



2026 Acts Affecting Children

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting children enacted during the 2026 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Education, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) or special act (SA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the [General Assembly's website](#) or the Connecticut State Library.

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Table of Contents

Child Health and Safety	5
Access to Opioid Antagonists in Public Schools.....	5
Baby Products and Toxic Heavy Metals.....	5
Crisis Response Drills in Schools.....	5
CWCSEO Working Groups.....	5
Emergency Notification System for Youth Camps	6
Failure to Stop for a School Bus	6
Feasibility Study for Inpatient IDD Facility for Children and Young Adults.....	6
Health Insurance Benefit Mandates.....	6
Nonprofit Distribution of Free Eyeglasses.....	6
Notification of Restraint and Seclusion.....	7
Relieving Permittee of Liability for Serving Alcohol to Minor	7
Sharing Safety Plans With Schools.....	7
State Immunization Standards	7
Voluntary Surrender of Infants Task Force.....	8
Youth Camp Mandated Reporters	8
Courts, Criminal Law, and Juvenile Justice	8
Children’s Matters in Probate Court	8
Decreasing Child Support When Obligor is Incarcerated	9
Disclosing Child Care Employee on Abuse and Neglect Registry	9
Enforcing Child Support Orders From Another State.....	9
Female Genital Mutilation	9
Peace Officer Civil Offense Custody Actions	10
Risk and Needs Assessment for Arrested Juvenile	10
Sharing Acknowledgement of Parentage Information.....	10
Early Childhood and Child Care Programs.....	10
Background Check Requirements for Child Care Providers and Staff Members.....	10
Early Childhood Education Endowment	11
Legislative Approval of Childcare MOU.....	11
Minimally Disruptive Transition to the Early Intervention System for Armed Forces Members’ Children Relocating Due to New Orders.....	11
Pediatrician Added to Early Childhood Cabinet	11
Grants, Tax Exemptions, and Other Funding Provisions	11
After School Program Grants for Foster Caregivers.....	11
Distributing Youth Employment and Training Funding.....	12
Grant Program for Junior Firefighter Programs.....	12
Postsecondary Education Grant Program for Youths in DCF Care	12
Sales Tax Free Week Expansion	12
Tax Exemption for Nonelectronic School Supplies	12
Internet and Technology.....	13

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Companions	13
Social Media Platforms and Minors.....	13
State Oversight of Child Welfare and Protection	13
Combating Human Trafficking	13
Consolidating DCF Reporting Requirements.....	14
DCF Accountability and Transparency	14
DCF and DESPP Child Welfare Policies and Communications Study	14
DCF Procedures to Ensure Child Welfare and Safety.....	14
Immediate Removal of Assault Victims From Out-of-Home Placements Report.....	15
Prohibition on Using Mental Health Treatment as Sole Reason for DCF Action.....	15
Public School Withdrawal	15
Miscellaneous	15
Civil Air Patrol Youth Camp.....	15
Kindergarten Waivers for the 2026-2027 School Year	16
Prospective Social Worker Internship and First Year Social Worker Mentorship Programs.....	16

Child Health and Safety

Access to Opioid Antagonists in Public Schools

Two new laws expand the instances in which an opioid antagonist (such as Narcan) may be administered to students in public schools. It updates laws on administering opioid antagonists to reflect the recent availability of a non-legend (over the counter) opioid antagonist nasal spray approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

More specifically, the new laws allow any person to give someone a non-legend opioid antagonist to treat or prevent an opioid drug overdose, including in a school, and gives them immunity from civil and criminal liability for doing so. It also exempts anyone who distributes these medications from needing a non-legend drug permit to do so ([PA 26-38](#), §§ 1 & 2, and [PA 26-68](#), § 165, most provisions effective upon passage).

Baby Products and Toxic Heavy Metals

Beginning January 1, 2028, a new law prohibits making, selling, or distributing a baby food product containing a toxic heavy metal (such as arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury) in an amount exceeding a limit set by the FDA. It will also require manufacturers to test their products for these metals, post test information on their websites, and display certain information on product containers related to these metals ([PA 26-100](#), § 26, effective October 1, 2026).

