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## OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5004 (as amended by House "A" and "C")\*

### **AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY.**

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**SUMMARY**

This bill makes numerous changes to child welfare law. A section-by-section analysis follows.

\*House Amendment "A" makes various changes to the bill, including (1) adding the ability to appeal the denial of a foster care license; (2) changing aspects of the caregiver grant for necessities, including narrowing eligibility and specifying a \$625 maximum grant; (3) adding the provisions on releasing information relating to an acknowledgment of parentage and requiring an investigation and a new investigator in certain Department of Children and Families (DCF) abuse and neglect cases; (4) adding the Appropriations Committee chairs and ranking members to the policy and oversight committee and allowing the committee to vote to terminate itself in five years; making various minor and technical changes.

Amendment "A" also modifies the (1) after school program grant program for foster caregivers by extending it to certain relative or fictive kin caregivers and setting a spending limit; (2) social worker mentorship and internship programs by requiring DCF to report on them and

allowing DCF to pay a stipend to certain participants; (3) postsecondary education grant program for youths in DCF care, including by lowering the maximum age (from 26 to 21) to participate and allowing participation past this age with DCF's permission; (4) DCF online dashboard, including by allowing it to be on the department's existing website, requiring additional information, and adding the ranking members of the Committee on Children to the associated working group; and (5) procedures for a parent or guardian to take a child under protective supervision or services out of state.

This amendment also removes from the underlying bill the (1) stipends for DCF employees providing training, (2) requirement for a DCF public awareness campaign, (3) provision prohibiting DCF from using a parent or guardian's mental health treatment as the primary reason to pursue any action (but it keeps the prohibition on it being the only reason), (4) report on foster care licensure requirements for relative and fictive kin caregivers, and (5) provision on the subsidized guardianship program.

\*House Amendment "C" adds a provision that requires additional follow-up and oversight of people who are convicted of certain crimes and then live with a minor child.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various, see below.

## **§ 1 — RELATIVE AND FICTIVE KIN IN EMERGENCY PLACEMENTS**

*Requires, rather than permits, the DCF commissioner to make an emergency placement of a child to an unlicensed relative or fictive kin caregiver if certain conditions are met; requires the commissioner to document in writing the reasons for denying these placements*

The bill requires, rather than permits, the DCF commissioner to make an emergency placement of a child to a relative or fictive kin caregiver (an unrelated person at least 21 years old who has a significant emotional connection with the child or family), even if the person is not DCF-licensed or -approved when the placement is deemed in the child's best interest. As under current law, DCF must first do a basic family assessment, including a home visit. By law, an "emergency placement" is the placement of a child in the home of a relative or fictive kin caregiver due to the sudden unavailability of the child's primary

caretaker.

As part of this process, the commissioner must order a criminal history and child abuse registry check of anyone 18 years old or older living in the home after the placement is approved. By law, the criminal history can result in the denial of the placement and removal of the child. The bill requires the commissioner to document the reason for any denial of a placement with, or removal from, a relative or fictive kind caregiver.

The bill also requires the commissioner, when placing a child with someone who is not a relative or fictive kind caregiver, to document why doing so, rather than placing the child with a relative or fictive kin caregiver, is in the child's best interests.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 1 — FOSTER PARENT LICENSE DENIAL**

*Provides those denied a foster care license the ability to appeal the decision to the DCF commissioner; requires the commissioner to decide on the appeal within 60 days*

Upon the denial of an initial foster care license, the bill requires DCF to disclose, in writing, the reason for the denial to the applicant. Any applicant denied an initial license can appeal the denial to the commissioner within 30 days after the denial, in a way the commissioner establishes. The commissioner must grant the license or affirm the denial, in writing, within 60 days after the applicant makes the appeal.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

## **§ 2 — RELATIVE AND FICTIVE KIN AND ABUSE AND NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS**

*Explicitly includes a fictive kin caregiver in the placement options for an abuse and neglect proceeding; requires the state agency to give primary consideration to placement with them*

Under current law, following a petition to the court alleging child abuse or neglect, a court can consider vesting the child's care and custody temporarily with a relative, agency, or other person. The bill explicitly includes a fictive kin caregiver in the list of possible temporary

care and custody placement options a court can consider during these proceedings and when these orders are made ex parte (on behalf of one party).

