



Substitute House Bill No. 5476

Public Act No. 26-70

AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE USE OF CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS HOTLINES AT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

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

Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, "human trafficking" has the same meaning as "trafficking", as defined in section 46a-170 of the general statutes, as amended by this act. The Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division within the Office of Policy and Management shall evaluate the coordination of efforts among executive branch state agencies and law enforcement agencies to prevent human trafficking in the state and shall develop a comprehensive plan for how activities and programs of executive branch state agencies and other multidisciplinary partners should be coordinated to combat human trafficking in the state. All executive branch state agencies shall provide any assistance, information or data needed by the division to perform the planning duties established under this section, to the extent permitted under state and federal law.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2027, the division shall submit a copy of the comprehensive plan developed under subsection (a) of this section, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having

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cognizance of matters relating to government oversight, the judiciary and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, any recommendations for legislation to implement the division's recommendations.

Sec. 2. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 46a-170 of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) There is established a Trafficking in Persons Council that shall be within the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity for administrative purposes only.

(b) The council shall consist of the following members: (1) The Chief State's Attorney, or a designee; (2) the Chief Public Defender, or a designee; (3) the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, or the commissioner's designee; (4) the Labor Commissioner, or the commissioner's designee; (5) the Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's designee; (6) the Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's designee; (7) the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or the commissioner's designee; (8) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee; (9) the Commissioner of Consumer Protection, or the commissioner's designee; (10) the Commissioner of Developmental Services, or the commissioner's designee; (11) the Commissioner of Transportation, or the commissioner's designee; (12) the director of the Basic Training Division of the Police Officer Standards and Training Council, or the director's designee; (13) the Child Advocate, or the Child Advocate's designee; (14) the Victim Advocate, or the Victim Advocate's designee; (15) a chairperson of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or the chairperson's designee; (16) the Secretary of the State, or the Secretary's designee; (17) one representative of the Office of Victim Services of the Judicial Branch appointed by the Chief Court Administrator; [(17)] (18) a municipal police chief

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appointed by the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, or a designee; [(18)] (19) the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee; [(19)] (20) a judge of the Superior Court, appointed by the Chief Court Administrator; [(20)] (21) a state's attorney appointed by the Chief State's Attorney; [(21)] (22) a public defender appointed by the Chief Public Defender; and [(22)] (23) sixteen public members appointed as follows: The Governor shall appoint four members, one of whom shall represent victims of commercial exploitation of children, one of whom shall represent sex trafficking victims who are children and one of whom shall represent a coalition of children's advocacy centers and multidisciplinary teams that are dedicated to serving child abuse victims and their families, the president pro tempore of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence and one of whom shall represent an organization that provides civil legal services to low-income individuals, the speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence and one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Lodging Association, the majority leader of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent an organization that deals with behavioral health needs of women and children and one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, the majority leader of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent an organization that advocates on social justice and human rights issues and one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, the minority leader of the Senate shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition and one of whom shall represent massage therapists, and the minority leader of the House of Representatives shall appoint two members, one of whom shall represent the Motor Transport Association of Connecticut, Inc. and one of whom shall represent an organization that works with adult victims of trafficking.

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Sec. 3. Subsection (b) of section 17a-3 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

(b) The state-wide program of services shall provide services and placements that are clinically indicated and appropriate to the needs of each child or youth. In furtherance of this purpose, the department shall:

- (1) Develop a comprehensive program for prevention and treatment of problems experienced by children and youths and provide a flexible, innovative and effective program for the placement, care and treatment of children and youths committed by any court to the department, transferred to the department by other departments, or voluntarily admitted to the department;
- (2) provide appropriate services to the families of children and youths as needed to achieve the purposes of sections 17a-1 to 17a-26, inclusive, 17a-28 to 17a-49, inclusive, and 17a-51;
- (3) establish incentive paid work programs for children and youths under the care of the department and the rates to be paid such children and youths for work done in such programs, and may provide allowances to children and youths in the custody of the department;
- (4) collect, interpret and publish statistics relating to children and youths committed to the department;
- (5) conduct studies of any program, service or facility developed, operated, contracted for, licensed or supported by the department in order to evaluate its effectiveness;
- (6) establish staff development and other training and educational programs designed to improve the quality of departmental services and programs, which shall include, but not be limited to, training in the prevention, identification and effects of family violence and the training on human trafficking developed under section 17a-106h, as amended by this act, and may establish educational or training programs for children, youths, parents or other interested persons on any matter related to the promotion of the well-being of children, including, but not limited to, the prevention and treatment of mental illness, substance use disorders and other disabilities in children and youths;
- (7) require each