Crisis Response Drills in Schools

Starting with the 2027-2028 school year, recent legislation creates new protocols for school crisis response drills to ensure they are designed to prevent emotional harm and support psychological safety while improving preparedness. Among other things, the law (1) prohibits active assailant simulations; (2) requires the Connecticut Center for School Safety and Crisis Prevention at Western Connecticut State University, in collaboration with Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), to develop guidance for responding to crises and for crises response drills; and (3) addresses communication between school personnel, students, and parents about the nature and purpose of crises response drills ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 44-47, effective July 1, 2026).

CWCSEO Working Groups

A new law requires the executive director of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO) to establish working groups concerning the (1) treatment of eating disorders and (2) development of a state-wide food education roadmap and a model school nutrition curriculum ([PA 26-62](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

Emergency Notification System for Youth Camps

A new law requires every Office of Early Childhood (OEC)-licensed youth camp (licensee) to provide, verify, and update OEC with the camp's contact information, including its telephone number. The law requires OEC to share the contact information with DESPP for use in an emergency notification system that notifies licensees about emergency situations (such as a fire; criminal act; emergency; or act of nature, such as an earthquake or hurricane) that occur in the camp's vicinity or that may endanger the children at the camp ([PA 26-105](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2026).

Failure to Stop for a School Bus

A new law requires the motor vehicles commissioner, without a hearing, to issue a six-month suspension of the driver's license or operating privilege of someone who, for the third or subsequent time, violates the state law on failing to stop for a school bus ([PA 26-95](#), effective October 1, 2026).

Feasibility Study for Inpatient IDD Facility for Children and Young Adults

A new law requires the social services commissioner to study the feasibility of establishing an inpatient facility to provide psychiatric treatment services to children and young adults, ages 14 to 21, with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD). The commissioner must include certain things in the study, like the appropriate facility size and number of people served, best treatment practices for the population, and the facility's operational costs ([PA 26-72](#), § 16 and [PA 26-62](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

Health Insurance Benefit Mandates

Effective January 1, 2027, a new law generally requires certain individual and group health insurance policies to provide coverage for, among other conditions, (1) Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) and Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) treatment, including the use of intravenous immunoglobulin therapy; and (2) prosthetic devices designed exclusively for athletic purposes, including medically necessary repairs and replacements ([PA 26-33](#), §§ 1-3 & 6-7, effective January 1, 2027).

Nonprofit Distribution of Free Eyeglasses

A new law allows nonprofit organizations that distribute free glasses produced by an optician to give the glasses to the wearer's authorized representative if the wearer is unavailable to receive them in-person from the organization. Under prior practice, the Connecticut Board of Examiners for

Opticians required eyeglasses to be dispensed in-person by a licensed optician ([PA 26-13](#), § 3, effective July 1, 2026).

Notification of Restraint and Seclusion

A new law requires schools to notify the parent or guardian of a student placed in physical restraint or seclusion on the day it happens, rather than within 24 hours after it happened as prior law required. The existing requirement that a school make a reasonable attempt to notify parents or guardians immediately after a restraint or seclusion begins continues to apply under this new law ([PA 26-1](#), § 42, effective July 1, 2026).

Relieving Permittee of Liability for Serving Alcohol to Minor

By law, if alcoholic liquor permittees are unsure of a person's age, they must have the person fill out and sign an age statement form in which the customer verifies certain information, including being old enough to legally consume alcohol. Under certain circumstances, getting this form relieves the permittee of liability for serving alcohol to a minor if the permittee is later charged for doing so. A new law additionally requires the permittee or backer to have otherwise acted reasonably in serving or giving alcohol to the minor to have this relief ([PA 26-100](#), § 25, effective July 1, 2026).

Sharing Safety Plans With Schools

A new law sets requirements for health care providers to share certain minors' safety plans with schools. Starting April 1, 2027, the act requires each health care provider that prepares a safety plan for a minor patient who received at least 12 consecutive days of inpatient behavioral health care treatment to (1) review it with the minor, if medically appropriate, and (2) ask whether the minor or the minor's parent or legally authorized representative consents to sharing the safety plan with the minor's school. If this consent is given, the provider must (1) get written consent from the minor's parent or legally authorized representative (or the minor if they are at least age 16) and (2) send the plan to the minor's school or school district using a secure messaging system or in a way that complies with the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) ([PA 26-13](#), §§ 19-22, most provisions effective upon passage).

State Immunization Standards

In response to recent changes in federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccine standards, the legislature enacted a law requiring the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish immunization standards of care for all Connecticut residents, instead of only children and adolescents. In developing these standards, it allows DPH to consider recommended vaccine

schedules from several medical professional organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Family Physicians.

Among other things, the new law also (1) requires the Connecticut Vaccine Program to give all children's vaccines included under DPH's standard of care, instead of only those recommended by the CDC and (2) allows licensed pharmacists to give vaccines listed in DPH's immunizations standards of care, instead of only CDC-recommended vaccines, for certain minors.

Additionally, the new law expressly provides that the state's Religious Freedom Restoration Act does not apply to school and child care facility immunization requirements ([PA 26-3](#), various effective dates).

Voluntary Surrender of Infants Task Force

A new law creates a task force to study the voluntary surrender of infants in the state and report to the legislature. The study must analyze the law that allows a newborn child to be voluntarily surrendered to a hospital by the child's parent (or their agent) within 30 days of birth with no legal repercussions. The task force must also study the policies and procedures of hospitals and DCF regarding the law ([SA 26-5](#), effective upon passage).

Youth Camp Mandated Reporters

A new law specifies that the existing mandated reporter requirement for youth camp staff applies to camps operated by a municipal agency. Prior law designated all paid youth camp staff (including a director or assistant director) age 21 or older as mandated reporters but did not specify if this applied to both licensed camps and license-exempt municipal camps. By law, people in many designated occupations or professions who have contact with children are mandated reporters with a legal duty to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect ([PA 26-25](#), effective date October 1, 2026).

Courts, Criminal Law, and Juvenile Justice

Children's Matters in Probate Court

A new law makes minor changes in various laws governing probate court operations and related matters, including certain children-related matters. Among other things, the act (1) allows name changes to be heard in regional children's probate courts and (2) requires that appeals of probate matters on appointment of a minor's (a) guardian, temporary guardian, or statutory parent or (b) emancipation, be filed in the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, as is already the case for other children's-related matters ([PA 26-87](#), §§ 1, 3-4 & 10, various effective dates).

Decreasing Child Support When Obligor is Incarcerated

A new law removes a prohibition on decreasing an existing support order based solely on the child support obligor's income loss due to incarceration for an offense against the custodial party or the child ([PA 26-1](#), § 68, effective upon passage).

Disclosing Child Care Employee on Abuse and Neglect Registry

A new law requires child care providers to notify OEC if they learn that a worker at their facility is listed on the child abuse and neglect registry. This requirement applies to family child care homes and licensed child care centers and group homes. Failure to disclose knowledge of registry placement is subject to the same disciplinary measures as knowledge of criminal convictions ([PA 26-105](#), §§ 4 & 6, effective July 1, 2026).

Enforcing Child Support Orders From Another State

A new law allows the Department of Social Services (DSS) or the Superior Court's Support Enforcement Services to notify certain parties (for example, financial institutions) of a child support obligor's overdue support when DSS, acting as the IV-D agency, receives a request from another state for help enforcing an order that is not registered in the state but meets certain federal requirements on high-volume, automated enforcement in interstate cases. (DSS's Bureau of Child Support Enforcement is the states designated IV-D agency.) (PA 26-1, § 67, effective upon passage.)

Female Genital Mutilation

A new law makes it a class D felony to perform female genital mutilation (FGM) on a minor. It establishes that a child FGM victim is qualified to testify without prior qualification, and leaves it up to the jury (or the judge in nonjury trials) to determine the weight and credibility to give to the child's testimony. It also authorizes a court to use special procedures when a child age 12 or younger is testifying in these cases, including allowing the child to be videotaped rather than testifying in open court.

The act also allows a child FGM victim to sue the person who performed FGM on her (including the victim's parent, when applicable) to recover compensatory or punitive damages or other relief the court considers appropriate. It allows the victim to bring the lawsuit at any time until her 48th birthday ([PA 26-5](#), effective October 1, 2026, and the provision on the civil statute of limitations applies to cases filed on or after that date).

Peace Officer Civil Offense Custody Actions

The legislature passed restrictions on detaining, arresting, or taking someone into custody based on a civil offense in certain locations, including at schools, school bus stops when children are there, playgrounds, recreation centers, foster care facilities, group homes for children, and social services establishments. To do so, the peace officer must be acting in his or her official capacity and have a judicial warrant for the individual ([PA 26-14](#), § 7, effective October 1, 2026).

Risk and Needs Assessment for Arrested Juvenile

By law, a child arrested for a delinquent act must generally be brought to court within five business days after their arrest. At that time, prior law allowed the court to consider whether the child should be assessed for services if it found probable cause to believe that they committed the acts alleged. A provision in the annual court operations act specifically allows it to order a risk and needs assessment and requires that the assessment generally be confidential ([PA 26-92](#), § 14, effective October 1, 2026).

Sharing Acknowledgement of Parentage Information

A provision in a new law adds an authorized DCF representative to the existing list of people and entities that DPH may give information to about an acknowledgement of parentage. But the information may only be given when it is requested for work on a matter pending in Superior Court for juvenile matters and the child's parentage is outstanding ([PA 26-130](#), § 4, effective October 1, 2026).

Early Childhood and Child Care Programs

Background Check Requirements for Child Care Providers and Staff Members

A new law clarifies the people associated with providing child care services who must undergo a background check. The law distinguishes the different types of staff at child care facilities based on various factors, including the staff member's age and responsibilities. It also specifies that the background check required under existing law must include a check of (a) national and state criminal history records and sex offender registries; (b) the state's child abuse or neglect registry; and (c) child abuse or neglect registries for other states where the individual recently lived ([PA 26-105](#), § 5, effective July 1, 2026).

Early Childhood Education Endowment

The Early Childhood Education Endowment, established in PA 25-93, is funded with unappropriated surplus and used by OEC to support early care and education programs in the state. A new law requires OEC to make an annual spending plan for released endowment funds, which must include OEC's policy goals, the amount of planned expenditures, and a statement of how the spending will meet the policy goals ([PA 26-68](#), §387, effective upon passage).

Legislative Approval of Childcare MOU

This year's budget implementer act includes legislative approval for a memoranda of understanding (MOU) submitted to the legislature on May 1, 2026, between OEC and the Connecticut State Employees Association SEIU Local 2001. In general, the office collectively bargains with the union over the pay rates and other working conditions of child care providers in the state's Care 4 Kids program ([PA 26-68](#), § 469, effective upon passage).

Minimally Disruptive Transition to the Early Intervention System for Armed Forces Members' Children Relocating Due to New Orders

This session, the legislature enacted a new law that requires the Birth-to-Three program to take steps to provide a minimally disruptive transition for a relocating armed forces member's child who was previously enrolled in the program in another jurisdiction and had an individualized family service plan (IFSP). Under the new law, the Birth-to-Three program must take steps such as (1) transferring records and prior assessments, (2) performing any reassessments, and (3) holding a meeting within 45 days after the referral to create a written IFSP for the eligible child ([PA 26-35](#), § 10, effective July 1, 2026).

Pediatrician Added to Early Childhood Cabinet

A new law adds a pediatrician, appointed by the governor, to the Early Childhood Cabinet, which brings the cabinet membership to 33. The cabinet advises the OEC commissioner and annually develops reports required under the federal Head Start program ([PA 26-105](#) § 1, effective July 1, 2026).

