

Exhibit I: Statement of Work



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

**DFPS STATEMENT OF WORK
FOR
RURAL COMMUNITY-BASED CARE (CBC) PILOT PROGRAM**

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ARTICLE I: DEFINITIONS

As used in this Agreement, the following terms and conditions have the meanings assigned below:

Adoptive Placement: Begins when a Child is placed with an adoptive Family and includes post-placement supervision and assistance in completing the adoption consummation process. It ends when the adoption is consummated, and the case is closed.

Affinity: Related by marriage, as set forth in Texas Government Code §573.024.

Alternative Caregiver: A person who is not the foster parent of the Child and who provides temporary care for the Child for more than twelve (12) hours but less than sixty (60) days.

At-Risk Youth (Trafficked): Youth in DFPS conservatorship who have indicators of trafficking according to the CSE-IT or worker suspicion are At-Risk of being trafficked. These Youth are not currently missing and are not on current runaway status but do exhibit behaviors that exposed them to the dangers of being trafficked and are likely to be experiencing trafficking.

Authorized Service Level (ASL): A Basic, Moderate, Specialized, or Intense service level determined by the third-party Contractor or, a Basic service level determined by the DFPS Caseworker and supervisor in the Legacy System.

Awaiting Adoption: A Child who is legally free for adoption; the Child's Permanency Goal is Adoption; and the Child is not in an Adoptive Placement or own home placement.

Billing Service Level (BSL): Determined by the third-party Contractor or DFPS; establishes the reimbursement rate to a Childcare facility in the Legacy System.

Blended Foster Care Rate: Foster Care rate paid to the Lead Entity for each day of service provided to a Child or Youth in paid Foster Care, equal to the weighted average rate paid across all placement types.

Capacity Sharing: the statewide process of non-CBC and CBC catchment areas to be used as placement options by a Lead Entity or DFPS in any Designated Community Area if a Child in Foster Care is best served by placement into that Designated Community Area.

Care Coordination Teams (CCT) - A CCT is made up of professional organizations in a local rural community who provide services or who investigate and prosecute Trafficking cases. A CCT provides Child Youth victims of sex trafficking with a continuum of care. In most communities across Texas, Children's Advocacy Centers lead the CCT development process and serve as the local Care Coordinator.

Caregiver: A Caregiver is a person, including an employee, foster parent, contract service provider, or volunteer, whose day-to-day responsibilities include direct care, supervision, guidance, and protection of a Child/Youth in care. This includes employees and contract staff who provide twenty-four (24) hour awake night supervision. Generally, and in furtherance of a Child/Youth having as normal of a life experience as

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possible while in Substitute Care, “Caregiver” does not include individuals who are not routinely responsible for direct care, supervision, guidance, and protection of a Child/Youth in care, such as school personnel, mentors, tutors, and chaperones. Instead, determining what information to provide an adult involved with a Child/Youth’s normalcy activity (e.g., extra-curricular activity, part-time job, church activities, school field trip, visit to friend’s house) must be considered on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the confidential nature of the information and the need to balance the Child/Youth’s privacy concerns. Depending on the history, age of the Child/Youth, and situation in which the Child/Youth may be when engaging in a normalcy activity, the involved adult may not need to know of the Child/Youth’s history, for example a tutor periodically at the Child/Youth’s placement or an adult chaperone on a school field trip.

Case Information: Case information is all abuse and neglect records, including records relating to reports, investigations, legal actions, and the provision of services to adults, Children, and families.

Case Management: In accordance with [Texas Family Code Section 264.152](#), provision of Case Management services to a Child for whom the department has been appointed Temporary Managing Conservator or Permanent Managing Conservator or to the Child’s Family, a Young Adult in Extended Foster Care , a relative or Kinship Caregiver, or a Child who has been placed in the Designated Community Area through Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, and includes, but is not limited to:

1. Caseworker visits with the Child, Family, and Caregivers;
2. Convening and conducting Permanency Planning meetings;
3. Development and revision of Child and Family plans of service, including a permanency plan and goals for a Child or Young Adult in care;
4. Coordination and monitoring of services required by the Child & the Child’s Family;
5. Assumption of court-related duties regarding the Child; and
6. Any other function or service that the department determines necessary to allow a Lead Entity to assume responsibility for Case Management.

Case Management Conflict of Interest: Any situation where an individual’s official duties with the Lead Entity to move Children and Youth from Substitute Care to permanency under this contract could be reasonably perceived as conflicting with the Lead Entity financial interests to an extent where it could impair the individual’s judgement when trying to determine the proper course of action.

Casey Life Skills Assessment: An assessment of a Youth’s independent living skills designed to be completed by both the Youth and the Caregiver. The Youth and Caregiver results are combined into a report which provides an indication of the skill level and readiness of the Youth to live independently and creates the opportunity for the Caregiver and Youth to talk about the Youth’s strengths and challenges.

Caseworker: A DFPS or Lead Entity employee who provides Case Management services to Children and Youth in Substitute Care under the conservatorship of the State.

Caseworker Turnover: Regular full- and part-time Lead Entity Caseworkers who voluntarily and involuntarily separate from the Lead Entity agency during the fiscal year.

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Catchment Area: A geographic service area for providing child protective services that is identified as part of Community-Based care.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment (CANS): A type of comprehensive and developmentally appropriate Child welfare assessment required by [Texas Family Code §266.012](#). It is a multi-purpose tool that links the assessment and Service Planning process with the goal of improving permanency, safety, and improved quality of life.

Child Full Time Equivalent (Child FTE): The number of days of care provided divided by the number of days in the fiscal year.

Child(ren)/Youth: An eligible person(s) who is referred by DFPS to the Lead Entity for services under this Contract from birth through the end of the month in which the individual turns twenty-two (22) years of age.

Children/Youth in DFPS Legal Responsibility: All Children for whom a court has appointed DFPS legal responsibility through temporary or permanent managing conservatorship or other court ordered legal basis. DFPS legal responsibility terminates upon court order or when a Youth turns eighteen (18), whichever comes first.

Child-Care Services: Services that meet a Child or Youth's basic need for shelter, nutrition, clothing, nurture, socialization and interpersonal skills, care for personal health and hygiene, supervision, education, and Service Planning.

Child Placing Agency: A person, including an organization, other than the natural parents or guardian of a Child who plans for the placement of or places a Child in a Child-care facility, agency foster home, agency group home, or adoptive home.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Identification Tool (CSE-IT): A validated screening tool to aid in accurately detecting sexual exploitation.

Community-Based Care (CBC): The provision of child welfare services in accordance with state and federal child welfare goals by a Community-Based nonprofit or local governmental entity under the Pilot Program.

Confidential Information: Personally Identifiable Information (PII), Protected Health Information (PHI), Case Information, Criminal History Record Information (CHRI), or Sensitive Personal Information.

Consanguinity: Two individuals are related to each other by consanguinity if one is a descendant of the other, or they share a common ancestor. An adopted child is related by consanguinity for this purpose. Consanguinity is defined in Texas Government Code §573.022.

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Consortium: A group of providers who propose to jointly develop and implement a Single Source Continuum Contract proposal with different providers responsible for different parts of the proposal and resulting network. DFPS will only contract with one of the providers of a Consortium who will be directly responsible to DFPS for all services and performance outcomes under the Lead Entity Contract. DFPS will also contract with a separate business entity formed by Consortia that all members have an ownership interest in.

Contract: A promise or a set of promises, for breach of which the law gives a remedy, or the performance of which the law in some way recognizes as a duty. It is an agreement between two or more parties creating obligations that are enforceable or otherwise recognizable at law. The term also encompasses the written document that describes the terms of the agreement. For state contracting purposes, it generally describes the terms of the purchase of goods or services from a vendor or service provider.

Contracting Conflict of Interest: when an employee, acting in the employee's official capacity with their employer, participates in or makes a decision that impacts upon or could reasonably be perceived as having a substantial impact upon the employee's own personal or financial interests or those of certain other persons such as the employee's spouse, minor Child, general partner, or an organization in which the employee serves as an officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee, or a person with whom the employee is negotiating for or has an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Contractor: A person, including an organization, who is awarded a Contract pursuant to this solicitation.

Criminal History Record Information (CHRI): is arrest-based data and any derivative information from that record, such as descriptive data, FBI number, conviction status, sentencing data, incarceration, and probation and parole information.

Decision Memo: A document submitted to DFPS, completed by the Lead Entity when a Child requires Treatment services as defined below.

Deliverable: A unit or increment of work required by the Contract, including such items as services, reports, or documents.

Designated Community Area (DCA): A geographic area (also known as catchment area) for providing Child protective services that is identified as part of Community-Based Care. The designated area in which the Lead Entity will provide all services described in this Contract. The Lead Entity will be responsible for ensuring services described in this Contract for all eligible Children and their families who are from the agreed to geographic area.

Designated Victim: A Child determined as such by an investigation resulting in a disposition of Reason to Believe (RTB).

eCANS: The eCANS portal is an online system that will be able to house CANS assessment results, deliver a suite of reports containing aggregate data, and provide system functionality that ties Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) and DFPS efforts together.

