



**Combined Children's
Advocacy Programs and
Contingency for Child
Advocacy Center and
Court Appointed Special
Advocate Grants Report
for Fiscal Year 2020**

**As Required by
House Bill 1, 86th Legislature,
Regular Session, 2019 (Article II,
Health and Human Services
Commission, Rider 95(e)) and
Texas Family Code, Section 264.608**



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Executive Summary

The *Combined Children's Advocacy Programs and Contingency for Child Advocacy Center and Court Appointed Special Advocate Grants* report for fiscal year 2020 is submitted in compliance with the 2020-21 General Appropriations Act, [House Bill 1, 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019](#) (Article II, Health and Human Services Commission [HHSC], Rider 95(e)) and Texas Family Code, [§264.608](#).

Rider 95(e) requires HHSC to submit a report detailing the expenditures of funds appropriated for children's advocacy programs. Section 264.608 requires HHSC to submit a detailed report of the data on contracts and client services.

Beginning in fiscal year 2016, HHSC established contracts to administer the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program and Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC) program, pursuant to Senate Bill 354, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015.

The CASA program provides training, technical assistance, evaluation and funding administration to local programs who provide recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteer advocates. The program represents children under 18 years of age in the protective custody of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Child Protective Services (CPS). In fiscal year 2020, HHSC contracted with Texas CASA (TXCASA) to provide administration of this program and to contract with local programs for direct services.

The CAC program provides training, technical assistance, evaluation services and funds administration to local programs that facilitate the investigation and prosecution of child sexual and physical abuse cases and provides critical support and aftercare services to children and their families. In fiscal year 2020, HHSC contracted with the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX) to provide administration of this program and to contract with local programs for direct services.

1. Introduction

Rider 95(e) requires HHSC to submit an annual report detailing the expenditures of funds appropriated for children’s advocacy programs within 100 days of the close of each fiscal year to the Governor, Senate Finance Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and Legislative Budget Board (LBB).

The report must include:

- Information demonstrating continuity of service from the previous fiscal year;
- The amount of grants awarded in each of the categories;
- The amount of expenditures for administration;
- The amount of expenditures from General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund Account No. 0469; and
- Oversight activities conducted relating to the children’s advocacy programs.

Additionally, Section 264.608 of the Texas Family Code requires HHSC to submit an annual report by December 1 of each fiscal year to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, members of the Legislature, and LBB. This report must:

- Summarize reports from volunteer advocate programs under contract with HHSC;
- Analyze the effectiveness of the contracts made by HHSC under Chapter 264; and
- Provide information on:
 - ▶ The expenditure of funds under Chapter 264;
 - ▶ Services provided and the number of children for whom the services were provided; and
 - ▶ Any other information relating to the services provided by the volunteer advocate programs under Chapter 264.

2. Background

HHSC Children's Advocacy Program (CAP) operating within the Health, Developmental, and Independence Services (HDIS) department of HHSC, provides critical advocacy services for children who have experienced abuse, witnessed violence, or are in the custody of CPS.

HHSC contracts with one statewide organization each to administer services for children's advocacy services and for children's court appointed advocacy services. The statewide organization must be exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as outlined in Texas Family Code §§264.409 and 264.603.

HHSC program staff responsibilities include oversight of funds management, contract administration, contract monitoring, oversight of program operations, and provision of technical assistance to contracted entities.

TXCASA

TXCASA is the statewide association for 72 local CASA programs that provide advocacy for children in CPS custody in 219 counties. TXCASA works to connect each part of the CASA community and empower the local programs to perform at their highest level. At the local level, the programs recruit, train and supervise CASA volunteers to advocate for the best interests of children involved in foster care and to improve their well-being. CASA volunteers typically remain with their assigned child/children until the case closes due to the child achieving permanency or aging out of care.

At the state level, TXCASA provides a variety of services including financial support, training, technical assistance, and monitoring for standards compliance to help the local programs operate effectively. TXCASA develops training curricula concerning CASA standards for volunteers and local staff to advocate for abused and neglected children in Texas. Additionally, TXCASA provides evaluation services and funds administration for local volunteer advocate programs in accordance with Texas Family Code Subchapter G, Court-Appointed Volunteer Advocate Programs.

CACTX

CACTX is the membership organization for all 71 CAC programs in Texas, ensuring access to safety, justice, and healing for Texas children impacted by sexual and physical abuse through the CAC multidisciplinary team approach. This team is comprised of law enforcement, CPS, the local prosecuting authority, and medical and mental health professionals who collaboratively develop effective, coordinated strategies sensitive to the needs of each case and child. CACTX assists in the operation of local CAC programs by developing and adopting standards and providing specialized training, technical assistance, evaluation services, and funds administration to support CAC programs under Texas Family Code §264.409.

