

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1410
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Health & Human Services
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas continues to be plagued by high turnover rates among Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) caseworkers which costs the state money and undermines recent efforts to ensure that cases involving abuse and neglect are properly investigated. Texas caseworkers rank among the lowest 10 states in terms of salaries and continue to carry higher than average caseloads. Currently, Texas is one of eight states that do not require caseworkers to hold a baccalaureate degree in a behavioral or human service field.

As proposed, S.B. 1410 establishes maximum average caseloads for DFPS caseworkers. The bill also prohibits DFPS from employing persons as caseworkers unless they have a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree in certain fields of study. The bill authorizes DFPS to hire a person who does not meet the degree requirement if that person has certain exceptional education or experience that qualifies the person for the position.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 531.048, Government Code, by adding Subsection (d-1), as follows:

(d-1) Requires the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to ensure that the average caseload for certain categories of DFPS caseworkers does not exceed the number specified by this subsection, notwithstanding Subsection (d).

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 40, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 40.0325, as follows:

Sec. 40.0325. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR CASEWORKERS. (a) Prohibits DFPS from employing a person as a caseworker unless the person holds a bachelor's degree or advanced degree in at least one of specific academic areas.

(b) Authorizes DFPS to employ a person as a caseworker who does not hold a degree required by Subsection (a) provided that the person has other exceptional education or experience that DFPS determines qualifies the person to perform the functions of a caseworker, notwithstanding Subsection (a).

SECTION 3. Makes application of Section 40.0325, Human Resources Code, as added by this Act, prospective. Provides that a caseworker hired before the effective date of this Act is not required to possess the degree required by Section 40.0325, Human Resources Code, as added by this Act, as long as the person remains employed by the DFPS as a caseworker.

SECTION 4. Requires the DFPS to increase and maintain the salary for case management and investigative caseworkers and supervisors in the child protective services division providing services through conservatorship programs, foster and adoption programs, and family-based safety services programs so that the salary for each employee exceeds 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2007.