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**Feb. 1, 2023**

**Texas Should Not Have a Child Welfare System Where Data – and Kids – Fall Through the Cracks**

*Texas Cannot Continue To Rely on '90s Era Technology to Protect the State's Most Vulnerable*

**AUSTIN, TX** – Texas 2036 and the Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services (TACFS) are releasing today a report calling for the state to update the child welfare information system used by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to track case file information, including instances of possible abuse and neglect.

Texas DFPS currently uses the Information Management Protecting Adults and Children in Texas (IMPACT) platform to track case file information. The technology supporting this platform was built in 1996, based on federal guidelines from 1993. Modern platforms allow for greater interoperability between agencies and between staff, support continuous updates, and allow staff to access accurate and timely data by both computer and phone.

Texas' case management system fails to meet current federal guidance. Texas is one of just four states that has not seized the opportunity to modernize its child welfare information system.

"Texas' most vulnerable, our children, deserve better than 30-year-old technology," said **Texas 2036 Executive Vice President A.J. Rodriguez**. "There are multiple opportunities this session – between federal funds, excess general revenue and the newly created Technology Improvement and Modernization Fund – to address this issue, more so than any session in recent history."

A commitment to conversion is fiscally responsible:

- Texas 2036 and TACFS estimate that converting to a modern child welfare information system would cost \$80 million.
- As things stand, the state is spending millions to maintain a functionally obsolete system. DFPS asked for \$68 million in the next budget cycle for “strengthening information technology and data resources,” which includes IMPACT needs.
- Since 2015, IMPACT has cost the state about \$80 million in modernization efforts alone.
- The cost of conversion, while high, can be offset partially through unused federal funds and the newly created Technology Improvement and Modernization Fund.
- The federal government can match 50% of the state funds if the new system meets all the efficiency and effectiveness requirements of a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System.

Converting to a modern child welfare information system would carry additional benefits:

- Conversion will improve efficiency and collaboration across entities, including courts, Medicaid, educational institutions and other service providers and stakeholders that require timely access to quality data.
- Modern systems’ modular structure ensures that system maintenance and upgrades are not cost prohibitive and do not disable the system.
- Taking a modular approach to conversion is recommended as it would allow the continuous function of the child welfare information system for the duration of the overhaul.

“Investing now in a modern platform for tracking child welfare cases will save the state from continuing to place Band-Aids on a long outdated system,” said **Texas 2036 Manager of Policy and Advocacy Hope Osborn**. “The beneficiaries are not just the children in the system but the caseworkers who dedicate their lives to help those children.”

Deficiencies in the IMPACT system have been cited by the federal judge overseeing ongoing litigation regarding the state’s child welfare services. Among the challenges she identified are “inherent problems with DFPS’s outdated IMPACT [data] system [that] further impede caseworkers’ ability to review important electronic case file information” and a lack of “functionality for uploading most documents, such as birth certificates, school records, legal documents, medical, dental, developmental and psychological evaluations or the capacity to store these documents.”

“Improving the systems that support caseworkers and the children under their care is a long-term project and will take more than one year or one legislative session, but it’s a worthwhile effort,” said **TACFS Vice President of Public Affairs Jamie McCormick**. “These systems are critical to get the best information, keep all parties apprised of important information and work to better support kids and youth served in Texas.”

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### **About Texas 2036**

Texas 2036 is a nonprofit organization building long-term, data-driven strategies to secure Texas' prosperity through our state's bicentennial and beyond. We offer non-partisan ideas and modern solutions that are grounded in research and data on issues that matter most to all Texans. For more information, visit [www.texas2036.org](http://www.texas2036.org).

### **About TACFS**

At TACFS, our responsibility, above all, is to the children, youth, and families across Texas that we serve every day. Our vocation and our passion is to understand and work to undo the damage caused by trauma, create a system where vulnerable children and families experience safety and well being, and maximize the potential of each child and family.

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