



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony

Committee on Children

March 3, 2015



S.B. No. 1006 AN ACT CONCERNING VOLUNTARY SERVICES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Department of Children and Families **supports** S.B. No. 1006, An Act Concerning Voluntary Services within the Department of Children and Families.

This bill outlines Probate Court responsibility in DCF voluntary services cases, and DCF and the Probate Court Administration have jointly developed this proposal. We understand that the Probate Court will be submitting some technical amendments with their testimony and we support these changes.

The Voluntary Services Program (VSP) is a DCF operated program for children and youth with serious emotional disturbances, mental illnesses and/or substance dependency who are in need of services that they cannot otherwise access. Parents do not have to relinquish custody or guardianship under this program. VSP eligibility requirements are outlined in DCF policy. The Voluntary Services Program emphasizes a community-based approach and attempts to coordinate service delivery across multiple agencies. Parents and families are critical participants in this program and are required to participate in the planning and delivery of services for their child or youth. The Voluntary Services Program promotes positive development and reduces reliance on restrictive forms of treatment and out-of-home placement.

DCF may provide, on a voluntary basis (at the request of the family), casework, community referrals and treatment services for children and youth who are not committed to the Department. These clients do not require protective services intervention, but may require any of the services offered, administered by, under contract with or otherwise available to the Department of Children and Families due to emotional or behavioral difficulties.

The Probate Courts play an important role in making a determination as to whether continuation in the program is in the child's best interest and, if so, if the individual care plan is appropriate.