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social worker trainee to complete the training in the prevention, identification and effects of family violence established pursuant to subdivision (6) of this subsection and on and after January 1, 2027, the training on human trafficking developed under section 17a-106h, as amended by this act, prior to being assigned a case load; (8) develop and implement aftercare and follow-up services appropriate to the needs of any child or youth under the care of the department; (9) establish a case audit unit to monitor each regional office's compliance with regulations and procedures; (10) develop and maintain a database listing available community service programs funded by the department; (11) provide outreach and assistance to persons caring for children whose parents are unable to care for such children by informing such persons of programs and benefits for which they may be eligible; and (12) collect data sufficient to identify the housing needs of children served by the department and share such data with the Department of Housing.

Sec. 4. Section 17a-106h of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

(a) The Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Emergency Services and Public Protection, shall develop an initial educational training program and refresher training program for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking.

(b) The training program shall include a presentation, developed and approved by said commissioners, that offers awareness of human trafficking issues and guidance to (1) law enforcement personnel, (2) judges of the Superior Court, (3) prosecutors, (4) public defenders and other attorneys who represent criminal defendants, (5) hospital emergency room staff, urgent care facility staff and emergency medical services personnel who have contact with patients, and (6) persons employed by a local or regional board of education or a constituent unit,

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as defined in section 10a-1, who have contact with students. The Commissioner of Children and Families shall, within available appropriations, provide the training developed pursuant to this section to all employees of the Department of Children and Families and all providers that provide services pursuant to a contract with the department, except such training shall not be required for employees or providers who do not have regular contact with children while in the course of employment or while providing such services. Such training may consist of a recorded training.

(c) [Any] (1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, any person described in subsection (b) of this section shall complete the initial educational training program not later than July 1, 2018, and shall complete the refresher training program every three years thereafter, provided any person being employed as such a person shall complete such initial educational training program not later than six months after beginning such employment or July 1, 2018, whichever is later.

(2) Each employee of the Department of Children and Families or contracted-with provider shall complete the initial educational training program not later than July 1, 2027, and shall complete the refresher training program every three years thereafter, provided any such employee shall complete such initial educational training program not later than six months after beginning such employment or July 1, 2027, whichever is later, or in the case of a provider, not later than six months after entering into a contract with the department or July 1, 2027, whichever is later.

Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) The Chief Court Administrator shall, within available appropriations, develop and provide training to all employees of the Court Support Services Division within the Judicial Branch regarding the trafficking of minor children and adults. The training shall include, but need not be limited to, (1) awareness and compliance with the laws and protocols concerning

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human trafficking, (2) identification of, access to and provision of services for victims of trafficking, (3) de-escalation and harm reduction techniques when encountering victims of human trafficking, and (4) techniques on receiving disclosures of trauma from minor children. The Chief Court Administrator may use a recorded training curriculum to satisfy the requirements of this section.

(b) Each employee of the division shall complete the initial educational training program not later than July 1, 2027, and shall complete the refresher training program every three years thereafter, provided any such employee shall complete such initial educational training program not later than six months after beginning such employment or July 1, 2027, whichever is later.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) As used in this section, (1) "child care facility" or "facility" has the same meaning as provided in section 17a-93 of the general statutes, (2) "operator" means the person responsible for the total operation of the child care facility, and (3) "department" means the Department of Children and Families.

(b) Any operator of a child care facility shall:

(1) Maintain policies covering its plans, program and services which shall be clearly stated in writing and reviewed for necessary updates not less than annually and, upon request, submit evidence of such annual review to the Department of Children and Families, in a manner prescribed by the department;

(2) Maintain personnel policies for the training and education of employees, temporary workers, volunteers and interns that include, but are not limited to, (A) introductory orientation; (B) ongoing training and development; (C) supervision; and (D) annual evaluations;

(3) Develop a plan for ongoing training which includes a written curriculum and a minimum number of hours of annual training, review

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such plan not less than once every two years, update such plan as necessary for consistency with best practices and document the implementation of such training in a manner prescribed by the department;

(4) Submit to the department not less than once every two years a written quality assurance plan that describes how the operator intends to monitor the quality of the facility services, the extent to which the facility complies with its stated purpose, program objectives, security requirements and any other requirements of the department, including any documentation of the implementation of the quality assurance plan, with findings and, if applicable, an improvement plan, and make immediately available any revision of the quality assurance plan to staff of the facility and the department;

(5) Provide internal and external security measures necessary to ensure the safety of residents of the facility; and

(6) Provide supervisory staff capable of ensuring (A) the health and safety of each child; (B) the security and well-being of each child; and (C) appropriate security of the facility while maintaining a home-like atmosphere.

