



## **Legislative Priorities for Texas CASA for 84<sup>th</sup> Legislature**

### Seek Adequate State Funding to Support CASA Growth and Serve More Children

- Maintain current funding through the Office of Attorney General Crime Victims Compensation fund and request \$2 million in additional funding for FY 2016 and \$2 million for FY 2017.
- Support efforts to provide adequate, ongoing funding sources for the Crime Victims Compensation Fund.

### Improve Courts and the Judicial Process

- Amend the Texas Family Code to create a legal presumption that CASAs shall be appointed as guardians ad litem.
- Support efforts to improve the functioning and convenient and timely access to courts that recognize and accommodate the special needs of the child welfare system.

### Support Needed Improvements at DFPS and Strengthen CASA-DFPS Partnerships

- Support DFPS funding increases to lower caseworker/staff turnover and increase retention of experienced staff, as well as other DFPS priorities that improve child welfare.
- Request new appropriated funds from DFPS to enhance CASA family finding efforts and to expand CASA efforts to help children and youth in PMC achieve permanency.

### Support Changes Affecting DFPS and the Foster Care System

- Support provisions in the DFPS Sunset bill to improve placement decisions and hasten permanency.
- Support provisions in the DFPS Sunset bill to collect data on former foster youth who aged out of the system, including employment history, economic status, educational attainment, health status, marital and family status and other relevant indicators of well being.
- Support legislation to enact recommendations of the Texas CASA Mental Health Task Force, including efforts to promote normalcy, to better assess foster care providers, and to increase the quality and availability of mental health services.
- Support other statutory changes that improve the ability of CASA volunteers to more effectively advocate for children in the CPS system.