

2022 -- H 6617

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Introduced By: Representatives Casimiro, Vella-Wilkinson, Ackerman, Kazarian,
Kennedy, Fenton-Fung, and Noret

Date Introduced: January 06, 2022

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 40-11-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 40-11 entitled "Abused and
2 Neglected Children" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **40-11-7. Investigation of reports -- Petition for removal from custody -- Report to**
4 **child advocate -- Attorney general -- Court-appointed special advocate -- Children's advocacy**
5 **center.**

6 (a) The department shall investigate reports of child abuse and neglect made under this
7 chapter in accordance with the rules the department has promulgated and in order to determine the
8 circumstances surrounding the alleged abuse or neglect and the cause thereof. The investigation
9 shall include personal contact with the child named in the report and any other children in the same
10 household. Any person required to investigate reports of child abuse and/or neglect may question
11 the subjects of those reports with or without the consent of the parent or other person responsible
12 for the child's welfare. The interviewing of the child or children, if they are of the mental capacity
13 to be interviewed, shall take place in the absence of the person or persons responsible for the alleged
14 neglect or abuse. In the event that any person required to investigate child abuse and/or neglect is
15 denied reasonable access to a child by the parents or other person, and that person required to
16 investigate deems that the best interests of the child so require, they may request the intervention
17 of a local law enforcement agency, or seek an appropriate court order to examine and interview the
18 child. The department shall provide such social services and other services as are necessary to
19 protect the child and preserve the family.

1 (b) In the event that after investigation it is determined by the department that the child is
2 being or has been abused or neglected but that the circumstances of the child's family or otherwise
3 do not require the removal of the child for his or her protection, the department may allow the child
4 to remain at home and provide the family and child with access to preventative support and services.
5 In addition, the department is authorized to petition the family court for an order for the provision
6 of treatment of the family and child. Provided, further, the department shall notify the children's
7 advocacy center of all suspected cases of child sexual abuse.

8 (c) The department shall have the duty to petition the family court for removal of the child
9 from the care and custody of the parents, or any other person having custody or care of the child, if
10 there is a determination that a child has been abused or neglected; which results in a child death,
11 serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that
12 represents an imminent risk of serious harm. In addition, in cases of alleged abuse and/or neglect,
13 the department may petition the family court for the removal of the alleged perpetrator of that abuse
14 and/or neglect from the household of the child or children when the child or children are eleven
15 (11) years of age or older. It shall be the responsibility of the department to make the parent or
16 other person responsible for the child's welfare aware of the court action, the possible consequences
17 of the court action, and to explain the rights of the parent relative to the court action.

18 (d) The department shall forward immediately any reports of institutional child abuse and
19 neglect to the child advocate who shall investigate the report in accordance with chapter 73 of title
20 42, and also to any guardian ad litem and/or attorney of record for the child.

21 (e) In the event that after investigation the department takes any action regarding placement
22 of the child, the department shall immediately notify the child advocate of such action.

23 (f) In the event that after investigation the department has reasonable cause to know or
24 suspect that a child has been subjected to criminal abuse or neglect, the department shall forward
25 immediately any information as it relates to that knowledge or suspicion to the law enforcement
26 agency.

27 (g) If a report is accepted as a valid allegation of abuse or neglect, the department shall
28 collect information concerning the military status of the parent or guardian of the child who is the
29 subject of the report and shall share information about the allegation with the appropriate military
30 authorities.

31 SECTION 2. Chapter 40-11 of the General Laws entitled "Abused and Neglected Children"
32 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

33 **40-11-20. Military family advocacy program.**

34 (a) The department shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the military

1 family advocacy program at a local military installation with respect to child abuse and neglect
2 investigations.

3 (b) Such memorandum of understanding shall establish procedures and protocols for
4 matters including, but not limited to:

5 (1) Identifying an individual alleged to have committed abuse or neglect as military
6 personnel;

7 (2) Reporting to a military family advocacy program when an investigation implicating
8 military personnel has been initiated; and

9 (3) Maintaining confidentiality requirements under state and federal law.

10 (c) For the purposes of this section, "military family advocacy program" means the program
11 established by the United States Department of Defense to address child abuse and neglect in
12 military families.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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1 This act would establish a military family advocacy program to address child abuse and
2 neglect in military families.

3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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