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## OLR Bill Analysis

**sHB 7108 (as amended by House "A")\***

### ***AN ACT CONCERNING AUTISM AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY SERVICES AND ABUSE AND NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill sets reporting and other requirements related to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorder.

The bill requires the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to:

1. report on abuse and neglect reports filed and investigations conducted under existing laws and review related DDS policies and procedures (§ 1),
2. report on its use of funds appropriated for its programs (§ 2), and
3. establish a working group to study recommendations on Southbury Training School (§ 3).

The bill also requires the (1) Department of Social Services (DSS) to apply for any available federal funding or private grant funding to conduct a state-wide autism needs assessment (§ 4) and (2) Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to establish a working group on the feasibility of an interagency complex case team for young adults with IDD, including autism spectrum disorder (§ 5).

Lastly, the bill allows the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health committees to annually hold a joint informational hearing to review DDS and DSS efforts to ensure the safety and quality of care for people with disabilities receiving services funded by federal Medicaid waiver programs. Hearing topics may include (1) how the agencies are addressing audit findings and recommendations on abuse

and neglect prevention from state and federal auditors and (2) timely abuse and neglect complaint reporting and related corrective action (§ 6).

\*House Amendment “A” strikes the underlying bill, which included more prescriptive reporting requirements on abuse and neglect and required, rather than allowed, legislative committees to hold joint informational hearings. The amendment adds provisions on the Southbury Training School working group, the complex case team working group, and the state-wide autism needs assessment.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provisions (1) requiring DDS to report on spending appropriated funds and (2) allowing a joint information hearing are effective July 1, 2025.

## **§ 1 — DDS ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTS AND INVESTIGATIONS**

Existing law requires DDS to maintain a registry of certain former employees who were fired from or left their jobs due to substantiated abuse or neglect, and make the registry available to specified agencies and employers. The law also requires DDS to investigate reports of abuse and neglect of people with IDD and people who receive services from DSS’s Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services.

The bill requires the DDS commissioner to report annually, beginning by January 15, 2026, on abuse and neglect reports filed under these laws to the Human Services and Public Health committees, and post the report on its website. The report must include:

1. the number of abuse and neglect complaints the department received in the previous year and deaths reported;
2. the number and type of complaints that DDS investigated and the percentage investigated directly by the department or by private providers;
3. the number and percentage of cases that were substantiated; and
4. any administrative action taken by DDS regarding substantiated

complaints, including a distribution of their outcomes and any recommendations.

The bill also requires the DDS commissioner, starting by February 1, 2026, to review department policies and procedures on abuse and neglect investigations and reports every five years and post any updates to policies and procedures on its website. The review must include:

1. ensuring the policies and procedures reflect the current process in place for investigating abuse and neglect reports,
2. reviewing DDS's method for sharing information on substantiated abuse and neglect complaints with the reported victim or his or her legal representative while keeping records related to its registry of former employees confidential, and
3. getting feedback on the policies and procedures from qualified providers as the DDS commissioner determines.

## **§ 2 — DDS REPORT ON APPROPRIATED FUNDS**

The bill requires the DDS commissioner to report quarterly, beginning by September 30, 2025, to the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health committees and post the report on its website. The report must describe:

1. progress in expending funds appropriated for programs DDS administers;
2. what services these funds were spent on;
3. whether lapsed funds are anticipated at the end of the fiscal year;
4. reasons appropriated funds were not expended, if applicable; and
5. waiting lists for DDS services.

## **§ 3 — SOUTHBURY TRAINING SCHOOL WORKING GROUP**

The bill requires the DDS commissioner, or his designee, to convene

a working group to study information and make recommendations on the current and potential future use of Southbury Training School. The commissioner must appoint the working group, and its members must at least include representatives from:

1. the Southbury Training School Board of Trustees,
2. Southbury Home and School Association,
3. the protection and advocacy system (i.e. Disability Rights Connecticut), and
4. DDS.

The bill allows the commissioner to appoint additional people to the working group or solicit additional input from other stakeholders (e.g., representatives from other state agencies, legislators, and the town of Southbury). The study must at least consider current and future supports delivered on the school campus, disposition of buildings and grounds, and costs for any recommendations.

The commissioner must report on the working group's findings and recommendations to the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health committees by February 1, 2026.

#### **§ 4 — STATE-WIDE AUTISM NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The bill requires the DSS commissioner, in consultation with OPM, to apply for any available federal funds or private grants to conduct a state-wide autism needs assessment. Under the bill, if this assessment is funded, it must collect data from people living with autism spectrum disorder and their caregivers to inform policy and service delivery. The bill requires DSS to make any funded assessment available on its website.

#### **§ 5 — INTERAGENCY COMPLEX CASE TEAM WORKING GROUP**

The bill requires OPM, in consultation with the Governor's Kids Cabinet, to establish a working group on the feasibility of an interagency complex case team for young adults (ages 17 to 22) with IDD, including

autism spectrum disorder, who also:

1. may have co-occurring mental or behavioral health needs,
2. are in urgent need of community placement or agency services, and
3. qualify for support from more than one state agency.

The bill requires the OPM secretary to report to the Human Services and Public Health committees by February 1, 2026, on the working group's:

1. findings on the need to create a formalized process to address long hospital stays for these young adults and safe discharges with community supports,
2. summary of best practices identified in other states,
3. recommendation on state appropriations needed to operationalize any recommended process,
4. recommendations on a referral process for complex case team management, and
5. proposed legislation to implement any recommended process.

Under the bill, the working group terminates on February 1, 2026, or when it completes its report, whichever is sooner.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Legislative History***

The House referred the bill (File 470) to the Appropriations Committee, which reported out a substitute that eliminates provisions requiring (1) OPM to revisit the “intellectual disability” statutory definition and related eligibility criteria and report on people who are denied services, (2) DDS to evaluate and report on services for certain people with autism spectrum disorder, and (3) OPM’s statewide autism services coordinator to serve as a liaison to hospitals.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/18/2025)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 50 Nay 0 (05/05/2025)