

children 90th Texas Legislature at Risk Early Childhood Education Recommendations

In Fall 2025, CHILDREN AT RISK engaged communities across Texas to better understand the realities facing families, child care providers, and other early childhood stakeholders. We held conversations in 12 communities, shared research, policy updates and heard about local experiences and challenges. We also conducted a statewide survey of Texas child care providers and parents. More than 1,300 people, representing all 28 Local Workforce Development Boards, responded. Based on this community feedback and survey research, CHILDREN AT RISK recommends increasing the efficiency and impact of state administration, supporting the early childhood workforce, and ensuring effective implementation of previously passed legislation.

1. Establish a Unified Governance Structure.

Texas' early childhood system is administered across multiple agencies, creating fragmented oversight and duplicative requirements. This recommendation would strengthen coordination among TWC, HHSC, DFPS, and TEA to align standards and guidance.

- **Strengthen cross-agency coordination:** Align standards, guidance, and communication across Child Care Minimum Standards, Child Care Subsidy, Texas Rising Star, and Pre-K Guidelines. Reduce duplication, improve coordination, give policymakers visibility into the full system, and make it easier for families and providers to access services.
- **Improve consistency and accountability:** Set shared goals across agencies using existing structures and agreements. Bring key programs under aligned leadership, streamline administration, improve access for families and providers, and create a clearer view of system performance, costs, and outcomes.

2. Improve Oversight and Accountability of Contracted Child Care Services.

Unclear or inconsistent payments, contracting, and performance expectations create administrative burden and financial uncertainty for providers. This recommendation would establish clear, mutual accountability standards for providers, state agencies, and local administrators.

- **Establish clear performance standards:** Set expectations for communication, payment reliability, and consistency across contracted services.
- **Create shared accountability measures:** Require regular performance reporting to strengthen provider stability and family access to care.

3. Improve Efficiency of Application and Enrollment Process.

Families and providers navigate multiple agencies, applications, and requirements to access early childhood services, creating delay and administrative burden. This recommendation would align eligibility, procedures, and technology across agencies to create a simpler, more coordinated system.

- **Align eligibility and onboarding requirements:** Standardize eligibility criteria and documentation across TWC, HHSC, and DFPS and reduce duplicate applications.

FOR QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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- **Coordinate technology and agency processes:** Building on existing infrastructure, align agency systems and procedures to cut processing delays and cost.

4. Modernize and Integrate Early Childhood Technology and Data Systems.

Texas' early childhood programs rely on disconnected data systems across agencies, limiting coordination and outcome evaluation. This recommendation would build on the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) to create more efficient, connected systems.

- **Expand the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS):** Build on HB 3963 (89R) to expand, secure, and maintain cross-agency data sharing among TWC, HHSC, and DFPS.
- **Create a more seamless experience for families and providers:** Unify access to information, applications, and eligibility determinations in an integrated user-centered platform. This would allow families to better understand their options and reduce duplicate data entry.

5. Strengthen the Administrative Review Process.

The Administrative Review process allows child care providers to dispute HHSC Child Care Regulation (CCR) findings that can affect reimbursement rates and publicly reported compliance records. This recommendation for greater transparency and standardization would ensure providers receive clear notice of their rights, timely access to relevant evidence, a clear submission process, and a reasoned written decision.

- **Increase transparency in the review process:** Require a plain-language notice of Administrative Review rights, automatic disclosure of evidence supporting a disputed finding, and tolling of the review deadline until required records are provided.
- **Standardize the review and decision process:** Establish a clear, standardized written submission process and require a reasoned written decision that addresses the provider's principal arguments and is applied consistently statewide.

6. Require LWDB Member Training on Child Care Oversight.

Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) members oversee significant public investment in child care, yet board orientation does not consistently cover Child Care Subsidy or Texas Rising Star programs. Board members need a better understanding of their fiduciary and oversight responsibilities. This recommendation would create mandatory and standardized training for serving on the board.

- **Require standardized orientation training:** Require all LWDB members to complete training on TWC/LWDB roles, including Child Care Subsidy and Texas Rising Star oversight, before serving on the board.
- **Clarify governance and oversight responsibilities:** Define roles of board members and staff and promote consistent practices for governing all 28 LWDBs.

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