



**Combined Children's Advocacy  
Program and Contingency for  
Children's Advocacy Center  
and Court Appointed Special  
Advocate Grants Report for  
Fiscal Year 2023**

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**As Required by  
House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular  
Session, 2023 (Article II, Health and Human  
Services Commission, Rider 79(d)) and Texas  
Family Code, Section 264.608**

**Texas Health and Human Services  
December 2023**



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

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## Executive Summary

The *Combined Children's Advocacy Program and Contingency for Children's Advocacy Center and Court Appointed Special Advocate Grants Report for Fiscal Year 2023* is submitted in compliance with the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Health and Human Services Commission [HHSC], Rider 79(d)) and Texas Family Code Section 264.608.

Rider 79(d) 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 that provide recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteer advocates. The program represents children under the age of 18 who are in the protective custody of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). In fiscal year 2023, HHSC contracted with Texas CASA to provide administration of this program and to contract with local programs for direct client 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 provide critical support and aftercare services to children and their families. In fiscal year 2023, 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 client services.

## Introduction

Rider 79(d) requires HHSC to submit a report by December 1 of each fiscal year detailing the expenditures of funds appropriated for children's advocacy programs to the Governor, Senate Finance Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and the Legislative Budget Board.

The report must include:

- Information demonstrating continuity of service from the previous fiscal year;
- Services provided and the number of children for whom the services were provided;
- The amount of grants awarded in each of the categories;
- The amount of expenditures for administration;
- The amount of expenditures from General Revenue - Dedicated Sexual Assault Program Account No. 5010;
- Oversight activities conducted relating to the children's advocacy programs; and
- An analysis of the effectiveness of the contracts awarded.

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 the Legislative Budget Board. 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.

# 1. Background

HHSC Children's Advocacy Program (CAP) provides critical advocacy services for children who have experienced abuse, witnessed violence, or are in the custody of DFPS. HHSC contracts with one statewide organization to administer services for children's advocacy services and one statewide organization for children's court appointed advocacy services. These statewide organizations must meet all applicable requirements outlined in Chapter 264 of Texas Family Code.

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

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

## Texas CASA

Texas CASA is the statewide association for 72 local CASA programs that provide advocacy for children in DFPS custody in 219 Texas counties. Texas CASA supports the CASA network by administering HHSC funding to local programs and providing training and technical assistance. 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, Texas CASA provides a variety of services including financial support, training, technical assistance, and monitoring for standards compliance to ensure the local programs operate effectively. Texas CASA develops training curricula concerning CASA standards for volunteers and local staff to advocate for abused and neglected children in Texas. Additionally, Texas CASA provides evaluation services and funds administration for local volunteer advocate programs in accordance with Texas Family Code Chapter 264, Subchapter G, Court-Appointed Volunteer Advocate Programs.

## **CACTX**

CACTX is the membership organization for all 70 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, DFPS, the local prosecuting authority, and medical and mental health professionals who collaboratively develop effective, coordinated case strategies, and provide specialized direct services 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 Section 264.409.

## 2. Funding and Expenditures

### Grants

HHSC was appropriated funding for the programs as listed in Table 1, which delineates grant funding by program. Table 2 details the method of financing for the grant awards.

**Table 1. Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Award by Program**

Program	Grant Amount
CASA	\$15,964,000.00
CAC	\$34,547,067.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,511,067.00</b>

**Table 2. Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Award by Financing Method**

Financing Method	Contractor	Grant Amount
General Revenue	Texas CASA and CACTX	\$28,319,660.00
License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802	Texas CASA	\$13,500.00
General Revenue – Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund Account No. 0469	Texas CASA and CACTX	\$10,229,844.00
General Revenue – Dedicated Sexual Assault Program Account No. 5010	CACTX	\$5,000,000.00
Social Services Block Grant Title XX funds transferred from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	CACTX	\$6,948,063.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$50,511,067.00</b>

Table 3 details unexpended balances for Texas CASA and CACTX that were transferred from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2023, pursuant the 2022-23 General



Appropriations Act, Senate Bill 1, 87th Legislature, Regular Session, 2021 (Article II, HHSC, Rider 80(c)).

