

Acronyms:

- ARD: Admission, Review, and Dismissal
- CASA: Court Appointed Special Advocate
- COS: Circle of Support (DFPS)
- DFPS: Department of Family and Protective Services
- IEP: Individual Education Program
- ISS: In-School Suspension
- OSS: Out-of-School Suspension
- RTI: Response to Intervention
- UT: The University of Texas at Austin
- DAEP: Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

David: So, we actually have two presenters. We're going to have Sarah Crockett of Texas CASA and then Felicia Penn is a DFPS Education Specialist. I think what's great about these webinars is that we get to reach out and have great experience from across the state so thank you to the RTI department at UT for helping to put these together.

But Sarah's going to talk to us about the role of CASA and who should be invited to ARDs, what's the role of surrogate parents and what does a CASA actually do. And then Felicia's going to take over and she'll talk about the role of DFPS in ARD meetings, the student circle of support, and then also documentation, whether that's documentation from DFPS or documentation related to ARD paperwork, she's going to discuss that as well. We'll have other topics but those are the main topics that they'll be discussing today.

The topic that I was given was actually to talk about data related to foster care and special education. And we had a group of us out there diving in and looking for data. And pretty much all you're going to be able to find right now that is the combination of special education and foster care is that 22% of our students in foster care have an IEP. They're in special education. Now when we compare that to the statewide group, the statewide is at 8.6%. And that falls into this common theme that we see with "three times." I don't know if you've been in the other webinars but we saw that for just about all these statistics, students in foster care have it about three times worse. So, when we look at ISS, OSS, and DAEP, students in foster care are three times more likely to receive those. When you look at graduation or drop-outs, students that are in foster care are three times more likely to drop out or not graduate with their peer group. So, another point of data that we wanted to talk about as well that you can kind of glean from this is that we have a very low reported number of students in foster care that are in that kindergarten/pre-K group. Even though that they might be found out to have a disability later on, they're just starting school and so maybe their foster care status puts them in the pre-K program or they don't find the disability until later on in the education career. And so, we see those numbers go up once the student reaches a higher grade. However, our highest number of students in foster care in school are in those younger grades. And that's pretty much all the data that we can find so let's tap into some of our experts and we're going to start out with

Sarah. We'll see if I can share my screen. Give me one second. All right, Sarah, I've unmuted you, are you there?

Sarah: Yeah. Hi, everyone.

D: Hi. All right so now you have the screen. Go ahead and take over.

S: Great! Well thank you so much, David, and I join probably everyone on the webinar in saying congratulations on your new role but also, we're all going to miss you a lot. So, thank you so much for the opportunity to present to you all today. So, I'm Sarah Crocket. I'm the Public Policy Coordinator for Texas CASA and I think a lot of you are probably familiar with CASA but I just wanted to kind of give you an overview of who we are and talk a little bit about Texas CASA's role versus the role of the local CASA programs. So, Texas CASA is actually the state-wide membership organization of the 72 CASA programs around the state. So, we've got 72 local programs that service 217 of the 254 counties in Texas, so that's the majority of the state and last year we served, in 2018 we served about 58% of the kids in foster care. We had almost 11,000 volunteers, so 10,856, and we served a little over 30,000 children. So that actually makes Texas CASA and the CASA network the biggest volunteer organization in the state of Texas and we're also the largest CASA program in the nation so we're really proud of that and we work really hard to make sure that all of our volunteers across the state receive the same information and the same training. So our volunteers are Court-Appointed Special Advocates. So, what that means is that they are appointed by a judge to serve...representing the best interest of children on the case. So most of our CASA volunteers around the state are appointed by the court as guardian ad litem. For a few of our programs, the courts appoint CASA volunteers as friends of the court, but we do a lot of the things that you think of CPS caseworkers doing, where we get to know the child, we get to know the foster parent, we get to know biological families on cases. We work closely with the caseworker and the child's attorney but we also are representing kids' best interests in school and in their foster placement and things like that. So I'm going to talk a little bit later about our role as it relates to education but kind of just wanted to give you a sense of what the volunteers do. So, all the volunteers receive at least 30 hours of training and do three hours of court observation. And a lot of our training is really focused on making sure that all of a kid's many needs are being met while they're in the conservatorship of the state. And so that obviously ranges from everything from are they having their education needs met all the way to are they able to see their families and their siblings and have any trauma that they've experienced addressed. And so, we play a pretty broad role in the lives of kids but really kind of what we're known for is representing what's in the best interest of kids when in the foster care system.

