



# Brand Audit Findings

Prepared for Harris County Resources for Children and Adults by Outreach Strategists, LLC.

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**Outreach** Strategists  
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# BRAND AUDIT FINDINGS

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## BACKGROUND

In September 2021, Harris County Commissioners Court retained Outreach Strategists LLC to develop a branding and strategic marketing plan comprehensive media plan for Harris County Resources for Children and Adults. The approval of this project followed the Court's decision in December 2020 to change the agency's name from Harris County Protective Services for Children and Adults to help the public distinguish it from the State of Texas Children's Protective Services agency.

This brand audit will identify strengths and areas for improvement in the agency's current communications materials and will aid in the creation of a new plan.

Outreach Strategists reviewed and scored 77 individual pieces of material for the purpose of analyzing content currently in use and/or used before the agency's rebranding initiative. Scores were determined based on a rubric created to assess if they meet the three important elements of good communication:

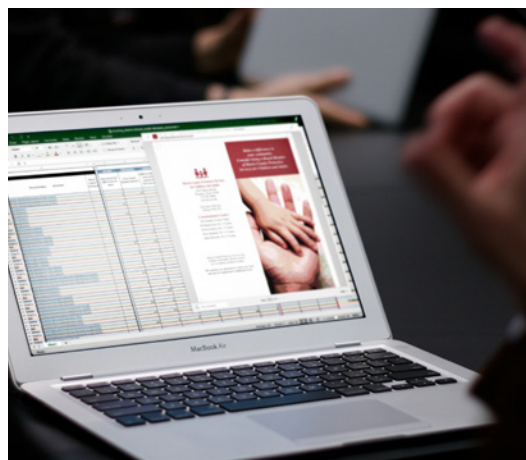
1. Message accuracy.
2. Clearly Identified audience.
3. Reflects agency's mission, vision and values.

Additionally, each piece was reviewed to ensure it meets basic elements of quality design, including the use of imagery, balance of design elements, and proportion (the visual weight between elements) among other design factors.

Collateral pieces provided for review included PowerPoint presentations, internal memos and reports, external brochures and handouts, and logos used both internally and externally to communicate the agency's programs and priorities produced between 2015 and 2021 (including ad-hoc pieces created while the agency's rebrand was still under consideration). A single piece's overall score was determined by subject matter experts in communications and graphic design, and an outside lay-person to provide a typical person's assessment of the material. This document outlines initial findings and will serve as the basis for both the redesign and key-informant interviews, all of which will culminate in the creation of a branding guide.

In addition to these standard brand audit components, the Resources administration identified two unique challenges to address in this effort:

- Illustrating the connection among a wide variety of programs and services for people needing an array of interventions at all stages of life, all of which are overseen by Resources.
- The historical difficulty of distinguishing Resources as a separate, distinct agency from Texas Child Protective Services.



## SUMMARY FINDINGS

- While each piece of collateral aims for and achieves informational accuracy, many lack a consistent brand image and a coherent agency story.
- Elements of successful branding are often present, though unevenly applied.
- The Resources Mission, Vision, and Values should drive all communications, thereby linking the many services provided under a unifying brand.
- The Resources Annual Report represents the agency's most effective communications asset and, with some modifications, should serve as the foundation for all communications materials.

## MISSION, VISION AND VALUES (MVV)

### Current MVV: To better the lives of children and adults in Harris County.

All communications should start and end with a recitation of the MVV or be otherwise summarized in each piece. The MVV is meant to drive the agency, so all things must link back to them clearly. This does not mean that MVV must be present verbatim, but the language's theme should shine through.

Resources' MVV language is very broad, however, and some modification may better reflect the client base.

For Resources, the MVV should be demonstrated in the story telling and explicitly stated each time they are referenced or applied. This means that each conversation about the agency should reflect the mission, values, and vision. Articulating the connection between the work and the MVV should be part of each piece – whether internal or external – to help cement them as concepts regardless of the audience.

The MVV are a critical part of the agency and must be incorporated in call communications.

