

## **Improving Healthcare for Children in Foster Care**

At the direction of the Legislature, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), in collaboration with the Department of State Health Services, are launching an important effort to improve the quality of healthcare services for children in foster care.

The goal of this project is to create a medical home for each child in foster care through the development of a seamless system of accessible, coordinated, comprehensive, and continuous healthcare services. In the new system, a health organization will provide and coordinate services for children in foster care. This means medical professionals, rather than foster care providers, will determine what a child's treatment needs are and who should deliver the care.

### **Background**

In 2004, Gov. Rick Perry directed HHSC to review the state's Child Protective Services program. This review found that children in the foster care system might not receive optimal healthcare because of a variety of factors, such as the frequent movement of children from one foster care setting to another. Foster children, who are eligible for comprehensive medical benefits through Medicaid, can easily become disconnected from their medical and educational histories. To address these issues, Senate Bill 6 (79th Regular Session) directs HHSC to develop a statewide healthcare delivery model for children in foster care. Under this model, the state will contract with a health organization to provide and coordinate both the physical and behavioral healthcare services for children in foster care. The tentative implementation date for the model is January 1, 2007.

### **Components of the model**

- Medical home for each foster child with a primary care provider team.
- Management system to coordinate physical, behavioral, and possibly long-term care services.
- Review system to monitor the quality of services being delivered to foster care children.

### **Goals for the model**

- Effective service delivery through better coordination of healthcare services and reduced duplication of services.
- Continuous, coordinated health care for foster children, coordinated through a single point-of-contact.
- Efficient use of existing state and federal resources.
- Enhanced access to services.
- Improved outcomes through better health practices.
- Greater convenience and ease-of-use for foster children, foster families, and healthcare providers.

### **Status**

HHSC will issue a Request for Information (RFI) in August. This will be followed later in the year by a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) to get public input before issuing a final request for proposals seeking a single vendor for the statewide system. Additional information, including the link to the RFI, will be sent to you soon.