

**Department of Planning and Budget  
2026 General Assembly Session  
State Fiscal Impact Statement**

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**ORIGINAL**

**Bill Number:** HB266

**Patron:** Tata

**Bill Title:** Child abuse and neglect; creates centralized intake and validity determination.

**Bill Summary:** Establishes a centralized intake system for reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect at the Department of Social Services (DSS). Under current law, local departments of social services (LDSS) are responsible for coordinating the intake of reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect and determining the validity of such reports or complaints. The bill designates DSS as the agency responsible for receiving reports and complaints of child abuse or neglect and specifies that DSS shall determine the validity of all such reports and complaints. DSS is further required to forward any valid reports or complaints to the LDSS of jurisdiction for further action. The bill directs any LDSS receiving a report or complaint of child abuse or neglect to immediately forward such report or complaint to the centralized intake system at DSS. The bill also makes technical updates to existing Code language to replace references to the previous LDSS intake model with references to the centralized intake system.

**Budget Amendment Necessary:** No

**Items Impacted:** Item 333

**Explanation:** Although this legislation is expected to result in a significant fiscal impact for the Department of Social Services, general fund appropriation and positions addressing the provisions of this bill were provided in the introduced budget; as such, no additional legislative amendment is necessary.

**Fiscal Summary:** The proposed legislation will require additional positions and significant general fund expenditures on the part of the Department of Social Services (DSS). The impacts in the table below are consistent with appropriation provided to address the provisions of this bill in the introduced budget (Item 333 X). See fiscal analysis for additional information.

**General Fund Expenditure Impact:**

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
DSS (765)	-	\$14,596,414	\$18,080,700	\$18,080,700	\$18,080,700	\$18,080,700
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	<b>\$14,596,414</b>	<b>\$18,080,700</b>	<b>\$18,080,700</b>	<b>\$18,080,700</b>	<b>\$18,080,700</b>

**Position Impact:**

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>	<u>FY2031</u>
DSS (765)	-	132.0	132.0	132.0	132.0	132.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	<b>132.0</b>	<b>132.0</b>	<b>132.0</b>	<b>132.0</b>	<b>132.0</b>

**Fiscal Analysis:** This bill establishes a new organizational structure within the Department of Social Services (DSS) to centrally coordinate intake and determine validity for all child abuse and neglect reports that are

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submitted statewide. DSS will need additional personnel, technological capacities, and supplies for the effective operation of such a system. The fiscal impact outlined in the following analysis is reflective of estimates provided by DSS that were included in the introduced budget.

In FY 2024, 120 local departments of social services (LDSS), the DSS State Hotline, and the Mandated Reporter Portal received a cumulative total of 94,728 reports of child abuse or neglect. DSS reports that call volume is expected to increase in future years, creating a need for additional staff time and attention. The centralized intake system proposed in this legislation is a way for DSS to address this need.

To determine the total number of staff needed to effectively support a centralized intake system, DSS reviewed factors including the current average wait time on the State Hotline, the current average call handling time, and the current average time needed for an LDSS employee to determine report validity. DSS' analysis indicates that 132 full-time (FTE) positions and 67 part-time positions will be necessary to effectively staff a call center for the centralized intake system and comply with the validity determination and referral responsibilities as set forth by the bill. DSS suggests that the positions will comprise the following teams and roles:

- 1 Workforce Manager (FTE)
- 1 Operations Manager (FTE)
- 1 Training Manager (FTE)
- 5 Quality Assurance Specialists (FTE)
- 10 Phone Team Supervisors (FTE)
- 10 Phone Team Work Leaders (FTE)
- 82 Phone Team Specialists (FTE)
- 4 Mandated Reporter Team Supervisors (FTE)
- 2 Mandated Team Work Leaders (FTE)
- 16 Mandated Reporter Specialists (FTE)
- 67 Phone Team Specialists (part-time)

DSS estimates the total cost for all positions listed above at \$14,372,924 the first year (FY 2027) and \$17,857,210 each year thereafter (FY 2028 and ongoing). This estimate includes employee salaries, benefits, and non-personnel operating costs (supplies and equipment). The first year cost is reduced to account for delays in hiring and implementation and assumes staffing costs for three quarters of the fiscal year. Additionally, the first year total also includes one-time costs related to onboarding (estimated at \$5,163 per employee for 132 FTEs) and employee training (estimated at \$1,500 per employee for 132 FTEs and 67 part-time staff). DSS notes that the listed positions will require a baccalaureate degree based on current professional and occupational regulations, and that employee salaries must be in line with those of positions requiring similar qualifications for effective recruitment.

Finally, DSS estimates that an additional \$223,490 will be needed annually beginning in FY 2027 to support information technology needs associated with the centralized intake system. DSS reports that this additional

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funding will be used to support current hotline contracts, critical system enhancements, and expansion of translation services and the existing Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to accommodate additional reports.

The estimates provided by DSS assume that the centralized intake system outlined in the bill will be fully implemented and staffed by the end of Q1 in FY 2027. Any delays in the implementation or hiring process may impact the amount of funding needed for the system in the first year.

**Other:** n/a