

By: Hull

H.B. No. 474

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 that is composed of  
3 individuals or groups of individuals who have expertise in the  
4 dynamics of child abuse and neglect and experience in operating  
5 volunteer advocate programs to provide training, technical  
6 assistance, and evaluation services for the benefit of local  
7 volunteer advocate programs. The contract shall:

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

10 (A) active volunteer advocates in the program;

11 [~~and~~]

12 (B) inactive volunteer advocates in the program;

13 and

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

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

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

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

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

26 (2) has provided court-appointed advocacy services  
27 for at least six months;

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

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

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

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

11           SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.