
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the malama ohana
2 working group established by Act 86, Session Laws of Hawaii
3 2023, was tasked with recommending transformative changes to the
4 State's existing child welfare system. For fifteen months,
5 seventeen members of the working group representing those
6 serving youth, as well as youth, families, and community members
7 throughout the State, opened their hearts and listened deeply to
8 the stories of lived experience in the child welfare system.
9 They worked to develop recommendations to establish a child
10 welfare system that is trauma-informed, sustains a community-
11 based partnership, and responds to the needs of children and
12 families in the system and the community. The result of this
13 work was a powerful vision for transforming how Hawaii supports
14 families and protects children.

15 Among the many recommendations to move toward this vision
16 was to strengthen the capacity of the child welfare services
17 branch to manage cases that are complicated by domestic violence



1 experienced by a parent or children in the family. Where there
2 is domestic violence, the child welfare services system must
3 differentiate between parents who are cooperating with the
4 system from those using the system to punish or continue abusing
5 their partner.

6 The legislature further finds that child welfare services
7 social workers support and advocate for families and children
8 experiencing domestic violence through counseling, as well as
9 connecting clients with legal and community resources that
10 support safety and stability. One such resource is provided
11 through a one-year contract between the department of human
12 services and Domestic Violence Services for Families, a non-
13 profit that provides referred clients with individual and group
14 education, counseling, safety and service plans, supervised
15 visitation, parenting skills, and temporary restraining order
16 assistance, if needed.

17 In 2024, the child welfare services branch received
18 approximately five hundred one reports involving children
19 experiencing domestic violence, with one hundred eight of these
20 reports identifying confirmed child victims. To assist the
21 child welfare services branch with better detecting and



1 servicing the growing number of cases of domestic violence,
2 three new initiatives will need to be implemented.

3 The first initiative will be achieved through specialized
4 comprehensive domestic violence training for all child welfare
5 services branch staff by function of each different type of
6 staff: intake, assessment, case management, and permanency.
7 Intake and case management staff will be trained to do universal
8 screening to measure the level of exposure to and involvement in
9 violence in the home and community, as well as other risk
10 factors. Assessment and permanency social workers will be
11 trained to manage domestic violence cases with skills in
12 assessing child and family needs, creating safety plans,
13 gathering witness declarations, and requesting medical records.

14 The second initiative is to create a tracking system to
15 monitor identified domestic violence cases and report on the
16 numbers, what specialized services were offered and used, and
17 the dispositions of the cases. This will help ensure domestic
18 violence cases are being monitored, identify patterns of
19 behavior that may be used to predict risk, and provide data to
20 inform policies for effective service delivery.



1 The third initiative is to have automatic referral of
2 domestic violence identified cases to conduct joint case
3 planning with a non-profit specialist in domestic violence. The
4 specialists should, wherever possible, be located on-site at the
5 child welfare services branch offices to be more of a presence
6 and to work with the staff right when they are needed. The
7 collaborative work will build systemic capacity within the child
8 welfare workforce to investigate domestic violence and to
9 support and engage with families during the child welfare
10 services intervention.

11 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds for the
12 department of human services to contract with a non-profit
13 specializing in domestic violence to provide training and staff
14 to be housed on-site in child welfare services branch offices to
15 support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic
16 violence within a case.

17 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and
20 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
21 year 2026-2027 for the department of human services to contract



1 with a non-profit specializing in domestic violence to provide
2 training and staff to be housed on-site in child welfare
3 services branch offices to support all aspects of screening for
4 and addressing domestic violence within a case.

5 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department
6 of human services for the purposes of this Act.

7 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Department of Human Services; Child Welfare Services; Domestic Violence; Training; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates funds for the Department of Human Services to contract with a non-profit specializing in domestic violence to provide training and staff to be housed on-site in Child Welfare Services Branch offices to support all aspects of screening for and addressing domestic violence within a case. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

