

FISCAL NOTE TO

[Third Reprint]
SENATE, No. 419

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 4, 1997

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill No. 419 (3R) of 1996 establishes a 21-month "Domestic Violence Resource Center Demonstration Program." The Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) in the Department of Human Services (DHS) is to establish three domestic violence resource centers in three different counties to provide various evaluation, treatment and outreach services for persons who have been found guilty of committing an act of domestic violence and ordered by the court to receive domestic violence counseling and services. The bill establishes an 11-member Domestic Violence Resource Center Advisory Committee and directs DYFS to conduct an independent, professional evaluation of the program to be completed no later than three months prior to the legislation's expiration.

The bill appropriates \$750,000 to DHS to be used as follows:

- C Establish three resource centers - \$515,000
- C Outreach services - \$75,000
- C Evaluation - \$60,000
- C DYFS administrative support - \$100,000

Each person ordered by the court to receive treatment and services from the center or any person who receives such treatment and services is to pay a \$200 evaluation fee to the center and is required to pay for counseling and to pay all fees associated with a person's use of a referral agency. However, no person shall be excluded from the program due to an inability to pay and the center may waive all or part of the evaluation fee based on a person's ability to pay. Any funds raised by this fee are to be used to support the center's various activities.

Agency Comments:

DHS and the Office of Management and Budget have not provided any fiscal information on the legislation. The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) has indicated that a maximum of \$346,600 in revenues might be generated during the 21-month period.

Office of Legislative Services Comments:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) is not able to determine the adequacy of the \$750,000 appropriation.

In implementing the legislation, DHS would issue a Request for Proposal to:

- C Establish three resource centers;
- C Provide outreach services; and
- C Conduct an independent evaluation of the program.

Once bids are received from interested parties, the adequacy of the individual allocations can be better determined. However, the \$515,000 allocation to establish three centers (roughly \$171,000 per facility) may be insufficient to establish the centers and to enable the centers to provide all the services enumerated in the legislation, as there were nearly 25,400 arrests for domestic violence in 1994, though the number that are found guilty is not readily known.

The \$100,000 allocated to DYFS appears high as DYFS' involvement is limited to selecting providers to operate the three centers, provide outreach services and conduct an independent evaluation. These activities are routinely conducted by DYFS with existing administrative staff.

The AOC has estimated that the \$200 evaluation fee may generate a maximum of \$346,600 over the 21-month period. Though the methodology used by the AOC to estimate the amount of revenue a \$200 evaluation fee may generate is reasonable, it is highly unlikely that the \$200 evaluation fee will generate as much as the AOC estimates because the \$200 fee may be waived for persons who cannot afford the fee and because the \$200 fee may be reduced depending on a person's income. As the clients to be served by the centers may not have significant financial resources, it is likely that the \$200 evaluation fee will either be waived or reduced. Even if an evaluation fee (regardless of the amount) is to be paid, collection may be difficult given the type of clients the centers will be dealing with. Therefore, AOC's revenue estimates appear to overstate the total amount of revenues that may be available to the three centers over the 21-month period.

Finally, clients are required to pay for counseling and to pay all fees associated with their use of a referral agency; however, clients may not be denied services because of an inability to pay. The amount of revenues that might be generated due to this provision cannot be determined as service fees clients may have to pay for services and the number of clients who will have this fee waived or reduced is not known.

This fiscal note has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.