PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 1044

HOUSE BILL NO. 3850

By Representatives Richardson, Mike Turner

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 3865

By Senators Kyle, Henry, Burks

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 5, relative to powers and duties of the commissioner of children's services.

WHEREAS, standards set by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, Inc. (COA) are nationally recognized as the best practices for protecting and providing services to abused and neglected children; and

WHEREAS, achieving and maintaining these standards requires a solid commitment from the legislative and executive branches of state government; and

WHEREAS, a 2003 U.S. Congressional Report on Child Welfare found that accreditation reduces caseloads, resulting in more attention and better care for clients; increases emphasis on professional credentials, leading to more qualified staff; and reduces supervisor-to-staff ratios, allowing more supervision of frontline staff; and

WHEREAS, a 2002 Aspen Institute study compared COA-accredited and non-accredited organizations and found that COA-accredited organizations used clearly defined criteria to evaluate personnel performance and ensure that employees have the skills and training they need to provide services; had ongoing procedures to identify problem areas and make necessary changes and improvements to the organization; and had processes in place to plan for adverse situations and effectively manage risk; and

WHEREAS, COA accreditation has been shown to reduce costs by reducing employee turnover, creating more efficient processes and strengthening an organization's capacity; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services is a leader in adopting evidence based practices; and

WHEREAS, accreditation involves all of an organization's stakeholders - employees, board members, clients, and most especially, line staff; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services became the eighth state-administered program to receive accreditation from the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, Inc. on January 22, 2010; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 37-5-105, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated subsection:

(16) Promote collaboration and accountability among local, public, and private programs to improve the lives of children and families, including continuing accreditation with the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, Inc. or its equivalent, to develop strategies consistent with best practice standards for delivery of services. If the department fails to maintain accreditation, a report shall be provided to the general assembly outlining the reasons the department is no longer accredited.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming law, the public welfare requiring it.

PASSED: May 27, 2010

KENT WILLIAMS, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 11th day of June 2010

PHIL BREDESEN, GOVERNOR