



# TexProtects, The Texas Association for the Protection of Children

83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The following legislative proposals were initiated and crafted by TexProtects except where noted.

## **CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PRIORITIES**

### **SB 426 by Nelson (House Sponsor-Zerwas) - Home Visiting Expansion and Accountability Act**

- Ensure home visiting (HV) programs set clear standards and that they are accountable for their outcomes, implemented with fidelity to the research model, and evaluated for QI and QA.
- Create a framework that ensures at least 75% of state revenues invested in home visiting are directed toward evidence-based programs, and allow 25% of the funds to be invested in “Promising Practices.”

### **Funding Request: Budget Rider by Deuell/Zerwas**

- Serve at least 30% more families across the state with home visiting by investing an additional \$27.5 million during the 2014-15 biennium. Realize potential return of \$5.70 per \$1.00 invested.
- In addition, maintain the current base-budget funding of \$17.8 million for the Nurse-Family Partnership program as well as additional existing home visiting funds, which serve as the maintenance of effort (MOE) used to leverage millions in federal funds for evidence-based home visiting programs.

### **SB 1836 by Deuell**

Permissive language for optional check off fee on birth certificates, marriage license and divorce filings to go towards home visiting for child abuse prevention.

### **SB 939 by West / HB 2495 by Parker, HB 135 by Raymond - Child Protection Act**

- Require institutions of higher education, schools and charter schools to provide professional training to new and existing staff on preventing, recognizing, and reporting suspected child abuse. Ensure all these institutions implement written recognition and reporting policies consistent with state mandatory reporting laws to avert “inside” reporting exclusively.
- No state fiscal impact anticipated

### **SB 1788 by Uresti - Prevention Advisory Committee**

### **Blue Ribbon Task Force**

Create a subcommittee of the Council on Children and Families to advise the Council on child abuse prevention.

### **Other Prevention Funding Request:**

Restore 2012-13 funding cuts to the DFPS Prevention and Early Intervention Division (PEI) with priority restoration provided to evidence-based, at-risk services for child abuse prevention.

## **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES PRIORITIES**

### **SB 1758 by Uresti - Task Force on Recruitment & Retention of Caseworkers**

Establish a task force composed of external business CEO's, expert labor consultants, human resource leaders, other innovators and CPS program staff to design a performance-based compensation and recognition system to improve the hiring and retention of CPS caseworkers. The task force will also recommend other strategies for improving recruitment and reducing turnover of CPS caseworkers.

#### **Funding Request:**

- Increase recruitment and retention of high quality CPS workers as follows:
  - Restore FTE positions for caseworkers, case aides and administrative support staff.
  - Increase all non-investigative caseworkers' salaries by \$5K, reducing bias toward investigative caseworkers.
  - Fund a performance-based compensation system (approximately \$5 mil for FY 2015).
  - Support student loan forgiveness for social workers that are frontline caseworkers.
  - Create financial incentives for caseworkers to become supervisors.
- Increase statewide intake capacity by increasing staff to reduce hold time from the average, recent rates of 8-9 minutes per call and to keep up with growth in population and abuse cases.
- Fund caseload growth for protective day care and CPS Purchased Client Services.

### **SB 429 by Nelson / HB 1684 by Raymond - Dismissal Orders for Children**

**SB 434 Task Force**

Before approving the dismissal of a CPS suit, judges should consider whether any child support, visitation, or other orders affecting the children should be entered.

### **SB 330 by Huffman / HB 1922 by Thompson - Records Access for Court Appointed Evaluators**

**Child Protection Roundtable**

Allow court-appointed evaluators access to Child Protective Services records in order to provide comprehensive assessments for children in custody cases.

### **SB 1789 by Uresti / HB 3399 by Raymond - Preventing Placement Disruptions**

**Child Protection Roundtable**

A second placement failure will trigger administrative action, a placement stability conference and potential judicial review.

### **SB 1404 by Patrick and Uresti - Educational Success for Foster Children**

**Child Protection Roundtable**

Allow greater flexibility in order to graduate (student could graduate from transfer school), ensure a high school student is on track to graduate upon enrollment in new school, award partial credit for coursework completed, and excuse school absences related to students being in foster care with an opportunity for appropriate makeup work.

### **SB 130 by Nelson - Better Access to Protective Orders**

**SB 434 Task Force**

Clarify that a prosecuting attorney who represents a party in obtaining a protective order is not precluded from representing the Department of Family and Protective Services.

### **SB 384 by Carona / HB 1205 by Parker - Increase Penalty for Failure to Report**

For statutorily defined "professional reporters," failing to report child abuse, with the intent to deceive, allow a range of penalties from the current Class A misdemeanor to a state jail felony.

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