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Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program: A federally funded (Chafee) and state-administered program. Under this program, Youth, and Young Adults ages sixteen (16) to twenty-three (23) years old may be eligible for up to \$5,000.00 financial assistance per year to help them reach their post-secondary educational goals.

Education Portfolio: The updated and maintained separate education binder that contains important school documents and is designed to follow school-age Children and Youth to each placement. This allows for the review of the most current educational records and documentation by school officials, residential child-care Contractors, foster parents, Family Caregivers, Children, and Youth.

Eligible Rural Region: A Catchment area for which the department requested but did not receive bids, proposals, or other applicable expressions of interest to implement Community-Based care under [Subchapter B-2 of Chapter 264 of the Family Code](#) in which at least two-thirds of the counties comprising the area have a population of 50,000 or less.

Emergency Behavior Intervention (EBI): An intervention used in an emergency situation, including personal restraint, mechanical restraint, emergency medication, or seclusion.

Exceptional Care Utilization Management (ECUM): The process and justification for authorizing the use of exceptional care days.

Exceptional Foster Care Rate: Based on a pro forma approach which involves using historical state costs of delivering similar services, where appropriate data are available, and estimating the basic types and costs of products and services necessary to deliver services meeting federal and state requirements.

Experiential Life Skills Activities: Activities which engage Children and Youth in learning new skills, attitudes, and ways of thinking through hands-on learning opportunities [Experiential Life Skills Activities](#) is tailored to the Child or Youth's skills and abilities and may include training in practical activities that include grocery shopping, meal preparation and cooking, using public transportation, performing basic household tasks, balancing a checkbook, and managing personal finances.

Extended Foster Care: A program for Young Adults ages eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years old that are eligible and have signed an agreement to participate in this program. A Young Adult who turns 18 years of age while in the conservatorship of DFPS who is continuing to receive Extended Foster Care services is eligible for services through the end of the month in which the Young Adult reaches the age limit referenced in below in numbers one (1) through six (6). There must be sufficient documentation provided on a periodic basis as required by the terms of the Young Adult's Extended Foster Care Agreement to demonstrate that the Youth or Young Adult is:

1. Regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or GED up to the Youth or Young Adult's 22nd birthday;
2. Regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday. These can remain in care to complete vocational-technical training classes regardless of whether or not the Youth or Young Adult has received a high school diploma or GED certificate;

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3. Actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to employment up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday;
4. Employed for at least 80 hours per month up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday;
5. Incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday; or
6. Accepted for admission to a college, or vocational program that does not begin immediately. In this case, the Youth or Young Adult's eligibility is extended three and a half months after the end of the month in which the Youth or Young Adult receives his/her high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) certificate.

Face-to-Face Contact: An in-person, (at least) monthly meeting or visit that is well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the Child/Youth and do not require video conferencing or similar technology. Frequency of face-to-face visits is based on the needs of Child(ren) or circumstances of case situation. Quality of visits with Child(ren), include alone time with (each) Child for at least part of every visit, with most visits being at the Child's placement/residence.

Family: Parents or other relatives (including fictive kin) of Children in DFPS conservatorship who are referred by DFPS to the Lead Entity for services.

Family Preservation Services: means time-limited, family-focused services [service], including services [a service] subject to the Family First Prevention Services Act (Title VII, Div. E, Pub. L. No.A115-123) and services approved under the Title IV-E state plan provided to the family of a child who is:

- (A) a candidate for foster care to prevent or eliminate the need to remove the child and to allow the child to remain safely with the child 's family;
- (B)a pregnant or parenting foster youth; or
- (C) a member of a household that is subject to an order rendered under Texas Family Code Section 264.203.

See [Texas Family Code §262. 401](#)

Fictive Kin: An individual who has a longstanding and significant relationship with a Child in DFPS conservatorship, or with the Child's Family and provides, or is anticipated to provide, care to the Child.

Financial Literacy Education Program: Education, training and experiential support that includes:

1. Obtaining and interpreting a credit score;
2. Protecting, repairing, and improving a credit score;
3. Avoiding predatory lending practices;
4. Saving money and accomplishing financial goals through prudent financial management practices;
5. Using basic banking and accounting skills, including balancing a checkbook;
6. Using debit and credit cards responsibly;
7. Understanding a paycheck and items withheld from a paycheck; and

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8. Protecting financial, credit, and identifying information in personal and professional relationships.

Form 2054: DFPS Form which initiates invoicing process and contains, at a minimum the following information:

1. Name of the Contractor and Contract number;
2. Service Code;
3. Names of client or Family members who are to receive services;
4. Types services requested;
5. Number of units for each service requested; and
6. Time limit for the service.

Foster Care: A placement paid by DFPS or other public facility. Placements include foster homes, TEP, IPSP, QRTP and GRO including basic Childcare facilities, those offering multiple services, RTC, shelters, treatment Family Foster Care, and Supervised Independent Living (SIL). This is a subset of Children in Substitute Care.

Foster Care Case Rate: For purposes of the Contract, this references the average length of stay for Children and Youth in paid Foster Care in the Designated Community Area.

Foster Family Home: An independent licensed operation or a home under the regulation of a child-placing agency that is the primary residence of the foster parents and provides residential child care for six or fewer children up to the age of 22 years.

Full Continuum of Care: An array of least restrictive, most-family like placement services that meet the residential and treatment service needs of all Children and Youth in the care of a Contractor.

General Residential Operation (GRO): A child-care facility that is licensed to provide care for at least thirteen (13) or more Children for twenty-four (24) hours a day, including facilities known as Children's homes, Residential Treatment Centers, and emergency shelters.

Graduated Case Load: Policy that caseload's managed by a Caseworker start at a minimum threshold and correspondingly increase with greater tenure and experience.

High Risk Youth (Trafficked): Youth in DFPS Conservatorship who are in missing or on runaway status are considered to be at High Risk for Human Trafficking because they are exposed to perpetrators when they are missing or have run away.

Human Trafficking Advocate Agency (HTAA): An entity that provides Child Sex Trafficking Advocates who are specifically trained to offer a variety of services to victims of sex trafficking. Advocates may provide support in crisis intervention, ongoing Case Management, and healthy, supportive long-term relationships for survivors. HTAA includes Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Advocate Agencies.

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IMPACT: Information Management Protecting Adults and Children in Texas, a computer application used by DFPS staff for Case Management and serves as the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

Initial Coordination Meeting (ICM): Convened by DFPS and held within seven (7) days of referral to the Lead Entity for placement and/or services to a Child or Youth and/or Family. Purpose of the ICM is to review Child or Youth/Family's history and identify service needs to be included in the Child or Youth and/or Family plan(s) of service.

Intensive Psychiatric Stabilization Program (IPSP): is a time limited program in a psychiatric hospital that assists Children in DFPS conservatorship who have a history of placement instability due to psychiatric hospitalizations. The goal of this program is to stabilize and transition the Child or Youth to a less restrictive setting or divert them from hospitalization. Children are often placed in acute psychiatric hospitals or other psychiatric inpatient settings to stabilize serious mental health disturbances that pose a risk of harm to themselves or others. There is an option for the Child/Youth to exit the program early if they have successfully completed it and met their treatment goals. The program's typical length of stay is ninety (90) days.

Intermittent Alternate Care: A planned alternative twenty-four (24) hour care provided for a Child or Youth by a licensed Child-Placing Agency or independent Foster Family Home as part of the agency or home's regulated Childcare and that lasts more than seventy-two (72) consecutive hours.

Kinship Care: Relatives or other people known as "Fictive Kin" who have a significant relationship with the Child or the Child's Family, such as a godparent or Family friend, and provide residential care for a Child.

Kinship Caregiver: A Kinship Caregiver:

(A) Is a person counted in the child/caregiver ratio for kinship foster care services, including employees, kinship foster parents, contract service providers, and volunteers whose duties include direct care, supervision, guidance, and protection of a kinship foster child, including any person who is solely responsible for a kinship foster child; a child placement staff taking a kinship foster child on an appointment or doctor's visit is an example of a kinship caregiver; and

(B) Does not include a babysitter, an overnight care provider, or a respite child-care provider unless the person is:

- (i) A verified kinship foster parent;
- (ii) An agency employee;
- (iii) A contract service provider; or
- (iv) A volunteer.

Kinship Foster Child: A child in the care of a kinship foster home who:

(A) Is related to the kinship foster parents by consanguinity or affinity; or

(B) Has, or whose family has a longstanding and significant relationship with the kinship foster parent.

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Kinship Foster Home: A foster family home that has a kinship foster parent or parents.

Kinship Payment: A part of the Relative or Other Designated Caregiver Program, a monthly payment per Child of up to half of the daily basic Foster Care reimbursement rate paid directly to eligible Kinship Caregivers with a household income that is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. The kinship payment is based on legislative appropriation. Other eligibility criteria and rules apply. See [Texas Family Code §264.755](#).

Kinship Placement: Placement of a Child for whom the Department has been appointed Temporary Managing Conservator, Joint Temporary Managing Conservator or Permanent Managing Conservator with a Kinship Caregiver, including relatives or Fictive Kin. A Kinship Caregiver may also be verified as a foster parent to provide residential care in accordance with Childcare licensing and through a licensed Child Placing Agency.

