

By: Representative Warren

To: Public Health and Human
Services; Judiciary A

HOUSE BILL NO. 778

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-1-55, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 EXTEND THE DATE OF REPEAL FROM JULY 1, 2006, TO JULY 1, 2008, ON
3 THIS SECTION AND SECTIONS 43-21-261, 43-21-353, 43-21-355,
4 43-21-603, 43-27-109, 43-47-7, 93-21-23 AND 97-3-7, MISSISSIPPI
5 CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDE THE STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND
6 SERVICE DELIVERY OF THE OFFICE OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES,
7 PROVIDE THE INSTANCES WHEN A YOUTH'S COURT RECORD MAY BE
8 DISCLOSED, PROVIDE THE DUTY OF CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS TO REPORT
9 SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND TO PROVIDE IMMUNITY FOR SUCH INDIVIDUALS
10 WHO REPORT SUCH ABUSE, PROVIDE THE DISPOSITION HEARING PROCEDURE
11 FOR YOUTH COURT, REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
12 SUPERVISE YOUTH SERVICES WORKERS, PROVIDE THE DUTY OF CERTAIN
13 INDIVIDUALS TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS,
14 PROVIDE IMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OF AN
15 ABUSED INDIVIDUAL IF DONE IN GOOD FAITH AND DESCRIBES CERTAIN
16 CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

18 **SECTION 1.** Section 43-1-55, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
19 amended as follows:

20 43-1-55. (1) The Office of Family and Children's Services
21 shall devise formal social worker standards for employment and
22 service delivery designed to measure the quality of services
23 delivered to clients, as well as the timeliness of services. Each
24 social worker shall be assessed annually by a supervisor who is
25 knowledgeable in the standards promulgated. The standards shall
26 be applicable to all social workers working under the office.

27 (2) The Office of Family and Children's Services shall
28 devise formal standards for child protection specialists of the
29 Department of Human Services who are not licensed social workers.
30 Those standards shall require that:

31 (a) In order to be employed as a child protection
32 specialist, a person must have a bachelor's degree in either
33 psychology, sociology, nursing, criminal justice or a related
34 field, or a graduate degree in either law, psychology, sociology,

35 nursing, criminal justice or a related field. The determination
36 of what is a related field shall be made by certification of the
37 State Personnel Board; and

38 (b) Before a person may provide services as a child
39 protection specialist, the person shall complete four (4) weeks of
40 intensive training provided by the training unit of the Office of
41 Family and Children's Services, and shall take and receive a
42 passing score on the certification test administered by the
43 training unit upon completion of the four-week training. Upon
44 receiving a passing score on the certification test, the person
45 shall be certified as a child protection specialist by the
46 Department of Human Services. Any person who does not receive a
47 passing score on the certification test shall not be employed or
48 maintain employment as a child protection specialist for the
49 department. Further, a person, qualified as a child protection
50 specialist through the procedures set forth above, shall not
51 conduct forensic interviews of children until the specialist
52 receives additional specialized training in child forensic
53 interview protocols and techniques by a course or curriculum
54 approved by the Department of Human Services to be not less than
55 forty (40) hours.

56 (3) For the purpose of providing services in child abuse or
57 neglect cases, youth court proceedings, vulnerable adults cases,
58 and such other cases as designated by the Executive Director of
59 Human Services, the caseworker or service provider may be a child
60 protection specialist whose work is overseen by a licensed social
61 worker.

62 (4) The Department of Human Services and the Office of
63 Family and Children's Services shall seek to employ and use
64 licensed social workers to provide the services of the office, and
65 may employ and use child protection specialists to provide those
66 services only in counties in which there is not a sufficient

67 number of licensed social workers to adequately provide those
68 services in the county.

69 (5) This section and Sections 43-21-261, 43-21-353,
70 43-21-355, 43-21-603, 43-27-109, 43-47-7, 93-21-23 and 97-3-7
71 shall stand repealed on July 1, 2008.

72 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
73 and after July 1, 2006.