

FAMILY CODE

TITLE 5. THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND THE SUIT AFFECTING THE

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

SUBTITLE E. PROTECTION OF THE CHILD

CHAPTER 264. CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 264.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Age-appropriate normalcy activity" means an activity or experience:

(A) that is generally accepted as suitable for a child's age or level of maturity or that is determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for the age or age group; and

(B) in which a child who is not in the conservatorship of the state is generally allowed to participate, including extracurricular activities, in-school and out-of-school social activities, cultural and enrichment activities, and employment opportunities.

(1-a) "Department" means the Department of Family and Protective Services.

(2) Repealed by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 316 (H.B. 5), Sec. 36(1), eff. September 1, 2017.

(3) Repealed by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 316 (H.B. 5), Sec. 36(1), eff. September 1, 2017.

(3-a) "Least restrictive setting" means a placement for a child that, in comparison to all other available placements, is the most family-like setting.

(4) "Residential child-care facility" has the meaning assigned by Section 42.002, Human Resources Code.

(5) "Standard of care of a reasonable and prudent parent" means the standard of care that a parent of reasonable judgment, skill, and caution would exercise in addressing the health, safety, and welfare of a child while encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, taking into

consideration:

- (A) the overall health and safety of the child;
- (B) the child's age, maturity, and development level;
- (C) the best interest of the child based on the caregiver's knowledge of the child;
- (D) the appropriateness of a proposed activity and any potential risk factors;
- (E) the behavioral history of the child and the child's ability to safely participate in a proposed activity;
- (F) the importance of encouraging the child's social, emotional, and developmental growth; and
- (G) the importance of providing the child with the most family-like living experience possible.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.42, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262 (S.B. 1407), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 316 (H.B. 5), Sec. 36(1), eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1022 (H.B. 1542), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.0011. REFERENCE TO EXECUTIVE COMMISSIONER OR COMMISSION. In this chapter:

(1) a reference to the executive commissioner or the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission means the commissioner of the department; and

(2) a reference to the commission or the Health and Human Services Commission means the department.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 316 (H.B. 5), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.002. SPECIFIC APPROPRIATION REQUIRED.

(a) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec.

86(22), eff. September 1, 2015.

(b) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(22), eff. September 1, 2015.

(c) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(22), eff. September 1, 2015.

(d) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(22), eff. September 1, 2015.

(e) The department may not spend state funds to accomplish the purposes of this subtitle unless the funds have been specifically appropriated for those purposes.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 46, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 47, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(22), eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.004. ALLOCATION OF STATE FUNDS. (a) The department shall establish a method of allocating state funds for children's protective services programs that encourages and rewards the contribution of funds or services from all persons, including local governmental entities.

(b) Except as provided by this subsection, if a contribution of funds or services is made to support a children's protective services program in a particular county, the department shall use the contribution to benefit that program. The department may use the contribution for another purpose only if the commissioners court of the county gives the department written permission.

(c) The department may use state and federal funds to provide benefits or services to children and families who are otherwise eligible for the benefits or services, including foster care, adoption assistance, medical assistance, family reunification services, and other child protective services and related benefits without regard to the immigration status of the child or the child's family.

(d) The Health and Human Services Commission may use money appropriated from the trafficked persons program account established under Section 50.0153, Health and Safety Code, to establish, maintain, and operate facilities to provide care and recovery and to ensure the general well-being of children and youth who are victims of an offense of trafficking of persons as defined by Article 56B.003, Code of Criminal Procedure.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 23, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 704 (H.B. 2633), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.005. COUNTY CHILD WELFARE BOARDS. (a) The commissioners court of a county may appoint a child welfare board for the county. The commissioners court and the department shall determine the size of the board and the qualifications of its members. However, a board must have not less than seven and not more than 15 members, and the members must be residents of the county. The members shall serve at the pleasure of the commissioners court and may be removed by the court for just cause. The members serve without compensation.

(b) With the approval of the department, two or more counties may establish a joint child welfare board if that action is found to be more practical in accomplishing the purposes of this chapter. A board representing more than one county has the same powers as a board representing a single county and is subject to the same conditions and liabilities.

(c) The members of a county child welfare board shall select a presiding officer and shall perform the duties required by the commissioners court and the department to accomplish the purposes of this chapter.

(d) A county child welfare board is an entity of the department for purposes of providing coordinated state and local public welfare services for children and their families and for the coordinated use of federal, state, and local funds for these

services. The child welfare board shall work with the commissioners court.

(e) A county child welfare board is a governmental unit for the purposes of Chapter 101, Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

(f) A county child protective services board member may receive information that is confidential under Section 40.005, Human Resources Code, or Section 261.201 when the board member is acting in the member's official capacity.

(g) A child welfare board may conduct a closed meeting under Section 551.101, Government Code, to discuss, consider, or act on a matter that is confidential under Section 40.005, Human Resources Code, or Section 261.201.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 24, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.006. COUNTY FUNDS. The commissioners court of a county may appropriate funds from its general fund or any other fund for the administration of its county child welfare board. The court may provide for services to and support of children in need of protection and care without regard to the immigration status of the child or the child's family.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.
Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 25, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.008. CHILD WELFARE SERVICE FUND. The child welfare service fund is a special fund in the state treasury. The fund shall be used to administer the child welfare services provided by the department.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 264.009. LEGAL REPRESENTATION OF DEPARTMENT. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), (c), or (f), in any action under this code, the department shall be represented in court by the county attorney of the county where the action is brought, unless the district attorney or criminal district attorney of the county

elects to provide representation.

(b) If the county attorney, district attorney, or criminal district attorney is unable to represent the department in an action under this code because of a conflict of interest or because special circumstances exist, the attorney general shall represent the department in the action.

(c) If the attorney general is unable to represent the department in an action under this code, the attorney general shall deputize an attorney who has contracted with the department under Subsection (d) or an attorney employed by the department under Subsection (e) to represent the department in the action.

(d) Subject to the approval of the attorney general, the department may contract with a private attorney to represent the department in an action under this code.

(e) The department may employ attorneys to represent the department in an action under this code.

(f) In a county with a population of 2.8 million or more, in an action under this code, the department shall be represented in court by the attorney who represents the state in civil cases in the district or county court of the county where the action is brought. If such attorney is unable to represent the department in an action under this code because of a conflict of interest or because special circumstances exist, the attorney general shall represent the department in the action.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 116, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1022, Sec. 91, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.0091. USE OF TELECONFERENCING AND VIDEOCONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY. Subject to the availability of funds, the department, in cooperation with district and county courts, shall expand the use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing to facilitate participation by medical experts, children, and other individuals in court proceedings, including children for whom the department or a licensed child-placing agency has been appointed managing conservator and who are committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.43, eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 108 (H.B. 1629), Sec. 12, eff. May 23, 2009.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.184, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.010. CHILD ABUSE PLAN; LIMITATION ON EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS. (a) Funds appropriated for protective services, child and family services, and the purchased service system for the department may only be spent on or after March 1, 1996, in a county that provides the department with a child abuse prevention and protection plan. If a plan is not submitted to the department under this section, the department shall document the county's failure to submit a plan and may spend appropriated funds in the county to carry out the department's duties under this subtitle.

(b) A child abuse prevention and protection plan may be submitted by the governing body of a county or of a regional council of governments in which the county is an active participant.

(c) The department may not require a child abuse prevention and protection plan to exceed five double-spaced letter-size pages. The county or council of governments may voluntarily provide a longer plan.

(d) A child abuse prevention and protection plan must:

(1) specify the manner of communication between entities who are parties to the plan, including the department, the commission, local law enforcement agencies, the county and district attorneys, members of the medical and social service community, foster parents, and child advocacy groups; and

(2) provide other information concerning the prevention and investigation of child abuse in the area for which the plan is adopted.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 943, Sec. 6, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.185, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.011. LOCAL ACCOUNTS. (a) The department may establish and maintain local bank or savings accounts for a child who is under the managing conservatorship of the department as necessary to administer funds received in trust for or on behalf of the child.

(b) Funds maintained in an account under this section may be used by the department to support the child, including for the payment of foster care expenses, or may be paid to a person providing care for the child.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 26, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.0111. MONEY EARNED BY CHILD. (a) A child for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator and who has been placed by the department in a residential child-care facility as defined by Chapter 42, Human Resources Code, is entitled to keep any money earned by the child during the time of the child's placement.

(b) The child may deposit the money earned by the child in a bank or savings account subject to the sole management and control of the child as provided by Section 34.305, Finance Code. The child is the sole and absolute owner of the deposit account.

(c) If a child earns money as described by this section and is returned to the child's parent or guardian, the child's parent or guardian may not interfere with the child's authority to control, transfer, draft on, or make a withdrawal from the account.

(d) In this section, a reference to money earned by a child includes any interest that accrues on the money.

(e) The executive commissioner may adopt rules to implement this section.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 964, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.186, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 317 (H.B. 7), Sec. 32, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.0121. NOTICE TO LEGISLATORS OF FOSTER CHILD'S DEATH. Not later than the fifth day after the date the department is notified of the death of a child for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator, the department shall provide the information described by Section 261.203(a) for the child to the state senators and state representatives who represent:

(1) the county in which the child's placement at the time of the child's death was located; and

(2) the county in which a suit affecting the parent-child relationship involving the child is pending.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 722 (H.B. 1309), Sec. 2, eff. June 17, 2015.

Sec. 264.013. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH OTHER STATES. Subject to the availability of funds, the department shall enter into agreements with other states to allow for the exchange of information relating to a child for whom the department is or was the managing conservator. The information may include the child's health passport and education passport.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.44, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.0145. RELEASE OF CASE RECORD. (a) In this section, "case record" means those files, reports, records, communications, audio recordings, video recordings, or working papers under the custody and control of the department that are collected, developed, or used:

(1) in a child abuse or neglect investigation; or

(2) in providing services as a result of an investigation, including substitute care services for a child.

(b) The executive commissioner by rule shall establish guidelines that prioritize requests to release case records, including those made by an adult previously in the department's managing conservatorship.

(c) The department is not required to release a copy of the case record except as provided by law and department rule.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 568 (H.B. 3234), Sec. 1,

eff. September 1, 2011.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1069 (H.B. [3259](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. [219](#)), Sec. 1.187, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.015. TRAINING. (a) The department shall include training in trauma-informed programs and services in any training the department provides to foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, department caseworkers, and department supervisors. The department shall pay for the training provided under this subsection with gifts, donations, and grants and any federal money available through the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Pub. L. No. 110-351). The department shall annually evaluate the effectiveness of the training provided under this subsection to ensure progress toward a trauma-informed system of care.

(b) The department shall require department caseworkers and department supervisors to complete an annual refresher training course in trauma-informed programs and services.

(c) To the extent that resources are available, the department shall assist the following entities in developing training in trauma-informed programs and services and in locating money and other resources to assist the entities in providing trauma-informed programs and services:

- (1) court-appointed special advocate programs;
- (2) children's advocacy centers;
- (3) local community mental health centers created under Section [534.001](#), Health and Safety Code; and
- (4) domestic violence shelters.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. [1151](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2009.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 371 (S.B. [219](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.017. REQUIRED REPORTING. (a) The department shall prepare and disseminate a report of statistics by county relating to key performance measures and data elements for child protection.

(b) The department shall provide the report required by Subsection (a) to the legislature and shall publish the report and make the report available electronically to the public not later than February 1 of each year. The report must include, with respect to the preceding year:

(1) information on the number and disposition of reports of child abuse and neglect received by the department;

(2) information on the number of clients for whom the department took protective action, including investigations, alternative responses, and court-ordered removals;

(3) information on the number of clients for whom the department provided services in each program administered by the child protective services division, including investigations, alternative responses, family-based safety services, conservatorship, post-adoption services, and transitional living services;

(4) the number of children in this state who died as a result of child abuse or neglect;

(5) the number of children described by Subdivision (4) for whom the department was the children's managing conservator at the time of death;

(6) information on the timeliness of the department's initial contact in an investigation or alternative response;

(7) information on the response time by the department in commencing services to families and children for whom an allegation of child abuse or neglect has been made;

(8) information regarding child protection staffing and caseloads by program area;

(9) information on the permanency goals in place and achieved for children in the managing conservatorship of the department, including information on the timeliness of achieving the goals, the stability of the children's placement in foster care, and the proximity of placements to the children's home

counties;

(10) the number of children who suffer from a severe emotional disturbance and for whom the department is appointed managing conservator, including statistics on appointments as joint managing conservator, due to an individual voluntarily relinquishing custody of a child solely to obtain mental health services for the child;

(11) the number of children who are pregnant or a parent while in the managing conservatorship of the department and the number of the children born to a parent in the managing conservatorship of the department who are placed in the managing conservatorship of the department;

(12) the number of children who are missing from the children's substitute care provider while in the managing conservatorship of the department; and

(13) the number of children who were victims of trafficking under Chapter 20A, Penal Code, while in the managing conservatorship of the department.

(c) To the extent feasible, the report must also include, for each county, the amount of funding for child abuse and neglect prevention services and the rate of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children in the county for the preceding year and for each of the preceding five years.

(d) Not later than September 1 of each year, the department shall seek public input regarding the usefulness of, and any proposed modifications to, existing reporting requirements and proposed additional reporting requirements. The department shall evaluate the public input provided under this subsection and seek to facilitate reporting to the maximum extent feasible within existing resources and in a manner that is most likely to assist public understanding of department functions.

(e) In addition to the information required under Subsections (a) and (b), the department shall annually publish information on the number of children who died during the preceding year whom the department determined had been abused or neglected but whose death was not the result of the abuse or neglect. The department may publish the information described by this subsection

in the same report required by Subsection (a) or in another annual report published by the department.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 48, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.018. REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Child-placing agency" has the meaning assigned by Section 42.002, Human Resources Code.

(2) "Psychotropic medication" has the meaning assigned by Section 266.001.

(3) "Residential child-care facility" has the meaning assigned by Section 42.002, Human Resources Code.

(4) "Significant change in medical condition" means the occurrence of an injury or the onset of an illness that is life-threatening or may have serious long-term health consequences. The term includes the occurrence or onset of an injury or illness that requires hospitalization for surgery or another procedure that is not minor emergency care.

(5) "Significant event" means:

(A) a placement change, including failure by the department to locate an appropriate placement for at least one night;

(B) a significant change in medical condition;

(C) an initial prescription of a psychotropic medication or a change in dosage of a psychotropic medication;

(D) a major change in school performance or a serious disciplinary event at school;

(E) a placement in a qualified residential treatment program as that term is defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 672(k)(4); or

(F) any event determined to be significant under department rule.

(b) The notification requirements of this section are in addition to other notice requirements provided by law, including Sections 263.0021, 264.107(g), and 264.123.

(c) The department must provide notice under this section in

a manner that would provide actual notice to a person entitled to the notice, including the use of electronic notice whenever possible.

(d) Not later than 24 hours after an event described by this subsection, the department shall make a reasonable effort to notify a parent of a child in the managing conservatorship of the department of:

(1) a significant change in medical condition of the child;

(2) the enrollment or participation of the child in a drug research program under Section 266.0041; and

(3) an initial prescription of a psychotropic medication.

(d-1) Except as provided by Subsection (d-2), as soon as possible but not later than 24 hours after a change in placement of a child in the conservatorship of the department, the department shall give notice of the placement change to the managed care organization that contracts with the commission to provide health care services to the child under the STAR Health program. The managed care organization shall give notice of the placement change to the primary care physician listed in the child's health passport before the end of the second business day after the day the organization receives the notification from the department.

(d-2) In this subsection, "catchment area" has the meaning assigned by Section 264.152. In a catchment area in which community-based care has been implemented, the single source continuum contractor that has contracted with the commission to provide foster care services in that catchment area shall, as soon as possible but not later than 24 hours after a change in placement of a child in the conservatorship of the department, give notice of the placement change to the managed care organization that contracts with the commission to provide health care services to the child under the STAR Health program. The managed care organization shall give notice of the placement change to the child's primary care physician in accordance with Subsection (d-1).

(e) Not later than 48 hours before the department changes the residential child-care facility of a child in the managing

conservatorship of the department, the department shall provide notice of the change to:

- (1) the child's parent;
- (2) an attorney ad litem appointed for the child under Chapter 107;
- (3) a guardian ad litem appointed for the child under Chapter 107;
- (4) a volunteer advocate appointed for the child under Chapter 107; and
- (5) the licensed administrator of the child-placing agency responsible for placing the child or the licensed administrator's designee.

(f) Except as provided by Subsection (d-1), as soon as possible but not later than the 10th day after the date the department becomes aware of a significant event affecting a child in the conservatorship of the department, the department shall provide notice of the significant event to:

- (1) the child's parent;
- (2) an attorney ad litem appointed for the child under Chapter 107;
- (3) a guardian ad litem appointed for the child under Chapter 107;
- (4) a volunteer advocate appointed for the child under Chapter 107;
- (5) the licensed administrator of the child-placing agency responsible for placing the child or the licensed administrator's designee;
- (6) a foster parent, prospective adoptive parent, relative of the child providing care to the child, or director of the group home or general residential operation where the child is residing; and
- (7) any other person determined by a court to have an interest in the child's welfare.

(g) For purposes of Subsection (f), if a hearing for the child is conducted during the 10-day notice period described by that subsection, the department shall provide notice of the significant event at the hearing.

(h) The department is not required to provide notice under this section to a parent of a child in the managing conservatorship of the department if:

(1) the department cannot locate the parent;

(2) a court has restricted the parent's access to the information;

(3) the child is in the permanent managing conservatorship of the department and the parent has not participated in the child's case for at least six months despite the department's efforts to involve the parent;

(4) the parent's rights have been terminated; or

(5) the department has documented in the child's case file that it is not in the best interest of the child to involve the parent in case planning.

(i) The department is not required to provide notice of a significant event under this section to the child-placing agency responsible for the placement of a child in the managing conservatorship of the department, a foster parent, a prospective adoptive parent, a relative of the child providing care to the child, or the director of the group home or general residential operation where the child resides if that agency or individual is required under a contract or other agreement to provide notice of the significant event to the department.

(j) A person entitled to notice from the department under this section shall provide the department with current contact information, including the person's e-mail address and the telephone number at which the person may most easily be reached. The person shall update the person's contact information as soon as possible after a change to the information. The department is not required to provide notice under this section to a person who fails to provide contact information to the department. The department may rely on the most recently provided contact information in providing notice under this section.

(k) To facilitate timely notification under this section, a residential child-care facility contracting with the department for 24-hour care shall notify the department, in the time provided by the facility's contract, of a significant event for a child who

is in the conservatorship of the department and residing in the facility.

(1) The executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission shall adopt rules necessary to implement this section using a negotiated rulemaking process under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 722 (H.B. 1309), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 48, eff. September 1, 2015.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 317 (H.B. 7), Sec. 33, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 14, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 467 (H.B. 4170), Sec. 7.005, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 616 (S.B. 1575), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.019. COLLECTION AND REPORTING OF ALCOHOL AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE STATISTICS. (a) The department shall collect the following information and update the department's automated case tracking and information management system to allow caseworkers to record:

(1) the number of children reported to the department who at birth tested positive for the presence of alcohol or a controlled substance;

(2) the controlled substances for which the children described by Subdivision (1) tested positive;

(3) the number of children described by Subdivision (1) who were removed from their homes and have been diagnosed as having a disability or chronic medical condition resulting from the presence of alcohol or controlled substances; and

(4) the number of parents who test positive for the presence of a controlled substance during a department investigation of a report of abuse or neglect of the parent's child.

(b) Not later than November 1 of each year, the department shall:

(1) prepare for the preceding year a report containing:

(A) the information collected under Subsection (a); and

(B) the data collected under Section [531.02143](#), Government Code;

(2) post a copy of the report prepared under Subdivision (1) on the department's Internet website; and

(3) electronically submit to the legislature a copy of the report.

(c) The commissioner of the department shall adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

(d) The department is required to implement this section in a state fiscal biennium only if the commissioner of the department determines that the legislature has specifically appropriated an amount sufficient to update the department's automated case tracking and information management system. If the commissioner of the department does not make that determination, the department shall implement this section not later than the date of the department's next update of the automated case tracking and information management system.

