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## OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5476 (File 389, as amended by House "A")\*

### **AN ACT CONCERNING OVERSIGHT OF EFFORTS TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING.**

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BACKGROUND

**SUMMARY**

This bill makes several changes related to preventing and responding to human trafficking in the state, as shown in the section-by-section analysis below. It also makes technical and conforming changes.

\*House Amendment "A" principally (1) eliminates the underlying bill's new human trafficking prevention coordinator position and instead tasks an existing Office of Policy and Management (OPM) division with coordinating efforts among agencies and law enforcement; (2) adds the provisions on (a) trafficking as part of basic or review police training and (b) the correction department's sexual violence crisis hotlines; (3) replaces the underlying bill's requirement for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to assess out-of-home care facility security with requirements for congregate care residence operators to have certain policies, plans, and security measures; (4) limits DCF's required employee and provider training to those who have regular contact with children as part of their work; (5) allows the DCF employee and provider and judicial branch employee trainings to be done through a recorded format; and (6) switches the responsibility for implementing a report on the state's trafficking response from a temporary task force to a subcommittee formed by an existing task force's statewide steering committee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various, see below.

**§§ 1 & 504 — OPM HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION COORDINATION**

*Broadens OPM's Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division responsibilities to include advising and helping coordinate trafficking prevention efforts; requires the division to (1) evaluate state agency and law enforcement coordination of related efforts and (2) develop a plan for how the efforts should be coordinated*

Existing law sets OPM's Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division purpose as promoting a more effective and cohesive state criminal justice system, through certain specified actions. The bill expands the list of activities the division must perform to include advising and helping the state develop coordination of trafficking prevention efforts among state executive branch agencies and other multidisciplinary partners, including helping provide associated training.

The bill relatedly requires the division to (1) evaluate the coordination of efforts among state executive branch agencies and law enforcement agencies to prevent human trafficking in the state and (2) develop a comprehensive plan for how the state agencies' and other multidisciplinary partners' activities and programs should be coordinated for this purpose. It requires state agencies to give any information, data, or assistance the division needs, as long as state or federal law permits it.

The bill requires the division to submit a copy of its plan, including any recommendations for legislation, to the Appropriations, Government Oversight, and Judiciary committees by January 1, 2027.

Under the bill, "trafficking" refers to all acts involved in recruiting, abducting, transporting, harboring, transferring, selling, or receiving people within national or across international borders using force, coercion, fraud, or deception, to place them in situations of slavery or slavery-like conditions; forced labor or services, such as forced prostitution or sexual services; domestic servitude; bonded sweatshop labor; or other debt bondage.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 2 — TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

*Increases the Trafficking in Persons Council's membership by adding the secretary of the state or her designee*

The bill increases the Trafficking in Persons Council's membership by adding the secretary of the state or her designee. By law, among other things, this council coordinates human trafficking data collection and analysis and consults with government and non-government organizations in developing recommendations to strengthen efforts to prevent trafficking, protect and help victims, and prosecute traffickers (CGS § 46a-170).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§§ 3-5, 10 & 501 — AGENCY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING**

*Requires, within available appropriations, (1) DCF employees and contracted service providers who have regular contact with children as part of their work to be trained on identifying and reporting human trafficking, (2) the judicial branch to develop and offer certain employees training on trafficking, and (3) DCF to help POST develop trafficking training; requires POST's basic and review training programs to include training in human trafficking*

### **DCF (§§ 3 & 4)**

Existing law requires DCF, with the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), to develop initial and refresher training programs on accurately and promptly identifying and reporting human trafficking.

The bill requires DCF, within available appropriations, to give this training, which may be in a recorded format, to all its employees and its contracted service providers who have regular contact with children as part of their job or while providing their services. It correspondingly explicitly includes this training in DCF's listed statutory responsibilities for developing and training staff.

