

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.