Kinship Foster Home Verification: A verification for a kinship foster home. A kinship foster home must meet certain requirements for a non-expiring foster home verification, as provided in this subchapter, and may only care for kinship foster children.

Kinship Foster Parent: A foster parent who:

- (A) Is related to a foster child by Consanguinity or Affinity;
- (B) Has a longstanding and significant relationship with a foster child or the child's family before the child is placed; or
- (C) Is the spouse of a foster parent who has a longstanding and significant relationship with the foster child or the foster child's family.

Lead Entity: A nonprofit entity that has a board of directors composed of residents of the catchment area or a local government entity selected under [Family Code Section 264.183](#), who, in partnership with DFPS, shall develop and implement a Rural Community-Based Care Pilot in an eligible rural region. Pilot in an eligible rural region.

Least Restrictive Placement: Most family-like setting (e.g., parent or legal Family of origin, non-custodial parent, Kinship Care, Foster Family Home, adoptive home, or cottage-style GRO) based on the Child's or Youth's individual needs.

Legacy System: Foster care system where DFPS delivers placement, Case Management and Purchased Client Services to Children, Youth and Family members and utilizes the service level system (please note that beginning in 2025, it is anticipated that all Children will begin to transition to the Texas Child Center Care System as the method in which to pay for residential services for Children and Youth in DFPS conservatorship or who voluntarily agree to remain in care. Additional information regarding T3C can be found at: [DFPS - Texas Child-Centered Care](#)

Level(s) of Need: Array of services (including both licensed Childcare and Treatment Services) required by an individual Child who resides in Substitute Care, and are designed to support the achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being.

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Legal Conservator: Also known as the managing conservator, is an entity responsible (either temporarily or permanently) for a Child or Youth as the result of a district court order as described by [Texas Family Code 153.074](#).

Luggage: A suitcase, duffel bag, backpack, or similar container designed to hold an individual's personal belongings as described by [Texas Family Code §264.1078](#).

Material Subcontractor: Any subcontractor who performs all or a portion of program component services (direct services) procured by DFPS in this solicitation. Subcontractors who perform indirect services which incidentally support program component services are not material subcontractors.

Minimum Standards: HHSC standards to protect the health, safety, and well-being of Children and Youth. HHSC provides publications that contain the Minimum Standards and guidelines for compliance for each type of operation.

National Youth in Transition Database: The data collection system developed by the [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#) to track the independent living services provided to Children and Youth and to develop outcomes that measure the States' performance in preparing Children and Youth for their transition from Foster Care to independent living. More information is available at: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/txYouth/NYTD/default.asp>.

No eject/no reject: Contract requirement that a Contractor may not refuse to accept a properly referred client for services under this Contract nor may a Contractor cease to serve, or request DFPS remove, an eligible Child, Youth, or Family from its referred client list.

Office of Community-Based Care Transition. SB1896 of the 87th Regular Texas Legislative Session established the Office of Community-Based Care Transition (OCBCT), which is administratively attached to DFPS, but whose Director independently reports to the Governor.

Outcome: A measure that reflects or reveals change or impact.

Performance-Based Contract: A Contract that ties payment, financial incentives, and remedies to performance.

Permanency Care Assistance (PCA): The Permanency Care Assistance program gives financial support to eligible Kinship Caregivers who want to provide a permanent home by assuming permanent managing conservatorship of eligible Children who can't be reunited with their parents.

Permanency Goal: The Department's permanency goals are subcategories of the four goals identified by the [Texas Family Code §263.3026](#). The categories are as follows:

1. Family Reunification;
2. Adoption by a relative or suitable individual (Relative Adoption or Unrelated Adoption);

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3. Permanent Managing Conservatorship to a relative or suitable individual (Relative Conservatorship or Unrelated Conservatorship); and
4. Another planned permanent living arrangement (Foster Family - DFPS Conservatorship, Other Family DFPS Conservatorship, Independent Living or Community Care).

Permanency Planning: The identification of services for a Child or Youth (and usually to the Child or Youth's Family), the specification of the steps to be taken and the time frames for taking those steps to achieve the following goals:

1. A safe and permanent living situation for the Child or Youth;
2. A committed Family for the Child or Youth;
3. An enduring and nurturing Family relationship that can meet the Child or Youth's needs;
4. A sense of security for the Child or Youth; and
5. A legal status for the Child or Youth that protects the rights of the Child or Youth.

For more information please see: [Texas Family Code §263.3025 and 40 TAC §700.1201](#)

Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC): When a court orders DFPS PMC of a Child, it can be either with a Child's parental rights terminated or parental rights intact. The rights and duties of DFPS and the Lead Entity are generally the same as with TMC.

Person Identification Number (PIDs): a number used in DFPS systems that is unique to a person to identify who the person is without a name.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII): Any information that can be used alone or in conjunction with any other personal information to identify a specific individual. PII includes any information that can be used to search for or identify individuals or can be used to access their records. Examples include name, SSN, DOB, Social Security benefit data, and state or government issued driver's license number.

Pilot Program/Region 9 CBC Pilot Program: A rural Community-Based Care Pilot as described under Subchapter B-2 of Chapter 264 of the Family Code.

Placement Change: Any change in placement location except for temporary breaks in service as further defined in the Contract.

Possessory Conservator: A court-ordered appointment that specifies the right to possess and have access to a Child or Youth as described by [Texas Family Code Section §153.316](#)

Preparation for Adult Living (PAL): The Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) program prepares Youth for adult life when they leave Foster Care. The program provides services, benefits, resources, and supports to help Youth become healthy, productive adults. The program makes efforts to connect Youth to rural community resources they will need in their transition to successful adulthood. Services and benefits may include:

1. Casey Life Skills Assessment to assess strengths and needs in life skills;

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2. Life Skills training in core areas including but not limited to, financial literacy, insurance, and civic management;
3. Job readiness and life decisions/responsibility;
4. Educational/vocational services;
5. Coordination of the Transitional Living Allowance (TLA) up to \$1000 (distributed in increments up to \$500 per month for Children and Youth who participate in PAL Life Skills training, to help Children and Youth with initial start-up costs in adult living);
6. Coordination of After Care Room and Board (ACRB) assistance, based on need, up to \$500 per month for rent, utility deposits, food, etc. (not to exceed \$3000 of accumulated payments per Child or Youth);
7. Case management to help Children and Youth with self-sufficiency planning and resource coordination;
8. Teen conferences;
9. Leadership development activities; and
10. Additional supportive services, based on need and availability of funds, such as mentoring services and driver's education.

Pre-Placement Visit: Occurs before placement and allows the Child or Youth to visit with potential Caregivers in an effort to determine if the Child or Youth feels that the placement is a good fit and allows time to process the change.

Primary Case Worker: a Caseworker who is assigned as primary and has responsibility for Case Management activities. There can only be one primary Caseworker per case.

Protected Health Information (PHI): individually identifiable health information that is transmitted or maintained in any form or medium. Individually identifiable health information is data, including demographics, that relates to:

1. The individual's past, present, or future physical or mental health or condition;
2. The provision of health care to the individual, or the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to the individual; and
3. Information that identifies the individual or for which there is a reasonable basis to believe it can be used to identify the individual.

As a general rule, health information linked with any one of the following direct or indirect identifiers of the individual, relatives, employers, or household members is considered Protected Health Information:

1. Name;
2. Street address, city, county, precinct, zip code, and equivalent geocode;
3. All elements of dates (except year) for dates directly related to an individual and all ages over 89;
4. Telephone number;
5. Fax number;
6. Electronic mail address;
7. Social Security number;
8. Medical record numbers;

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9. Health plan ID numbers;
10. Account numbers;
11. Certificate and license numbers;
12. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, including license plate numbers;
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers;
14. Web addresses (URLs);
15. Internet IP addresses;
16. Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints;
17. Full face photographic images and any comparable images; and
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code.

Purchased Client Services: Services designed to remedy abuse, neglect, and exploitation of DFPS clients. For purposes of this Contract, these services are purchased by the Lead Entity (through an allocation of funds) and offered to Children and Youth in the Department's conservatorship or in Extended Foster Care and their families to support the achievement safety, permanency, and well-being.

Qualified Residential Treatment Program (Q RTP): are providers who are **accredited** and licensed as General Residential Operations (GROs) and provide time-limited clinical intervention and treatment services to Children and Youth in DFPS conservatorship with the most complex emotional, mental, and behavioral health needs.

Readiness: The activities the Lead Entity must perform in order to demonstrate that it is sufficiently prepared to receive its first referral from DFPS for the applicable phase of implementation.

Reason to Believe: A finding that abuse or neglect occurred based on a preponderance of the evidence. This means when all evidence is weighed, it is more likely than not that abuse, or neglect occurred.

Referral: Process by which DFPS notifies the Lead Entity of need to initiate placement and/or other services to eligible Children, Youth and/or Families.

Residential Child Care: The care, custody, supervision, assessment, training, education, or treatment of a Child or Youth for twenty-four (24) hours a day that occurs in a place other than the Child or Youth's own home.

Residential Treatment Center (RTC): an operation that exclusively provides care and treatment services for emotional disorders for children up to eighteen (18) years old.

