

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN LEGISLATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

What you can do:

- Send a letter to your state leaders: Governor Perry, Lt. Governor Dewhurst, your State Representative, State Senator, US Congressman, and Senator.
- Talk to their local legislators offices and ask what they intend to do about the problems with Child Protection.
- Contact local radio and TV stations and see if we can get on their local talk shows and if they would do a PSA (Public Service Announcement) for us.

Sample Letter to Legislators

Dear Representative/Senator _____:

The recent, tragic deaths of little **Emma Thompson, Amber Maccurdy, and David Tijerina** in Houston have provided an exceptional opportunity for our community leaders to address the long-standing, unresolved problems associated with child protection -- an issue that is normally on the back burner until the next, high-profile, child fatality case.

We demand better accountability from our state agency that is responsible for the protection of children. Contrary to popular opinion, the problems at CPS are not a lack of funding or resources. These defenseless little children died as a direct and predictable result of an agency that places a higher priority on preserving “families” and rehabilitating child abusers than protecting children. Conscious decisions were made to leave these children in harm’s way.

What Texas CPS needs is a completely transparent, independent group of experts with the legal authority to issue subpoenas, periodically audit un-redacted CPS records, require investigations into pending, dormant, or closed case files, and issue meaningful reports to the general public. CPS must not be allowed to hide behind the shield of confidentiality.

Other legislative changes that need to happen are:

- 1) make law enforcement the lead investigative agency of crimes against children;
- 2) all CPS-court (Juvenile/Family) personnel should received mandatory training;
- 3) all attorneys ad litem should be periodically certified and required to attend the above training;
- 4) codify in state law the Federal Adoption and Safe Family Act of 1997 requirement that the first priority in child abuse and neglect investigations should be the safety of the child and enforce it on the Federal level;
- 5) Making it mandatory to remove a child and his/her siblings when there is evidence of sexual abuse (including STDs) or physical abuse.

I am a member of Justice for Children headquartered in Houston. Should you be interested in additional recommendations from our organization including sample legislation, and expert testimony on these issues, please contact Randy Burton, Founder of Justice for Children at (713) 358-1762 or our national office at (713) 225-4357.

Sincerely,