Current law requires the state agency with authority for the child to give primary consideration to placing the child in the town where the child lives. Under the bill the agency must give primary consideration to placement with a relative or fictive kin caregiver. If that placement is denied, the agency must give secondary consideration to placing the child in the town where the child lives.

By law, the agency must file, in writing, with the court clerk the reasons for a child's particular placement. The bill adds that the filing must include confirmation that the placement selected for the child, if the placement is not with a relative or fictive kin caregiver, serves the best interests of the child.

The bill makes related minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **§ 3 — RELATIVE OR FICTIVE KIN CAREGIVER GRANT FOR NECESSITIES**

*Establishes a grant program to make payments to certain caregivers for clothing, food, safety-related purchases, and other necessities for children in their care after an emergency placement*

The bill establishes a grant program to make payments to caregivers for clothing, food, safety-related purchases, and other necessities for the children in their care upon the DCF placement of these children. For purposes of the grant, a "caregiver" is a relative or fictive kin caregiver who has accepted emergency placement of a child by DCF.

It requires the DCF commissioner, by January 1, 2027, to develop a distribution formula for the grant payments, which must set the maximum total grant payment at \$625, and guidelines for the appropriate expenditure of grant payments.

The bill requires each caregiver receiving a grant payment to file an expenditure report with the DCF commissioner as she determines. A

caregiver must pay back any amounts not spent in line with the commissioner's guidelines.

By January 1, 2028, and each following year, the DCF commissioner must submit a report to the Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee (see § 18) and the Committee on Children. The report must include, for the preceding year, the number of grant payments made, and the amount of each one, and the length of each placement that has ended.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§ 4 — AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANTS FOR FOSTER CAREGIVERS**

*Establishes a grant program giving financial support to caregivers to help cover the cost of after school programs for foster children in their care*

The bill establishes a grant program to give financial support to caregivers to cover, either fully or partially, the costs of after school programs for children placed in their care. Under the bill, after school programs take place after regular school hours and provide educational, enrichment, and recreational activities for children grades kindergarten through 12. "Caregivers" are generally those who are either a (1) relative or fictive kin caregiver who has accepted emergency placement of a child or (2) licensed foster care provider caring for a child for whom reunification with the parent is unlikely within the foreseeable future.

Grant payments must be prioritized for caregivers who are eligible for foster care maintenance payments or a guardianship subsidy, but who have not yet received an initial payment or subsidy. The bill also specifies that no more than 50% of the total funds available in any fiscal year for the grant program can be for either after school program or child care service costs.

For the grant program, the bill requires DCF to develop the following by January 1, 2027:

1. an application process;
2. caregiver eligibility criteria;

3. appropriate expenditure guidelines for the caregiver grants; and
4. a grant distribution formula, including the maximum grant available.

Each caregiver who receives a grant must (1) file an expenditure report with DCF and (2) return unexpended funds to DCF.

Beginning by January 1, 2028, the bill also requires DCF to annually report to the Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee (see § 20) on the number of applications it received and grants it provided.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

#### **§ 5 — ESTABLISHMENT OF PROSPECTIVE SOCIAL WORKER INTERNSHIP AND FIRST YEAR SOCIAL WORKER MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS**

*Requires DCF to establish a (1) first-year social worker mentorship program for their newly hired social workers and (2) prospective social worker internship program for people enrolled in a bachelor's or master's degree program in a relevant field*

The bill requires DCF to establish a (1) first-year social worker mentorship program and (2) prospective social worker internship program (in consultation with higher education institutions). Under the bill, DCF must (1) establish both the internship and mentorship program by January 1, 2027, and (2) pay a stipend to each intern and mentor who successfully completes either program.

For both programs, DCF must:

1. establish an application process and acceptance criteria,
2. set mentor-selection criteria, and
3. recruit social workers to be mentors.

Additionally, the bill requires DCF to annually report on these two programs to the Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee (see § 18 below) and the Committee on Children, beginning by January 1, 2028. The report must include, for the preceding year, (1) the number of program participants, (2) each program's cost, (3) whether adequate

resources have been allocated to each program, and (4) participant recruitment and retention statistics.

