



## Services To At-Risk Youth (“STAR”) Program

Department of Family and Protective Services

(REVISED 2-11-09)

### **Action Needed: Approve DFPS Exceptional Item for STAR Program**

Approve Exceptional Item # 11 (\$4.2 million GR), providing a 10 percent increase in funding to the STAR Program. (Total \$6.2 million GR, including CYD). DFPS estimates increase will serve 621 more youth and families per month.

### ***The STAR Program offers a critical SAFETY NET needed to protect Texas children.***

The Services To At-Risk Youth (STAR) Program was developed in 1983 to assist local communities in serving youth who often fall between the cracks of the service delivery system. The purpose of the STAR program is to **prevent child abuse, truancy and delinquent behaviors** by helping young people and their families resolve conflict, build on their strengths, and achieve healthy goals. Services are designed to intervene at the front end, often in crisis situations such as when a child runs away, to prevent problems from escalating further and requiring intervention by Child Protective Services or juvenile justice systems.



### **What services are available through STAR?**

- Through contracts with local agencies, the program provides 24-hour crisis intervention, emergency short-term residential care, coping skills education, and counseling for at-risk children/youth ages 0-17 and their families free of charge.
- Universal Child Abuse Prevention information and services are also provided by all contractors.
- Presence remains in all 254 Texas counties (though diminished by rising costs and services not fully restored after cuts in FY 04-05); in rural counties STAR is often the ONLY service available for families without financial means.

### **Why should STAR be a funding priority?**

Without additional funding, fewer youth and families will get served:

- ★ The program has not seen a real increase since funds were appropriated to expand it statewide; completed in 1998.
- ★ Rising costs for fuel have hit STAR providers hard. Many drive long distances to serve youth and families in their homes.
- ★ Beginning in FY 04, 10% of STAR funding was diverted to Universal Child Abuse Prevention information and services.
- ★ New program requirements implemented in FY09 increased provider costs, further diminishing service capacity.

Youth in Texas need STAR services: (for more information, see Supporting Documentation)

- ★ In FY 2008, more than 32,163 Texas youth (and their families) received services through STAR
- ★ Of 278,000 alleged abuse cases referred to DFPS in FY 2007, 175,566 cases were unconfirmed. Indications are that many of the families involved in these allegations went without services, and are at risk for abuse. They could benefit from STAR services.
- ★ In 2006, more than 8,000 youth were in custody in juvenile justice facilities on a daily basis; 61% for non-violent offenses. Many of these youth could have been prevented from entering the juvenile justice system had they received STAR services.

Early intervention brings results: (for more information, see Supporting Documentation)

- ★ The strength-based, client-centered methods used by the STAR program are resoundingly supported by research on therapeutic effectiveness, and are consistent with approaches demonstrated to prevent child maltreatment and delinquency.
- ★ Follow-up data suggests success with a high majority of all youth served in the STAR program.

STAR has a high return on investment (ROI) ratio: (for more information, see Supporting Documentation)

- ★ The average cost of serving a youth and their family through STAR is less than \$700. The cost of providing STAR services is miniscule compared to the financial and emotional costs of serving a youth in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems.

Texas Network of Youth Services

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## STAR Program –Supporting Documentation

(See also map of STAR providers by county)

### The Need for STAR

- Truancy costs students more than their education. It costs them their future. 48% of truants have a history of convictions, compared to 14% of non-truants. The average dropout costs society more than \$800,000 over their lifetime (*studies cited in OJJDP, 2007*).
- Thousands of youth run away from home each year in Texas, most due to family conflict; abuse and neglect are also common reasons. Runaways are at risk for health and mental health issues, substance abuse, and illegal activity, and are vulnerable to physical and criminal exploitation.
- 1.2 million children are at risk for mental illness (*Code Red*), but only 28,445 Texas children received public mental health services last year. (*DSHS Data*)
- 5% of youth ages 12-17 experience homelessness in a given year (*US GAO, 1992 National Health Interview Survey*).



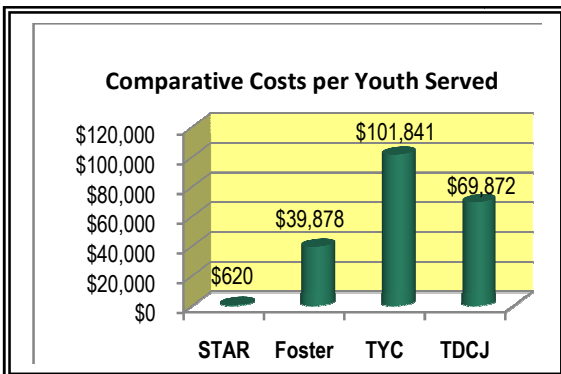
### Results

STAR's **track record** continues to suggest that the program works. At 90 day follow up data on all children/youth served in FY 2008:

- 87.2% with a family conflict reported that the situation improved,
- 95% who had been delinquent reported no further offenses since receiving services,
- 81.2% who had run away did not run away again, and
- 79.9% who had previously been truant reported no further truancy.

The Criminal Justice Policy Council conducted a **follow-up study** that concluded 83% of STAR participants (with prior juvenile justice history) had no referral to the juvenile justice system one year following program exit. (*March 2003*)

### ROI (Return on Investment)



The **total average cost** to serve a youth (and family) in STAR is miniscule, compared to the average cost to serve a youth in Foster Care or TYC, or in the criminal justice system. STAR can serve around 145 youth and families for the cost of serving just one youth in TYC. (Chart revised 2-10-09; please discard

Sources: **Graph revised 2-11-09. STAR costs** – DFPS data; average cost per youth/family FY08. **Foster Care costs** – Cost per day per child removed from home, FY08 = \$58.37; Average time in out of home care, FY08 = 22.4 months; per DFPS External Relations Office (some costs excluded). **TYC costs** - cost per day for youth in state-operated facilities = \$162.88, from Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report, LBB, FY06; average length of stay = 20.5 months, from TYC Population Trends, FY06. **TDCJ costs** – daily cost system-wide = \$42.54; Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report table, LBB, FY06; average years served on prison sentence = 4.5, from TDCJ Statistical Report, 2008.

- Research shows programs that encourage high-risk youth to finish school and stay out of trouble prevented five times as many crimes as stiff penalties imposed on repeat offenders. *RAND Institute study, "Diverting Children from a Life of Crime: Measuring Costs and Benefits," 1996*
- Each teen prevented from becoming a career criminal (including future adult offenders) could save between 1.7 and 2.3 million dollars per youth. *Transforming Juvenile Justice in Texas: A Framework for Action," Blue Ribbon Task Force Report, 2007*



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