

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 7078 — Child Welfare

by Fiscal Policy Committee and Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

The bill makes changes to a number of provisions related to the child welfare system.

The bill clarifies the roles of the state and local review committees within the Child Abuse Death Review (CADR) process and imposes specific reporting requirements to address the increased volume of cases reviewed. Pursuant to state and federal law, child abuse and neglect deaths are reviewed to seek ways to reduce or eliminate such deaths. The bill also provides that directors of county health departments appoint members to the local child abuse death review committees and specifies membership of those committees.

The bill authorizes the Secretary of Department of Children and Families (DCF) to deploy a critical incident rapid response team (CIRRT) in response to child deaths in addition to those with verified abuse and neglect during the last 12 months. A CIRRT is a multiagency team that conducts an immediate investigation of child deaths or other serious incidents involving children in the child welfare system to identify root causes of the death or other incident and rapidly determine the need to change policies and practices related to child protection and child welfare. The bill also requires more frequent reviews and reports by the CIRRT advisory committee.

The bill provides that multi-agency staffings currently required to be convened in cases of alleged medical neglect, shall only be convened if medical neglect is substantiated by the child protection team.

The bill requires personnel of specified membership organizations to meet state and national background screening requirements through the DCF and adds personnel of those membership organizations to the definition of the term “child care personnel” for screening purposes.

The bill removes a category of counties that have independent special taxing districts created to provide funding for children’s services from the requirement to submit the question of retention or dissolution of the district to the electorate in a general election.

The bill allows specialty Medicaid plans to continue to serve children in custody of the DCF as long as those children remain in care or are in a subsidized adoption and continue to be Medicaid eligible. Young adults remaining in extended foster care are included.

The bill requires public, private and charter schools that accept scholarship students in the

John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program or the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program to post information related to child abuse reporting. The bill also specifies the information to be included on the poster and designates where the poster is to be placed.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2015.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-1