

DCF LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



March 8, 2023

TESTIMONY OF

Deanne Dinkel, Director Safety & Thriving Families and Performance Improvement
Kansas Department for Children and Families

TESTIMONY ON

Proponent Written Only Testimony HB 2034

Chair

Senator Gossage

Vice Chair

Senator Erickson

Ranking Minority

Senator Pettey

and

Members of the Committee

SUMMARY OF ISSUE & DCF POSITION

Chairwoman Gossage and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent on HB 2034. House Bill 2034 proposes changes to the Child in Need of Care (CINC) statutes K.S.A. 38-2202 and 2226 to create a program in the department of health and environment to provide a Child abuse review and evaluation referral (CARE referral) process for trained CARE provider to perform CARE exams of and provides medical diagnosis and treatment to a child alleged to be a victim of abuse or neglect. CARE referrals will be submitted to CARE network by DCF upon assignment by the secretary of an investigation of physical abuse or physical neglect for children five years of age or younger.

CONTEXT & HISTORY

A Safe-Care Kansas pilot program was implemented by DCF in Johnson and Wyandotte counties in October 2021. This pilot program with a budget of \$51,000 is estimated to provide about 500 reviews annually and is federally funded through a Children's Justice Act grant for a term of one year with up to two additional one-year renewals possible. It allows for DCF Child Protection Specialist to submit a medical review referral for a child three years of age or younger who is alleged as a victim of physical abuse or physical neglect. The pilot has provided opportunities to build relationships and engagement with medical professionals to seek medical consult and advice regarding child abuse and neglect concerns.

In July of 2022, the Safe-Care Kansas program was implemented by DCF and expanded to three additional counties to include Douglas, Leavenworth, Atchison and Johnson, Wyandotte counties. Between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022, there have been 197 Safe-Care referrals made throughout the five counties.

Statewide during State Fiscal Year (SFY) 22, there were 38,870 reports assigned for response by a child protection specialist, of which over two-thirds (69%) are assigned for investigation of alleged abuse or neglect. Of the reports assigned for investigation for children 18 and younger, 31% are assigned for physical abuse; 24% for emotional abuse; 18% for lack of supervision; 8% physical neglect; and medical neglect is 5%. In Kansas, about 94% of reports of alleged child abuse or neglect are unsubstantiated. Of the victims substantiated or affirmed for abuse or neglect, 38% are ages 5 and under. Nationally, in FY 2020, of all child fatalities 83% involved children five and younger. (NCANDS data.)

EFFECT OF LEGISLATION & FISCAL IMPACT

This act requires DCF statewide to make a CARE referral for a child five years of age or younger when there is an allegation of physical abuse or physical neglect. A CARE referral may be made for other investigations for other aged children with an allegation of physical abuse, emotional abuse, medical neglect, or physical neglect.

Involvement by a network of experts in child abuse pediatrics results in improved assessments related to alleged child abuse or neglect and positive impact to planning for supports and services for immediate and lasting safety and health for children, their caregivers, and families. The review network increases DCF, caregiver and family knowledge of any mechanisms of child abuse injuries, health, and safety. The program of CARE providers and its network of medical training support and mentoring across Kansas will have positive impact statewide.

There is no fiscal impact to DCF.

DCF POSITION

DCF is supportive of this legislation with experience in providing Kansas Safe-Care referrals for five counties for children five and under and would ask this committee to pass HB 2034 favorably.