



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 9J.15: Dominique Moody Safety Act

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 9J.15

Date: August 19, 2026

Prepared by: Legislative Analysis
Division Staff

Section 9J.15 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) requires the Division of Social Services to create a child welfare escalation team (Team) to conduct escalation assessments of children who have a history of child protective services attention because of safety and risk factors. The team will (i) support county departments of social services, (ii) provide an additional level of review to ensure child safety statewide, and (iii) provide quality assurance of the child protective services history of a family who has returned to the attention of child protective services. Additionally, the section creates definitions necessary to implement its provisions.

A county director of social services will send an escalation notice to the Team upon receiving a report of abuse or neglect of a child residing in a high-risk home. The county department of social services must assist the Team in getting access to the entire case file for the child and forward any records in its possession on request of the Team.

Once all necessary information is received, the Team will do the following:

- Assess child welfare history.
- Identify gaps in services and other areas that impact safety of the child.
- Review the overall safety planning for the child.
- Create a chronological time line of child protective services intervention to understand the maltreatment factors of concern related to the family to aid in decision making.

The Team will be involved in determining case decisions for the child and services needed for the child and will be required to discuss any concerns with the involvement of child welfare services related to the child and family with the director and the assigned regional child welfare team.

A combination of State and federal funding is appropriated for the creation of six full time positions for the creation of the Child Welfare Escalation Team to include five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2026-2027. \$100,000 in nonrecurring funds allocated to DHHS for the 2026-27 fiscal year must be spent on training county social service employees to recognize abuse and neglect.

The Division of Social Services must explore means and resources needed to for counties to alert the Team.

The Division of Social Services must amend protocols and rules necessary for the Team's entry into a private residence.

The appropriation provisions became effective July 1, 2026. The provisions creating the Team and its procedures become effective October 1, 2026. The remaining provisions became effective July 7, 2026.

Kara McCraw
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578