

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

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BILL: SB 846

INTRODUCER: Senators Gainer and Steube

SUBJECT: Sheriffs Providing Child Protective Investigative Services

DATE: February 27, 2018

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Preston</u>	<u>Hendon</u>	<u>CF</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Sneed</u>	<u>Williams</u>	<u>AHS</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

The bill requires the Walton County Sheriff to assume responsibility for child protective investigations beginning with the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

This bill does not affect state or local expenditures.

The bill is effective upon becoming law.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Background**

Child protective investigation units are responsible for receiving and responding to reports of child abuse and neglect, which involves determining whether the report meets the criteria to be accepted for a protective investigation, gathering information, and determining whether child maltreatment occurred or the child is at risk of abuse or neglect.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF or department) has been authorized to enter into contracts with county sheriffs to provide child protective investigations since 1998.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the department is responsible for performing child protective investigations in 61 counties statewide. Sheriff's offices in the remaining six counties are responsible for performing child protective investigations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 39.3065, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 39.3065, F.S. authorizes the department to enter into grant agreements with the sheriff of any county to perform child protective investigations. Broward, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas are named in statute. Hillsborough and Seminole counties currently perform child protective investigations, but are not specifically named in the statute.

The department employs 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to conduct child protective investigations in Walton County.<sup>3</sup>

The department is also required to enter into agreements with the jurisdictionally responsible county sheriffs' offices and local police departments that will assume the lead in conducting any potential criminal investigations arising from allegations of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.<sup>4</sup> The following types of calls to the hotline are automatically transferred to the appropriate county sheriff's office:

- Reports of known or suspected child abuse by an adult other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, as defined in s. 39.01, F.S.;
- Reports involving juvenile sexual abuse or a child who has exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior; and
- Reports of an instance of known or suspected child abuse involving impregnation of a child under 16 years of age by a person 21 years of age or older solely under s. 827.04(3), F.S.<sup>5</sup>

All child protective investigations, regardless of the entity administering this function, must be done in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations. The county sheriffs must conduct investigations, at a minimum, in accordance with the performance standards and outcome measures established by the legislature for protective investigations conducted by the department. Each individual child protective investigator must complete, at a minimum, the training provided to and required of protective investigators employed by the department.<sup>6</sup>

Funds for providing child protective investigations must be identified in the annual appropriation made to the department, which shall award grants to the respective sheriffs' offices. Funds for child protective investigations may not be integrated into the sheriffs' regular budgets. Budgetary data and other data relating to the performance of child protective investigations must be maintained separately from all other records of the sheriffs' offices and reported to the department as specified in the grant agreement.<sup>7</sup>

The sheriffs' grants are funded from several funding sources, including state general revenue, the Welfare Transition Trust Fund (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant), the Social Services Block Grant Trust Fund, the Child Welfare Training Trust Fund, and the Federal Grants Trust Fund. Federal funds are provided to the department as the agency of record for the State of Florida. The department is required to complete a number of reports to the federal government, including certifications as to how the funding is spent and that the expenses meet federal guidelines and sufficient state matching funds are available. These funds, according to federal guidelines, must be appropriated to the agency of record.<sup>8</sup>

The department is required to submit an annual report regarding quality performance, outcome-measure attainment, and cost efficiency to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House

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<sup>3</sup> The Department of Children and Families, 2018 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 846, November 17, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Section 39.306, F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 39.201, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 39.3065, F.S.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> The Department of Children and Families, 2017 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 846, November 17, 2017.

of Representatives, and to the Governor no later than January 31 of each year the sheriffs are receiving general appropriations to provide child protective investigations.<sup>9</sup>

**Numbers of Investigations<sup>10</sup>**

The following table shows the number of child protective investigations performed by each sheriffs’ office and the department over a three year period.

County Sheriff	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16
	Number of Investigations	Number of Investigations	Number of Investigations
<b>Broward</b>	13,509	14,293	13,785
<b>Hillsborough</b>	11,539	11,686	11,913
<b>Manatee</b>	4,125	4,087	4,265
<b>Pasco</b>	5,115	5,261	5,462
<b>Pinellas</b>	9,365	9,338	9,100
<b>Seminole</b>	4,007	3,967	4,016
<b>All Sheriffs</b>	<b>47,660</b>	<b>48,632</b>	<b>48,541</b>
<b>Department</b>	<b>136,212</b>	<b>137,872</b>	<b>142,680</b>

**Performance**

The DCF and sheriffs generally use similar investigative processes and procedures, although the higher level of funding for the sheriffs results in their investigators having greater resources than typically available to the DCF investigators. Due to their law enforcement affiliation, child abuse investigators working for sheriffs also generally have greater access to training and specialists, as well as enhanced cooperation and community respect not always afforded to DCF investigators.<sup>11</sup> The additional resources available to sheriffs’ offices enhanced their investigators’ ability to perform job duties and the offices ability to attract and retain experienced investigators. Sheriffs:

- Have slightly lower overall investigator caseloads;
- Tend to have more investigative aides and support staff positions;
- Provide vehicles for investigators;
- Provide investigator uniforms;
- Provide additional equipment to investigators;
- Provide supplies for children awaiting placement, including diapers, formula, food, and clothes;
- Have well-equipped visitation rooms with furniture, rugs, toys, television, games, kitchens, and bathrooms to provide children with a comfortable and safe environment after removal, further enabling investigators to perform their job more easily;

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Data provided by Senate Appropriations professional staff.

