

SUBJECT: Requiring caseworkers to meet with foster children every month

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Frank, Hinojosa, Clardy, Meza, Miller, Noble, Rose

0 nays

2 absent — Deshotel, Klick

WITNESSES: For — Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Bryan Mares, Texas CASA; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Melissa Shannon, Bexar County Commissioners Court; Lauren Spreen, Texas Academy of Family Physicians; Amy Bresnen, Texas Family Law Foundation; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Jennifer Lucy, Texprotects; Arthur Simon)

Against — None

On — Liz Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Audrey Carmical, Department of Family and Protective Services)

DIGEST: HB 3614 would require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to conduct an in-person meeting at least once per month with each child in the department's conservatorship and to document the results of the meeting in the child's case file. DPFS would submit a report to the Legislature on those visits.

Monthly meetings. Each monthly meeting would have to include:

- a complete assessment of the child's safety, including an assessment of the child's placement;
- if the child was verbal, an interview with the child conducted individually, separately, and privately from the caregiver and other children;

- a discussion of the forms of discipline used in the placement; and
- a review of the child's medical, mental health, dental, and educational progress and needs.

If a monthly meeting was missed, DFPS would have to record the reason for the missed meeting in the child's case file. If the monthly meeting was not conducted by the primary caseworker assigned to a child protective services (CPS) case, the caseworker would have to communicate with the child at least once per month by telephone, video conference, or another developmentally appropriate form of communication.

DFPS would have to ensure that each CPS caseworker received training on visitation requirements and would have to update its automated case tracking and information management system to allow caseworkers to record each meeting with a child.

Report. By the 30th day following the last day of each calendar quarter, DFPS would have to submit a report to the lieutenant governor, House speaker, and the chairs of the relevant legislative committees. The report would have to include:

- the total number of caseworker visits with children in DFPS conservatorship that caseworkers were required to make each month of the calendar quarter;
- the total number of caseworker visits with children in DFPS conservatorship that caseworkers actually made each month of the calendar quarter, including face-to-face visits and virtual visits; and
- the number of visits caseworkers made each month as a percentage of the number they were required to make.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.