The Florida Senate
PROFESSIONAL STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT
(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

BILL: CS/SB 1392

INTRODUCER: Children, Families, and Elder Affairs and Senator Storms

SUBJECT: Florida Safe Families Network

DATE: March 14, 2007   REVISED:

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ray	Jameson	CF	**Fav/CS**
2.			JU	
3.			HA	
4.			RC	
5.				
6.				

I.   Summary:

This bill creates an undesignated section in law to require all agencies and institutions involved in a child welfare case to accurately maintain the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) and to require the Florida Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) to work with the Office of the State Courts Administrator and the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office to allow a judge, magistrate, or guardian ad litem to access FSFN information concerning cases to which they are assigned.

The legislation requires DCF to implement the change by FSFN's release date and report on its progress by February 1, 2008.

This bill creates a new undesignated section of the Florida Statutes.

II.   Present Situation:

Information technology (IT) plays a vital role in the provision of state government services and has forever changed the way people access such services. The wide availability of information via the Internet creates significant fiscal and substantive policy challenges for federal, state, and local governments. This challenge is particularly evident in Florida because of our very broad public records law. As more governmental information and services become electronically available, the issues of privacy, security, and integrity of personal data in federal, state, and local government IT systems continue to grow in their importance. Problems or malfunctions of IT

systems, e.g., electronic databases and voting machines, can have far-reaching practical and political implications.[1]

The Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) project is the result of a federal initiative through the Department of Health and Human Service/Administration for Children and Families to help states develop information systems that will provide child welfare workers with a mechanism to manage cases more effectively and track children and families more efficiently.[2]

The origin of focused Federal support for SACWIS came from Title XIII, Section 13713., ENHANCED MATCH FOR AUTOMATED DATA SYSTEM, of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993, enacted on August 19, 1993. That legislation provided states with the opportunity to obtain 75 percent enhanced funding through the Title IV-E program of the Social Security Act to plan, design, develop, and implement a SACWIS. This legislation made the enhanced funding available for Federal fiscal years 1993-1996. Title V, s. 502 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), enacted on August 22, 1996, extended the SACWIS enhanced funding through Federal fiscal year 1997. Additionally, the legislation provided an enhanced SACWIS cost allocation to states so that Title IV-E would absorb all SACWIS costs for foster and adopted children, without regard to their Title IV-E eligibility.[3]

Subsequent to the passage of OBRA 1993, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) promulgated the Departmental regulations at 45 CFR 1355.50 – 1355.57, issued on December 22, 1993. These regulations implemented ss. 474(a)(3)(C) and (D) of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.[4]

A SACWIS is expected to be a comprehensive automated case management tool that supports social workers, foster care, and adoptions assistance case management practice. States were also encouraged to add complementary functionality to their SACWIS, such as functionality that supports child protective and family preservation services, thereby providing a unified automated tool to support most, if not all, of child welfare services. In addition, states have the option of incorporating other programs into a SACWIS, such as TANF emergency assistance, juvenile justice, and child care. By law, a SACWIS is required to support the reporting of data to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). Furthermore, SACWIS are expected to have bi-directional interfaces with state's Title IV-A (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Title IV-D (Child Support) systems.[5]

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[1] Committee on Governmental Operations, Enterprise Information Technology Senate Review and Study, Report Number 2007-140, pg. 34 (2007).
[2] Florida Department of Children and Families, HomeSafenet: A Historical Perspective, (2006), http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/transition//docs/issues_fsfnhistorical.pdf. (March 9, 2007).
[3] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, About SACWIS, (2006), http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/systems/sacwis/about.htm. (March 9, 2007).
[4] Id.
[5] Id.

