

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1227
By: Dukes
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

While a court-appointed volunteer advocate, sometimes known as a court-appointed special advocate or CASA volunteer, has access to certain information regarding the child for which the advocate is providing services, interested parties note that a volunteer advocate is required to stay inside the child protective services office and look through information until finding the needed information. H.B. 1227 seeks to allow a volunteer advocate to quickly and securely access information in a child's case file through an automated case tracking and information management system.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTIONS 1 and 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1227 amends the Family Code to require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), subject to the availability of money, to develop an Internet application that allows a court-appointed volunteer advocate representing a child in the managing conservatorship of DFPS to access the child's case file through the department's automated case tracking and information management system and to add the volunteer advocate's findings and reports to the child's case file. The bill requires the court-appointed volunteer advocate to maintain the confidentiality required by statutory provisions relating to child welfare services and by DFPS rule for the information accessed by the advocate through the system. The bill prohibits DFPS from using money other than money received as a gift, grant, or donation to pay for the costs of developing and maintaining the Internet application and authorizes DFPS to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations of any kind and from any source for such purposes.

H.B. 1227 requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission, as soon as practicable, to adopt rules necessary to implement the bill's provisions. The bill requires DFPS, as soon as practicable, to solicit money and develop the Internet application.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2013.