

HCS HB 2292 -- REPORTING OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT (Jones (88))

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: Special Committee on Urban Issues

This bill requires animal control officers and animal humane investigators to be mandated reporters in cases of abuse and neglect of children, the elderly, and other vulnerable persons.

The bill requires animal control officers and animal humane investigators to receive 1.5 hours of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect in children, the elderly, and vulnerable persons. Certain professionals who offer support or advocacy services for children in foster care, Children's Division personnel, and protective services employees with direct contact with children, the elderly, and vulnerable persons will be required to receive 1.5 hours of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect in animals.

This bill establishes within the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) the "Office of Special Investigations" to assist in the investigations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of certain adults.

The Office will investigate or assist in the investigation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation upon the request of a local, county, State, or Federal law enforcement agency; a county, State, or Federal prosecutor; or staff from the Division of Senior and Disability Services. The Office will coordinate with and provide assistance, expertise, or training to law enforcement agencies and multidisciplinary teams. The power of arrest of an investigator for the Office acting as a peace officer will be limited to offenses involving eligible adult abuse, neglect, or exploitation and to situations of imminent danger.

The bill provides that the director of DHSS has the power to subpoena the production of books, papers, or records when necessary to investigate potential abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

This bill creates a mandated reporting requirement for certain mental health, educational, protective services, and law enforcement personnel to report cases of animal abuse or neglect to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association (MACA). MACA must provide the report of abuse or neglect to any duly-authorized law enforcement official and, if appropriate, a county or municipal animal control officer or an

animal cruelty investigator. If the mandated reporter is an employee of an agency or political subdivision of the State and fails to make a report as required under this provision, the employer must send a written notice to the employee noting the failure and provide a reminder of the requirements of reporting animal abuse or neglect. A mandated reporter who fails to make a report will be subject to discipline by his or her professional licensing board, as well as a fine, as described in the bill.

This bill creates the offense of malicious false report of animal abuse. A person commits this offense if they make a report to a law enforcement agency or an applicable government agency alleging animal abuse when the person knows the report is false and makes the report for the purpose of disrupting, harassing, causing monetary loss to, or disturbing the peace of the owner of the animal. Malicious false report of animal abuse is a class C misdemeanor. If a reporting party asserts that his or her report of animal abuse was made in good faith, the state will have the burden to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant did not have good faith

The bill adds starvation of an animal to the offense of animal abuse.

This bill is similar to HB 1298 (2025).