

JLBC Fiscal Note

BILL # HB 2322

SPONSOR: Gress

PREPARED BY: Maggie Rucker

TITLE: DCS; investigations; interviews; recording

STATUS: As Introduced

Description

The bill would require the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to record investigative interviews with children. The bill contains a conditional enactment clause stipulating that the bill only becomes effective if federal legislation is enacted by December 31, 2026, that provides grants to states requiring recordings of child welfare interviews.

Estimated Impact

We estimate that the bill would generate an initial one-time cost of \$3.5 million and an annual cost of between \$1 million and \$4.9 million, based on an agency estimate from 2024. We have asked the agency for an updated estimate, but the agency has not yet responded. 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.

Because the bill would only become effective if federal grants are made available for this purpose, any of the costs outlined above may potentially be offset by the provision of grant award monies.

Analysis

Our estimate assumes the following:

1. DCS is required by law to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect by conducting interviews with alleged victims. Under current department policy, 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.
2. 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.
3. The department's current policy is to produce a transcript when there is an audio or video recording. Based on rates with DCS's 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. 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.

2/12/26