So, I wanted to talk a little bit about ARD meetings and who should be invited when a child is in foster care. There are a lot of people who are invested in that kiddo and so we've got everyone from the caseworker to the foster parent to the kinship caregiver. A kinship caregiver is generally a relative of the child who is taking care of the child while they're in foster care, but it could also be what we call 'fictive kin,' which means it could be a friend of the family or a teacher or someone who has a relationship to the child prior to them entering the foster care

system. So about 40% or so, and I think that number is actually going up, but about 40% or so of kids in foster care are actually placed with a kinship caregiver and the rest of our kids are in some type of paid placement, whether it's in a foster home with a foster parent or they could be in a residential treatment-type setting or a larger congregate care setting like a cottage home or things like that. So generally speaking, if they're in foster care and they are in a school district in a school with other kids, they are usually with a foster parent or a kinship caregiver. We do have some of our residential treatment centers in Texas that work with their local ISDs but many of the residential treatment centers have a charter school on the campus. And so, there is just a little bit of variety when you talk about the types of placements that children and youth in foster care could be in. But so, for the ARD meeting you want to always make sure you're inviting the caseworker, the foster parent or kinship caregiver or whoever is kind of the identified staff person or caregiver for that child if they're not in a home and they're in a more congregate care setting. The surrogate parent for the child...and that is new after last legislative session. So, part of what we wanted to make sure is that you guys know that the law changed actually in 2017 and so now the default for kids in foster care is that the foster parent is actually serving as the surrogate parent. And so there used to be a law that said that a child had to be placed in a foster home for 60 days before the foster parent could make special education decisions for a child in foster care. But that law changed last legislative session in 2017, so now the assumption is that the foster parent is serving in that role. However, there might be times when the foster parent will decide not to serve as the surrogate parent, and in that case, CASA might be appointed to serve as the surrogate parent but we're going to talk a little bit about that in a little bit. I'll expand into what that looks like but even if CASA's not appointed as the surrogate parent, they are still very actively involved, generally speaking, in the child's education and so CASA should also be invited to the ARD meeting. And usually the caseworker helps to facilitate that communication. And then in some cases, and this is actually pretty rare, but there are some cases where the biological parents are still involved in some capacity in education decision-making for their child. So, we get a lot of questions about that actually because I think, especially before parental rights have been terminated and parents are still trying to get their children back, it's very confusing for schools. They're not sure if the biological parents are the ones making the decision or is it the foster parent. So generally speaking, the foster parent is the one making the education decisions. There are some situations where biological parents, it might be appropriate to invite them as well and the caseworker and the CASA can advise you on if that's a good idea or not. Generally speaking the caseworker would be the one to invite the bio parents but really the only time that that would happen is if we're getting to a point in the case where bio mom and dad are about to get their kids back. So it makes sense that they would need to be in that meeting and kind of caught up with everything that's going on. So generally speaking we're not inviting the biological parents but sometimes it would be appropriate to do that and the caseworker will give you that information. So that's kind of generally who should be invited. Sometimes it might be appropriate to invite the attorney ad litem to the ARD meeting as well. I think that makes schools nervous, to have an attorney in the room, and also generally speaking, the attorney does not go to those kinds of meetings, but there might be a situation in which it might be appropriate to invite the attorney ad litem as well and again, the caseworker and the CASA would be the ones to advise you about that.

