

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

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1542 and H.B. 5, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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

(3) "Executive commissioner" means the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission.

(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.

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.

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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 7, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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 foster home or child-care institution 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. [1488](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Text of section as added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 713 (H.B. [1217](#)), Sec. 1

For text of section as added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. [206](#)), Sec. 48, see other Sec. 264.017.

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; and

(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.

(c) 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.

(d) 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. 713 (H.B. [1217](#)), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. [1488](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Text of section as added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. [206](#)), Sec. 48

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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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 7 and S.B. 11, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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; or

(E) 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.

(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) 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. [1542](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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.

(b-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (b), the department shall use the standard application for the placement of children in contract residential care as adopted and maintained by the Health and Human Services Commission until the department develops an application or assessment under Subsection (b). Subject to the availability of funds, the department shall develop the application or assessment not later than December 1, 2016. This subsection expires September 1, 2017.

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

(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 is unable to find an appropriate placement for a child, an employee of the department who has on file a background and criminal history check may provide temporary emergency care for the child. An employee may not provide emergency care under this subsection in the employee's residence. The department 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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 begins receiving foster care under this subchapter, the department shall assess whether the child has a developmental or intellectual disability.

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.

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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. 1758, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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; and

(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.

(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 a financial literacy education

program that:

- (1) includes instruction on:
 - (A) obtaining and interpreting a credit score;
 - (B) protecting, repairing, and improving a credit score;
 - (C) avoiding predatory lending practices;
 - (D) saving money and accomplishing financial goals through prudent financial management practices;
 - (E) using basic banking and accounting skills, including balancing a checkbook;
 - (F) using debit and credit cards responsibly;
 - (G) understanding a paycheck and items withheld from a paycheck; and
 - (H) protecting financial, credit, and identifying information in personal and professional relationships; and

- (2) assists a youth who has a source of income to establish a savings plan and, if available, a savings account that the youth can independently manage.

(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) proof of enrollment in Medicaid, if appropriate.

(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.

(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; and
- (8) 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 provisions that inform

the youth about:

- (1) the use of the medication;
- (2) the resources that are available to assist the youth in managing the use of the medication; and
- (3) informed consent and the provision of medical care in accordance with Section [266.010\(1\)](#).

(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.

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.

Text of section as added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262
(S.B. 1407), Sec. 7

For text of section as redesignated by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S.,
Ch. 1236 (S.B. 1296), Sec. 21.001, see other Sec. 264.125.

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.

Text of section as redesignated by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1236 (S.B. 1296), Sec. 21.001

For text of section as added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 262 (S.B. 1407), Sec. 7, see other Sec. 264.125.

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

Sec. 264.125. FOSTER PARENT PILOT PROGRAM. (a) The department shall establish a pilot program to provide specialized training to foster parents of children who have been traumatized or have serious mental health needs if the department or another state agency is able to provide the training using existing resources or a local governmental entity or charitable organization is able to provide the training at no cost to the state.

(b) The department shall:

(1) establish the pilot program in a county with a population of at least 1.5 million that is within 200 miles of an international border;

(2) coordinate the specialized training as part of community-based services and support provided under a Wraparound individualized planning process for foster children as prescribed

by the Texas Integrated Funding Initiative Consortium; and

(3) evaluate the pilot program not later than the second anniversary of the date the program is established.

(c) The department shall prepare a report containing the evaluation required under Subsection (b)(3) and the department's recommendations on the feasibility and continuation of the pilot program. The department shall submit electronically a copy of the report to the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house of representatives not later than December 1, 2016.

(d) This section expires September 1, 2017.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 444 (S.B. 769), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

Redesignated from Family Code, Section 264.124 by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1236 (S.B. 1296), Sec. 21.001(19), eff. September 1, 2015.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. 11, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.126. REDESIGN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN. (a) The department shall develop and maintain a plan for implementing the foster care redesign required by Chapter 598 (S.B. 218), Acts of the 82nd Legislature, Regular Session, 2011. The plan must:

(1) describe the department's expectations, goals, and approach to implementing foster care redesign;

(2) include a timeline for implementing the foster care redesign throughout this state, any limitations related to the implementation, and a progressive intervention plan and a contingency plan to provide continuity of foster care service delivery 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;

(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 foster care redesign system as a whole that includes an independent evaluation of processes and outcomes; and

(7) include a report on transition issues resulting from implementation of the foster care redesign.