Return to Foster Care: A program designed for Youth and Young Adults eighteen (18) to twenty-two (22) years old that are eligible and sign an agreement to participate in this program. Eligible participants must have been in DFPS conservatorship at the time they turned 18 years old (or were on runaway status at the time they turned 18 years old, and their conservatorship case had not been dismissed), and want to Return to Extended Foster Care, and:

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1. Regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or GED up to the Youth or Young Adult's 22nd birthday;
2. Regularly attending an institution of higher education or a post-secondary vocational or technical program (minimum six hours per semester) up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday. These can remain in care to complete vocational-technical training classes regardless of whether or not the Youth or Young Adult has received a high school diploma or GED certificate ([40 TAC §700.316](#));
3. Actively participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to employment up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday;
4. Employed for at least 80 hours per month up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday;
5. Incapable of doing any of the above due to a documented medical condition up to the Youth or Young Adult's 21st birthday ([40 TAC §700.316](#)); or
6. Return on a break from college or a technical or vocational program for at least one month, but no more than four (4) months and have not reached their 21st birthday ([40 TAC 700.316](#)).

Reunification: Identification of a Child's own home as the safe and permanent living situation towards which services are directed. Reunification means that (1) DFPS has removed the Child from the home and (2) DFPS has determined that the Child's parent(s) are willing and, after completing services, able to provide the Child with a safe living environment. Reunification occurs when the Child has returned to the home.

School of Origin: The same school the Child was attending at the time of removal or any subsequent Placement Change, unless it is not in the Child's best interests to remain in that school.

Secondary Caseworker: A Caseworker who has a secondary assignment of a case and does not have primary responsibilities of the case but is assisting with case activities (e.g., courtesy contacts with a Family or Child out of the primary Caseworker's area).

Sensitive Personal Information: Sensitive personal information means an individual's first name or first initial and last name in combination with any one or more of the following items, if the name and the items are not encrypted:

1. Social Security number;
2. Driver's license number or government-issued identification number; and
3. Account number or credit or debit card number in combination with any required security code, access code, or password that would permit access to an individual's financial account.

Sensitive Personal Information also includes data revealed directly or indirectly relating to:

1. Natural persons concerning their racial or ethnic origin;
2. Political opinion;
3. Trade union membership;
4. Religious or philosophical beliefs;
5. Physical and mental health including state of health, illness, handicaps, pathological defects, or medical treatments;

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6. Criminal records, including convictions, decisions of penalties and fines, or other information collected in judicial or administrative proceeding to ascertain an offense or regarding an alleged or suspected commission of an offense;
7. Biometric or genetic data; and
8. Social welfare needs or benefits or other social welfare assistance received.

Sensitive information does not include publicly available information that is lawfully made available to the public from the federal, state, or local government.

Serious Incident: Any non-routine occurrence that has an impact on the care, supervision, or treatment of a Child or Youth. This includes, but is not limited to, suicide attempts, injuries requiring medical treatment including psychiatric hospitalizations, runaways, commission of a crime, and allegations of abuse or neglect or abusive treatment.

Service Plan: The Contractor's developed plan that is tailored to address the services that will be provided to a Child or Youth to meet the Child, Youth and/or Family member's specific needs while served by the Contractor.

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

1. Knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a Child to be Trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under §20A.02(a)(7) or (8), Penal Code, or the failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a Child from being Trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of these sections. - [Texas Family Code §261.001\(1\)\(L\)](#); and
2. Compelling or encouraging the Child in a manner to engage in sexual conduct that constitutes an offense of Trafficking of persons under §20A.02(a)(7) or (8), Penal Code, prostitution under §43.02(b), Penal Code, or compelling prostitution under §43.05(a)(2), Penal Code. - [Texas Family Code §261.001\(1\)\(G\)](#).

Sexual Behavior Problem: A sexual behavior problem is when a child exhibits sexual activities or actions that are outside the range of those which are developmentally appropriate. This behavior may indicate that the child should be referred for services, but does not rise to the level of sexually aggressive behavior that would require checking the sexually aggressive behavior box in the IMPACT system. Sexual orientation or gender identity are not indicators of sexual behavior problems or sexually aggressive behavior.

Siblings: Children, Youth, and Young Adults who have one (1) or more parents in common either biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents. For purposes of the performance measure, this is counted as any Child in the same CPS case with another Child.

Sexually Aggressive Behavior: Sexually aggressive behavior occurs when a Child takes advantage of another person who is less powerful through seduction, coercion, and/or force.

1. Less powerful: Differences in developmental level, physical stature, cognitive ability, and/or social skills;

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2. Seduction: The use of charm, manipulation, promises, gifts, and flattery to induce a person to engage in sexual behavior;
3. Coercion: The exploitation of authority or the use of bribes, threats, threats of force, and/or intimidation to gain cooperation or compliance;
4. Force: Threat or use of physical or emotional harm towards a person, and/or someone and/or something a person cares about; and
5. Sexual orientation or gender identity are not indicators of sexual behavior problems or sexually aggressive behavior.

Siblings: Children, youth, and young adults who have one or more parents in common either biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents. For purposes of the performance measure, this is counted as any child in the same CPS case with another child.

Sibling Group: Any CPS case with two (2) or more Children in substitute (foster and relative/kinship) care.

Single Source Continuum Contract/Contractor: Entity, as described in [Texas Family Code §264.154](#), with whom DFPS enters into a Contract for the provision of the full continuum of Substitute Care, Case Management, and Reunification services in a Designated Catchment Area.

Standard Terms and Conditions: The terms and conditions applicable to any Contract resulting from this RFP HHS0016279 that govern the response and any resulting Contract.

STAR Health: Statewide managed care program that provides comprehensive health care to Children and Youth in Foster Care and relative care, including medical, behavioral health, dental and vision care.

Subrecipient: An entity that expends awards received from a pass-through entity to carry out a project program. As defined by 45 CFR 75, a subrecipient relationship exists when funding from a pass-through entity is provided to perform a portion of the scope of work or objectives of the pass-through entity's award agreement with the federal awarding agency. Throughout this Contract, the Lead Entity is referred to as a provider, Contractor, grantee, and subrecipient. Regardless of the term used, beginning in the implementation phase, DFPS classifies the Lead Entity agreements as subrecipient relationships.

Substitute Care: All Children who are living in a DFPS out of home placement (kinship or paid foster care). It does not include Children living in a return and monitor placement. Unless noted otherwise, it does include Youth over eighteen (18) who are in Extended Foster Care but are not in DFPS custody.

Supervised Independent Living (SIL): A type of voluntary Extended Foster Care placement where Young Adults can live on their own, while still getting Caseworker and support services to help them become independent and self-sufficient. The SIL program allows Young Adults to live independently under a supervised living arrangement provided by a contracted provider. A Young Adult in SIL is not supervised twenty-four (24) hours a day by an adult and has increased responsibilities. Through SIL a Young Adult has increased responsibilities, such as:

1. Managing their own finances,

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2. Buying groceries or personal items, and
3. Working with a landlord.

SIL also helps transition Young Adults to independent living by teaching them to:

1. Achieve identified education and employment goals,
2. Access rural community resources,
3. Engage in needed life skills training, and
4. Establish important relationships.

Temporary Emergency Placements Program (TEP): is designed to provide highly structured quality residential care and services for high needs Children for whom DFPS is working to identify a safe and suitable longer-term placement to meet their unique needs as described by [40 TAC §700.1337](#).

Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC): When a court grants DFPS TMC of a Child, DFPS can exercise specific rights including but not limited to the right to have physical possession of the Child along with specific responsibilities, including but not limited to the duty of care, control and protection of a Child, the right to designate the primary residence of the Child and the right to make decisions concerning the Child's healthcare and education.

Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE): TARE website is a recruitment tool for prospective adoption homes for DFPS. The purpose of TARE is to expedite permanency for available waiting Children by increasing the number of prospective adoptive home resources.

Texas Child Centered Care: Texas Child-Centered Care, or T3C, represents a complete transformation of the foster care system. It is the result of a multi-year effort directed by the Texas Legislature, supported by DFPS in collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and guided by countless residential childcare providers and other child welfare stakeholders.

Beginning January 2025, T3C replaces the service level system with a universal child assessment tool and placement process which includes:

- 24 clearly defined service packages and three add-on services;
- New fully funded rate methodology; and
- New opportunities to claim federal funds for foster care services.

More information on T3C can be found at: [DFPS - Texas Child-Centered Care](#)

Transitional Living Services: The Transitional Living Services program provides transition planning, services, and benefits to both older Youth in Foster Care and those who have aged out. Transitional Living Services are available to Youth aged fourteen (14) to twenty-three (23). The Transitional Living Services program includes:

1. Preparation for Adult Living (PAL);
2. Health care coverage for Youth and Young Adults that age out of Foster Care;
3. STAR Health Program;

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4. Transition center information;
5. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program;
6. College tuition and fee waivers for Youth who were in DFPS conservatorship, adopted Youth, and Youth in the Permanency Care Assistance program;
7. Extended Foster Care program;
8. Supervised Independent Living program;
9. Trial Independence and Young Adults Returning to Care; and
10. Preparation for long-term care and support in adulthood for Youth with disabilities.

