
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)