So, then who has to attend? Like, who absolutely needs to be at the ARD meeting? Definitely the foster parent or the kinship caregiver if they're serving as the parent. Remember the law changed in 2017, so that now the assumption is that the foster parent is serving in that role. The only times that the foster parent would not be is if the foster parent opts out, which is still allowable under the law. A lot of our foster parents may just feel overwhelmed by making special education decisions, and they're not sure what's appropriate or not. Even though training is now required, we know that some foster parents may not be comfortable making those decisions so they would indicate that to the caseworker who would communicate that to the school. And at that point it would be up to either the school to appoint a surrogate parent, which is generally what happens, unless in some cases the courts might appoint a surrogate parent to the case. And generally, when the courts appoint a surrogate to a case, they're appointing a CASA volunteer. And so, you will know about that. It's required, though, that whoever is serving as the surrogate parent, generally the foster parent but if not, someone that's appointed as a surrogate parent, has to attend. And I think that's probably pretty obvious to all of you but it gets a little bit confusing about who's serving in that role or not. So just be really clear, as you're inviting people, make sure that you know that the foster parent is choosing to serve in that role or if not, has the court [or school district] appointed anyone.

Again, talking about who can serve as a surrogate. I mentioned already that foster parents are the default, both as the education decision-maker and as the surrogate parent. That can be appropriate for you to know because obviously the education decision-maker is sometimes making more decisions than just a surrogate parent would. So, the default is, and the thing you should always assume, is that the foster parent is playing that role unless they opt out.

CASA will serve as a surrogate in those cases. A lot of the time we will be appointed if a child is in a residential treatment center or if they're frequently moving placements, because CASA volunteers are that steady voice and advocate for the child. So if the child is moving around a lot or if they're in a residential treatment setting, that's the most likely time when CASA would be appointed by the court to serve as the surrogate parent. And if CASA's not appointed or if no one else is appointed by the court to serve as the surrogate parent and the foster parent has opted out, then the school district would appoint a surrogate parent. You all know that under the law, a surrogate parent cannot be an employee of TEA or of the Department of Family Protective Services. So I want to stop there. I know we went over a lot of information so I want to make sure to answer any questions that come up and make sure that everything was clear because it does get really murky, for kids in foster care, who's supposed to be doing what and who should you invite and it can be very confusing. And that's the core of the point of this, is to get a little bit more clarity.

D: So, I'm reviewing questions right now. It doesn't look like we have any but let me double check. It looks like there was a question about the school appointing a surrogate but you've covered it. Let's see.

D: But other than that, it looks like we don't have any questions

S: Okay, great. One of the questions that we get frequently is who can train court-appointed surrogate parents. That came up actually quite a bit. CASA has a free training on that that we have. It's publicly available. Disability Rights Texas also trains, but really anyone who offers that free one-hour training on surrogate parents. It's the exact same training that anyone that's appointed by the school district would be required to take. It's just that one-hour training on basically the law as it relates to surrogate parents. Anyone, including the foster parent, has to have that one-hour training and so there is some required training for folks if they have questions about that.

D: There were two more questions that came up

S: Okay.

D: Do CASA volunteers have the right to access a student's school records?

S: Yes. Generally speaking they do. And because we're appointed by the court, we would have the same access to records that the foster parent does and also the caseworker. Often we actually help-facilitate getting those records more quickly from school to school and we have access to the foster parents. The foster parents end up having a lot of information in what's called the "green binder." They have a lot of information that they get about the student as well. Anything like grades, attendance, all of those kinds of things CASA would have access to, whether or not they're appointed to serve as the surrogate. If there are questions about the CASA's appointment, there is a form that we can get from the courts that shows that we're appointed to serve as a CASA, or as a guardian ad litem for the child. CASA can show that to you if there's any questions or concerns about their official appointment or not.

D: Okay. And then the last one is could you briefly just go back over the role of the surrogate parent and then does DFPS offer surrogate parent trainings throughout the year?

S: DFPS generally refers folks to the other trainings that I was referring to. We have a lot of people that take our surrogate parent training throughout the year and it's actually provided by Disability Rights Texas. You can access it through our website or through Disability Rights. I think Felicia may be covering the role of the surrogate parent but I can get into that a little bit. Essentially the surrogate parent is the official decision-maker for the child about any special education plans, any IEPs, any special education decisions. They can request an assessment be done for the child, they can request an updated plan and all of that. So, they have...they're the official ones that sign off and say, "Yes, we agree to this IEP," or this behavioral intervention plan, or whatever is appropriate for child. They're really the child's advocate and also the official decision-maker for the child. So hopefully that makes sense and I think Felicia's going to talk a little bit more about what the surrogate parent does as well. But that's the basic background of it. All these other people that are listed there can attend the meeting, but they can't actually agree to anything on behalf of the child. Only the surrogate parent can. So, the

surrogate parent essentially plays exactly the same role as a biological parent would for a child who's not in foster care.

