

ASSEMBLY, No. 4638

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 216th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 29, 2015

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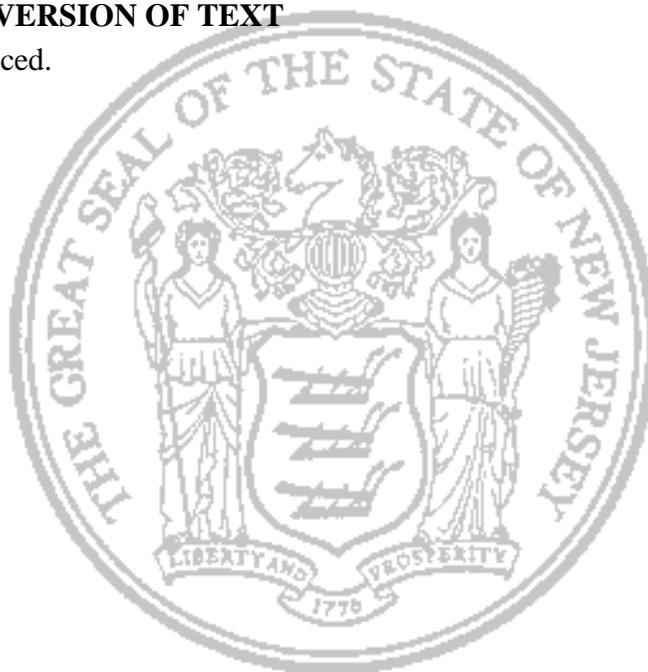
District 28 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Requires DCPD to implement policies and procedures to ensure caseworker safety.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/17/2015)

1 AN ACT concerning caseworker safety and supplementing Title 30
2 of the Revised Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. a. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the
8 Division of Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of
9 Children and Families shall implement policies and procedures to
10 ensure the safety of every caseworker employed by the division.

11 The policies and procedures shall address issues of safety in the
12 event that a caseworker receives a threat of violence from a client or
13 is presented with a potentially dangerous situation while working in
14 a local office, investigating a report of child abuse or neglect in the
15 field, or making an emergency removal of a child pursuant to
16 section 8 of P.L.1974, c.119 (C.9:6-8.28).

17 b. In order to ensure the safety of a caseworker in a local office,
18 the division shall require that:

19 (1) a Human Services police officer or State trooper is assigned
20 to every building where a local office is located to provide security
21 and assistance to the caseworkers assigned to the office;

22 (2) each local office is equipped with a metal detector or metal
23 detector wands to be operated by the Human Services police officer
24 or State trooper assigned to the office;

25 (3) a panic button be installed in every meeting room in which a
26 caseworker meets with a client; and

27 (4) at least one meeting room or conference room in each local
28 office is equipped with a two-way mirror located to allow for the
29 observation of the meeting or conference room by the Human
30 Service police officer or State trooper assigned to the office.

31 c. In order to ensure the safety of a caseworker while
32 investigating a report of child abuse or neglect in the field or
33 making an emergency removal of a child pursuant to section 8 of
34 P.L.1974, c.119 (C.9:6-8.28), the division shall require that:

35 (1) a caseworker assigned to a home visit is accompanied by
36 another caseworker if:

37 (a) a client or a member of the client's family has threatened or
38 harassed the assigned caseworker in the past;

39 (b) the client or a member of the client's family has a history of
40 violence either documented by a criminal record or by threats of
41 violence against the division or a division employee; or

42 (c) the caseworker believes the home or the surrounding
43 environment is unsafe;

44 (2) at the request of a caseworker or the caseworker's supervisor,
45 the Human Services police officer or State trooper assigned to the
46 caseworker's local office accompanies and assists the caseworker
47 when conducting an investigation in a high crime area or making an
48 emergency removal; and

1 (3) the Human Services police officer or State trooper assigned
2 to a local office is available to a caseworker within 30 minutes of a
3 request to accompany and assist a caseworker pursuant to paragraph
4 (2) of this subsection, except that in an emergency situation, the
5 officer shall be immediately available to accompany and assist the
6 caseworker.