In addition to statutory requirements in Texas Family Code, HHSC maintains administrative rules that provide the operating standards for each of the statewide children's advocacy programs. CASA standards of operation are found in Texas Administrative Code (TAC) [Title 1, Part 15, Chapter 377, Subchapter B](#), and CAC standards of operation are found in [Title 1, Part 15, Chapter 377, Subchapter C](#).

3. COVID-19 Impact on TXCASA and CACTX

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacted TXCASA and CACTX's training and technical assistance model, local programs direct service delivery, and access to children experiencing abuse, witnessing violence, and those in the custody of CPS. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the statewide organizations quickly adapted to a virtual learning and telehealth platform for local CAC service providers and volunteers. Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the CAP programs, CASA and CAC programs were able to successfully meet the need of clients and ensure continuity of services during the pandemic.

TXCASA and local CASAs adjusted to fulfill their role virtually to interact with children, recruit and train volunteers, attend court, conduct family meetings and gather information. Additionally, TXCASA moved events and training to a virtual format and added programming to the TXCASA website for local programs to access. They proceeded to train local programs on maintaining visual contact with children virtually. CACTX shifted from predominantly in-person service provision to virtual service delivery. In-person training events were shifted to virtual training delivery and multidisciplinary team coordination staff shifted to a hybrid in-person/virtual environment.

Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home orders and social distancing requirements significantly reduced the number of child abuse reports received by CPS. Statewide, there was a decrease in the number of child abuse reports being made, since the largest sources of abuse reporters, medical professionals and teachers, were not seeing children in-person. Consequently, the number of children, and types of services provided to children and families by CACs decreased, although abuse is still occurring. CACTX proactively developed an education and awareness campaign to educate the public on warning signs of abuse when observed in person or virtually. Both CACTX and TXCASA are strategically preparing for the anticipated increase in cases in fiscal year 2021 and beyond. The anticipated increase will be a result of children's potential return to school and making more in-person contact with school officials and other professionals in the community.

4. Funding and Expenditures

Grants

HHSC CAP was appropriated funding for the CAP programs as shown on Table 1. Table 1 delineates grant funding by program, while Table 2 details the method of financing for the grant awards. For fiscal year 2020, the Legislature appropriated HHSC an additional \$1,750,000.00 in exceptional item funding for CASA services, and an additional \$10,000,000.00 in exceptional item funding for CAC services, per annum. This exceptional item (EI) funding was purposed to expand the service capacity and increase the number of children referred to both CASA and CAC programs in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Additionally, this EI funding supported the growth in children served and volunteers recruited as well for TXCASA. CACTX also utilized EI funding to address the increasing number of children being referred to CAC.

Table 1. Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Award by Program

Program	Grant Amount
CASA	\$14,975,811.43
CAC	\$23,599,003.50
Total	\$38,574,814.93

The fiscal year 2020 amount for TXCASA includes the License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802 fiscal year 2019 unexpended funds of \$11,810.93 carried forward to fiscal year 2020.

Table 2. Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Award by Financing Method

Financing Method	Grant Amount
General Revenue	\$23,319,660.00
General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund No. 0469	\$10,229,844.00

Financing Method	Grant Amount
License Plate Trust Fund Account Number	\$25,310.93
General Revenue – Dedicated Sexual Assault Program	\$5,000,000.00
Total	\$38,574,814.93

The fiscal year 2020 amount for TXCASA includes the License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802 fiscal year 2019 unexpended funds of \$11,810.93 carried forward to fiscal year 2020.

Expenditures

Table 3 details funds expended by TXCASA for fiscal year 2020.

Table 3. TXCASA Expenditures

TXCASA	Expended	Unexpended Balance	Total
General Revenue	\$9,529,574.95	\$306,003.55	\$9,835,578.50
General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund No. 0469	\$4,955,787.06	\$159,134.94	\$5,114,922.00
License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802	\$13,496.80	\$8,014.10	\$21,510.90
Total	\$14,498,858.81	\$476,952.62	\$14,975,811.43

Table 4 details the funds expended by CACTX for fiscal year 2020.

Table 4. CACTX Expenditures

CACTX	Expended	Unexpended Balance	Total
General Revenue	\$12,259,816.66	\$1,224,264.84	\$13,484,081.50
General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund No. 0469	\$4,650,521.14	\$464,400.86	\$5,114,922.00
General Revenue - Dedicated Sexual Assault Program Fund No. 5010	\$4,546,033.29	\$453,966.71	\$5,000,000.00
Total	\$21,456,371.09	\$2,142,632.41	\$23,599,003.50

Administrative Expenditures

Texas Family Code, Chapter 264, Subchapters E and G, cap administrative expenses for the CAP contractors. Administrative expenses cannot exceed 12 percent of the annual legislative appropriation. Table 5 shows the total amount of administrative expenditures for each contractor and the percentage of the annual legislative appropriation.

