

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Judiciary, Division B

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2957

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-1-55, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 DELETE THE REPEALERS ON VARIOUS OTHER SECTIONS OF LAW, INCLUDING
3 SECTION 43-21-261, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES FOR
4 CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE RECORDS OF THE YOUTH COURT; SECTION
5 43-21-353, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH IMPOSES A DUTY TO
6 REPORT A REASONABLE SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT; SECTION
7 43-21-355, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES IMMUNITY TO
8 ANYONE WHO REPORTS IN GOOD FAITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT;
9 SECTION 43-21-603, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH CREATES THE
10 DISPOSITION HEARING PROCEDURES FOR YOUTH COURT; SECTION 93-21-23,
11 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES GOOD FAITH IMMUNITY TO
12 ANYONE REPORTING DOMESTIC ABUSE; AND SECTION 93-3-7, MISSISSIPPI
13 CODE OF 1972, WHICH IS THE CRIMINAL STATUTE CREATING AS OFFENSES
14 THE CRIMES OF SIMPLE AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC ABUSE;
15 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

19 43-1-55. (1) The Office of Family and Children's Services
20 shall devise formal social worker standards for employment and
21 service delivery designed to measure the quality of services
22 delivered to clients, as well as the timeliness of services. Each
23 social worker shall be assessed annually by a supervisor who is
24 knowledgeable in the standards promulgated. The standards shall
25 be applicable to all social workers working under the office.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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69 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
70 and after its passage.