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## STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE

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### Texas CASA Exceptional Funding Item Request to HHSC

#### **Summary**

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Texas CASA is requesting consideration for an HHSC Exceptional Item to increase funding for CASA programs by \$2.25 million annually, from \$13,224,500 million in the current biennium to \$15,449,500 million for each year of the 2020-21 biennium. Texas CASA is the financial conduit to our 71 local CASA programs. Funding for CASA programs is currently under F.3.2 Strategy: Child Advocacy Programs, along with funding for Child Advocacy Center Programs. Funding for CASA programs is detailed in HHSC rider 129 b.

Texas CASA's request is primarily based on the substantial growth in the number of volunteers assigned and children served by CASA programs, and the impact anticipated future growth will have on local CASA program costs. In FY 2017 CASA experienced a 14 percent growth in volunteers and a 6.4 percent growth in children served, as illustrated in charts 1 and 2. CASA served 58.4 percent of children in state care in FY 2017, and our ultimate goal is to serve all children in state care. Recruitment, training and case assignment of volunteers is the key to serving more children, and under the CASA model this will require growth in volunteer supervisors and other professional staff, as well as other related costs including direct operating expenses.

Texas CASA is following the direction of state and legislative leaders to expand service to more children in foster care. State investment through HHSC funding is highly leveraged with an estimated 1.2 million hours of CASA volunteer service valued at around \$30 million. State investment also leverages private philanthropic investment and other local funds on an approximately three dollar to one state dollar basis, and it leverages other federal funds. Most importantly, CASA volunteers efficiently provide essential advocacy and support for child victims of abuse and neglect.

#### **CASA Growth**

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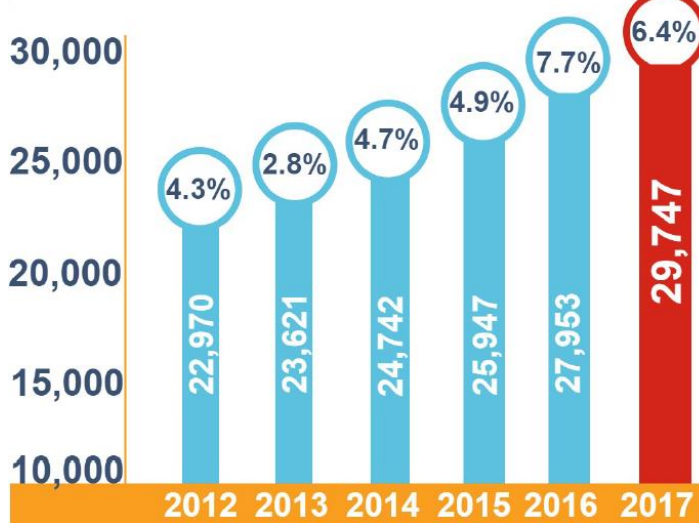
Based on requests from state and legislative leaders, Texas CASA has initiated several efforts to accelerate growth in volunteers and children served. Texas CASA began a multimedia statewide volunteer recruitment and awareness campaign in 2017. In collaboration with local programs, Texas CASA developed and has been disseminating best practices for volunteer recruitment and retention. Texas CASA also administers a competitive growth fund using HHSC funding.

The combination of these efforts has substantially elevated growth as illustrated in charts 1 and 2 below. The FY 2017 growth rate for volunteers of 14 percent substantially exceeded our expectations. Staff is still analyzing the disparity in growth in volunteers and children served since these have historically tracked fairly closely – CASA's efforts to serve more children in Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC) provide a partial explanation. Texas CASA anticipates a



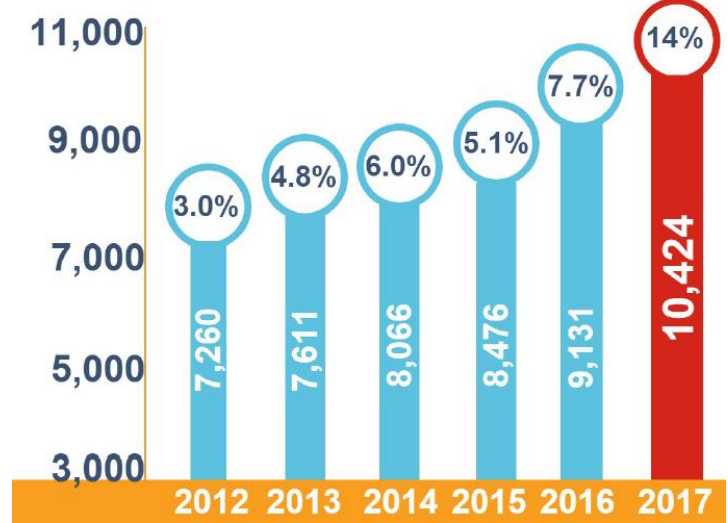
continued higher rate of growth in both volunteers and children served during the current biennium and through the FY 2020-21 biennium. Texas CASA is not currently able to project a single likely growth rate for volunteers or children served, but expects that it will be in the 5 to 8 percent range. Using 5 and 8 percent as the lower and upper bounds of growth between 2017 and 2021, CASA will likely see total children served grow to between 36,158 and 40,470, while total volunteers are expected to grow to between 12,670 and 14,182. This growth will not be possible without additional funding to support required staff and other program costs.