D: Pam was chiming in and said that ESC 9 has a parent network that has the online [surrogate parent] training available 24/7.

S: Great. There's actually a lot of different folks and avenues for getting that free training and it's just one hour and you only are required to take it one time. Once you've taken it one time you can be appointed to as many children as you want. We encourage people to take it more than once because we update the training if there are any changes to the law like there were in 2017. Technically, the statute only requires all surrogate parents, whether they're appointed by the court or the district, to take that training one time. Any other questions?

D: Let's see. I think that's it. Let me double-check one more time. You can go ahead.

S: Okay. Well if there are no other questions I think that's the end of my part. Our website is [txcasa.org](http://txcasa.org) and you can also just Google 'Texas CASA surrogate parent training' and that should come up for you as well if you're interested in accessing that training.

D: So, the final question was a little bit long. It took me a little bit to read it but basically the gist of it is they're having issues in their LEA: Foster parents who either are not informed about the special education process, 504 program, or they just don't participate at all. Is there anything on the foster care side, CPS side, where they work with those families or train them on what to expect?

S: Yes. After the law passed in 2017, it's required that foster parents take that one-hour training. If you're experiencing foster parents who haven't taken that training, they may just not be aware that that's a requirement. So, I would encourage you to let them know that it's a requirement and ask to see the certificate to prove that they've taken the training. The other thing is that we experience that pretty frequently as well at CASA where foster parents are really intimidated by the special education process, so they don't feel comfortable. They don't know what to do. So it's totally appropriate at that point if the school feels like the foster parent isn't fulfilling their duty, then I think it's totally appropriate to let the caseworker or the CASA volunteer know and they can have a conversation with the foster parent. At that point CASA or CPS can ask the judge to appoint a surrogate parent. But as you know, the schools have the duty to ensure that a child has an appropriate person serving in this role. We want to make sure that kids are getting the highest quality advocacy in this arena as possible. We do feel like it's really important for foster parents to be empowered to serve as the decision-maker because they're the ones that will be supporting the child 24/7. They'll be getting the calls if the child is struggling. They'll be helping them with homework and all of that, so we feel like it's really important for the foster parent to be really involved and to be aware of everything that's going on. But like I said, there's a statutory duty for the schools but also for us to make sure that kids are getting the highest quality advocacy in the education arena. So any time there's questions I would talk to the caseworker or a CASA volunteer if one is appointed.

D: And Pam also mentioned that's a good opportunity to go that surrogate path if we've got parents that are not participating, foster parents. There was one more that came in as well. Is there an official certificate that the school should be providing once the surrogate parent goes through the training? Some have created their own but they don't know if there's an official one.

S: I think each training...most of them are online and so...but each training has their own certificate. So, I would say, you know, it doesn't necessarily have to be a standardized certificate. You just want some kind of certificate saying that they've completed a training and if there are questions, usually the certificate would have the location and the date so you could probably verify it.

D: Sounds good. I'm sorry it looks like there's no more questions at this point so I'm going to go ahead and mute Sarah and switch it over to Felicia. Felicia, can you hear me?

Felicia: Yes, I can.

D: All right I'm going to give you the screen so it's coming over right now.

F: We're good to go

D: All right. Real quick before you get started, Felicia, there was one other question that came in for Sarah. Sarah, are you still there?

S: Yes

D: Okay. So, someone was asking where they can find it written down that the foster parents are required to take the one-hour training

S: It's in the education code and family code, just in the surrogate parent statute. So, I don't remember what the statute number is right now but we could get that information to you, David, that you could send out to everyone

D: Sure. Yeah, I'll send it out with the PowerPoints if you can find that actual legal citation from the code. That brings me to something else, too. A lot of y'all use the *Foster Care and Student Success* guidebook. I just want y'all to know that TEA and Children's Commission, they're in the process of updating that guidebook and so that information will be in that guidebook as well. All right, I'm going to switch it over to Felicia.