***Prospective Social Worker Internship Program***

The bill requires DCF, in consultation with institutions of higher education in Connecticut, to establish a prospective social worker internship program for people enrolled in a bachelor's or master's degree program in a relevant field, including, among others, social work, applied sociology, child development, clinical psychology, nursing, social services, education, or criminal justice.

The program, administered through at least one academic semester, must (1) include opportunities for internship experiences, job shadowing, support, and coaching, and (2) offer participants insight into the challenges and benefits of social work.

***First-Year Social Worker Mentorship Program***

The bill requires DCF to establish a first-year social worker mentorship program for their newly hired social workers. The program, administered during participants' first year as a social worker, must include opportunities for job shadowing, support, and coaching.

Under the bill, DCF may pay a stipend to each newly hired social worker who successfully completes the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**§§ 6-8 — TRAINING ON PERINATAL MOOD AND ANXIETY, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**

*Requires training for DCF staff on perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, human trafficking, and cultural sensitivity and implicit bias*

The bill requires the DCF commissioner to develop and provide a mandatory educational training program for DCF employees in three areas: (1) perinatal mood and anxiety disorders, (2) human trafficking, and (3) cultural sensitivity in the delivery of the department's services and implicit bias.

For all three types of training, DCF employees hired before January

1, 2028, must initially complete each training by December 31, 2028. Employees hired on or after January 1, 2028, must initially complete each training not later than one year after beginning employment. The perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and human trafficking trainings must be completed at least once, and the cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training at least once every two years.

All three trainings must be ready by January 1, 2028, and be offered at least every six months. Each training must include the respective guidance to the employees.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

***Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (§ 6)***

The DCF commissioner must develop and provide a mandatory educational training program for DCF employees about (1) perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and (2) trauma-informed, non-stigmatizing practices for interacting with people suffering from these disorders. The commissioner must do this in consultation with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services commissioner.

***Human Trafficking (§ 7)***

The DCF commissioner must develop and provide a mandatory educational training program for DCF employees about human trafficking and trauma-informed, non-stigmatizing practices for interacting with child and adult victims of human trafficking. The commissioner must do this in consultation with the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity's executive director, and the Emergency Services and Public Protection commissioner.

***Cultural Sensitivity and Implicit Bias (§ 8)***

The DCF commissioner must develop and provide a mandatory educational training program for DCF employees about implicit bias and delivering the agency's services with cultural sensitivity. Under the bill "implicit bias" means an attitude or internalized stereotype that affects a person's perceptions, actions, and decisions in an unconscious

way and often contributes to unequal treatment of someone based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other characteristic.

**§§ 9 & 10 — POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM FOR YOUTHS IN DCF CARE**

*Requires DCF to establish a postsecondary education grant program for young people who were adopted before turning 18 and those who consent to stay in DCF care after turning 18 years old; requires the state auditors to audit the program; and establishes reporting requirements*

The bill requires DCF to establish a postsecondary education grant program by January 1, 2027. The program must give grants to fund postsecondary education, meaning programs that lead to an academic degree, vocation certification, or trade, for youths who were adopted through DCF's foster care program on or after January 1, 2005, prior to turning 18 years old, and (2) consent to remain in DCF care after turning 18 years old. Under the bill, young people cannot participate in the program after they turn 21 years old. However, with DCF's permission, they may continue to participate until they (1) turn 24 years old or (2) complete their postsecondary education program, whichever happens first.

DCF must establish:

1. an application process,
2. a list of DCF-approved postsecondary education programs,
3. a grant distribution formula, and
4. eligibility criteria.

Each year, participants must complete (1) the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and (2) applications for any appropriate scholarships and grants, including any available through a scholarship application portal administered by an education provider.

DCF must report to the Committee on Children on (1) the number of applicants received and accepted and (2) any challenges implementing the program by July 1, 2027.

The bill also requires DCF to report, by January 1, 2028, to the Children, Higher Education and Employment Advancement, Appropriations, and Government Oversight committees, and to the State Auditors of Public Accounts on this program and any similar program. It must include information on:

1. the number of applicants received and accepted;
2. grant payment information, including the total grant payments offered and average grant payment amount per participant;
3. postsecondary education program information, including what postsecondary programs participants enrolled in and the percentage of participants who completed the postsecondary program;
4. the number of participants who have requested, and have been approved, to remain in the program after turning 21 years old;
5. reasons why DCF denied initial applicants and existing participants' requests to remain in the program after turning 21;
6. demographic information; and
7. how long any similar program has existed.

