

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 4806  
By: Rose  
Human Services  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates™ (CASA) advocates for abused and neglected children in the court system through the development, growth and support of local CASA programs.

Texas CASA is part of a national volunteer movement that began over 30 years ago in Seattle. The first CASA program in Texas began in Dallas in 1979. Today, CASA operates 68 local programs covering 203 counties with 68 programs helping over 20,000 of the 44,000 foster children in state care.

Since the early 1990s, the Texas Legislature has seen fit to support the expansion and growth of CASA volunteers and programs serving foster children. For all intents and purposes, the CASA statute authorizing funding has not been significantly updated since 1995.

H.B. 4806 updates current Family Code provisions to more accurately reflect its current operations, administration and funding needs.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

HB 4806 specifies that a "volunteer advocate program" means a volunteer-based nonprofit program that provides advocacy services to abused or neglected children with the goal of obtaining permanent placement and complies with recognized standards for volunteer advocate programs.

The bill states that the statewide organization with which the attorney general contracts shall provide advocacy services to abused or neglected children and strikes current law relating to expanding existing services of the programs.

The bill states that expenses incurred by the volunteer advocate program to promote public awareness are not considered administrative expenses.

HB 4806 adds that contract provisions between the attorney general and one statewide organization or groups of individuals to provide training, technical assistance and evaluation of services for the benefit of local volunteer advocate programs must include measurable goals and objectives relating to the number of volunteer advocates in the program and children receiving services from the program. The contract must also follow practices designed to ensure compliance with standards referenced in the contract.

HB 4806 would authorize funding for a public or nonprofit entity that operates a volunteer advocate program if it has provided court-appointed advocacy services for at least six months, instead of two years as stated in current law.

The bill repeals Family Code sections 264.602(c) and 264.607 (b) and (c) pertaining to the use of certain forms and scaling state funding of local programs.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

The act takes effect September 1, 2009, unless it receives a vote of two-thirds of all member elected to each house, in which case it would take effect immediately.