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## STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR TEXAS CASA FOR 85TH LEGISLATURE

#### *State Funding Issues*

- Increase state funding for CASA programs under HHSC from \$13 million to \$15 million annually for the 2018-2019 fiscal biennium to support local CASA program growth in order to serve more children.
- Seek continued financial support through DFPS to expand Texas CASA's Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) program.
- Support state funding to lower CPS caseloads and increase caseworker compensation to help reduce turnover.

#### *Systemic Changes to the Child Protection System*

- Improve foster care placement decisions to reduce disruptions and increase placement proximity to children's families and home communities.
- Increase foster care capacity to provide appropriate caregiving in the least restrictive setting.
- Promote trauma-informed understanding of children and trauma-informed care throughout the child protection system.
- Consolidate all child abuse and neglect investigations under CPS before RCCL is moved to HHSC.
- Increase timely access to needed medical, mental health and other support services for children and families involved with CPS.
- Promote policies and legislation that hold the best interest of the child as the primary determinant in placement and other CPS decisions and respect the voice of children when making policy decisions and recommendations.
- Support policies and legislation to improve permanency outcomes for youth aged 14 and older in state care, and provide better services and support for youth who age out of care.

#### *Court and Legal Practices and Educational Policies*

- Support efforts to improve docketing and other court practices in order to recognize and accommodate the special needs of the child protection system.
- Support policies and legislation to improve the quality and funding for legal representation of children in the child protection system.
- Support criminal justice system reforms to remedy legal barriers which disproportionately impact children and youth in state care.
- Support legislation and policies that improve educational outcomes for children and youth in state care.