Position Statement Approved by One Voice Texas: December 10, 2014

Issue/Concern:
Evidence-based prevention services strengthen families, ensuring that parents and children stay together and out of costly systems such as children’s protective services, outpatient and inpatient substance abuse and mental health facilities, homeless or family violence shelters, and juvenile detention or adult prison facilities. Currently, Texas prevention programs are fragmented and buried under disparate state agencies. This structural disconnection creates barriers to providing existing resources most efficiently to the highest-need populations. The fragmented system inhibits the ability to effectively keep children and families safe, well-functioning, and together as a unit. A new model for prevention presents the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive delivery system that strengthens families, reduces costly redundant overhead, and improves outcomes.

Specific Policy Recommendations:
• Establish a Prevention and Family Strengthening (PFS) unit under the Health and Human Services Commission;
• Merge three prevention programs (recommended for move under DFPS) and two other prevention programs into one program under PFS: (HHSC’s Texas Home Visiting Program and Nurse-Family Partnership; DFPS’s Prevention and Early Intervention Unit; DSHS PPI and PADRE programs; HHSC’s and the Attorney General’s (AG) family violence prevention programs; TOPDD fetal alcohol prevention and injury prevention programs);
• Designate the following as PFS responsibilities:
  o Coordinating the development, funding and evaluation of this unit;
  o Merging IT systems to create seamless referral and communications for a coordinated service delivery system;
  o Developing a coordinated state strategic plan;
  o Establishing coordinated intake, measurement, outcomes and data collection and analysis.

What Can Be Accomplished?
Consolidating the various prevention services will ensure that Texas provides efficient and effective services that save money and prevents families from going into more costly systems including child protective services and juvenile justice.

How Will This Impact State Funding?
By consolidating these programs, Texas will increase the probability of drawing down additional federal funding, will reduce duplicative overhead costs and will save money on more costly systems such as foster care, inpatient treatment and prison.

Supporting Facts/Research Resources:
✓ 2013 DFPS Databook available at: https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Books_and_Annual_Reports/2013/cps.asp

Contact:
Katherine Barillas, Ph.D.
Director of Child Welfare Policy
One Voice Texas
(713) 480-3937 / kbarillas@onevoicetexas.org