



Colorado Office of the  
Child's Representative



## Please Vote YES on HB21-1099

### Polices & Procedures to Identify Domestic Abuse

**Sponsors: Rep. Michaelson-Jenet & Ransom, Sen. Zenzinger & Smallwood**

#### **Problem:**

Domestic abuse can have an emotional and psychological impact on children. The term, however, is not defined in title 19 of the children's code. Without a definition, child welfare caseworkers lack guidance on how to identify and assess for it.

#### **Solution:**

Direct the state to:

- 1.) convene a Domestic Abuse Task Force (Task Force) to develop a definition of domestic abuse for title 19 that captures the impact of this adult behavior on a child; and
- 2.) promulgate rules based on recommendations from the Task Force.

The Task Force is required to represent and reflect the broad cultural and socioeconomic diversity of the state and include people with lived and professional experience.

#### **Background:**

Over the years, the child welfare fatality review team (CFRT) has observed an increasing number of egregious, near fatal and fatal cases in which domestic abuse is present and the corresponding emotional and psychological impact this adult behavior has on children. Out of the 232 Incidents reviewed by CFRT in CYs 2014-2019, domestic abuse was a stressor identified 94 times (232/94: 40.5%).

Currently, child welfare caseworkers classify these situations under the catchall of 'injurious environment'. In the absence of a specific definition for domestic abuse in the children's code, mandatory reporters and case workers lack clear and intentional direction to watch for the effects of this adult behavior on a child's wellbeing.

Once the Task Force's work is completed, child welfare practice, training, and assessment protocols will be developed. In doing so, the roles of the non abusive parent, the abusive parent and diversity sensitivities will be front and center.

## Please Support HB21-1099

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#### **Proponents:**

Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center