<sup>11</sup> The Florida Legislature, Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Research Memorandum, *Sheriff’s Offices Have Advantages for Conducting Child Abuse Investigations, but Quality Cannot be Directly Compared to DCF*, February 26, 2010.

- Provide investigators with office space either in the sheriff’s office or collocated with or near community-based care lead agencies, which facilitates communication between supervisors and investigators and enhances accountability; and
- Often provide higher salaries for investigators, which enhances morale and also contributes to lower turnover. In addition to higher salaries, sheriffs’ child protective investigators are normally awarded merit and cost-of-living raises.<sup>12</sup>

Child protective investigation units administered by sheriffs’ offices also have advantages that are not entirely due to their higher state funding. Because sheriff’s offices are law enforcement agencies, they can provide protective investigators with access to training and resource specialists, and a higher degree of cooperation with local law enforcement agencies and the community.<sup>13</sup>

However, the higher funding and other advantages enjoyed by the sheriff’s offices does not appear to result in better outcomes.<sup>14</sup> The table below shows the difference in performance between the department and the sheriffs’ offices on the measure of non-recurrence of maltreatment within six months of case closure. The federal Administration for Children and Families non-recurrence standard is 94.6%.<sup>15</sup>

County Sheriff	Non-Recurrence of Maltreatment Within Six Months of Case Closure							
	August 2015	September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015	January 2016	February 2016	March 2016
<b>Broward</b>	94.96	93.90	95.15	93.58	93.59	93.08	94.39	91.07
<b>Hillsborough</b>	95.88	97.03	95.32	97.13	95.77	92.11	95.81	97.01
<b>Manatee</b>	95.45	93.75	96.23	96.88	96.40	91.80	93.26	91.60
<b>Pasco</b>	97.06	94.62	96.09	96.40	98.41	90.83	97.70	97.22
<b>Pinellas</b>	92.21	91.38	94.39	92.89	93.00	95.00	93.98	90.77
<b>Seminole</b>	93.78	89.13	93.26	91.43	92.90	93.37	91.85	93.72
<b>Sheriff Average</b>	<b>94.89</b>	<b>93.30</b>	<b>95.07</b>	<b>94.71</b>	<b>95.01</b>	<b>92.82</b>	<b>94.50</b>	<b>93.56</b>
<b>Department Average</b>	<b>95.01</b>	<b>96.20</b>	<b>94.89</b>	<b>95.24</b>	<b>95.93</b>	<b>94.75</b>	<b>94.31</b>	<b>96.11</b>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> The Florida Legislature, Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Research Memorandum, *Sheriffs’ Offices and DCF Perform Similarly in Conducting Child Protective Investigations*, May 28, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> The Department of Children and Families, Florida Sheriffs Performing Child Protective Investigations, Annual Program Performance Evaluation Report, Fiscal Year 2015-2016, available at:

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/LegislativeMandatedRpts/AnnualSheriffPerfRptFY15-16.pdf>. (last visited February 2, 2018).

**Cost**

The following table provides a 3-year funding history that includes total funding amounts and cost per investigation for each of the six counties where the sheriff provides child protective investigations and the department.<sup>16</sup>

County Sheriff	FY 2013-14		FY 2014-15		FY 2015-16	
	Funding	Cost Per Investigation	Funding	Cost Per Investigation	Funding	Cost Per Investigation
<b>Broward</b>	\$14,565,620	\$1,078	\$15,054,474	\$1,053	\$15,054,474	\$1,130
<b>Hillsborough</b>	\$12,254,683	\$1,062	\$13,430,952	\$1,149	\$13,430,952	\$1,127
<b>Manatee</b>	\$3,760,532	\$912	\$4,719,787	\$1,155	\$4,719,787	\$1,107
<b>Pasco</b>	\$5,591,619	\$1,093	\$6,241,374	\$1,186	\$6,241,374	\$1,143
<b>Pinellas</b>	\$10,240,024	\$1,093	\$11,828,667	\$1,267	\$11,828,667	\$1,300
<b>Seminole</b>	\$3,563,114	\$889	\$4,537,154	\$1,144	\$4,537,154	\$1,130
<b>All Sheriffs</b>	\$49,975,592		\$55,812,408		\$55,812,408	
<b>Department</b>	\$111,777,077	\$821	\$133,870,553	\$971	\$138,028,685	\$967

**III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

**Section 1** amends s. 39.3065, F.S., relating to sheriffs of certain counties conducting child protective investigative services, to authorize the Walton County Sheriff to assume responsibility for the investigations beginning with the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

**Section 2** provides an effective date of upon becoming law.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

<sup>16</sup> Data provided by Senate Appropriations professional staff.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

The Walton County sheriff's office may incur additional costs due to the transition, over and above the funding provided by the DCF, however, the costs are expected to be minimal.<sup>17</sup>

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill requires the Walton County Sheriff's Office to assume responsibility for child protective investigations. The bill does not provide any funding for grants to offset the costs to be incurred by the sheriff's office.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:****VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 39.3065 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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<sup>17</sup> The Department of Children and Families, 2018 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 1092, February 27, 2017.