

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 539  
By: Hinojosa  
State Affairs  
6/29/2017  
Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

In 2015, five women were murdered during custody exchanges. Overall, 11 children witnessed the murder of their mothers, highlighting the need for better, safer custody solutions.

Currently, mediators handling suits affecting parent-child relationships (child custody) cases do not have training in domestic violence. Other professionals involved in child custody cases such as parenting time coordinators and child custody evaluators have a statutory requirement of a minimum of eight hours of training on domestic violence. Mediators play a pivotal role in child custody cases and families' lives.

S.B. 539 enhances family safety and well-being by including a family violence dynamics training requirement for mediators in child custody cases. Mediators with a base level of domestic violence knowledge can help accomplish safety in the mediation process. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 539 amends current law relating to the qualifications for an impartial third party in certain civil disputes.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 154.052(b), Civil Practice and Remedies Code, as follows:

(b) Requires a person, to qualify for an appointment as an impartial third party under this subchapter (Impartial Third Parties) in a dispute relating to the parent-child relationship, to complete the training required by Subsection (a) (relating to minimum classroom training for impartial third parties) and an additional 24 hours of training in certain fields, including a minimum of four hours of family violence dynamics training developed in consultation with a statewide family violence advocacy organization.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective to January 1, 2018.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2017.