

Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes

This task force has two resolutions:

SR 167, 2024 RS

SR 193, 2025 RS

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 167

BY SENATOR BARROW

A RESOLUTION

To create and provide for the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes.

WHEREAS, Dr. David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, has stated, "The impact of child sexual abuse is profound and long-lasting, affecting not only the victims but also their families and communities. Early and effective intervention is crucial to mitigate these effects and to bring justice to the victims"; and

WHEREAS, national statistics indicate that approximately one in ten children will be sexually abused before their eighteenth birthday, with an estimated sixty percent of victims never disclosing their abuse, and only twelve percent of child sexual abuse cases being reported to authorities; and

WHEREAS, the National Children's Alliance's 2023 annual report states that, in Louisiana, child advocacy centers served a total of 6,144 children with 4,105 reports of child sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, in calendar year 2023, the Department of Children and Family Services reported 1,999 investigations involving at least one allegation of sexual abuse or juvenile sex trafficking affecting 2,340 individual alleged child victims; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes is essential to thoroughly examine the current processes for investigating child sexual abuse, identify gaps and weaknesses, and recommend actionable improvements to better protect and support victims.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish and provide for the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes to study the methods, systems, investigative techniques, and management of investigations involving sexual abuse of children, and to propose recommendations, together with specific proposals for legislation, if any, by written report to the Senate and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772, no later

than February 28, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the purposes of the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) Investigating current procedures and protocols used by law enforcement, child protective service agencies, or other relevant agencies in the investigation of child sexual abuse cases.

(2) Evaluating the effectiveness of investigative practices used in Louisiana and identifying any deficiencies or areas needing improvement.

(3) Recommending legislative and procedural changes to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sensitivity of investigations.

(4) Promoting interagency collaboration and communication to produce a comprehensive approach to investigating child sex abuse.

(5) Encouraging timely, compassionate, and effective support services including medical, psychological, and legal assistance.

(6) Identifying and developing specialized training programs for professionals who investigate or provide support in sexual abuse cases involving children including law enforcement officers, social workers, medical personnel, prosecutors, and educators.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force should consider accepting public testimony for the purpose of achieving its goals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consist of members from each of the following, to be appointed by the specified entity:

(1) Two representatives from the Department of Children and Family Services, appointed by the secretary.

(2) A law enforcement officer with experience investigating sexual abuse in children, appointed by the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association.

(3) A juvenile court judge appointed by the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

(4) A family court judge appointed by the Louisiana District Judges Association.

(5) A district attorney appointed by the Louisiana District Attorneys Association.

(6) A forensic interviewer appointed by the Louisiana Alliance of Children's

Advocacy Centers.

(7) A child psychologist appointed by the chairman of the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists.

(8) A survivor of child sexual abuse appointed by Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response.

(9) A custodial parent or caretaker of a child who has been the subject of a child sexual abuse investigation, appointed by the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services.

(10) A noncustodial parent of a child who has been the subject of a child sexual abuse investigation appointed by Fathers On a Mission (FOAM).

(11) A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, appointed by the president of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

(12) The president of the Louisiana Senate, or his designee.

(13) The state child ombudsman, or her designee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of designees to the task force to the president of the Louisiana Senate no later than August 15, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than October 1, 2024, at the call of the president of the Louisiana Senate or his designee, and at the first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman and other officers as the task force may deem appropriate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and all official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the quorum.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expense reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall receive staff support from one or more of the entities from which the task force's membership is designated or appointed, at the discretion of the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its report, if any, or February 28, 2025, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the Louisiana Senate, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Louisiana District Judges Association, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers, the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response, Fathers On a Mission, the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, and the state child ombudsman.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 193

BY SENATOR BARROW

A RESOLUTION

To provide for the Task Force on Child Abuse Investigation Processes.

WHEREAS, Senate Resolution No. 167 of the 2024 Regular Session established the Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse Investigation Processes to study the methods, systems, investigative techniques, and management of investigations involving sexual abuse of children and to propose recommendations for improving current processes; and

WHEREAS, by bringing together all stakeholders involved in investigating and prosecuting child abuse cases, the task force was able to identify a multitude of challenges and obstacles that prevent effectively protecting the children of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the task force heard critical public testimony that further identified failures in both the current child sexual abuse investigation process and all other aspects of child abuse reporting and investigations; and

WHEREAS, while some of the issues identified by the task force can be addressed immediately through legislative and policy changes, due to the complexity of child sexual abuse cases, the number of agencies involved in child abuse investigations and related judicial processes, the task force needs additional time to find solutions to the many problems concerning the state's response to child abuse cases.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish the Task Force on Child Abuse Investigation Processes to continue and expand upon the work on the task force established by the Senate Resolution No. 167 of the 2024 Regular Session.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force should continue to gather information and evaluate the following:

(1) Current procedures and protocols used by law enforcement, child protective service agencies, or other relevant agencies in the investigation of child abuse cases,

including specific child sexual abuse procedures and protocols.

(2) Interagency collaboration and communication when investigating child abuse cases.

(3) Effectiveness of investigative practices for child sexual abuse cases used in Louisiana to identify any deficiencies or areas needing improvement.

(4) Information provided to and utilized by the courts in custody cases involving child sexual abuse.

(5) Available support services including medical, psychological, and legal assistance for child sexual abuse cases and whether those services are utilized.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall identify gaps and weaknesses in current processes and recommend actionable improvements to better protect and support victims by the following:

(1) Identifying and developing specialized training programs for professionals who investigate or provide support in sexual abuse cases involving children including law enforcement officers, social workers, medical personnel, prosecutors, and educators.

(2) Recommending legislative and procedural changes to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sensitivity of all child abuse investigations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) Two representatives from the Department of Children and Family Services, appointed by the secretary.

(2) A law enforcement officer with experience investigating sexual abuse in children, appointed by the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association.

(3) A juvenile court judge appointed by the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

(4) A family court judge appointed by the Louisiana District Judges Association.

(5) A district attorney appointed by the Louisiana District Attorneys Association.

(6) A forensic interviewer appointed by the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers.

(7) A child psychologist appointed by the chairman of the Louisiana State Board of

Examiners of Psychologists.

(8) A practicing child psychologist with experience in child sexual assault appointed by the chairman of the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists.

(9) A survivor of child sexual abuse appointed by Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response.

(10) A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, appointed by the president of the Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

(11) The president of the Louisiana Senate, or his designee.

(12) The state child ombudsman, or her designee.

(13) A representative of the Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocates Association appointed by the executive director.

(14) A representative from the State Police Special Investigations Division appointed by the superintendent of state police.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any member serving on the task force pursuant to Senate Resolution No. 167 of the 2024 Regular Session of the Legislature shall continue to serve on the task force unless the designating authority appoints a different designee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the names of designees for new members of the task force to the president of the Louisiana Senate no later than August 1, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the president of the Louisiana Senate, or his designee, shall serve as chair of the task force and the task force shall convene for its first meeting no later than September 1, 2025, at the call of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. All official actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its final report or December 31, 2027, whichever occurs first.

SR NO. 193

ENROLLED

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to president of the Louisiana Senate, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Sheriffs' Association, the Louisiana Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the Louisiana District Judges Association, the Louisiana District Attorneys Association, the Louisiana Alliance of Children's Advocacy Centers, the Louisiana State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, Sexual Trauma Awareness & Response, the Louisiana State Board of Nursing, the state child ombudsman, the Louisiana Court Appointed Special Advocates Association, and the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE