



### WHERE ARE THE FIRE FIGHTERS?

**Post - FFPSA: What is happening in your state? Are child welfare services plentiful?**

**Does your State's experience mirror what is happening in Texas?**

A Texas lobbyist recently provided me an email alert she received from Texas Senator - Sarah Eckhardt. The communication was dated Saturday, April 19th, 2025, and the subject line asks the question: "Where are the Fire Fighters? Sounding the alarm on Texas's Ongoing Foster Care Crisis."

Under a cloak of transparency she writes: "The Texas Legislature has passed a number of laws over the past few years that resulted in fewer children entering custody of Child Protective Services. Not a bad thing on its face, and I supported some of these efforts. Unity among the right and left is rare these days but most Texans agree that the state shouldn't remove a child from its family unless the benefits of removal outweigh the risks of leaving the child at home."

What Sen. Eckhardt recently discovered from TPR's [Texas Public Radio] Paul Flahive's Investigative Report entitled "When Home Is the Danger," are irrefutable examples of how, "Texas is simultaneously refusing to remove children from dangerous homes and families without providing ongoing support or monitoring."

Sen. Eckhardt states: "These services are imperative for these families if the state's goal is for safer children. Instead, children are dying while state leaders refuse to accept responsibility or even level with Texans about what is happening."

Paul Flahive, Investigative Reporter for TPR, writes that across Texas, "From 2018 to 2023, a child died from abuse or neglect, on average, more than every other day."

"An analysis of those fatalities by TPR revealed a child welfare system so intent on reducing its contact with troubled families that it frequently left children in dangerous households even as it sharply reduced the family services that might have kept them safe."

“Compelled by changes in state law in 2021 and to their own policies starting in 2020, DFPS decision makers closed cases and hoped for the best and walked away...

“More than 1,200 children died from 2018 to 2023 from maltreatment. More than half the deaths blamed on abuse and neglect occurred in families that had come under state scrutiny.

TPR’s investigation found:

- One out of five of those deaths occurred in families that had already been investigated at least three times for abuse and neglect. Nearly 100 of these families had been investigated six or more times;
- One out of four deaths occurred in families that had been investigated within a year prior. More than 200 happened within six months of an investigation.
- The 2021 law, intended to reduce unnecessary removals of children from their homes, fueled a 40% drop in the six year period for removals for everything from physical and sexual abuse to neglect and supervision issues.
- Yet, Texas also radically curtailed the services provided to parents - things like drug testing and treatment and domestic violence prevention efforts - that could lessen the risk to children left with them.

TPR reviewed thousands of pages of DFPS fatality reports, autopsies, police and court records, state reviews and audits and it interviewed dozens of current and former case workers, investigators, victim’s loved ones, attorneys and judges.

TPR compiled more than 1,200 deaths into a database, charting the services that were offered and what caseworkers found, including connections to previous investigations and perpetrators.

The deaths were predictable and spanned the entire state. “When Home is the Danger,” is a multipart series on how Texas is leaving families without ongoing support and monitoring. The identification of some of the victims and their stories are included in the TPR Report.

[\[https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/texas-matters-when-home-danger-audio#:~:text=A%20Texas%20Public%20Radio%20investigation,dangerous%20homes%20failed%20to%20intervene.\]](https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/texas-matters-when-home-danger-audio#:~:text=A%20Texas%20Public%20Radio%20investigation,dangerous%20homes%20failed%20to%20intervene.)

Another part of the series explains why Texas’ massive drop in child abuse and neglect deaths is misleading. Reportedly, the plunging numbers coincided with changes with law and policy on what counts as a neglect death and when the department even investigates deaths for abuse and neglect.

Under 2021's House Bill 567, the legislature raised the legal threshold, driving down two of the largest categories of neglect deaths, drownings and asphyxiation due to unsafe sleep accommodations, often involving the accidental smothering by parents impaired by drugs or alcohol.



[ <https://www.tpr.org/bioscience-medicine/2025-03-31/why-texas-massive-drop-in-child-abuse-and-neglect-deaths-is-misleading> ]

## **CREATING ACCOUNTABLE, RESPECTFUL, ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN - THE CARE ACT**



I am reaching out to ask for your assistance. As you know, the previous legislative session ended without passage of H.R. 3852 - Creating Accountable Respectful Environments (CARE) For Children Act. This act would have restored children's home back into the continuum of care for children in harm's way and offer increased capacity to a child welfare system that has too often settled for hotel rooms, worker's offices or make-shift arrangements without the safeguards of licensing and accountability.

Congressman Stuebe, from Florida, plans to file the same legislation that was filed last session. The tentative date for filing is the second week in June 2025. The Legislative Committee of the Coalition of Residential Excellence believe

strongly that this legislation is critically necessary to offer resiliency and hope to children who have nowhere else to turn.

A one-page narrative that highlights the strengths of the legislation has been emailed to CORE agency heads and administrative staff. If you need a copy, please let me know. I am asking that you give immediately priority to contacting your congressman and asking for his support for this legislation. The narrative provides a comprehensive overview of the benefit and strengths of the legislation.

The Act is intended to address or assist in resolving the shortage of appropriate foster homes for children. It provides a system of checks and balances to ensure a child's ongoing safety and wellbeing in a cottage family home and makes such a child's placement eligible for foster care maintenance payments. If you are interested in co-sponsoring, please contact Ronnie Carabbia ([Ronnie.Carabbia@mail.house.gov](mailto:Ronnie.Carabbia@mail.house.gov)) in Congressman Steube's office.

We need your assistance in orchestrating a favorable response on the part of your Congressman. The only time we have is now and the only place we have is here.

**Registration is now open for the 2025 CORE National Conference - October 21-23, 2025**

Registering on this website is an easy, secure way to sign up. CORE uses PayPal for processing, but a PayPal account is not required to checkout; you can just use your credit card. Please mark your calendar and make plans now to be in attendance. There are three options for registration.

OPTION 1: CORE Members: \$350/person

OPTION 2: GROUP of four or more CORE Members: \$300/person

OPTION 3: Non-Members: \$400

**REGISTER NOW**

**Call for Presenters**

Methodist Children's Home is accepting presentation proposals from experienced professionals for the Coalition of Residential Excellence (CORE) Conference held in Waco, Texas this October. The conference planning committee will review all proposals and make selections based on relevance to CORE's mission, the conference theme, and the challenges education and residential-based programs are facing today. Presentation proposals should be engaging, practical, have clear objectives, and based on established or emerging best-practices. Refer the CORE Conference Information Packet for more detailed information about presentation length, A/V needs, and topic suggestions.

**SUBMIT PRESENTER PROPOSAL**

## Catherine Hershey Award Nominations

With its inception in 2005, the Catherine Hershey Awards are national awards specifically for the residential education field. Administered by CORE, the Coalition for Residential Excellence, the awards are sponsored by the Milton Hershey School. Judges are individuals from the residential field who rank all submitted nominations with personal and program information removed.

Announcement to the award winner will be coordinated between CORE and the nominator. Following notification to the award winner, a letter will be sent providing details of the award presentation which will be held at the CORE National Conference, October 21-23, 2023. This year's conference is hosted by Methodist Children's Home, located in Waco, TX. Travel expenses to attend the awards presentation will be the responsibility of the award winner and/or their nominator. All nominees will be notified and listed in the awards program.

**SUBMIT AWARD NOMINATIONS**

## Conference Hotel/Housing

**AC Hotel Waco Downtown:** \$192/night (.5 miles from venue)  
GROUP CODE: M-UQMJRKD

**Cambria Waco University Riverfront:** \$139-149/night (.4 miles from venue)  
GROUP CODE: CORE

**Hotel Indigo Waco:** \$157/night (.4 miles from venue)  
GROUP CODE: WK96H5

# Airport:

## **Waco Regional Airport (ACT)**

Distance to Waco: 8 miles (17 min)

## **Dallas Love Field (DAL)**

Distance to Waco: 99 miles (1 hour, 33 min)

# *Welcome New Members*

## **Christian Children's Home Of Ohio**

Christian Children's Home of Ohio has been operational since March of 1969, when it opened with a single cottage. It was initially licensed as a foster group home serving three to five children.

Today, the facility includes five different cottages located in a serene 165 acre setting with a capacity of forty-six children. Other programs operated by Children Children's Homes of Ohio include foster care, adoption, and One Heart Stables, an equine therapy program serving both children in residence and children from the community.

The agency is located in Wooster, OH and is licensed for residential treatment by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth and accredited by COA (Council of Accreditation).

Recently, in a different location, the agency opened Safe Harbor Ohio. It is a faith-based, long-term, residential, therapeutic community for girls, ages 14 through 18, who are survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. We operate under a least-restriction philosophy, designed for restorative care.

That location is also an open setting. Each resident is provided the code to facilitate their exit should they choose to leave. There are safeguards that prohibit others from entering the program. The capacity for this program is currently 12 residents.

Kevin Hewitt is CEO and President of Christian Children's Home of Ohio

Children admitted to care are between ages six-to-seventeen. Two thirds of the population served are placed by one of seventy-seven counties in Ohio. The remainder are private placements.

They mostly serve children for a six-to-nine-month period with the goal of family reunification or placement in a less restrictive setting. Over the past three months, they met that goal 100% of the time. Their identified acceptable threshold is 75% of the time.

### **Show Me Christian Youth Home**

Show Me Christian Youth Home has been operational since 1967, Chad Puckett is the Director. The home is located in LaMonte, MO.

In 2,000, the children's home added a school to their program. The curriculum is a self-paced program using ACE (Accelerated Christian Education) materials.

The children's home is staffed with a live-in houseparent model. The campus includes six cottages. One is being used for relief child care and one for a single parent family program. The home has recreational resources and sports fields available on campus. In addition, they also have an Equestrian program that is tied to their leadership curriculum.

In promoting independent living skills, the home has a "Path To Purpose:" program, On the date of my visit, there were 38 children in care.

Many of the referrals for placement include children who are being raised by grandparents because the parent(s) is incarcerated, addicted to drugs, or otherwise not responsible.

Despite the remote rural area, children interface with the community through church (each houseparent couple take children in their cottage to a church of their choosing in the area), planned athletic competitions with other groups and private schools, and planned community activities.