See the [Transitional Living Services Resource Guide](#) for more information.

Trauma Informed Care: An approach to understanding the biological, developmental, relational, and social effects of trauma and violence on Children, Youth and families which integrates the understanding of the impact of trauma into the provision of services and support through a child-centered, strength-based perspective to care.

Trafficking or Human Trafficking: The transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, or obtaining another person for transport.

1. It is a crime for any person to knowingly engage, or attempt to engage, in human trafficking with the intent or knowledge that the Trafficked person will be subjected to force labor or services; or to benefit financially by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture that has subjected a person to forced labor or services.
2. Children can be victims of human trafficking regardless of their citizenship, residency, or alien or immigrant status.

Treatment Services: A specialized type of Child-Care Services designed to treat and/or support Children or Youth with Emotional Disorders, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Primary Medical Needs as described in [40 TAC §700.2341](#) and [40 TAC 700.2343](#).

Turnover Plan: The activities that the Lead Entity is required to perform prior to or upon termination of the Contract, in situations where the Lead Entity will transition data and documentation to DFPS or a subsequent Contractor.

Verified Kinship Care: A Kinship Caregiver who has become verified as a foster parent to provide residential care in accordance with Childcare licensing regulations.

Voluntary Extended Foster Care Agreement (Form 2540): DFPS's form which documents the Young Adult's agreement to voluntarily remain in Foster Care and outlines the categories of activity which qualify to remain in Foster Care.

Voluntary Return to Foster Care Agreement (Form 2560): DFPS's form which documents the Young Adult's agreement to voluntarily return to Foster Care and outlines the categories of activity which qualify to return to Foster Care.

Young Adults: A person aged 18 or older.

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ARTICLE II: SCOPE OF WORK

Section 2.00 Phase I: Design and Planning

Section 2.01 Introduction Rural Community-Based Care (CBC) Pilot Program

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) invites applications from qualified organizations to serve as the Lead Entity for the Rural CBC Pilot Program authorized by Senate Bill 513, 88th Texas Legislature.

The Rural CBC Pilot Program seeks to design, implement, and evaluate a Community-Based child welfare system in rural regions of Texas, with an emphasis on:

- Co-design with DFPS and local Community Alliances,
- Improved permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families,
- Regional flexibility to address diverse community needs, and
- Shared accountability across state, local, and provider partners.

Under guidance of Texas Family Code (TFC) Section 264.183, DFPS is required to implement a Rural CBC Pilot Program which is aimed at improving child welfare services in rural areas in which at least two-thirds of the counties comprising the area have a population of 50,000 or less and where traditional CBC has not been established and where there has been no response from interested applicants through the formal Request for Application (RFA) process. The Rural CBC Pilot Program will be developed and implemented by DFPS in partnership with a Lead Entity, which may be a nonprofit or local government entity selected through a competitive procurement process.

DFPS reserves the right to alter or make any changes to the Contract, including payment, administration, program, and direct services, in whatever manner necessary that may be subsequently required under the law to achieve the goals and objectives of Community-Based Care or the Rural CBC Pilot Program and the best interests of Children.

Section 2.02 Project Scope/Service Delivery Model

The Lead Entity shall demonstrate a clear understanding of service demand, available resources, and service gaps within Region 9 which include (30 counties) Andrews, Borden, Coke, Concho, Crane, Crockett, Dawson, Ector, Gaines, Glasscock, Howard, Irion, Kimble, Loving, Martin, Mason, McCulloch, Menard, Midland, Pecos, Reagan, Reeves, Schleicher, Sterling, Sutton, Terrell, Tom Green, Upton, Ward, and Winkler.

DFPS with a Lead Entity from within the Permian/Concho (Region 9) rural community shall develop and implement a Rural CBC Pilot Program to improve child welfare services in eligible rural regions where traditional CBC has not been established and where there has been no response from interested applicants through the formal Request for Application process. The goal is to enhance service delivery, increase rural community engagement, and create a sustainable, replicable model within rural areas.

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The Lead Entity will be responsible for the collaborative development and implementation of a Rural CBC Pilot Program that must include services to all Children and Youth in the legal conservatorship of DFPS and their Families, as well as Young Adults in Extended Foster Care or who have exited Foster Care at or after the age of eighteen (18), that support safety, permanency, and well-being. As set forth in the Contract and associated state and federal requirements, the service model must ensure the full continuum of Substitute Care (Foster and Kinship Care), Purchased Client Services, and Case Management services for Children and Youth in DFPS legal conservatorship, including: Reunification services for Children and Youth from the Designated Community Area and who are referred to the Lead Entity by DFPS, and those placed in the Designated Community Area through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and through inter-regional agreements. As also set forth in the Contract and state and federal requirements, the Rural CBC Pilot Program service model must also ensure the delivery of Purchased Client Services, with necessary service coordination, to the Families and/or any other individual or entity that is significant to the achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being of Children in DFPS' legal conservatorship. The Lead Entity shall follow all CPS policies and procedures as outlined in [Child Protective Services Handbook](#).

DFPS in partnership with a Lead Entity under Section 264.182, shall develop and implement a Rural CBC Pilot Program in an eligible rural region to:

1. Implement a Community-Based model of child welfare services and increase community engagement in the child welfare system.
2. Improve outcomes for children and families by expanding the availability of child welfare services and promoting innovation in the delivery of child welfare services to children and families; and
3. Develop a sustainable, replicable model for the provision of child welfare services in rural areas.

The department, in partnership with the Lead Entity, shall develop a Rural CBC Pilot Program model that includes a timeline, with identified funding, for implementing Community-Based care in the eligible rural region and that addresses.

1. The Lead Entity must propose a Rural CBC Pilot Program service model that includes the following:

- (A) Family-Based Services to ensure child safety and prevent entry into foster care;
- (B) Family Preservation Services, as defined by Section [262.401](#);
- (C) Case Management;
- (D) Foster Care and Kinship Services;
- (E) Adoption and Post-Adoption Services;
- (F) Transition Services for youth aging out of Foster Care; and
- (G) Any additional services necessary to meet the needs of children and families in the region.

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2. The development of and coordination with a diverse network of service providers, including faith-based organizations, local mental health authorities, and other to ensure comprehensive service delivery;
3. The development and implementation of innovative approaches to improve outcomes for children and families;
4. Any identified geographic disparities in service availability and access in the region's child welfare system;
5. The creation and oversight of a quality assurance system; and
6. The implementation of a system to manage financial risks and resources, including state and federal funds.

Section 2.03 Qualification and Selection of Lead Entity

- A. To enter a contract with the DFPS, a Lead Entity must be:
 1. A nonprofit entity that has a board of directors composed entirely of residents of the Designated Community Area; or
 2. A local government entity.
- B. In selecting a Lead Entity, the Department shall consider whether a prospective contractor has:
 1. Strong community support and partnerships.
 2. Demonstrated experience leading collaborative initiatives in the region; and
 3. The capacity to coordinate with local community organizations to serve children and families.
- C. DFPS shall request local stakeholders in an eligible rural region to provide any necessary information about the region that the department will assist in:
 1. Preparing the department's request for bids, proposals, or other applicable expressions of Interest to provide Community-Based care in the eligible rural region; and
 2. Selecting a Lead Entity to provide Community-Based care in the eligible rural region.
- D. The Department's request for bids, proposals, or other applicable expressions of interest to provide Community-Based Care in the eligible rural region may include a single request, which serves to develop the Rural CBC Pilot Program model and implement the Rural CBC Pilot Program.
- E. Notwithstanding any other law and to address the unique challenges of providing Community-Based care to rural areas of this state in an efficient manner the Department may:
 1. Procure, as a single procurement, services to develop a program model under Section 264.184(a) and implement the Rural CBC Pilot Program under Section 264.184(b); and
 2. Separately procure the services of the independent evaluator under Section 264.194.

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- F. **Notice:** [Texas Penal Code §32.52](#) prohibits the use of fraudulent or substandard degrees. Contractor must include a process to verify the education and degree requirements of all employees in its human resources policy. Education and degree information represent material facts upon which DFPS relies when entering into a Contract. DFPS reserves the right to exercise all available remedies if Contractor submits fraudulent or substandard education information, including termination of any Contract and other appropriate civil and criminal legal action.
- G. Hiring former DFPS/OCBCT employees not statutorily impacted by the implementation of CBC will require a review for potential conflict of interest by DFPS.

Section 2.04 Community Alliance

- A. DFPS and Lead Entity shall establish a community alliance or similar group of stakeholders to provide a forum for community participation and governance of Community-Based care under the Rural CBC Pilot Program. DFPS and Lead Entity shall collaborate with:
1. Local families with lived experience in the child welfare system.
 2. Local representatives from sectors related to the child welfare system, including the judiciary, education, and health care; and
 3. Other community stakeholders.
- B. The duties of the community alliance or similar group of stakeholders described by Subsection (A) shall include:
1. Joint planning with the Department and Lead Entity regarding resource utilization in the community, including resources appropriated to the Department and any funds provided by local funding sources for that purpose.
 2. Conducting needs assessments and establishing community priorities for service delivery.
 3. Determining community outcome goals to supplement state-required outcomes.
 4. Serving as a catalyst for community resource development, including:
 - a. Identifying existing programs, services, and assistance available from community and faith-based organizations.
 - b. Encouraging the development and increased availability of programs, services, and assistance available from community and faith-based organizations; and
 - c. Informing the Department and the Lead Entity of programs, services, and assistance available from community and faith-based organizations and working to facilitate the Lead Entity's use of available resources.
 5. Providing community education and advocacy regarding issues related to delivery of services; and
 6. Promoting family preservation services.

