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S.239

An act relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING WORKING GROUP

(a) There is created the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group for the purpose of examining the existing statutes and the Department for Children and Families' rules and policies regarding mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect of a child and recommending changes to modernize them and reflect current best practices.

(b) The Working Group shall be composed of the following members:

(1) the Director of the Office of Professional Regulation or designee;

(2) the Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services or designee;

(3) a co-executive director of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence or designee;

(4) the Attorney General or designee;

(5) the Chief Administrative Judge or designee;

(6) two members from the Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Division;

1 (7) the Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont or designee;

2 and

3 (8) the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Advocate.

4 (c) In conducting its work, the Working Group shall consult with
5 stakeholders, including:

6 (1) Vermont Children’s Alliance and representation from Child
7 Advocacy Centers;

8 (2) the Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs;

9 (3) KidSafe Collaborative;

10 (4) Voices for Vermont’s Children;

11 (5) Vermont Parent Representation Center;

12 (6) Disability Rights Vermont;

13 (7) medical partners, such as the University of Vermont’s Child Safe
14 Program; and

15 (8) individuals with lived experience as child victims of abuse and
16 neglect.

17 (d) On or before January 15, 2027, the Working Group shall report its
18 findings and any recommended legislative proposal to the House Committee
19 on Human Services, Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, and Senate and
20 House Committees on Judiciary.

1 (1) Any recommendations should remain consistent with federal
2 requirements under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA),
3 which establishes minimum standards related to state definitions of abuse and
4 neglect, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, and
5 emotional maltreatment.

6 (2) To promote efficiency and avoid duplicative work, the Working
7 Group shall leverage the work of the Children’s Justice Act Task Force and the
8 Vermont Citizens Advisory Board (VCAB), which serves as Vermont’s
9 CAPTA citizen review panel.

10 (3) The Working Group shall consider best practices from other states in
11 development of its recommendations.

12 (e) The Working Group shall have the administrative, technical, and legal
13 assistance of the Department for Children and Families.

14 (1) The Working Group shall convene its first meeting on or before
15 August 15, 2026.

16 (2) The Working Group shall elect a chair at its first meeting.

17 (3) Five members shall constitute a quorum for meeting purposes.

18 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

19 This act shall take effect on passage.