Table 5. Administrative Expenses by Total and Percent of Legislative Appropriation

Contractor	Administrative Expenses	Percent of Legislative Appropriation
TXCASA	\$1,457,516.06	9.73%
CACTX	\$1,743,339.44	7.39%

The legislative appropriation is the fiscal year 2020 grant award for CASA and CAC detailed in Table 1.

Required Data

Table 6 provides information regarding contracts for both TXCASA and CACTX.

Table 6. Fiscal Year 2020 Contracts Summary

	TXCASA	CACTX
Contract Term	2 years	2 years
FY 2020 Total Awarded Amount	\$14,975,811.43	\$23,599,003.50
Administrative Cap	\$1,797,097.37	\$2,831,880.42
Actual Administrative Expense	\$1,457,516.06	\$1,896,581.09
Actual Service Expense	\$13,041,343.46	\$19,559,790.00
Total Expenditures	\$14,498,858.81	\$21,456,371.09

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted TXCASA’s and CACTX’s ability to expend all awarded funds. Both programs made unexpected but necessary changes to their service delivery models and adjusted to the lower number of child abuse reports statewide. It is expected both TXCASA and CACTX will expend their carry forward funds in fiscal year 2021. The fiscal year 2020 total amount includes the License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802; however, only \$9,699.97 was collected to be expended in fiscal year 2020.

Administrative expenses capture all CACTX program expenditures related to carrying out the requirements of Texas Family Code, §264.409 including specialized training, technical assistance, evaluation services, and funds administration to support CAC programs.

To evaluate contractual compliance and to ensure fiscal controls, HHSC CAP and HHSC Fiscal Monitoring Unit (FMU) completed contract monitoring activities during fiscal year 2020 for the areas listed in Table 7. There were no findings for TXCASA nor CACTX.

Table 7. Fiscal Year 2020 Contract Monitoring Activities

Contract Monitoring Activity	TXCASA	CACTX
Board of Directors Makeup and Operation	No findings	No findings
Organizational Chart	No findings	No findings
Policies and Procedures	No findings	No findings
Payroll Journals	No findings	No findings
Timesheets and Activity Logs	No findings	No findings
Scheduled Trainings	No findings	No findings
Programmatic Review	No findings	No findings

HHSC receives quarterly statistical reports from TXCASA and CACTX detailing client and service data and information from each local program. The following data is based on those reports.

Table 8 details TXCASA’s fiscal year 2020 performance data. The data for new children served includes the count of unduplicated children for fiscal year 2020.

Table 8. Fiscal Year 2020 TXCASA Data

Data	Total Number
New Children Served	29,398
Court-Appointed Volunteers	11,066

Data	Total Number
New Volunteers	3206
Local Programs	72
Counties Served	219

Table 9 shows CACTX’s fiscal year 2020 performance data. The data for new children served includes the count of unduplicated children for fiscal year 2020.

Table 9. Fiscal Year 2020 CACTX Data

Data	Total Number
New Children Served	52,368
Children Receiving Mental Health Services	23,231
Forensics Interviews Conducted On-site	41,379
Child Abuse Cases Reviewed by Multidisciplinary Team	33,330
Training Sessions Provided to Local Advocacy Centers	86
Local Programs	71
Counties Receiving Full Services	210

5. Oversight

HHSC provided oversight of contracts by evaluating contractual compliance and ensuring fiscal controls. HHSC completed contract monitoring activities during fiscal year 2020, with no major findings for either contractor.

HHSC reviewed the operation and make-up of the Board of Directors, policies and procedures, detailed general ledger and payroll journals, timesheets and activity logs, personnel files, and local program monitoring files.

Contract oversight activities indicated that services are being provided in accordance with programmatic and contractual requirements. Oversight activities remain ongoing to ensure that contracted providers continue to meet all program requirements, as well as the needs of Texas children.

Beginning fiscal year 2020, HHSC implemented enhanced fiscal oversight for the CAP contracts. Enhanced monitoring is an increased level of monitoring, beyond the regular monitoring, typically used to assess progress of the contractor toward meeting identified goals and outcomes in accordance with contract terms and agency regulations.

