
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 204

AN ACT CONCERNING CAMPERS' EDUCATION.

SUMMARY:

This bill requires licensed youth camps, by January 1, 2015 and each year afterward, to develop or approve a program on child and sexual abuse and inform staff, campers, and campers' parents and legal guardians about the program. It requires paid and volunteer camp directors and assistant directors to (1) submit to state and national criminal history record checks and (2) certify that they are not listed on the state child abuse or neglect registry.

It requires the Department of Public Health (DPH), by January 1, 2015 and each year afterwards, to develop and distribute information on Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. DPH must do this in consultation with specified organizations. The bill requires each licensed camp to use this information to develop or approve a Lyme disease education and prevention program and inform staff, campers, and campers' parents and legal guardians about the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2014, except for the provision requiring DPH, by January 1, 2015, to develop and distribute the information on Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses, which takes effect upon passage.

CAMPER INJURY AND ABUSE

Program's Written and Oral Components

Each licensed youth camp, by January 1, 2015, must develop or approve a camper injury and abuse education program. The program must include both written and oral components and include information on:

1. physical injury and sexual and emotional abuse;

2. identification of early warning signs associated with such injury or abuse;
3. proper procedures for notifying the (a) director, (b) assistant director, (c) injury or abuse resource counselor, or (d) other staff member of suspected or actual injury to or abuse of a camper; and
4. best practices for preventing and treating injury or abuse at the camp.

Before each camp session, the director or assistant director must distribute the written material to paid and volunteer staff and each camper's parent or legal guardian. The director or assistant director must present the program's oral component to each staff member and camper by the end of the session's first day.

Before each camp session, the director or assistant director must designate a staff member as the injury or abuse resource counselor. By the end of the camp session's first day, the director or assistant director must identify the counselor to campers and describe how campers should contact him or her.

The camp must allow a camper who (1) was the victim of injury or abuse or (2) witnessed such injury or abuse, or suspects that another camper has been injured or abused to report the injury or abuse anonymously, provided this does not violate state or federal law (see BACKGROUND). The camp must notify a camper's parent, legal guardian, or emergency contact within 24 hours after the camper reports such injury or abuse.

The camp must allow a camper to contact his or her parent, legal guardian, or emergency contact within 12 hours of asking to do so. The bill does not restrict these to contacts related to instances of injury or abuse.

Background Checks of Camp Directors and Assistant Directors

The bill requires both paid and volunteer camp directors and

assistant directors to submit to state and national criminal history record checks, in accordance with Connecticut's criminal history record check procedure, before starting work at the camp, or, if already working at the camp, before DPH renews the camp's license (see BACKGROUND). It exempts directors and assistant directors who (1) successfully completed a state and national criminal history record check for immigration purposes according to federal law no more than six months before beginning work at the camp or (2) previously submitted to such a check for purposes of camp employment. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection may charge the camp a fee, as allowed by law, for conducting the state and national background checks.

Directors and assistant directors also must certify that they are not listed on the state child abuse or neglect registry before starting work, or if already working, before DPH renews the camp's license.

The bill requires DPH, when inspecting a camp's facilities, to verify that each director and assistant director (1) submitted to the criminal history record check and (2) certified that he or she is not listed on the state child abuse or neglect registry.

TICK-BORNE DISEASES

DPH Information on Tick-Borne Diseases

The bill requires DPH, by January 1, 2015 and annually thereafter, to:

1. identify or develop best practices to prevent, identify, diagnose, and treat Lyme disease and such other diseases as bartonellosis, babesiosis, anaplasmosis, and ehrlichiosis; and
2. through its website and publications, inform the public about these best practices and increase coordination among state and local agencies and health care providers.

DPH must do this in consultation with groups actively involved in the prevention of, and education on, Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, including various state health districts and the BLAST

Lyme Disease Prevention Program (see BACKGROUND). Starting July 1, 2015, DPH must report annually to the Public Health and Children's committees on the status of these initiatives.

Camp Programs on Tick-Borne Diseases

By July 1, 2015, and annually thereafter, each licensed youth camp must develop or approve a Lyme disease education program using the DPH information. The program must have both written and oral components and include information on:

1. identifying (a) ticks and parasitic or potentially harmful insects and (b) early warning signs of Lyme disease and such other diseases as bartonellosis, babesiosis, anaplasmosis, and ehrlichiosis;
2. proper procedures for campers to notify staff members of suspected tick bites;
3. proper methods of checking for and removing ticks and potentially harmful insects, including whether to preserve them for further examination; and
4. current best practices for avoiding exposure to ticks and potentially harmful insects.

Before each camp session, the camp director or assistant director must distribute the written materials to paid and volunteer staff and each camper's parent or legal guardian. No later than the session's first day, the director or assistant director must present the oral information to each staff member and camper.

The bill requires camp directors or assistant directors to notify a camper's parent, legal guardian, or emergency contact within 24 hours after a camper reports a suspected tick bite.

BACKGROUND

Youth Camp Licensing and Inspection

By law, people seeking to establish, conduct, or maintain a youth

camp must obtain a DPH license. The license is valid for one year from the date issued. DPH must inspect a camp's facilities before issuing a license and inspect all licensees annually (CGS §§ 19a-421 and 19a-426).

Mandated Reporters

By law, certain persons must report instances of suspected child abuse. The report must include the child's name and certain other information. Mandated reporters include, among others, doctors; nurses; DPH employees responsible for the licensing of child day care centers, group day care homes, family day care homes, or youth camps; and people paid to care for children in any state licensed public or private facility, child day care center, group day care home or family day care home (CGS §§ 17a-101 et seq.)

BLAST Lyme Disease Prevention Program

The BLAST Lyme Disease Prevention program was developed as the result of a 2008 DPH grant to the town of Ridgefield for a program on Lyme disease prevention and education.

Related Bill

HB 5040, favorably reported by the Committee on Children, makes paid youth camp directors and assistant directors mandated reporters.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 10 Nay 2 (03/04/2014)