Section 2.06 Financial and Risk Management

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- A. DFPS shall seek input from the Lead Entity regarding the feasibility of a capitated funding model for the provision of services under the Rural CBC Pilot Program. If the Department determines that a capitated funding model is feasible, DFPS shall develop a capitated funding model that provides a fixed rate of funding per child receiving services under the Rural CBC Pilot Program.
- B. Regardless of whether DFPS implements a capitated funding model under Subsection A, the Department shall ensure that the funding model for the implementation of Rural CBC Pilot Program:
 - 1. Accounts for the additional costs of providing services to geographically dispersed populations in rural areas, including:
 - a. Increased transportation costs.
 - b. Challenges in achieving economies of scale in the provision of services.
 - c. Increased costs for recruiting and retaining qualified staff in rural areas; and
 - d. Costs related to building and maintaining service provider networks in rural areas.
 - 2. Includes financial risk-sharing mechanisms.
 - 3. Incentives desired outcomes and cost savings.
 - 4. Supports innovation.
 - 5. Allows for the reinvestment of cost savings into the program; and
 - 6. Allow the Lead Entity to flexibly allocate funds within the scope of applicable law.
- C. DFPS shall pursue leveraging various funding sources, including state and federal funds, to implement and sustain the Rural CBC Pilot Program.

Section 2.07 Data Management and Information Sharing

- A. DFPS shall consult with the Lead Entity to assess the feasibility of and design any enhancements to IMPACT necessary to support an integrated electronic case management system for use during any future implementation phase of the Rural CBC Pilot Program. Consultations regarding enhancements must address potential system capabilities that:
 - 1. Allow for real-time case management;
 - 2. Facilitate coordination among service providers; and
 - 3. Support outcome tracking and reporting.
- B. Regardless of whether DFPS implements an integrated electronic case management system, DFPS shall:
 - 1. Provide the Lead Entity with technical support and access to data as necessary to facilitate implementation of a data management system for effective case management and service coordination;
 - 2. Ensure secure and efficient sharing information with stakeholders; and
 - 3. Support outcome tracking and reporting through existing or modified systems.

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- C. DFPS shall provide existing and, if necessary, establish additional protocols related to any data management and information-sharing systems used for the Rural CBC Pilot Program to ensure:
1. Privacy and security of data; and
 2. The efficient sharing of information.
- D. The Lead Entity will require access to IMPACT, CLASS, and/or TARE during development of the Rural CBC Pilot Program Model or during any implementation phase:
1. The Data Access and Standards Governance Council is charged with developing protocols for the electronic transfer of data from the Lead Entity to the Department to allow the Contractors to perform Case Management functions.
 2. The Lead Entity must participate in the DFPS Data Access and Standards Governance Council.
 3. All Lead Entity data use, data sharing, or other type of data agreements and any related underlying subcontractor(s) contracts must be provided to DFPS for review and approval during readiness and implementation processes specified in the Contract; the Lead Entity will have access to IMPACT, the state's information management system, which serves as the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). All access and data entry requirements related to IMPACT will be granted to the Lead Entity and may not be delegated by the Lead Entity to a subcontractor unless approved by DFPS.
 4. The Lead Entity's access and documentation requirements in IMPACT will be different in each phase of implementation and will be based on the roles and responsibilities and requirements outlined in this Contract.
 5. DFPS will make a pre-defined and scheduled data export available for use in the approved Lead Entity information system.
 6. The Lead Entity will have limited access to CLASS, the state's licensing database system, and the Texas Adoption Resource Exchange (TARE). DFPS will only grant access to CLASS and/or TARE to the direct employees authorized by the Lead Entity. The Lead Entity will only request authorization for CLASS and/or TARE access for those of its employees who have demonstrated a business justification to review or retrieve such information.
 7. The Lead Entity, regardless of any subcontracted responsibilities, will be responsible for entry to and updating the IMPACT system based on the documentation requirements in each phase of implementation. DFPS will provide the Lead Entity with one training session regarding use of IMPACT, after which the Lead Entity will maintain responsibility for training its staff on using IMPACT. DFPS will provide the Lead Entity with documentation of any changes to IMPACT, so that the Lead Entity can appropriately train its staff. If DFPS makes fundamental, major changes to IMPACT, DFPS will provide the Lead Entity with one training session regarding the changes, after which the Lead Entity will maintain responsibility for training its staff and/or subcontractors.
 8. The Lead Entity must demonstrate that its IT system can accommodate data imports into IMPACT and exports from IMPACT as necessary to support implementation processes.
 9. The Lead Entity must have policies and procedures related to the protection of DFPS Confidential Information and a Data Back-up and Disaster Recovery plan.

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10. DFPS provides support to external users who report problems and issues related to IMPACT and other DFPS casework applications. Staff monitor tickets created through the Help Desk and various application associated mailboxes. Tickets are prioritized and assigned for review and resolution based on specified criteria. It is estimated that within three days, DFPS staff will respond with a resolution, status of ticket resolution, or a request for further information. Several steps and possible assistance from other DFPS areas may be required to process a ticket, which could impact timeframes for ticket resolution; and
11. As part of IMPACT training, Lead Entity staff and any subcontracted staff as necessary will undergo the same training protocol as CPS on handling criminal history, Criminal Justice Information Security (CJIS). The Lead Entity employees and any subcontracted staff must take this training. The Lead Entity must adopt policies and procedures to minimize risk of data breaches in the final Operations Manual. DFPS will work with the Lead Entity to determine a training schedule.

E. DFPS is ultimately responsible for the proper operation of the foster care system and all applicable requirements of this contract. DFPS and the Court (when applicable under certain circumstances) is the final authority on all planning, placement and service decisions. The SSCC will have latitude to make placements and determine services as specified in the child and family service plans, relevant to the stage of implementation.

Section 2.08 Development and Management of a Continuum of Care and Service Delivery Model

A. Lead Entity Management Plan

At least 30 days prior to entering into implementation, the Lead Entity is required to submit a Lead Entity Management Plan for DFPS approval. The Lead Entity Management Plan must clearly identify all tasks and activities associated with each deliverable, dates of completion, and key staff responsible for, at a minimum, the following key elements:

1. A Disaster Recovery and business continuity plan that is specific to the Designated Community Area as well as plans for ensuring the safety and well-being of all children, youth and young adults that are placed in other parts of Texas and other parts of the country should a disaster occur including a data backup and recovery plan.
2. The Lead Entity must require Continuous 24 – Hour Awake Supervision in all placements housing more than 6 children, inclusive of all foster, biological, and adoptive children. The Lead Entity must participate in DFPS oversight and enforcement activities to ensure provider compliance with the continuous 24-hour awake supervision requirement. DFPS will not approve any subcontracted provider of the Lead Entity until DFPS has approved the provider's continuous 24-hour awake supervision policies and procedures submitted to DFPS. DFPS and the Lead Entity must review the provider's continuous 24-hour awake supervision policies and procedures and assess them for adequacy and compliance with the continuous 24-hour awake supervision requirements based on the ages, needs, living arrangements, physical environment, facility layout, and levels of service required for the

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children and youth at the provider's facility.

Section 2.9 Continuum of Substitute Care and Purchased Client Services

The Lead Entity must build and maintain the infrastructure necessary to support the full continuum of substitute care, case management and purchased client services for all children and youth originating from the Designated Community Area, those placed in the Designated Community Area through Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) and through inter-regional agreements and their families who are referred to the Lead Entity by DFPS. The infrastructure must be sufficient to ensure services are safely provided in the child's or youth's home community, in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for the child or youth, and must reduce the number of moves children and youth make while in care while working towards positive permanency for the child.

A. Case Management Services

The Lead Entity must build and maintain the infrastructure and staff capacity necessary to implement graduated caseloads for newly hired staff and to deliver case management services for all children who are referred to the Lead Entity by DFPS. The Lead Entity must develop a Case Management Manual that provides detail on how the Lead Entity will accomplish the following:

1. Assumption of court-related duties regarding the child, including but not limited to:
 1. Providing any required notifications or consultations;
 2. Preparing court reports;
 3. Attending judicial and permanency hearings, trials, and mediations;
 4. Complying with applicable court orders; and
 5. Ensuring the child is progressing toward the goal of permanency within state and federally mandated guidelines;
2. Conducting family finding and engagement activities, including conducting background checks and searches for relatives, non-custodial parents and other persons significant to the child's safety, permanency and well-being;
3. Coordination and monitoring of reunification support services to a child or youth and family after the child is returned to the child's family; including face to face contact with the child and family a minimum of once a month to ensure stability, safety, well-being.