6. Contract Effectiveness

CACTX

The following CAC accomplishment data was self-reported and provided to HHSC by CACTX. The Texas CAC network continued to expand its official service area in fiscal year 2020, adding two new counties for a total of 210 counties. Despite a global pandemic negatively impacting child abuse reporting, CAC programs experienced significant growth and surpassed performance goals for fiscal year 2020. They exceeded their goal for the number of new children served by nearly 5 percent and served 2260 more new children than in fiscal year 2019. Additionally, CACTX supported local CAC program capacity by adding therapists, family advocates, case managers, and multidisciplinary team support and coordination. To ensure child victims of crime continue to receive care and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, CAC programs immediately adapted to providing mental health services via telehealth platforms and conducting forensic interviews virtually, when necessary.

Through both in-person and virtual modalities, CAC programs provided 119,731 trauma-informed mental health sessions to 23,231 children and 44,864 mental health sessions to 9,983 adults. CAC programs reviewed 251,147 child abuse reports from the DFPS Statewide Intake Child Abuse Hotline, and 65,809 cases received CAC multidisciplinary team case coordination services. Additionally, 60,493 families received victim advocacy and case management services.

CACTX trained 2,450 CAC and multidisciplinary team partners through 86 trainings in both in-person and virtual settings, including new training offerings including guidance on adapting CAC services during the pandemic such as providing mental health services via telehealth platforms and secondary trauma and resiliency trainings. CACTX also spearheaded new partnerships with the Texas Education Agency and collaborated with key stakeholders and state agencies on various task forces, including the Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force and led the Statewide Multidisciplinary Team.

CACTX and CAC programs in ten counties continue to partner with the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit in fiscal year 2020, launching and sustaining care coordination teams for child sex trafficking cases in Texas.

TXCASA

The following CASA accomplishment data was self-reported and provided to HHSC by TXCASA. Through the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) program, TXCASA and DFPS have steadily increased family engagement in Texas. In fiscal year 2020, 2260 children were served through CFE, representing a 60 percent increase from fiscal year 2019. CFE is a shared collaboration between CASA and CPS—who are jointly trained and staffed to work cases together using a CFE approach which identifies and engages families as ongoing supportive connections and as permanent placements in some cases. This effort emphasizes family connections to fully engage families.

The Volunteer Coaching and Advocacy Program works specifically with CASA staff in how to coach CASA volunteers for retention and towards excellence in advocacy. TXCASA moved from almost exclusively in-person training and assistance to virtual training and assistance to programs with a focus on how they could support their volunteers virtually throughout the pandemic. This yielded 219 unique staff trained onsite or virtually with customized assistance to meet their program needs and 97 percent satisfaction from staff. TXCASA also averages 643 virtual participants on monthly video calls via Zoom.

TXCASA transitioned from in-person to virtual quality assurance reviews that continued to provide both oversight and beneficial program assistance and allowed them to complete 23 of 23 scheduled reviews. They have also seen marked improvement in the retention of CASA program executive directors (ED) and measured 92 percent satisfaction in all areas of new ED support as evidenced through satisfaction surveys of all new EDs

A wide variety of outreach efforts, awareness campaigns, trainings, and focus groups were also accomplished by TXCASA in fiscal year 2020. New interactive and engaging e-learning modules and webinars were developed, eight “Advocacy on the Go” podcasts were recorded, and a statewide virtual huddle was held with CASA program trainers. TXCASA also led a series of new trainer orientations online to offer additional support of remote training during the COVID-19 pandemic. The TXCASA Public Policy Team provided Community Based Care and Family First trainings to educate programs on the impact of CPS’s initiative to outsource case management services and the federal Family First legislation, which allows the use of federal Title IV-E funds to fund prevention services to prevent removal of children into foster care, and limits use of federal funds for some care facilities.

7. Conclusion

HHSC is committed to promoting collaboration with TXCASA and CACTX. This effort seeks to ensure the protection of abused and neglected children through child and family advocacy, victim support, comprehensive case management, forensic interviews, specialized medical and mental health services, assistance with the legal system, and giving children a voice in the process. HHSC will continue to work with TXCASA and CACTX throughout fiscal year 2021 to serve the children of Texas.

CAP is dedicated to strengthening relationships with statewide organizations providing children's advocacy programs through increased communication efforts and technical assistance. The program will continue to improve service quality by enhancing the contract monitoring process, establishing outcome measures, and analyzing data to identify service trends and ensure effective use of state funding.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
CAC	Children’s Advocacy Centers
CACTX	Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas
CAP	Children’s Advocacy Program
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CPS	Child Protective Services
DFPS	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
EI	Exceptional Item
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
LBB	Legislative Budget Board
TXCASA	Texas Court Appointed Special Advocates