The auditors then must do a performance audit of the program by July 1, 2028, and submit a report to the same committees. The report must include results of the audit, any recommendations on the grant program under the bill, and cover generally the same information as the report DCF provided the auditors, described above.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the provision requiring the program to be audited is effective October 1, 2026.

**§§ 11 & 12 — DCF ONLINE DASHBOARD AND ASSOCIATED WORKING GROUP**

*Requires DCF to make a public website with an online dashboard and various information related to DCF programs and procedures and child welfare by January 1, 2027; creates a working group to identify information for the online dashboard*

The bill requires DCF to make, by January 1, 2027, a public, online dashboard with information on DCF's state-wide programs relating to services for abused, neglected, and uncared for children and young people, as well as children and young people who have mental health needs and substance use disorders. The dashboard also must (1) include information identified by the working group (see *Online Dashboard Working Group* below); (2) include information identified in the annual reports relating to caregiver grant programs and social worker internship and mentorship programs established through the bill (see §§ 3, 4 & 5 above); (3) be integrated with any electronic data collection and tracking tools DCF uses; and (4) present information in an accessible way.

The dashboard must be web-based and may be within DCF's existing website, and must also include information on:

1. DCF offices, programs, and services, including the Office of Community Relations, housing and homelessness programs, the child abuse and neglect Careline, and text message programs for the public; and
2. child abuse and neglect identification and how to report child abuse and neglect.

The website must also include the mandated reporter video training program and any accompanying training materials in a publicly-accessible format that does not require a username or password.

***Online Dashboard Working Group***

The bill creates a working group to identify information to be included on the online dashboard. The working group must consist of:

1. members of the General Assembly, as designated by the Committee on Children chairpersons;

2. the ranking members of the Committee on Children or their designees;
3. any people the chairpersons find relevant and necessary to carry out the duties of the working group; and
4. the DCF commissioner or her designee.

The Committee on Children’s administrative staff serve as the working group’s administrative staff.

The working group must submit a report with its findings to the Committee on Children by October 1, 2026, and ends on that date or when it submits its report, whichever is later.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the provision creating the working group is effective upon passage.

**§ 13 — DCF PROCEDURES WHEN A CHILD UNDER PROTECTIVE SUPERVISION OR SERVICES IS TAKEN OUT OF STATE BY A PARENT OR GUARDIAN**

*Requires DCF to carry out specified procedures when a child who is the subject of a DCF investigation, under protective supervision, receiving protective services, or residing with a child who meets one of these criteria is taken out-of-state by a parent or guardian*

The bill requires the parent or guardian of a child who (1) is the subject of a DCF investigation, (2) is under protective supervision or receiving protective services, or (3) residing with a child who meets at least one of these two previous criteria must notify DCF if the child will be taken out of the state for more than 14 consecutive days. The bill also allows DCF, to require the parent or guardian to notify DCF if the child will be taken out-of-state 14 or fewer days.

The bill also requires DCF to give written notice of these provisions to the parents or guardians of each eligible child.

***Notification Requirements***

The parent or guardian must give this notice to DCF at least 48 hours before taking the child out of state and must include (1) the address of each place where the child will sleep during this period and (2) how

long the child will be out-of-state and, if this changes, the parent must notify DCF as soon as is practicable.

### ***Failure to Notify Procedures***

The bill requires DCF to follow specified procedures when a parent or guardian removing a covered child out-of state fails to notify DCF in the way previously described. It also allows DCF to follow these procedures when a covered child is taken out-of-state for 14 or fewer days.

In these situations, DCF must attempt to contact a parent, guardian, or other family member on three consecutive days to determine the child's location (if unknown) and evaluate the child's safety. If contact is made and the child's location is determined, DCF must (1) contact the child welfare or law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where the child is located (the "local agency") and ask them to do an in-person visit to the child to ensure the child's safety, (2) follow-up with the local agency on three consecutive days following the initial visit request to ensure the child was actually visited and to discuss any findings, and (3) directly visit with the child in-person (or virtually if in-person is not feasible) to evaluate the child's safety. DCF must document in writing all attempts to contact the child, parent, guardian, family member, and local agency.

