

Attorney General Helps Parents and Children Who Live Apart



By Greg Abbott
Attorney General of Texas

More than one million Texas children are being raised by single parents. Growing up is easier for boys and girls from single-parent households when the parent without custody stays involved in his or her children's lives.

In a continuing commitment to building strong Texas families and children, last month my office awarded grants to 11 organizations that help never-married, divorced or separated mothers and fathers work together to parent their children.

The federally funded "Access and Visitation" grants are administered by the Attorney General's Division for Families and Children. This year's grants, totaling more than \$300,000, were awarded to private nonprofit organizations and local governments across Texas.

Access and Visitation grant recipients include: Family Support Services of Amarillo; Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas in Arlington;

Travis County Domestic Relations Office in Austin; Family Services Center in Brownwood; Voices For Children Inc. in Bryan; Child Crisis Center of El Paso; Family Court Services of Tarrant County and NewDay Services for Children and Families in Fort Worth; Panhandle Crisis Center in Perryton; Bexar County Domestic Relations Office in San Antonio; and The Place in Wichita Falls.

The awards will fund services that help parents who do not have custody develop and maintain meaningful relationships with their children. Approved services include co-parenting education; dispute resolution; providing legal advice about visitation, paternity establishment and child support; and visitation enforcement. Providing funding to local organizations is a way the Attorney General's Office helps children whose parents are engaged in custody or visitation disputes, since federal regulations prohibit state child support programs from handling these matters directly.

Studies have found noncustodial parents who maintain close ties with their children are

more likely to make regular child support payments. Children of parents who pay their child support have fewer behavior problems, make better grades, and stay in school longer than children who do not receive regular support.

Texas has received Access and Visitation funding from the federal government since 1997. This year's grantees were selected based on their ability to provide crucial services that were identified by a state-wide team of family law judges, court administrators, directors of county domestic relations offices, and child support program officials.

Partnerships with local organizations allow my office to reach the families and children of Texas in ways we couldn't do alone. Children thrive from the love and support of both parents. It is my hope that these grants will help more Texas parents make a positive impact in their sons' and daughters' lives.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

Parental Responsibility Means:

- Supporting your children financially;
- Staying involved in your children's lives;
- Cooperating with the other parent for the good of your children.

"Access and Visitation" Grant Recipients Are:

- Family Support Services of Amarillo;
- Legal Aid of North West Texas (Arlington);
- Travis County Domestic Relations Office (Austin);
- Family Services Center (Brownwood);
- Voices For Children Inc. (Bryan);
- Child Crisis Center of El Paso;
- Family Court Services of Tarrant County (Fort Worth);
- NewDay Services for Children and Families (Fort Worth);
- Panhandle Crisis Center (Perryton);
- Bexar County Domestic Relations Office (San Antonio);
- The Place (Wichita Falls).



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Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.