Under the bill, each employee and service provider must complete (1) an initial training program by the later of July 1, 2027, or six months after beginning their employment or the applicable contract date, and (2) refresher training every three years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except a conforming change is

effective October 1, 2026.

**Judicial Branch (§ 5)**

The bill requires the chief court administrator, within available appropriations, to develop and provide training for all judicial branch Court Support Services Division employees on the trafficking of minor children and adults.

Under the bill, the trainings must at least include:

1. awareness of and compliance with the laws and protocols on trafficking;
2. how to identify, get access to, and provide services for trafficking victims; and
3. techniques for (a) de-escalating and reducing harm when encountering victims and (b) receiving trauma disclosures.

The bill allows for the use of a recorded training curriculum to meet these requirements.

Each employee must complete (1) an initial training program by the later of July 1, 2027, or six months after beginning their employment or the applicable contract date, and (2) refresher training every three years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

**Law Enforcement (§§ 10 & 501)**

Current law allows DCF to, within available appropriations, provide training to law enforcement officials on the trafficking of minor children that must at least include information about the laws and protocols on trafficking and how to identify, get access to, and provide services for victims.

The bill instead requires DCF to help the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) to develop this training, which the bill expands to include trafficking of adults, but still within available appropriations. DCF must do this in collaboration with OPM's Criminal Justice Policy

and Planning Division.

The bill also requires the law's required basic and review police training programs administered by POST to include this trafficking training.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, except the requirement for the police basic or review training programs to include trafficking training is effective October 1, 2026.

## **§ 6 — CONGREGATE CARE RESIDENCE OPERATOR REQUIREMENTS**

*Sets policy, plan, and security measure requirements for DCF-licensed congregate care residence operators*

The bill sets policy, plan, and security measure requirements for DCF-licensed congregate care residence ("child care facility") operators, who are the people responsible for total facility operation. By law, these facilities are used for out-of-home placements of:

1. children or youths under age 18;
2. people under age 21 who are (a) homeless or at risk of homelessness or (b) enrolled full-time in a secondary or technical school, college, or state-accredited job training program; or
3. people who require special education, until the end of the school year during which they reach age 22.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### ***Policies***

First, the bill requires each operator to have clearly stated written policies of its plans, program, and services. They must be reviewed at least annually for any needed updates. The bill requires operators to give evidence of the annual review to DCF, if it asks and in its prescribed format.

The bill also requires each operator to have personnel policies on employee, temporary worker, volunteer, and intern training and

education. The policies must include introductory orientation, ongoing training and development, supervision, and annual evaluations.

### **Plans**

Under the bill, the operators must develop a plan for ongoing training, review it at least biennially, and update it as needed to be consistent with best practices. The plan must have a written curriculum and an annual minimum number of training hours. Operators must document the training's implementation as DCF requires.

The bill requires each operator to give DCF, at least biennially, a written quality assurance plan for its facility. The plan must describe (1) how facility services quality will be monitored; (2) the facility's compliance with its stated purpose, program objectives, and security requirements; and (3) other requirements from DCF, such as evidence of the plan's implementation with findings and, if applicable, an improvement plan. Revisions to the plan must be immediately available to facility staff and DCF.

### **Security Measures**

Lastly, under the bill, these facilities must also have (1) the internal and external security measures needed to ensure the residents' safety and (2) supervisory staff that can ensure each child's health, safety, security, and well-being and appropriate facility security for a home-like atmosphere.

## **§ 7 — CHILD ADVOCATE REVIEWS OF CHILDRENS' PLACEMENT**

*Specifies that the child advocate's existing responsibility for reviewing where children are placed by a state agency or department includes reviewing STTAR Enhancement plan homes*

The bill specifies that the child advocate's existing responsibility for reviewing where children are placed by a state agency or department includes reviewing Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification (STTAR) Enhancement Plan homes. (STTAR is a short-term group home program for children DCF removes from their homes due to high-risk situations.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

## **§ 8 — HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION AND RESPONSE SUBCOMMITTEE**

*Requires the creation of a subcommittee on human trafficking prevention and response to implement certain recommendations on the state's response to trafficking*

The bill requires the Division of Criminal Justice's Statewide Steering Committee of the Regionalized Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce (RHTRT) to create a Human Trafficking Prevention and Response Subcommittee. RHTRT is a greater-Hartford-area partnership to combat trafficking, bringing together law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, and service providers to investigate cases, help victims, and increase prevention efforts.