## LANGUAGE

Resources offers a broad range of valuable services but linking all of them under consistent messaging themes is a challenge. Current language practices emphasize overarching ideals and philosophies, and there are opportunities to more clearly state the specific services offered, and how potential clients might access them. Current language provides a good overview but would benefit from a greater focus on what the divisions provide, the specific challenges they seek to help clients overcome, and the outcomes they seek to achieve. Using the language of healing and recovery, Resources should more specifically state the purpose of the services provided.



## NAMING CONVENTIONS

Integrated Health Services and Integrated Health Clinics are similarly named divisions that provide similar services, and their similar names create confusion. This is particularly true for external audiences who may not have enough familiarity to distinguish between the two. They need names that underscore what they do while also making clear they are distinct. Other areas that should be considered for a name change include: 4Cs, 3 in 30, and CCRCG. Acronyms can be problematic when used too frequently and when they are not universally recognized.

If name changes are not a viable option, then additional effort should be made to clearly identify these divisions based on their target clientele, the services they provide, and the outcomes they drive. If not, then particular attention should be given to clearly stating the divisions' services, clientele, and desired outcomes.

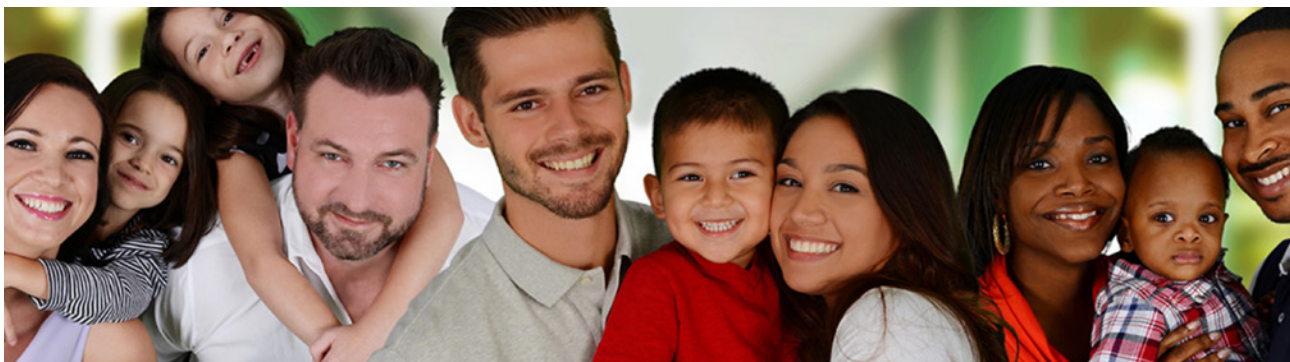
## TAG LINE

The current tag line – At the heart of families – ties directly to the existing logo and echoes the acronym of the agency values (H.E.A.R.T). Stating that Resources' work is at the heart of families, while an important and accurate statement in one sense, is overly broad. Consideration should also be given as to whether the agency supports families or individuals, some of whom are being abused by their families.

Resources provides care and counseling for those in crisis or emerging from crisis. The goal of the services is to protect clients and help them heal from the precipitating event or circumstance. As with other elements of Resources branding, the language should focus more on setting out a clear, compelling picture of what clients can expect.

Numerous social media posts from Resources embrace similar language that reflects this progression from crisis to recovery. This healing process is what Resources can provide, which is what drives the current tag line. Shifting to language that focuses on the outcomes, rather than the agency's role in it provides a more flexible tag line that is more specific, resonant, and applicable.

It is worth considering whether any tag line should be included in the Resources rebranding plan. If so, alternative tag line options should be considered that more specifically aligns with the work of the agency.



## AUDIENCE & INTENTION

Resources has strong materials designed for providing broad overview information to outside entities. These materials would benefit from a more careful consideration of the intended audience, the message goals, and the call for action. For adjacent entities (Child Advocates, etc.) the overview is less important than building familiarity with how they complement Resources. For donors and the community at-large, broad overviews of structure are important, but should be balanced against building the understanding that Resources supports children and adults in state DFS care – it does not take people into custody, and most of its services are voluntary, not compelled by law.

