

## House Bill 605

By: Representatives Sinkfield of the 60<sup>th</sup>, Manning of the 32<sup>nd</sup>, Morgan of the 39<sup>th</sup>, Ashe of the 56<sup>th</sup>, Stephenson of the 92<sup>nd</sup>, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 5 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to children and youth services, so as to provide for definitions; to provide for  
3 legislative intent; to provide for a sufficient number of qualified child protective services  
4 workers; to limit caseloads for child protective services workers; to provide for requirements  
5 relating to initial investigations; to provide for adequate supervision of child protective  
6 services workers by the Division of Family and Children Services of the Department of  
7 Human Resources; to provide for a monthly report to the Board of Human Resources  
8 regarding caseloads of child protective services workers; to provide for related matters; to  
9 repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

11 **SECTION 1.**

12 Article 1 of Chapter 5 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
13 children and youth services, is amended by adding a new Code section to the end of such  
14 article as follows:

15 "49-5-24.

16 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

17 (1) 'Active families' means families for which the department has open case files  
18 regarding one or more children within the family and in which case closing documents  
19 have not been completed, filed, and entered into the data system. For purposes of this  
20 Code section, one family shall be counted as one case.

21 (2) 'Active reports' means open case files that have been assigned to a child protective  
22 services worker for investigation, but for which an assessment has not been completed  
23 and no recommendations or investigative conclusions have been made.

24 (3) 'Child protective services worker' means a person employed by the Division of  
25 Family and Children Services of the Department of Human Resources to investigate,  
26 provide follow-up, or provide adoption and placement resources in cases of child abuse,

1 neglect, or exploitation. This shall include any person employed by such division as a  
2 social services case management associate, social services case manager, social services  
3 specialist, or social services supervisor and shall be construed to include job titles created  
4 in the future involving the same or similar job functions.

5 (b) The General Assembly seeks to protect the well-being of this state's children while  
6 preserving family integrity. The General Assembly believes that protection of the health  
7 and safety of this state's children is important to all Georgians. The General Assembly  
8 finds that the child protective services provided by the Division of Family and Children  
9 Services of the Department of Human Resources are critical to the safety and well-being  
10 of children. The General Assembly further finds that the deaths of children in the care of  
11 the department have resulted, at least in part, from excessively high case loads, high work  
12 force turnover, low morale, inadequate training and supervision, and a negative public  
13 image of the agency. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the case loads assigned  
14 to child protective services workers be reduced to and maintained at levels that ensure  
15 high-quality services that protect children and youth and strengthen families and  
16 neighborhoods.

17 (c) The Division of Family and Children Services of the Department of Human Resources  
18 shall employ a sufficient number of qualified child protective services workers to assure  
19 the highest quality professional services to Georgia's families and children.

20 (d)(1) Child protective services workers whose job responsibilities are primarily to  
21 conduct initial investigations into allegations of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation and  
22 to determine the level of risk to the child or children shall have caseloads of no greater  
23 than 12 active reports per month. In determining the level of risk to a child or children  
24 during the initial investigation of an active report, the child protective services worker  
25 shall be assisted in the assessment process by a mental health professional and a licensed  
26 medical professional as such professionals are defined by the department. Collectively,  
27 the child protective services worker, the mental health professional, and the licensed  
28 medical professional shall recommend actions to be taken to protect the child or children  
29 at issue in the investigation.

30 (2) Child protective services workers whose job responsibilities are primarily to provide  
31 follow-up and adoption and placement resources, recommend or take appropriate action,  
32 provide continued assessment, or provide case management services shall have caseloads  
33 no greater than 17 active families at one time.

34 (3) Child protective services workers whose job responsibilities include responsibilities  
35 as set out in both paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection shall have caseloads no greater  
36 than ten active families and four active reports combined.

1 The department, in its discretion, may impose more stringent caseload standards than are  
2 included in this subsection, in accordance with Child Welfare League minimum standards.  
3 The workload of employees primarily responsible for screening reports of abuse and  
4 neglect and employees allocated specifically to this function shall be considered separately  
5 from this subsection.

6 (e) The Division of Family and Children Services shall provide adequate supervision of  
7 child protective services workers in order to ensure effective service delivery and staff and  
8 professional development. The ratio of child protective services workers to supervisors  
9 shall not exceed five to one.

10 (f) The commissioner shall report each month to the board the actual caseload size by  
11 county for each child protective services worker employed to deliver child protective  
12 services."

13

## **SECTION 2.**

14 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.