

# Travis County Model Court – Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the “Travis County Model Court for Children and Families?”**

The Travis County Model Court for Children and Families is a Multidisciplinary Community Initiative started in September, 2008, to help facilitate systemic improvement of the court and child welfare systems. The work of this model court is focused on promoting successful outcomes for children and families in Travis County who are involved in civil suits filed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as a result of findings of child abuse and neglect. This Model Court is part of a national network of similar model courts. It is supported by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, which provides organizational support and technical assistance.

## **What is the Mission of this Model Court?**

**Mission Statement:** The Travis County Model Court for Children and Families is a multidisciplinary effort to make certain every child has a safe, permanent, healthy home in a timely manner and strengthen families, while ensuring fairness and procedural protections for individuals.

## **Who is a part of this Model Court Team?**

The Model Court Team is led by a **Lead Judge, Darlene Byrne** of the 126<sup>th</sup> District Court of Travis County, as well as an **Executive Committee**, which meets monthly, and is composed of the following members:

- Judge John Hathaway, Associate Judge
- Judge Texanna Davis, Associate Judge
- LaRu Woody, Travis County District Attorney’s Office
- Shelia Brown, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Leslie Strauch, University of Texas School of Law - Children’s Rights Clinic
- Robynn Fletcher, Private Attorney
- Laura Wolf, CASA of Travis County
- Leslie Hill, Office of Child Representation
- Lori Kennedy, Office of Parental Representation

In addition, the Model Court Team includes a broader, multidisciplinary **Collaborative Council** which meets three times each year and includes representatives of the community, service providers for children and families, state and local agencies working with children and youth, former foster youth, legislative advocates, and others who are interested in improving outcomes for children and families.

## **What are the Model Court Initiatives for 2012-2013?**

This year, the primary initiatives of the Model Court are:

- (1) Court Ordered Services Pilot Project
- (2) Education Initiative
- (3) Disproportionality
- (4) Crossover Youth (Youth with both CPS and Juvenile Justice involvement)

Specific Model Court Committees have been formed to work on each of these initiatives and these committees meet regularly to advance specific goals.

### [Who can I contact for more information?](#)

Please contact Judge Byrne’s Court Operations Officer, Rene Salinas, at (512) 854-9870 or [rene.salinas@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:rene.salinas@co.travis.tx.us) if you have any questions.