



Combined Children's Advocacy Program Grant Report for Fiscal Year 2024

**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
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TEXAS
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Executive Summary

The *Combined Children's Advocacy Program Grant Report for Fiscal Year 2024* 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 2024, HHSC contracted with Texas CASA, Inc. to administer this program and 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 2024, HHSC contracted with the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX) to administer this program and 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 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.

The HHSC Children's Advocacy Program'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 73 local CASA programs that provide advocacy for children in DFPS custody in 217 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 in 209 counties 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 Children’s Advocacy Program as shown in Table 1, which delineates grant funding by program. Table 2 details the method of financing for the grant awards.

Table 1. Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Award by Program

Program	Grant Amount
CASA	\$15,964,000.00
CAC	\$41,775,897.00
Total	\$57,739,897.00

Table 2. Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Award by Financing Method

Financing Method	Grantee	Grant Amount
General Revenue	Texas CASA and CACTX	\$45,778,334.00
License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802	Texas CASA	\$13,500.00
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
Total		\$57,739,897.00

Table 3 details unexpended balances for Texas CASA and CACTX that were transferred from fiscal year 2024 to fiscal year 2025, pursuant to the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Rider 79(c)).

Table 3. Unexpended Balance Carryforward Amounts

Grantee	Unexpended FY24 Balance	Carried Forward to FY25
Texas CASA	\$444,132.70	\$444,132.70
CACTX	\$639,034.46	\$639,034.46

Expenditures

Table 4 details funds expended and unexpended by Texas CASA for fiscal year 2024.

Table 4. Texas CASA Expenditures

Texas CASA	Expended	Unexpended	Total
General Revenue	\$15,506,367.30	\$444,132.70	\$15,950,500.00
License Plate Trust Fund Account No. 0802	\$13,500.00	\$0.00	\$13,500.00
Total	\$15,519,867.30	\$444,132.70	\$15,964,000.00

Table 5 details the funds expended and unexpended by CACTX for fiscal year 2024 and includes a new line item of \$1,000,000 to implement regional support centers, pursuant to the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Rider 79(a)). More information about the implementation of regional support centers can be found in Section 4 of this report.

Table 5. CACTX Expenditures

CACTX	Expended	Unexpended	Total
General Revenue	\$28,302,156.83	\$525,677.17	\$28,827,834.00
General Revenue – Regional Support Centers Pilot Initiative	\$886,642.71	\$113,357.29	\$1,000,000.00
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
Total	\$41,136,862.54	\$639,034.46	\$41,775,897.00

Administrative Expenditures

Texas Family Code, Chapter 264, Subchapters E (CACTX) and G (Texas CASA), cap administrative expenses for the Children’s Advocacy Program grantees.

Administrative expenses cannot exceed 12 percent of the annual legislative appropriation. Table 6 shows the total amount of administrative expenditures for each grantee and the percentage of the annual legislative appropriation.

Table 6. Administrative Expenses by Total and Percent of Legislative Appropriation for Fiscal Year 2024

Grantee	Administrative Expenses	Percent of Legislative Appropriation
Texas CASA	\$1,643,808.87	10.59%
CACTX	\$4,287,345.83	10.65%

Expended funds for the new regional support center pilot initiative for CACTX are exempt from the 12 percent administrative cap, pursuant to the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023 (Article II, Rider 79(a)).

Required Data

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

Table 7. Fiscal Year 2024 Grants Summary

FY24 Expenditure	Texas CASA	CACTX
Grant Term (FY24-FY25)	2 years	2 years
FY24 Total Awarded Amount	\$15,964,000.00	\$41,775,897.00
Administrative Cap	\$1,915,680.00	\$4,893,107.64
Actual Administrative Expense	\$1,643,808.87	\$4,287,345.83
Actual Service Expense	\$13,876,058.43	\$36,849,516.71
Total Expenditures	\$15,519,867.30	\$41,136,862.54

Administrative expenses capture all program expenditures related to carrying out the operational 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 performance 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 2024 performance data. The data for new children served reflects the total unduplicated new children served in fiscal year 2024. The data for total children served includes all unduplicated children served in fiscal year 2024. Data on volunteer numbers is also unduplicated and includes a new distinction between active and inactive volunteers, pursuant to House Bill 474, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023.

Texas Family Code defines an active volunteer as “an individual who has been trained by a volunteer advocate program in accordance with recognized standards for volunteer advocate programs, and is currently serving as a volunteer advocate on at least one child’s case.” Inactive volunteer is defined as “an individual who has been trained by a volunteer advocate program in accordance with recognized

standards for volunteer advocate programs and is not currently serving as a volunteer advocate.”

Table 8. Fiscal Year 2024 Texas CASA Data

Data	Total Number
Total Children Served	17,864
New Children Served	6,098
Active CASA Volunteers	7,401
Inactive CASA Volunteers	1,444
New CASA Volunteers ¹	2,247
Local Programs	73
Counties Served	217

Table 9 shows CACTX’s fiscal year 2024 performance data. The data for new children served reflects the total unduplicated new children served in fiscal year 2024. The data for total children served includes all unduplicated children served in fiscal year 2024.

