



CASA's Legislative Priorities Achieved in the 81st Legislative Session

1. STRENGTHENING CASA'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER ADVOCACY TO MORE CHILDREN IN CPS CUSTODY

*SB 1 (Senator Ogden, Rep. Pitts) provides an additional **\$7 million in state funding** in the next biennium to CASA programs to maintain our current level of service to children – over 20,000 children a year – and to serve an additional 4,000 children with volunteers in FY 2011.

*SB 1369 (Senator Lucio, Rep. Hunter, Rep. Rose) ensures that new CASA programs are eligible to receive state funding and emphasizes that CASA's priority is serving more children with volunteers.

*HB 1462 (Rep. Pickett, Sen. Uresti) allows certain **state employees to take 5 hours/month of paid leave** to train with or volunteer with CASA.

2. HELPING FOSTER YOUTH FIND PERMANENT HOMES AND BECOME HEALTHY ADULT CITIZENS

*SB 43 (Senator Zaffirini, Rep. Gonzales-Tourelles) **extends the eligibility period for tuition waivers** and waives other fees for foster and former foster youth.

*SB 939 (Senator Watson, Senator Nelson, Rep. Hughes, Rep. Rose) **requires DFPS and the courts to continue to work toward safe, permanent homes for children** throughout their time in foster care and **speeds up the adoption process after termination.**

*SB 983 (Senator Davis, Rep. Rose) ensures that youth aging out of the system have the **documents they need to become adult citizens** (birth certificates, social security cards, Medicaid cards and medical records, identification cards).

*SB 2248 (Senator Zaffirini, Rep. Patrick) improves the **educational experiences and eases educational transitions for foster youth.**

*HB 704 (Rep. Rose, Senator Davis) **extends court jurisdiction for children 18 -21** who want or need additional support from the courts or CASA.

*HB 1629 (Rep. Naishtat, Sen. Uresti) ensures that foster youth that enter the **juvenile justice system** continue to have support from CPS, the child protection court system, and their attorneys and CASAs.

*HB 1912 (Rep. Rodriguez, Sen. Uresti) improves the **Preparation for Adult Living program** by requiring CPS, CPS contractors, and foster homes to provide hands-on, individualized and on-going life skills training to youth and by allowing youth who reunite with their families to continue to receive PAL services.

3. ENCOURAGING SAFE, PERMANENT HOMES WITH RELATIVES RATHER THAN FOSTER CARE

*HB 1151 (Rep. Thompson, Rep. Dukes, Senator Nelson) and SB 2080 (Senator West, Senator Uresti, Rep. McClendon) implements available federal funding **for relative guardianship assistance** to relatives who make a long-term commitment to raising children in lieu of foster care.

Priorities that didn't pass:

SB 69 (Nelson, Rep. Rose) that would have enacted a Foster Children's Bill of Rights, would have required a study of placement processes and decisions. Died on the Calendar in the House.

HB 1943/SB 2434 (Herrero/Davis) that would have required that when judges choose to appoint CASA, they appoint CASA as a guardian ad litem (and not volunteer advocate or friend of the court). Died in Senate Jurisprudence.

HB 324 (Rep. Raymond) that would have provided a small amount of financial support to relatives who provide a placement during the time that a child is in the temporary managing conservatorship of CPS. Died in the Calendars Committee.