

SUBJECT: Limiting training hours for foster and adoptive parents to 35 hours

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Frank, Hinojosa, Clardy, Deshotel, Klick, Meza, Noble
0 nays
2 absent — Miller, Rose

WITNESSES: For — Cindy Asmussen; Jana Normandin; Beth Walker; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Krista McIntire, Family Rights Advocacy; Andrew Brown, Texas Public Policy Foundation)

Against — None

On — Alyssa Jones, Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Liz Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services; Amber Krause, Health and Human Services Commission)

BACKGROUND: Human Resources Code sec. 42.0537 requires potential caregivers to complete at least 35 hours of competency-based, preservice training before they can be verified or approved as foster or adoptive parents.

Sec. 42.042(b) requires the Department of Family and Protective Services at least once every six years to conduct a comprehensive review of all rules and standards regulating facilities, homes, and agencies that provide childcare services.

Some have suggested that the training requirements for potential foster or adoptive parents are overly burdensome and may result in qualified families choosing not to enter the system.

DIGEST: CSHB 2764 would limit total training hours for potential foster or adoptive parents, require the Department of Family and Protective

Services (DFPS) to streamline and simplify training, and allow child-placing agencies to waive trainings that were not directly related to caring for the child.

The bill would limit training for potential caregivers to 35 hours, except for cases in which the child had complex medical needs, emotional disorders, intellectual or developmental disabilities, was a victim of human trafficking, or any other situation as determined by DFPS.

The bill also would allow child placing agencies to provide additional training that met the eligibility standards for federal financial participation under the requirements of the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Child-placing agencies could issue a provisional verification to prospective foster caregivers while they were completing those additional training requirements.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) would be required to create and implement a process to simplify, streamline, and provide for greater flexibility in the application of the minimum standards to licensed child-placing agencies, agency foster homes, and adoptive homes with the goal of increasing the number of family and adoptive homes in the state. That process would have to be completed by December 31, 2020, or by the date of HHSC's next comprehensive review. This provision would expire September 1, 2021.

DFPS would be required to grant each child-placing agency and single source continuum contractor the authority to waive certain minimum training standards that were not directly related to caring for the child for certain foster homes or foster or adoptive parents.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019, and would apply only to foster care contracts entered into or renewed after the effective date.