

2025 -- H 5377

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- CHILD ADVOCATE OFFICE

Introduced By: Representatives Casimiro, Noret, Spears, Donovan, Speakman, Morales,
Roberts, Read, and Chippendale

Date Introduced: February 07, 2025

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 42-73-2.3 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-73 entitled "Child
2 Advocate Office" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **42-73-2.3. Child fatality reviews.**

4 (a) The department of children, youth and families shall notify the office of the child
5 advocate verbally and electronically within forty-eight (48) hours of a confirmed fatality or near
6 fatality of a child who is the subject of a DCYF case and shall provide the office of the child
7 advocate with access to any written material about the case.

8 (b) The child advocate, working with a voluntary and confidential child fatality review
9 panel, whose members may vary on a case-by-case basis, shall review the case records of all
10 notifications in accordance with subsection (a) of fatalities and near fatalities of children under
11 twenty-one (21) years of age, if:

12 (1) The fatality or near fatality occurs while in the custody of, or involved with, the
13 department, or if the child's family previously received services from the department;

14 (2) The fatality or near fatality is alleged to be from abuse or neglect of the child and the
15 child or child's family had prior contact with the department; or

16 (3) A sibling, household member, or daycare provider has been the subject of a child abuse
17 and neglect investigation within the previous twelve (12) months, including, without limitation,
18 cases in which the report was unsubstantiated or the investigation is currently pending.

19 (c) The child fatality review panel shall assess and analyze such cases; make

1 recommendations regarding such cases; and make recommendations for improvements to laws,
2 policies, and practices that support the safety of children. Each report shall be made public within
3 thirty (30) days of its completion.

4 (d) The members of the child fatality review panel, established in accordance with this
5 section, shall be subject to the confidentiality provisions of § 42-73-10.

6 (e) The child advocate shall publicly announce the convening of a child fatality review
7 panel, including the age of the child involved.

8 (f) The department of children, youth and families shall implement whatever measures are
9 necessary to comply with recommendations pursuant to subsection (c) of this section within six (6)
10 months of the recommendation; provided, further, the director of DCYF shall provide a report to
11 the child advocate, the speaker of the house, president of the senate and governor detailing DCYF's
12 specific response to recommendations made pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Reports
13 required pursuant to this section shall be completed within three (3) months of the date of any
14 measure implemented by DCYF in response to recommendations pursuant to subsection (c) of this
15 section.

16 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- CHILD ADVOCATE OFFICE

1 This act would require DCYF to implement recommendations made by the child advocate
2 and child fatality review panel within six (6) months and provide the child advocate, speaker of the
3 house, senate president and governor with a report of the measures taken to address the
4 recommendations.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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