The bill also specifies that if DCF is not notified of the child's removal from the state until after they have already returned, they do not need to follow the above procedures.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **§ 14 — PROHIBITION OF USING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AS SOLE OR PRIMARY REASON FOR DCF ACTION**

*Generally prohibits DCF from using evidence that a parent or guardian has voluntarily sought or received mental health treatment as the sole reason to pursue any action or proceeding*

The bill generally prohibits DCF from using evidence that a parent or guardian has voluntarily sought or received professional mental health treatment as the sole reason to pursue any action or proceeding related

to harm or risk of harm. Under the bill, this treatment can be sought for mental health concerns including, among others, perinatal mood or anxiety disorders.

But the bill specifies that DCF can still (1) act when a child is harmed or at risk of harm and (2) use mental health treatment evidence in an action or proceeding if otherwise authorized.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

### **§ 15 — CONSIDERATION OF CHILD’S EXPRESSED OPINION IN DCF HOME VISITS**

*Requires DCF personnel to consider children’s opinions during home visits when investigating a report of child abuse or neglect of a young child*

By law, all DCF investigations into reports of child abuse or neglect for children from birth to age three must include a home visit to, among other things:

1. observe the child and any siblings;
2. evaluate the parents, home, and condition of other children living in the household; and
3. if appropriate, determine the nature and extent of, and who is responsible for, the reported abuse or neglect.

The bill requires that during these home visits, DCF personnel consider any opinions expressed by the child or other children living in the household about whether the child was abused or neglected.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **§ 16 — PERSONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION DEVICES FOR DCF STAFF DURING HOME VISITS**

*Requires DCF to offer employees who do visits to the homes of children under DCF supervision personal emergency communication devices*

The bill requires the DCF commissioner, beginning January 1, 2027, to give all DCF employees who regularly do visits to, or evaluations of, the homes of children under the commissioner’s supervision personal emergency communication devices if the employees chose to use the

devices during these visits or evaluations. The commissioner must also develop guidelines and a training program for their use.

The bill defines “personal emergency communication device” as a GPS-enabled, wearable device that allows someone to contact local police by pressing a button or through another mechanism.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **§ 17 — URGENT CRISIS CENTER**

*Requires DCF to establish an urgent crisis center in Stamford for FY 27*

The bill requires DCF to establish an urgent crisis center in Stamford for FY 27. Urgent crisis centers are walk-in clinics that provide immediate access to mental health services for children who do not require medical emergency department care.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

### **§ 18 — CHILD WELFARE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

*Establishes a Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee charged with making recommendations about the state agencies providing services relating to child welfare*

The bill establishes a 32-member Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee. The committee is charged with evaluating and making recommendations about the operation, policies, and service outcomes of state agencies providing services relating to and supporting child welfare in the state and (2) the efficacy and continued operation of existing statewide boards, committees, and councils charged with oversight and evaluation of child welfare services.

The committee is made up of members named by position and appointed members. The members named by position are the (1) Children and Appropriations Committee chairpersons and ranking members and (2) following agency heads or their designees: (a) the commissioners of Children and Families, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Developmental Services, Social Services, Housing, and Correction, and (b) the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary, the chief court administrator, the probate court administrator, the chief public defender, and the child advocate.

**Table: Appointed Committee Members**

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Members</i>	<i>Qualifying Description</i>
House speaker	2	One is a mental health professional employed at an urgent crisis center
Senate president pro tempore	2	One is a DCF regional social worker supervisor
House majority leader	2	One is a private provider of child welfare services
Senate majority leader	2	One is a licensed foster parent
House minority leader	2	One is an expert in child welfare employed by an in-state higher education institution
Senate minority leader	2	One is a relative or fictive kin caregiver with whom a child in DCF's care and custody has been placed

Any vacancy will be filled by the appointing authority. Members of the committee serve without compensation.

The Committee on Children chairpersons, or their designees, and the OPM secretary, or the secretary's designee, serve as co-chairpersons. The co-chairpersons must schedule the first committee meeting, which must be held within 60 days after the bill becomes law. The committee must meet quarterly, and more often upon the call of the co-chairpersons. The co-chairpersons may designate subcommittees to carry out committee duties.

By January 1, 2028, the committee must submit its first annual report on its evaluation and recommendations to the Committee on Children. On or after January 1, 2031, the committee may choose, by its own majority vote, to terminate if it finds its work is no longer necessary or beneficial.