Added by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 417 (S.B. [195](#)), Sec. 2, eff. January 1, 2020.

SUBCHAPTER B. FOSTER CARE

Sec. 264.101. FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS. (a) The department may pay the cost of foster care for a child only if:

(1) the child has been placed by the department in a foster home or other residential child-care facility, as defined by Chapter [42](#), Human Resources Code, or in a comparable residential facility in another state; and

(2) the department:

(A) has initiated suit and been named conservator of the child; or

(B) has the duty of care, control, and custody after taking possession of the child in an emergency without a prior court order as authorized by this subtitle.

(a-1) The department shall continue to pay the cost of foster care for a child for whom the department provides care, including medical care, until the last day of the month in which the child attains the age of 18. The department shall continue to pay the cost of foster care for a child after the month in which the child attains the age of 18 as long as the child is:

(1) regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate;

(2) regularly attending an institution of higher education or a postsecondary vocational or technical program;

(3) participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;

(4) employed for at least 80 hours a month; or

(5) incapable of performing the activities described by Subdivisions (1)-(4) due to a documented medical condition.

(a-2) The department shall continue to pay the cost of foster care under:

(1) Subsection (a-1)(1) until the last day of the month in which the child attains the age of 22; and

(2) Subsections (a-1)(2)-(5) until the last day of the month the child attains the age of 21.

(b) The department may not pay the cost of protective foster care for a child for whom the department has been named managing conservator under an order rendered solely under Section [161.001\(b\)\(1\)\(J\)](#).

(c) The payment of foster care, including medical care, for a child as authorized under this subchapter shall be made without regard to the child's eligibility for federally funded care.

(d) The executive commissioner may adopt rules that establish criteria and guidelines for the payment of foster care, including medical care, for a child and for providing care for a child after the child becomes 18 years of age if the child meets the requirements for continued foster care under Subsection (a-1).

(d-1) The executive commissioner may adopt rules that prescribe the maximum amount of state money that a residential child-care facility may spend on nondirect residential services, including administrative services. The commission shall recover the money that exceeds the maximum amount established under this subsection.

(e) The department may accept and spend funds available from any source to pay for foster care, including medical care, for a child in the department's care.

(f) In this section, "child" means a person who:

(1) is under 22 years of age and for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator of the child before the date the child became 18 years of age; or

(2) is the responsibility of an agency with which the department has entered into an agreement to provide care and supervision of the child.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 27, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 183 (H.B. 614), Sec. 1, eff. May 27, 2005.

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.45, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(b), eff. October 1, 2010.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.188, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 49, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.1015. LIABILITY OF CHILD'S ESTATE FOR FOSTER CARE.

(a) The cost of foster care provided for a child, including medical care, is an obligation of the estate of the child and the estate is liable to the department for the cost of the care.

(b) The department may take action to recover from the estate of the child the cost of foster care for the child.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 28, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.102. COUNTY CONTRACTS. (a) The department may contract with a county commissioners court to administer the funds authorized by this subchapter for eligible children in the county and may require county participation.

(b) The payments provided by this subchapter do not abrogate the responsibility of a county to provide child welfare services.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 264.103. DIRECT PAYMENTS. The department may make direct payments for foster care to a foster parent residing in a county with which the department does not have a contract authorized by Section [264.102](#).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 264.104. PARENT OR GUARDIAN LIABILITY. (a) The parent or guardian of a child is liable to the state or to the county for a payment made by the state or county for foster care of a child under this subchapter.

(b) The cost of foster care for a child, including medical care, is a legal obligation of the child's parents, and the estate of a parent of the child is liable to the department for payment of the costs.

(c) The funds collected by the state under this section shall be used by the department for child welfare services.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 29, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.1061. FOSTER PARENT PERFORMANCE. The department shall monitor the performance of a foster parent who has been verified by the department in the department's capacity as a child-placing agency. The method under which performance is monitored must include the use of objective criteria by which the

foster parent's performance may be assessed. The department shall include references to the criteria in a written agreement between the department and the foster parent concerning the foster parent's services.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1022, Sec. 92, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Sec. 264.107. PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN. (a) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(25), eff. September 1, 2015.

(b) The department shall use an application or assessment developed by the department in coordination with interested parties for the placement of children in contract residential care.

(c) In selecting a placement for a child, the department shall consider whether the placement is in the child's best interest. In determining whether a placement is in a child's best interest, the department shall consider whether the placement:

- (1) is the least restrictive setting for the child;
- (2) is the closest in geographic proximity to the child's home;
- (3) is the most able to meet the identified needs of the child; and
- (4) satisfies any expressed interests of the child relating to placement, when developmentally appropriate.

(d) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(25), eff. September 1, 2015.

- (e) In making placement decisions, the department shall:
- (1) except when making an emergency placement that does not allow time for the required consultations, consult with the child's caseworker, attorney ad litem, and guardian ad litem and with any court-appointed volunteer advocate for the child; and
 - (2) use clinical protocols to match a child to the most appropriate placement resource.

(f) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 1.203(11), eff. April 2, 2015.

(g) If the department or single source continuum contractor is unable to find an appropriate placement for a child, an employee

of the department or contractor who has on file with the department or contractor, as applicable, a background and criminal history check may provide temporary emergency care for the child. The employee may not provide emergency care under this subsection in the employee's residence. The department or contractor shall provide notice to the court for a child placed in temporary care under this subsection not later than the next business day after the date the child is placed in temporary care.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.48, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 14, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 193 (S.B. 425), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.189, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.203(11), eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 50, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(25), eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1022 (H.B. 1542), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 2, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.1071. OFFICE STAYS PROHIBITED. The department may not allow a child to stay overnight in a department office.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 3, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.1072. EDUCATIONAL STABILITY. The department shall develop, in accordance with 42 U.S.C. Section 675, a plan to ensure the educational stability of a foster child.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 688 (H.B. 2619), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 264.1073. TREATMENT FOSTER CARE. The department and single source continuum contractors shall:

(1) lessen employment restrictions to allow single parents to participate in treatment foster care, when quality care is assured;

(2) expand the eligible age for treatment foster care to include children 10 years of age or older;

(3) prepare and plan for the subsequent placement not later than the 30th day after a child is placed in treatment foster care to assist in the transition to the least restrictive placement; and

(4) extend the length of time for a treatment foster care placement.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 3, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.1075. ASSESSING NEEDS OF CHILD. (a) On removing a child from the child's home, the department shall use assessment services provided by a child-care facility, a child-placing agency, or the child's medical home during the initial substitute care placement. The assessment may be used to determine the most appropriate substitute care placement for the child, if needed.

(b) As soon as possible after a child is placed in the managing conservatorship of the department, the department shall assess whether the child has a developmental or intellectual disability.

(c) If the assessment required by Subsection (b) indicates that the child might have an intellectual disability, the department shall ensure that a referral for a determination of intellectual disability is made as soon as possible and that the determination is conducted by an authorized provider before the date of the child's 16th birthday, if practicable. If the child is placed in the managing conservatorship of the department after the child's 16th birthday, the determination of intellectual

disability must be conducted as soon as possible after the assessment required by Subsection (b). In this subsection, "authorized provider" has the meaning assigned by Section 593.004, Health and Safety Code.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1022, Sec. 93, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.49, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.190, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 51, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.1076. MEDICAL EXAMINATION REQUIRED. (a) This section applies only to a child who has been taken into the conservatorship of the department and remains in the conservatorship of the department for more than three business days.

(b) The department shall ensure that each child described by Subsection (a) receives an initial medical examination from a physician or other health care provider authorized under state law to conduct medical examinations not later than the end of the third business day after the date the child is removed from the child's home, if the child:

(1) is removed as the result of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or an obvious physical injury to the child; or

(2) has a chronic medical condition, a medically complex condition, or a diagnosed mental illness.

(c) Notwithstanding Subsection (b), the department shall ensure that any child who enters the conservatorship of the department receives any necessary emergency medical care as soon as possible.

(d) A physician or other health care provider conducting an examination under Subsection (b) may not administer a vaccination

as part of the examination without parental consent, except that a physician or other health care provider may administer a tetanus vaccination to a child in a commercially available preparation if the physician or other health care provider determines that an emergency circumstance requires the administration of the vaccination. The prohibition on the administration of a vaccination under this subsection does not apply after the department has been named managing conservator of the child after a hearing conducted under Subchapter C, Chapter 262.

(e) Whenever possible, the department shall schedule the medical examination for a child before the last business day of the appropriate time frame provided under Subsection (b).

(f) The department shall collaborate with the commission and selected physicians and other health care providers authorized under state law to conduct medical examinations to develop guidelines for the medical examination conducted under this section, including guidelines on the components to be included in the examination. The guidelines developed under this subsection must provide assistance and guidance regarding:

(1) assessing a child for:

(A) signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect;

(B) the presence of acute or chronic illness; and

(C) signs of acute or severe mental health conditions;

(2) monitoring a child's adjustment to being in the conservatorship of the department;

(3) ensuring a child has necessary medical equipment and any medication prescribed to the child or needed by the child; and

(4) providing appropriate support and education to a child's caregivers.

(g) Notwithstanding any other law, the guidelines developed under Subsection (f) do not create a standard of care for a physician or other health care provider authorized under state law to conduct medical examinations, and a physician or other health care provider may not be subject to criminal, civil, or

administrative penalty or civil liability for failure to adhere to the guidelines.

(h) The department shall make a good faith effort to contact a child's primary care physician to ensure continuity of care for the child regarding medication prescribed to the child and the treatment of any chronic medical condition.

(i) Not later than December 31, 2019, the department shall submit a report to the standing committees of the house of representatives and the senate with primary jurisdiction over child protective services and foster care evaluating the statewide implementation of the medical examination required by this section. The report must include the level of compliance with the requirements of this section in each region of the state.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 15(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

For expiration of this section, see Subsection (c).

Sec. 264.1077. STUDY REGARDING RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER PLACEMENT. (a) The Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission, in collaboration with the department, shall establish and oversee a work group to examine the oversight of and best practices related to residential treatment center placements, including placements in qualified residential treatment programs as that term is defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 672(k)(4). The work group shall consider topics and changes to current practices the work group determines necessary to ensure the appropriate use of and to improve the transition into and out of residential treatment center placements, including:

(1) statutorily required judicial review of residential treatment center placements;

(2) fiscal implications of additional judicial review for residential treatment center placements;

(3) methods for improving the state's practices regarding the duration of residential treatment center placements, including best practices for transition planning and involving family and other relevant participants in preparing the child for a subsequent placement;

(4) proposed statutory changes regarding appropriate judicial findings, evidence required to be submitted by the department, and recommendations for information to be gathered from the child's attorney or guardian ad litem; and

(5) model court orders determined to be appropriate for the legal requirements for a particular placement.

(b) Not later than October 1, 2022, the Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission shall submit a report to the legislature regarding the findings and recommendations from the work group established by Subsection (a).

(c) This section expires September 1, 2023.
Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 616 (S.B. 1575), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.1085. FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL LAW REQUIRED. The department or a licensed child-placing agency making a foster care placement shall comply with the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. Section 1996b).

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 52, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.109. ASSIGNMENT OF SUPPORT RIGHTS IN SUBSTITUTE CARE CASES. (a) The placement of a child in substitute care by the department constitutes an assignment to the state of any support rights attributable to the child as of the date the child is placed in substitute care.

(b) If a child placed by the department in substitute care is entitled under federal law to Title IV-D child support enforcement services without the requirement of an application for services, the department shall immediately refer the case to the Title IV-D agency. If an application for Title IV-D services is required and the department has been named managing conservator of the child, then an authorized representative of the department shall be the designated individual entitled to apply for services on behalf of the child and shall promptly apply for the services.

(c) The department and the Title IV-D agency shall execute a memorandum of understanding for the implementation of the

provisions of this section and for the allocation between the department and the agency, consistent with federal laws and regulations, of any child support funds recovered by the Title IV-D agency in substitute care cases. All child support funds recovered under this section and retained by the department or the Title IV-D agency and any federal matching or incentive funds resulting from child support collection efforts in substitute care cases shall be in excess of amounts otherwise appropriated to either the department or the Title IV-D agency by the legislature.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 117, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.110. PROSPECTIVE FOSTER OR ADOPTIVE PARENT STATEMENT. (a) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(b) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(c) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(d) Before a child may be placed with a foster or adoptive parent, the prospective foster or adoptive parent must sign a written statement in which the prospective foster or adoptive parent agrees to the immediate removal of the child by the department under circumstances determined by the department.

(e) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(f) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(g) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

(h) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 943, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Renumbered from Family Code Sec. 264.109 by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 165, Sec. 31.01(30), eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. [219](#)), Sec. 1.192, eff.

April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 53, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 54, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(28), eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.112. REPORT ON CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE.

(a) The department shall report the status for children in substitute care to the executive commissioner at least once every 12 months.

(b) The report shall analyze the length of time each child has been in substitute care and the barriers to placing the child for adoption or returning the child to the child's parent or parents.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 600, Sec. 18, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.193, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.113. FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT. (a) In this section, "faith-based organization" means a religious or denominational institution or organization, including an organization operated for religious, educational, or charitable purposes and operated, supervised, or controlled, in whole or in part, by or in connection with a religious organization.

(b) The department shall develop a program to recruit and retain foster parents from faith-based organizations. As part of the program, the department shall:

(1) collaborate with faith-based organizations to inform prospective foster parents about the department's need for foster parents, the requirements for becoming a foster parent, and any other aspect of the foster care program that is necessary to recruit foster parents;

(2) provide training for prospective foster parents recruited under this section; and

(3) identify and recommend ways in which faith-based organizations may support persons as they are recruited, are trained, and serve as foster parents.

(c) The department shall work with OneStar Foundation to expand the program described by Subsection (b) to increase the number of foster families available for the department and its private providers. In cooperation with the department, OneStar Foundation may provide training and technical assistance to establish networks and services in faith-based organizations based on best practices for supporting prospective and current foster families.

(d) The department shall work with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to recruit foster parents and adoptive parents who have skills, training, or experience suitable to care for children with hearing impairments.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 957, Sec. 1, eff. June 20, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 16, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 264.114. IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY; ADVERSE DEPARTMENTAL ACTION PROHIBITED. (a) A faith-based organization, including the organization's employees and volunteers, that participates in a program under this chapter is subject to civil liability as provided by Chapter 84, Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

(b) A faith-based organization that provides financial or other assistance to a foster parent or to a member of the foster parent's household is not liable for damages arising out of the conduct of the foster parent or a member of the foster parent's household.

(c) A foster parent, other substitute caregiver, family relative or other designated caregiver, or licensed child placing agency caring for a child in the managing conservatorship of the department is not liable for harm caused to the child resulting from the child's participation in an age-appropriate normalcy activity approved by the caregiver if, in approving the child's participation in the activity, the caregiver exercised the standard

of care of a reasonable and prudent parent.

(d) A licensed child placing agency is not subject to adverse action by the department, including contractual action or licensing or other regulatory action, arising out of the conduct of a foster parent who has exercised the standard of care of a reasonable and prudent parent.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 957, Sec. 1, eff. June 20, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262 (S.B. 1407), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262 (S.B. 1407), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.115. RETURNING CHILD TO SCHOOL. (a) If the department takes possession of a child under Chapter 262 during the school year, the department shall ensure that the child returns to school not later than the third school day after the date an order is rendered providing for possession of the child by the department, unless the child has a physical or mental condition of a temporary and remediable nature that makes the child's attendance infeasible.

(b) If a child has a physical or mental condition of a temporary and remediable nature that makes the child's attendance in school infeasible, the department shall notify the school in writing that the child is unable to attend school. If the child's physical or mental condition improves so that the child's attendance in school is feasible, the department shall ensure that the child immediately returns to school.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 234, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Renumbered from Family Code, Section 264.113 by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 728 (H.B. 2018), Sec. 23.001(25), eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.116. TEXAS FOSTER GRANDPARENT MENTORS. (a) The department shall make the active recruitment and inclusion of senior citizens a priority in ongoing mentoring initiatives.

(b) An individual who volunteers as a mentor is subject to state and national criminal background checks in accordance with

Sections [411.087](#) and [411.114](#), Government Code.

(c) The department shall require foster parents or employees of residential child-care facilities to provide appropriate supervision over individuals who serve as mentors during their participation in the mentoring initiative.

(d) Chapter [2109](#), Government Code, applies to the mentoring initiative described by this section.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. [6](#)), Sec. 1.50(a), eff. September 1, 2005.

For expiration of this section, see Subsection (c).

Sec. 264.117. MENTORS FOR FOSTER CHILDREN. (a) The department and each single source continuum contractor in this state, in collaboration with local governmental entities and faith- and community-based organizations, shall examine the feasibility of designing a volunteer mentor program for children in congregate care settings.

(b) Not later than December 31, 2022, the department shall report its findings and recommendations for establishing a mentor program to the legislature.

(c) This section expires September 1, 2023.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. [1896](#)), Sec. 4, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.118. ANNUAL SURVEY.

(a) The department shall collect and report service and outcome information for certain current and former foster care youth for use in the National Youth in Transition Database as required by 42 U.S.C. Section 677(f) and 45 C.F.R. Section 1356.80 et seq.

(b) The identity of each child participating in a department survey is confidential and not subject to public disclosure under Chapter [552](#), Government Code. The department shall adopt procedures to ensure that the identity of each child participating in a department survey remains confidential.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. [6](#)), Sec. 1.50(a), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 598 (S.B. 218), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.120. DISCHARGE NOTICE. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a substitute care provider with whom the department contracts to provide substitute care services for a child shall include in a discharge notice the following information:

- (1) the reason for the child's discharge; and
- (2) the provider's recommendation regarding a future placement for the child that would increase the child's opportunity to attain a stable placement.

(b) In an emergency situation in which the department is required under the terms of the contract with the substitute care provider to remove a child within 24 hours after receiving the discharge notice, the provider must provide the information required by Subsection (a) to the department not later than 48 hours after the provider sends the discharge notice.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1324 (S.B. 534), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2013.

Sec. 264.121. TRANSITIONAL LIVING SERVICES PROGRAM.

(a) The department shall address the unique challenges facing foster children in the conservatorship of the department who must transition to independent living by:

- (1) expanding efforts to improve transition planning and increasing the availability of transitional family group decision-making to all youth age 14 or older in the department's permanent managing conservatorship, including enrolling the youth in the Preparation for Adult Living Program before the age of 16;

- (2) coordinating with the commission to obtain authority, to the extent allowed by federal law, the state Medicaid plan, the Title IV-E state plan, and any waiver or amendment to either plan, necessary to:

- (A) extend foster care eligibility and transition services for youth up to age 21 and develop policy to permit eligible youth to return to foster care as necessary to

achieve the goals of the Transitional Living Services Program; and

(B) extend Medicaid coverage for foster care youth and former foster care youth up to age 21 with a single application at the time the youth leaves foster care;

(3) entering into cooperative agreements with the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce development boards to further the objectives of the Preparation for Adult Living Program. The department, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the local workforce development boards shall ensure that services are prioritized and targeted to meet the needs of foster care and former foster care children and that such services will include, where feasible, referrals for short-term stays for youth needing housing;

(4) addressing barriers to participation in the Preparation for Adult Living Program for a youth who has a disability by making appropriate accommodations that allow the youth to meaningfully participate in the program; and

(5) documenting in the youth's case file any accommodations made under Subdivision (4).

(a-1) The department shall require a foster care provider to provide or assist youth who are age 14 or older in obtaining experiential life-skills training to improve their transition to independent living. Experiential life-skills training must be tailored to a youth's skills and abilities and must include training in practical activities that include grocery shopping, meal preparation and cooking, performing basic household tasks, and, when appropriate, using public transportation.

