

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action:	Do Pass
Vote:	6 - 1 - 1
Yeas:	Frederick, Greenlick, Parrish, Thompson, Gilliam, Tomei
Nays:	Weidner
Exc.:	Harker
Prepared By:	Jennifer Kellar, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	5/16, 5/25

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Requires persons conducting child abuse investigations or making protective order determinations to have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. Exempts current Department of Human Services (DHS) employees and law enforcement officials.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Necessity of measure
- Qualifications of instructors for degree recipients
- Applicability of earned degrees
- Applicability of caseworker's having their own children in making determinations
- Number of caseworkers with high school diploma only
- Degree requirement fiscal impact to agency

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: The Child Protective Services division of DHS shares responsibility with law enforcement agencies to take and respond to child abuse reports. In federal fiscal year 2010, DHS received 71,886 reports of abuse and neglect. Of those received reports, 29,021 reports were referred for investigation and 7,306 referrals were founded for abuse or neglect, involving 11, 188 victims.

According to DHS' 2010 *Child Welfare Data Book*, public and private officials required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect made 74.4 percent of the reports of abuse and neglect received by DHS. Of all reports, 38.1 percent came from schools and law enforcement agencies.

The response time for investigations by a DHS worker to make contact is determined by the information collected from the reporter about access the alleged perpetrator has to the child. There are two types of response times, "within 24 hours" and "within five days". More than two-thirds of all investigations (69.6 percent or 20,202 investigations) were assigned a response time of "within 24 hours". During federal fiscal year 2010 the average amount of time to respond to reports requiring contact within 24 hours was 22.7 hours; for the five day response, the average time was 3.6 days.

Senate Bill 748-A requires DHS employees conducting child abuse investigations or making protective custody determinations to have an advanced degree.