The committee must complete its duties under the bill in consultation with one or more organizations that focus on child welfare-related issues, including an independent institution of higher education in the state. The committee can accept administrative support as well as technical and research assistance from any such organization.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**§ 19 — DCF AND DESPP COMMUNICATION IMPROVEMENT AND CHILD WELFARE POLICIES STUDY**

*Requires DCF and DESPP to study and report on improving their communication with one another and their policies on removing children from home*

The bill requires DCF and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to study ways to improve (1) communication between DCF and DESPP on child welfare services and (2) existing policies and practices on removing children from their homes.

The bill also requires DCF and DESPP to report on their findings and associated recommendations to the Committee on Children by January 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 20 — IMMEDIATE REMOVAL FOR CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT FROM OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS REPORT**

*Requires DCF and OCA to study and report on ways to improve department policies and practices to ensure a child's immediate removal from an out-of-home placement if they become a victim of physical or sexual assault*

The bill requires DCF and the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to jointly study ways to improve department policies and practices to ensure children are immediately removed from out-of-home placements made by DCF if they become a victim of physical or sexual assault occurring in, or because of, the out-of-home placement (presumably, this would apply when the perpetrator was someone living in the home or with access to it).

The bill also requires DCF and OCA to report on findings of the study and associated recommendations to the Committee on Children by January 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

**§ 21 — RELEASING ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARENTAGE INFORMATION**

*Permits DPH to release acknowledgment of parentage information to DCF*

By law, the Department of Public Health (DPH) may release information relating to an acknowledgment of parentage to certain

parties, including (1) a signatory of the acknowledgment, (2) the child if such child is 18 years of age or older, (3) a guardian of the person whose parentage is acknowledged, and (4) an authorized representative of the Department of Social Services. The bill also permits the information to be released to an authorized DCF representative.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**§ 22 — REQUIRING AN INVESTIGATION AND NEW DCF INVESTIGATOR IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES**

*Regardless of the DCF process for evaluating accepted reports and choosing a response based on the severity of the situation, requires DCF investigation and assignment of a new investigator in certain circumstances of alleged abuse or neglect*

The bill requires the DCF commissioner to begin a new investigation into reports of child abuse or neglect when a third report of abuse or neglect is accepted within a 12-month period concerning a child or a combination of children who are related or living in the same home. The investigation must be done by a different DCF employee than the one (or ones) who did the previous investigations during the 12-month period.

The requirement applies after the third accepted report of child abuse or neglect in which (1) the child who is the subject of the report; (2) a sibling, half-sibling, step-sibling, or other child residing in the same home as such child; or (3) any combination of children described in items (1) and (2), has been identified as the subject of prior accepted reports during the previous 12-month period. In a related change, the bill waives the DCF process of evaluating accepted reports and choosing a response based on the severity of the situation (which may not include an investigation, but instead only a referral for family assessment and services).

The bill requires the investigation to be done as required by law, which includes (1) a home visit with observation of the child or children; (2) an evaluation of the parents; (3) a determination of the nature, extent, and cause or causes of the abuse or neglect; (4) a determination of the person or persons suspected to be responsible for the abuse or neglect; (5) and the name, age, and condition of other children residing in the

same household.

The bill specifies that it (1) does not prevent the commissioner from removing a child from the child’s surroundings under her existing authority or (2) cannot be construed to require the department to assign a second, new investigator for any further reports of child abuse or neglect about a child made after completion of the investigation of a third report as required under the bill.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**§ 501 — ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT AND NOTIFICATIONS ON PEOPLE CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN**

*Requires additional follow-up and oversight of people who are convicted of certain crimes and then live with a minor child and requires notification to DCF when people convicted of these crimes are released from incarceration*

Beginning October 1, 2026, the bill requires notification to DCF and additional oversight of anyone convicted of certain crimes against children when they are released from a correctional institution and then live in a home with a minor child. The table below shows the 14 crimes for which this applies and a high-level summary for each. A minor child is a person under 18 years old.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**Table: Crimes Triggering Additional Oversight When Living With a Minor Child**

