



**New DCF Child Fatality website**

The DCF Child Fatality Prevention website <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/childfatality/> was created to raise public awareness about child fatalities throughout the state and assist communities with identifying where additional resources or efforts are needed to assist struggling families. With this information readily available to the public, we hope communities will join DCF to work together to meet the needs of their neighbors and protect vulnerable children. Additionally, DCF and our community partners will use this data to improve child welfare practice to better protect children and assist at-risk families. This website includes information regarding all child fatalities called into the Florida Abuse Hotline alleged to be a result of abuse or neglect. The definitions for abuse, abandonment and neglect can be found in [Ch. 39, Florida Statutes](#).

**Highlights of Senate Bill 1666**

On June 23, 2014 Governor Rick Scott signed bipartisan legislation which strengthens current child welfare laws and increases resources to protect children from abuse and neglect. Here are some highlights of the bill:

- Creates a new Assistant Secretary for Child Welfare
- Creates new and amended definitions within Chapter 39
- Expands services to medically complex children; DCF to monitor medical foster homes with DOH
- Mandates new reporting processes and transparency to reporting child

fatalities in families known to the Department

- Expands Child on Child Sexual Abuse definitions and process
- Creates new hiring preferences, continuing education benefits, and required training for CPIs
- Provides additional Safety Planning direction
- Requires specialized training for investigators assigned to medical neglect or sexual exploitation investigations; case managers assigned to sexual exploitation cases must also be specially trained

**Student Loan Forgiveness and Tuition Exemption for Child Protective Investigators, Case Managers and Supervisors**

**Tuition Exemption:**

Creates a tuition exemption program for child protection and child welfare personnel who would like to pursue a graduate-level social work program or certificate program related to child welfare that is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

-Allows for up to six credit hours per term and requires continued employment for 5 years with the Department, a state agency, or a contracted provider

upon graduation to avoid repayment.

- Requires courses be taken online if offered
- Must maintain at least a "B" or repayment is required
- Requires the Annual Employee Evaluation to reflect high performance

**Loan Forgiveness:**

Creates a student loan forgiveness program for child protection and child welfare personnel who have a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Social Work from an accredited program and are

employed by DCF, a CBC or a subcontracted agency.

Payments for tuition, books, fees and living expenses may be covered, up to \$3,000 a year for 4 years.

Requires continued employment for 5 years to avoid repayment.

Funds are prioritized to regions with high caseload averages and low retention. Program is limited based on funding availability. \$500,000 was appropriated for FY 2014-2015.



## **Child on Child Sexual Abuse Legislative changes**

Amended 39.201: “Child on Child Sexual Abuse”

Age expanded to include all children 0 to 17+ years of age

De-stigmatizes youth; “juvenile sexual offender” changed to “alleged abuser”

Incidents of juvenile sexual abuse involving a child in the custody of or protective supervision of

the Department shall be reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline.

Facts and results of an investigation must be shared with the court at the next hearing and included in the next written report to the court.

At the Florida Abuse Hotline, every child will get a Florida

Administrative Message (FAM) and all youth will be assigned a Child on Child special condition report.

Regarding incidents involving children in the custody of the Department or under protective supervision, a call is required to the hotline whether the child is defined as the victim or the alleged abuser.

### **Quick Reference Links**

Senate Bill 1666 -  
<http://laws.flrules.org/2014/224>

House Bill 561 -  
<http://laws.flrules.org/2014/227>

House Bill 977 -  
[http://laws.flrules.org/files/Ch\\_2014-166.pdf](http://laws.flrules.org/files/Ch_2014-166.pdf)

House Bill 989 -  
<http://laws.flrules.org/2014/160>

House Bill 7141 -  
<http://laws.flrules.org/2014/161>

Implementation Webinars:  
<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/HorizontalTab/VideoTrainingTopic.shtm>

### **Hiring Goals for CPIs**

The Legislature has established a hiring goal for DCF that by July 1, 2019, at least half of all child protective investigators (CPI) and child protective investigator supervisors employed by the Department should have a bachelors or a master's degree in Social Work.

Annually, the Department is required to report the qualifications of its CPI workforce, employee turnover in the area of child protection and working conditions of all child protection staff around the state.

## **Medical Neglect Definition and the New Process**

“Medical neglect” means the failure to provide or the failure to allow needed care as recommended by a health care practitioner for a physical injury, illness, medical condition, or impairment, or the failure to seek timely and appropriate medical care for a serious health problem that a reasonable person would have recognized as requiring professional medical attention. Medical neglect does not occur if the parent or legal guardian has made reasonable attempts to obtain necessary health care services or the immediate health condition giving rise to the allegations of neglect is a known and expected complication of the child's diagnosis and treatment and:

(a) The recommended care offers limited net benefit to the child and the morbidity or other side effects of the treatment may be considered to be greater than the anticipated benefit; or

(b) The parent or legal guardian received conflicting medical recommendations for treatment from multiple practitioners and did not follow all recommendations.

Investigations of medical neglect must be conducted by investigators with specialized training arranged through the Office of Child Welfare.

Upon receiving an investigation for a “Medical neglect” allegation, the child protective investigator (CPI) shall promptly notify the Child Protection Team (CPT).

The Child Protection Team is to consult a physician with experience treating the child's medical condition.

Children suspected of having a delay or disability must be referred to a local child developmental screening program.

Upon receipt of the report by CPT, the CPI should convene a staffing for the case to include Children Legal Services, the CPI, Children's Medical Services, the community based care organization and the Agency for Health Care Administration (if the child receives Medicaid).