F: Good afternoon. I'm Felicia Penn. I'm the Education Specialist for Region 8. There are actually 14 education specialists throughout the state and we'll talk about that briefly in a little bit. I want to start with the roles and responsibilities of an Education Specialist and I'll try not to

repeat the things that Sarah has already mentioned to you. But since it's fresh in your mind, I want to talk about the training for surrogate parents.

CPS does provide surrogate parent training through the Education Specialists. We've all been trained. We've actually also trained the CASA staff. So, you can also get that training through us. Anybody that requests it through us, we will provide that training. Annually our lead in the state office, Kristine Mohajer, will request and send out calendar of everybody's surrogate parent trainings that are scheduled for the year. So, you'll see across the state all of the Education Specialists and when they're going to provide that training and where. Just wanted to kind of clear that up so that we can make sure we get everybody trained. The other responsibility that the Education Specialists have is we serve as the liaison between the schools and agencies. An agency can be CPS as well as a child placement agency. We maintain communications between the school staff, foster parents, kinship providers, TEA, court, anybody that has a voice in a child's education. We will attend any ARD, 504s, parent-child, not parent-child visits, but parent-teacher conferences. Anything that we're needed, our voice is needed but we have to be requested. We can't just show up. We have to be requested by either the school, caregiver, or caseworker. We assist in reviewing and interpreting any IEP, any behavior plans, 504s, if a caseworker's having a hard time understanding ARD paperwork we will help interpret those. We research any problems, any concerns, about education that we're providing for a child or a school's providing for a child as long as that child's under CPS custody. If they're in an out-of-home placement, which is under our custody, then we will interject and help out as needed. Once they're not in our custody, then they would have to find those services elsewhere. We do identify and provide information to other education services. Let's say a child would like to attend a charter school or an online school or even get their GED or if they're going to be homeschooled, those things come through us. And so, we review, we look for resources, and we help the caseworker make the best decision possible for that child.

Our primary role is to work with identifying and improving practices with both the Education Specialist and our foster care liaisons. Every district has a foster care liaison assigned to them and that person is supposed to work hand-in-hand with each Education Specialist ensuring that enrollment processes are smooth, that we're transferring records correctly, we're advocating for all services, we're collecting and tracking data and documentation, for that matter. And that's going to come through our 2085 (form). That form, 2085, will be given to the schools and it's for placement as well who is charge of making all education decisions. So that should be given at the time of enrollment for every child. We're constantly working on making sure that those are provided and we know that it's not always provided in a timely manner or when it should be 'cause if it was, then hopefully our numbers would be a little bit better throughout the districts. And I know that that's an issue, and we've all been trying to push our boundaries to make sure that you get those forms. Any time you have a form that is old or outdated or it's not signed appropriately, you have the right to ask CPS staff for an updated version of that 2085. Those are important. Court documents are sometimes requested. Court documents will be given if we need to...if the school needs to justify why they're assigning a surrogate parent. That court document should never ever be a removing affidavit. If you need a court document and affidavit it can be any other form of an affidavit from the court once it has the judge's



signature and then the front page with all the information regarding the child but the middle pages that have the why the child's in care is confidential and can't be provided to the school. Other documentation you may be looking for may be birth certificates, socials (Social Security numbers). Those things we don't have access to either. We may have a copy if we're blessed with a copy from the parent and we're willing to share that. Otherwise we'll get maybe a birth verification form but according to Texas Education Code, Chapter 25.002, those things should be given to you on whatever form we have, whatever documentation we have stating the dates of birth, socials, and so forth, you must accept those. Schools have to accept those and enroll our children on the spot. That's an issue we've run into time and time again. Hopefully we'll get that ironed out one day. Nutrition programs being implemented: We want that to be when a child is enrolled with that 2085 saying they're in state custody; they automatically qualify for breakfast and lunch and we shouldn't be racking up bills. Sometimes that's a problem and a barrier we still tackle. Withdrawals, transfers, credit recovery, it's constant and ongoing because unfortunately our children tend to bounce sometimes. We are to work together regarding ESSA, Every Student Succeeds Act, to make sure that our children get the best stability, education stability as they possibly can by staying in their school of origin if at all possible and us working together to provide transportation.