<b>Crime</b>	<b>CGS §</b>	<b>Description</b>
Cruelty to persons	53-20	When a person intentionally tortures, torments, or unlawfully punishes another person or deprives them of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or physical care
Injury or risk of injury to, or impairing morals of, children; sale of children	53-21	When a person (1) causes or allows a child under age 16 to be placed in a situation where the child’s life or limb is endangered or morals are likely to be impaired, (2) has sexual or indecent contact with the child’s intimate parts, or (3) sells or buys permanent custody of the child
Abandonment of child under the age of six years	53-23	When a person having charge of a child under age six leaves the child in any place, with intent to abandon the child

<b>Crime</b>	<b>CGS §</b>	<b>Description</b>
Aggravated sexual assault of a minor	53a-70c	When any person commits certain crimes (for example, sexual assault) against a child under 13 and the crime is compounded by certain factors (for example, the victim was kidnapped, illegally restrained, or stalked, or the accused has been convicted of a violent sexual assault before)
Promoting prostitution of a person less than 18 years old in the first degree	53a-86(a)(2)	When a person knowingly advances or profits from the prostitution of a person under age 18
Enticing a minor	53a-90a	When a person uses an interactive computer service (such as the Internet) to knowingly persuade, induce, entice, or coerce someone under age 18, or who the person reasonably believes to be under 18, to engage in prostitution or unlawful sexual activity
Obscenity as to minors	53a-196	When a person knowingly promotes to a minor, for money, any material or performance that is obscene for minors
Employing a minor in an obscene performance	53a-196a	When a person employs a minor or allows a minor to be employed to promote any material or performance that is obscene for minors, regardless of whether the minor receives any consideration (is paid)
Promoting a minor in an obscene performance	53a-196b	When a person knowingly promotes any material or performance that employs a minor, whether or not the minor receives consideration, and the material or performance is obscene for minors
Importing child sexual abuse material	53a-196c	When a person knowingly imports or causes to be imported into the state three or more visual depictions of child sexual abuse material (sometimes referred to as "child pornography")
Possessing child sexual abuse material in the first degree	53a-196d	When a person knowingly possesses (1) 50 or more images of child sexual abuse material, (2) one or more images of child sexual abuse material depicting the infliction or threatened infliction of serious injury, or (3) a series of images or a video depicting either multiple children engaging in sexually explicit conduct or more than one act of explicit conduct by one or more children
Possessing child sexual abuse material in the second degree	53a-196e	When a person knowingly possesses (1) between 20 and 49 images of child sexual abuse material or (2) a series of images or a video depicting a single act of sexually explicit conduct by one child

<b><i>Crime</i></b>	<b><i>CGS §</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
Possessing child sexual abuse material in the third degree	53a-196f	When a person knowingly possesses (1) fewer than 20 images of child sexual abuse material or (2) a series of images or a video depicting a single act of sexually explicit conduct by one child
Commercial sexual exploitation of a minor	53a-196i	When a person knowingly buys advertising space for an advertisement for a commercial sex act that includes a depiction of a minor

Under the bill, when someone convicted of a crime in the table above is released from incarceration and sentenced to a period of parole or probation, the correction commissioner or the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) executive director, as applicable, must notify the DCF commissioner within one week after the person is released about a minor child residing at the residential address to which the person was released.

#### ***Child Receiving DCF Services***

Upon receiving the notification, the bill requires the DCF commissioner to check if any minor child residing at the residential address is under protective supervision or receiving protective services. Within a week of determining that there is a minor child under protective supervision or receiving protective services, the commissioner or DCF designee must conduct a visit to the address to evaluate the child's safety. The visits must continue monthly until the probation or parole ends or a minor child no longer resides at the address.

By law, "protective supervision" means a court determined a child was neglected, but DCF or another social agency is, at the court's request, helping correct the neglect while the child stays in the home. "Protective services" are public welfare services provided to a family following a complaint of abuse, neglect, or abandonment, but where there is no ruling on the complaint.

#### ***Child Not Receiving DCF Services***

DCF must notify the correction commissioner or the CSSD executive director, as appropriate, if no minor child at the residential address is

under supervision or receiving protective services. Upon that notification and not less than every three months after it, the correction commissioner or the CSSD executive director, as applicable, must ask the probationer or parolee about the welfare of any minor child residing with them and must do so until the person's probation or parole ends.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14 Nay 2 (03/05/2026)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 50 Nay 0 (04/14/2026)