



The 2024 Legislative session is open! We are grateful for the collaboration with the members of the Connecticut General Assembly and especially the Children's Committee for their support of the Department of Children and Families.

The Department has two bills that we have proposed this year. The following is an explanation and overview:

SB 127 - An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Department of Children and Families Relating to Background Checks, Certain Subsidies, Urgent Crisis Centers, Departmental Records and Special Police Officers.

Section 1 updates language in the statutes concerning kin foster licensing and required background checks. This bill already permits DCF to place a child with a relative or fictive kin on an emergency basis when the child's primary caregiver is suddenly unavailable. The Administration of Children and Families passed a new rule this fall that allows kin placements to receive Title IV-E reimbursement from the federal government from the moment of placement with kin, rather than when the kin are licensed as long as language is embedded in state statute.

The bill also streamlines the FBI fingerprinting process for family members and fictive kin who have a child placed with them. The proposed change will clarify that such relatives or fictive kin will only have to be fingerprinted once while being licensed by the Department.

The bill would also require only household residents 18 years of age and older to submit to the background check, rather than those who are 16 years of age and older as under current law. This reflects best practice nationally.



Section 2 amends the law to allow for the adoption subsidy for a child, that was in the care and custody of DCF prior to adoption, to "follow" the child when an adoptive parent dies or is unable to care for the child due to incapacitation or serious illness. The subsidy would follow the child to a successor guardian appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction, ensuring that the child will continue to receive support and reducing the risk of a return to DCF custody.



Sections 3 and 4 redefine "urgent crisis center" in two insurance statutes that prevent surprise billing for families receiving services at the facilities. The UCCs are currently defined as being licensed by DCF. However, one provider operates their urgent crisis center through their emergency department under its Department of Public Health (DPH) hospital license. Under the new language in the bill, these centers may be licensed by state agencies other than DCF but will still operate under DCF oversight. In order to qualify for Medicaid payments, an urgent crisis center must be certified by DCF.

Section 5 amends our confidentiality statutes to allow the Department of Public Health (DPH), who now licenses the Albert J. Solnit Children's Center, access to records necessary to carry out its regulatory responsibilities.



Section 6 amends DCF's Juvenile Justice Educational Unit statute to explicitly state that for those children in detention or incarcerated, DCF is a state educational authority under the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and as such has access to educational records for the children in detention or incarcerated.

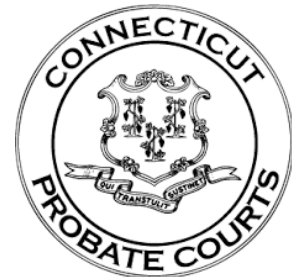


Sections 7 and 8 will provide statutory authority for DCF to employ our existing police officers. These police officers perform critical functions for DCF, including conducting background checks, focus on threat assessments, physical plant safety analysis and liaison with local and state police. The bill enables the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Commissioner (DESPP) to appoint officers to DCF to perform these vital duties for the agency.

Lastly, section 9 updates one of our implementation statutes concerning our service array for children with behavioral health needs. It replaces terms such as "emotionally disturbed" or "substance abusers" with contemporary terminology used in statutes. It also contains grammatical fixes.

SB 125 - An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Department of Children and Families Relative to Identified Adoptions and Revisions to Certain Terminology.

DCF partnered with the Probate Court Administration and private adoption agencies to develop sections 1 through 6 of this bill. It updates the language in the identified adoption statutes to conform with the CT Parentage Act and revises the probate statutes regarding payments by prospective adoptive parents to birth parents.



The remainder of the bill concerns the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) which requires states to implement a notification process to DCF when a baby is born who has been prenatally exposed to substances. This bill makes changes to the corresponding state statute by replacing references to "plans of safe care" with "family care plans." It also amends the language of the statute to involve all parents in the family care plans and be consistent with the CT Parentage Act by making the language gender neutral.