Section 2.10 Compliance with General Requirements of the Lead Entity

A. Accountability. The Lead Entity is ultimately responsible for all Contract requirements, including outcomes, regardless of whether the Contract requirement is performed directly by the Lead Entity or indirectly by the Lead Entity through an agent, employee, volunteer, or subcontractor.

1. The Lead Entity is responsible for implementing and maintaining a quality assurance process to ensure the product satisfies the requirements of the Contract.
2. The Lead Entity is responsible for responding to feedback from DFPS relative to services provided under Contract and incorporating that feedback to ensure continuous improvement as indicated in performance measures.

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3. The Lead Entity is responsible for monitoring and evaluating services, policies, and processes and applying actions necessary for improvement if the results require change.
4. The Lead Entity must manage referrals to ensure timeframes and quality expectations are met.
5. The Lead Entity must cooperate with DFPS in monitoring, verifying and evaluating services provided under this Contract. Contractor must make Client records and service delivery documentation available upon request by DFPS.
6. The Lead Entity must establish a system to monitor the performance of its direct service network providers to ensure the highest quality services and compliance with this Contract.
7. The Lead Entity must establish a system to verify performance data of its direct service network providers to ensure accurate data is reported and verified in compliance with this Contract.

B. Legal/Regulatory. The Lead Entity must:

1. Comply with all court orders and jurisdictional requirements;
2. Comply with all court orders regarding the provision of substitute care, case management services, Purchased Client Services and/or reunification services for children, youth, and families served through the Lead Entity, relevant to the stage being implemented;
3. Follow all State (including, but not limited to, Texas Family Code and Title 40, Part 19 of the Texas Administrative Code) and federal laws listed below, including compliance with the terms and regulations of all Performance Improvement Plans as a result of a Federal or State Audit as well as Child Care Minimum Standards for 24-Hour Residential Care Operations and Child-Placing Agencies, and DFPS Records Management Policy:
 - a. [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
 - b. [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act \(CAPTA\)](#)
 - c. [Child and Family Service Review \(CFSR\)](#). The Lead Entity must work with DFPS to improve outcomes for Children based on the Federal CFSR requirements.
 - d. [Child Welfare Services, Title IV-B, Subpart 1 of the Social Security Act](#)
 - e. [HHSC Child Care Minimum Standards](#). SSCCs must also support CPAs to comply with new rules that establish kinship specific standards located in TAC, Chapter 749, Minimum Standards for Child-Placing Agencies, Subchapter W, Kinship Foster Homes. CPAs must follow the rules in new Subchapter W, and Child Care Regulation (CCR) with monitor for compliance in kinship foster homes.
 - f. [DFPS Records Management Policy](#)
 - g. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
 - h. [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#)
 - i. [Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#)
 - j. [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)
 - k. [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#)
 - l. [Multiethnic Placement Act \(MEPA\)](#)
 - m. [National Youth in Transition Database \(NYTD\)](#). The Lead Entity must assist children and support the necessary activities including on-going computer access required for

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- entry of data into NYTD system and will assume this responsibility in Stage II.
- n. [Promoting Safe and Stable Families, Title IV-B, Subpart 2 of the Social Security Act](#)
 - o. [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TANF)
 - p. [Texas Family Code](#)
 - q. [Title IV-E of the Social Security Act](#)
 - r. [Title 40, Part 19 of the Texas Administrative Code](#)
4. The legal representation provided to the Department during DFPS conservatorship case proceedings will be provided to the Lead Entity.
5. Pursuant to Texas Family Code §264.167, an employee, agent, or representative of a Lead Entity is a client's representative of DFPS for purposes of the privilege under [Rule 503, Texas Rules of Evidence](#) found at <https://www.txcourts.gov/media/1456691/texas-rules-of-evidence.pdf> as that privilege applies to communications with a prosecuting attorney or other attorney representing DFPS, or the attorney's representatives, in a proceeding under Subtitle E (Protection of the Child) of Title 5 of the Texas Family Code.

Section 2.11 Placement Services and Services to Children/Youth/Young Adults

The Lead Entity must coordinate and manage services to the child, youth or young adult in a manner that, at a minimum, conforms to and complies with the service and Contract requirements stated, defined, and described in this Contract.

A. Applicable Requirements

1. The Lead Entity must consider all applicable state and federal requirements and best practices when making recommendations of potential placements to DFPS. All decisions should be made based on the individual child's best interest. Areas for consideration include but are not limited to, the following:
 - a) The child's safety;
 - b) Preference for family;
 - c) Least Restrictive, most family-like setting;
 - d) Placement with siblings;
 - e) Child's individual circumstances;
 - f) Children are placed in their home communities and in close proximity (no more than 50 miles) to their home of removal;
 - g) Maintaining the child in the school of origin and minimizing educational disruption;
 - h) Biological family's individual circumstances;
 - i) Substitute caregiver's individual circumstances;
 - j) Services respect and support the child's culture; and
 - k) Continual review of the appropriateness of the child's placement and efforts to preserve the current placement.
2. All applicable state and federal requirements when documenting the child's placement and document in IMPACT the following (see Chart 2 for time frames):
 - a) Date of placement;
 - b) Date of discussion with child regarding initial and all subsequent changes in placement;
 - c) Child's response to discussion regarding placement;

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- d) Whether placement was emergency or planned;
 - e) Whether pre-placement visit(s) occurred and if so, date(s) of pre-placement visit(s) ;
and
 - f) Name, address, and telephone number for current placement, including agency or facility name if service is delivered through a subcontract with the Lead Entity.
3. Explanation as to why identified placement is most appropriate, including:
- a) If the placement is not with a kinship caregiver, foster family home or cottage-style general residential operation (GRO) document why a more restrictive setting is needed;
 - b) If placement change resulted in a change of schools, explanation as to the need for school change;
 - c) If placement is more than 50 miles from child's home of origin, explanation for why the child is not in close proximity; and
 - d) If the child is not placed with all siblings, reasons for separation.
4. Immediately notify DFPS when the Lead Entity becomes aware that a child or youth may no longer be eligible for Lead Entity services.
5. Luggage Requirements for Foster Children. When moving a Child's personal belongings, from one foster home, GRO, CWOP, etc. to another placement, the SSCC must ensure that Luggage is provided to the Child. If a Child requires more than one Luggage to transport the Child's personal belongings, then the Lead Entity must provide additional Luggage to the Child.
- a) Lead Entity must track each time a trash bag is used to transport a Child's personal belongings and the reason the SSCC failed to provide the Child with appropriate Luggage to move the Child's personal belongings.

B. Required Notifications related to the Child

DFPS will provide the Lead Entity with a completed Placement Summary (Form K- 908-2279 or DFPS accepted equivalent) and its Attachment A - Child Sexual History Report, which provides any history of sexual victimization or sexual aggression for each child upon placement. When a history of sexual aggression or victimization is identified after placement, DFPS will provide an updated Attachment A to the Lead Entity, which must ensure that the placement addresses the child's safety, any therapeutic needs, and other children's safety. The Lead Entity must ensure that all of its residential child care providers have policy that reflects the requirements of this section.

Section 2.12 Court Responsibilities

State and federal requirements mandate that children in DFPS' legal conservatorship have periodic court reviews. The court reviews include, but are not limited to, adversary/show cause hearings, status hearings, permanency hearings, special hearings, trial settings, post- trial permanency hearings, and special settings. At those court review hearings, the court will review the child's permanency goal, the child's placement, child and family services, the child's medical care, and progress towards

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permanency. The role of the SSCC and DFPS is outlined by stage of Community Based Care (CBC) implementation. Regardless of the stage of CBC implementation:

- A. **DFPS will** provide the SSCC access to all available court orders, reports, and information at the time of referral.
- B. **Lead Entity must:**
 - 1. Maintain and provide all available court orders, reports and information to DFPS upon request by DFPS, its authorized agents, or as otherwise expressly provided for in this agreement.
 - 2. Ensure that children and youth attend all court hearings unless excused by the presiding judge prior to the court hearing. Attendance may occur through video conference and/or teleconference when appropriate and if approved by the court.
 - 3. Notify DFPS immediately of any service of legal process including but not limited to summons, subpoena, or discovery notices related to performance under contract.
 - 4. Ensure attendance of staff with personal knowledgeable of case at all court hearings unless excused by the presiding judge.
 - 5. Comply with all court orders and jurisdictional requirements.
 - 6. If the Lead Entity fails to comply with any court order or other governmental requirement and a court imposes a monetary penalty upon DFPS, in an amount not to exceed \$250,000 per fiscal year/per case number, then DFPS will recoup such damages against the Lead Entity in the amount attributable to the Lead Entity's noncompliance. This includes noncompliance attributed to the Lead Entity in regards to any orders that DFPS must comply with as part of the M.D. v. Abbott matter that relate to the functions assumed by the Lead Entity. DFPS will provide a copy of the orders that relate to the Lead Entity. DFPS will develop the methodology for recoupment and request input from the Lead Entity. DFPS must consider any input from the SSCC but has sole discretion to determine which methodology will finally be used. DFPS will follow the proper procedure and seek the proper approval(s) consistent with the General Appropriations Act and the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts' guidelines. The Parties must use the process outlined in Texas Government Code Chapter 2260 if the Case-Specific Dispute Resolution protocol under Section 3.5 of the Lead Entity Uniform Terms and Conditions fails to resolve a dispute arising under this Contract.
- C. Court services (including Drug and other specialty courts) are required of both DFPS and the Lead Entity whenever DFPS has legal conservatorship of a child or youth who has been referred to the Lead Entity.

