps.state.tx.us/CPS/Regional/community.asp>

Training on Reporting Abuse

 <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting/default/asp>

OAG Open Government Training [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)

Reporting Abuse [www.reportabusehotline.org](http://www.reportabusehotline.org)

Texas Network of Youth Services (TNOYS) [www.tnoys.org](http://www.tnoys.org)

TexProtects / PCAT [www.texprotects.org](http://www.texprotects.org)

**E-MAILS**:

TCCWB Executive Director,

 George Ford gford@tccwb.org

CPS Community Affairs Liaison,

 Valinda Bolton valinda.bolton@dfps.state.tx.us

Regional Directors *See List following Contacts List*

**HOTLINE**:

Reporting Adult & Child Abuse: [1-800-252-5400](http://www.cass.com)