(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 the foster care redesign.

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

SUBCHAPTER C. CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. 1488, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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, the program must be an evidence-based or promising practice parenting education program described by Section 265.101 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.

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) Except as provided by Subsection (d), the court on request of the department may order the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the subject child's household to:

(1) participate in the services the department provides or purchases for:

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

(B) reducing the reasonable likelihood that the child may be abused or neglected in the immediate or foreseeable future; and

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

(b) The department may request the court to order the parent, managing conservator, guardian, or other member of the child's household to participate in the services whether the child resides in the home or has been removed from the home.

(c) If the person ordered to participate in the services fails to follow the court's order, the court may impose appropriate sanctions in order to protect the health and safety of the child, including the removal of the child as specified by Chapter 262.

(d) If the court does not order the person to participate, the court in writing shall specify the reasons for not ordering participation.

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.

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. 264.205. 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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. [1488](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.304. HEARING; DETERMINATION OF AT-RISK CHILD.

Without reference to the amendment of this subsection, this section was repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. [206](#)), Sec. 86(35), eff. September 1, 2015.

(c) The court shall determine that the child is an at-risk child if the court finds that the child has engaged in the following conduct:

- (1) conduct, other than a traffic offense and except as provided by Subsection (d), that violates:
 - (A) the penal laws of this state; or
 - (B) the penal ordinances of any political subdivision of this state;

(2) the unexcused voluntary absence of the child on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period from school without the consent of the child's parent, managing conservator, or guardian;

(3) the voluntary absence of the child from the child's home without the consent of the child's parent, managing conservator, or guardian for a substantial length of time or without intent to return;

(4) conduct that violates the laws of this state prohibiting driving while intoxicated or under the influence of intoxicating liquor (first or second offense) or driving while under the influence of any narcotic drug or of any other drug to a degree that renders the child incapable of safely driving a vehicle (first or second offense); or

(5) conduct that evidences a clear and substantial intent to engage in any behavior described by Subdivisions (1)-(4).
Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, Sec. 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.

Amended by:

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 935 (H.B. 2398), Sec. 28, eff. September 1, 2015.

Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 944 (S.B. 206), Sec. 86(35), 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 entities described by Section 264.403(a) to serve a county or two or more contiguous counties.

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.

Sec. 264.403. INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. (a) Before a center may be established under Section 264.402, a memorandum of understanding regarding participation in operation of the center must be executed among:

(1) the division of the department responsible for child abuse investigations;

(2) representatives of county and municipal law enforcement agencies that investigate child abuse in the area to be served by the center;

(3) the county or district attorney who routinely prosecutes child abuse cases in the area to be served by the center; and

(4) a representative of any other governmental entity that participates in child abuse investigations or offers services to child abuse victims that desires to participate in the operation of the center.

(b) A memorandum of understanding executed under this section shall include the agreement of each participating entity to cooperate in:

(1) developing a cooperative, team approach to investigating child abuse;

(2) reducing, to the greatest extent possible, the number of interviews required of a victim of child abuse to minimize the negative impact of the investigation on the child; and

(3) developing, maintaining, and supporting, through the center, an environment that emphasizes the best interests of children and that provides investigatory and rehabilitative services.

(c) A memorandum of understanding executed under this section may include the agreement of one or more participating entities to provide office space and administrative services necessary for the center's operation.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.404. BOARD REPRESENTATION. (a) In addition to any

other persons appointed or elected to serve on the governing board of a children's advocacy center, the governing board must include an executive officer of, or an employee selected by an executive officer of:

(1) a law enforcement agency that investigates child abuse in the area served by the center;

(2) the child protective services division of the department; and

(3) the county or district attorney's office involved in the prosecution of child abuse 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.

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.

Sec. 264.405. DUTIES. A center shall:

(1) assess victims of child abuse and their families to determine their need for services relating to the investigation of child abuse;

(2) provide services determined to be needed under Subdivision (1);

(3) provide a facility at which a multidisciplinary team appointed under Section 264.406 can meet to facilitate the efficient and appropriate disposition of child abuse cases through the civil and criminal justice systems; and

(4) coordinate the activities of governmental entities relating to child abuse investigations and delivery of services to child abuse victims and their families.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 264.406. MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM. (a) A center's multidisciplinary team must include employees of the participating agencies who are professionals involved in the investigation or prosecution of child abuse cases.

