

AGENCY RESPONSE: DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Department appreciates the unique nature of investigations conducted by the Educational Professionals Investigation Unit (EPIU) and is finalizing policy and training specific to this work, which will be governed by the Department's existing statutory authority related to abuse and neglect investigations. The identification and oversight of "program concerns" that do not rise to the level of abuse or neglect falls outside the scope of that authority and are better addressed by local Boards of Education. However, the Department will continue to ensure that all information relevant to the determination of abuse or neglect allegations will be included in the investigation protocols, which will be shared with the State Department of Education and the Superintendent for their own independent review and follow up as they deem appropriate and necessary.

Likewise, the Department also appreciates the intent of recommendation #8 related to training and oversight for the EPIU. The EPIU was created in 2020 for the purpose of centralizing all school personnel investigations under one statewide management structure to standardize practice and procedures for these specialized investigations. As the EPIU was launched, all employees selected received initial unique training and orientation to the new unit and modifications were made to the investigation protocol specific to EPIU. Since the initial roll-out, EPIU members have received continuous training on routine investigation procedures through DCF's Academy for Workforce Development. In addition, the Department is exploring a specialized training plan for initial and ongoing EPIU staff that covers all aspects of educational matters related to child abuse and neglect, which may include the specific areas of training and focus recommended in this report. The Department would welcome the opportunity for further discussion with your office as we develop these training plans and curricula.