Grants, Tax Exemptions, and Other Funding Provisions

After School Program Grants for Foster Caregivers

A new law establishes a grant program to assist foster caregivers with the costs of after-school programs for children placed in their care. The law specifies that eligible 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 ([PA 26-26](#) § 4, effective July 1, 2026).

Distributing Youth Employment and Training Funding

A new law changes how the Department of Labor must allocate youth employment and training funds to the regional workforce development boards. Instead of specifying the percentage of the funds that each board must receive (as under prior law), it generally requires the funds to be allocated based on each workforce development region's number of (1) students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; (2) economically disadvantaged youth; and (3) at-risk students ([PA 26-76](#), § 53, effective July 1, 2026).

Grant Program for Junior Firefighter Programs

A new law requires the state fire administrator to create and administer a program to give grants to junior firefighter programs administered by volunteer fire departments ([PA 26-12](#), § 39, effective upon passage).

Postsecondary Education Grant Program for Youths in DCF Care

A new law requires DCF to establish a grant program to fund postsecondary programs that lead to an academic degree, vocation certification, or trade, for youths who (1) were adopted through DCF's foster care program on or after January 1, 2005, prior to turning 18 years old, or (2) consent to remain in DCF care after turning 18 years old ([PA 26-26](#), §§ 9 & 10, effective July 1, 2026, except a provision requiring the program to be audited is effective October 1, 2026).

Sales Tax Free Week Expansion

A new law expands the sales and use tax exemption for clothing and footwear sold from the third Sunday in August through the following Saturday (sales tax free week) to (1) items costing less than \$300, rather than \$100, and (2) backpacks and cleated shoes costing less than \$300 ([PA 26-68](#), § 262, effective upon passage).

Tax Exemption for Nonelectronic School Supplies

Under a new law, nonelectronic school supplies that are purchased for nonbusiness purposes are exempt from the state's 6.35% sales and use tax as of July 1, 2026. The Department of Revenue Services must issue policies and procedures that identify which school supplies qualify for the exemption ([PA 26-68](#), § 272, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 101, effective July 1, 2026, and applicable to sales occurring on or after that date).

Internet and Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Companions

A new law requires an AI companion operator to (1) include a protocol with certain detection methods for identifying specified user expressions (such as self-harm) and (2) give certain notices to a user disclosing that the user is communicating with an AI companion. Additionally, the law prohibits operators from providing an AI companion to minors if the companion is capable of certain actions (for example, encouraging self-harm, discouraging seeking help, and manipulating the user in certain ways to extend interactions) ([PA 26-15](#), §§ 4-6, effective January 1, 2027).

Social Media Platforms and Minors

This session, the legislature limited a minor's ability to access portions of a social media platform that use a personalized algorithm. The new law also limits the times when notifications with any personalized suggestions may be sent and requires platform operators to give minors certain warnings related to mental health. It also requires operators to (1) make the platform's default setting, among others, one that limits the minor's access to any portion of the platform that uses a personalized algorithm to one hour per day and (2) disclose certain information for the previous calendar year to the public ([PA 26-15](#), § 39, effective January 1, 2028).

State Oversight of Child Welfare and Protection

Combating Human Trafficking

This session, the legislature passed a new law with several provisions aimed at combating human trafficking in the state. Regarding minor children specifically, among other things, the new law requires:

1. DCF employees and service providers who have regular contact with children to be trained on human trafficking;
2. the judicial branch's chief court administrator to train certain employees on trafficking;
3. certain actions and planning for DCF-licensed congregate care residence operators;
4. DCF and the state's attorneys to set up multidisciplinary teams to help abused, neglected, or trafficked children;
5. DCF to help the Police Officer Standards and Training Council develop training for law enforcement on trafficking ([PA 26-70](#), §§ 3-6, & 9-11, various effective dates).