(a-2) The experiential life-skills training under Subsection (a-1) must include:

(1) a financial literacy education program developed in collaboration with the Office of Consumer Credit Commissioner and the State Securities Board that:

(A) includes instruction on:

(i) obtaining and interpreting a credit score;

(ii) protecting, repairing, and improving a credit score;

(iii) avoiding predatory lending

practices;

(iv) saving money and accomplishing financial goals through prudent financial management practices;

(v) using basic banking and accounting skills, including balancing a checkbook;

(vi) using debit and credit cards responsibly;

(vii) understanding a paycheck and items withheld from a paycheck;

(viii) understanding the time requirements and process for filing federal taxes;

(ix) protecting financial, credit, and personally identifying information in personal and professional relationships and online;

(x) forms of identity and credit theft; and

(xi) using insurance to protect against the risk of financial loss; and

(B) assists a youth who has a source of income to:

(i) establish a savings plan and, if available, a savings account that the youth can independently manage; and

(ii) prepare a monthly budget that includes the following expenses:

(a) rent based on the monthly rent for an apartment advertised for lease during the preceding month;

(b) utilities based on a reasonable utility bill in the area in which the youth resides;

(c) telephone service based on a reasonable bill for telephone service in the area in which the youth resides;

(d) Internet service based on a reasonable bill for Internet service in the area in which the youth resides; and

(e) other reasonable monthly expenses; and

(2) for youth who are 17 years of age or older, lessons related to:

(A) insurance, including applying for and obtaining automobile insurance and residential property insurance, including tenants insurance;

(B) civic engagement, including the process for registering to vote, the places to vote, and resources for information regarding upcoming elections; and

(C) the documents the youth is required to receive under Subsection (e-1) prior to being discharged from foster care and how those documents may be used.

(a-3) The department shall conduct an independent living skills assessment for all youth in the department's conservatorship who are 16 years of age or older.

(a-4) The department shall conduct an independent living skills assessment for all youth in the department's permanent managing conservatorship who are at least 14 years of age but younger than 16 years of age.

(a-5) The department shall annually update the assessment for each youth assessed under Subsections (a-3) and (a-4) to determine the independent living skills the youth learned during the preceding year to ensure that the department's obligation to prepare the youth for independent living has been met. The department shall conduct the annual update through the youth's plan of service in coordination with the youth, the youth's caseworker, the staff of the Preparation for Adult Living Program, and the youth's caregiver.

(a-6) The department, in coordination with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, shall establish a work group to develop a plan to ensure that foster youth who complete the standardized curriculum for the Preparation for Adult Living Program are eligible to receive college credit for completing the program. The work group must include representatives from urban and rural institutions of higher education, as defined by Section [61.003](#), Education Code. In developing its evidence-based recommendations, the work group shall consider the feasibility of implementing each recommendation, a foster youth's access to the Preparation for Adult Living Program, and the average length of time a foster youth will remain in a placement. The department

shall report the plan to the legislature not later than November 1, 2022. This subsection expires September 1, 2023.

(a-7) The department shall ensure that before a youth leaves foster care, each youth who is 14 years of age or older has an e-mail address through which the youth may receive encrypted copies of personal documents and records.

(b) In this section:

(1) "Local workforce development board" means a local workforce development board created under Chapter 2308, Government Code.

(2) "Preparation for Adult Living Program" means a program administered by the department as a component of the Transitional Living Services Program and includes independent living skills assessment, short-term financial assistance, basic self-help skills, and life-skills development and training regarding money management, health and wellness, job skills, planning for the future, housing and transportation, and interpersonal skills.

(3) "Transitional Living Services Program" means a program, administered by the department in accordance with department rules and state and federal law, for youth who are age 14 or older but not more than 21 years of age and are currently or were formerly in foster care, that assists youth in transitioning from foster care to independent living. The program provides transitional living services, Preparation for Adult Living Program services, and Education and Training Voucher Program services.

(c) At the time a child enters the Preparation for Adult Living Program, the department shall provide an information booklet to the child and the foster parent describing the program and the benefits available to the child, including extended Medicaid coverage until age 21, priority status with the Texas Workforce Commission, and the exemption from the payment of tuition and fees at institutions of higher education as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code. The information booklet provided to the child and the foster parent shall be provided in the primary language spoken by that individual.

(d) The department shall allow a youth who is at least 18

years of age to receive transitional living services, other than foster care benefits, while residing with a person who was previously designated as a perpetrator of abuse or neglect if the department determines that despite the person's prior history the person does not pose a threat to the health and safety of the youth.

(e) The department shall ensure that each youth acquires a copy and a certified copy of the youth's birth certificate, a social security card or replacement social security card, as appropriate, and a personal identification certificate under Chapter 521, Transportation Code, on or before the date on which the youth turns 16 years of age. The department shall designate one or more employees in the Preparation for Adult Living Program as the contact person to assist a youth who has not been able to obtain the documents described by this subsection in a timely manner from the youth's primary caseworker. The department shall ensure that:

(1) all youth who are age 16 or older are provided with the contact information for the designated employees; and

(2) a youth who misplaces a document provided under this subsection receives assistance in obtaining a replacement document or information on how to obtain a duplicate copy, as appropriate.

(e-1) If, at the time a youth is discharged from foster care, the youth is at least 18 years of age or has had the disabilities of minority removed, the department shall provide to the youth, not later than the 30th day before the date the youth is discharged from foster care, the following information and documents unless the youth already has the information or document:

(1) the youth's birth certificate;

(2) the youth's immunization records;

(3) the information contained in the youth's health passport;

(4) a personal identification certificate under Chapter 521, Transportation Code;

(5) a social security card or a replacement social security card, if appropriate; and

(6) a Medicaid card or other proof of the youth's enrollment in Medicaid or an insurance card from a health plan that

provides health coverage to foster youth.

(e-2) When providing a youth with a document required by Subsection (e-1), the department shall provide the youth with a copy and a certified copy of the document or with the original document, as applicable.

(e-3) When obtaining a copy of a birth certificate to provide to a foster youth or assisting a foster youth in obtaining a copy of a birth certificate, the department shall obtain the birth certificate from the state registrar. If the department is unable to obtain the birth certificate from the state registrar, the department may obtain the birth certificate from a local registrar or county clerk.

(e-4) The youth's caseworker shall:

(1) assist the youth with developing a plan for keeping the documents described by Subsection (e) in a safe place; and

(2) inform the youth about the documents the youth is required to receive before the date the youth is discharged from foster care.

(f) The department shall require a person with whom the department contracts for transitional living services for foster youth to provide or assist youth in obtaining:

(1) housing services;

(2) job training and employment services;

(3) college preparation services;

(4) services that will assist youth in obtaining a general education development certificate;

(5) services that will assist youth in developing skills in food preparation;

(6) nutrition education that promotes healthy food choices;

(7) a savings or checking account if the youth is at least 18 years of age and has a source of income;

(8) mental health services;

(9) financial literacy education and civic engagement lessons required under Subsection (a-2); and

(10) any other appropriate transitional living

service identified by the department.

(g) For a youth taking prescription medication, the department shall ensure that the youth's transition plan includes provisions to assist the youth in managing the use of the medication and in managing the child's long-term physical and mental health needs after leaving foster care, including:

(1) provisions that inform the youth about:

(A) the use of the medication;

(B) the resources that are available to assist the youth in managing the use of the medication; and

(C) informed consent and the provision of medical care in accordance with Section 266.010(1); and

(2) for each youth who is 17 years of age or older and preparing to leave foster care, a program supervised by a health care professional to assist the youth with independently managing the youth's medication.

(h) An entity with which the department contracts for transitional living services for foster youth shall, when appropriate, partner with a community-based organization to assist the entity in providing the transitional living services.

(i) The department shall ensure that the transition plan for each youth 16 years of age or older includes provisions to assist the youth in managing the youth's housing needs after the youth leaves foster care, including provisions that:

(1) identify the cost of housing in relation to the youth's sources of income, including any benefits or rental assistance available to the youth;

(2) if the youth's housing goals include residing with family or friends, state that the department has addressed the following with the youth:

(A) the length of time the youth expects to stay in the housing arrangement;

(B) expectations for the youth regarding paying rent and meeting other household obligations;

(C) the youth's psychological and emotional needs, as applicable; and

(D) any potential conflicts with other household

members, or any difficulties connected to the type of housing the youth is seeking, that may arise based on the youth's psychological and emotional needs;

(3) inform the youth about emergency shelters and housing resources, including supervised independent living and housing at colleges and universities, such as dormitories;

(4) require the department to review a common rental application with the youth and ensure that the youth possesses all of the documentation required to obtain rental housing; and

(5) identify any individuals who are able to serve as cosigners or references on the youth's applications for housing.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.51, eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 17, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 407 (H.B. 1912), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 407 (H.B. 1912), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 168 (S.B. 1589), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 204 (H.B. 915), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 342 (H.B. 2111), Sec. 1, eff. June 14, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.194, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 81 (S.B. 1117), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 55, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 56, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1236 (S.B. 1296), Sec. 7.004, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1236 (S.B. 1296), Sec. 7.005,

eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1236 (S.B. [1296](#)), Sec. 21.001(18), eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 937 (S.B. [1758](#)), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 707 (H.B. [53](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1024 (H.B. [123](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 793 (H.B. [700](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.1211. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM.

(a) The department shall collaborate with local workforce development boards, foster care transition centers, community and technical colleges, schools, and any other appropriate workforce industry resources to create a program that:

(1) assists foster care youth and former foster care youth in obtaining:

(A) a high school diploma or a high school equivalency certificate; and

(B) industry certifications that are necessary for occupations that are in high demand;

(2) provides career guidance to foster care youth and former foster care youth; and

(3) informs foster care youth and former foster care youth about the tuition and fee waivers for institutions of higher education that are available under Section [54.366](#), Education Code.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 419 (S.B. [1220](#)), Sec. 3, eff. June 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.1212. FACILITATION OF TRANSITION TO INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION. (a) In this section, "community resource coordination group" means a coordination group established under a memorandum of understanding under Section [531.055](#), Government Code.

(b) A department employee who is a member of a community

resource coordination group shall inform the group about the tuition and fee waivers for institutions of higher education that are available to eligible children in foster care under Section [54.366](#), Education Code.

(c) Each school district, in coordination with the department, shall facilitate the transition of each child enrolled in the district who is eligible for a tuition and fee waiver under Section [54.366](#), Education Code, and who is likely to be in the conservatorship of the department on the day preceding the child's 18th birthday to an institution of higher education by:

(1) assisting the child with the completion of any applications for admission or for financial aid;

(2) arranging and accompanying the child on campus visits;

(3) assisting the child in researching and applying for private or institution-sponsored scholarships;

(4) identifying whether the child is a candidate for appointment to a military academy;

(5) assisting the child in registering and preparing for college entrance examinations, including, subject to the availability of funds, arranging for the payment of any examination fees by the department; and

(6) coordinating contact between the child and a liaison officer designated under Section [61.0908](#), Education Code, for students who were formerly in the department's conservatorship. Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 333 (H.B. [928](#)), Sec. 1, eff. June 1, 2017.

Redesignated from Family Code, Section [264.1211](#) by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 467 (H.B. [4170](#)), Sec. 21.001(16), eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.1213. RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS FOR CHILDREN AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE. The department in cooperation with volunteer advocates from a charitable organization described by Subchapter C, Chapter [107](#), and the Department of Public Safety shall develop procedures to ensure that a foster child obtains a driver's license or personal identification card before the child leaves the

conservatorship of the department.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1076 (H.B. 3338), Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2017.

Redesignated from Family Code, Section 264.1211 by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 467 (H.B. 4170), Sec. 21.001(17), eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.1214. HOUSING FOR HOMELESS YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE. (a) For a youth who will voluntarily enter extended foster care on the youth's 18th birthday, the youth's caseworker shall, not later than six months before the youth's 18th birthday, complete any necessary transitional living or supervised independent living paperwork to ensure the youth has housing on the date the youth enters extended foster care. Not later than the 90th day before the youth's 18th birthday, the caseworker shall review the qualifications and requirements for the youth's housing.

(b) If a youth intends to continue living with the youth's substitute care provider after the youth's 18th birthday, the department shall waive any background check otherwise required for the youth to remain living with the substitute care provider.

(c) For a youth who continues living with the youth's substitute care provider after the youth's 18th birthday, the youth may share a bedroom with another youth who is 16 years of age or older provided the age difference between the youths does not exceed two years.

(d) A substitute care provider who prohibits a youth from living in the facility after the youth's 18th birthday shall notify the youth's caseworker of that fact:

(1) not later than:

(A) the 90th day before the youth's 18th birthday if the facility is a foster home; or

(B) six months before the youth's 18th birthday if the facility is a cottage family home or general residential operation; or

(2) as soon as possible if the youth is placed in a foster home, cottage family home, or general residential operation less than six months before the youth's 18th birthday.

(e) After receiving notice under Subsection (d), the youth's caseworker shall verbally communicate with the youth about the youth's living arrangements and document the substance of the communication in the youth's case file.

(f) The department shall assist a youth living in a supervised independent living program arrangement to develop a rental history by allowing the youth to cosign the lease for the youth's housing provided the property owner does not object.

(g) The department by rule shall establish a protocol that may be implemented for a youth to prevent the youth from aging out of a residential treatment center. The protocol, if implemented, must be implemented not later than the youth's 17th birthday or at the time the youth is placed in a residential treatment center after the youth's 17th birthday.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 793 (H.B. 700), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.122. COURT APPROVAL REQUIRED FOR TRAVEL OUTSIDE UNITED STATES BY CHILD IN FOSTER CARE. (a) A child for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator and who has been placed in foster care may travel outside of the United States only if the person with whom the child has been placed has petitioned the court for, and the court has rendered an order granting, approval for the child to travel outside of the United States.

(b) The court shall provide notice to the department and to any other person entitled to notice in the suit if the court renders an order granting approval for the child to travel outside of the United States under this section.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 18, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 264.123. REPORTS CONCERNING CHILDREN WHO ARE MISSING OR VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING. (a) If a child in the department's managing conservatorship is missing from the child's substitute care provider, including a child who is abducted or is a runaway, the department shall notify the following persons that the child is missing:

- (1) the appropriate law enforcement agencies;
- (2) the court with jurisdiction over the department's managing conservatorship of the child;
- (3) the child's attorney ad litem;
- (4) the child's guardian ad litem; and
- (5) the child's parent unless the parent:
 - (A) cannot be located or contacted;
 - (B) has had the parent's parental rights terminated; or
 - (C) has executed an affidavit of relinquishment of parental rights.

(b) The department shall provide the notice required by Subsection (a) not later than 24 hours after the time the department learns that the child is missing or as soon as possible if a person entitled to notice under that subsection cannot be notified within 24 hours.

(c) If a child has been reported as a missing child under Subsection (a), the department shall notify the persons described by Subsection (a) when the child returns to the child's substitute care provider not later than 24 hours after the time the department learns that the child has returned or as soon as possible if a person entitled to notice cannot be notified within 24 hours.

(d) The department shall make continuing efforts to determine the location of a missing child until the child returns to substitute care, including:

- (1) contacting on a monthly basis:
 - (A) the appropriate law enforcement agencies;
 - (B) the child's relatives;
 - (C) the child's former caregivers; and
 - (D) any state or local social service agency that may be providing services to the child; and

- (2) conducting a supervisory-level review of the case on a quarterly basis if the child is 15 years of age or younger to determine whether sufficient efforts have been made to locate the child and whether other action is needed.

(e) The department shall document in the missing child's case record:

(1) the actions taken by the department to:
(A) determine the location of the child; and
(B) persuade the child to return to substitute care;

(2) any discussion during, and determination resulting from, the supervisory-level review under Subsection (d)(2);

(3) any discussion with law enforcement officials following the return of the child regarding the child's absence; and

(4) any discussion with the child described by Subsection (f).

(f) After a missing child returns to the child's substitute care provider, the department shall interview the child to determine the reasons why the child was missing, where the child stayed during the time the child was missing, and whether, while missing, the child was a victim of conduct that constitutes an offense under Section [20A.02\(a\)\(7\)](#), Penal Code. The department shall report to an appropriate law enforcement agency any disclosure made by a child that indicates that the child was the victim of a crime during the time the child was missing. The department shall make a report under this subsection not later than 24 hours after the time the disclosure is made. The department is not required to interview a missing child under this subsection if, at the time the child returns, the department knows that the child was abducted and another agency is investigating the abduction.

(g) The department shall collect information on each child in the department's managing conservatorship who is missing from the child's substitute care provider and on each child who, while in the department's managing conservatorship, is a victim of conduct that constitutes an offense under Section [20A.02\(a\)\(7\)](#), Penal Code. The collected information must include information on:

(1) whether the managing conservatorship of the department is temporary or permanent;

(2) the type of substitute care in which the child is placed; and

(3) the child's sex, age, race, and ethnicity and the

department region in which the child resides.

(h) The department shall prepare an annual report on the information collected under Subsection (g) and make the report available on the department's Internet website. The report may not include any individually identifiable information regarding a child who is the subject of information in the report.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1130 (H.B. 943), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 713 (H.B. 1217), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 713 (H.B. 1217), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.124. DAY CARE FOR FOSTER CHILD. (a) In this section, "day care" means the assessment, care, training, education, custody, treatment, or supervision of a foster child by a person other than the child's foster parent for less than 24 hours a day, but at least two hours a day, three or more days a week.

(b) The department, in accordance with department rules, shall implement a process to verify that each foster parent who is seeking monetary assistance from the department for day care for a foster child has attempted to find appropriate day-care services for the foster child through community services, including Head Start programs, prekindergarten classes, and early education programs offered in public schools. The department shall specify the documentation the foster parent must provide to the department to demonstrate compliance with the requirements established under this subsection.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), the department may not provide monetary assistance to a foster parent for day care for a foster child unless the department receives the verification required under Subsection (b).

(d) The department may provide monetary assistance to a foster parent for a foster child without the verification required under Subsection (b) if the department determines the verification would prevent an emergency placement that is in the child's best

interest.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 423 (S.B. 430), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.195, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.125. AGE-APPROPRIATE NORMALCY ACTIVITIES; STANDARD OF CARE. (a) The department shall use its best efforts to normalize the lives of children in the managing conservatorship of the department by allowing substitute caregivers, without the department's prior approval, to make decisions similar to those a parent would be entitled to make regarding a child's participation in age-appropriate normalcy activities.

(b) In determining whether to allow a child in the managing conservatorship of the department to participate in an activity, a substitute caregiver must exercise the standard of care of a reasonable and prudent parent.

(c) The department shall adopt and implement policies consistent with this section promoting a substitute caregiver's ability to make decisions described by Subsection (a). The department shall identify and review any departmental policy or procedure that may impede a substitute caregiver's ability to make such decisions.

(d) The department shall require licensed child placing agency personnel, residential child care licensing staff, conservatorship caseworkers, and other persons as may be determined by the department to complete a course of training regarding:

(1) the importance of a child's participation in age-appropriate normalcy activities and the benefits of such activities to a child's well-being, mental health, and social, emotional, and developmental growth; and

(2) substitute caregiver decision-making under the standard of care of a reasonable and prudent parent.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262 (S.B. 1407), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2015.

For expiration of this section, see Subsection (h).

Sec. 264.1251. SUMMER INTERNSHIP PILOT PROGRAM. (a) The department shall establish a summer internship pilot program that provides foster youth with the opportunity to develop marketable job skills and obtain professional work experience through a summer internship with a participating business, nonprofit organization, or governmental entity.

(b) The department may collaborate with other state agencies, as appropriate, to establish the pilot program. The pilot program may be implemented in more than one department region.

(c) The department may enter into an agreement with one or more entities described by Subsection (a) to allow the entity to award internships to youth who participate in the pilot program. Internships provided under the pilot program may be paid or unpaid.

(d) Not later than April 1 of each year, the department shall select foster youth or former foster youth who are 15 years of age or older to participate in the pilot program. Each youth participating in the pilot program shall enter into an agreement with the organization awarding the internship and the department relating to the terms of the youth's internship.

(e) The department shall complete an evaluation of the pilot program not later than the second anniversary of the date the program begins.

(f) The department shall submit a report on the evaluation of the pilot program to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives. The report must include:

(1) the number of youth who participated in the pilot program;

(2) the location and type of internships provided under the pilot program; and

(3) details of the department's efforts to recruit eligible youth to participate in the pilot program.

(g) The executive commissioner may adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

(h) This section expires September 1, 2021.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1029 (H.B. 1608), Sec. 1, eff. June 15, 2017.

