



# House of Representatives

**File No. 802**

General Assembly

January Session, 2013

**(Reprint of File No. 43)**

House Bill No. 6465  
As Amended by House Amendment  
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner  
May 13, 2013

## ***AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2013*) (a) For purposes of this  
2 section, "animal-assisted therapy" means goal-directed intervention in  
3 which animals are used as an integral part of the crisis response  
4 process to aid individuals who have experienced mental, physical or  
5 emotional trauma; "animal-assisted therapy community" means the  
6 local or regional entities capable of providing animal-assisted therapy  
7 to individuals within the state; and "animal-assisted activity  
8 organization" means any entity involved in training, evaluating and  
9 registering members of the animal-assisted therapy community.

10 (b) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
11 and Families shall, within available appropriations, develop and  
12 implement training for certain employees of the Department of  
13 Children and Families and mental health care providers on (1) the  
14 healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of  
15 therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the

16 benefit of an animal-assisted therapy program.

17 (c) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children  
18 and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture  
19 and within available appropriations, shall identify a coordinated  
20 volunteer canine crisis response team. Such team shall consist of  
21 various handlers and canines that have been trained, evaluated and  
22 registered by an animal-assisted activity organization to provide aid to  
23 individuals during and after traumatic events. Such team shall operate  
24 on a volunteer basis and shall be available to provide animal-assisted  
25 therapy within twenty-four hours of receiving notice to do so.

26 (d) Not later than July 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children and  
27 Families, in consultation with the Governor's Prevention Partnership  
28 and the animal-assisted therapy community, shall, within available  
29 appropriations, develop a crisis response program utilizing the  
30 services of the coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team  
31 identified pursuant to subsection (c) of this section to provide animal-  
32 assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and loss.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	October 1, 2013	New section

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

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### **OFA Fiscal Note**

**State Impact:** None

**Municipal Impact:** None

### **Explanation**

The bill requires, no later than 1/1/14, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) train certain DCF employees and mental health care providers on the value of the human-animal bond (among other topics) and develop a volunteer canine crisis response team. The bill specifies that DCF implement the provisions of the bill within available appropriations. However, if the bill were to be implemented, no fiscal impact to DCF is anticipated.

As DCF has collaborated with Soul Friend, Inc. for a related employee training entitled, "Considering the Importance of the Human-Animal Bond for Children with Trauma: Stories of Hope"<sup>1</sup> there is no fiscal impact anticipated for DCF to train certain DCF employees and mental health care providers on the value of the human-animal bond. While it's not clear which "certain" DCF employees and mental health care providers are required to be trained under the bill, if Soul Friend, Inc. or another animal assisted therapy (AAT) organization in the state provides training for free, no cost is anticipated for this provision of the bill, should DCF choose to implement it.

While it is unknown how many of the approximately 800,000 children and youth in the state are living with "trauma and loss" (the

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<sup>1</sup>DCF Calendar of Events online, March 2013, accessed 3/16/13, available at: <http://www.ct.gov/dcf/ical/calendar.asp>.

bill does not define “trauma and loss”), the bill specifics that AAT must be provided by a volunteer canine crisis response team. As such, it is anticipated that children and youth will be served to the extent that volunteer services are available. There is no cost anticipated to DCF to coordinate this volunteer canine crisis response team as AAT providers in the state are few: the Connecticut Human Society, Animal Assisted Therapy Services, Inc. and Soul Friends.

House “A” struck the language of the underlying bill and its associated fiscal impact, replacing it with language that does not result in a fiscal impact.

***The Out Years***

***State Impact:*** None

***Municipal Impact:*** None

*Sources: United Way of Connecticut 2-1-1 Infoline Online*

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**OLR Bill Analysis****HB 6465 (as amended by House "A")\******AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY.***

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), by January 1, 2014 and within available appropriations, to:

1. develop and implement training for certain DCF staff and mental health care providers on the (a) healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (b) value of therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (c) benefit of an animal assisted therapy program;
2. consult with the Department of Agriculture (DOAG) commissioner to identify a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team; and
3. consult with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the animal assisted therapy community to develop a crisis response program using the response team to provide animal assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and loss.

\*House Amendment "A" requires DCF and DOAG to identify, instead of develop, a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team. It also eliminates requirements that DCF (1) develop and operate, or contract for, an animal assisted therapy program and (2) develop a results based accountability assessment of the staff training, volunteer canine response team, and animal assisted therapy program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013

**VOLUNTEER CANINE RESPONSE TEAM**

The DCF commissioner must consult with the DOAG commissioner to identify a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team. These teams must (1) consist of various handlers and dogs who have been trained, evaluated, and registered by an animal assisted activity organization to provide aid to individuals during and after traumatic events; (2) operate on a volunteer basis; and (3) be available to provide animal assisted therapy within 24 hours of receiving notice to do so. (The bill does not specify (1) who notifies the team and (2) what qualifies as a “traumatic event.”)

**DEFINITIONS**

The bill defines:

1. “animal assisted therapy” as goal-directed intervention in which animals are used as an integral part of the crisis response process to aid people who have experienced mental, physical, or emotional trauma;
2. “animal assisted therapy community” as the local or regional entities capable of providing animal assisted therapy to people within the state; and
3. “animal assisted activity organization” as any entity involved in training, evaluating, and registering members of the animal assisted therapy community.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Children Committee

Joint Favorable  
Yea 10 Nay 2 (02/28/2013)

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable  
Yea 14 Nay 0 (04/11/2013)