Consolidating DCF Reporting Requirements

The legislature enacted a law that merges certain existing DCF reporting requirements into a single report, among other reporting requirement changes. DCF must submit the consolidated report to the General Assembly each year, starting on October 15, 2027 ([PA 26-48](#), §§ 1-2 & 4-7, effective July 1, 2026).

DCF Accountability and Transparency

In response to recent concerns about DCF, which include several widely publicized fatalities of children who were under DCF care, the legislature enacted an omnibus child welfare act with numerous components, including creating a new oversight body and information transparency requirements (other aspects of the omnibus law are described in other parts of this report).

The legislation created a 32-member Child Welfare Policy and Oversight Committee, made up of state officials, legislators, and child welfare providers and experts, that is charged with evaluating and making recommendations about the operation, policies, and service outcomes of DCF and other state agencies providing child welfare services in Connecticut.

Related to transparency, the same legislation requires DCF to create a public, online dashboard by with information on DCF's state-wide programs for children and young people who are abused, neglected, and uncared for and those who have mental health needs and substance use disorders ([PA 26-26](#), §§ 11, 12 & 18, various effective dates).

DCF and DESPP Child Welfare Policies and Communications Study

A new law requires DCF and 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 law requires DCF and DESPP to report to the legislature on their findings and associated recommendations ([PA 26-26](#), § 19, effective upon passage).

DCF Procedures to Ensure Child Welfare and Safety

As part of the new omnibus child welfare law, the legislature made various changes to existing laws regarding child welfare and safety. Among other things, the legislation requires (1) 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; (2) DCF personnel to consider children's opinions during home visits when investigating a report of child abuse or neglect of a young child; (3) assignment of a new investigator in certain circumstances of alleged abuse or neglect; and (4) additional follow-up

and oversight of people who are convicted of certain crimes against children and then live with a minor child ([PA 26-26](#), §§ 13, 15, 22 & 23, effective October 1, 2026).

Immediate Removal of Assault Victims From Out-of-Home Placements Report

A new law requires DCF and the Office of the Child Advocate 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. The law requires them to report the legislature with findings and recommendations ([PA 26-26](#), § 20, effective upon passage).

Prohibition on Using Mental Health Treatment as Sole Reason for DCF Action

A new law 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 ([PA 26-26](#), § 14, effective upon passage).

Public School Withdrawal

Starting with the 2027-28 school year, a new law, among other things, requires parents seeking to withdraw a child from public school to go, in person, to the school district's office and sign a withdrawal form. It also prohibits parents from withdrawing a child for the purpose of switching to parent-managed learning (such as homeschooling) if DCF records show that any adult living with the child is on the state's child abuse and neglect registry or currently under investigation for child abuse or neglect ([PA 26-37](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2027).

Miscellaneous

Civil Air Patrol Youth Camp

A new law allows the Connecticut Wing of the Civil Air Patrol to open, operate, and maintain a youth camp without an OEC license. However, to be exempt, the camp must (1) be opened, operated, and maintained on state property and use a facility operated exclusively by the Connecticut Military Department or U.S. Armed Forces, and (2) comply with certain guidelines if operating as an overnight camp ([PA 26-45](#), § 14, effective October 1, 2026).

Kindergarten Waivers for the 2026-2027 School Year

By law, children must be at least age five by September 1 of the school year to enroll in public school kindergarten. Under prior law, school districts had to have a waiver process that allowed children under age five to enroll in kindergarten if the (1) child's parent or guardian makes a written request to the school principal and (2) principal and an appropriate certified school staff member do an assessment that shows the child is developmentally ready. A new law makes this process optional for school districts starting July 1, 2026, and eliminates the process entirely starting July 1, 2027 ([PA 26-1](#), §§ 26 & 27, effective July 1, 2026, and July 1, 2027, as applicable).

Prospective Social Worker Internship and First Year Social Worker Mentorship Programs

A new law 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 (in consultation with higher education institutions). The law specifies DCF must pay a stipend to each intern and mentor who successfully completes either program ([PA 26-26](#), § 5, effective October 1, 2026).

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