The Annual Reports represent Resources’ most effective communications collateral, and they provide a strong foundation upon which all other messaging should be built. These reports effectively highlight pertinent data and explain each division’s target audience, services, and mission. Other pieces should accomplish the same, emphasizing client outcomes in addition to the number of clients served.

The intention of many pieces is somewhat unclear: Is a flyer meant to encourage people to reach out? Learn more about a program? Make a donation? The common theme across pieces is to describe agency divisions – less clear though is what action each piece is meant to drive.

### Known & potential audiences – What each needs to know – What each need to be asked.

AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	EXAMPLE
<b>Adjacent Agencies</b>	<i>How we work with you</i>	Our Youth Services Division is here to conduct assessment and provide referrals for young people and their families to get the help they need. If you have a student in crisis, reach out and we can start the process for intake. This is usually a 30-minute phone call to get the relevant information from you, and then conduct follow-up contact with the student within 72 hours.
<b>Clients / Potential Clients / Caregivers</b>	<i>Tell us how we can help, so we can connect you with the right provider.</i>	We're here to help people who are experiencing trauma or crisis, and we want to help you get back on track. The first step is for us to talk through what's been going on and figure out how to get you and your loved one the help you need. We call this an intake assessment, and you can schedule one or just call us with questions.
<b>Donors/ Funders</b>	<i>What can be accomplished</i>	Your contributions help us restore people who are suffering from a wide range of problems. This important work is critical to Harris County’s future.

AUDIENCE	MESSAGE	EXAMPLE
<b>Elected Officials</b>	<i>How their staff can help connect constituents with the help we provide</i>	We are here to serve the community by providing counseling and support. If you have constituents who need to be assessed, or receive referrals for service, we are ready to help. We are very excited about the possibilities for expanding our service in the area and we want to meet with your staff so they can better understand what we do and how we can help your constituents.
<b>Judiciary</b>	<i>How we can help defendants</i>	We can assist with pretrial diversion for youth by providing counseling and expert analysis of the psychological conditions of those before you. As part of that process, we make ourselves available to the court to provide status and progress updates on the people receiving care under court order.
<b>Schools</b>	<i>How we can help students</i>	We're here to help you, not break up your family. If you're struggling at home, call us. We can help you identify the best way to handle the obstacles in your life.
<b>Internal - Employees</b>	<i>How we help our clients</i>	People come to us for help. It's our job to listen, and to link everyone who reaches out to us to the specific help they need. Everyone who comes to us should be linked to a resource.
<b>Internal - Leadership / Board</b>	<i>How the agency is meeting the mission</i>	We are accountable. We report specific results, and we use data to drive decisions at every level. This way, we ensure that everything we do is directly linked to our Mission, Vision, and Values.
<b>Media</b>	<i>How we are helping our clients</i>	Our work is both heart-mending, and heart rending. Any time we are confronted with a case like this we focus all our efforts on providing for the immediate needs of the child. We provide shelter, food, clothing, and medical care and more through our programs from the moment a child enters our care.
<b>Public</b>	<i>What we do for our clients, and what we don't do</i>	We provide the support that equips families to properly care for the children in their custody. We do not oversee family separations or child removals - those are handled by the state of Texas. We come in to help determine a pathway forward for the whole family.



## CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The public launch of the newly named Harris County Resources for Children and Adults (Resources) provides a strong opportunity to reacquaint the community with a valuable agency that provides critical services to people in crisis. The Resources leadership team recognizes the need for unified, consistent, and strategic messaging to expand the agency's positive influence.

Findings of the Brand Audit, Social Media Audit, and Research Report will guide development and implementation of a comprehensive branding and strategic marketing plan. This plan will include:

- Style Manual
- Logo Design
- Social Media Campaign
- Digital and Print Templates
- Earned Media Strategy