



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services



**Child
Protective Services**

Regional Parent Support Group Resource Guide

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1. Introduction

The regional Parent Support Groups (PSGs) are informational support groups for parents receiving investigations, Alternative Response (AR), Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS), or conservatorship services through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

These groups are led by a parent who has successfully navigated the DFPS system and a staff person from Child Protective Investigations (CPI), Child Protective Services (CPS) or a representative from the Single Source Continuum Contractor (SSCC) Community-Based Care (CBC) catchment area, if applicable.

Most regional PSG meetings are held at least once a month in communities around the state and provide information about the CPI and CPS system and support to parents through engaging with other parents.

PSGs do not discuss details about open cases or provide advice on cases. PSGs are in every region, but not in every community.



Joint Operations Manuals

More resources for PSGs in CBC Stage II SSCC areas are found in the [joint operations manuals](#) for each respective region.



2. Liaison Roles and Responsibilities

CPI, CPS, and SSCC Liaisons

Qualifications

CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison must meet the qualifications listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Qualifications

CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Qualifications

- Have at least two years' experience with DFPS or the SSCC;
- Be able to represent regional issues;
- Be able to handle criticism and confrontation;
- Show commitment to safety, permanency, and well-being; and
- Be at a supervisor level or above.



Responsibilities

The CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison's responsibilities are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2. CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Responsibilities

CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Responsibilities

- Attend regional PSG meetings on a regular basis;
- Coordinate with other CPI and CPS subject matter experts;
- Conduct presentations in their regions to provide information about the regional PSGs to garner support for continued referrals to the regional PSGs;
- Conduct presentations to community groups about the regional PSGs;
- Assist the parent liaison with the development, planning, and facilitation of the regional PSG;
- Identify other parent liaisons as alternates for presentations and regional PSGs assistance;
- Recruit new parents to attend support groups by presenting PSG information to regional CPI, CPS, and SSCC staff;
- Facilitate the parent liaison nomination process:
 - ▶ Provide caseworkers with parent liaison nomination forms to recruit parent liaisons;
 - ▶ Present parent liaison nomination forms to the CPS regional director for review and approval;
 - ▶ Once CPS regional director has reviewed and approved the nomination form, submit to the State Office parent program specialist;
- Provide updated community resources list to support group participants;
- Plan for parent liaisons speaking at engagements in a timely manner, including any other logistics associated with the event;
- Submit a PSG Monthly Report **Form 1793** to the State Office parent program specialist by the 15th of each month; and
- Engage and develop supportive relationships with parent liaisons.

Setting Up Parent Support Group Meetings

The role of the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison is not to direct or facilitate the PSG meetings, but rather assist the parent liaison. However, it is likely the parent liaison does not have experience facilitating groups which will require the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison to model the process. The CPI, CPS, SSCC liaison must provide the necessary support to help the parent liaison be successful.



Remember

Parent liaisons are volunteers navigating other priorities in their lives. It is important the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison is mindful of the parent liaisons' other priorities.

Collaborative Duties

In collaboration with the parent liaison, the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison should complete the meeting duties listed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Duties in Collaboration with the Parent Liaisons

CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Assist the Parent Liaison With:

- Identify meeting dates, times, and locations;
- Determine how often meetings occur;
- Organize materials and other resources for meetings;
- Arrange to practice facilitation with the parent liaison.

Meeting Materials

At each PSG meeting, the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison provides the documents listed in Figure 4 to the participants which are found on the [Parent Collaboration Group Forms Safety Net webpage](#).

Figure 4. Documents Provided at Each PSG Meeting

CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison-Provided Meeting Documents

- Parent Support Group Sign-in Sheet Form 1780 [English](#) and [Spanish](#);
- Parent Support Group Certificate Form 1781 [English](#) and [Spanish](#);
- Parent Support Group Feedback Form 1783 [English](#) and [Spanish](#);
- Parent Liaison Nomination [Form 1785](#); and
- Parent Liaison Assessment [Form 1788](#).

Parent Liaisons

A parent liaison is a person who has successfully completed services in a CPI, FBSS, or conservatorship case with priority given to parents with a prior conservatorship case.

The parent liaison must be able to comfortably speak about their past involvement with CPI and/or CPS and understand the need for the interventions that occurred. Parent liaisons should have a willingness and genuine interest in sharing their experiences, expertise, and wisdom to help other parents succeed. Additionally, the parent liaison serves as a voice to help CPI and CPS or SSCC staff and members of the community understand how policy and practices may impact parents involved in the child welfare system. Parent liaisons are committed to helping keep children safe.

While a region may have multiple parent liaisons to assist with the regional PSGs, only two parent liaisons are appointed by the regional director to serve as members of the [Parent Collaboration Group Advisory Committee](#).



Restrictions

Parent liaisons may not offer advice to parents on specific cases or become involved in a parent's case. They do not perform duties such as:

- Case analysis;
- Helping determine case dispositions; or
- Providing input about the appropriateness of case-specific service plans.

Qualifications

Qualifications to serve as a parent liaison are listed in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Parent Liaison Qualifications

Parent Liaison Qualifications

- Be a birth parent with a closed CPI or CPS case that is at least a year old;
- Be referred by a caseworker and approved by the CPS regional director or SSCC leadership; and
- Complete the nomination form.

Exceptions

The regional director and SSCC leadership may grant an exception to the one-year case closure requirement on a case-by-case basis.

It is recommended that parents in recovery have at least one year of sobriety, although this recommendation may be lessened on a case-by-case basis.

Responsibilities

The parent liaison must be willing to perform the responsibilities listed in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Parent Liaison Responsibilities

Parent Liaison Responsibilities

- Work with the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison to arrange, facilitate, and attend regional PSGs;
- Represent the voice of the regional PSG in regional and statewide meetings and local communities;
- Identify ways to gather input and information from other parents to share with CPI, CPS, and SSCCs;
- Develop activities to facilitate open communication with regional groups when needed; and
- Conduct presentations to CPI, CPS, and SSCC staff at community groups or meetings as requested and able.



Nominations

Parent liaison nominations are accepted on an ongoing basis. To nominate a parent as a parent liaison for the regional PSG, the parent completes the Parent Liaison Nomination [Form 1785](#), and the process outlined in Figure 7 is followed.

Figure 7. Parent Liaison Nomination Process



Self-Reporting Requirement

Within five business days, parent liaisons must report the occurrence or existence of any of the following listed in Figure 8 to the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison.

Figure 8. Parent Liaison Self-Reporting Requirements

Parent Liaisons Have Five Business Days to Report:

- Arrest;
- Indictment;
- Adjudication of guilt or no contest plea;
- Assessment of probation;
- Pretrial diversion or community supervision;
- Deferred adjudication of any criminal offense; and
- DFPS involvement of the parent liaison or their family with CPI or CPS.

CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaisons must notify the State Office parent program specialist and the CPS regional director or SSCC leadership immediately of any new arrest, conviction, other criminal activity, or CPI, CPS, or SSCC involvement of a parent liaison.

Consequences of an Arrest for a New Criminal Charge or DFPS Investigation

The circumstances of the charges and behaviors will be assessed to determine if the parent liaison can continue to serve in their role or must become inactive.

Open DFPS Cases

A parent liaison who has a new DFPS investigation may not continue to serve as a parent liaison until the case is closed. Once the case is closed, the CPS regional director or SSCC leadership will determine if the parent liaison is able to resume their role depending upon the circumstances and outcome of the case.

3. Legal Considerations

Regional parent liaisons could be subpoenaed by a parent's attorney to testify regarding the parent's PSG participation. It is important for CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaisons to convey this information to the parent liaisons to help them understand the court process.

Attorney Requests

Many parent liaisons may not have the personal experience of appearing in court or understand the implications of the court process. If a parent liaison receives a request from an attorney about a parent who attended a PSG, the parent liaison should inform the attorney that:

- Parent liaisons are not DFPS employees;
- PSGs are not contracted services, but rather a support group where parents offer hope and support to one another;
- Case specifics are not discussed during PSG meetings; and
- Parent liaisons serve only as support and are not involved in the individual parents' cases.



Note

If an attorney requests to attend a PSG meeting, the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison or parent liaison may allow if all parents attending agree.



4. Parent Support Group Meetings

Promoting Parent Support Groups

Each region should establish at least one PSG. Caseworkers and supervisors are responsible for identifying parents who are involved in a CPI case and/or receive FBSS or conservatorship services through CPS and refer them to their regional PSG. Regional fliers may be used as advertisement or a direct invitation to parents.

In addition, CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaisons may promote PSGs by presenting information at:

- Unit meetings or conferences;
- CPI, CPS, and SSCC professional development trainings;
- Regional leadership meetings;
- Child welfare board meetings;
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) events; and
- Judicial events.



Note

While CPI, CPS, and SSCC staff can provide a parent information about PSGs at any time, the following opportunities are especially optimal:

- *Permanency conferences;*
- *Family group conferences;*
- *Family team meetings;*
- *Home visits; and*
- *Attending court, but not during the hearing itself.*



Encouraging Parent Participation

Examples of PSG messaging the CPI, CPS, and SSCC staff may use to encourage parent participation in the regional PSGs are listed in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Encouraging PSG Messaging for Parent Participation

PSG Messaging to Encourage Parent Participation

- **Support:** Informing parents the PSG is a meeting for the support of parents who are currently involved in an open CPI, AR, or CPS case;
- **Information:** Informing parents that knowledge can be powerful, and they will receive information about CPI, AR, and CPS, the child welfare system, and available resources;
- **Connection:** Informing parents they may find other parents from their community who may be having similar experiences;
- **Hope:** Informing parents there is hope and they may feel motivated when hearing and learning from parents who have successfully navigated the child welfare system; and
- **Understanding:** Sharing with parents that hearing from others who have successfully reunified with their child could help them better understand the child welfare system and what changes need to occur for them to be successful.

Facilitating Virtual Meetings



Note

*PSGs **do not allow** the recording of meetings via virtual platforms.*

Some regions may choose to conduct PSGs virtually, or supplement in-person meetings, to reach more parents, especially in rural areas.

Figure 10 details some tips to create a supportive environment in a virtual space.

Figure 10. Helpful Tips for Successful Virtual Meetings

1

Select a Platform

Select an online meeting platform, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

2

Establish Group Agreements

Consider preparing ground rules and sharing them virtually at the start of the meeting. This will help acclimate group members to the meeting format. Issues to consider for group agreements include:

- What to do if many people have trouble getting on the platform.
- How to handle phone calls or other things that take us away from the meeting space.
- How to ensure the meeting is still a private space. With everyone participating from home, make sure participants use headphones or can be away from others.

3

Draft and Share Meeting Instructions in Advance

The instructions might include:

- Links to any downloads needed to access ahead of time;
- Instructions for testing software, logging on, and using the microphone, chat, and webcam;
- How to use a smartphone or call-in option if participants do not have a computer; and
- Basics on the plan to participate and what to expect during the meeting, including screenshots if possible.

4

Maintain Privacy Settings

Do not post meeting links where people outside the group could see them. Consider using a platform that requires an access code or where the organizer can control who joins the meeting. Though this may make it harder for members to access the group, it is worth the privacy protection.

5

Limit the Group Size and Expect Less Participation

Just like in person, too many people in a group setting can make it difficult to facilitate discussion. Any online platform takes some getting used to and people may be less comfortable interacting this way at first.

6

Use a Webcam and Provide a Call-In Option

Seeing participant faces helps to bridge the technological gap and remind each other that this is still the normal support group – just in a different format. Parents with limited or no internet access still need to access by phone only. If you are aware of members in this situation, be sure to select a platform with a call-in option. Stay aware of people on the phone and be mindful that they cannot see what is displayed on the screen.

7

Partner with Other Leaders or a Co-Facilitator

This can be especially helpful if one person is more technologically savvy and can handle more technical questions as the group learns the platform. Consider having one person monitor chat questions as the other facilitates the conversation.

8

Check in Frequently and Ask Questions

Ask about both the digital format and the content of the conversation. It may be difficult for people to bring up pressing concerns or needs online. It can also be harder for the group leader to gauge how members are feeling because of the lack of body language or facial cues on a virtual platform. Sample questions include, but are not limited to:

- “I know doing this meeting virtually is harder than in person, do you feel like you are missing pieces of the conversation as we talk?”
- “Are you finding the chat function helpful? If you aren’t sure how to unmute yourself, you can participate by chatting.”

5. Travel and Allowable Expenses

Activities that may require travel reimbursement for the parent liaison include attending the following listed in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Parent Liaison Activities Eligible for Travel Reimbursement

Parent Liaison Activities Eligible for Travel Reimbursement

- Regional PSG meetings;
- Supervisory meetings;
- Community presentations about PSG;
- CPI, CPS, or SSCC professional development training presentations;
- CASA presentations; and
- Presentations to judges.

Reimbursement Requests

A parent liaison facilitating a parent support group completes a Mileage Log (see [Appendix A](#)) to document activities and signs and submits requests for mileage reimbursement and the [Form 1799](#), if applicable, to the CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison for review and approval.

The CPI, CPS, or SSCC liaison reviews, approves, and forwards the form to the State Office parent program specialist to submit for payment.



Note

Travel reimbursement for parent volunteers comes out of the local budget using the regional program activity code (PAC) or SSCC local budget.

Speaker Participation Fees

A speaker participation fee of \$50 may be paid to parent liaison(s) after conducting a presentation or training to CPI, CPS, or SSCC staff or other community stakeholders.

To qualify, the presentation or training must last for at least one hour. The parent liaison must complete the Request for Participation Fee [Form 1799](#).

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AR	Alternative Response
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CBC	Community-Based Care
CPI	Child Protective Investigations
CPS	Child Protective Services
DFPS	Department of Family and Protective Services
FBSS	Family Based Safety Services
PAC	Program Activity Code
PSG	Parent Support Group
SSCC	Single Source Continuum Contractor

Appendix A: Parent Liaison Mileage Log

Trip Date	Trip Purpose	Address of Origination	Address of Destination	Miles

Total Miles:	
CPI, CPS, or SSCC Liaison Name:	
Parent Liaison Name:	
Region:	