

CCADV Priority Bills

PUBLIC ACT 22-82, AN ACT CONCERNING...THE PROVISION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING AND PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRAINING FOR ALL STATE EMPLOYEES & POSTING OF RESOURCES BY MOST EMPLOYERS

Requires domestic violence training for all state employees and the posting of domestic violence resources by most employers (*Sections 7-9*)

- All state employees are required to receive a minimum of one hour of training and education related to domestic violence. Such training shall include information concerning (i) domestic violence, abuser and victim behaviors; (ii) how domestic violence may impact the workplace; and (iii) the resources available to victims of domestic violence.
- All employees hired prior to January 1, 2023 shall be trained no later than July 1, 2023 and all employees hired after July 1, 2023 shall be trained no later than six months after their assumption of a position with a state agency.
- All employers with three or more employees shall post in a prominent location information about domestic violence and the resources available to victims in Connecticut.
- The Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities, in conjunction with organizations that advocate on behalf of victims of domestic violence, shall develop and include on its website information about domestic violence and an online training and education video to satisfy the requirements listed above.

[§46a-51, §46a-54, and §46a-56; see above for effective date of training]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A PROTECTED CLASS & REASONABLE LEAVE

Establishes domestic violence as a protected class with respect to discrimination by certain individuals and entities and ensures reasonable leave from employment for victims to address issues related to victimization (*Sections 10-21*)

- Prohibits discrimination against individuals because of their "status as a victim of domestic violence" in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, and credit transactions. Some specific prohibitions include:
 - For an employer to refuse to hire or employ or to discharge from employment;
 - For an employment agency to fail or refuse to classify properly or refer for employment;
 - For a labor organization to exclude from full membership rights or to expel from membership;
 - Denial of full and equal accommodations in any place of public accommodation, resort or amusement;
 - Refusal to sell or rent after the making of an offer, or to refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling; or,
 - For a creditor to discriminate in any credit transaction.
- Prohibits employers from denying employees reasonable leave of absence in order to:
 - (i) Seek attention for injuries caused by domestic violence including for a child who is a victim of domestic violence, provided the employee is not the perpetrator of the domestic violence against the child;
 - (ii) Obtain services including safety planning from a domestic violence agency or rape crisis center, as those terms are defined in section 52-146k, as a result of domestic violence;
 - (iii) Obtain psychological counseling related to an incident or incidents of domestic violence, including for a child who is a victim of domestic violence, provided the employee is not the perpetrator of the domestic violence against the child;
 - (iv) Take other actions to increase safety from future incidents of domestic violence, including temporary or permanent relocation; or
 - (v) Obtain legal services, assisting in the prosecution of the offense, or otherwise participate in legal proceedings in relation to the incident or incidents of domestic violence.

PUBLIC ACT 22-82 CONTINUED...

- Requires employees, when absent and when certification of the absences is requested by the employer, to provide certification in the form of:
 - (i) A police report indicating the employee or employee's child was a victim of domestic violence;
 - (ii) A court order protecting the employee or employee's child;
 - (iii) Other evidence from the court or prosecuting attorney that the employee appeared in court; or,
 - (iv) documentation from a medical professional, domestic violence counselor, or healthcare provider that the employee or employee's child was receiving services as a result of domestic violence.
- "Domestic violence" used for this purpose meets the definition found in C.G.S. §46b-1.
- Individuals who believe they have experienced discrimination may file, at no cost, a complaint with the CT Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities.

[§46a-58 - §46a-60, §46a-64, §46a-64c, §46a-66, §46a-70 - §46a-73, §46a-75 - §46a-76 ; Effective October 1, 2022]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CHILD & FAMILY ADVOCATES

- Allocates funding in the amount of \$1,440,000 through the Department of Social Services for domestic violence child & family advocates at domestic violence agencies as defined in C.G.S. §52-146k, whose purpose shall be to provide trauma-informed services to children and families experiencing domestic violence.

[New; Effective July 1, 2022]

Other Bills of Interest

PUBLIC ACT 22-26, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT OPERATIONS...

Makes changes to the definition of "transcript page" and disclosure of erased records in actions for financial restitution (*Sections 15 & 35*)

- Court transcripts can be obtained electronically. (Note: There is no change in the fee or fee waiver process for victims.)
- Authorizes, not later than two years from the date that records are erased, the disclosure of erased records to victims who have started or intend to start an action to enforce a financial restitution order.