DCF successfully deployed the first of several planned releases of HomeSafenet (HSN), Florida's SACWIS in November 2000. The statewide deployment of basic case management functionality, focusing on child placements, was completed in phases between November 2000 and August 2001.[6]

In March 2001, DCF contracted with a vendor for a Project Management Team to direct the further development of HSN. During fiscal year 2001-2002, the HSN project team first developed and deployed improvements to case management, and later completed the development of the Child Safety Assessment. This functionality was developed for child protective investigators and managers to document child abuse investigations.[7]

Due to critical issues found with an interface to the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System, the Project Management Team made a decision to replace the interface with functionality that handled data related to in-home incidences of child abuse and neglect. This decision impacted the project schedule and resources assigned to other tasks.[8]

Beginning in January 2003, a number of project challenges were identified. DCF and the State Technology Office started analyzing the situation to determine the best approach to move the project forward. It was decided that HSN was not built for expansion.[9] At this time, plans for the development of new functionality in HSN were discontinued.[10]

Upon completion of a thorough analysis, DCF determined that the procurement of a systems integrator was in the best interest of the state. There was a strong consensus in the 2005 legislative session that further development utilizing HSN as a foundation for Florida's child welfare system was not likely to achieve the objectives needed by the program. As a result, a decision was made not to commit further development resources on HSN but rather to proceed with procuring the services of an experienced systems integrator to leverage a proven approach.[11]

DCF successfully procured a federally approved contract with CGI-AMS. Currently, CGI-AMS has web-based installations in Wisconsin, Alaska, Illinois, and New Jersey.[12] A three phase release of Florida's SACWIS is planned over an 18-month period.[13] When completed, Florida's new system, known as the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), will be comprised of intake, assessment, case management, resource management, eligibility and financial management functionality with the ability to produce required federal, state, and management reports.[14]

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[6] Florida Department of Children and Families, HomeSafenet: A Historical Perspective, (2006), http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/transition//docs/issues_fsfnhistorical.pdf. (March 9, 2007).
[7] Id.
[8] Id.
[9] Conversation with Joe Vastola, Chief of Applications, Support, and Development, Department of Children and Family Services, March 12, 2007.
[10] Florida Department of Children and Families, HomeSafenet: A Historical Perspective, (2006), http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/transition//docs/issues_fsfnhistorical.pdf. (March 9, 2007).
[11] Id.
[12] Florida Department of Children and Families, Florida Safe Families Network, As-Needed Advance Planning Document Update, December 2006. pg. 3.
[13] Id.
[14] Id.

According to DCF, the total estimated cost of FSFN is $50 million. This amount includes $18.4 million appropriated in FY 2006-2007 budget and an estimated appropriation of $24 million in FY 2007-2008 budget.[15] As this money is spent by the state, it is matched by the Federal Government at a rate of fifty cents on the dollar.[16]

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill creates an undesignated section in law to require all public and private agencies and institutions participating in child welfare cases to maintain the accuracy of FSFN by consistently entering information specified by rule of DCF into FSFN.

The bill requires DCF to coordinate with the Office of the State Courts Administrator and the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office to allow a judge, magistrate, or guardian ad litem who is assigned to a dependency court case, access to information in FSFN concerning a specific case. The legislation requires DCF to implement the change by FSFN's release date, and report on its progress by February 1, 2008.

The final implementation of FSFN should allow more effective case management in child welfare cases.

The bill repeals subsections (2) and (3) on July 1, 2008.

The bill will take effect upon becoming law.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A.   Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B.   Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C.   Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A.   Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

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[15] Conversation with Pat Badlands, Director of Family Safety, Department of Children and Family Services, March 9, 2007.
[16] Conversation with Joe Vastola, Chief of Applications, Support, and Development, Department of Children and Family Services, March 12, 2007.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Allowing a judge, magistrate, or guardian ad litem to access FSFN information concerning cases to which they are assigned should make child welfare proceedings more efficient and expedite the permanency of the child.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The completion of HSFN should allow the courts to access court dates and documents from a centralized location. Ultimately, this will increase the efficiency of a child welfare proceeding.[17]

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

It is important that DCF, the Office of State Courts Administrator, and the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem ensure that security of FSFN due to the sensitive nature of FSFN information. The DCF, the Office of State Courts Administrator, and the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996, Public Law 104-191, when allowing access to those required in the bill.

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[17] Conversation with Joe Vastola, Chief of Applications, Support, and Development, Department of Children and Family Services, March 12, 2007.

VIII.   Summary of Amendments:

None.