

# Oklahoma State Senate

Communications Division  
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## ***New Law Will Help Better Protect Child Abuse Victims***

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – Child abuse victims will be receiving help and protection sooner under a new law signed this week. House Bill 1738, by Rep. Ron Peters and Sen. Gary Stanislawski, amends the Oklahoma Child Abuse Reporting and Prevention Act to include “or other health care professional” to the list of persons required to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child.

“Currently, we have a problem because the police and DHS have to file a subpoena in order to get medical information about suspected child abuse from EMSA or other medical workers,” said Peters, R-Tulsa. “It’s an unnecessary formality that wastes time and places these children in further danger. We need to ensure that law enforcement can get all the information they need regarding suspected child abuse from the health professionals at the time the victim is being treated.”

Health professionals will now be required to provide copies of the examination on which the report of child abuse or neglect was based along with other relevant records to law enforcement and the Department of Human Services.

“This new law will increase the efficiency and ability of law enforcement and child welfare investigators to obtain the vital medical information and evidence they need to investigate child abuse and deaths,” said Stanislawski, R-Tulsa. “Any delay in the availability of 911 calls and paramedics’ reports degrades the quality of the scene investigation as well as the initial interviews with witnesses and suspects which may affect the ability to obtain sufficient evidence to successfully prosecute child abusers.”

OKDHS received 65,493 reports of child abuse on families in FY’ 2008 and investigated or assessed 61,327. They found 11,714 cases of confirmed child abuse, which was 19 percent of the investigated and assessed cases. In 2008, 32 Oklahoma children died as a result of child abuse.

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**For more information, contact:**  
Sen. Stanislawski – (405) 521-5624  
Rep. Peters – (405) 557-7359