

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Authors: Meslow and others

Subject: Expanding first-degree murder crime involving child abuse

Analyst: Judie Zollar (651 296-1554)

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Overview

This bill expands the first-degree murder crime that applies when a person causes the death of a minor while committing child abuse. Under the bill, the first-degree murder crime applies when the person has engaged in a past pattern of child abuse upon *any* child. Under current law, the first-degree murder crime applies only if the perpetrator has previously engaged in child abuse against the child the perpetrator kills.

Section

- 1 **Murder in the first degree.** Expands the first-degree murder crime that applies when a person causes the death of a minor while committing child abuse to apply when the perpetrator has previously engaged in child abuse against any child, not just the child whose death the perpetrator causes. Currently, this crime occurs when a perpetrator causes the death of a child while committing child abuse and the person has engaged in a past pattern of child abuse upon "the child" and the death occurs under circumstances manifesting an extreme indifference to human life. Under the bill, the crime would occur when a perpetrator has engaged in a past pattern of child abuse on "a child," not necessarily the same child, and the death occurs under circumstances manifesting an extreme indifference to human life. The penalty for this crime is life, although the commissioner of corrections may release the offender from prison after the offender has served 30 years.
- 2 **Effective date.** Effective the day after enactment, for crimes committed on or after that date.