



LEGISLATIVE FISCAL OFFICE
Fiscal Note

Fiscal Note On: **SB 237** SLS 26RS 9
 Bill Text Version: **RE-REENGROSSED**
 Opp. Chamb. Action: **w/ HSE COMM AMD**
 Proposed Amd.:
 Sub. Bill For.:

Date: May 25, 2026	6:52 PM	Author: BARROW
Dept./Agy.: Children and Family Services (DCFS)		Analyst: Patrice Thomas
Subject: Child Welfare - Child Fatalities or Near Fatalities		

CHILDREN RR1 INCREASE GF EX See Note Page 1 of 2
 Provides relative to child welfare. (8/1/26)

Proposed law requires the state child ombudsman to notify, without identifying information, senators/representatives when a child in their district is the subject of an alleged child abuse/neglect investigation; expands notifications, with specific information, that DCFS must report to the state child ombudsman – upon receiving information and after the conclusion of the investigation; and authorizes the ombudsman to have unrestricted remote access to view records on DCFS’s child welfare computer networks/systems. Proposed law adds testimony, with identifying information and explicit details related to physical or sexual abuse of children, in executive session. Proposed law requires DCFS to establish a law enforcement liaison position; designate a chief medical director to manage a public website. Proposed law creates a critical incident review team, with specific members, to review cases of child fatalities/near fatalities. Proposed law requires a forensic interview by a child advocacy center (CAC) within 72 hours, and CAC to notify the multidisciplinary investigative team within 24 hours. Proposed law requires all mandatory reporters to complete annual training provided by DCFS. Implementation of proposed law is contingent upon appropriation by the legislature.

EXPENDITURES	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	5 -YEAR TOTAL
State Gen. Fd.	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	
Agy. Self-Gen.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ded./Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Federal Funds	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	INCREASE	
Local Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Annual Total						
REVENUES	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	5 -YEAR TOTAL
State Gen. Fd.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Agy. Self-Gen.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Ded./Other	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Local Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Annual Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

EXPENDITURE EXPLANATION

To the extent the Legislature appropriate funds, proposed law may significantly increase expenditures and positions in the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). There is no anticipated material impact on the Office of the Attorney General, the State Child Ombudsman (LA Legislative Auditor), law enforcement agencies, district courts, or district attorneys. **Implementation of proposed law shall be subject to the appropriation of funds by the legislature for this purpose.**

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) - Proposed law requires DCFS to do the following, subject to appropriation: (1) designate a Chief Medical Director to oversee all matters regarding child fatalities and near fatalities; (2) increase notification, by the Chief Medical Director, to the State Child Ombudsman of all child fatalities or near fatalities within three business days, and notifications must include certain information; (3) allow the State Child Ombudsman unrestricted remote access to the department’s child welfare case management systems including certain reports and assessments; (4) management of a public website for substantiated cases of child fatalities or near fatalities by the Chief Medical Director, and to release a public summary report with certain information within 120 days; (5) create new law enforcement liaison positions for each region; (6) require DCFS to notify reporter of alleged abuse/neglect to the specific law enforcement agency where the report was referred; (7) disallow the department from closing cases prior to the review of the case by the multidisciplinary critical incident review team; and (8) require the department to “immediately” investigate all reports deemed a high level of risk.

DCFS reports that the proposed law will increase expenditures by \$3,207,746 (\$2,245,422 SGF and \$962,324 Federal) and 24 T.O. positions beginning in FY 27, with a 4% increase for market rate adjustments and related benefits for positions in future fiscal years. DCFS estimates the need for 24 T.O. positions with salaries and related benefits (\$2,725,665). Other recurring costs include operating expenses (\$12,000) and other charges (\$28,800), as well as one-time expenditures in FY 27 for 9 new vehicles for new staff (\$259,281 = \$28,809 x 9). In subsequent fiscal years, the fiscal note presumes a 4% increase in salaries and related benefits for market rate adjustments as the positions will be classified.

Also, DCFS estimates increases, some indeterminable, for IT system enhancements by the Office of Technology Services (OTS) as follows: (1) \$42,000 to develop a new public page on its website to publish data on substantiated cases of child fatalities and near fatalities; (2) unrestricted remote view access by the State Child Ombudsman; (3) provide information and track outcomes by the multidisciplinary critical incident review team; (4) \$66,000 to prevent case closures prior to view by the team; and (5) \$24,000 for IT system generate notices and produce a print file for notifications to reporters on law enforcement referrals, and \$50,000 for ongoing mailings.

See the Expenditure Table and Continued Expenditures Explanation on Page 2.

REVENUE EXPLANATION

There is no anticipated direct material effect on governmental revenues as a result of this measure.

Senate Dual Referral Rules
 13.5.1 >= \$100,000 Annual Fiscal Cost {S & H}
 13.5.2 >= \$500,000 Annual Tax or Fee Change {S & H}

House
 6.8(F)(1) >= \$100,000 SGF Fiscal Cost {H & S}
 6.8(G) >= \$500,000 Tax or Fee Increase or a Net Fee Decrease {S}

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CONTINUED EXPLANATION from page one:

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EXPENDITURE EXPLANATION Continued from Page 1

Note: The LFO cannot corroborate the estimated increase for IT system enhancements predicted by the department. To the extent that the requirements of the proposed law could possibly be integrated into ongoing IT enhancements, the need for additional IT expenditures may be mitigated.