Sec. 264.1261. FOSTER CARE CAPACITY NEEDS PLAN. (a) In this section, "community-based care" has the meaning assigned by Section 264.152.

(b) Appropriate department management personnel from a child protective services region in which community-based care has not been implemented, in collaboration with foster care providers, faith-based entities, and child advocates in that region, shall use data collected by the department on foster care capacity needs and availability of each type of foster care and kinship placement in the region to create a plan to address the substitute care capacity needs in the region. The plan must identify both short-term and long-term goals and strategies for addressing those capacity needs.

(b-1) Notwithstanding Section 264.0011, the Health and Human Services Commission, in collaboration with the department and each single source continuum contractor in this state, shall develop a plan to increase the placement capacity in each catchment area of the state with the goal of eliminating the need to place a child outside of the child's community. In developing the plan, the commission shall:

(1) evaluate whether contracting for additional capacity at residential treatment centers, facilities that provide mental inpatient or outpatient beds for crisis intervention and stabilization purposes only for children with severe behavioral health or mental health needs, and other potential temporary placement options provides the best methods for meeting capacity shortages; and

(2) make a recommendation to the department regarding contracting for additional capacity.

(b-2) A plan developed under Subsection (b-1) that includes the use of an inpatient or outpatient mental health facility must require the facility to discharge a child placed in the facility not later than 72 hours after the treating health care provider determines it is not medically necessary for the child to remain in the facility.

(b-3) The plan developed under Subsection (b-1) must include information and contingency plans to ensure adequate capacity in other facilities to meet placement needs when a facility is placed on probation.

(b-4) The department and each single source continuum contractor shall contract with facilities for reserve beds to ensure the department may place each child in a facility if capacity is otherwise unavailable.

(c) A foster care capacity needs plan developed under Subsection (b) must be:

- (1) submitted to and approved by the commissioner; and
- (2) updated annually.

(d) The department shall publish each initial foster care capacity needs plan and each annual update to a plan on the department's Internet website.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 17(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2017.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 5(a), eff. June 14, 2021.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 5(a), eff. June 14, 2021.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 5(b), eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.128. SINGLE CHILD PLAN OF SERVICE INITIATIVE.

(a) In this section, "community-based care" has the meaning assigned by Section 264.152.

(b) In regions of the state where community-based care has not been implemented, the department shall:

- (1) collaborate with child-placing agencies to implement the single child plan of service model developed under the single child plan of service initiative; and

- (2) ensure that a single child plan of service is developed for each child in foster care in those regions.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 17(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.130. PREGNANCY AND PARENTING INFORMATION. The department at developmentally appropriate stages shall ensure that children in the managing conservatorship of the department who are pregnant or who are minor parents receive information on and support in providing safe environments for children, including information and support regarding:

- (1) safe sleeping arrangements;
- (2) suggestions for childproofing potentially dangerous settings in a home;
- (3) child development and methods to cope with challenging behaviors;
- (4) selection of appropriate substitute caregivers;
- (5) a child's early brain development, including the importance of meeting an infant's developmental needs by providing positive experiences and avoiding adverse experiences;
- (6) the importance of paternal involvement in a child's life and methods for coparenting;
- (7) the benefits of reading, singing, and talking to young children;
- (8) the importance of prenatal and postpartum care for both the mother and infant, including the impact of and signs for perinatal mood disorders;
- (9) infant nutrition and the importance of breastfeeding; and
- (10) healthy relationships, including the prevention of intimate partner violence.

Added by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1033 (H.B. 475), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

SUBCHAPTER B-1. COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

Sec. 264.151. LEGISLATIVE INTENT. (a) It is the intent of the legislature that the department contract with community-based nonprofit and local governmental entities that have the ability to

provide child welfare services. The services provided by the entities must include direct case management to ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being, in accordance with state and federal child welfare goals.

(b) It is the intent of the legislature that the provision of community-based care for children be implemented with measurable goals relating to:

- (1) the safety of children in placements;
- (2) the placement of children in each child's home community;
- (3) the provision of services to children in the least restrictive environment possible and, if possible, in a family home environment;
- (4) minimal placement changes for children;
- (5) the maintenance of contact between children and their families and other important persons;
- (6) the placement of children with siblings;
- (7) the provision of services that respect each child's culture;
- (8) the preparation of children and youth in foster care for adulthood;
- (9) the provision of opportunities, experiences, and activities for children and youth in foster care that are available to children and youth who are not in foster care;
- (10) the participation by children and youth in making decisions relating to their own lives;
- (11) the reunification of children with the biological parents of the children when possible; and
- (12) the promotion of the placement of children with relative or kinship caregivers if reunification is not possible.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.152. DEFINITIONS. Except as otherwise provided, in this subchapter:

- (1) "Alternative caregiver" means a person who is not the foster parent of the child and who provides temporary care for

the child for more than 12 hours but less than 60 days.

(2) "Case management" means the provision of case management services to a child for whom the department has been appointed temporary or permanent managing conservator or to the child's family, a young adult in extended foster care, a relative or kinship caregiver, or a child who has been placed in the catchment area through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, and includes:

(A) caseworker visits with the child;

(B) family and caregiver visits;

(C) convening and conducting permanency planning meetings;

(D) the development and revision of child and family plans of service, including a permanency plan and goals for a child or young adult in care;

(E) the coordination and monitoring of services required by the child and the child's family;

(F) the assumption of court-related duties regarding the child, including:

(i) providing any required notifications or consultations;

(ii) preparing court reports;

(iii) attending judicial and permanency hearings, trials, and mediations;

(iv) complying with applicable court orders; and

(v) ensuring the child is progressing toward the goal of permanency within state and federally mandated guidelines; and

(G) any other function or service that the department determines necessary to allow a single source continuum contractor to assume responsibility for case management.

(3) "Catchment area" means a geographic service area for providing child protective services that is identified as part of community-based care.

(4) "Community-based care" means the provision of child welfare services in accordance with state and federal child

welfare goals by a community-based nonprofit or a local governmental entity under a contract that includes direct case management to:

- (A) prevent entry into foster care;
- (B) reunify and preserve families;
- (C) ensure child safety, permanency, and well-being; and
- (D) reduce future referrals of children or parents to the department.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 6, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.153. COMMUNITY-BASED CARE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

(a) The department shall develop and maintain a plan for implementing community-based care. The plan must:

(1) describe the department's expectations, goals, and approach to implementing community-based care;

(2) include a timeline for implementing community-based care throughout this state, any limitations related to the implementation, and a progressive intervention plan and a contingency plan to provide continuity of the delivery of foster care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers if a contract with a single source continuum contractor ends prematurely;

(3) delineate and define the case management roles and responsibilities of the department and the department's contractors and the duties, employees, and related funding that will be transferred to the contractor by the department;

(4) identify any training needs and include long-range and continuous plans for training and cross-training staff, including plans to train caseworkers using the standardized curriculum created by the human trafficking prevention task force under Section 402.035(d)(6), Government Code, as that section existed on August 31, 2017;

(5) include a plan for evaluating the costs and tasks associated with each contract procurement, including the initial and ongoing contract costs for the department and contractor;

(6) include the department's contract monitoring approach and a plan for evaluating the performance of each contractor and the community-based care system as a whole that includes an independent evaluation of each contractor's processes and fiscal and qualitative outcomes; and

(7) include a report on transition issues resulting from implementation of community-based care.

(b) The department shall annually:

(1) update the implementation plan developed under this section and post the updated plan on the department's Internet website; and

(2) post on the department's Internet website the progress the department has made toward its goals for implementing community-based care.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 57, eff. September 1, 2015.

Transferred, redesignated and amended from Family Code, Section 264.126 by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(b), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.154. QUALIFICATIONS OF SINGLE SOURCE CONTINUUM CONTRACTOR; SELECTION. (a) To enter into a contract with the commission or department to serve as a single source continuum contractor to provide services under this subchapter, an entity must be:

(1) a nonprofit entity that has:

(A) an organizational mission focused on child welfare; and

(B) a majority of the entity's board members residing in this state; or

(2) a governmental entity.

(b) In selecting a single source continuum contractor, the department shall consider whether a prospective contractor for a catchment area has demonstrated experience in providing services to

children and families in the catchment area.

(c) The department shall request local stakeholders in a catchment area, including those listed in Section 264.155(a)(8), to provide any necessary information about the catchment area that will assist the department in:

(1) preparing the department's request for bids, proposals, or other applicable expressions of interest to provide community-based care in the catchment area; and

(2) selecting a single source continuum contractor to provide community-based care in the catchment area.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 7, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.155. REQUIRED CONTRACT PROVISIONS. (a) A contract with a single source continuum contractor to provide community-based care services in a catchment area must include provisions that:

(1) establish a timeline for the implementation of community-based care in the catchment area, including a timeline for implementing:

(A) case management services for children, families, and relative and kinship caregivers receiving services in the catchment area; and

(B) family reunification support services to be provided after a child receiving services from the contractor is returned to the child's family;

(2) establish conditions for the single source continuum contractor's access to relevant department data and require the participation of the contractor in the data access and standards governance council created under Section 264.159;

(3) require the single source continuum contractor to create a single process for the training and use of alternative caregivers for all child-placing agencies in the catchment area to facilitate reciprocity of licenses for alternative caregivers

between agencies, including respite and overnight care providers, as those terms are defined by department rule;

(4) require the single source continuum contractor to maintain a diverse network of service providers that offer a range of foster capacity options and that can accommodate children from diverse cultural backgrounds;

(5) allow the department to conduct a performance review of the contractor beginning 18 months after the contractor has begun providing case management and family reunification support services to all children and families in the catchment area and determine if the contractor has achieved any performance outcomes specified in the contract;

(6) following the review under Subdivision (5), allow the department to:

(A) impose financial penalties on the contractor for failing to meet any specified performance outcomes; or

(B) award financial incentives to the contractor for exceeding any specified performance outcomes;

(7) require the contractor to give preference for employment to employees of the department:

(A) whose position at the department is impacted by the implementation of community-based care; and

(B) who are considered by the department to be employees in good standing;

(8) require the contractor to provide preliminary and ongoing community engagement plans to ensure communication and collaboration with local stakeholders in the catchment area, including any of the following:

(A) community faith-based entities;

(B) the judiciary;

(C) court-appointed special advocates;

(D) child advocacy centers;

(E) service providers;

(F) foster families;

(G) biological parents;

(H) foster youth and former foster youth;

(I) relative or kinship caregivers;

(J) child welfare boards, if applicable;
(K) attorneys ad litem;
(L) attorneys that represent parents involved in suits filed by the department; and

(M) any other stakeholders, as determined by the contractor; and

(9) require that the contractor comply with any applicable court order issued by a court of competent jurisdiction in the case of a child for whom the contractor has assumed case management responsibilities or an order imposing a requirement on the department that relates to functions assumed by the contractor.

(b) A contract with a single source continuum contractor under this subchapter must be consistent with the requirements of applicable law and may only include terms authorized by the laws or rules of this state.

(c) In regions identified for implementing community-based care and in regions where community-based care has been implemented, a contractor may apply to the department for a waiver from any statutory and regulatory requirement to increase innovation and flexibility for achieving contractual performance outcomes.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 8, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.156. READINESS REVIEW PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED CARE CONTRACTOR. (a) The department shall develop a formal review process to assess the ability of a single source continuum contractor to satisfy the responsibilities and administrative requirements of delivering foster care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers, including the contractor's ability to provide:

(1) case management services for children and families;

(2) evidence-based, promising practice, or

evidence-informed supports for children and families; and

(3) sufficient available capacity for inpatient and outpatient services and supports for children at all service levels who have previously been placed in the catchment area.

(b) As part of the readiness review process, the single source continuum contractor must prepare a plan detailing the methods by which the contractor will avoid or eliminate conflicts of interest. The department may not transfer services to the contractor until the department has determined the plan is adequate.

(c) Repealed by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 26(1), eff. June 14, 2021.

(d) If after conducting the review process developed under Subsection (a) the department determines that a single source continuum contractor is able to adequately deliver foster care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers in advance of the projected dates stated in the timeline included in the contract with the contractor, the department may adjust the timeline to allow for an earlier transition of service delivery to the contractor.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 26(1), eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.157. EXPANSION OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE. (a) Not later than the last day of the state fiscal biennium, the department shall:

(1) identify the catchment areas in the state where the department will implement community-based care; and

(2) following the implementation of community-based care services in those catchment areas, retain an entity based in this state that is independent of the department to conduct an evaluation of the implementation process and the single source continuum contractor performance in each catchment area.

(b) Notwithstanding the process for the expansion of

community-based care described in Subsection (a), the department shall accept and evaluate unsolicited proposals from entities based in this state to provide community-based care services in a geographic service area where the department has not implemented community-based care. An entity that submits a proposal to provide community-based care services must ensure that it meets all criteria outlined by this subchapter and must demonstrate established connections to the area the entity proposes to serve. The Health and Human Services Commission in conjunction with the department shall adopt rules to ensure that proposals submitted under this subsection comply with state procurement laws and rules.

(c) In expanding community-based care, the department may change the geographic boundaries of catchment areas as necessary to align with specific communities or to enable satisfactory unsolicited proposals for community-based care services to be accepted and implemented.

(d) The department shall ensure the continuity of services for children and families during the transition period to community-based care in a catchment area.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 9, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.158. TRANSFER OF CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO SINGLE SOURCE CONTINUUM CONTRACTOR. (a) In each initial catchment area where community-based care has been implemented or a contract with a single source continuum contractor has been executed before September 1, 2017, the department shall transfer to the single source continuum contractor providing foster care services in that area:

(1) the case management of children, relative and kinship caregivers, and families receiving services from that contractor; and

(2) family reunification support services to be provided after a child receiving services from the contractor is

returned to the child's family for the period of time ordered by the court.

(b) The commission shall include a provision in a contract with a single source continuum contractor to provide foster care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers in a catchment area to which community-based care is expanded after September 1, 2017, that requires the transfer to the contractor of the provision of:

(1) the case management services for children, relative and kinship caregivers, and families in the catchment area where the contractor will be operating; and

(2) family reunification support services to be provided after a child receiving services from the contractor is returned to the child's family.

(c) The department shall collaborate with a single source continuum contractor to establish an initial case transfer planning team to:

(1) address any necessary data transfer;

(2) establish file transfer procedures; and

(3) notify relevant persons regarding the transfer of services to the contractor.

(d) A single source continuum contractor may implement its own procedures to execute the department's statutory duties the contractor assumes and is not required to follow the department's procedures to execute the assumed department duties.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. [11](#)), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. [1896](#)), Sec. 10, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.159. DATA ACCESS AND STANDARDS GOVERNANCE COUNCIL.

(a) The department shall create a data access and standards governance council to develop protocols for the interoperable electronic transfer of data from single source continuum contractors to the department to allow the contractors to perform case management functions and additional contracted services by the

department.

(b) The council shall develop protocols for the access, management, and security of case data that is electronically shared between a single source continuum contractor and the department.

(c) The council shall develop protocols for the access, management, and security of data shared with an independent entity retained to conduct the independent evaluations required under this subchapter. The protocols shall ensure the entity has full, unrestricted access to all relevant data necessary to perform an evaluation.

(d) The council consists of single source continuum contractors with active contracts and department employees who provide data, legal, information technology, and child protective services. The council shall meet at least quarterly during each calendar year.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 11, eff. June 14, 2021.

Sec. 264.160. LIABILITY INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS. A single source continuum contractor and any subcontractor of the single source continuum contractor providing community-based care services shall maintain minimum insurance coverage, as required in the contract with the department, to minimize the risk of insolvency and protect against damages. The executive commissioner may adopt rules to implement this section.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.161. STATUTORY DUTIES ASSUMED BY CONTRACTOR. Except as provided by Section 264.163, a single source continuum contractor providing foster care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers in a catchment area must, either directly or through subcontractors, assume the statutory duties of the department in connection with the delivery of foster

care services and services for relative and kinship caregivers in that catchment area.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.162. REVIEW OF CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE. The department shall develop a formal review process to evaluate a single source continuum contractor's implementation of placement services and case management services in a catchment area.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.163. CONTINUING DUTIES OF DEPARTMENT. In a catchment area in which a single source continuum contractor is providing family-based safety services or community-based care services, legal representation of the department in an action under this code shall be provided in accordance with Section 264.009.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.164. CONFIDENTIALITY. (a) The records of a single source continuum contractor relating to the provision of community-based care services in a catchment area are subject to Chapter 552, Government Code, in the same manner as the records of the department are subject to that chapter.

(b) Subchapter C, Chapter 261, regarding the confidentiality of certain case information, applies to the records of a single source continuum contractor in relation to the provision of services by the contractor.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.165. NOTICE REQUIRED FOR EARLY TERMINATION OF CONTRACT. (a) A single source continuum contractor may terminate a contract entered into under this subchapter by providing notice to the department and the commission of the contractor's intent to terminate the contract not later than the 60th day before the date

of the termination.

(b) The department may terminate a contract entered into with a single source continuum contractor under this subchapter by providing notice to the contractor of the department's intent to terminate the contract not later than the 30th day before the date of termination.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.166. CONTINGENCY PLAN IN EVENT OF EARLY CONTRACT TERMINATION. (a) In each catchment area in which community-based care is implemented, the department shall create a contingency plan to ensure the continuity of services for children and families in the catchment area in the event of an early termination of the contract with the single source continuum contractor providing foster care services in that catchment area.

(b) To support each contingency plan, the single source continuum contractor providing foster care services in that catchment area, subject to approval by the department, shall develop a transfer plan to ensure the continuity of services for children and families in the catchment area in the event of an early termination of the contract with the department. The contractor shall submit an updated transfer plan each year and six months before the end of the contract period, including any extension. The department is not limited or restricted in requiring additional information from the contractor or requiring the contractor to modify the transfer plan as necessary.

(c) If a single source continuum contractor gives notice to the department of an early contract termination, the department may enter into a contract with a different contractor for the sole purpose of assuming the contract that is being terminated.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.167. ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE. An employee, agent, or representative of a single source continuum contractor is considered to be a client's representative of the department for

purposes of the privilege under Rule 503, Texas Rules of Evidence, as that privilege applies to communications with a prosecuting attorney or other attorney representing the department, or the attorney's representatives, in a proceeding under this subtitle. Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.168. REVIEW OF CONTRACTOR RECOMMENDATIONS BY DEPARTMENT. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter governing the transfer of case management authority to a single source continuum contractor, the department may review, approve, or disapprove a contractor's recommendation with respect to a child's permanency goal.

(b) Subsection (a) may not be construed to limit or restrict the authority of the department to include necessary oversight measures and review processes to maintain compliance with federal and state requirements in a contract with a single source continuum contractor.

(c) The department shall develop an internal dispute resolution process to decide disagreements between a single source continuum contractor and the department.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 18(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

For expiration of this section, see Subsection (f).

Sec. 264.1691. STUDY OF OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES. (a) In this section, "family preservation service" means a time-limited, family-focused service, including:

(1) a service subject to the Family First Prevention Services Act (Title VII, Div. E, Pub. L. No. 115-123), provided to the family of a child who is:

(A) a candidate for foster care to prevent or eliminate the need to remove the child and to allow the child to remain safely with the child's family; or

(B) a pregnant or parenting foster youth;

(2) enhanced in-home support services and non-recurring financial support to promote safe and stable

families; and

(3) services to promote self-sufficiency and prevent further need for interaction in the child welfare system.

(b) The department shall study and develop a comprehensive list of options for implementing family preservation services in existing catchment areas, including:

(1) contracting with single source continuum contractors to provide services; and

(2) procuring service providers through a competitive bidding process.