Adds language in the restraining order statute regarding testimony by Family Services Unit and clarification regarding service of process fee and mileage reimbursement (*Sections 59 & 62*)

- Reports prepared by Family Services may now only be considered by the court "provided that the person who prepared such report is available to testify at the hearing and is subject to cross examination."
- Adds clarifying language that the cost of mileage reimbursement for state marshals when serving restraining orders (which was increased in a different section of the public act) is the responsibility of the Judicial Branch.

[§51-60, §54-142c; §46b-15; Effective from passage, January 1, 2023 and October 1, 2022 respectively]

PUBLIC ACT 22-47, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Requires law enforcement to distribute additional information to victims of domestic violence and expands Victim Compensation in substantiated cases of child abuse (*Sections 62 & 65*)

- Requires law enforcement at the scene of a domestic violence incident to provide to victims information developed pursuant to C.G.S. §10-10g on domestic violence resources and information developed pursuant to C.G.S. §17a-22r regarding children's behavioral and mental health resources.
- Expands Victim Compensation to include an incident of child abuse substantiated by DCF on or after October 1, 2022, provided the individual determined to be responsible is placed on DCF's child abuse and neglect registry.

[§46b-38b, §54-209; Effective July 1, 2022 and October 1, 2022 respectively]

PUBLIC ACT 22-77, AN ACT CONCERNING LOW COST BANK ACCOUNTS

Requires certain state chartered financial institutions to offer Connecticut residents a basic banking account with few-to-no fees beginning July 1, 2023. Among other features, the accounts must include a free debit card and cannot impose low balance fees or charge for in-network ATM access, over drafting the account, or having insufficient funds.

[New; Effective January 1, 2023]

PUBLIC ACT 22-118, AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023...**STATE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS**

Relevant budget adjustments for Fiscal Year 2023 (7.1.22 - 6.30.23) include:

- **\$1,440,000 in state funding** through the Department of Social Services for domestic violence child & family advocates. [pursuant to Public Act 22-82] (Section 1)
- **\$14,865,300 in one-time American Rescue Plan Act funding** through the Judicial Department to enhance funding for victim service providers. [Note: this funding is intended to cover losses in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) for various victim services funded through the Judicial Department, a portion of which will be used for domestic violence services.] (Section 10)
- **\$2,900,000 in one-time American Rescue Plan Act funding** through the Department of Social Services to provide additional supports for victims of domestic violence. [Note: Examples of what this funding is intended for include hoteling, food, transportation costs, basic needs, childcare assistance, housing, moving, utilities, and furniture assistance.] (Section 10)
- **5.5% COLA** for nonprofit providers, including those providing services through the Department of Social Services. (Sections 1 & 10)

[New; Effective July 1, 2022]

PROVISION OF FREE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS

Each emergency shelter operated by a domestic violence agency as defined in C.G.S. §52-146k that receives state funding shall provide free menstrual products in each restroom of the shelter that is accessible to its residents in a manner that does not stigmatize any resident seeking such products. Menstrual products are defined in C.G.S. §18-69e as “tampons and sanitary napkins.” (Section 87)

[New; Effective July 1, 2022]

CONTINUATION OF “COUNSEL FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE” PROGRAM THROUGH JUDICIAL BRANCH

The unexpended balance of funds appropriated to the Judicial Department for Counsel for Domestic Violence (legal representation for indigent victims when applying for a restraining order in certain courts) in Special Act 21-15 for fiscal year 2022 shall not lapse and shall be carried forward and made available in fiscal year 2023. (Section 26)

[New; Effective from passage]

ESSENTIAL WORKER RELIEF FUND

Expands the Essential Workers COVID-19 Assistance Program to cover a broader range of essential employees, including those categorized under the CDC's category 1c which includes shelter workers, and extends the deadline to apply for the program's benefits to December 31, 2022. (Section 205)

This program is available to essential workers who contracted COVID-19 between March 10, 2020 and July 20, 2021 and...

- Lost wages due to the inability to work after COVID-19 diagnosis or related illness (does not reimburse for paid time off), OR
- Had out-of-pocket medical expenses due to COVID-19 diagnosis or related illness.

It is also available to the relative/family of an essential worker who died as a result of COVID-19 after receiving such diagnosis between March 10, 2020 and July 20, 2021.

[§31-900; Effective from passage]

EXPANDED INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR CHILDREN REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

Beginning January 1, 2023, Medicaid is expanded, within available appropriations, to children up to the age of 12 regardless of their immigration status. It also allows eligible children receiving such coverage to continue receiving coverage until they are 19 years old. (Section 232)

[§17b-261; Effective from passage]