**Chart 1: Increase in Children Served**



Yearly number of children served & growth rate statewide.

**Chart 2: Increase in Volunteers**



Yearly number of active volunteers & growth rate statewide.

### **Impact of Growth on CASA Program Costs**

The CASA model is based on carefully screened and well-trained volunteers overseen by highly knowledgeable CASA program staff. CASA program standards limit the number of volunteers and cases that a staff supervisor can oversee to 30 volunteers or 45 cases. This is a quality assurance mechanism similar to caseload standards or caps. In practice, this means that the primary driver of program costs is the number of volunteers assigned and the commensurate number of supervisory staff and training staff, and other associated costs to effectively manage volunteer recruitment, training and oversight. A number of CASA programs are also attempting to lower their volunteer oversight ratios to account for the increased complexity of cases and the higher and more complex needs of many of the children they serve.

Texas CASA's Exceptional Item request of \$2.25 million per year is intended to cover the anticipated costs growing out of continued expansion of volunteers and children served across the CASA network during the state 2020-2021 biennium. Currently the largest program cost items for state reimbursement for local programs are staff salaries and benefits, which are anticipated to be 77 percent of overall costs in FY 2018. Average salary and benefits costs for recruiting and hiring a volunteer supervisor are in the \$50,000 to \$60,000 range, with additional direct operating expenses associated with that position. According to FY 2018 budgets submitted by local programs, 77 percent of HHSC funds cover salaries for program staff with another 10 percent for fringe benefits.



CASA programs are also experiencing other cost pressures based on external competition for staff, and the increasing complexity of cases and the higher needs of children served. Local CASA programs have cited the legislatively authorized \$1,000 a month salary increase for CPS caseworkers as increasing the compensation necessary to attract and retain quality CASA staff, particularly given state health benefits and retirement. Several CASA programs have indicated that staff members have returned to the state workforce as a result of better compensation. As mentioned previously, some CASA programs are lowering their volunteer oversight ratios to account for the increased complexity of cases and the higher and more complex needs of the children they serve.

### **HHSC Funding Leverages Significant Volunteer Resources & Other Funds**

State funding through HHSC efficiently leverages an estimated 1.2 million hours of CASA volunteer time annually based on a conservative estimate of 10 volunteered hours per month for the approximately 10,000 volunteers in 2017. Based on the 2016 average hourly value of volunteer time of \$25.15 for Texas developed by Independentsector.org, this renders an estimated value of approximately \$30 million that HHSC funding leverages. In addition, across all CASA programs in Texas, every state dollar helps leverage around three dollars in private charitable contributions and other local contributions. In FY 2017, Texas CASA awarded \$10,544,190 in HHSC funds to our 71 local programs. These local programs brought in an additional \$30,729,000 from local private funding and contributions, local government funds and United Way.

### **Other Considerations**

CASA volunteers will continue to play a crucial role in our child protection system. With the expansion of Community-Based Care in Texas resulting from the enactment of Senate Bill 11 during the 85th Legislature, CASA programs and volunteers will need to play an even greater role in protecting the best interests of children in state conservatorship. CASA programs and volunteers will provide oversight and assurance as private contractors assume many of the duties and responsibilities historically borne by Child Protective Services. CASA is already planning how to support our new partners in the child protection system.

### **About Texas CASA & the Statewide CASA Network**

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers are community members with a special calling to help children in need. They are trained to serve the state's most vulnerable children by working one-on-one with each child or sibling group to form a relationship built on trust and honest communication.

At the local level, the 71 local CASA programs champion the cause to make children's lives better by recruiting, training and supervising these dedicated volunteers. Local CASA programs currently serve children in 217 of Texas' 254 counties.