(b) A center's multidisciplinary team may also include professionals involved in the delivery of services, including medical and mental health services, to child abuse victims and the victims' families.

(c) A multidisciplinary team shall meet at regularly scheduled intervals to:

(1) review child abuse cases determined to be appropriate for review by the multidisciplinary team; and

(2) coordinate the actions of the entities involved in the investigation and prosecution of the cases and the delivery of services to the child abuse victims and the victims' families.

(d) A multidisciplinary team may review a child abuse case in which the alleged perpetrator does not have custodial control or supervision of the child or is not responsible for the child's welfare or care.

(e) When acting in the member's official capacity, a multidisciplinary team member is authorized to receive information made confidential by Section 40.005, Human Resources Code, or Section 261.201 or 264.408.

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.

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 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 child who is the subject of the records and a court-appointed volunteer advocate appointed for the child under Section [107.031](#).

(b) Information related to the investigation of a report of abuse or neglect under Chapter [261](#) and 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.

(d) A video recording of an interview of a child that is made by a center is the property of the prosecuting attorney involved in the criminal prosecution of the case involving the child. If no criminal prosecution occurs, the video recording is the property of the attorney involved in representing the department in a civil action alleging child abuse or neglect. If the matter involving the child is not prosecuted, the video recording is the property of the department if the matter is an investigation by the department of abuse or neglect. If the department is not investigating or has not investigated the matter, the video recording is the property of the agency that referred the matter to the center.

(d-1) A video 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 a video recording of an interview described by Subsection (d), provided that the prosecuting attorney makes the video 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 a center's video recordings of interviews of children.

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.

Sec. 264.409. ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACTS. (a) The department or the commission shall contract with a 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 designated as a supporting organization under Section 509(a)(3) of that code and that is composed of individuals or groups 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) If the commission enters into a contract under this section, the contract 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.

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.

Sec. 264.410. CONTRACTS WITH CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.

(a) The statewide organization with which the department or the commission contracts under Section 264.409 shall contract for services with eligible centers to enhance the existing services of the programs.

(b) The contract under this section may not result in reducing the financial support a local center receives from another source.

(c) If the commission enters into a contract with a statewide organization under Section 264.409, the executive commissioner by rule shall adopt standards for eligible local centers. The statewide organization shall assist the executive commissioner in developing the standards.

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.

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) operates under the authority of a governing board as provided by Section 264.404;

(3) has a multidisciplinary team of persons involved in the investigation or prosecution of child abuse cases or the delivery of services as provided by Section 264.406;

(4) holds regularly scheduled case reviews as provided by Section 264.406;

(5) operates in a neutral and physically separate space from the day-to-day operations of any public agency partner;

(6) has developed a method of statistical information

gathering on children receiving services through the center and shares such statistical information with the statewide organization, the department, and the commission when requested;

(7) has an in-house volunteer program;

(8) employs an executive director who is answerable to the board of directors of the entity and who is not the exclusive salaried employee of any public agency partner;

(9) operates under a working protocol that includes a statement of:

(A) the center's mission;

(B) each agency's role and commitment to the center;

(C) the type of cases to be handled by the center;

(D) the center's procedures for conducting case reviews and forensic interviews and for ensuring access to specialized medical and mental health services; and

(E) the center's policies regarding confidentiality and conflict resolution; and

(10) implements at the center the following program components:

(A) a case tracking system that monitors statistical information on each child and nonoffending family member or other caregiver who receives services through the center and that includes progress and disposition information for each service the multidisciplinary team determines should be provided to the client;

(B) a child-focused setting that is comfortable, private, and physically and psychologically safe for diverse populations of children and nonoffending family members and other caregivers;

(C) family advocacy and victim support services that include comprehensive case management and victim support services available to each child and the child's nonoffending family members or other caregivers as part of the services the multidisciplinary team determines should be provided to a client;

(D) forensic interviews conducted in a neutral, fact-finding manner and coordinated to avoid duplicative

interviewing;

(E) specialized medical evaluation and treatment services that are available to all children who receive services through the center and coordinated with the services the multidisciplinary team determines should be provided to a child;

(F) specialized trauma-focused mental health services that are designed to meet the unique needs of child abuse victims and the victims' nonoffending family members or other caregivers and that are available as part of the services the multidisciplinary team determines should be provided to a client; and

(G) a system to ensure that all services available to center clients are culturally competent and diverse and are coordinated with the services the multidisciplinary team determines should be provided to a client.

