



Andy Homer

Texas CASA Testimony to Sunset Commission on HHSC Recommendations

Andy Homer, Director of Public Affairs

Regarding HHSC Recommendation 1.1

Texas CASA is opposed to including DFPS in the proposed consolidation of the five current health and human services agencies into a new “mega” HHSC, at least until DFPS has made substantial progress on its current transformation efforts.

Texas CASA is supportive of prior recommendations made by the Sunset Commission and contained in The Stephen Group report that identify core problems within DFPS and Child Protective Services. Both the Sunset Commission and The Stephen Group call for a “time out” on new directives and mandates on DFPS to enable the agency to focus on fixing these critical problems. Texas CASA believes the proposed HHSC consolidation will divert energy, time and resources away from critical transformation efforts. As a result, Texas CASA believes it will be counterproductive to include DFPS in the recommended consolidation of health and human services agencies into a new HHSC. DFPS is aggressively developing and rolling out key aspects of transformation to deal with workforce stability, training and decision making, and it will require several years of focused efforts to make real progress on these issues.

Texas CASA has other concerns about the likely impact of HHSC consolidation on the ability of DFPS to effectively protect and serve children and youth who are at risk or suffer abuse or neglect. These include:

- Greater difficulty keeping and attracting quality executive leadership;
- Less ability for agency/division leadership to act as an advocate for program needs;
- Heightened competition for financial resources within HHSC; and
- Greater difficulty elevating policy issues to executive level.

Maintaining DFPS as a separate state agency does not preclude achieving efficiencies in provision of centralized services such as information technology. Discrete services or functions could be moved out of DFPS and provided under an MOU or other agreement.