



SENATE BILL 280: Dominique Moody Act.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	June 17, 2026
Introduced by:	Sens. Jarvis, B. Newton, Overcash	Prepared by:	Debbie Griffiths
Analysis of:	PCS to Fourth Edition S280-CSC Ia-58		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *The PCS to Senate Bill 280 would create and fund a Child Welfare Escalation Team (the Team),) require the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (the Division) to amend rules and protocols necessary for the Team's integration into the entry of a private residence, require video or photographs to be taken by the social worker during the initial assessment, require the custodian of criminal investigative records to show the court by clear and convincing evidence that release of requested information and records when requested by the Team would jeopardize prosecution of the case or a fair trial, require and fund training for child protective services employees and social workers on recognizing child abuse and neglect, require the N.C. Department of Justice to provide recommendations for reducing the State's liability and requiring some liability by a county when a county department of social services fails to follow statutory requirements or the State's policies and procedures in providing child welfare services, require the appointment of a guardian ad litem for any parent under the age of 16 in a proceeding for the termination of their parental rights and would permit the appointment of a guardian ad litem for a parent who is 16 or 17 years old, prohibit the department from placing the juvenile in an unlicensed facility or a facility not licensed to provide care to juveniles without court approval contained in a court order, include the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in the Child Advocacy Center process, establish and fund a predictive risk modeling pilot program, require and fund public county child safety dashboard, require the Division to submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee for Health and Human Services and Fiscal Research Division on the activities and findings of the Team, require the Division to report child fatalities and near fatalities when there is suspected abuse or neglect, or abuse or neglect may have contributed to the child's death or serious injury, and make various clarifying and conforming changes.*

BILL ANALYSIS:

PART I. CHILD WELFARE ESCALATION TEAM

Section 1.(a). A Child Welfare Escalation Team (the Team) would be created to assist counties with child welfare assessments when a report is received regarding the abuse or neglect of a juvenile in a high-risk home. A high risk home would be defined as a home or family that has an extensive child welfare history, has two or more known screened out reports, has been involved in two or more assessments whether substantiated or unsubstantiated, has a history of a prior removal and placement of a child in foster care or kinship care, or ongoing medical or mental health neglect of a juvenile. The Team would assess the child welfare history for the child and home, identify gaps in service that impact the child, review the overall safety planning for the child, and create a timeline for use in decision making. The Team would be involved in determining case decisions for the child and services needed for the child.

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The Team would be required to discuss any concerns with the involvement of child welfare services related to the child and family with the county director of social services and the director of the regional social services department.

Section 1.(b). Six (6) full-time positions would be created to establish the Child Welfare Escalation Team. The sum of five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2026-2027 fiscal year and the sum of one hundred fifty-seven thousand dollars (\$157,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year would be appropriated from the General Fund to the Division.

Section 1.(c) and (d). The Division of Social Services would be required to explore means and resources needed for counties to alert the Team. The Division would also be required to amend protocols and rules necessary for the Team's involvement in entry into a private residence.

PART II. CPS EMPLOYEE ASSESSMENT HOME VISIT AND RECORD MODIFICATIONS

Section 2.(a). The Division of Social Services would be required to update its rules, and policies and procedures to require that photographs or videos be taken by the social worker during an initial investigative or family assessment and that those photos and videos be maintained as a permanent part of the file.

Section 2.(b). G.S. 7B-302(e) would be amended to require the custodian of criminal investigative records to show the court, by clear and convincing evidence, that providing documents requested by the Team would jeopardize a current or future prosecution of a defendant or the defendant's right to a fair trial.

PART III. RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT TRAINING

The North Carolina Department of Human Resources, Division of Social Services (the Division) would be required to create a training program for child protective services employees and social workers in recognizing abuse and neglect. The training would be required to be virtually available for future training, and for continuing education for employees. The sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year would be appropriated from the General Fund to the Division.

PART IV. LIABILITY

The North Carolina Department of Justice would be required to make recommendations to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services no later than March 1, 2027 on reducing the State's liability and placing some liability on a county when the county department of social services fails to follow statutory requirements or State policies or procedures for the provision of child welfare services.

PART V. PROCEDURE FOR EXPUNGEMENT FROM RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS LIST

G.S. 7B-200(a)(9) would be amended to clarify that the court has jurisdiction over proceedings involving placement on or expungement from the responsible individuals list and G.S. 7B-325(b) would be amended to clarify that the petition for expungement be served on the director who identified the individual seeking expungement.

