



# A Message for FAMILIES

Children and families go hand in hand. A nurturing family life offers children a sense of security. When families are consistently and actively engaged in children's lives, those children know they are loved and supported as they grow.

However, if you are raising a child with disabilities, your family can face unique challenges. Providing daily care, love and security requires energy and time, which can be in short supply when you are dealing with life's day-to-day demands and caring for a child with special needs.

Texas Health and Human Services provides supports and services for families of children and young adults under age 22 who have special needs. When needed supports and services are not readily available, families may feel that placing their child in a residential facility is their best or only option. Residential care in a group home, state supported living center, nursing facility or intermediate care facility for individuals with an intellectual disability may be a serious consideration. Placing your child in a residential facility means they will live in a residential program with shift staff that come and go, which creates a different environment than living with a family.

In 2001, permanency planning laws in Texas took effect, recognizing that children are best supported and cared for in families and acknowledging that facility care should be a temporary solution and cannot meet the long-term needs of children. Through the permanency planning process, families are made aware of all options available to support them in the care of their child and understand their ongoing responsibility if and when their child is placed in a facility.

Recognizing that circumstances and resource availability change over time, your child's permanency plan is reviewed every six months to continuously revisit those issues that impose barriers to family living. HHS makes sure you always know the options available to support you in caring for your child.

By keeping families, facilities and other support agencies focused and informed, permanency planning builds the foundation children need to transition out of facility care. The goal of permanency planning is to help you bring your child home or have your child cared for by a family chosen by you with needed supports.

Permanency planners and Local Intellectual and Developmental Disability Authority staff can provide information on all options available to families of children with special needs. Contact your permanency planner or LIDDA at any time for more detailed information on options in your area.

You can also connect with advocates who understand the service system, as well as with other families of children with disabilities, by contacting or joining local support groups or local and statewide disability organizations. Additional information on these resources is also available through your local LIDDA.

HHS's ongoing effort to build a system of supports for children with disabilities and the families that care for them aims to provide all children with the opportunity to grow up in families.