Under the bill, the subcommittee is made up of members RHTRT appoints and works as a public-private partnership to implement the recommendations from the RHTRT report "A Blueprint to Strengthen Connecticut's Response to Human Trafficking." The bill specifies that the subcommittee does not take over any of the Trafficking in Persons Council's responsibilities.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

### ***Purpose***

To implement the recommendations, the bill requires the subcommittee to work on the following:

1. advancing development of a permanent statewide entity to coordinate anti-trafficking response across agencies and service providers to help minor children and adult trafficking victims, including creating associated standards;
2. creating and implementing a standard, cross-disciplinary training framework and centralized learning management system;
3. developing and implementing a unified statewide data collection process with shared definitions, standard reporting fields, and secure data-sharing protocols;
4. designing and implementing standard, trauma-informed

screening questions and referral methods so that there is consistent identification of and response to victims across systems;

5. expanding and strengthening statewide service capacity by mapping and verifying providers, identifying service and funding gaps, and supporting the creation of a vetted resource directory; and
6. reviewing trafficking trends, identifying systemic gaps, and developing policy recommendations for submission to the Trafficking in Persons Council.

**§ 9 — MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS TO HELP ABUSED, NEGLECTED, OR TRAFFICKED CHILDREN**

*Requires, instead of allows, DCF and the state's attorneys to set up multidisciplinary teams to help abused, neglected, or trafficked children*

The bill requires, instead of allows, DCF and the state's attorneys to set up multidisciplinary teams to, among other things, review cases, coordinate intervention and prevention, and ensure treatment of abused, neglected, or trafficked children.

Under current law, the multidisciplinary teams that DCF and state's attorneys may establish include various professionals, including DCF, law enforcement, a victim advocate, and a forensic interviewer. These teams' purposes are to, among other things, (1) protect abused, neglected, or trafficked children and their families and (2) advance and coordinate investigations of alleged abuse, neglect, and trafficking (CGS 17a-106a).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026

**§§ 502 & 503 — DOC CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS HOTLINE FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

*Requires DOC to (1) issue an RFP for a confidential crisis hotline for reporting sexual violence and (2) report on it to the Appropriations, Government Oversight, and Judiciary committees; requires DOC to revise its policy on using these hotlines to report sexual violence and post the policy on the department's website*

The bill requires the DOC commissioner, by October 1, 2026, to issue

a request for proposals (RFP) to get proposals for a confidential crisis hotline so that correction officers and incarcerated people can report incidents of sexual violence. By January 1, 2027, the commissioner must report the RFP's results, including any appropriations request for the hotline, to the Appropriations, Government Oversight, and Judiciary committees.

The bill also requires the commissioner, by December 1, 2026, to (1) revise the department's policy on using confidential crisis hotlines by correction officers and incarcerated people to report incidents of sexual violence and (2) post it on the department's website. Under the bill, the revised policy must ensure that incarcerated people can access the hotline for free; in a location that makes using the hotline confidential; and without supervision of, or permission from, a DOC employee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2026, for the RFP provision, and the crisis hotline policy revision provision is effective October 1, 2026.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Related Bill***

sHB 5004 (Files 103 and 754), favorably reported by the Children and Appropriations committees and passed by the House, requires DCF to develop and provide a mandatory training program for its employees about human trafficking and how to interact with victims (§ 7).

## **COMMITTEE ACTION**

### Government Oversight Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 12 Nay 0 (03/17/2026)

### Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 47 Nay 4 (04/14/2026)