



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**Public Hearing Testimony
Human Services Committee
March 15, 2011**



**H.B. No. 6588 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND
CHILD TRAUMA.**

The Department of Children and Families **supports** H.B. No. 6588, An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Child Trauma.

Sections 1, 2 and 5 of the bill directly relate to DCF responsibilities and we believe that the proposed statutory revisions are appropriate to our work on domestic violence issues. This legislation builds upon the information sharing provisions contained in Public Act 10-144 which permitted the sharing of information by Family Relations Counselors to DCF and by DCF to a Superior Court Judge and all necessary parties in a family violence proceeding.

Section 1 amends subsection (d) of section 46b-38b to require a peace officer to inform the Department when they *reasonably believe* that a child in the home may be endangered. This is consistent with their existing responsibilities as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, but it is important to cross reference that duty in this family violence statute. The Department welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with law enforcement around identifying the impact on children, interviewing children and documenting that impact in police reports.

The Department suggests a minor amendment to the language, changing the reference to "section 17a-101b" on line 22 to "sections 17a-101a to 17a-101d, inclusive and section 17a-103." This is a more comprehensive cross-reference to the applicable mandated reporter statutes.

Section 2 amends section 46b-38c (c)(5)(B) to require, rather than permit, disclosure by a family relations counselor, family relations counselor trainee or family services supervisor employed by the Judicial Branch to DCF information that indicates that a defendant poses a danger or threat to a child or a parent of the child. We support this revision.

Finally, section 5 amends section 17a-3 (a) to require that new DCF social workers be trained in the prevention, identification and effects of family violence. Because this requirement is already part of our training for new social workers, as we currently devote 12 hours of pre-service training to domestic violence issues, the Department has no objection to making this a statutory requirement.

Since 2006, DCF has funded the Domestic Violence Consultation Initiative, a private-public partnership, which integrated domestic violence consultants into all area offices. The goal of the Initiative has been supporting the Department's mission to promote the safety, permanency and well-being of children by improving case practice, elevating staff competencies and addressing practice, policy and resource challenges. The Initiative was designed to shift the culture and practice of the agency to ensure the best possible response to domestic violence based on the strategies of partnerships with domestic violence survivors; meeting the needs of children; and interventions with perpetrators. A Statewide Service Administrator has provided leadership and coordination to the Initiative, and policy and practice consultation to the Department's managers.

Beyond providing case specific consultation, the Domestic Violence Consultants provide formal and informal training and coaching for DCF staff and their community partners. The consultants are trained to utilize home visits and other interactions with social workers to teach about the dynamics of domestic violence, the *Safe and Together* model and a wide range of skills including interviewing perpetrators, safety planning with adult and children survivors, case planning and documentation. In addition the Consultants work with their area social work managers and supervisors to identify training needs and to deliver training. For example, some of the consultants provide on-going in-office trainings for training units to supplement the formal training they receive at the Training Academy. Training for DCF partners has included presentations to domestic violence providers, child serving agencies and others. These trainings often focus on the skills associated with the *Safe and Together* model and how to work more collaboratively with the Department on cases involving domestic violence.

In 2010, our Domestic Violence Consultants provided 7,190 consultation activities, and conducted 36 trainings reaching over 400 people (DCF staff and outside partners). The Domestic Violence Consultants also play a critical role in the development and delivery of statewide trainings, including the initial and on-going training of the domestic violence investigations protocol and the two days of domestic violence pre-service training.