This is the list of the Education Specialists. We have a new Education Specialist for Region 1 who will be starting February 4<sup>th</sup>. Our other new Education Specialist is Cari Schroeder for Region 6B. And she is already in that position and up and running. But everybody else has been there for a little while. These are assigned to each individual region. We try to cover our own regions but we support each other when needed. So, you may have a child that lives here in Bexar County but that case resides in Houston. So, Education Specialists between the two work together to provide whatever services or help needed. And if they need help they will reach out to their fellow Education Specialists. So, there's two pages of those and like I said earlier, we have a state office lead which is Kristine Mahojer. She's our wealth of knowledge and the person we run to when we don't have the answers and we can't bounce it off one another.

An Education Specialist's role within an ARD varies. We don't have a voting right, but we are there to provide whatever we can and again, upon invitation by either the student, sometimes students will ask us to attend an ARD; caseworker; could be the school; could be the foster parent; a grandparent; an attorney; could be CASA asks for us to go with them as backup; or it could be a judge. It just depends on who needs us there but upon request and invitation we attend. The role in the meeting is to advocate for what's in the best interest of that child and to provide answers to some of the problems and the questions and the concerns that may come about in dealing with children that are in CPS custody, especially if, for whatever reason, the caseworker is not there. Well we hope that they're going to be there but there are times that they may not be there. So, Sarah mentioned earlier there was a concern sometimes about parents not showing. We always want someone there. So, if you ever get wind of this ARD and no one is coming from the CPS side, the foster parent's not coming, we would definitely like for you to reach out to the Education Specialist so that we can be there to have a voice as well for that student. We do help our foster parents if we attend that meeting with them. Like coaching them, tell them what their rights are, what to advocate for, help them to remember those

acronyms that for us we take them for granted but for them it's very overwhelming as well as acronyms that we may use for CPS. So, we're there to work and encourage everybody to work as a team. A lot of times you will find that we're missing IEPs. A child moves from place to place and the ARD didn't follow them and we're having to hunt down the last previous ARD or what services the last school had or contacts of that nature. Your Education Specialist can help you with that and be your support there as well. You just have to let them know exactly what you're looking for or what's missing, what you did receive and what you didn't receive and then we will take it from there. Some of the background information that you will need in an ARD in order to make a good decision regarding an IEP's goals comes from that background [knowledge] of that child, which a school may not know. They may not know the type of home-life environment they came from, if they missed a lot of school, if they were homeschooled, and what program they used. So, all of those things the Education Specialist will help you research so that we can all bring it to the table and make a good decision there.

I'll talk briefly about Circles of Support. A Circle of Support is a type of a meeting that we run here at CPS and it's driven by the youth. It's the youth's plan. It's them planning their adulthood. So, they will invite the people that are important to them and that they think will offer stability and support. So, it could include CPS staff, their current caseworker or a previous caseworker that really made an impression on them, family members, kinship providers, foster parents, could be friends, and many times they do ask their teachers to show up to those meetings as well. During those meetings we talk about their hopes, their dreams, their strengths. We plan for their living situation after CPS is no longer involved. We connect them with people that can support them if they're planning to go to college because we all know once you're done with college, depending on that college and if they have implemented a new program, when there's a break in school you don't have a place to go and even if you do, is it that family that you want to spend that holiday with. We bring those people to the table and we create a plan that the child's comfortable with. We help them get their copies of their original birth certificate, their social [security numbers], their IDs, any transcripts they may need when they're applying for college. If they want the voter's registration cards, we take care of that, and Medicaid [enrollment] because Medicaid will change once they age out of care. All of those things that they need to be sufficient in life, we take care of those and talk about it during the Circle of Support. And those [meetings] we start on typically at the age of 14. Sometimes we do it earlier and unfortunately sometimes it's later depending on what's happening in that case.