Lead Entity must:

- 1. Ensure that the SSCC's agents, employees, volunteers, and subcontractors appear and testify in judicial proceedings, depositions and administrative hearings relating to the child at the request of DFPS or the Court.
- 2. Notify or assist DFPS in locating past agents, employees, volunteers or subcontractors when DFPS needs past agents, employees, volunteers, or subcontractors to appear and

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testify in accordance with services offered under the purview of this Contract.

- D. Court services are required of the SSCC whenever DFPS has legal conservatorship of a child or youth, or at the request of DFPS.

Lead Entity must:

1. Work with the applicable DFPS or local government assigned Attorney in preparing for all court related activities.
2. Ensure that the SSCC's agents, employees, case managers, direct delivery service providers, volunteers, subcontractors, or any other necessary party appear and testify in judicial proceedings, depositions, and administrative hearings relating to the child or child's family, as directed by counsel.
3. Provide notice of all court hearings, prepare court reports as required and present evidence in child protection cases in compliance with [*Texas Family Code §263.0021*](#).

The following persons are entitled to at least 10 days' notice:

- a) Foster parent,
- b) Pre-adoptive parent,
- c) Relative caregiver,
- d) Director of a Group Home or General Residential Operation,
- e) Biological parents,
- f) Attorney ad Litem,
- g) Guardian ad Litem, and
- h) The child, if the child is 10 or older.

Notice is required for: a child's placement change, the failure to locate a placement for at least one night, a significant change in medical condition, an initial prescription of a psychotropic medication or a change in dosage, a major change in school performance or serious disciplinary event at school or any event determined to be significant under DFPS rule.

4. **Court Ordered Mediation.** In instances involving court ordered mediation, the SSCC must attend and comply with applicable [*CPS policy 5571.1*](#) regarding what can and cannot be agreed to during mediation.

Section 2.13 Kinship Services: Roles, Responsibilities and Documentation Requirements

DFPS will provide necessary oversight measures and review processes to maintain compliance with federal and state requirements.

Section 2.14 Workforce Development

DFPS, in collaboration with Lead Entity, shall incorporate into the Rural CBC Pilot Program a workforce development plan that includes:

1. Strategies that address rural workforce challenges, including strategies for recruiting and retaining child welfare professionals.
2. Training program aligned with best practices in child welfare; and
3. Career advancement opportunities.

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Section 2.15 Policy and Procedure Waivers

The Lead Entity may apply to the DFPS Commissioner for a waiver from any department policy or procedure that governs the provision of child welfare services as per [Texas Family Code Section 189](#)

Section 2.16 Conflict Resolution Process

Through protocol development, DFPS and Lead Entity shall establish a formal process for resolving conflicts of disputes that arise related to the Rural CBC Pilot Program described by Section 264.190.

Section 2.17 Change Order Process

Change Order Process for the contract resulting from this procurement will be in accordance with Texas Family Code Section 264.191.

Section 2.18 Confidentiality

Subchapter C, Chapter 261, of this code and Chapter 552, Government Code, apply to the records of Lead Entity or its subcontractors that relate to the provision of Community-Based care under the Rural CBC Pilot Program in the same manner as the records of DFPS. Please refer to confidentiality provisions in Exhibit B, Uniform Terms and Conditions, for reference.

Section 2.19 Privileged Communication

The Lead Entity and its employees, agents and representatives are clients of DFPS for purposes of the attorney-client privilege under Rule 503, Texas Rules of Evidence, as that privilege applies to communications with a prosecuting attorney or other attorney representing DFPS or that attorney's representative in a proceeding under this subtitle.

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Article III

Section 3.00 Phase II: Implementation of the CBC Rural Pilot Program

Section 3.01 Effective Date and Funding Condition

The implementation phase under this statement of work shall not commence unless and until funding is approved by the Legislature, beginning in the next legislative session (or other lawful appropriation authority).

In the event that the Legislature fails to appropriate sufficient funds for implementation, the obligations under this Contract shall be suspended or deferred until appropriation is secured, without penalty or breach.

Upon notice of appropriation, DFPS and the Lead Entity shall provide written notification to all stakeholders and subcontractor(s) of the activation of the implementation phase.

Section 3.02 Implementation Activities

Upon activation, the Lead Entity (in partnership with DFPS and the pre-established Community Alliance) shall carry out the following implementation tasks in accordance with SB513's mandates and the approved designed and planning deliverables in Phase I including but not limited to the following:

1. Service Network Formation and Contracting

- a. Execute contracts and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with local and regional service providers for foster care, kinship, adoption, post-adoption, and youth transition services.
- b. Prioritize participation of local, faith-based organizations as defined by Texas Family Code 264.184(a) that reflect the demographics and needs of the Region 9 rural service area.
- c. Implement network oversight, contract monitoring, and fiscal accountability protocols developed and approved during the planning and design phase.

2. Immediate Operational Launch or Phased Roll-Out

- a. Immediate launch into the Rural CBC Pilot Program implementation post design and planning phase, or
- b. Launch service delivery using a phased roll-out plan designed to ensure geographic balance and provider readiness across all Region 9 counties.
- c. Establish infrastructure for referral pathways, case transfer procedures, and coordination with DFPS Child Protective Services (CPS) regional operations and regional courts.
- d. Conduct pre-implementation training, capacity building, and system integration to prepare all providers and partners for go-live.

3. Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation

- a. Implement the Quality Assurance (QA) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) framework developed during the planning and design phase, incorporating data collection, reviewing cycles, and outcome validation.

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1. The Lead Entity is responsible for monitoring and evaluating services, policies, and processes and applying actions necessary for improvement if the results require change;
 2. The Lead Entity must manage referrals to ensure timeframes and quality expectations are met;
 3. The Lead Entity must cooperate with DFPS in monitoring, verifying, and evaluating services provided under this Contract. Contractor must make Client records and service delivery documentation available upon request by DFPS;
 4. The Lead Entity must establish a system to monitor the performance of its direct service network providers to ensure the highest quality services and compliance with this Contract;
 5. The Lead Entity must establish a system to verify performance data of its direct service network providers to ensure accurate data is reported and verified in compliance with this contract; and
- 4. The Lead Entity and Lead Entity's subcontractor(s),** as a term of its agreement with the Lead Entity, must respond to feedback requested from DFPS regarding any findings made by the State Auditor Office (SAO) and must reconcile all cited findings in order of priority as designated by the SAO
- a. Track and report on child safety, permanency, and well-being indicators aligned with DFPS performance measures, federal measures, and metrics designed during the planning and design phase.
 - b. Participate in independent evaluation efforts as directed under SB 513, providing access to data, records, and operational documentation.
- 5. Financial Management and Risk Mitigation**
- a. Activate the Region 9 fiscal management system, including budget administration, provider payments, and performance-based reimbursement mechanisms.
 - b. Ensure compliance with all state and federal funding requirements, including applicable grant, Title IV-E, and Medicaid provisions.
 - c. Submit quarterly financial and variance reports and cost reports to DFPS and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) as required.
- 6. Stakeholder Engagement and Communications**
- a. Implement the Region 9 stakeholder engagement plan, including but not limited to county advisory councils, provider workgroups, community alliance, and family voice panels.
 - b. Maintain transparent communication with local stakeholders, DFPS leadership, and community partners through regular briefings and public updates.
 - c. Solicit community feedback and incorporate lessons learned to inform continuous improvement and scalability.
- 7. Purchased Client Services and Case Management services for Children and Youth in DFPS legal conservatorship.**

Section 3.03 Milestones, Deliverables and Contingencies

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1. The Lead Entity shall meet milestones as approved in the final implementation schedule, including:
 - a. Completion of provider contracting.
 - b. Operational readiness verification.
 - c. Go-live in Region 9 counties.
2. Data system integration and first quarterly report; and
3. Submission of the first annual evaluation report.
 - a. The Lead Entity shall prepare an annual report to DFPS and the Legislature summarizing implementation progress, service outcomes, fiscal performance, and recommendations for policy or statutory changes.
 - b. Reports shall be submitted in a form and manner prescribed by DFPS and shall include both quantitative performance data and qualitative analysis.
 - c. At the conclusion of the Region 9 pilot or upon legislative request, the Lead Entity shall provide a comprehensive final report detailing lessons learned, sustainability recommendations, and scalability potential.

Section 3.04 Statutory Compliance and Departmental Compliance

All activities under this Article shall comply with the requirements of Texas SB 513 and any rules adopted under Subchapter B-2, Chapter 264, Family Code. DFPS should retain oversight authority and may conduct audits, site visits, or corrective reviews to ensure statutory and contractual compliance. The Lead Entity shall notify DFPS of any material deviations, financial instability, or operational challenges that could affect performance or service continuity within 20 business days. Any delays, funding limitations, or unanticipated barriers shall be reported to DFPS along with a corrective action plan that clearly identifies the issue and actions to resolve or a timeline adjustment request.