

2026 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 432

BY SENATOR BARROW

CHILDREN/FAMILY SERVICES DEPT. Provides relative to child welfare. (8/1/26)

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AN ACT

To amend and reenact Children's Code Arts. 603(18) and 612(A)(1), relative to child welfare; to provide for definitions in the Children's Code; to provide for the assignment of reports for investigation and assessment by the Department of Children and Family Services; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Children's Code Arts. 603(18) and 612(A)(1) are hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

Art. 603. Definitions

As used in this Title:

* * *

(18) "Neglect" means the refusal or unreasonable failure of a parent or caretaker to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, care, treatment, or counseling for any injury, illness, or condition of the child, as a result of which the child's physical, mental, or emotional health, welfare, and safety is ~~substantially~~ threatened or impaired. Neglect includes prenatal neglect. Consistent with Article 606(B), the inability of a parent or caretaker to provide for a child due to inadequate

1 financial resources shall not, for that reason alone, be considered neglect. Whenever,
 2 in lieu of medical care, a child is being provided treatment in accordance with the
 3 tenets of a well-recognized religious method of healing that has a reasonable, proven
 4 record of success, the child shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be
 5 neglected or maltreated. However, nothing in this Subparagraph shall prohibit the
 6 court from ordering medical services for the child when there is substantial risk of
 7 harm to the child's health, welfare, or safety.

* * *

9 Art. 612. Assignment of reports for investigation and assessment

10 A. (1) Upon receiving a report of abuse or neglect of a child, ~~who is not in~~
 11 ~~the custody of the state, the local child protection unit of the department shall~~
 12 promptly assign a level of risk to the child based on ~~the information provided by the~~
 13 ~~reporter.~~ **whether the information provided indicates that the child is in an**
 14 **unsafe condition and if a potential threat of danger exists. The department shall**
 15 **not make a determination of whether abuse or neglect has occurred prior to**
 16 **investigating a report.**

* * *

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Senate Legislative Services. The keyword, summary, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

DIGEST

SB 432 Original 2026 Regular Session Barrow

Present law provides for definitions in the Children's Code relative to child abuse and neglect.

Proposed law makes changes to the definition of "neglect".

Present law provides procedures for the assignment of reports for investigation and assessment by the Dept. of Children and Family Services.

Proposed law provides additional requirements for assigning a risk level for reports received by the department.

Effective August 1, 2026.

(Amends Ch.C. Arts. 603(18) and 612(A)(1))