**Table 3. Unexpended Balance Carryforward Amounts**

<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Unexpended FY22 Balance</b>	<b>Carried Forward to FY23</b>
Texas CASA	\$507,936.15	\$507,936.15
CACTX	\$3,443,217.53	\$3,443,217.53

Unexpended fiscal year 2022 balances for Texas CASA and CACTX were carried forward to fiscal year 2023 and expended within the fiscal year. Table 4 and Table 5 exclude unexpended balance carryforward funds that were expended in fiscal year 2023.

## Expenditures

Table 4 details funds expended and unexpended by Texas CASA for fiscal year 2023.

**Table 4. Texas CASA Expenditures**

<b>Texas CASA</b>	<b>Expended</b>	<b>Unexpended</b>	<b>Total</b>
General Revenue	\$10,246,107.42	\$589,470.58	\$10,835,578.00
General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund No. 0469	\$5,114,922.00	\$0.00	\$5,114,922.00
License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802	\$0.00	\$13,500.00	\$13,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,361,029.42</b>	<b>\$602,970.58</b>	<b>\$15,964,000.00</b>

Table 5 details the funds expended and unexpended by CACTX for fiscal year 2023.

**Table 5. CACTX Expenditures**

<b>CACTX</b>	<b>Expended</b>	<b>Unexpended</b>	<b>Total</b>
General Revenue	\$17,484,082.00	\$0.00	\$17,484,082.00

<b>CACTX</b>	<b>Expended</b>	<b>Unexpended</b>	<b>Total</b>
General Revenue - Dedicated Compensation to Victims of Crime Fund No. 0469	\$5,114,922.00	\$0.00	\$5,114,922.00
General Revenue – Dedicated Sexual Assault Program Fund No. 5010	\$5,000,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000,000.00
Social Services Block Grant Title XX funds transferred from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	\$6,948,063.00	\$0.00	\$6,948,063.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$34,547,067.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$34,547,067.00</b>

## Administrative Expenditures

Texas Family Code, Chapter 264, Subchapters E (CACTX) and G (Texas CASA), cap administrative expenses for the CAP contractors. Administrative expenses cannot exceed 12 percent of the annual legislative appropriation. Table 6 shows the total amount of administrative expenditures for each contractor and the percentage of the annual legislative appropriation.

**Table 6. Administrative Expenses by Total and Percent of Legislative Appropriation**

<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>Percent of Legislative Appropriation</b>
Texas CASA	\$1,342,553.97	8.74%
CACTX	\$4,138,738.63	11.98%

## Required Data

Table 7 provides information regarding contracts for both Texas CASA and CACTX.

**Table 7. Fiscal Year 2023 Contracts Summary**

<b>FY23 Expenditure</b>	<b>Texas CASA</b>	<b>CACTX</b>
<b>Contract Term (FY 22-FY23)</b>	2 years	2 years

<b>FY23 Expenditure</b>	<b>Texas CASA</b>	<b>CACTX</b>
<b>FY 2023 Total Awarded Amount</b>	\$15,964,000.00	\$34,547,067.00
<b>Administrative Cap</b>	\$1,915,680.00	\$4,145,648.04
<b>Actual Administrative Expense</b>	\$1,342,553.97	\$4,138,738.63
<b>Actual Service Expense</b>	\$14,018,475.45	\$30,408,328.37
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$15,361,029.42</b>	<b>\$34,547,067.00</b>

Administrative expenses capture all program expenditures related to carrying out the requirements of Texas Family Code Sections 264.409 and 264.603, including specialized training, technical assistance, evaluation services, and funds administration to support local CASA and CAC programs.

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

Table 8 details Texas CASA’s fiscal year 2023 performance data. The data for new children served reflects the total unduplicated new children served in fiscal year 2023. The data for total children served includes all unduplicated children served in fiscal year 2023. Data on volunteer numbers is also unduplicated.

