

---

---

## OLR Bill Analysis

**sSB 652 (File 246, as amended by Senate "A")\***

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING REFERRALS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO THE BIRTH-TO-THREE PROGRAM.***

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure that children age three or younger are screened for developmental and social-emotional delays if they are (1) substantiated abuse and neglect victims or (2) receiving DCF differential response program services (see BACKGROUND). The department must do this starting October 1, 2013 for the former and July 1, 2015 for the latter.

The department must refer any child found, through the screening, to exhibit such delays to (1) the Birth-to-Three Program (see BACKGROUND) or if ineligible for this program (2) the Children's Trust Fund's Help Me Grow prevention program (see BACKGROUND) or a similar program.

Starting by July 1, 2014, the bill requires DCF to begin submitting annual reports on the screenings and referrals to the Children's Committee for inclusion in the committee's annual report card on state policies and programs affecting children.

\*Senate Amendment "A" replaces the original bill and:

1. removes the requirement that DCF establish a program, within available appropriations, to address the developmental needs of these children and
2. requires the screenings to be conducted using validated assessment tools instead of evidence-based assessments.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013

## **SCREENINGS**

The bill requires DCF, within available appropriations, to ensure eligible children who are substantiated abuse and neglect victims are screened twice annually, unless the child is found to be eligible for the Birth-to-Three program.

It also requires DCF to ensure eligible children receiving DCF differential response program services are screened, unless the child is found to be eligible for the Birth-to-Three program. But, it does not specify how often these screenings must occur.

The bill requires all screenings to be conducted using validated assessment tools, such as the Ages and Stages and the Ages and Stages-Social/Emotional Questionnaires, or their equivalents.

## **REPORT**

DCF must annually report, for the preceding 12 months, the number of Connecticut children age three or younger who (1) were substantiated abuse and neglect victims or (2) received differential response program services. Of these children, DCF must also report the number who:

1. were screened for developmental and social-emotional delays by DCF or a contracted provider;
2. were (a) referred to the Birth-to-Three program for evaluation, (b) actually evaluated by the program, (c) found eligible for program services and the types of services they were eligible for; and
3. received evidence-based developmental support services through the Birth-to-Three program or a DCF-contracted provider.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Differential Response Program***

Through the differential response program, DCF can refer families to appropriate community providers for assessment and services, (1) at

any time during an investigation in an abuse or neglect case, or (2) when DCF decides not to investigate such a case that it classifies as presenting a lower risk. These referrals can only occur when there has been an initial safety assessment of the family's circumstances and criminal background checks have been performed on all adults involved in the report.

***Birth-To-Three Program***

The Birth-to-Three program is designed to strengthen families' capacities to meet the developmental and health-related needs of their infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities. Eligible families work with service providers to develop Individualized Family Services Plans, with services starting within 45 days of the plan's completion. The plans are reviewed at least once every six months and rewritten at least annually.

The Department of Developmental Services is the state's lead agency for the Birth-to-Three program, but families may get referrals from it to other state agencies' programs, depending on the number and type of disabilities a child has.

***Children's Trust Fund's Help Me Grow Program***

The Children's Trust Fund is a division of the Department of Social Services. Its Help Me Grow program helps parents and child health and service providers access community based early identification, prevention, and intervention services for child developmental or behavioral problems through a toll-free number.

***Related Bill***

SB 832, reported favorably by the Children's Committee, changes the name of the differential response program to the family assessment program.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Children Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/12/2013)

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 15 Nay 0 (05/08/2013)