

# Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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## *FISCAL NOTE*

Date: Updated April 16, 2021

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### **H.265 An act relating to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate – Draft 10.3**

*As amended by the House Committee on Human Services*

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2022/H.265>

#### Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate (Sec. 1)

Sec. 1 would establish the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate for the purpose of advancing the interests and welfare of all Vermont’s children and youths receiving services from the Department for Children and Families (DCF) in a manner that addresses racial and social equity, including providing transparent and impartial oversight of the child protection and juvenile justice systems and promoting reforms necessary to better serve Vermont’s children, youths, and families. The Office would act independently of any State agency in performing its duties.

The Office would be directed by the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate, which would be a full-time exempt position within State government. The Advocate would be appointed by the Governor (from among applicants recommended by the Oversight Commission) and be subject to confirmation by the Senate. The office would also have a Deputy Advocate. The estimated ranges for salaries and benefits are as following:

| Job                               | Salary Est.          | Benefits & FICA Est. <sup>1</sup> | Other | Total Gross Est.     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| Child, Youth, and Family Advocate | \$75,000 - \$100,000 | \$15,000 - \$33,000               | N/A   | \$90,000 - \$133,000 |
| Deputy Advocate                   | \$60,000 - \$80,000  | \$15,000 - \$31,000               | N/A   | \$75,000 - \$111,000 |

There would also be administrative expenses associated with the office which include costs for equipment, travel, information technology and telecom, purchased services and other expenses which could cost as much as \$10,000.00. Additionally, costs for space can range from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 annually depending on the size and location of the space. To the extent the office would need further administrative resources or personnel, the Advocate would propose this in future budget requests to the Legislature.

#### Oversight Commission on Children, Youth and Families (Sec. 1)

Sec. 1 of the bill would also create the Oversight Commission on Children, Youths, and Families to provide guidance and recommendations to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family. The Commission would have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Agency of Administration (AOA). In addition to the Executive Director of Racial Equity, the Commission

would have 2 legislators and 6 other members, all of whom would be eligible to receive per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as allowed under the statutes for up to 4 meetings per year. It is estimated that per diems and reimbursement for the non-legislative members would cost approximately \$3,000.00 annually. Per diems and reimbursements for legislative members would be nominal and could be absorbed within the existing legislative budget.

*Fiscal Impact – Sec. 1: Est. FY 2022: \$3,000.00 for per diems and reimbursement*

Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council (Sec.1)

Sec. 1 of the bill would also create the Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council, to provide advice and guidance to the office regarding administration and operations of the office. The Advocate would appoint nine stakeholders who have been impacted by child welfare services provided by DCF and would be eligible to receive per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as allowed under the statutes for up to 12 meetings annually. It is estimated per diems and reimbursements would cost approximately \$13,000 annually.

*Fiscal Impact – Sec. 1:*

- *Est. FY 2022: Assuming a January 1, 2022 start date for the office (based on the effective dates in Sec. 9), we estimate year one costs could range between \$99,000.00 and \$140,000.00. Fully annualized, costs for the office as envisioned in this bill could cost between \$200,500.00 and \$292,500.00.*

| <b>Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate</b>            |                        |                         |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Estimated Budget (Range)</b>                                  | <b>Low</b>             | <b>High</b>             |
| Advocate - wages and benefits                                    | \$90,000               | \$133,000               |
| Deputy Advocate - wages and benefits                             | \$75,000               | \$111,000               |
| Rented property / space  | \$10,000               | \$20,000                |
| Other (equipment, travel, IT/telecom, purchased services, other) | \$10,000               | \$10,000                |
| Per Diems for Advisory Council Members                           | \$3,000                | \$5,000                 |
| Per Diems for Commission Members                                 | \$12,500               | \$13,500                |
| <i>Annualized</i>  | <i>\$200,500</i>       | <i>\$292,500</i>        |
| <b><i>Jan.1, 2022 effective date for Appropriation</i></b>       | <b><i>\$99,000</i></b> | <b><i>\$140,000</i></b> |

Sec. 7 - Appropriation

Sec. 7 would appropriate **\$120,000.00** to the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate from the General Funds in FY 2022 for carrying out the purposes of this act.