**Table 8. Fiscal Year 2023 Texas CASA Data**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
Total Children Served	20,169
New Children Served	7,144
Total Court-Appointed Volunteers	8,281
New Volunteers	2,447
Local Programs	72
Counties Served	219

Table 9 shows CACTX’s fiscal year 2023 performance data. The data for new children served reflects the total unduplicated new children served in fiscal year 2023. The data for total children served includes all unduplicated children served in fiscal year 2023.

**Table 9. Fiscal Year 2023 CACTX Data**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Total Number</b>
Total Children Served	64,938
New Children Served	51,742
Children Receiving Mental Health Services	25,953
Forensics Interviews Conducted On-Site	41,927
Child Abuse Cases Reviewed by Multidisciplinary Team	35,993
Training Sessions Provided to Local Advocacy Centers	335
Local Programs	70
Counties Receiving Full Services	208

### 3. Contract Oversight

HHSC provided oversight of CAP contracts by evaluating contractual compliance, reviewing operational policies and procedures, examining local program monitoring files, and ensuring fiscal controls. HHSC completed on-site in-person contract monitoring activities during fiscal year 2023 for both Texas CASA and CACTX. HHSC also provided comprehensive technical assistance to support staff and leadership at Texas CASA and CACTX.

Contract oversight activities indicated that services are being provided in accordance with program 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 and their families.

For fiscal year 2023, HHSC conducted 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. Texas CASA and CACTX worked closely with HHSC to address and resolve any issues noted during enhanced monitoring reviews.

To evaluate contractual compliance, CAP completed contract monitoring activities during fiscal year 2023 for the areas listed in Table 10.

**Table 10. Fiscal Year 2023 Contract Monitoring Activities**

<b>Contract Monitoring Activity</b>	<b>Texas CASA</b>	<b>CACTX</b>
Administrative Review	No findings	No findings
Programmatic Review	No findings	No findings

## 4. Contract Effectiveness

### Texas CASA

Texas CASA and local CASA organizations provide vital support services to advocate for the safety and well-being of children and families in the child welfare system. CASA volunteers provide a consistent presence in the lives of children and families they serve. Texas CASA also receives federal grants and private funds to operate CASA programs and administration. HHSC funding to Texas CASA is only a portion of the total resources CASA receives to fund their organization and local programs.

Texas CASA is responsible for quality assurance, oversight, and funds administration to the network of 72 local service providers in the state. In fiscal year 2023, Texas CASA completed the first year of the three-year cycle to monitor quality assurance and compliance with each local CASA program. Overall compliance was measured at 91 percent, and in-person visits were made by Texas CASA staff to each region in Texas in fiscal year 2023. These visits and listening sessions were conducted to discuss local challenges, successes, and unmet stakeholder and community needs across the state.

In fiscal year 2023, Texas CASA continued to address the post-pandemic impact on volunteerism experienced by local CASA programs. The total number of active CASA volunteers in fiscal year 2023 was 8,281, which is a 13.6 percent decrease from fiscal year 2022. However, the number of new CASA volunteers only decreased by 4.6 percent from fiscal year 2022 to 2023. This suggests volunteer recruitment efforts have been successful the past fiscal year, and Texas CASA continues to work with faith-based and community partners to improve their volunteer recruitment and retention strategies across Texas.

### CACTX

CACTX and local CAC organizations provide a safe child-friendly environment where law enforcement, Child Protective Services, prosecutors, medical providers, and mental health professionals work together to implement coordinated strategies that honor the unique needs of each child and family. CACTX also receives other grants and private funds to operate CAC programs and administration. HHSC funding to CACTX is only a portion of the total resources CAC receives to fund their organization and local programs.

CACTX supports CACs and multidisciplinary team (MDT) partners through training and technical assistance. In fiscal year 2023, 1,787 individuals participated in 75 trainings and CACTX provided local programs with significant programmatic and financial technical assistance to ensure the sustainability and integrity of CAC services throughout the state. In surveys completed by more than 1,700 MDT partners, 84 percent reported that the resources given to them by CAC helped improve work on team cases, and 77 percent reported that they were able to get the information needed to fulfill their areas of responsibility on cases.