Sec. 7. Subsection (a) of section 46a-13l of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) The Child Advocate shall:

(1) Evaluate the delivery of services to children by state agencies and those entities that provide services to children through funds provided by the state;

(2) Review periodically the procedures established by any state agency providing services to children to carry out the provisions of

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sections 46a-13k to 46a-13p, inclusive, with a view toward the rights of the children and recommend revisions to such procedures;

(3) Review complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state or municipal agency providing services to children and of any entity that provides services to children through funds provided by the state, make appropriate referrals and investigate those where the Child Advocate determines that a child or family may be in need of assistance from the Child Advocate or that a systemic issue in the state's provision of services to children is raised by the complaint;

(4) Pursuant to an investigation, provide assistance to a child or family who the Child Advocate determines is in need of such assistance including, but not limited to, advocating with an agency, provider or others on behalf of the best interests of the child;

(5) Periodically review the facilities and procedures of any and all institutions or residences, public or private, where a juvenile has been placed by any agency or department, including, but not limited to, Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification Enhancement Plan homes;

(6) Recommend changes in state policies concerning children including changes in the system of providing juvenile justice, child care, foster care and treatment;

(7) Take all possible action including, but not limited to, conducting programs of public education, undertaking legislative advocacy and making proposals for systemic reform and formal legal action, in order to secure and ensure the legal, civil and special rights of children who reside in this state;

(8) Provide training and technical assistance to attorneys representing children and guardians ad litem appointed by the Superior Court;

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(9) Periodically review the number of special needs children in any foster care or permanent care facility and recommend changes in the policies and procedures for the placement of such children;

(10) Serve or designate a person to serve as a member of the child fatality review panel established in subsection (b) of this section;

(11) Take appropriate steps to advise the public of the services of the Office of the Child Advocate, the purpose of the office and procedures to contact the office;

(12) Prepare an in-depth report on conditions of confinement, including, but not limited to, compliance with section 46a-152, regarding children twenty-one years of age or younger who are held in secure detention or correctional confinement in any facility operated by a state agency. Such report shall be submitted, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children not later than March 1, 2017, and every two years thereafter; and

(13) Present to the advisory committee, established pursuant to section 46a-13r at least three times each year, a report on the goals of and projects undertaken by the Office of the Child Advocate, within available appropriations, that are consistent with the responsibilities of the Child Advocate.

Sec. 8. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) (a) The Statewide Steering Committee of the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce established by the Division of Criminal Justice shall establish a Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Subcommittee consisting of members appointed by the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce as necessary to carry out the purposes of this section. Such subcommittee shall serve as a public-private partnership to implement the recommendations set forth in the Regionalized Human Trafficking

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Recovery Taskforce's report entitled "A Blueprint to Strengthen Connecticut's Response to Human Trafficking".

(b) Such implementation shall include, but need not be limited to:

(1) Advancing development of a permanent state-wide governing body to coordinate the state's anti-trafficking response across agencies and service providers, to assist both minor children and adult victims of trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and to create state-wide standards related to such coordination;

(2) Creating and implementing a standardized, cross-disciplinary human trafficking training framework and centralized learning management system;

(3) Developing and implementing a unified state-wide data collection process based on shared definitions, standardized reporting fields and secure data-sharing protocols;

(4) Designing and implementing standardized, trauma-informed screening questions and referral pathways to ensure consistent identification of and response to victims of human trafficking across systems;

(5) Expanding and strengthening state-wide service capacity by mapping and verifying existing providers, identifying service and funding gaps, and supporting development of a vetted state-wide resource directory; and

(6) Reviewing trafficking trends, identifying systemic gaps and developing policy recommendations to be submitted to the Trafficking in Persons Council, established pursuant to section 46a-170 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, consistent with the work undertaken pursuant to this subsection.

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(c) The subcommittee shall not replace or supersede the statutory authority of Trafficking in Persons Council, established pursuant to section 46a-170 of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

Sec. 9. Subsection (b) of section 17a-106a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(b) The Commissioner of Children and Families, as department head of the lead agency, and the appropriate state's attorney [may] shall establish multidisciplinary teams for the purposes of (1) reviewing particular cases or particular types of cases, (2) coordinating the intervention in and prevention of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children and the treatment of abused, neglected or trafficked children in each judicial district, (3) reviewing selected cases of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children, (4) advancing and coordinating the prompt investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children, (5) reducing the trauma experienced by alleged victims of such abuse or neglect or trafficking and, (6) ensuring the treatment of abused, neglected or trafficked children and the protection of such children and their families. The head of the local law enforcement agency or such head's designee may request the assistance of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection in order to accomplish such purposes.

