**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, TO ENACT THE “SOUTH CAROLINA CHILD ABUSE RESPONSE PROTOCOL ACT” BY ADDING ARTICLE 24 TO CHAPTER 11, TITLE 63 SO AS TO REQUIRE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS INVOLVED IN CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION TO FOLLOW CERTAIN CHILD ABUSE RESPONSE PROTOCOL, TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REVIEW AND UPDATE THE PROTOCOL, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES; AND TO AMEND SECTION 63‑11‑310, RELATING TO CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTERS, SO AS TO REQUIRE CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTERS TO HOLD CERTAIN ACCREDITATION STATUS OR BE ACTIVELY PURSUING ACCREDITATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act may be known and cited as the “South Carolina Child Abuse Response Protocol Act”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 11, Title 63 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 24

South Carolina Child Abuse Response Protocol Act

Section 63‑11‑2400. In the investigation and prosecution of a known or suspected crime against a child, a multidisciplinary team must follow the South Carolina Child Abuse Response Protocol as developed by the South Carolina Children’s Justice Act Task Force and the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers.

Section 63‑11‑2410. (A) The South Carolina Children’s Justice Act Task Force and the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers shall develop and provide initial training on the protocol and updated training as needed for this purpose.

(B) The protocol must be publicly available and must be reviewed annually and updated as needed by an advisory committee. The advisory committee should include representatives for stakeholders, at a minimum including a representative for each of the following:

(1) South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers;

(2) State or county law enforcement;

(3) A county solicitor’s office;

(4) Department of Social Services;

(5) Medical/South Carolina Children’s Advocacy Medical Response System;

(6) State Guardian Ad Litem Program/Richland County CASA; and

(7) A school district.

Section 63‑11‑2420. The Department of Children’s Advocacy shall maintain the protocol and the advisory committee’s updates to the protocol.”

SECTION 3. Section 63‑11‑310(B)(1), (C), and (D) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(1) Children’s Advocacy Centers must establish memoranda of agreement with governmental entities charged with the investigation and prosecution of child abuse. ~~Fully operational centers must function in a manner consistent with standards of the National Children’s Alliance, and all centers must strive to achieve full membership in the National Children’s Alliance~~ Children’s Advocacy Centers must be fully accredited by the National Children’s Alliance or must be an Associate/Developing or Affiliate Member of the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers and be actively pursuing full accreditation with the National Children’s Alliance within the next two years.

(C) The South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers ~~and the South Carolina Chapter of the National Children’s Alliance~~ must coordinate and facilitate the exchange of information among statewide centers and provide technical assistance to communities in the establishment, growth, and certification of local centers. The network must also educate the public and legislature regarding the needs of abused children and provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities which support the comprehensive response to suspected child maltreatment.

~~(D)~~ ~~Nothing in this section requires the exclusive use of a Children’s Advocacy Center.~~”

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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