(c) In developing the options under Subsection (b), the department shall:

(1) examine existing department functions related to the stage of service the department describes as family-based safety services, including assessments of child safety and child removals, and make recommendations for incorporating the functions into a contracted model;

(2) consider the results from community needs assessments and capacity development plans conducted during the preceding 10 years; and

(3) consider:

(A) contingent on appropriation, including Title IV-E prevention services in the delivery of community-based family preservation services and the appropriate use of those services;

(B) the financial modeling used to determine implementation costs, including:

(i) start-up funding costs;

(ii) the cost of purchased client services;

(iii) strategies for shared financial risk;

and

(iv) rate methodology;

(C) procedures for transitioning between case stages, including transitions from:

(i) investigation to family preservation;

and

(ii) family preservation to foster care;

(D) ways to maximize evidence-based services and

to increase the evidence base for family preservation programs in this state;

(E) requirements for complying with federal law to receive matching funds for certain prevention services;

(F) appropriate performance measures for contracted services, including associated financial remedies and incentives;

(G) ways to incorporate and to maximize existing funding methods for and programs related to behavioral health and substance use provided by the Health and Human Services Commission;

(H) appropriate contract provisions to ensure a clear distinction of money, personnel, and processes for family preservation services and foster care services;

(I) conflict resolution procedures between the department and contractors concerning:

(i) service plans;

(ii) services; and

(iii) case action for children or families served by a contractor;

(J) appropriate oversight structures to manage contract compliance, contractor performance, and child and family safety;

(K) appropriate contract provisions to ensure community engagement, including appropriate partnerships with faith-based organizations;

(L) recommendations for statutory changes necessary to support the department's implementation options; and

(M) any other information the department determines necessary for legislative direction of the department's implementation of community-based family preservation services.

(d) In developing implementation options under this section, the department shall:

(1) incorporate relevant information obtained from previous efforts and similar service models implemented in other states;

(2) collaborate with the Health and Human Services Commission as needed, including on:

(A) recommendations for the provision of behavioral health and substance use services; and

(B) appropriate rate methodology; and

(3) allow interested persons to comment on the provision of behavioral health and substance use services.

(e) The department may enter into any contracts the department determines necessary to comply with this section.

(f) This section expires August 31, 2023.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 858 (S.B. 910), Sec. 1, eff. June 16, 2021.

Sec. 264.170. LIMITED LIABILITY FOR SINGLE SOURCE CONTINUUM CONTRACTOR AND RELATED PERSONNEL. (a) A nonprofit entity that contracts with the department to provide services as a single source continuum contractor under this subchapter is considered to be a charitable organization for the purposes of Chapter 84, Civil Practice and Remedies Code, with respect to the provision of those services, and that chapter applies to the entity and any person who is an employee or volunteer of the entity.

(b) The limitations on liability provided by this section apply:

(1) only to an act or omission by the entity or person, as applicable, that occurs while the entity or person is acting within the course and scope of the entity's contract with the department and the person's duties for the entity; and

(2) only if insurance coverage in the minimum amounts required by Chapter 84, Civil Practice and Remedies Code, is in force and effect at the time a cause of action for personal injury, death, or property damage accrues.

Added by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 467 (H.B. 4170), Sec. 7.006(a), eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.171. JOINT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY-BASED CARE TRANSITION. (a) Notwithstanding Section 264.0011, in this section:

(1) "Commission" means the Health and Human Services Commission.

(2) "Committee" means the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Community-Based Care Transition.

(3) "Department" means the Department of Family and Protective Services.

(b) The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Community-Based Care Transition is composed of six voting members as follows:

(1) three members of the senate, appointed by the lieutenant governor; and

(2) three members of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.

(c) The lieutenant governor and speaker of the house of representatives shall each appoint a member described by Subsection (b)(1) or (2), respectively, to serve as joint chairs of the committee.

(d) The committee shall meet at the call of the joint chairs and may consider public testimony.

(e) The committee may employ persons necessary to carry out this section through funds made available by the legislature.

(f) The committee shall monitor and report to the legislature on the following related to the implementation of community-based care:

(1) the funding of community-based care;

(2) the performance and outcomes of community-based care statewide and by region;

(3) statutory or regulatory barriers to the successful implementation of community-based care; and

(4) other challenges to the successful implementation of community-based care.

(g) The committee may request any relevant information from the commission, the department, or another relevant state agency, and the commission, department, or agency shall comply with the request, unless the provision of the information is prohibited by state or federal law.

(h) Not later than January 1 of each odd-numbered year, the committee shall submit a written report of the committee's findings and recommendations to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the

speaker of the house of representatives, and each member of the standing committees of the senate and house of representatives having primary jurisdiction over child welfare issues.

(i) The committee shall monitor the continued implementation of community-based care and hold public hearings to receive comments from the public on the implementation of community-based care.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. 1896), Sec. 12, eff. June 14, 2021.

For expiration of this section, see Subsection (i).

Sec. 264.172. OFFICE OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE TRANSITION.

(a) In this section:

(1) "Department" means the Department of Family and Protective Services.

(2) "Office" means the Office of Community-Based Care Transition created under this section.

(b) The Office of Community-Based Care Transition is a state agency independent of but administratively attached to the department.

(c) The office shall:

(1) assess catchment areas in this state where community-based care services may be implemented;

(2) develop a plan for implementing community-based care in each catchment area in this state, including the order in which community-based care will be implemented in each catchment area and a timeline for implementation;

(3) evaluate community-based care providers;

(4) contract, on behalf of the department, with community-based care providers to provide services in each catchment area in this state;

(5) measure contract performance of community-based care providers;

(6) provide contract oversight of community-based care providers;

(7) report outcomes of community-based care providers;

(8) identify the employees and other resources to be transferred to the community-based care provider to provide the necessary implementation, case management, operational, and administrative functions and outline the methodology for determining the employees and resources to be transferred;

(9) create a risk-sharing funding model that strategically and explicitly balances financial risk between this state and the community-based care provider and mitigates the financial effects of significant unforeseen changes in the community-based care provider's duties or the population of the region it serves; and

(10) require the annual review and adjustment of the funding based on updated cost and finance methodologies, including changes in policy, foster care rates, and regional service usage.

(d) The department shall provide any administrative support the office needs, and the department and the Health and Human Services Commission shall provide access to any information and legal counsel the office requires to implement community-based care.

(e) The governor shall appoint the director of the office to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the governor. The director reports directly to the governor.

(f) The office shall report to the legislature at least once each calendar quarter regarding the implementation of community-based care in the state.

(g) A provision of this subchapter applicable to the department with respect to any duty assigned by this section to the office applies to the office in the same manner as the provision would apply to the department.

(h) Except as otherwise provided by this section, the department retains the powers and duties provided by this subchapter to the department.

(i) The office is abolished and this section expires on the date that community-based care is implemented in the last department region in this state.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 621 (S.B. [1896](#)), Sec. 12, eff. June 14, 2021.

SUBCHAPTER C. CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Sec. 264.201. SERVICES BY DEPARTMENT. (a) When the department provides services directly or by contract to an abused or neglected child and the child's family, the services shall be designed to:

- (1) prevent further abuse;
- (2) alleviate the effects of the abuse suffered;
- (3) prevent removal of the child from the home; and
- (4) provide reunification services when appropriate for the return of the child to the home.

(b) The department shall emphasize ameliorative services for sexually abused children.

(c) The department shall provide or contract for necessary services to an abused or neglected child and the child's family without regard to whether the child remains in or is removed from the family home. If parental rights have been terminated, services may be provided only to the child.

(d) The services may include in-home programs, parenting skills training, youth coping skills, and individual and family counseling. If the department requires or a court orders parenting skills training services through a parenting education program or practice, the program or practice must be an evidence-based program or practice or promising program or practice that is provided in the community in which the family resides, if available.

(e) The department may not provide and a court may not order the department to provide supervision for visitation in a child custody matter unless the department is a petitioner or intervener in the underlying suit.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1150, Sec. 28, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1390, Sec. 49, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1257 (H.B. [2630](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 324 (S.B. [1488](#)), Sec.

24.002(6), eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 515 (S.B. 452), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.2011. ENHANCED IN-HOME SUPPORT PROGRAM. (a) To the extent that funding is available, the department shall develop a program to strengthen families through enhanced in-home support. The program shall assist certain low-income families and children in child neglect cases in which poverty is believed to be a significant underlying cause of the neglect and in which the enhancement of in-home support appears likely to prevent removal of the child from the home or to speed reunification of the child with the family.

(b) A family that meets eligibility criteria for inclusion in the program is eligible to receive limited funding from a flexible fund account to cover nonrecurring expenses that are designed to help the family accomplish the objectives included in the family's service plan.

(c) The executive commissioner shall adopt rules establishing:

(1) specific eligibility criteria for the program described in this section;

(2) the maximum amount of money that may be made available to a family through the flexible fund account; and

(3) the purposes for which money made available under the program may be spent.

(d) The department shall evaluate the results of the program to determine whether the program is successful in safely keeping families together. If the department determines that the program is successful, the department shall continue the program to the extent that funding is available.

Added by Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 19, eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 264.2015. FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING. The department may collaborate with the courts and other appropriate local entities to develop and implement family group conferencing as a

strategy for promoting family preservation and permanency for children.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.52, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.202. STANDARDS AND EFFECTIVENESS. (a) The department, with assistance from national organizations with expertise in child protective services, shall define a minimal baseline of in-home and foster care services for abused or neglected children that meets the professionally recognized standards for those services. The department shall attempt to provide services at a standard not lower than the minimal baseline standard.

(b) The department, with assistance from national organizations with expertise in child protective services, shall develop outcome measures to track and monitor the effectiveness of in-home and foster care services.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Sec. 264.203. REQUIRED PARTICIPATION. (a) The department may file a suit requesting the court to render a temporary order requiring the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household to:

(1) participate in the services for which the department makes a referral or services the department provides or purchases for:

(A) alleviating the effects of the abuse or neglect that has occurred;

(B) reducing a continuing danger to the physical health or safety of the child caused by an act or failure to act of the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household; or

(C) reducing a substantial risk of abuse or neglect caused by an act or failure to act of the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or member of the child's household; and

(2) permit the child and any siblings of the child to receive the services.

(b) A suit requesting an order under this section may be filed in a court with jurisdiction to hear the suit in the county in which the child is located.

(c) Except as otherwise provided by this subchapter, the suit is governed by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure applicable to the filing of an original lawsuit.

(d) The petition shall be supported by a sworn affidavit by a person based on personal knowledge and stating facts sufficient to support a finding that:

(1) the child has been a victim of abuse or neglect or is at substantial risk of abuse or neglect; and

(2) there is a continuing danger to the physical health or safety of the child caused by an act or failure to act of the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household unless that person participates in services requested by the department.

(e) In a suit filed under this section, the court may render a temporary restraining order as provided by Section [105.001](#).

(f) The court shall hold a hearing on the petition not later than the 14th day after the date the petition is filed unless the court finds good cause for extending that date for not more than 14 days.

(g) The court shall appoint an attorney ad litem to represent the interests of the child immediately after the filing but before the hearing to ensure adequate representation of the child. The attorney ad litem for the child shall have the powers and duties of an attorney ad litem for a child under Chapter [107](#).

(h) The court shall appoint an attorney ad litem to represent the interests of a parent for whom participation in services is being requested immediately after the filing but before the hearing to ensure adequate representation of the parent. The attorney ad litem for the parent shall have the powers and duties of an attorney ad litem for a parent under Section [107.0131](#).

(i) Before commencement of the hearing, the court shall inform each parent of:

(1) the parent's right to be represented by an attorney; and

(2) for a parent who is indigent and appears in opposition to the motion, the parent's right to a court-appointed attorney.

(j) If a parent claims indigence, the court shall require the parent to complete and file with the court an affidavit of indigence. The court may consider additional evidence to determine whether the parent is indigent, including evidence relating to the parent's income, source of income, assets, property ownership, benefits paid in accordance with a federal, state, or local public assistance program, outstanding obligations, and necessary expenses and the number and ages of the parent's dependents. If the court determines the parent is indigent, the attorney ad litem appointed to represent the interests of the parent may continue the representation. If the court determines the parent is not indigent, the court shall discharge the attorney ad litem from the appointment after the hearing and shall order the parent to pay the cost of the attorney ad litem's representation.

(k) The court may, for good cause shown, postpone any subsequent proceedings for not more than seven days after the date of the attorney ad litem's discharge to allow the parent to hire an attorney or to provide the parent's attorney time to prepare for the subsequent proceeding.

(l) An order may be rendered under this section only after notice and hearing.

(m) At the conclusion of the hearing, the court shall deny the petition unless the court finds sufficient evidence to satisfy a person of ordinary prudence and caution that:

(1) abuse or neglect has occurred or there is a substantial risk of abuse or neglect or continuing danger to the physical health or safety of the child caused by an act or failure to act of the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household; and

(2) services are necessary to ensure the physical health or safety of the child.

(n) If the court renders an order granting the petition, the court shall:

(1) state its findings in the order;

(2) make appropriate temporary orders under Chapter 105 necessary to ensure the safety of the child; and

(3) order the participation in specific services narrowly tailored to address the findings made by the court under Subsection (m).

(o) If the court finds that a parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household did not cause the continuing danger to the physical health or safety of the child or the substantial risk of abuse or neglect, or was not the perpetrator of the abuse or neglect alleged, the court may not require that person to participate in services ordered under Subsection (n).

(p) Not later than the 90th day after the date the court renders an order under this section, the court shall hold a hearing to review the status of each person required to participate in the services and the child and the services provided, purchased, or referred. The court shall set subsequent review hearings every 90 days to review the continued need for the order.

(q) An order rendered under this section expires on the 180th day after the date the order is signed unless the court extends the order as provided by Subsection (r) or (s).

(r) The court may extend an order rendered under this section on a showing by the department of a continuing need for the order, after notice and hearing. Except as provided by Subsection (s), the court may extend the order only one time for not more than 180 days.

(s) The court may extend an order rendered under this section for not more than an additional 180 days only if:

(1) the court finds that:

(A) the extension is necessary to allow the person required to participate in services under the plan of service time to complete those services;

(B) the department made a good faith effort to timely provide the services to the person;

(C) the person made a good faith effort to complete the services; and

(D) the completion of the services is necessary to ensure the physical health and safety of the child; and

(2) the extension is requested by the person or the person's attorney.

(t) At any time, a person affected by the order may request the court to terminate the order. The court shall terminate the order on finding the order is no longer needed.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.55, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1406 (S.B. 758), Sec. 20, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 8 (H.B. 567), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.2031. SELECTION OF SERVICE PROVIDER. (a) A parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of a household ordered to participate in services under Section 264.203(a) may obtain those services from a qualified provider selected by the person.

(b) A parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of a household who obtains services from a provider selected by the person is responsible for the cost of those services.

(c) A parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of a household who successfully completes the services ordered under Section 264.203(a) must obtain verification from the service provider of that completion. The department shall accept the service provider's verification provided under this subsection as proof that the person successfully completed the court-ordered services.

Added by Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 269 (H.B. 3041), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.204. COMMUNITY-BASED FAMILY SERVICES. (a) The department shall administer a grant program to provide funding to community organizations, including faith-based or county organizations, to respond to:

(1) low-priority, less serious cases of abuse and

neglect; and

(2) cases in which an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child was unsubstantiated but involved a family that has been previously investigated for abuse or neglect of a child.

(b) The executive commissioner shall adopt rules to implement the grant program, including rules governing the submission and approval of grant requests and the cancellation of grants.

(c) To receive a grant, a community organization whose grant request is approved must execute an interagency agreement or a contract with the department. The contract must require the organization receiving the grant to perform the services as stated in the approved grant request. The contract must contain appropriate provisions for program and fiscal monitoring.

(d) In areas of the state in which community organizations receive grants under the program, the department shall refer low-priority, less serious cases of abuse and neglect to a community organization receiving a grant under the program.

(e) A community organization receiving a referral under Subsection (d) shall make a home visit and offer family social services to enhance the parents' ability to provide a safe and stable home environment for the child. If the family chooses to use the family services, a case manager from the organization shall monitor the case and ensure that the services are delivered.

(f) If after the home visit the community organization determines that the case is more serious than the department indicated, the community organization shall refer the case to the department for a full investigation.

(g) The department may not award a grant to a community organization in an area of the state in which a similar program is already providing effective family services in the community.

(h) For purposes of this section, a case is considered to be a less serious case of abuse or neglect if:

(1) the circumstances of the case do not appear to involve a reasonable likelihood that the child will be abused or neglected in the foreseeable future; or

(2) the allegations in the report of child abuse or

neglect:

(A) are general in nature or vague and do not support a determination that the child who is the subject of the report has been abused or neglected or will likely be abused or neglected; or

(B) if substantiated, would not be considered abuse or neglect under this chapter.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.53, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.2041. CULTURAL AWARENESS. The department shall:

(1) develop and deliver cultural competency training to all service delivery staff;

(2) increase targeted recruitment efforts for foster and adoptive families who can meet the needs of children and youth who are waiting for permanent homes;

(3) target recruitment efforts to ensure diversity among department staff; and

(4) develop collaborative partnerships with community groups, agencies, faith-based organizations, and other community organizations to provide culturally competent services to children and families of every race and ethnicity.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.54, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.2042. NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES. (a) The department shall cooperate with nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations, in providing information to families in crisis regarding child and family services, including respite care, voluntary guardianship, and other support services, available in the child's community.

(b) The department does not incur any obligation as a result of providing information as required by Subsection (a).

(c) The department is not liable for damages arising out of the provision of information as required by Subsection (a).

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 244 (H.B. 871), Sec. 11, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.2043. PROHIBITION ON ABUSE OR NEGLECT INVESTIGATION BASED SOLELY ON REQUEST FOR INFORMATION. The department may not initiate an investigation of child abuse or neglect based solely on a request submitted to the department by a child's parent for information relating to child and family services available to families in crisis.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 244 (H.B. 871), Sec. 11, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.2044. GRANTS FOR FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS. (a) Using available funds or private donations, the governor shall establish and administer an innovation grant program to award grants to support faith-based community programs that collaborate with the department and the commission to improve foster care and the placement of children in foster care.

(b) A faith-based community program is eligible for a grant under this section if:

(1) the effectiveness of the program is supported by empirical evidence; and

(2) the program has demonstrated the ability to build connections between faith-based, secular, and government stakeholders.

(c) The regional director for the department in the region where a grant recipient program is located, or the regional director's designee, shall serve as the liaison between the department and the program for collaborative purposes. For a program that operates in a larger region, the department may designate a liaison in each county where the program is operating. The department or the commission may not direct or manage the operation of the program.

(d) The initial duration of a grant under this section is two years. The governor may renew a grant awarded to a program under this section if funds are available and the governor determines that the program is successful.

(e) The governor may not award to a program grants under

this section totaling more than \$300,000.

(f) The governor shall adopt rules to implement the grant program created under this section.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 319 (S.B. 11), Sec. 19(a), eff. September 1, 2017.

Redesignated from Family Code, Section 264.2042 by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 467 (H.B. 4170), Sec. 21.001(18), eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.205. SWIFT ADOPTION TEAMS. (a) The department shall develop swift adoption teams to expedite the process of placing a child under the jurisdiction of the department for adoption. Swift adoption teams developed under this section shall, in performing their duties, attempt to place a child for adoption with an appropriate relative of the child.

(b) A swift adoption team shall consist of department personnel who shall operate under policies adopted by rule by the executive commissioner. The department shall set priorities for the allocation of department resources to enable a swift adoption team to operate successfully under the policies adopted under this subsection.

(c) Repealed by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1083, Sec. 25(27), eff. June 17, 2011.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 943, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 306, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1050 (S.B. 71), Sec. 20, eff. September 1, 2011.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1083 (S.B. 1179), Sec. 25(27), eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.196, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.207. HOME STUDY REQUIRED BEFORE ADOPTION.

(a) The department must complete a home study before the date an applicant is approved for an adoption.

(b) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(32), eff. September 1, 2015.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 600, Sec. 19, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1022, Sec. 94, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 58, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 59, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(32), eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER D. SERVICES TO AT-RISK YOUTH

Sec. 264.301. SERVICES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH. (a) The department shall operate a program to provide services for children in at-risk situations and for the families of those children.

(b) The services under this section may include:

- (1) crisis family intervention;
- (2) emergency short-term residential care;
- (3) family counseling;
- (4) parenting skills training;
- (5) youth coping skills training;
- (6) mentoring; and
- (7) advocacy training.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, Sec. 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.

