

# Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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## *FISCAL NOTE*

Date: April 23, 2015

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This fiscal note was originally prepared when S.9 was in the Senate. The amendment recommended by the House Committee on Government Operations removes one of the duties of the Child Care Advocate regarding administrative, judicial or other remedies on behalf of persons involved in the child protection system; and requires the Agency of Administration to reallocate one existing position and use existing financial resources to support the position and activities of the Child Protection Advocate. Please note that the amendment as drafted does not establish the position, which would need to occur, with transfer and convert language. The cost estimate for the Office of Child Care Advocate is detailed below and reflects the same estimate that was used in the Senate.

### **S.9- Sec. X Office of The Child Protection Advocate (House Committee on Government Operations amendment, draft version 2)**

This section creates a new Office of the Child Protection Advocate within the Agency of Administration.

This creates the position of the Child Protection Advocate and lists the required duties and authorities of the office. This is an appointed position for a term of four years.

The salary for this position will reflect the workload and scope of activities to be managed by the position. The estimated range of salary is \$65,000 to \$100,000 with a mid-range of \$82,500. The additional cost for FICA and benefits including retirement are estimated at 40% for a total position cost of \$91,000 to \$140,000 with a mid-range of \$115,500.

The difficulty comes in estimating the additional staff and/or contracting budget and corresponding operating costs that this office may require, and recognition that initially these costs may be relatively small but as the office and its functions mature the demand for more staff is likely to grow. The difficulty in making this estimate is due to:

1 - The caseload of complaints of persons involved in the child protection system is unknown and likely to be highly variable year to year. It is not specified when the advocate will become involved, will it be concurrent or after other existing AHS processes such as the Human Service Board.

2- The scope of training services this office is to provide is not limited. Is intended to be a single point of training for DCF staff replacing existing training, augmentation to the training that is currently provided or to provide input and approval of training programs both in AHS but also criminal justice agencies?

3- It is unclear how this new office may impact the current practice and operations in AHS or other agencies and department of the state.

With greater specificity about the intent related to these issues, a possible minimum budget range for this new office is \$220,000 to \$250,000. This is comparable to the VT Labor Relation Board which has one Executive Director and one part time staff person.