

TBM handles logistics to address foster care housing

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Texas Baptist Men disaster relief volunteers are helping address an out-of-the-ordinary emergency by helping the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services care for children in the foster care system.

Texas faces an acute shortage in available licensed homes where children and youth in foster care can be placed, and the situation has grown worse since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the first half of this year, more than [500 children spent at least one night](#) in an unlicensed state-operated placement, such as an office, hotel or church building. In June, 415 Texas children spent [at least two consecutive nights](#) in unlicensed placements.

The Texas Legislature passed [SB 1896](#)—signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott—that prohibits children from sleeping in the state agency offices.



TBM volunteers are loading, unloading and assembling furniture for homes where children in foster care are being housed until they can be placed with a family. (TBM Photo)

As a short-term solution, the state is leasing homes where DFPS staff temporarily can care for children who enter the foster care system until they are placed, so the children and youth won't have to spend the night in

an office. When the needs arise, the state agency has to furnish the homes on short notice—often in as little as 48 hours.

Last month, a representative from the DFPS Office of Faith-based and Community Engagement contacted TBM to ask for logistical assistance.

“They may have furniture available that has been donated in San Antonio, but it needs to be in Houston or wherever,” said Rupert Robbins, TBM associate director of disaster relief.

So, the state agency asked TBM volunteers to take responsibility for loading, unloading and assembling the furniture.

“At this point, we’ve completed three projects—in San Antonio, Houston and Belton,” Robbins said. “The social workers are doing more than they ever signed on for, and this is a way we can help them out of a bind and love on them a little bit.”

Mickey Lenamon, TBM executive director and CEO, sent an email to all registered volunteers Nov. 18 requesting help in handling the furniture.

“Some items are as large as couches. Others are small as chairs. Construction of the furniture is simple,” Lenamon wrote. “In other words, anyone who wants to help can. No experience is necessary.”

About 70 volunteers throughout the state responded to the appeal, Robbins said. Also, Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy agreed to handle any needs in the greater Houston area, he added.

“It’s a privilege we have. We get to watch God work and to love on people,” Robbins said.