



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Children Committee

February 18, 2014



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**S.B. No. 43 AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES STATUTES**

The Department of Children and Families **supports** S.B. No. 43, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Department of Children and Families Statutes. This proposal is part of DCF's legislative package.

This bill makes a number of technical and/or minor changes to various DCF statutes. Specifically, it makes the following modifications:

Sections 1 through 4 delete references to "certified relatives" in §§ 17a-11(d), 17a-93, 17a-11b and 17a-114a. The Department stopped new placements of children with certified relative caregivers approximately ten years ago because those placements did not qualify for federal Title IV-E reimbursement. Those certified relative caregivers in place at that time were "grandfathered," however, no such placements have existed for the past few years.

Section 5 provides statutory authority for DCF to lien properties when providing funds for home modifications on behalf of foster parents. We envision utilizing this mechanism in limited circumstances. If we do place a lien, it would be for fifty percent of the funds provided and the amount would be reduced by ten percent for each year a child remains in residence.

Section 6 corrects an obsolete statutory reference to the Select Committee on Children.

Section 7 corrects references to the Department's Family Assessment Response program.

Section 8 repeals § 17a-63a, which concerns a reporting requirement related to private provider measurable outcomes. We believe that this reporting requirement is unnecessary now that the Department has incorporated Results Based Accountability provisions in most of our provider contracts.

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**H.B. No. 5040 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

The Department of Children and Families **supports** H.B. No. 5040, An Act Concerning the Department of Children and Families and the Protection of Children. This proposal is part of

DCF's legislative package. This bill makes a number of technical and other minor changes to DCF statutes.

Section 1 provides for greater sharing of information between DCF and other agencies. Specifically, it amends or adds the following provisions:

- § 17a-28 (f) to permit the sharing of the name of a reporter of child abuse or neglect with law enforcement and prosecutors when they are investigating and/or prosecuting the failure to report by a mandated reporter or instances of false reporting;
- § 17a-28 (g)(7) to require the sharing of information with prosecutors when they are investigating and/or prosecuting the failure to report by a mandated reporter or instances of false reporting;
- § 17a-28 (g)(8) to require the sharing of information with law enforcement when they are investigating and/or prosecuting the failure to report by a mandated reporter or instances of false reporting;
- § 17a-28 (g)(11) to require the sharing of information with DPH when DCF places a licensee of DPH on the child abuse and neglect registry, or when DCF possesses information regarding a regulatory violation of an individual licensed by DPH;
- § 17a-28 (g)(23) to require the sharing of information with school superintendents or the head of a private school or institution providing care for children when DCF places individuals employed by such organizations on the child abuse and neglect registry;
- § 17a-28 (g)(24) to clarify the sharing of information with DSS in situations promoting the health, safety and welfare of a child or youth "receiving services from either department;"
- adds § 17a-28 (g)(25) to require the sharing of common case records with CSSD for the purpose of tracking recidivism of juvenile offenders;
- § 17a-28 (g)(26) for the purpose of referrals to the Birth-to-Three system to facilitate enrollment and the provision of services; and
- § 17a-28 (h)(11) to permit the sharing of information with law enforcement in situations whereby a DCF employee is being or has been threatened, harassed or assaulted by a client or co-worker.

Section 2 amends § 17b-90 (b) to provide DCF access to DSS' parent locator service to assist DCF in locating missing parents in child protective services cases.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 provide DCF with greater legal authority to seek legal custody of child victims of human trafficking to protect vulnerable victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Section 6 adds the following individuals to the list of people who must report suspected child abuse and neglect: (1) youth camp directors and assistant directors; (2) any adult who is a paid coach or director of intramural or interscholastic school athletics; (3) any adult who is a paid coach or director of youth athletics; (4) any adult who is a paid coach or director of a private sports organization or team; and (5) any adult who is a paid administrator, faculty, staff, athletic

director, athletic coach, or athletic trainer who works for a constituent unit of the state system of higher education or a private higher education institution.

Section 7 makes clarifying changes to statute concerning DCF investigations of allegations of child abuse or neglect involving school employees. It also allows DCF to share the outcome of investigations with school officials.

Finally, the Department recommends that the Committee make one modification to the language on lines 237 through 240. Please strike the language and in its place substitute the following:

"(26) The Birth-to-Three system's referral intake office to provide referrals of substantiated victims of child abuse or neglect with suspected developmental delays and newborns impacted by withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, to determine eligibility, facilitate enrollment and plan for the provision of services."

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#### **H.B. No. 5037 AN ACT CONCERNING CROSS REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND ANIMAL CRUELTY**

The Department of Children and Families **supports** H.B. No. 5037, An Act Concerning Cross Reporting of Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty.

Public Act 11-194 established a process for DCF, the Department of Agriculture (DOAG) and state, regional and municipal animal control officers (ACO) to cross report suspected child abuse or neglect and instances of an animal being treated cruelly, harmed or neglected. DCF and DOAG have collaborated on successful and well-attended training sessions on this issue. This bill builds upon the foundation laid by Public Act 11-194 by expanding the scope of the reporting requirements to more appropriately capture open DCF child protective services cases. We believe that the cross-reporting should not include referrals made by the Department to the Family Assessment Response system and our interpretation of this language is consistent with that belief. However, we would suggest a clarifying amendment on line 39: after the closing bracket insert "there is an open child protective service case and"

Currently records indicate that only one report to DCF from the Commissioner of Agriculture has been filed since the effective date of Public Act 11-94. This is due to the narrowly written definition of what must be reported: those cases in which an Animal Control Officer (ACO) has filed a verified petition with superior court. Almost no animal cruelty cases get to the point of the filing of a verified petition. Also, on the DCF end, we were only reviewing open investigation cases, which typically are only open for forty-five days.

The new language will help ACOs and DCF work together to identify children and families who may be in need of assistance from DCF.

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**H.B. No. 5039 AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL-ASSISTED SERVICES**

The Department of Children and Families **supports** S.B. No. 5039, An Act Concerning Animal-Assisted Services.

The Department appreciates the more inclusive and accurate definitions for animal assisted therapy and animal assisted activities included in this legislation, as this will promote more beneficial services for children and families. DCF also supports the new timeframes called for in this bill because with our implementation of Public Act 13-114 we have been in contact with many individuals and groups who are interested and knowledgeable about this important topic. We look forward to working with these groups and the proponents of this legislation in developing an effective animal-assisted therapy model in Connecticut.

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