

TEXAS CASA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 89TH SESSION

FUNDING PRIORITIES

1. Maintain the current appropriation of \$31.9M in the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) bill pattern.
2. Maintain the current state appropriation for Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funds.
3. Maintain the current appropriation of \$643,600 for Family Finding/Collaborative Family Engagement in the Department of Family and Protective Services bill pattern.

POLICY PRIORITIES

1. **Texas CASA supports policies that preserve families, promote family reunification when possible, and minimize the time children spend in foster care.**

Texas CASA will specifically focus on:

- Funding additional family preservation services, including evidence-based programs for parenting skills, in-home wrap-around services, behavioral health and substance use treatment
- Increased funding for and increased utilization of post-adoption supports to provide stability and prevent foster care reentry
- Policies and funding efforts to increase mental health services in communities for both children and families, with a particular focus on increasing services in rural areas of Texas
- Monitoring the impact of the statewide scaling of the Alternative Response pilot in Region 10

2. **Texas CASA supports funding and policies that provide a child access to safe, stable placements in their community that meet their individual need and support their permanency goals.**

Texas CASA will specifically focus on:

- Policies and funding to support the successful implementation of the Texas Child-Centered Care System (T3C)
- Ongoing monitoring of the number of children without placement and the policy solutions being implemented by the Department of Family and Protective Services
- Efforts to keep children placed close to their home communities
- Policies aimed at improving processes and increasing resources to locate at-risk youth who run away from their placements
- Efforts to prevent case dismissal when children are on runaway status

3. Texas CASA supports funding and policies that further support and encourage placement with relative caregivers.

Texas CASA will specifically focus on:

- Legislation, riders or budget items that will increase the daily reimbursement rate for kinship caregivers
- Increased funding for concrete services
- Decreased requirements and expanded funding to allow kinship caregivers to have access to childcare and respite care
- Implementation of new licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes in Texas

4. Texas CASA supports funding and policies that improve services and supports for older youth in foster care, and older youth exiting foster care.

Texas CASA will specifically focus on:

- Increased funding for events, education and other programming for youth in foster care who are older and preparing to exit foster care
- Increased funding for post-secondary education activities for youth in foster care, including transportation to college campus events across Texas
- Increased rates for supervised independent living programs for young adults in extended foster care
- Removal of the requirement to be age 25 to secure the tuition waiver for youth who exit foster care at 18, as recommended by the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Removal of the requirement that a young person must have been adopted or in Permanent Managing Conservatorship on or after 2009 to access the tuition and fee waiver for youth who experienced foster care

MISSION: To support local CASA volunteer advocacy programs and to advocate for effective public policy for children and families in the child protection system.