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**Act No. 154 (H.661). An act relating to child abuse and neglect investigation and substantiation standards and procedures**

**Subjects: Human services; Child Protection Registry; child and family welfare; investigations**

This act modernizes the Department for Children and Families (DCF) investigation and substantiations standards and procedures when handling complaints related to child abuse and neglect allegations. Specifically, this act raises the evidentiary standards to substantiate an allegation to a preponderance of the evidence standard and enhances timelines to respond to investigation and substantiation reviews. Additionally, the act requires DCF to use best efforts to obtain the person's current mailing and email address so that it can better effectuate investigation, substantiation, review, and appeal notifications, as well as maintaining records of any such notifications. The act also aims to ensure broader disclosure of records to individuals requesting reviews or appeals. Further, administrative reviews may be held electronically upon request or during a declared state of emergency. The act also mandates the adoption of rules related to placement on the Child Protection Registry (Registry), standards for determining child protection level designations, and for notice and appeal procedures for alternatives to conduct substantiation. Finally, the act requires DCF to author reports creating a model policy related to confidentially storing child abuse and neglect investigation interviews and related to substantiation determinations, categories, and thresholds for Registry placement.

Effective Date: September 1, 2024