



Fiscal Note

Fiscal Services Division



[HF 2356](#) – State Public Defender, Child Welfare Legal Representation (LSB5356HV.1)
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Fiscal Note Version – New

Description

[House File 2356](#) changes the State Public Defender (SPD) pilot project, Child Welfare Legal Representation, to a permanent program to be known as the Project to Preserve Families (PPF). The Bill allows the SPD to administer and maintain the PPF throughout the State. The SPD may adopt administrative rules to administer the PPF.

Background

2020 Iowa Acts, chapter [1040](#) (State Public Defender Pilot Project — Child Welfare Legal Representation Act), established a pilot project under Iowa Code section [13B.13](#) to implement models of legal representation to assist families involved in the child welfare system by implementing and studying ways to achieve positive outcomes for families, reduce trauma to young children, and deliver financial benefits to families and their communities. The pilot project was originally implemented in up to six counties in Iowa. However, 2023 Iowa Acts, chapter [10](#) (Child Welfare Legal Representation — State Public Defender Pilot Project Extension and Expansion Act), expanded it to 16 counties. The pilot project ended on June 30, 2025.

The pilot project has received a total of 403 referrals since 2020. Of the 403 referrals, 19 or 4.7% of the total referrals became child in need of assistance (CINA) cases.

Assumptions

- The average cost of a CINA case is \$7,800 when representation is provided to indigent clients. This cost is paid from the Indigent Defense Fund.
- In FY 2025, the cost of the average pilot project referral was approximately \$2,500. This cost is paid from the Juvenile Justice Improvement Fund, which is funded with federal Title IV-E dollars.
- When the PPF is fully implemented, it will receive approximately 200 referrals annually across the State.
- It is assumed that 19 referrals, or 4.7%, will become CINA cases annually.
- The SPD currently assigns 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) position to the pilot project. It is assumed 1.0 FTE position will be assigned to the PPF program.
- The annual cost of referrals under the PPF program is estimated to be \$471,000.
- The Juvenile Justice Improvement Fund will continue to receive Title IV-E funds.

Fiscal Impact

House File 2356 is estimated to result in approximate cost savings of \$1.5 million annually to the Indigent Defense Fund once the PPF is fully implemented across the State. However, that estimate is compared to current law for FY 2027, in which the pilot program would be expired. The pilot program has been in operation since 2020, and therefore a portion of the cost savings under the Bill may be a status quo savings compared to previous fiscal years. It is unknown when the full cost savings will be realized. The cost to the Juvenile Justice Fund is estimated to be \$471,000 annually, which is funded by federal moneys through Title IV-E reimbursement.

Source

Office of the State Public Defender

/s/ Jennifer Acton

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The Fiscal Note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to [Joint Rule 17](#) and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this Fiscal Note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.