Sec. 264.302. EARLY YOUTH INTERVENTION SERVICES. (a) This section applies to a child who:

(1) is seven years of age or older and under 17 years of age; and

(2) has not had the disabilities of minority for general purposes removed under Chapter 31.

(b) The department shall operate a program under this section to provide services for children in at-risk situations and

for the families of those children.

(c) The department may not provide services under this section to a child who has:

(1) at any time been referred to juvenile court for engaging in conduct that violates a penal law of this state of the grade of felony other than a state jail felony; or

(2) been found to have engaged in delinquent conduct under Title 3.

(d) The department may provide services under this section to a child who engages in conduct for which the child may be found by a court to be an at-risk child, without regard to whether the conduct violates a penal law of this state of the grade of felony other than a state jail felony, if the child was younger than 10 years of age at the time the child engaged in the conduct.

(e) The department shall provide services for a child and the child's family if a contract to provide services under this section is available in the county and the child is referred to the department as an at-risk child by:

(1) a juvenile court or probation department as part of a progressive sanctions program under Chapter 59;

(2) a law enforcement officer or agency under Section 52.03; or

(3) a justice or municipal court under Article 45.057, Code of Criminal Procedure.

(f) The services under this section may include:

(1) crisis family intervention;

(2) emergency short-term residential care for children 10 years of age or older;

(3) family counseling;

(4) parenting skills training;

(5) youth coping skills training;

(6) advocacy training; and

(7) mentoring.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, Sec. 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.
Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1086, Sec. 30, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 31, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1514, Sec. 16, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 60, eff. September 1, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER E. CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS

Sec. 264.401. DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "center" means a children's advocacy center.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.402. ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER. On the execution of a memorandum of understanding under Section 264.403, a children's advocacy center may be established by community members and the participating agencies described by Section 264.403(a) to serve a county or two or more contiguous counties in which a center has not been established.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 185, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.403. INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. (a) A center shall enter into a memorandum of understanding regarding participation in the multidisciplinary team response under Section 264.406. The center and each of the following agencies must execute the memorandum of understanding:

(1) the department responsible for child abuse and neglect investigations;

(2) each county and municipal law enforcement agency with jurisdiction to investigate child abuse and neglect in the area to be served by the center; and

(3) each county or district attorney with jurisdiction to prosecute child abuse and neglect cases in the area to be served by the center.

(b) A memorandum of understanding executed under this

section shall include the agreement of each participating agency to cooperate in:

(1) minimizing the revictimization of alleged abuse and neglect victims and nonoffending family members through the investigation, assessment, intervention, and prosecution processes; and

(2) maintaining a cooperative team approach to facilitate successful outcomes in the criminal justice and child protection systems through shared fact-finding and strong, collaborative case development.

(c) The memorandum of understanding must be reexecuted:

(1) at least every three years;

(2) on a significant change to the memorandum of understanding; or

(3) on a change of a signatory of a participating agency.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.4031. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM WORKING PROTOCOL.

(a) A center shall adopt a multidisciplinary team working protocol. The working protocol must include:

(1) the center's mission statement;

(2) the role of each participating agency on the multidisciplinary team and the agency's commitment to the center;

(3) specific criteria for referral of cases for a multidisciplinary team response and specific criteria for the referral and provision of each service provided by the center;

(4) processes and general procedures for:

(A) the intake of cases, including direct referrals from participating agencies described by Section [264.403\(a\)](#) and reports from the department that involve the suspected abuse or neglect of a child or the death of a child from abuse or neglect;

(B) the availability outside scheduled business

hours of a multidisciplinary team response to cases and provision of necessary center services;

(C) information sharing to ensure the timely exchange of relevant information;

(D) forensic interviews;

(E) family and victim advocacy;

(F) medical evaluations and medical treatment;

(G) mental health evaluations and mental health treatment;

(H) multidisciplinary team case review; and

(I) case tracking; and

(5) provisions for addressing conflicts within the multidisciplinary team and for maintaining the confidentiality of information shared among members of the multidisciplinary team.

(b) The working protocol must be executed by the participating agencies required to enter into the memorandum of understanding under Section [264.403](#).

(c) The working protocol must be reexecuted:

(1) at least every three years;

(2) on a significant change to the working protocol;

or

(3) on a change of a signatory of a participating agency.

Added by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.404. BOARD REPRESENTATION. (a) In addition to any other persons appointed or elected to serve on the governing board of a center, the governing board must include an executive officer of, or an employee with decision-making authority selected by an executive officer of:

(1) the department responsible for child abuse and neglect investigations;

(2) a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction to investigate child abuse and neglect in the area served by the center; and

(3) the county or district attorney's office with

jurisdiction to prosecute child abuse and neglect cases in the area served by the center.

(b) Service on a center's board by an executive officer or employee under Subsection (a) is an additional duty of the person's office or employment.

(c) The governing board members required under Subsection (a) may not constitute a majority of the membership of a center's governing board.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 185, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.405. CENTER DUTIES. (a) A center shall:

(1) receive, review, and track department reports relating to the suspected abuse or neglect of a child or the death of a child from abuse or neglect to ensure a consistent, comprehensive approach to all cases that meet the criteria outlined in the multidisciplinary team working protocol adopted under Section [264.4031](#);

(2) coordinate the activities of participating agencies relating to abuse and neglect investigations and delivery of services to alleged abuse and neglect victims and their families;

(3) facilitate assessment of alleged abuse or neglect victims and their families to determine their need for services relating to the investigation of abuse or neglect and provide needed services; and

(4) comply with the standards adopted under Section [264.409](#)(c).

(b) A center shall provide:

(1) facilitation of a multidisciplinary team response to abuse or neglect allegations;

(2) a formal process that requires the multidisciplinary team to routinely discuss and share information

regarding investigations, case status, and services needed by children and families;

(3) a system to monitor the progress and track the outcome of each case;

(4) a child-focused setting that is comfortable, private, and physically and psychologically safe for diverse populations at which a multidisciplinary team can meet to facilitate the efficient and appropriate disposition of abuse and neglect cases through the civil and criminal justice systems;

(5) culturally competent services for children and families throughout the duration of a case;

(6) victim support and advocacy services for children and families;

(7) forensic interviews that are conducted in a neutral, fact-finding manner and coordinated to avoid duplicative interviewing;

(8) access to specialized medical evaluations and treatment services for victims of alleged abuse or neglect;

(9) evidence-based, trauma-focused mental health services for children and nonoffending members of the child's family; and

(10) opportunities for community involvement through a formalized volunteer program dedicated to supporting the center.

(c) The duties prescribed to a center under Subsection (a)(1) do not relieve the department or a law enforcement agency of its duty to investigate a report of abuse or neglect as required by other law.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.406. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM. (a) A center's multidisciplinary team must include employees of the participating agencies described by Section [264.403\(a\)](#).

(b) A representative of any other entity may participate in the multidisciplinary team response as provided by the

multidisciplinary team working protocol adopted under Section 264.4031 if:

(1) the entity participates in or provides the following:

(A) child abuse or neglect investigations;

(B) abuse or neglect investigations involving persons with a disability;

(C) services to alleged child abuse or neglect victims; or

(D) services to alleged victims who are persons with a disability;

(2) the center and the participating agencies agree in writing to the entity's participation; and

(3) the entity signs the memorandum of understanding executed under Section 264.403 and the working protocol adopted under Section 264.4031.

(c) A multidisciplinary team shall be actively involved in the following multidisciplinary team response:

(1) coordinating the actions of the participating agencies involved in the investigation and prosecution of cases and the delivery of services to alleged abuse or neglect victims and the victims' families; and

(2) conducting at regularly scheduled intervals multidisciplinary review of appropriate abuse or neglect cases as provided by the working protocol adopted under Section 264.4031.

(d) A multidisciplinary team may review an abuse or neglect case in which the alleged perpetrator is not a person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare.

(e) A multidisciplinary team member is authorized to share with and receive from other multidisciplinary team members information made confidential by Chapter 552, Government Code, Section 40.005 or 48.101, Human Resources Code, or Section 261.201 or 264.408 of this code when acting in the member's official capacity as an employee of a participating agency described by Section 264.403(a) or of another entity described by Subsection (b).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 32, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 185, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.4061. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE REQUIRED.

(a) The department shall refer a case to a center and the center shall initiate a response by a center's multidisciplinary team appointed under Section 264.406 when conducting an investigation of:

(1) a report of abuse or neglect that is made by a professional as defined by Section 261.101 and that:

(A) alleges sexual abuse of a child; or

(B) is a type of case handled by the center in accordance with the working protocol adopted for the center under Section 264.4031; or

(2) a child fatality in which there are surviving children in the deceased child's household or under the supervision of the caregiver involved in the child fatality.

(b) Any interview of a child conducted as part of the investigation under Subsection (a) must be a forensic interview conducted in accordance with the center's working protocol adopted under Section 264.4031 unless a forensic interview is not appropriate based on the child's age and development or the center's working protocol adopted under Section 264.4031.

(c) Subsection (a) applies only to an investigation of abuse or neglect in a county served by a center that has executed an interagency memorandum of understanding under Section 264.403. If a county is not served by a center that has executed an interagency memorandum of understanding, the department may, if appropriate, directly refer a case to a center in an adjacent county to initiate a response by that center's multidisciplinary team.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 945 (S.B. 1806), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2017.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 7, eff.

September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.407. LIABILITY. (a) A person is not liable for civil damages for a recommendation made or an opinion rendered in good faith while acting in the official scope of the person's duties as a member of a multidisciplinary team or as a board member, staff member, or volunteer of a center.

(b) The limitation on civil liability of Subsection (a) does not apply if a person's actions constitute gross negligence.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.408. USE OF INFORMATION AND RECORDS; CONFIDENTIALITY AND OWNERSHIP. (a) The files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in providing services under this chapter are confidential and not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may only be disclosed for purposes consistent with this chapter. Disclosure may be made to:

(1) the department, department employees, law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, medical professionals, and other state or local agencies that provide services to children and families; and

(2) the attorney for the alleged victim who is the subject of the records and a court-appointed volunteer advocate appointed for the alleged victim under Section 107.031.

(b) Information related to the investigation of a report of abuse or neglect under Chapter 261 and to the services provided as a result of the investigation is confidential as provided by Section 261.201.

(c) The department, a law enforcement agency, and a prosecuting attorney may share with a center information that is confidential under Section 261.201 as needed to provide services under this chapter. Confidential information shared with or provided to a center remains the property of the agency that shared or provided the information to the center. A request for confidential information provided to the center under this section must be made to the agency that shared or provided the information.

(d) An electronic recording of an interview with a child or person with a disability that is made by a center is the property of the prosecuting attorney involved in the criminal prosecution of the case involving the child or person. If no criminal prosecution occurs, the electronic recording is the property of the attorney involved in representing the department in a civil action alleging abuse, neglect, or exploitation. If the matter involving the child or person is not prosecuted, the electronic recording is the property of the department if the matter is an investigation by the department of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. If the department is not investigating or has not investigated the matter, the electronic recording is the property of the agency that referred the matter to the center.

(d-1) An electronic recording of an interview described by Subsection (d) is subject to production under Article 39.14, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Rule 615, Texas Rules of Evidence. A court shall deny any request by a defendant to copy, photograph, duplicate, or otherwise reproduce an electronic recording of an interview described by Subsection (d), provided that the prosecuting attorney makes the electronic recording reasonably available to the defendant in the same manner as property or material may be made available to defendants, attorneys, and expert witnesses under Article 39.15(d), Code of Criminal Procedure.

(e) The department shall be allowed access to electronic recordings of interviews of children or persons with a disability. Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 33, eff. Sept. 1, 1997. Amended by:

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 653 (S.B. 1106), Sec. 4, eff. June 17, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1069 (H.B. 3259), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 299 (S.B. 60), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.409. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACTS. (a) The

commission shall contract with one statewide organization that is exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as an organization described by Section 501(c)(3) of that code and that is composed of individuals who have expertise in the establishment and operation of children's advocacy center programs. The statewide organization shall provide training, technical assistance, evaluation services, and funds administration to support contractual requirements under Section [264.411](#) for local children's advocacy center programs.

(b) The contract under this section must provide that the statewide organization may not spend annually in the performance of duties under Subsection (a) more than 12 percent of the annual amount appropriated to the commission for purposes of this section.

(c) The statewide organization with which the commission contracts shall develop and adopt standards for children's advocacy centers.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 33, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 347, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. [354](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.410. CONTRACTS WITH CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.

(a) The statewide organization with which the commission contracts under Section [264.409](#) shall contract with eligible centers to establish, maintain, and enhance the services provided by the centers.

(b) The contract under this section may not result in reducing the financial support a center receives from another source.

(c) Repealed by Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. [821](#)), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2019.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 33, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 347, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1,

1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 10, eff. September 1, 2019.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 264.411. ELIGIBILITY FOR CONTRACTS. (a) A public entity that operated as a center under this subchapter before November 1, 1995, or a nonprofit entity is eligible for a contract under Section 264.410 if the entity:

(1) has a signed memorandum of understanding as provided by Section 264.403;

(2) has a signed working protocol as provided by Section 264.4031;

(3) has a governing board as provided by Section 264.404;

(4) has a multidisciplinary team as provided by Section 264.406;

(5) regularly convenes the multidisciplinary team as provided by Section 264.406;

(6) employs an executive director who is accountable to the board of directors of the entity and who is not the exclusive salaried employee of any governmental agency; and

(7) fulfills the duties required by Section 264.405.

(b) The statewide organization described by Section 264.409 may waive the requirements specified in Subsection (a) if it determines that the waiver will not adversely affect a center's ability to carry out its duties under Section 264.405.

Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 575, Sec. 33, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 347, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 185, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 136 (S.B. 245), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 821), Sec. 11, eff. September 1, 2019.

SUBCHAPTER F. CHILD FATALITY REVIEW AND INVESTIGATION

Sec. 264.501. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Autopsy" and "inquest" have the meanings assigned by Article 49.01, Code of Criminal Procedure.

(2) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 1.203(13), eff. April 2, 2015.

(3) "Child" means a person younger than 18 years of age.

(4) "Committee" means the child fatality review team committee.

(5) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 1.203(13), eff. April 2, 2015.

(6) "Health care provider" means any health care practitioner or facility that provides medical evaluation or treatment, including dental and mental health evaluation or treatment.

(7) "Meeting" means an in-person meeting or a meeting held by telephone or other electronic medium.

(8) "Preventable death" means a death that may have been prevented by reasonable medical, social, legal, psychological, or educational intervention. The term includes the death of a child from:

- (A) intentional or unintentional injuries;
- (B) medical neglect;
- (C) lack of access to medical care;
- (D) neglect and reckless conduct, including failure to supervise and failure to seek medical care; and
- (E) premature birth associated with any factor described by Paragraphs (A) through (D).

(9) "Review" means a reexamination of information regarding a deceased child from relevant agencies, professionals,

and health care providers.

(10) "Review team" means a child fatality review team established under this subchapter.

(11) "Unexpected death" includes a death of a child that, before investigation:

(A) appears to have occurred without anticipation or forewarning; and

(B) was caused by trauma, suspicious or obscure circumstances, sudden infant death syndrome, abuse or neglect, or an unknown cause.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 957, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.203(13), eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.502. COMMITTEE. (a) The child fatality review team committee is composed of:

(1) a person appointed by and representing the state registrar of vital statistics;

(2) a person appointed by and representing the commissioner of the department;

(3) a person appointed by and representing the Title V director of the Department of State Health Services;

(4) a person appointed by and representing the speaker of the house of representatives;

(5) a person appointed by and representing the lieutenant governor;

(6) a person appointed by and representing the governor; and

(7) individuals selected under Subsection (b).

(b) The members of the committee who serve under Subsections (a)(1) through (6) shall select the following additional committee members:

(1) a criminal prosecutor involved in prosecuting crimes against children;

- (2) a sheriff;
- (3) a justice of the peace;
- (4) a medical examiner;
- (5) a police chief;
- (6) a pediatrician experienced in diagnosing and treating child abuse and neglect;
- (7) a child educator;
- (8) a child mental health provider;
- (9) a public health professional;
- (10) a child protective services specialist;
- (11) a sudden infant death syndrome family service provider;
- (12) a neonatologist;
- (13) a child advocate;
- (14) a chief juvenile probation officer;
- (15) a child abuse prevention specialist;
- (16) a representative of the Department of Public Safety;
- (17) a representative of the Texas Department of Transportation;
- (18) an emergency medical services provider; and
- (19) a provider of services to, or an advocate for, victims of family violence.

(c) Members of the committee selected under Subsection (b) serve three-year terms with the terms of six or seven members, as appropriate, expiring February 1 each year.

(d) Members selected under Subsection (b) must reflect the geographical, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of the state.

(e) An appointment to a vacancy on the committee shall be made in the same manner as the original appointment. A member is eligible for reappointment.

(f) Members of the committee shall select a presiding officer from the members of the committee.

(g) The presiding officer of the committee shall call the meetings of the committee, which shall be held at least quarterly.

(h) A member of the committee is not entitled to compensation for serving on the committee but is entitled to

reimbursement for the member's travel expenses as provided in the General Appropriations Act. Reimbursement under this subsection for a person serving on the committee under Subsection (a)(2) shall be paid from funds appropriated to the department. Reimbursement for other persons serving on the committee shall be paid from funds appropriated to the Department of State Health Services.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 957, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.56, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 802), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 933 (H.B. 3097), Sec. 3C.04, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1290 (H.B. 2017), Sec. 42, eff. September 1, 2011.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1145 (S.B. 66), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.503. PURPOSE AND DUTIES OF COMMITTEE AND SPECIFIED STATE AGENCIES. (a) The purpose of the committee is to:

(1) develop an understanding of the causes and incidence of child deaths in this state;

(2) identify procedures within the agencies represented on the committee to reduce the number of preventable child deaths; and

(3) promote public awareness and make recommendations to the governor and the legislature for changes in law, policy, and practice to reduce the number of preventable child deaths.

(b) To ensure that the committee achieves its purpose, the department and the Department of State Health Services shall perform the duties specified by this section.

(c) The department shall work cooperatively with:

- (1) the Department of State Health Services;
 - (2) the committee; and
 - (3) individual child fatality review teams.
- (d) The Department of State Health Services shall:
- (1) recognize the creation and participation of review teams;
 - (2) promote and coordinate training to assist the review teams in carrying out their duties;
 - (3) assist the committee in developing model protocols for:
 - (A) the reporting and investigating of child fatalities for law enforcement agencies, child protective services, justices of the peace and medical examiners, and other professionals involved in the investigations of child deaths;
 - (B) the collection of data regarding child deaths; and
 - (C) the operation of the review teams;
 - (4) develop and implement procedures necessary for the operation of the committee;
 - (5) develop and make available training for justices of the peace and medical examiners regarding inquests in child death cases; and
 - (6) promote education of the public regarding the incidence and causes of child deaths, the public role in preventing child deaths, and specific steps the public can undertake to prevent child deaths.

(d-1) The committee shall enlist the support and assistance of civic, philanthropic, and public service organizations in the performance of the duties imposed under Subsection (d).

(e) In addition to the duties under Subsection (d), the Department of State Health Services shall:

- (1) collect data under this subchapter and coordinate the collection of data under this subchapter with other data collection activities;
- (2) perform annual statistical studies of the incidence and causes of child fatalities using the data collected under this subchapter; and

(3) evaluate the available child fatality data and use the data to create public health strategies for the prevention of child fatalities.

(f) Not later than April 1 of each even-numbered year, the committee shall publish a report that contains aggregate child fatality data collected by local child fatality review teams, recommendations to prevent child fatalities and injuries, and recommendations to the department on child protective services operations based on input from the child safety review subcommittee. The committee shall submit a copy of the report to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, Department of State Health Services, and department and make the report available to the public. Not later than October 1 of each even-numbered year, the department shall submit a written response to the committee's recommendations to the committee, governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and Department of State Health Services describing which of the committee's recommendations regarding the operation of the child protective services system the department will implement and the methods of implementation.

(g) The committee shall perform the functions and duties required of a citizen review panel under 42 U.S.C. Section 5106a(c)(4)(A).