"Circle of Support" sounds a lot like the transitional planning that the schools will provide but those start about the same time. The difference is ours is mainly directed towards the child's life and how they're living and who's supporting them in whatever direction they choose to go, whether it's school, trade school, or whether it's just getting a job, that added support in how they're living. Transitional planning for schools is focused on the IEPs. What they're going to do, post high-school goals. If they're going to go to college, what college are they going to go to, what programs are they going to be involved in, what's the degree plan. With the Circle of Support, we do them every six months. If there's a need we can always do them sooner than

that. That's not a problem but we are supposed to do them every six months. Transitional planning [IEPs], those are addressed annually during the ARD [meeting].

CPS and school districts, we don't have the same districts or regions. Our [CPS region] numbers will overlap. So, I've attached the map so you can come see which area is responsible for which area. So, at any given time you will have two Education Specialists covering your particular school district because our [regional] lines just don't match up.

Do we have any further questions for me, David?

D: We had two statements come in. So, the first I'll do because it applies to you. It's from Kristine Mahojer and basically, she just wanted to reiterate that the Education Specialists also create and hold community consortiums. Those include your community stakeholders, school staff, administrators, service providers, community resources such as YMCA, CASA, local judges. Do you have information about when those are scheduled or where can people access that information?

F: Those are attached to that same calendar that Kris creates for us that we send her our dates. And she puts that on that same calendar as for surrogate parent [training]. So, we will send her our dates annually for those.

D: That sounds good. So, the next question is, 'Does the school need to initiate the gathering of information from the caseworkers on when the COS is held?'

F: Since the COS is driven by the student, when they, when CPS staff goes out to talk to the student about having a COS, they will ask them at that point who they want to invite. If they mention they want to invite the school, then it's up to CPS to let the school know that they have been invited. So not necessarily. A school wouldn't have to initiate a COS.

D: Okay. And then the last one is not a question but it's a statement about the requirement for training for the foster parents and surrogate training. That is TAC 89.104A. So, Texas Administrative Code 89.104A. And then another question came up about assisting the students with college process including TSI, FAFSA, and others. Who is available to help with that besides schools?

F: Repeat that, David.

D: This would be a question about access to post-secondary. So, we know that the school counselors are helping everybody at school with that, all their seniors with that. But is there anybody specifically on the CPS side who helps with the college process, FAFSA [applications], making sure they get their tuition and fee waiver figured out and all that?

F: Yes. We have a whole unit that helps with that. It's called our PAL: Preparation for Adult Living. And they will help prepare them for everything they need in order and to get into school

so as far as the tuition and fee waiver they produce those. If they need paperwork or FAFSA all that stuff filled out they help with all of that. So, PAL takes care of that.

D: And I can chime in on PAL as well. In the past we've had a PAL person come up to Region 10 and talk about what they do and the students they work with and it's been wonderful information. So look into the PAL programs that you have that your students would be attached to and if they're not attending that, if they're not going to that [program] like they should, that's something you should encourage because it's a wonderful opportunity. In my experience they tend to be younger folks that have an easier time connecting with the students than some of us who have been removed from high school for a while. So, yeah, at 16 they all have PALs but who is the contact person they can seek through CPS? And I imagine that's going to be the Education Specialist within their region, is that correct?

F: I would start there. I know for us our PAL staff is kind of in transition so I'm not sure who the supervisor is, if that person has been hired yet. So, I'm not sure. But I would say start with the Education Specialist because they can direct you to the right person.

D: Okay. Yeah, and it looks like they could reach out their Education Specialist to find out who the PAL coordinator is and then that would be their point of contact from there on, that would be the PAL coordinator. If it was extra stuff beyond what the PAL [specialist] is providing, you can tap into the Education Specialist. All right. It looks like that's all the questions. So, Felicia if you'll share your finalized PowerPoint with me as well, then we'll get those out to the registrants.

F: Okay, David. And one more thing. On February 6, we'll have a consortium at Region 20 and PAL is invited there, so anybody that's involved in that can be present for that one so we'll have a presentation by PAL.

D: Sounds great. All right. Well if there's not any other questions then we will end the webinar a little bit early today. So, basically my follow up to y'all is going to be you'll see one email with the copies of the PowerPoints and then you'll also receive another email from Region 10 that will have a survey in it. Once you fill out the survey you will be able to print your certificate of credit. And other than that, unless there's anything else, I will let you guys go. Thank you so much for being in attendance and we'll see you next time.