

Fiscal Note

BILL # HB 2402

TITLE: DCS; investigations; interviews; recording

SPONSOR: Gress

STATUS: As Introduced

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Description

The bill would require the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to record investigative interviews with children.

Estimated Impact

We estimate that the bill would generate an initial one-time cost of \$3.5 million and an annual cost between \$1 million and \$4.9 million. The ongoing cost would ultimately depend on how the bill is implemented, including whether audio or video recordings are used and whether transcription services are required.

Our one-time \$3.5 million cost estimate is based on DCS' analysis of the funding needed to support upgrades to the department's case management system, Guardian, to accommodate video or audio. DCS also believes that the ongoing cost would be \$4.9 million (the higher end of the JLBC range). The \$4.9 million estimate assumes that recordings would be done on video and that they would need to generate transcripts for all recordings. If the recordings are done on audio and transcripts are produced only when requested, the ongoing amount could be as low as \$1 million (the low end of the JLBC range). This amount would be on an ongoing basis and fund transcription services for the new recordings.

Analysis

DCS is required by law to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect by conducting interviews with alleged victims. Under current department policy, we understand that DCS caseworkers record written notes from their interviews with children, but most interviews are not recorded via audio or video.

The bill would require the department to record any investigative interview via either audiotape or videotape. DCS reports that Guardian, its case management system, currently cannot support video and audio. Based on an estimate from the agency's vendor, DCS estimates the cost to build the system would be \$3.5 million on a one-time basis.

Regarding the cost of equipment and data storage, DCS estimates that roughly 30,000 investigative interactions with children occur monthly, with each interview yielding an average 1 GB of data. Based on this data, 360,000 GB of storage, or 360 terabytes, would be needed to accommodate the recordings over the course of a year. DCS estimates these storage costs at \$1 million initially, with an additional \$1 million in each subsequent year.

We believe the cost of storing data to be overstated if DCS opts for audio-only recordings. Based on online materials from Stanford University, 1 GB can usually accommodate between 30 minutes-2 hours of video depending on video quality. However, it can store approximately 16 hours of audio. Audio-only recordings, therefore, would reduce the amount of GB storage required.

Finally, the Department states its current policy is to produce a transcript when there is an audio or video recording. Based on current rates with DCS' contracted vendor for transcription services as well as the number of annual investigations performed, DCS estimates the total cost of transcribing the recordings would be \$4.9 million on an annual basis.

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We think the cost of producing transcriptions could be lower depending on implementation. The bill language does not require the Department to provide transcriptions. The cost would depend on the extent to which DCS needs to produce transcriptions for court proceedings.

Local Government Impact

None

2/9/24