

WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER, Governor

3-834.1.

(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) "ADVOCATE" OR "C.A.S.A." MEANS A COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE.

(3) "PROGRAM" MEANS A COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE SERVICE THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN A COUNTY OR BALTIMORE CITY WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE JUVENILE COURT FOR THAT JURISDICTION FOR THE PURPOSE OR OF PROVIDING TRAINED VOLUNTEERS APPOINTED BY THE COURT TO:

(I) PROVIDE THE COURT WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO AID THE COURT IN MAKING DECISION DECISIONS IN THE CHILD'S BEST INTEREST; AND

(II) ENSURE THAT THE CHILD IS PROVIDED APPROPRIATE CASE PLANNING AND SERVICES.

(B) (1) THERE IS A COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE PROGRAM.

(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE VOLUNTEERS WHOSE PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO INSURE THAT CHILDREN WHO ARE THE SUBJECT OF THIS PROCEEDING ARE PROVIDED WITH APPROPRIATE SERVICE AND CASE PLANNING THAT IS IN THEIR BEST INTEREST.

(3) THE PROGRAM SHALL BE ADMINISTERED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS.

(4) THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS SHALL REPORT ANNUALLY TO THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE COURT OF APPEALS AND, SUBJECT TO § 2-1312 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING THE OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM.

(5) THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS MAY ADOPT RULES GOVERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO TRAINING, SELECTION, AND SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS.

(C) (1) THE GOVERNOR MAY INCLUDE FUNDS IN THE BUDGET TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION.

(2) ANY STATE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR THIS PROGRAM SHALL BE ALLOCATED TO THE COUNTIES ON A 50 PERCENT COST SHARING BASIS.

(D) AN ADVOCATE OR A MEMBER OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF OF THE PROGRAM IS NOT LIABLE FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS IN PROVIDING SERVICES OR PERFORMING DUTIES ON BEHALF OF THE PROGRAM, UNLESS THE ACT OR OMISSION CONSTITUTES RECKLESS, WILLFUL, OR WANTON MISCONDUCT OR INTENTIONALLY TORTIOUS CONDUCT.