

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 1227
By: Dukes (Williams)
Health & Human Services
5/7/2013
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

While a court-appointed volunteer advocate, sometimes known as a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteer, has access to certain information regarding the child for whom the advocate is providing services, interested parties note that a volunteer advocate is required to stay inside the child protective services office and look through information until finding the needed information. C.S.H.B. 1227 seeks to allow a volunteer advocate to quickly and securely access information in a child's case file through an automated case tracking and information management system.

C.S.H.B. 1227 amends current law relating to the use of an Internet application to allow access by court-appointed volunteer advocates to child protective services case information.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 264.614, Family Code) and SECTION 2 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter G, Chapter 264, Family Code, by adding Section 264.614, as follows:

Sec. 264.614. INTERNET APPLICATION FOR CASE TRACKING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. (a) Requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), subject to the availability of money as described by Subsection (c), to develop an Internet application that allows a court-appointed volunteer advocate representing a child in the managing conservatorship of DFPS to access the child's case file through DFPS's automated case tracking and information management system and to add the volunteer advocate's findings and reports to the child's case file.

(b) Requires the court-appointed volunteer advocate to maintain the confidentiality required by this chapter (Child Welfare Services) and DFPS rule for the information accessed by the advocate through the system described by Subsection (a).

(c) Authorizes DFPS to use money appropriated to DFPS and money received as a gift, grant, or donation to pay for the costs of developing and maintaining the Internet application required by Subsection (a). Authorizes DFPS to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations of any kind and from any source for purposes of this section.

(d) Requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner) to adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires DFPS, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to solicit money, if necessary, and develop the Internet application as required by Section 264.614, Family Code, as added by this Act.

(b) Requires the executive commissioner, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to adopt rules necessary to implement Section 264.614, Family Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2013.