(h) Each member of the committee must be a member of the child fatality review team in the county where the committee member resides unless the committee member is an appointed representative of a state agency.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 957, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.57, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. 396 (S.B. 802), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1145 (S.B. 66), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.5031. COLLECTION OF NEAR FATALITY DATA. (a) In this section, "near fatality" means a case where a physician has certified that a child is in critical or serious condition, and a caseworker determines that the child's condition was caused by the abuse or neglect of the child.

(b) The department shall include near fatality child abuse or neglect cases in the child fatality case database, for cases in which child abuse or neglect is determined to have been the cause of the near fatality. The department must also develop a data collection strategy for near fatality child abuse or neglect cases. Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.5032. REPORT ON CHILD FATALITY AND NEAR FATALITY DATA. (a) The department shall produce an aggregated report relating to child fatality and near fatality cases resulting from child abuse or neglect containing the following information:

(1) any prior contact the department had with the child's family and the manner in which the case was disposed, including cases in which the department made the following dispositions:

- (A) priority none or administrative closure;
 - (B) call screened out;
 - (C) alternative or differential response provided;
 - (D) unable to complete the investigation;
 - (E) unable to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred;
 - (F) reason to believe abuse or neglect occurred;
- or
- (G) child removed and placed into substitute care;

(2) for any case investigated by the department involving the child or the child's family:

(A) the number of caseworkers assigned to the case before the fatality or near fatality occurred; and

(B) the caseworker's caseload at the time the case was opened and at the time the case was closed;

(3) for any case in which the department investigation concluded that there was reason to believe that abuse or neglect occurred, and the family was referred to family-based safety services:

(A) the safety plan provided to the family;

(B) the services offered to the family; and

(C) the level of compliance with the safety plan or completion of the services by the family;

(4) the number of contacts the department made with children and families in family-based safety services cases; and

(5) the initial and attempted contacts the department made with child abuse and neglect victims.

(b) In preparing the part of the report required by Subsection (a)(1), the department shall include information contained in department records retained in accordance with the department's records retention schedule.

(c) The report produced under this section must protect the identity of individuals involved in a case that is included in the report.

(d) The department may combine the report required under this section with the annual child fatality report required to be produced under Section [261.204](#).

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. [1549](#)), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.504. MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE. (a) Except as provided by Subsections (b), (c), and (d), meetings of the committee are subject to the open meetings law, Chapter [551](#), Government Code, as if the committee were a governmental body under that chapter.

(b) Any portion of a meeting of the committee during which the committee discusses an individual child's death is closed to the public and is not subject to the open meetings law, Chapter [551](#),

Government Code.

(c) Information identifying a deceased child, a member of the child's family, a guardian or caretaker of the child, or an alleged or suspected perpetrator of abuse or neglect of the child may not be disclosed during a public meeting. On a majority vote of the committee members, the members shall remove from the committee any member who discloses information described by this subsection in a public meeting.

(d) Information regarding the involvement of a state or local agency with the deceased child or another person described by Subsection (c) may not be disclosed during a public meeting.

(e) The committee may conduct an open or closed meeting by telephone conference call or other electronic medium. A meeting held under this subsection is subject to the notice requirements applicable to other meetings. The notice of the meeting must specify as the location of the meeting the location where meetings of the committee are usually held. Each part of the meeting by telephone conference call that is required to be open to the public shall be audible to the public at the location specified in the notice of the meeting as the location of the meeting and shall be tape-recorded. The tape recording shall be made available to the public.

(f) This section does not prohibit the committee from requesting the attendance at a closed meeting of a person who is not a member of the committee and who has information regarding a deceased child.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995;
Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.58, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.505. ESTABLISHMENT OF REVIEW TEAM. (a) A multidisciplinary and multiagency child fatality review team may be established for a county to review child deaths in that county. A county may join with an adjacent county or counties to establish a combined review team.

(b) Any person who may be a member of a review team under Subsection (c) may initiate the establishment of a review team and call the first organizational meeting of the team.

(c) A review team must reflect the diversity of the county's population and may include:

- (1) a criminal prosecutor involved in prosecuting crimes against children;
- (2) a sheriff;
- (3) a justice of the peace or medical examiner;
- (4) a police chief;
- (5) a pediatrician experienced in diagnosing and treating child abuse and neglect;
- (6) a child educator;
- (7) a child mental health provider;
- (8) a public health professional;
- (9) a child protective services specialist;
- (10) a sudden infant death syndrome family service provider;
- (11) a neonatologist;
- (12) a child advocate;
- (13) a chief juvenile probation officer; and
- (14) a child abuse prevention specialist.

(d) Members of a review team may select additional team members according to community resources and needs.

(e) A review team shall select a presiding officer from its members.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.59, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.506. PURPOSE AND DUTIES OF REVIEW TEAM. (a) The purpose of a review team is to decrease the incidence of preventable child deaths by:

(1) providing assistance, direction, and coordination to investigations of child deaths;

(2) promoting cooperation, communication, and coordination among agencies involved in responding to child fatalities;

(3) developing an understanding of the causes and incidence of child deaths in the county or counties in which the review team is located;

(4) recommending changes to agencies, through the agency's representative member, that will reduce the number of preventable child deaths; and

(5) advising the committee on changes to law, policy, or practice that will assist the team and the agencies represented on the team in fulfilling their duties.

(b) To achieve its purpose, a review team shall:

(1) adapt and implement, according to local needs and resources, the model protocols developed by the department and the committee;

(2) meet on a regular basis to review child fatality cases and recommend methods to improve coordination of services and investigations between agencies that are represented on the team;

(3) collect and maintain data as required by the committee;

(4) review and analyze the collected data to identify any demographic trends in child fatality cases, including whether there is a disproportionate number of child fatalities in a particular population group or geographic area; and

(5) submit to the vital statistics unit data reports on deaths reviewed as specified by the committee.

(c) A review team shall initiate prevention measures as indicated by the review team's findings.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995;
Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.197, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 9, eff.

September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.507. DUTIES OF PRESIDING OFFICER. The presiding officer of a review team shall:

(1) send notices to the review team members of a meeting to review a child fatality;

(2) provide a list to the review team members of each child fatality to be reviewed at the meeting;

(3) submit data reports to the vital statistics unit not later than the 30th day after the date on which the review took place; and

(4) ensure that the review team operates according to the protocols developed by the department and the committee, as adapted by the review team.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. [219](#)), Sec. 1.198, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.508. REVIEW PROCEDURE. (a) The review team of the county in which the injury, illness, or event that was the cause of the death of the child occurred, as stated on the child's death certificate, shall review the death.

(b) On receipt of the list of child fatalities under Section [264.507](#), each review team member shall review the member's records and the records of the member's agency for information regarding each listed child.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.509. ACCESS TO INFORMATION. (a) A review team may request information and records regarding a deceased child as necessary to carry out the review team's purpose and duties. Records and information that may be requested under this section include:

(1) medical, dental, and mental health care

information; and

(2) information and records maintained by any state or local government agency, including:

(A) a birth certificate;

(B) law enforcement investigative data;

(C) medical examiner investigative data;

(D) juvenile court records;

(E) parole and probation information and records; and

(F) child protective services information and records.

(b) On request of the presiding officer of a review team, the custodian of the relevant information and records relating to a deceased child shall provide those records to the review team at no cost to the review team.

(b-1) The Department of State Health Services shall provide a review team with electronic access to the preliminary death certificate for a deceased child.

(c) This subsection does not authorize the release of the original or copies of the mental health or medical records of any member of the child's family or the guardian or caretaker of the child or an alleged or suspected perpetrator of abuse or neglect of the child which are in the possession of any state or local government agency as provided in Subsection (a)(2). Information relating to the mental health or medical condition of a member of of the child's family or the guardian or caretaker of the child or the alleged or suspected perpetrator of abuse or neglect of the child acquired as part of an investigation by a state or local government agency as provided in Subsection (a)(2) may be provided to the review team.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995;
Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.60, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 10, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.510. MEETING OF REVIEW TEAM. (a) A meeting of a review team is closed to the public and not subject to the open meetings law, Chapter 551, Government Code.

(b) This section does not prohibit a review team from requesting the attendance at a closed meeting of a person who is not a member of the review team and who has information regarding a deceased child.

(c) Except as necessary to carry out a review team's purpose and duties, members of a review team and persons attending a review team meeting may not disclose what occurred at the meeting.

(d) A member of a review team participating in the review of a child death is immune from civil or criminal liability arising from information presented in or opinions formed as a result of a meeting.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.511. USE OF INFORMATION AND RECORDS; CONFIDENTIALITY. (a) Information and records acquired by the committee or by a review team in the exercise of its purpose and duties under this subchapter are confidential and exempt from disclosure under the open records law, Chapter 552, Government Code, and may only be disclosed as necessary to carry out the committee's or review team's purpose and duties.

(b) A report of the committee or of a review team or a statistical compilation of data reports is a public record subject to the open records law, Chapter 552, Government Code, as if the committee or review team were a governmental body under that chapter, if the report or statistical compilation does not contain any information that would permit the identification of an individual.

(c) A member of a review team may not disclose any information that is confidential under this section.

(d) Information, documents, and records of the committee or of a review team that are confidential under this section are not subject to subpoena or discovery and may not be introduced into

evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding, except that information, documents, and records otherwise available from other sources are not immune from subpoena, discovery, or introduction into evidence solely because they were presented during proceedings of the committee or a review team or are maintained by the committee or a review team.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.512. GOVERNMENTAL UNITS. The committee and a review team are governmental units for purposes of Chapter 101, Civil Practice and Remedies Code. A review team is a unit of local government under that chapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.513. REPORT OF DEATH OF CHILD. (a) A person who knows of the death of a child younger than six years of age shall immediately report the death to the medical examiner of the county in which the death occurs or, if the death occurs in a county that does not have a medical examiner's office or that is not part of a medical examiner's district, to a justice of the peace in that county.

(b) The requirement of this section is in addition to any other reporting requirement imposed by law, including any requirement that a person report child abuse or neglect under this code.

(c) A person is not required to report a death under this section that is the result of a motor vehicle accident. This subsection does not affect a duty imposed by another law to report a death that is the result of a motor vehicle accident.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.514. PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF REPORTABLE DEATH. (a) A medical examiner or justice of the peace notified of a death of a child under Section 264.513 shall hold an inquest under Chapter

49, Code of Criminal Procedure, to determine whether the death is unexpected or the result of abuse or neglect. An inquest is not required under this subchapter if the child's death is expected and is due to a congenital or neoplastic disease. A death caused by an infectious disease may be considered an expected death if:

(1) the disease was not acquired as a result of trauma or poisoning;

(2) the infectious organism is identified using standard medical procedures; and

(3) the death is not reportable to the Department of State Health Services under Chapter 81, Health and Safety Code.

(a-1) The commissioners court of a county shall adopt regulations relating to the timeliness for conducting an inquest into the death of a child. The regulations adopted under this subsection must be as stringent as the standards issued by the National Association of Medical Examiners unless the commissioners court determines that it would be cost prohibitive for the county to comply with those standards.

(b) The medical examiner or justice of the peace shall immediately notify an appropriate local law enforcement agency if the medical examiner or justice of the peace determines that the death is unexpected or the result of abuse or neglect, and that agency shall investigate the child's death. The medical examiner or justice of the peace shall notify the appropriate county child fatality review team of the child's death not later than the 120th day after the date the death is reported.

(c) In this section, the terms "abuse" and "neglect" have the meaning assigned those terms by Section 261.001.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995. Amended by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1022, Sec. 95, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1301, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1997; Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 785, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.199, eff. April 2, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 11(a),

eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.515. INVESTIGATION. (a) The investigation required by Section 264.514 must include:

(1) an autopsy, unless an autopsy was conducted as part of the inquest;

(2) an inquiry into the circumstances of the death, including an investigation of the scene of the death and interviews with the parents of the child, any guardian or caretaker of the child, and the person who reported the child's death; and

(3) a review of relevant information regarding the child from an agency, professional, or health care provider.

(b) The review required by Subsection (a)(3) must include a review of any applicable medical record, child protective services record, record maintained by an emergency medical services provider, and law enforcement report.

(c) The committee shall develop a protocol relating to investigation of an unexpected death of a child under this section. In developing the protocol, the committee shall consult with individuals and organizations that have knowledge and experience in the issues of child abuse and child deaths.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 878, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

SUBCHAPTER G. COURT-APPOINTED VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE PROGRAMS

Sec. 264.601. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Abused or neglected child" means a child who is:

(A) the subject of a suit affecting the parent-child relationship filed by a governmental entity; and

(B) under the control or supervision of the department.

(2) "Volunteer advocate program" means a volunteer-based, nonprofit program that:

(A) provides advocacy services to abused or neglected children with the goal of obtaining a permanent placement for a child that is in the child's best interest; and

(B) complies with recognized standards for volunteer advocate programs.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1224 (S.B. 1369), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 264.602. CONTRACTS WITH ADVOCATE PROGRAMS. (a) The statewide organization with which the commission contracts under Section 264.603 shall contract for services with eligible volunteer advocate programs to provide advocacy services to abused or neglected children.

(b) The contract under this section may not result in reducing the financial support a volunteer advocate program receives from another source.

(c) The commission shall develop a scale of state financial support for volunteer advocate programs that declines over a six-year period beginning on the date each individual contract takes effect. After the end of the six-year period, the commission may not provide more than 50 percent of the volunteer advocate program's funding.

(d) The executive commissioner by rule shall adopt standards for a local volunteer advocate program. The statewide organization shall assist the executive commissioner in developing the standards.

(e) The department, in cooperation with the statewide organization with which the commission contracts under Section 264.603 and other interested agencies, shall support the expansion of court-appointed volunteer advocate programs into counties in which there is a need for the programs. In expanding into a county, a program shall work to ensure the independence of the program, to the extent possible, by establishing community support and accessing private funding from the community for the program.

(f) Expenses incurred by a volunteer advocate program to promote public awareness of the need for volunteer advocates or to explain the work performed by volunteer advocates that are paid with money from the commission volunteer advocate program account

under Section 504.611, Transportation Code, are not considered administrative expenses for the purpose of Section 264.603(b).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 118, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1294, Sec. 7, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.61, eff. September 1, 2005.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1224 (S.B. 1369), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 4, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.603. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACTS. (a) The commission shall contract with one statewide organization that is exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as an organization described by Section 501(c)(3) of that code and that is composed of individuals or groups of individuals who have expertise in the dynamics of child abuse and neglect and experience in operating volunteer advocate programs to provide training, technical assistance, and evaluation services for the benefit of local volunteer advocate programs. The contract shall:

(1) include measurable goals and objectives relating to the number of:

(A) volunteer advocates in the program; and

(B) children receiving services from the program; and

(2) follow practices designed to ensure compliance with standards referenced in the contract.

(b) The contract under this section shall provide that not more than 12 percent of the annual legislative appropriation to implement this subchapter may be spent for administrative purposes by the statewide organization with which the commission contracts under this section.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 119, eff. Sept. 1,

1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 600, Sec. 20, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1224 (S.B. 1369), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 5, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 98 (S.B. 1156), Sec. 1, eff. May 24, 2021.

Acts 2021, 87th Leg., R.S., Ch. 855 (S.B. 799), Sec. 17, eff. September 1, 2021.

Sec. 264.604. ELIGIBILITY FOR CONTRACTS. (a) A person is eligible for a contract under Section 264.602 only if the person is a public or private nonprofit entity that operates a volunteer advocate program that:

(1) uses individuals appointed as volunteer advocates or guardians ad litem by the court to provide for the needs of abused or neglected children;

(2) has provided court-appointed advocacy services for at least six months;

(3) provides court-appointed advocacy services for at least 10 children each month; and

(4) has demonstrated that the program has local judicial support.

(b) The statewide organization with which the commission contracts under Section 264.603 may not contract with a person that is not eligible under this section. However, the statewide organization may waive the requirement in Subsection (a)(3) for an established program in a rural area or under other special circumstances.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 120, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1294, Sec. 8, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1224 (S.B. 1369), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 6, eff.

September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.605. CONTRACT FORM. A person shall apply for a contract under Section 264.602 on a form provided by the commission.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.606. CRITERIA FOR AWARD OF CONTRACTS. The statewide organization with which the commission contracts under Section 264.603 shall consider the following in awarding a contract under Section 264.602:

(1) the volunteer advocate program's eligibility for and use of funds from local, state, or federal governmental sources, philanthropic organizations, and other sources;

(2) community support for the volunteer advocate program as indicated by financial contributions from civic organizations, individuals, and other community resources;

(3) whether the volunteer advocate program provides services that encourage the permanent placement of children through reunification with their families or timely placement with an adoptive family; and

(4) whether the volunteer advocate program has the endorsement and cooperation of the local juvenile court system.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 121, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.607. CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS. The commission shall require that a contract under Section 264.602 require the volunteer advocate program to:

(1) make quarterly and annual financial reports on a

form provided by the commission;

(2) cooperate with inspections and audits that the commission makes to ensure service standards and fiscal responsibility; and

(3) provide as a minimum:

(A) independent and factual information in writing to the court and to counsel for the parties involved regarding the child;

(B) advocacy through the courts for permanent home placement and rehabilitation services for the child;

(C) monitoring of the child to ensure the safety of the child and to prevent unnecessary movement of the child to multiple temporary placements;

(D) reports in writing to the presiding judge and to counsel for the parties involved;

(E) community education relating to child abuse and neglect;

(F) referral services to existing community services;

(G) a volunteer recruitment and training program, including adequate screening procedures for volunteers;

(H) procedures to assure the confidentiality of records or information relating to the child; and

(I) compliance with the standards adopted under Section [264.602](#).

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 122, eff. Sept. 1, 1995; Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 1294, Sec. 9, eff. Sept. 1, 1997.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1224 (S.B. [1369](#)), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. [354](#)), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.608. REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE. (a) Not later than December 1 of each year, the commission shall publish a report that:

(1) summarizes reports from volunteer advocate programs under contract with the commission;

(2) analyzes the effectiveness of the contracts made by the commission under this chapter; and

(3) provides information on:

(A) the expenditure of funds under this chapter;

(B) services provided and the number of children for whom the services were provided; and

(C) any other information relating to the services provided by the volunteer advocate programs under this chapter.

(b) The commission shall submit copies of the report to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, Legislative Budget Board, and members of the legislature.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1312 (S.B. 59), Sec. 21, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 10, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.609. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY. The executive commissioner may adopt rules necessary to implement this subchapter.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 11, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.610. CONFIDENTIALITY. The commission may not disclose information gained through reports, collected case data, or inspections that would identify a person working at or receiving services from a volunteer advocate program.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 12, eff.

September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.611. CONSULTATIONS. In implementing this chapter, the commission shall consult with individuals or groups of individuals who have expertise in the dynamics of child abuse and neglect and experience in operating volunteer advocate programs.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 13, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.612. FUNDING. (a) The commission may solicit and receive grants or money from either private or public sources, including by appropriation by the legislature from the general revenue fund, to implement this chapter.

(b) The need for and importance of the implementation of this chapter by the commission requires priority and preferential consideration for appropriation.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, Sec. 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 751, Sec. 128, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 597 (S.B. 354), Sec. 14, eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.613. USE OF INFORMATION AND RECORDS; CONFIDENTIALITY. (a) The files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in providing services under this subchapter are confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may only be disclosed for purposes consistent with this subchapter.

(b) Information described by Subsection (a) may be disclosed to:

(1) the department, department employees, law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, medical professionals, and other state agencies that provide services to children and families;

(2) the attorney for the child who is the subject of the information; and

(3) eligible children's advocacy centers.

(c) Information related to the investigation of a report of abuse or neglect of a child under Chapter 261 and services provided as a result of the investigation are confidential as provided by Section 261.201.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 142, Sec. 1, eff. May 16, 2001.

Sec. 264.614. INTERNET APPLICATION FOR CASE TRACKING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. (a) Subject to the availability of money as described by Subsection (c), the department shall develop an Internet application that allows a court-appointed volunteer advocate representing a child in the managing conservatorship of the department to access the child's case file through the department'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) The court-appointed volunteer advocate shall maintain the confidentiality required by this chapter and department rule for the information accessed by the advocate through the system described by Subsection (a).

