

HB 2033 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services

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Meeting Dates: 5/7, 5/14

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Modifies minimum degree requirements from requiring at least a bachelor's degree to requiring at least an associate's degree for Department of Human Services (DHS) caseworkers who conduct child abuse investigations or make determinations regarding the protective custody of children. Mandates that caseworkers who have a degree in a field that is not human-services related complete sufficient human services-related coursework and training as determined by rule.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Skills required for child protective caseworkers
- Qualifications for comparable fields of work
- Current turnover in child welfare workforce

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Currently, caseworkers who conduct child abuse investigations or make determinations regarding the protective custody of children must possess a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree from an accredited institution of higher education.

Child Protective Services (CPS) is responsible for investigations of child abuse within the Department of Human Services (DHS). Caseworkers in CPS listen to reports of abuse, assess the situations, and prepare safety plans to assist children and their families. CPS staff work closely with law enforcement agencies and other members of multidisciplinary teams in each county to assess child abuse reports. CPS and law enforcement agencies have a shared legal responsibility for receiving and responding to reports of suspected child abuse or neglect. According to the 2017 Child Welfare Data Book, CPS received 80,683 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect in federal fiscal year 2017 and 43,976 were referred for investigation.

A child may be taken into protective custody when the child's conditions or surroundings reasonably appear to be such as to jeopardize the child's welfare, when the juvenile court has ordered that the child be taken into protective custody, or when it reasonably appears that the child has run away from home. Unless the court has ordered that the child be taken into protective custody, or if the welfare of the child or others may be jeopardized, the child must be released to the custody of their parent or other responsible person.

House Bill 2033 A reduces minimum educational requirements for child welfare caseworkers from a bachelor's degree to an associate's degree, plus additional training related to the field of human services.

House vote: 57 - 1 - 2 - 0