



STATE OF TEXAS

January 11, 2017

Dear Faith Partner,

The new year brings new hope for health, happiness and prosperity, as well as resolutions to spend more time enjoying friends and, most importantly, family. Sadly, there are thousands of Texas children and teenagers in the foster care system who have no family and need our help finding loving homes. While not everyone feels called to foster or adopt a child in need, we are all called to do something for this vulnerable population. As you start planning your programs for the new year, please consider becoming a part of a “network of nurture” that provides support to youth and families in the child welfare system.

Finding loving homes, educating parents, providing support for youth in foster care and helping foster and adoptive families is a bigger job than state government can do alone. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is excited to partner with your congregation to meet the needs of foster children and families in your community. There are many ways that you and your members can help:

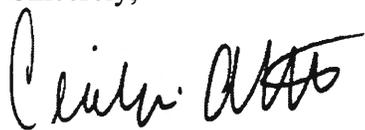
- Survey your members to see how many foster and adoptive families are a part of your congregation and may need support.
- Encourage members to provide support services, such as babysitting or providing meals, to foster and adoptive parents.
- Mentor an older youth transitioning out of the foster care system through ministries such as The Open Table, a faith-based model that congregations use to create community and transformation.
- Donate diapers, clothing, school supplies, car seats, cribs and beds, or volunteer to help sort items at a Child Protective Services (CPS) Rainbow Room.
- Consider joining the CarePortal or Orphan Care Solutions, online portals that allow congregants to fulfill requests for goods and services requested by a CPS caseworker or family member.
- Participate in Blue Sunday, a national day of prayer for abused and neglected children that is typically held on the last Sunday in April.

Sometimes it takes a congregation to raise a child. If you feel called to help serve Texas children in foster care and those families fostering children, please contact Felicia Mason-Edwards, Division Administrator for Faith-based Programs at DFPS. Felicia can be contacted at faithpartners@dfps.state.tx.us. Also, attached is a list of DFPS faith-based specialists that includes information on the areas that they serve so you may contact the specialist nearest you directly. Felicia and her regional faith-based specialists are available to consult with you, your staff and lay leaders.

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Thank you for the pivotal role you play in the community, and may 2017 bring you many blessings.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Cecilia Abbott in black ink.

Cecilia Abbott
First Lady of Texas

Handwritten signature of H. L. Whitman, Jr. in black ink.

H. L. Whitman, Jr.
Commissioner, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services