



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 13

February Session, 2014

Substitute House Bill No. 5039

House of Representatives, March 18, 2014

The Committee on Children reported through REP. URBAN of the 43rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL-ASSISTED SERVICES.

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

1 Section 1. Section 17a-22ee of the 2014 supplement to the general
2 statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof
3 (*Effective from passage*):

4 (a) For purposes of this section, "animal-assisted therapy" means
5 goal-directed intervention in which animals are used as an integral
6 part of the crisis response process to aid individuals who have
7 experienced mental, physical or emotional trauma; "animal-assisted
8 therapy community" means the local or regional entities capable of
9 providing animal-assisted therapy to individuals within the state;
10 [and] "animal-assisted activity" means an activity that involves
11 registered therapy animals interacting with individuals within the
12 state; "animal-assisted activity organization" means any nationally-
13 recognized entity involved in training, evaluating and registering
14 members of the animal-assisted therapy community; and "canine
15 disaster stress relief team" means any entity consisting of handlers and

16 canines that have been trained, evaluated and registered by an animal-
17 assisted activity organization to provide comfort to individuals after
18 traumatic events.

19 (b) Not later than [January] July 1, 2014, the Commissioner of
20 Children and Families shall, within available appropriations, develop
21 and implement training for certain employees of the Department of
22 Children and Families and mental health care providers on (1) the
23 healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of
24 therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the
25 benefit of [an] animal-assisted activity, animal-assisted therapy
26 [program] and a canine disaster stress relief team.

27 (c) Not later than [January] October 1, 2014, the Commissioner of
28 Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of
29 Agriculture and within available appropriations, shall identify a
30 coordinated volunteer canine [crisis response] disaster stress relief
31 team. [Such team shall consist of various handlers and canines that
32 have been trained, evaluated and registered by an animal-assisted
33 activity organization to provide aid to individuals during and after
34 traumatic events.] Such team shall operate on a volunteer basis and
35 shall be available to provide animal-assisted therapy within twenty-
36 four hours of receiving notice to do so.

37 (d) Not later than [July 1, 2014] January 1, 2015, the Commissioner
38 of Children and Families, in consultation with the Governor's
39 Prevention Partnership and the animal-assisted therapy community,
40 shall, within available appropriations, develop [a crisis response] an
41 animal-assisted activity program [utilizing the services of the
42 coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team identified pursuant
43 to subsection (c) of this section] to provide animal-assisted therapy and
44 animal-assisted activity to children and youths living with trauma and
45 loss.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	17a-22ee
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KID *Joint Favorable Subst.*

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.

OFA Fiscal Note**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None**Explanation**

There is no fiscal impact to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) from the bill as it clarifies existing statute by defining "animal-assisted activity," renames the canine crisis response team to the "canine disaster stress relief team," and makes various other changes. While the bill also eliminates language requiring that DCF provide a program utilizing the services of volunteers, it is anticipated that DCF will continue to work with state volunteer animal-assisted therapy organizations, in coordination with the Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Agriculture, towards this purpose.¹

The Out Years**State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None

¹Soul Friends, Inc. provides animal-assisted therapy to approximately 570 children a year and estimates that more than half of these children are under the care of DCF, according to testimony provided on 2/26/2013.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5039*****AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL-ASSISTED SERVICES.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), by July 1, 2014 and within available appropriations, to develop and implement training for certain department staff and mental health care providers on the benefits of animal-assisted activity and a canine disaster stress relief team. The bill extends, from January 1, 2014 to July 1, 2014, a requirement that DCF develop and implement such training on (1) the healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the benefit of animal-assisted therapy (rather than an animal-assisted therapy program, as required by current law.) It does not specify which staff or providers must receive the training.

Additionally, the bill (1) extends, from January 1, 2014 to October 1, 2014, the deadline by which the DCF commissioner must consult with the Department of Agriculture commissioner to identify a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team and (2) renames the team a "volunteer canine disaster stress relief team." By law, the team must be available to provide animal-assisted therapy within 24 hours of receiving notice to do so.

The bill also requires DCF, by January 1, 2015 and within available appropriations, to consult with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the animal-assisted therapy community to develop an animal-assisted activity program to provide animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activity to children and youths living with trauma and loss. It eliminates a requirement that DCF, by July 1, 2014 and in consultation with the above entities, develop a crisis response program

using coordinated volunteer canine response team services to provide animal assisted-therapy to such children and youths.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

DEFINITIONS

The bill defines:

1. “animal-assisted activity” as an activity that involves registered therapy animals interacting with people within the state (presumably, an animal-assisted activity organization registers the therapy animals) and
2. “canine disaster stress relief team” as an entity consisting of handlers and canines that an animal-assisted activity organization has trained, evaluated, and registered to provide aid to people during and after traumatic events.

Under current law, an “animal-assisted activity organization” is an entity involved in training, evaluating, and registering members of the animal-assisted therapy community. The bill requires such an entity to be nationally recognized.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 11 Nay 1 (03/04/2014)