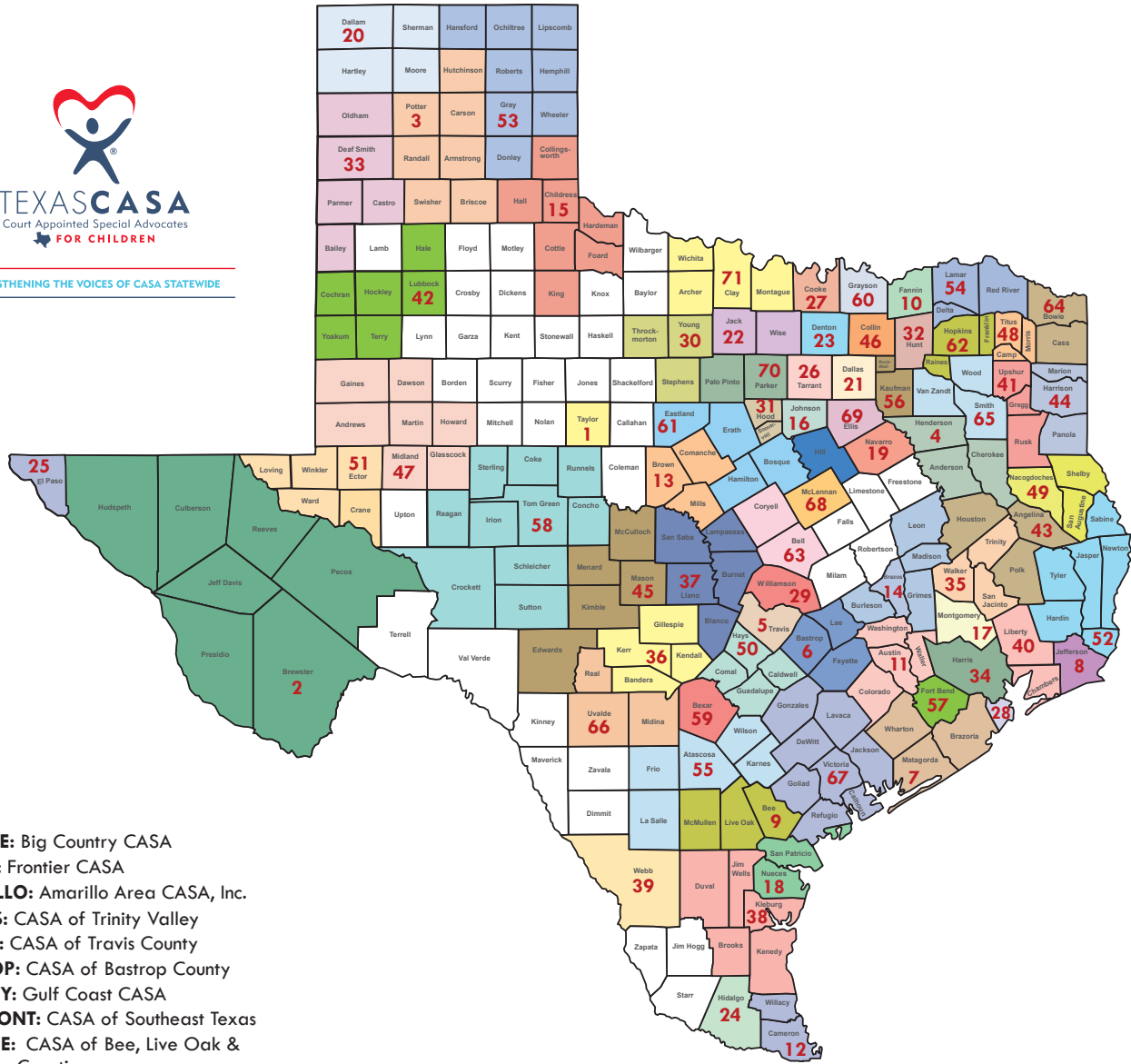
At the state level, Texas CASA provides financial support and services to help the local programs operate effectively and works directly with the state legislature to create systemic change – clearing the path for volunteers to better advocate for children. Through a culture of collaboration, Texas CASA inspires and empowers every volunteer's passion for helping children thrive and grow.