Sec. 10. Section 17a-106f of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) The Commissioner of Children and Families may: (1) Provide child welfare services for any minor child residing in the state who is identified by the Department of Children and Families as a victim of trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, as amended by this act; and (2) provide appropriate services to a minor child residing in the state who the Department of Children and Families reasonably believes may be a

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victim of trafficking in order to safeguard the welfare of such minor child. For purposes of this section and section 17a-106a, as amended by this act, "minor child" means any person under eighteen years of age.

(b) The Commissioner of Children and Families [may] shall, within available appropriations and in collaboration with the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division within the Office of Policy and Management, provide assistance to the Police Officer Standards and Training Council in developing training [to] for law enforcement [officials] officers regarding the trafficking of minor children [. The training shall include, but not be limited to, (1) awareness and compliance with the laws and protocols concerning trafficking of minor children, (2) identification of, access to and provision of services for minor children who are victims of trafficking, and (3) any other services the department deems necessary to carry out the provisions of this section and section 17a-106a] and adults, as described in section 11 of this act.

Sec. 11. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Each police basic or review training program conducted or administered by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council established under section 7-294b of the general statutes or a municipal police department in the state shall include training on the trafficking of minor children and adults, developed pursuant to section 17a-106f of the general statutes, as amended by this act. The training shall include, but not be limited to, (1) awareness and compliance with the laws and protocols concerning trafficking of minor children and adults, (2) identification of, access to and provision of services for minor children and adults who are victims of trafficking, and (3) any other services the council deems necessary to carry out the provisions of sections 17a-106a and 17a-106f of the general statutes, as amended by this act.

Sec. 12. (*Effective July 1, 2026*) Not later than October 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Correction shall issue a request for proposals to obtain

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proposals for a confidential crisis hotline to report incidents of sexual violence for purposes of making such hotline available to correction officers and persons who are incarcerated in a correctional institution, including, but not limited to, the York Correctional Institution. Not later than January 1, 2027, the commissioner shall report the results of such request for proposals and any request for appropriations to establish such hotline, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to government oversight, judiciary and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies.

Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) Not later than December 1, 2026, the Commissioner of Correction shall (1) revise the Department of Correction's existing policy concerning the use of any confidential crisis hotline to report incidents of sexual violence that is available to correction officers and persons who are incarcerated in a correctional institution, and (2) post such revised policy on the Internet web site of the department. The revised policy shall ensure that persons who are incarcerated can access such hotline at no charge, in a location that enables such persons to access such hotline confidentially and without the supervision of, or permission from, any employee of the Department of Correction.

Sec. 14. Subsections (a) and (b) of section 4-68m of the 2026 supplement to the general statutes are repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2026*):

(a) There is established a Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division within the Office of Policy and Management. The division shall be under the direction of an undersecretary.

(b) The division shall promote a more effective and cohesive state criminal justice system by:

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- (1) Conducting an in-depth analysis of the criminal justice system;
- (2) Determining the long-range needs of the criminal justice system and recommending policy priorities for the system;
- (3) Identifying critical problems in the criminal justice system and recommending strategies to solve those problems;
- (4) Assessing the cost-effectiveness of the use of state and local funds in the criminal justice system;
- (5) Recommending means to improve the deterrent and rehabilitative capabilities of the criminal justice system;
- (6) Advising and assisting the General Assembly in developing plans, programs and proposed legislation for improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system;
- (7) Making computations of daily costs and comparing interagency costs on services provided by agencies that are a part of the criminal justice system;
- (8) Making population computations for use in planning for the long-range needs of the criminal justice system;
- (9) Determining long-range information needs of the criminal justice system and acquiring that information;
- (10) Cooperating with the Office of the Victim Advocate by providing information and assistance to the office relating to the improvement of crime victims' services;
- (11) Serving as the liaison for the state to the United States Department of Justice on criminal justice issues of interest to the state and federal government relating to data, information systems and research;

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(12) Measuring the success of community-based services and programs in reducing recidivism;

(13) Developing and implementing a comprehensive reentry strategy as provided in section 18-81w;

(14) Engaging in other activities consistent with the responsibilities of the division; [and]

(15) Advising and providing assistance to the state concerning development of coordination of trafficking prevention efforts among executive branch state agencies and other multidisciplinary partners, including, but not limited to, assisting in providing training pursuant to section 17a-106f, as amended by this act; and

[(15)] (16) Developing and implementing policies for the state-wide delivery of postsecondary educational programs in correctional facilities, including, but not limited to, policies pertaining to federal Pell grants and prison education programs.