(c) The department may use money appropriated to the department 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). The department may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations of any kind and from any source for purposes of this section.

(d) The executive commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to implement this section.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 205 (H.B. 1227), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.200, eff. April 2, 2015.

SUBCHAPTER I. RELATIVE AND OTHER DESIGNATED CAREGIVER PLACEMENT
PROGRAM

Sec. 264.751. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Designated caregiver" means an individual who has a longstanding and significant relationship with a child or the family of a child for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator and who:

(A) is appointed to provide substitute care for the child, but is not verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home under Chapter 42, Human Resources Code; or

(B) is subsequently appointed permanent managing conservator of the child after providing the care described by Paragraph (A).

(2) "Relative" means a person related to a child by consanguinity as determined under Section 573.022, Government Code.

(3) "Relative caregiver" means a relative who:

(A) provides substitute care for a child for whom the department has been appointed managing conservator, but who is not verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home under Chapter 42, Human Resources Code; or

(B) is subsequently appointed permanent managing conservator of the child after providing the care described by Paragraph (A).

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(c), eff. September 1, 2009.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 317 (H.B. 7), Sec. 34, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1294 (H.B. 3390), Sec. 12, eff. June 14, 2019.

Sec. 264.752. RELATIVE AND OTHER DESIGNATED CAREGIVER PLACEMENT PROGRAM. (a) The department shall develop and procure a program to:

(1) promote continuity and stability for children for whom the department is appointed managing conservator by placing those children with relative or other designated caregivers; and

(2) facilitate relative or other designated caregiver placements by providing assistance and services to those caregivers in accordance with this subchapter and rules adopted by the executive commissioner.

(b) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(38), eff. September 1, 2015.

(c) The executive commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to implement this subchapter. The rules must include eligibility criteria for receiving assistance and services under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(38), eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.753. EXPEDITED PLACEMENT. The department shall expedite the completion of the background and criminal history check, the home study, and any other administrative procedure to ensure that the child is placed with a qualified relative or caregiver as soon as possible after the date the caregiver is identified.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.201, eff. April 2, 2015.

Sec. 264.754. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED PLACEMENT. (a) In this section, "low-risk criminal offense" means a nonviolent

criminal offense, including a fraud-based offense, the department determines has a low risk of impacting:

- (1) a child's safety or well-being; or
- (2) the stability of a child's placement with a relative or other designated caregiver.

(b) Before placing a child with a proposed relative or other designated caregiver, the department must conduct an assessment to determine whether the proposed placement is in the child's best interest.

(c) If the department disqualifies a person from serving as a relative or other designated caregiver for a child on the basis that the person has been convicted of a low-risk criminal offense, the person may appeal the disqualification in accordance with the procedure developed under Subsection (d).

(d) The department shall develop:

(1) a list of criminal offenses the department determines are low-risk criminal offenses; and

(2) a procedure for appropriate regional administration of the department to review a decision to disqualify a person from serving as a relative or other designated caregiver that includes the consideration of:

(A) when the person's conviction occurred;

(B) whether the person has multiple convictions for low-risk criminal offenses; and

(C) the likelihood that the person will commit fraudulent activity in the future.

(e) The department shall:

(1) publish the list of low-risk criminal offenses and information regarding the review procedure developed under Subsection (d) on the department's Internet website; and

(2) provide prospective relative and other designated caregivers information regarding the review procedure developed under Subsection (d).

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 587 (S.B. 879), Sec. 1, eff.

September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.7541. CAREGIVER VISIT WITH CHILD; INFORMATION.

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), before placing a child with a proposed relative or other designated caregiver, the department must:

(1) arrange a visit between the child and the proposed caregiver; and

(2) provide the proposed caregiver with a form, which may be the same form the department provides to nonrelative caregivers, containing information, to the extent it is available, about the child that would enhance continuity of care for the child, including:

(A) the child's school information and educational needs;

(B) the child's medical, dental, and mental health care information;

(C) the child's social and family information; and

(D) any other information about the child the department determines will assist the proposed caregiver in meeting the child's needs.

(b) The department may waive the requirements of Subsection (a) if the proposed relative or other designated caregiver has a long-standing or significant relationship with the child and has provided care for the child at any time during the 12 months preceding the date of the proposed placement.

(c) Once a child is placed with a relative or other designated caregiver, the department shall inform the caregiver of:

(1) the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2) the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 426 (S.B. 502), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Amended by:

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 375 (H.B. 1884), Sec. 6, eff. September 1, 2019.

See note following this section.

Sec. 264.755. CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT. (a) The department shall, subject to the availability of funds, enter into a caregiver assistance agreement with each relative or other designated caregiver to provide monetary assistance and additional support services to the caregiver. The monetary assistance and support services shall be based on a family's need, as determined by Subsection (b) and rules adopted by the executive commissioner.

(a-1) When a relative or other designated caregiver enters into a caregiver assistance agreement under Subsection (a), the department shall inform the caregiver of:

(1) the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2) the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K.

(b) The department shall provide monetary assistance under this section to a caregiver who has a family income that is less than or equal to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Monetary assistance provided to a caregiver under this section may not exceed 50 percent of the department's daily basic foster care rate for the child. A caregiver who has a family income greater than 300 percent of the federal poverty level is not eligible for monetary assistance under this section.

(b-1) The department shall disburse monetary assistance provided to a caregiver under Subsection (b) in the same manner as the department disburses payments to a foster parent. The department may not provide monetary assistance to an eligible caregiver under Subsection (b) after the first anniversary of the date the caregiver receives the first monetary assistance payment from the department under this section. The department, at its discretion and for good cause, may extend the monetary assistance payments for an additional six months.

(b-2) The department shall implement a process to verify the

family income of a relative or other designated caregiver for the purpose of determining eligibility to receive monetary assistance under Subsection (b).

(c) Monetary assistance and additional support services provided under this section may include:

(1) case management services and training and information about the child's needs until the caregiver is appointed permanent managing conservator;

(2) referrals to appropriate state agencies administering public benefits or assistance programs for which the child, the caregiver, or the caregiver's family may qualify;

(3) family counseling not provided under the Medicaid program for the caregiver's family for a period not to exceed two years from the date of initial placement;

(4) if the caregiver meets the eligibility criteria determined by rules adopted by the executive commissioner, reimbursement of all child-care expenses incurred while the child is under 13 years of age, or under 18 years of age if the child has a developmental disability, and while the department is the child's managing conservator; and

(5) if the caregiver meets the eligibility criteria determined by rules adopted by the executive commissioner, reimbursement of 50 percent of child-care expenses incurred after the caregiver is appointed permanent managing conservator of the child while the child is under 13 years of age, or under 18 years of age if the child has a developmental disability.

(d) The department, in accordance with department rules, shall implement a process to verify that each relative and designated caregiver who is seeking monetary assistance or additional support services from the department for day care as defined by Section [264.124](#) for a child under this section has attempted to find appropriate day-care services for the child through community services, including Head Start programs, prekindergarten classes, and early education programs offered in public schools. The department shall specify the documentation the relative or designated caregiver must provide to the department to demonstrate compliance with the requirements established under

this subsection. The department may not provide monetary assistance or additional support services to the relative or designated caregiver for the day care unless the department receives the required verification.

(e) The department may provide monetary assistance or additional support services to a relative or designated caregiver for day care without the verification required under Subsection (d) if the department determines the verification would prevent an emergency placement that is in the child's best interest.

(f) If a person who has a family income that is less than or equal to 300 percent of the federal poverty level enters into a caregiver assistance agreement with the department, obtains permanent managing conservatorship of a child, and meets all other eligibility requirements, the person may receive an annual reimbursement of other expenses for the child, as determined by rules adopted by the executive commissioner, not to exceed \$500 per year until the earlier of:

(1) the third anniversary of the date the person was awarded permanent managing conservatorship of the child; or

(2) the child's 18th birthday.

Amendments to this section made by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), take effect on September 1, 2017, but only if a specific appropriation is provided as described by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 6, which states: This Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 85th Legislature. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for the purpose of implementing this Act, this Act has no effect.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 423 (S.B. 430), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 426 (S.B. 502), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2013.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1 (S.B. 219), Sec. 1.202, eff.

April 2, 2015.

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2017.

Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 375 (H.B. 1884), Sec. 7, eff. September 1, 2019.

See note following this section.

Sec. 264.7551. FRAUDULENT AGREEMENT; CRIMINAL OFFENSE; CIVIL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if, with intent to defraud or deceive the department, the person knowingly makes or causes to be made a false statement or misrepresentation of a material fact that allows a person to enter into a caregiver assistance agreement.

(b) An offense under this section is:

(1) a Class C misdemeanor if the person entered into a fraudulent caregiver assistance agreement and received no monetary assistance under the agreement or received monetary assistance under the agreement for less than 7 days;

(2) a Class B misdemeanor if the person entered into a fraudulent caregiver assistance agreement and received monetary assistance under the agreement for 7 days or more but less than 31 days;

(3) a Class A misdemeanor if the person entered into a fraudulent caregiver assistance agreement and received monetary assistance under the agreement for 31 days or more but less than 91 days; or

(4) a state jail felony if the person entered into a fraudulent caregiver assistance agreement and received monetary assistance under the agreement for 91 days or more.

(c) If conduct that constitutes an offense under this section also constitutes an offense under any other law, the actor may be prosecuted under this section, the other law, or both.

(d) The appropriate county prosecuting attorney shall be responsible for the prosecution of an offense under this section.

(e) A person who engaged in conduct described by Subsection (a) is liable to the state for a civil penalty of \$1,000. The attorney general shall bring an action to recover a civil penalty as

authorized by this subsection.

(f) The commissioner of the department may adopt rules necessary to determine whether fraudulent activity that violates Subsection (a) has occurred.

Text of section effective on September 1, 2017, but only if a specific appropriation is provided as described by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 6, which states: This Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 85th Legislature. If the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for the purpose of implementing this Act, this Act has no effect.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.756. ASSISTANCE WITH PERMANENT PLACEMENT. The department shall collaborate with the State Bar of Texas and local community partners to identify legal resources to assist relatives and other designated caregivers in obtaining conservatorship, adoption, or other permanent legal status for the child.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.757. COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES. The department shall coordinate with other health and human services agencies, as defined by Section 531.001, Government Code, to provide assistance and services under this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.758. FUNDS. The department and other state agencies shall actively seek and use federal funds available for the purposes of this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 264.760. ELIGIBILITY FOR FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS AND

PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE. Notwithstanding any other provision of this subchapter, a relative or other designated caregiver who becomes verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home under Chapter 42, Human Resources Code, may receive foster care payments in lieu of the benefits provided by this subchapter, beginning with the first month in which the relative or other designated caregiver becomes licensed or is verified.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 8, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(d), eff. September 1, 2009.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 317 (H.B. 7), Sec. 35, eff. September 1, 2017.

See note following this section.

Sec. 264.762. ANNUAL REPORT. Not later than September 1 of each year, the department shall publish a report on the relative and other designated caregiver placement program created under this subchapter. The report must include data on permanency outcomes for children placed with relative or other designated caregivers, including:

(1) the number of disruptions in a relative or other designated caregiver placement;

(2) the reasons for any disruption in a relative or other designated caregiver placement; and

(3) the length of time before a relative or other designated caregiver who receives monetary assistance from the department under this subchapter obtains permanent managing conservatorship of a child.

Text of section effective on September 1, 2017, but only if a specific appropriation is provided as described by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 6, which states: This Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 85th Legislature. If the legislature does not appropriate money

specifically for the purpose of implementing this Act, this Act has no effect.

Added by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 315 (H.B. 4), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2017.

SUBCHAPTER K. PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sec. 264.851. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 , Sec. 86(39), eff. September 1, 2015.

(2) "Kinship provider" means a relative of a foster child, or another adult with a longstanding and significant relationship with a foster child before the child was placed with the person by the department, with whom the child resides for at least six consecutive months after the person becomes licensed by the department or verified by a licensed child-placing agency or the department to provide foster care.

(3) "Permanency care assistance agreement" means a written agreement between the department and a kinship provider for the payment of permanency care assistance benefits as provided by this subchapter.

(4) "Permanency care assistance benefits" means monthly payments paid by the department to a kinship provider under a permanency care assistance agreement.

(5) "Relative" means a person related to a foster child by consanguinity or affinity.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(e), eff. September 1, 2009.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(39), eff. September 1, 2015.

Sec. 264.852. PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS. (a) The department shall enter into a permanency care assistance agreement with a kinship provider who is eligible to receive

permanency care assistance benefits.

(b) The department may enter into a permanency care assistance agreement with a kinship provider who is the prospective managing conservator of a foster child only if the kinship provider meets the eligibility criteria under federal and state law and department rule.

(c) A court may not order the department to enter into a permanency care assistance agreement with a kinship provider unless the kinship provider meets the eligibility criteria under federal and state law and department rule, including requirements relating to the criminal history background check of a kinship provider.

(d) A permanency care assistance agreement may provide for reimbursement of the nonrecurring expenses a kinship provider incurs in obtaining permanent managing conservatorship of a foster child, including attorney's fees and court costs. The reimbursement of the nonrecurring expenses under this subsection may not exceed \$2,000.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. [1151](#)), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. [2080](#)), Sec. 6(e), eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 264.8521. NOTICE TO APPLICANTS. At the time a person applies to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to provide foster care in order to qualify for the permanency care assistance program, the department or the child-placing agency shall:

(1) notify the applicant that a background check, including a criminal history record check, will be conducted on the individual; and

(2) inform the applicant about criminal convictions that:

(A) preclude an individual from becoming a verified agency foster home; and

(B) may also be considered in evaluating the individual's application.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 318 (H.B. [2370](#)), Sec. 1,

eff. September 1, 2011.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 317 (H.B. 7), Sec. 36, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.853. RULES. The executive commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to implement the permanency care assistance program. The rules must:

(1) establish eligibility requirements to receive permanency care assistance benefits under the program; and

(2) ensure that the program conforms to the requirements for federal assistance as required by the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Pub. L. No. 110-351).

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(e), eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 264.854. MAXIMUM PAYMENT AMOUNT. The executive commissioner shall set the maximum monthly amount of assistance payments under a permanency care assistance agreement in an amount that does not exceed the amount of the monthly foster care maintenance payment the department would pay to a foster care provider caring for the child for whom the kinship provider is caring.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(e), eff. September 1, 2009.

Sec. 264.855. CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY FOR PERMANENCY CARE ASSISTANCE BENEFITS AFTER AGE 18. If the department first entered into a permanency care assistance agreement with a foster child's kinship provider after the child's 16th birthday, the department may continue to provide permanency care assistance payments until the last day of the month of the child's 21st birthday, provided the

child is:

(1) regularly attending high school or enrolled in a program leading toward a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate;

(2) regularly attending an institution of higher education or a postsecondary vocational or technical program;

(3) participating in a program or activity that promotes, or removes barriers to, employment;

(4) employed for at least 80 hours a month; or

(5) incapable of any of the activities described by Subdivisions (1)-(4) due to a documented medical condition.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(e), eff. October 1, 2010.

Sec. 264.856. APPROPRIATION REQUIRED. The department is not required to provide permanency care assistance benefits under this subchapter unless the department is specifically appropriated money for purposes of this subchapter.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1118 (H.B. 1151), Sec. 9, eff. September 1, 2009.

Added by Acts 2009, 81st Leg., R.S., Ch. 1238 (S.B. 2080), Sec. 6(e), eff. September 1, 2009.

SUBCHAPTER L. PARENTAL CHILD SAFETY PLACEMENTS

Sec. 264.901. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Caregiver" means an individual, other than a child's parent, conservator, or legal guardian, who is related to the child or has a long-standing and significant relationship with the child or the child's family.

(2) "Parental child safety placement" means a temporary out-of-home placement of a child with a caregiver that is made by a parent or other person with whom the child resides in accordance with a written agreement approved by the department that ensures the safety of the child:

(A) during an investigation by the department of alleged abuse or neglect of the child; or

(B) while the parent or other person is receiving services from the department.

(3) "Parental child safety placement agreement" means an agreement between a parent or other person making a parental child safety placement and the caregiver that contains the terms of the placement and is approved by the department.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.902. PARENTAL CHILD SAFETY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT.

(a) A parental child safety placement agreement must include terms that clearly state:

(1) the respective duties of the person making the placement and the caregiver, including a plan for how the caregiver will access necessary medical treatment for the child and the caregiver's duty to ensure that a school-age child is enrolled in and attending school;

(2) conditions under which the person placing the child may have access to the child, including how often the person may visit and the circumstances under which the person's visit may occur;

(3) the duties of the department;

(4) the date on which the agreement will terminate unless terminated sooner or extended to a subsequent date as provided under department policy; and

(5) any other term the department determines necessary for the safety and welfare of the child.

(b) A parental child safety placement agreement must contain the following statement in boldface type and capital letters: "YOUR AGREEMENT TO THE PARENTAL CHILD SAFETY PLACEMENT IS NOT AN ADMISSION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT ON YOUR PART AND CANNOT BE USED AGAINST YOU AS AN ADMISSION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT."

(c) A parental child safety placement agreement must be in writing and signed by the person making the placement and the caregiver.

(d) The department must provide a written copy of the parental child safety placement agreement to the person making the placement and the caregiver.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.903. CAREGIVER EVALUATION. (a) The department shall develop policies and procedures for evaluating a potential caregiver's qualifications to care for a child under this subchapter, including policies and procedures for evaluating:

- (1) the criminal history of a caregiver;
- (2) allegations of abuse or neglect against a caregiver; and
- (3) a caregiver's home environment and ability to care for the child.

(a-1) The department shall expedite the evaluation of a potential caregiver under this section to ensure that the child is placed with a caregiver who has the ability to protect the child from the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect against the child.

(b) A department caseworker who performs an evaluation of a caregiver under this section shall document the results of the evaluation in the department's case records.

(c) If, after performing an evaluation of a potential caregiver, the department determines that it is not in the child's best interest to be placed with the caregiver, the department shall notify the person who proposed the caregiver and the proposed caregiver of the reasons for the department's decision, but may not disclose the specifics of any criminal history or allegations of abuse or neglect unless the caregiver agrees to the disclosure.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Amended by:

Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 822 (H.B. 1549), Sec. 12, eff. September 1, 2017.

Sec. 264.904. DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES FOR CLOSING CASE.

(a) Before closing a case in which the department has approved a

parental child safety placement, the department must develop a plan with the person who made the placement and the caregiver for the safe return of the child to the person who placed the child with the caregiver or to another person legally entitled to possession of the child, as appropriate.

(b) The department may close a case with a child still living with the caregiver in a parental child safety placement if the department has determined that the child could safely return to the parent or person who made the parental child safety placement but the parent or other person agrees in writing for the child to continue to reside with the caregiver.

(c) If the department determines that the child is unable to safely return to the parent or person who made the parental child safety placement, the department shall determine whether the child can remain safely in the home of the caregiver or whether the department must seek legal conservatorship of the child in order to ensure the child's safety.

(d) Before the department may close a case with a child still living in a parental child safety placement, the department must:

(1) determine and document in the case file that the child can safely remain in the placement without the department's supervision;

(2) obtain the written agreement of the parent or person who made the parental child safety placement, if possible;

(3) obtain the caregiver's agreement in writing that the child can continue living in the placement after the department closes the case; and

(4) develop a written plan for the child's care after the department closes the case.

(e) The department is not required to comply with Subsection (d) if the department has filed suit seeking to be named conservator of the child under Chapter 262 and been denied conservatorship of the child.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.905. REMOVAL OF CHILD BY DEPARTMENT. This subchapter does not prevent the department from removing a child at any time from a person who makes a parental child safety placement or from a caregiver if removal is determined to be necessary by the department for the safety and welfare of the child as provided by Chapter 262.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.

Sec. 264.906. PLACEMENT PREFERENCE DURING CONSERVATORSHIP. If, while a parental child safety placement agreement is in effect, the department files suit under Chapter 262 seeking to be named managing conservator of the child, the department shall give priority to placing the child with the parental child safety placement caregiver as long as the placement is safe and available.

Added by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1071 (S.B. 993), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2011.