

Children and Families Position Statement

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that all children belong in families where they feel loved and cared for and have the supports and opportunity to learn to be independent and successful. Children with disabilities are no different from other children in their need for the benefits that come only from growing up in a loving permanent family. All children are enriched by being part of a family and community that promotes their physical, social, and intellectual well-being and leads to independence and self-determination.

Families of children with disabilities often need supports and services to keep their children at home and included in the community. Family support services are meant to support the family to continue as primary caregiver, maintain family unity and prevent expensive and isolating out-of-home placement of individuals with disabilities.

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities supports the position that:

- To best develop and thrive, children can and should grow up in families.
- No matter its makeup or cultural background, a family is the best chance for a child to have a home, love, belonging and permanency. Parents with disabilities can and do provide loving homes to children.
- All families should have the supports and services needed to keep their children with and without disabilities in their own homes. Family support services should include, but are not limited to, respite, rehabilitation, habilitation and assistive technologies, personal assistance services, parent training and counseling, vehicle and home modifications, and assistance with expenses associated with disabilities.
- Since the vast majority (over 85%) of individuals with disabilities live with families they need child care and before- and after-school programs with the necessary accommodations to their disability provided in the same settings as other children.
- Providers of family support services must have education and training that will prepare them to work with people with disabilities in inclusive settings to achieve this goal.
- Supports and services must be easy to access, family-driven, individualized, flexible to changing needs and circumstances, culturally appropriate and based on functional needs rather than categorical labels.
- When children with disabilities cannot remain in their own families, for whatever reason, the first priority should be to reunite the family by offering the necessary services and supports they need to continue to be a family. When reunification is not possible the family should be an active participant in the child's care plan and a key participant in selecting an alternate family situation for their child, including foster families, co-parenting and adoption.
- When families cannot be actively involved in their children's lives, permanency planning must occur to allow each child to live in a family.

- School districts and health and human services agencies are integral sources of information and training for parents. Coordination among school districts and outside agencies is necessary to provide parents with accurate, timely information about services and supports to help their child stay in the home and transition to independent adult life.
- It is essential to guarantee that all children are safe from abuse and neglect. Support of the families of children with disabilities from this system is critical to make sure children remain in a safe, family environment and are not unnecessarily removed from families due to the absence of necessary services and supports.

The Council supports the public policy statement adopted by the State of Texas that recognizes the value of families in children's lives and supports the development of programs, policies and funding mechanisms that allow all children to live and grow up in a family.

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