

By: Hull, Swanson, Ramos

H.B. No. 2973

Substitute the following for H.B. No. 2973:

By: Talarico

C.S.H.B. No. 2973

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT  
2 relating to certain requirements regarding court-appointed  
3 volunteer advocate programs.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. Section 264.601, Family Code, is amended by  
6 adding Subdivisions (1-a) and (1-b) to read as follows:

7 (1-a) "Active volunteer advocate" means an individual  
8 who:

9 (A) has been trained by a volunteer advocate  
10 program in accordance with recognized standards for volunteer  
11 advocate programs; and

12 (B) is currently serving as a volunteer advocate  
13 on at least one child's case.

14 (1-b) "Inactive volunteer advocate" means an  
15 individual who:

16 (A) has been trained by a volunteer advocate  
17 program in accordance with recognized standards for volunteer  
18 advocate programs; and

19 (B) is not currently serving as a volunteer  
20 advocate.

21 SECTION 2. Section 264.603(a), Family Code, is amended to  
22 read as follows:

23 (a) The commission shall contract with one statewide  
24 organization that is exempt from federal income taxation under

1 Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as an organization  
2 described by Section 501(c)(3) of that code and designated as a  
3 supporting organization under Section 509(a)(3) of that code, and  
4 that is composed of individuals or groups of individuals who have  
5 expertise in the dynamics of child abuse and neglect and experience  
6 in operating volunteer advocate programs to provide training,  
7 technical assistance, and evaluation services for the benefit of  
8 local volunteer advocate programs. The contract shall:

9 (1) include measurable goals and objectives relating  
10 to the number of:

11 (A) active volunteer advocates in the program;

12 [~~and~~]

13 (B) inactive volunteer advocates in the program;

14 and

15 (C) children receiving services from the  
16 program; and

17 (2) follow practices designed to ensure compliance  
18 with standards referenced in the contract.

19 SECTION 3. Section 264.604(a), Family Code, is amended to  
20 read as follows:

21 (a) A person is eligible for a contract under Section  
22 264.602 only if the person is a public or private nonprofit entity  
23 that operates a volunteer advocate program that:

24 (1) uses individuals appointed as volunteer advocates  
25 or guardians ad litem by the court to provide for the needs of  
26 abused or neglected children;

27 (2) has provided court-appointed advocacy services

1 for at least six months;

2 (3) provides court-appointed advocacy services for at  
3 least 10 children each month; ~~and~~

4 (4) has demonstrated that the program has local  
5 judicial support;

6 (5) has adopted a grievance procedure to address  
7 complaints regarding negligence or misconduct related to a  
8 volunteer advocate's duties under Section 107.002; and

9 (6) maintains accurate records regarding active  
10 volunteer advocates and inactive volunteer advocates under the  
11 program.

12 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.