

Committee on Children JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6640

AN ACT CONCERNING HOME VISITS AND EVALUATIONS BY THE

Title: COMMISSIONER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Vote Date: 2/28/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/16/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Committee on Children.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill is to ensure that in-person visits are conducted instead of virtual or telephonic visits in certain circumstances.

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency DCF began conducting virtual home visits as a precaution to ensure safety of staff during the emergency. This bill prohibits these virtual visits for certain circumstances such as child is under the age of six and not enrolled in school or being educated at home or in a private school. This is to ensure in cases of child distress that there is a viable presence for the child. Virtual visits do not allow for a full view of the home and of the dynamics of the family and this bill insures that in-person visits are the priority.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

State of Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate, Acting Child Advocate, Sarah Healy Eagan, supports this bill and believes that home visits by DCF should be conducted in person. However, they add, in-person visits should be required in following circumstances:

1. DCF investigations
2. Cases against DCF ongoing treatment unit, family is assessed as moderate or high risk or where DCF has instituted a "safety plan."
3. Cases involving safety-related "family arrangement."
4. "Child in placement" visits. (Foster care, group homes, etc.)
5. Any case involving a nonverbal child, a non-school age child, or a verbally impaired child.

State of Connecticut Office of the Probate Court Administrator, Probate Court Administrator, Beverly Streit-Kefalas, requests that the in person visit requirements or home investigations be required with any visit, evaluation, or investigation which address placement of a child or adjudication of parental or guardianship rights in the Probate Courts.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, Senior Public Policy Advisor, Jeff Shaw, supports this bill and believes that in-person visits should always be priority over virtual ones. That being said, with their understanding DCF is still conducting virtually meetings, in lieu of this, they suggest that DCF track and share data with OCA on the use of in-person vs remote methods of home visitations.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Christian Talarski

Date: 3/9/23