(b) The statewide organization may waive the requirements specified in Subsection (a) if it determines that the waiver will not adversely affect the 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending
publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th
Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this
section.

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; and

(4) individuals selected under Subsection (b).

(b) The members of the committee who serve under Subsections
(a)(1) through (3) 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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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; and

(5) 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; and

(2) perform annual statistical studies of the incidence and causes of child fatalities using the data collected under this subchapter.

(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).

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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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 review team for a county with a population of less than 50,000 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 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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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; and

(4) 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. [1549](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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.

(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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. [1549](#), 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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.

(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.

(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.

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 designated as a supporting organization under Section 509(a)(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.

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

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 7, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.751. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Designated caregiver" means an individual who has a longstanding and significant relationship with 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 licensed by the department or verified by a licensed child-placing agency or the department to operate a foster home, foster group home, agency foster home, or agency foster group 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 licensed by the department or verified by a licensed child-placing agency or the department to operate a foster home, foster group home, agency foster home, or agency foster group 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. 879, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.754. INVESTIGATION OF PROPOSED PLACEMENT. Before placing a child with a proposed relative or other designated caregiver, the department must conduct an investigation to determine whether the proposed placement is in the child's best interest.

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. 268 (S.B. 6), Sec. 1.62((a)), eff. September 1, 2005.

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.

Added by Acts 2013, 83rd Leg., R.S., Ch. 426 (S.B. 502), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2013.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 4, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting 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 rules adopted by the executive commissioner.

(b) Monetary assistance provided under this section must include a one-time cash payment to the caregiver on the initial placement of a child or a sibling group. The amount of the cash payment, as determined by the department, may not exceed \$1,000 for each child. The payment for placement of a sibling group must be at least \$1,000 for the group, but may not exceed \$1,000 for each child in the group. The cash payment must be provided on the initial placement of each child with the caregiver and is provided to assist the caregiver in purchasing essential child-care items such as furniture and clothing.

(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;

(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; and

(6) reimbursement of other expenses, as determined by rules adopted by the executive commissioner, not to exceed \$500 per year for each child.

(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.

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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 7, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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 licensed by the department or verified by a licensed child-placing agency or the department to operate a foster home, foster group home, agency foster home, or agency foster group 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.

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

Sec. 264.761. STUDY OF PROGRAM. (a) The department shall study the effectiveness of the relative and other designated caregiver placement program created by this subchapter and make recommendations to the legislature for improving the program. The recommended improvements must be designed to minimize the number of placements for each child, maximize efficiency in the distribution of any monetary or other assistance for which caregivers qualify, facilitate a safe and permanent exit from the managing conservatorship of the department in as timely a fashion as possible, and assist caregivers in obtaining the verification necessary to qualify for foster care maintenance reimbursement. The recommendations may include increases in the amount of assistance and the identification of automated or other processes designed to speed the payment of assistance.

(b) The department shall report its findings and recommendations to the legislature not later than January 1, 2017.

(c) This section expires September 1, 2017.

Added by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 790 (H.B. 2655), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2015.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 7, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.8521. NOTICE TO APPLICANTS. At the time a person applies to become licensed by the department or verified by a licensed child-placing agency or the department 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 licensed foster home or 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.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see S.B. 203, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

Sec. 264.857. DEADLINE FOR NEW AGREEMENTS. The department may not enter into a permanency care assistance agreement after August 31, 2017. The department shall continue to make payments after that date under a permanency care assistance agreement entered into on or before August 31, 2017, according to the terms of the agreement.

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.

This section was amended by the 85th Legislature. Pending publication of the current statutes, see H.B. 1549, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, for amendments affecting this section.

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.

(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.

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.