Table 9. Fiscal Year 2024 CACTX Data

Data	Total Number
Total Children Served	60,328
New Children Served	48,861
Families Receiving Advocacy Services	53,050
Forensics Interviews Conducted On-Site	40,539
Child Abuse Cases Reviewed by Multidisciplinary Team	34,117
Children Receiving Mental Health Services	25,411
Children Receiving Medical Services	7,386
Children Receiving Sex Trafficking Care Coordination	815
Training Sessions Provided to Local Advocacy Centers	304
Local Programs	70
Counties Receiving Full Services	209

¹ New CASA volunteers are a subset of the total number of CASA volunteers. A new volunteer could be either active or inactive.

3. Contract Oversight

HHSC provided oversight of Children’s Advocacy Program 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 2024 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 2024, HHSC conducted enhanced fiscal oversight for the Children’s Advocacy Program contracts. Enhanced monitoring is an increased level of monitoring beyond the regular monitoring typically used to assess progress of the grantee 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, HHSC Children’s Advocacy Program and the Fiscal Monitoring Unit completed contract monitoring activities during fiscal year 2024 for the areas listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Fiscal Year 2024 Contract Monitoring Activities

Contract Monitoring Activity	Texas CASA	CACTX
Administrative Review	No findings	No findings
Programmatic Review	Finding	No findings
Fiscal Monitoring Unit Fiscal 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 experienced a decrease in both total children served and new children served in fiscal year 2024, compared to fiscal year 2023. CASAs provided advocacy services to 17,864 total children in fiscal year 2024, which represents an 11.4 percent decrease from fiscal year 2023. They also provided advocacy services to 6,098 new children in fiscal year 2024, which indicates a 14.6 percent decrease from fiscal year 2023. HHSC will continue to monitor and analyze CASA service levels as more data becomes available in 2025.

In fiscal year 2024, Texas CASA implemented a new volunteer recruitment campaign developed to specifically target those they know are most likely to be a CASA volunteer. They also published several volunteer recruitment marketing materials and hosted a statewide volunteer summit to address the ongoing impact on volunteerism experienced by CASA programs. The total number of active CASA volunteers in fiscal year 2024 was 7,401, which is a 10.6 percent decrease from fiscal year 2023.

However, the number of new CASA volunteers has remained fairly consistent in fiscal year 2024, and this suggests volunteer recruitment efforts have been successful. Texas CASA continues to work with faith-based and community partners to expand their volunteer recruitment efforts and provides ongoing coaching, training, communication, and support to improve volunteer 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.

In fiscal year 2024, CACTX experienced a 7 percent decrease in total children served and a 5.5 percent decrease in new children served, as compared to fiscal year 2023 data. However, new data elements CACTX reported to HHSC in fiscal year 2024 provide a more comprehensive portrayal of the depth and breadth of services provided to children and families recovering from abuse. Family advocacy services were provided to 53,050 families, which represents 88 percent of all cases in fiscal year 2024. CACTX provided care coordination for 815 children who are survivors of sex trafficking, and the mental health services waitlist for children was reduced by over 30 percent in fiscal year 2024, compared to fiscal year 2023.

CACTX implemented a new Regional Support Center pilot project in fiscal year 2024 to provide more targeted support and training to local CACs. Four regional principals served as liaisons between the CAC network and CACTX, helping to explore, analyze, and understand at a more granular level the trends, challenges, and opportunities that the CAC network is experiencing, as well as to inform CACTX strategy, priorities, and problem solving. Additionally, this team assists in communicating CACTX initiatives, approaches, and strategies to the CAC network including coordinating training for law enforcement, the development of guidance materials for partnering with medical providers, and collaborating with Federal Bureau of Investigation victim specialists to share essential CAC information.

CACs play a critical role in improving the outcome of children and families served. Based on qualitative data collected from families and caregivers in fiscal year 2024, 98 percent of caregivers who responded stated that CAC staff provided them with resources to support their child and respond to his or her needs, and 96 percent felt they had received information that helped them understand how to best keep their child safe in the future. Additionally, 95 percent of youth respondents said that the CAC helped them feel safe, and 98 percent of youth said that the staff was good or very good at listening to them.

Conclusion

HHSC is committed to advancing oversight, support, and collaboration with Texas CASA and CACTX to improve outcomes for children. 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 2025 to serve the children of Texas.

Local CASA and CAC programs continue to serve clients who have experienced an increase in the severity of abuse and trauma over the past several years. In fiscal year 2025, HHSC will continue to expand its data collection and analysis for both children's advocacy programs to expand on the complexity of services children and families need, and the impact and quality 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 strengthening 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

Acronym	Full Name
CAC	Children's Advocacy Centers
CACTX	Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
DFPS	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
FY	Fiscal Year
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission