Governor’s FY 2017 Budget: Articles

Staff Presentation to the House Finance Committee
March 30, 2016
Introduction

- Article 23 – Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Creates new chapter of law - “the Rhode Island safe harbor for sexually exploited children act”

- Purpose of safe harbor
  - Ensure that minors who are victims of sex trafficking are provided immunity from prosecution for prostitution
  - Redirect child victims away from the criminal justice system and towards supportive services and programs
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Requires screening & risk assessment of potential victims
- Requires reporting of allegations to appropriate law enforcement agencies and DCYF
- Specifies eligibility for crime victims’ compensation grants
  - These individuals are currently eligible for program benefits
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Requires screening & risk assessment
  - To determine if the child should be considered a victim of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation
- Requires DCYF w/ Attorney General & Dept. of Public Safety to
  - Identify a screening/risk assessment tool
  - Develop uniform response protocols for addressing sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Requires that any child who is believed to be a victim of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation be reported to DCYF
- DCYF must report all such allegations to the appropriate law enforcement agencies who shall investigate such allegations jointly w/ DCYF
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Adds sex trafficking of a minor to the list of specific crimes that victims of which are eligible for crime victims’ compensation
  - Appears these victims are generally covered either explicitly or through program interpretation
Criminal Injuries Compensation Act of 1996 enables state to compensate innocent victims of violent crimes for certain expenses:
- Medical, dental and hospital expenses
- Mental health counseling expenses
- Funeral and burial expenses
- Loss of earnings (victim only)
- Loss of support (dependents of homicide victim)
Article 23 - Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children

- Restricted Receipts
  - Court fees
- Federal Funds
  - 60% match of claims paid by state
  - Approximately $1.5 million annually

- Currently no backlog or wait list
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