

<b>LFC Requester:</b>	<b>Rachel Mercer-Garcia</b>
-----------------------	-----------------------------

**AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS - 2025 REGULAR SESSION**

**WITHIN 24 HOURS OF BILL POSTING, UPLOAD ANALYSIS TO**

**[AgencyAnalysis.nmlegis.gov](http://AgencyAnalysis.nmlegis.gov) and email to [billanalysis@dfa.nm.gov](mailto:billanalysis@dfa.nm.gov)**

*(Analysis must be uploaded as a PDF)*

**SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

*{Indicate if analysis is on an original bill, amendment, substitute or a correction of a previous bill}*

**Date Prepared:** 2025.2.21 *Check all that apply:*  
**Bill Number:** HB534 Original  Correction   
 Amendment  Substitute

**Sponsor:** Diane Torres-Velásquez and Elizabeth "Liz" Thomson **Agency Name and Code Number:** Office of Family Representation and Advocacy - 68000  
**Short Title:** Autobiographical Storytelling for Children **Person Writing:** S. Ortiz  
**Phone:** 505-549-5843 **Email:** Stacie.Ortiz@ofra.nm.gov

**SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT**

**APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)**

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY25	FY26		
0	0	0	0

(Parenthesis ( ) indicate expenditure decreases)

**REVENUE (dollars in thousands)**

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY25	FY26	FY27		
0	0	0	0	0

(Parenthesis ( ) indicate revenue decreases)

**ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)**

	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
<b>Total</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:  
Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

### **SECTION III: NARRATIVE**

#### **BILL SUMMARY**

##### Synopsis:

This bill proposes would require the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) to establish a trauma-informed practice using autobiographies to teach children to retell their stories to support language and emotional development.

Subsection A: requires CYFD to contract with speech-language pathologists to train and facilitate workshops for families and case workers to support children in foster care with language and emotional development by learning and practicing storytelling skills using family experiences in history, mathematics, or science as the content and backdrop for shared stories.

Subsection B: requires CYFD to develop standards for the delivery of training and workshops, including quality management and improvement, accessibility, availability of services, rights and responsibilities of providers, evaluation and documentation and confidentiality of client records.

Subsection C: requires CYFD to develop, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

#### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

No funding is appropriated for the activities required in this bill. It is unknown if this program can be absorbed within CYFD's current budget, especially if the program is to be implemented statewide.

#### **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

While autobiographical storytelling can be a healing modality when implemented within a clinical framework, it can also lead to unintentional re-traumatization of children and youth in foster care. There is a risk of new disclosures of child abuse and neglect, and the bill does not address how this should be handled or addressed. Presumably, CYFD's established procedures for reports of abuse or neglect would apply. If storytelling activities occur in a place that feels unsafe or with people with whom the child or youth does not feel emotionally or physically safe, it could be harmful to them. Further, the bill does not clarify whether this service is voluntary for children and youth, or families and case workers.

It is unknown if there are current speech-language pathologists (SPLs) available in New Mexico with this specific expertise – trauma-informed storytelling. It is unclear if the bill seeks to create a new service type, if New Mexico's current Medicaid plan can cover the cost of this program, and if contracts with SPLs would require a non-profit/for-profit umbrella or if sole proprietors would be permitted to conduct this service.

The bill identifies SLPs as the professionals who will carry out the training and workshops. There is some concern that this program does not require a multidisciplinary approach,

specifically the inclusion of mental health professionals, which would be important since there is risk of retraumatizing children and youth.

The bill does not address the diverse needs of children and youth in foster care, including children/youth who speak languages other than English, are non-verbal, experience delays in language development, limitations due to chronological and developmental age, special needs or disabilities, or level of trauma they may have experienced. These factors must be considered when asking children and young people to share their stories. Additionally, the bill does not include or otherwise address cultural connections and cultural preservation, nor does it require knowledge/cultural expertise of the SLP trainers, or include consideration that many cultures in New Mexico currently utilize storytelling as healing practices and the responsibility of the department is to maintain those connections and activities.

The bill includes training and workshops to “families and case workers”. It is unclear if “families” means resource foster parents, Treatment Foster Care providers, and/or the biological/legal/chosen families of children and youth in foster care. This should be further defined.

### **PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS**

No performance measures are included in the bill. It is unclear how ‘success’ will be measured or what data will be tracked. This is not a pilot program with the requirement of assessing efficacy and impact. If the program does not produce the intended results, CYFD will still be required to maintain this program under the law.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

CYFD will need to develop a training plan to include this program as required. The bill does not designate which division within CYFD will be responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the framework. This will likely increase the duties of the CYFD employees and administration and could be burdensome for those workers given the current CYFD staff shortage.

No administrative implications are identified for the Office of Family Representation and Advocacy other than the potential for increased legal representation required should new disclosures of abuse/neglect be made resulting in new petitions being filed and/or amended.

### **CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP**

This bill may duplicate efforts/programs offered by current services providers in the community.

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

Technical assistance and IT support may be required if the training modules or workshops are in offered online. Accessibility considerations must also be addressed to ensure an inclusive program.

### **OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**

OFRA continues to be concerned about the growing number of bills that directly affect the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) and the child and family welfare system more broadly. While these bills may not directly conflict with one another or duplicate efforts,

this piecemeal approach could lead to a patchwork of uncoordinated requirements. Together, these changes would create significant administrative and programmatic burdens on CYFD.

Additionally, many of the requirements proposed in the multitude of bills would not improve practices or lead to better outcomes for children and families. OFRA is concerned that these bills, if passed without coordination, would negatively impact on our clients and their ability to work with CYFD to reunify their families.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

## **WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL**

## **AMENDMENTS**