



STATE OF TEXAS

January 30, 2017

Dear Providers,

As you know, the State of Texas is working hard to strengthen our foster care system. The constant drive to recruit qualified foster and adoptive parents never stops, but it is also important to support these parents after they begin caring for children.

Providing the support that foster and adoptive families need is a bigger job than state government can do alone. It requires a Network of Nurture that can provide assistance, understanding and encouragement from the communities where they live. It is the kind of support that all of us can relate to: a break from taking care of little ones for a night out with a spouse, or maybe just a break to run errands for the household.

Currently, foster families have extremely limited child care options because agencies only allow the families to use babysitters and child care providers who are certified with that family's respective agency. While safety of the child is the most important factor, the magnitude of the issue compelled us to consider other safe, reliable and trustworthy short-term child care options for these families.

We are very encouraged by a new initiative that Fostering Hope Austin (FHA) and the Heart Gallery of Central Texas in Region 7 have launched to address the need for short-term child care. FHA reached out to child placement agencies in Central Texas regarding their babysitting requirements. After each agency submitted its requirements, FHA created a joint application and training program that satisfied the needs of all of the participating agencies. FHA will offer a training day for babysitting certification that is accepted by this group of agencies. This regional community solution streamlines the process and provides one training session for multiple child placement agencies for those individuals who want to help these families by providing short-term child care. After attending the one-day training — which includes CPR, first aid, trauma informed care training and TB testing — participants will have a babysitting certification that is recognized by all of the child placement agencies in the collaboration.

We believe this collaboration has the potential to provide much needed support to thousands of foster and adoptive families in Central Texas. But, the need for this kind of support is not unique to Central Texas. We want to see similar collaborations happening all over the state. If your agency would like to learn more about participating in a similar collaborative effort, please contact Daniel Montez, Child Care Licensing Program Specialist at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, at Daniel.Montez@dfps.state.tx.us or (512) 438-3264.

Thank you for the important role you play in the lives of children, 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