CACs play an integral role to improve the outcome of children and families served. Based on qualitative data collected from families and caregivers in fiscal year 2023, 97 percent reported they were given information about the CAC programs and services, and 94 percent reported CAC staff provided them with resources necessary to support their child's needs as they seek safety, justice, and healing.

## 5. Notable Accomplishments

### Texas CASA: Family Engagement

Texas CASA administers the Collaborative Family Engagement (CFE) program, which functions to increase family engagement and improve family outcomes. The CFE approach identifies and engages families to support the child and, in some cases, facilitates child placement. CFE emphasizes family connections to fully engage families. CFE is a shared collaboration between CASA and DFPS, who are jointly trained and staffed to work together using the CFE approach. Training has now expanded to community-based care providers to maintain consistency in the services that children and families receive.

As of fiscal year 2023, all 72 local CASA programs are implementing CFE to improve support of children by locating family members and engaging those members in the child's life. Throughout fiscal year 2023, 6,113 children were served, and 3,289 families were engaged through CFE. This represents a 43 percent increase over fiscal year 2022. Based on qualitative data collected from DFPS, community-based care partners, and local CASA programs, 95 percent of respondents were satisfied with the effectiveness of family engagement using the CFE approach.

### CACTX: Behavioral Health

CACTX received an increase in funding for fiscal years 2022-2023 to increase access to behavioral health services for the population they serve. Behavioral health funds were used to address access to and quality of mental health services available for children served by CACs. Strategies to achieve this goal included recruiting, retaining, and training qualified mental health providers to increase service capacity to support the behavioral health needs of children and their families.

CACs experienced a notable increase in the provision of evidence-based, trauma-focused mental health services throughout fiscal year 2023. CACs provided 25,953 children with evidence-based mental health services, amounting to 134,922 total sessions overall. This represents a 7 percent increase from fiscal year 2022 in children who received mental health services and a 10 percent increase in child mental health sessions, indicating a significant increase in the depth of services provided to children across the state. In addition to services to children, CACs also provided 8,742 non-offending adults with 41,225 mental health sessions. Provision



of these mental health services to caregivers is critical to supporting families in the aftermath of trauma and develops skills to support the child victim and family unit as-a-whole.

In addition to the mental health increases described above, CACs experienced an increase in the number of child victims of sex trafficking served by CACs. Overall, the CAC network saw 732 cases of child sex trafficking, a 7 percent increase over fiscal year 2022. CACs continued to support the development of the response to child victims of sex trafficking, working closely with local MDT partners and community providers to establish programs that contemplate the unique needs of these children. CACTX worked closely with state-level partners, DFPS and the Office of the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team, to support and monitor the response to these cases across the state.

## Conclusion

HHSC is committed to promoting oversight and collaboration with Texas CASA 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 advocacy process. HHSC will continue to work with Texas CASA and CACTX throughout fiscal year 2024 to serve the children of Texas.

Local CASA and CAC programs are continuing to see a greater number of clients who have experienced an increase in the severity and complexity of trauma over the past several years. In fiscal year 2024, HHSC will expand its data collection for both children's advocacy programs to further expand on the depth and breadth of services that children and families are now needing and the impact of those services.

Texas CASA and CACTX are dedicated to strengthening relationships with organizations providing children's advocacy services through increased communication efforts, collaborative information sharing, and ongoing technical assistance. The programs will continue to improve service quality by enhancing the contract monitoring process and analyzing new and current data to identify service trends and ensure effective and responsible use of state funding.

## List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
CAC	Children's Advocacy Centers
CACTX	Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas
CAP	Children's Advocacy Program
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CFE	Collaborative Family Engagement
CPS	Child Protective Services
DFPS	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
FY	Fiscal Year
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
MDT	Multidisciplinary Team