Department of Children and Family Services

Expenditure Table

Position Title (Number)	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	FY 29-30	FY 30-31	Total
Deputy Medical Director/Physician (1)	\$290,000	\$301,600	\$313,664	\$326,211	\$339,259	\$1,570,734
Business Analytics Specialist (1)	\$135,100	\$140,504	\$146,124	\$151,969	\$158,048	\$731,745
Investigative Specialist 3 (1)	\$94,980	\$98,779	\$102,730	\$106,840	\$111,113	\$514,442
Child Welfare Specialist 3 (18)	\$1,857,564	\$1,931,867	\$2,009,141	\$2,089,507	\$2,173,087	\$10,061,166
Child Welfare Specialist Supervisor (3)	<u>\$348,021</u>	<u>\$361,942</u>	<u>\$376,420</u>	<u>\$391,476</u>	<u>\$407,135</u>	<u>\$1,884,994</u>
Personal Services Sub-Total	\$2,725,665	\$2,834,692	\$2,948,079	\$3,066,002	\$3,188,643	\$14,763,081
Operating Expenses	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$60,000
Other Charges	\$28,800	\$28,800	\$28,800	\$28,800	\$28,800	\$144,000
IT Systems Enhancements	\$182,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$382,000
Acquisitions (9 Vehicles)	<u>\$259,281</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$259,281</u>
Total	\$3,207,746	\$2,925,492	\$3,038,879	\$3,156,802	\$3,279,443	\$15,608,362
T.O. Positions	24	24	24	24	24	24

Note: The LFO cannot corroborate the increased workload predicted by the department. To the extent the additional workload is less than DCFS anticipates, the additional workload may be absorbable, either wholly or partially, using existing staff and resources, or may be achievable with fewer than 24 positions. Also, the department may utilize existing vacant positions within the Division of Child Welfare. To the extent the requirements and procedures could possibly be integrated into existing processes, or by a new IT solution, the need for additional staff may be mitigated.

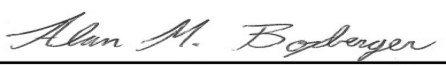
**Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
Expenditure Summary of Proposed Law**

	Expenditures	T.O.
<i>Expands Notifications by DCFS to State Child Ombudsman (3 Business Days) and Designate the Chief Medical Director - Notifications to Ombudsman/Public Website</i>		
Deputy Medical Director/Physician (1)	\$290,000	1
Business Analytics Specialist (1)	\$135,100	1
<i>Establishes Law Enforcement Liaison Positions in Each Region</i>		
Investigative Specialist 3 (1)	\$94,980	1
Operating Expenses (\$500 per employee)	\$1,500	0
Other Charges (\$1,200 per employee)	<u>\$3,600</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub-Total	\$525,180	3
<i>Expands Sexual Reporting to DCFS with Changing Definition of Sexual Abuse to that of Children's Code Article 610(c)</i>		
Child Welfare Specialist 3 (18)	\$1,857,564	18
Child Welfare Specialist Supervisor (3)	\$348,021	3
Operating Expenses (\$500 per employee)	\$10,500	0
Other Charges (\$1,200 per employee)	\$25,200	0
IT Systems Enhancements	\$182,000	0
New Vehicles for New Child Welfare Staff (9 vehicles @ \$28,809)	<u>\$259,281</u>	<u>0</u>
Sub-Total*	\$2,682,566	21
Total (Annual)	\$3,207,746	24

**Note: The LFO cannot corroborate the increase workload expenditures of \$2.68 M and 21 positions predicted by the department. Related to expanding the definition of "sexual abuse" to the definition contained in Children's Code Article 610(c). In accordance with Act 409 of 2025 RS, any sexual abuse cases in which the alleged perpetrator is a child shall be referred to the department. To the extent that expanding the definition of "sexual abuse" to the definition contained in Children's Code Article 610(c) increases reporting more than required in Act 409, the additional workload may be absorbable, either wholly or partially, using existing staff and resources, or may be achievable with fewer than 21 positions. Also, the department may utilize existing vacancy positions within the Division of Child Welfare. To the extent that the requirements and procedures could possibly be integrated into existing ongoing IT enhancements, the need for additional IT expenditures may be mitigated.*

This fiscal note does not contemplate expenditures of \$1.04 M and 7 positions reported by DCFS associated with the Child Welfare Medical Team (\$939,519 and 6 positions) and multidisciplinary critical incident review team (\$104,898 and 1 position). Currently, the department is in the process of hiring 3 registered nurses (RNs) and 3 advance practice nurses (NPs) for its Child Welfare Medical Team. Therefore, any expenditures reported by DCFS related to the medical team were not included, as these costs are already incurred, or being incurred, and not impacted by this legislation. Also, the department reported needing a position to provide information packets to members of the multidisciplinary critical incident review team. Since the proposed law designates the Office of the Attorney General as the coordinator of the review team, any expenditures reported by DCFS were not included. The Attorney General reports that any costs will be absorbed within its existing resources.

<u>Senate</u>	<u>Dual Referral Rules</u>	<u>House</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 13.5.1 >= \$100,000 Annual Fiscal Cost {S & H}		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6.8(F)(1) >= \$100,000 SGF Fiscal Cost {H & S}
<input type="checkbox"/> 13.5.2 >= \$500,000 Annual Tax or Fee Change {S & H}		<input type="checkbox"/> 6.8(G) >= \$500,000 Tax or Fee Increase or a Net Fee Decrease {S}


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