7 d. Nothing in subparagraph (1) of subsection c. of this section
8 shall be construed to prohibit the division, at the request of a
9 caseworker or the caseworker's supervisor, from requiring that a
10 Human Services police officer or State trooper assigned to the
11 caseworker's local office accompany or assist the caseworker while
12 investigating a report of child abuse or neglect in the field or
13 making an emergency removal of a child, if appropriate; and

14 e. The division shall require that each local office implement a
15 caseworker safety intervention plan. The plan shall, at a minimum:

16 (1) establish specific procedures to follow when a caseworker is
17 faced with, and responding to, a situation that poses a threat to the
18 safety and well-being of the caseworker, whether in the local office,
19 in the field, or when making an emergency removal of a child;

20 (2) specify when to request the assistance of the Human
21 Services police officer or State trooper assigned to the local office
22 and how to initiate such requests; and

23 (3) be posted in a conspicuous place in the local office and a
24 copy of the plan shall be provided to every staff member assigned
25 to that office.

26
27 2. The Department of Children and Families shall adopt rules
28 and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
29 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to effectuate the purposes of
30 this act.

31
32 3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh month
33 next following enactment, except that the commissioner may take
34 any anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be
35 necessary for the implementation of this act.

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38 STATEMENT

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40 This bill requires the Division of Child Protection and
41 Permanency in the Department of Children and Families to
42 implement policies and procedures to ensure the safety of every
43 caseworker employed by the division. The policies and procedures
44 would address issues of safety when a caseworker receives a threat
45 of violence from a client, or is presented with a potentially
46 dangerous situation while working in a local office, investigating a
47 report of child abuse or neglect in the field, or making an
48 emergency removal of a child pursuant to section 8 of P.L.1974,
49 c.119 (C.9:6-8.28).

1 Under the provisions of the bill, in order to ensure the safety of a
2 caseworker in a local office, the division would require that: a
3 Human Services police officer or State trooper be assigned to every
4 building where a local office is located to provide security and
5 assistance to the caseworkers assigned to the office; each local
6 office be equipped with a metal detector or metal detector wands
7 operated by the Human Services police officer or State trooper
8 assigned to the local office; a panic button be installed in every
9 meeting room in which a caseworker meets with a client; and at
10 least one meeting or conference room in each local office be
11 equipped with a two-way mirror located to allow for the observation
12 of the room by the Human Services police officer or State trooper
13 assigned to the office.

14 In order to ensure the safety of a caseworker when investigating
15 a report of child abuse or neglect in the field or when making an
16 emergency removal of a child, the division would require: a
17 caseworker assigned to a home visit to be accompanied by another
18 caseworker if certain conditions delineated in the bill are met; at the
19 request of a caseworker or the caseworker's supervisor, the Human
20 Services police officer or State trooper assigned to the caseworker's
21 local office would accompany and assist the caseworker when
22 conducting an investigation in a high crime area or making an
23 emergency removal; and the Human Services police officer or State
24 trooper assigned to a local office would be available to a
25 caseworker within 30 minutes of a request to accompany and assist
26 the caseworker, except that in an emergency situation, the officer or
27 trooper would be immediately available.

28 The provisions of the bill stipulate that when a caseworker,
29 investigating a report of child abuse or neglect in the field or
30 making an emergency removal of a child, is assigned to a home
31 visit and is accompanied by another caseworker, nothing would
32 prohibit the division, at the request of the caseworker or the
33 caseworker's supervisor, from requiring that a Human Services
34 police office or State trooper assigned to the caseworker's local
35 office accompany or assist the caseworker while on the home visit,
36 if appropriate.

37 The bill also requires that each local office implement a
38 caseworker safety intervention plan. The plan would, at a
39 minimum: establish specific procedures to follow when a
40 caseworker is facing or responding to a situation that poses a threat
41 to the safety and well-being of the caseworker, whether in the local
42 office, in the field, or when making an emergency removal of a
43 child; specify when to request the assistance of the Human Services
44 police officer or State trooper assigned to the caseworker's local
45 office and how to initiate such requests; and be posted in a
46 conspicuous place in the local office and a copy of the plan would
47 be provided to every staff member assigned to the office.