



Senate Aging & Youth Committee

Senator Bob Mensch

Chairman

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Summary of House Bill 316, P.N. 324 **Prime Sponsor: Representative Harhart**

A. Synopsis:

Creates a funding mechanism for children's advocacy centers (CACs).

B. Bill Summary:

HB 316 addresses the recommendation of the Task Force on Child Protection that the General Assembly establish a funding mechanism for CACs.

HB 316 amends two sections of the Administrative Code in order to:

- Increase funding for domestic violence and rape victim services, and
- Create a grant program to fund children's advocacy centers.

HB 316 increases the costs paid by criminal defendants by \$5, from \$10 to \$15, in order to provide an additional \$5 to domestic violence and rape victim services which are funded by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW).

HB 316 requires that criminal defendants pay a cost of \$15 for the purpose of funding children's advocacy centers. The money is to be paid to the State Treasurer and deposited in the General Fund.

Under the bill, the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) will administer a grant program which has the purpose of providing funding for the operation of existing CACs and for the establishment of additional children's advocacy centers. In awarding the grants, PCCD must consider:

- The number of children to be served;
- The geographical area to be serviced;
- The scope of services;
- The need for services;
- The availability of expert pediatric medical and mental health services; and
- The amount of funds provided from other sources.

In order to be considered a qualified applicant, PCCD must find that either:

- The applicant is a member of the National Children’s Alliance, the national accrediting body for children’s advocacy centers; or
- In the case of an applicant who is not a member of the National Children’s Alliance:
 - The applicant identifies a region of the Commonwealth it intends to serve;
 - The applicant receives a letter of support from the district attorney of the county and team which is brought together under the Child Protective Services Law to investigate cases of child abuse at the county level; and
 - The applicant intends to apply for membership in the National Children’s Alliance within reasonable time.

Further, the bill provides that grants will be provided to all qualified applicants that apply, to the extent funds are available. However, no more than 20% of the funds can be provided to any single applicant. In order to help increase the number of CACs, for the first three years, PCCD must endeavor to provide 30% of the funds to qualified applicants working to establish CACs in regions not yet served by such centers.

Effective date: 90 days

C. Analysis of Amendment #A05997 to House Bill 316 P.N. 324
Amendment Sponsor: Senator Mensch

This amendment will focus solely on CACs, Multidisciplinary Investigation Teams (MDIT) and training.

This amendment increases the cost of obtaining a certified copy of a birth record from \$10.00 to \$20.00.

The additional funds from the increase in birth record fees will be used in the following ways:

1. In the initial year 50% of the fee charged by the Department of Health for the birth record will be transferred to the Department of Public Welfare for training of mandated reporters and other costs related to child abuse.
2. In 2015, 50% of the fee charged will be distributed as follows:
 - a. 25% will be used for training of mandated reporters and related child abuse costs.
 - b. 75% will be transferred to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for CAC and MDIT funding.
3. The following restrictions apply:
 - a. The funding shall not be used to supplant Federal, State or local funds that are otherwise available to CACs and MDITs.
 - b. The Department of Public Welfare shall develop and provide mandated reporter training in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center.

The amendment also establishes the Child Advocacy Center Advisory Committee will consist of no more than 21 members and be appointed by the chairman of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. It also establishes the framework of the committee as follows:

- Members who shall be included as part of the committee.
- Members shall serve for a 4 year term
- The conditions of the appointment to the committee.
- Quorum is established by a majority of members being present.
- The Governor shall appoint the Chairman from the members of the committee and the committee will meet no less than 4 times per year.
- Establishes the powers and duties of the committee.

The effective date will change from 90 days to July 1, 2014 in order to better implement the legislation.

There are also a number of technical fixes included in the amendment that were recommended by the Task Force on Child Protection.