PART VI. CLARIFY CHILD WELFARE PROCEDURE

G.S. 7B-900.1(b) and (d), G.S. 7B-903.1(c1), G.S. 7B-906.1, G.S. 7B-906.2(b), G.S. 7B-908(c), G.S. 7B-909.2(h), and G.S. 7B-909.3(e) would be amended to make clarifying or conforming changes consistent with S.L. 2025-16 (HB612) including clarification that a party to an order modifying, terminating, or enforcing a post adoption contact agreement and order may not appeal that order unless it is an order holding a party in contempt.

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PART VII. TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

G.S. 7B-1101.1(b) would be amended to require the appointment of a guardian ad litem for any parent under the age of 16 in a proceeding for the termination of their parental rights and would permit the appointment for a parent who is 16 or 17 years old.

G.S. 7B-1103(a) would be amended to clarify that a county department of social services, consolidated human services agency, or licensed child placing agency may file a petition to terminate parental rights when a child is relinquished to them by a parent or when an infant is surrendered under the safe surrender statute.

PART VIII. UNDISCIPLINED AND DELINQUENT JUVENILES; NONSECURE CUSTODY

G.S. 7B-1905(a) would be amended to prohibit the department from placing the juvenile in an unlicensed facility or a facility not licensed to provide care to juveniles without court approval contained in a court order.

PART IX. INCLUSION OF EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS IN CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS

G.S. 108A-77.1(7) and (10) and G.S. 108A-77.4(c) would be amended to include the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in the Child Advocacy Center process.

PART X. PREDICTIVE RISK MODELING PILOT PROGRAM

Section 10.(a) The Division would be required to establish a Predictive Risk Modeling Pilot Program to supplement the professional judgment of social workers and supervisors, and the Team. The purpose of the pilot program includes recognition of cumulative patterns of concern that may remain fragmented when there are multiple reports, referrals, and investigations, identifying cases that may need enhanced supervisory review, multidisciplinary consultation, or involvement of the escalation team before serious harm occurs. The model would be prohibited from being used as the sole basis for screening decisions, assessment decisions, decisions to remove a juvenile from the home, or to deny services to a family. The model would be integrated with the Team and be required to have ongoing performance monitoring. The Division would be required to provide an annual report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services to include the number of cases flagged for enhanced review and outcomes of those cases, performance metrics, and equity analyses beginning one year after the initial deployment.

Section 10.(b) The sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for the customized build and implementation of a state-validated predictive risk model for child welfare and the sum of four hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$430,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2027-2028 fiscal year for ongoing model maintenance and the operation of at least two deployment modules would be appropriated from the General Fund to the Division.

Section 10.(c) The Division would be required to request proposals for obtaining the predictive risk model or otherwise comply with State law in doing so. The Division would be permitted to use federal funds to offset State costs as permitted under federal law.

PART XI. PUBLIC COUNTY CHILD SAFETY DASHBOARD

Section 11.(a) The Division would be required to develop and maintain a publicly accessible, internet based dashboard reporting county level child safety performance indicators including timeliness of initiation of child protective services, trends in households with repeat reports, maltreatment in foster care, recurrence of maltreatment in a household within a 12 month period, number of reports, investigations, and substantiations, and caseload to worker ratios. The dashboard would be required to be updated at least quarterly and shall be operational no later than July 1, 2028.

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Section 11.(b) The sum of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for development of the public county child safety dashboard and the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) in recurring funds beginning in the 2027-2028 fiscal year for ongoing maintenance and hosting would be appropriated from the General Fund to the Division.

PART XII. ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORTING ON CHILD WELFARE ESCALATION

The Division would be required to provide an annual report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services and the Fiscal Research Division on the activities and findings of the Team beginning March 1, 2028, and would be required to publish this report on its website within 30 days of submission to the General Assembly.

PART XIII. CHILD FATALITY AND NEAR-FATALITY PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

The Division would be required to make a public preliminary disclosure of a child fatality or near-fatality involving suspected abuse or neglect on its website within five (5) days of receiving the report, and publish a summary report on its website within 90 days of receiving the report. The Division would be required to have a designated employee to serve as the dedicated liaison for all matters involving child fatalities or near fatalities. If there is a child fatality under investigation because of suspected abuse or neglect and there is a prior child welfare history involving the family, the Division would be required to notify the cochairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health Human Services within 48 hours of the fatality.

PART XV. EFFECTIVE DATES

Subsection (a) of Section 1, subsection (b) of Section 2, Part VI, subsection (a) of Section 10, subsection (a) of Section 11, and Part XIII of this act become effective October 1, 2026. Subsection (b) of Section 1, Part III, subsection (b) of Section 10, and subsection (b) of Section 11 become effective July 1, 2026. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.