# CASA PROGRAMS IN TEXAS FY2018



**TEXASCASA**  
Court Appointed Special Advocates  
**FOR CHILDREN**

STRENGTHENING THE VOICES OF CASA STATEWIDE



- 1 ABILENE:** Big Country CASA
- 2 ALPINE:** Frontier CASA
- 3 AMARILLO:** Amarillo Area CASA, Inc.
- 4 ATHENS:** CASA of Trinity Valley
- 5 AUSTIN:** CASA of Travis County
- 6 BASTROP:** CASA of Bastrop County
- 7 BAY CITY:** Gulf Coast CASA
- 8 BEAUMONT:** CASA of Southeast Texas
- 9 BEEVILLE:** CASA of Bee, Live Oak & McMullen Counties
- 10 BONHAM:** Fannin County Children's Center
- 11 BRENHAM:** CASA for Kids of South Central Texas
- 12 BROWNSVILLE:** CASA of Cameron & Willacy Counties
- 13 BROWNWOOD:** CASA in the Heart of Texas
- 14 BRYAN:** Voices for Children, Inc. - CASA of Brazos Valley
- 15 CHILDRESS:** CASA of the Rolling Plains
- 16 CLEBURNE:** CASA of Johnson County
- 17 CONROE:** Child Advocates of Montgomery County
- 18 CORPUS CHRISTI:** CASA of the Coastal Bend
- 19 CORSICANA:** CASA of Navarro County
- 20 DALHART:** CASA 69, Inc.
- 21 DALLAS:** Dallas CASA
- 22 DECATUR:** CASA of Wise & Jack Counties
- 23 DENTON:** CASA of Denton County
- 24 EDINBURG:** CASA of Hidalgo County
- 25 EL PASO:** CASA of El Paso
- 26 FORT WORTH:** CASA of Tarrant County
- 27 GAINESVILLE:** CASA of North Texas
- 28 GALVESTON:** CASA of Galveston County
- 29 GEORGETOWN:** CASA of Williamson County
- 30 GRAHAM:** North Star CASA
- 31 GRANBURY:** CASA of Hood & Somervell Counties
- 32 GREENVILLE:** CASA for Hunt County
- 33 HEREFORD:** Great Plains CASA for Kids
- 34 HOUSTON:** Child Advocates, Inc.
- 35 HUNTSVILLE:** CASA of Walker, San Jacinto & Trinity Counties
- 36 KERRVILLE:** Hill Country CASA
- 37 KINGSLAND:** CASA for the Highland Lakes Area
- 38 KINGSVILLE:** Brush Country CASA
- 39 LAREDO:** Voz de Niños
- 40 LIBERTY:** CASA of Liberty/Chambers Counties
- 41 LONGVIEW:** East Texas CASA
- 42 LUBBOCK:** CASA of the South Plains
- 43 LUFKIN:** CASA of the Pines
- 44 MARSHALL:** CASA of Harrison County
- 45 MASON:** Bluebonnet CASA
- 46 MCKINNEY:** CASA of Collin County
- 47 MIDLAND:** CASA of West Texas
- 48 MOUNT PLEASANT:** CASA of Titus, Camp & Morris Counties
- 49 NACOGDOCHES:** CASA of Deep East Texas
- 50 NEW BRAUNFELS:** CASA of Central Texas
- 51 ODESSA:** CASA of the Permian Basin Area
- 52 ORANGE:** CASA of the Sabine Neches Region
- 53 PAMPA:** CASA of the High Plains, Inc.
- 54 PARIS:** CASA for KIDS
- 55 PLEASANTON:** CASA of South Texas
- 56 ROCKWALL:** Lone Star CASA
- 57 ROSENBERG:** Child Advocates of Fort Bend
- 58 SAN ANGELO:** Children's Advocacy Center of Tom Green County
- 59 SAN ANTONIO:** Child Advocates San Antonio, Inc.
- 60 SHERMAN:** CASA of Grayson County
- 61 STEPHENVILLE:** CASA for the Cross Timbers Area
- 62 SULPHUR SPRINGS:** Lake Country CASA
- 63 TEMPLE:** CASA of Bell & Coryell Counties
- 64 TEXARKANA:** CASA of Northeast Texas
- 65 TYLER:** CASA for Kids of East Texas
- 66 UVALDE:** Tri-County CASA
- 67 VICTORIA:** Golden Crescent CASA, Inc.
- 68 WACO:** CASA of McLennan County
- 69 WAXAHACHIE:** CASA of Ellis County
- 70 WEATHERFORD:** CASA - Hope for Children, Inc.
- 71 WICHITA FALLS:** Child Advocates CASA of Red River