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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
(Rouson) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete lines 72 - 286

and insert:

caregiver names.—Subject to an appropriation, the Department of  
Law Enforcement shall provide information to a law enforcement  
officer stating whether a person is a parent or caregiver who is  
currently the subject of a child protective investigation for  
alleged child abuse, abandonment, or neglect or is a parent or  
caregiver of a child who has been allowed to return to or remain



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11 in the home under judicial supervision after an adjudication of  
12 dependency. This information shall be provided via a Florida  
13 Crime Information Center query into the department's child  
14 protection database.

15 (1) If a law enforcement officer has an interaction with a  
16 parent or caregiver as described in this section and the  
17 interaction results in the officer having a concern about a  
18 child's health, safety, or well-being, the law enforcement  
19 officer shall report the relevant details of the interaction to  
20 the central abuse hotline immediately after the interaction even  
21 if the requirements of s. 39.201, relating to reporting of  
22 knowledge or suspicion of abuse, abandonment, or neglect, are  
23 not met.

24 (2) The central abuse hotline shall provide any relevant  
25 information to:

26 (a) The child protective investigator, if the parent or  
27 caregiver is the subject of a child protective investigation; or

28 (b) The child's case manager and the attorney representing  
29 the department, if the parent or caregiver has a child under  
30 judicial supervision after an adjudication of dependency.

31 Section 4. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section  
32 39.8296, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

33 39.8296 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office; legislative  
34 findings and intent; creation; appointment of executive  
35 director; duties of office.—

36 (2) STATEWIDE GUARDIAN AD LITEM OFFICE.—There is created a  
37 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office within the Justice  
38 Administrative Commission. The Justice Administrative Commission  
39 shall provide administrative support and service to the office



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to the extent requested by the executive director within the available resources of the commission. The Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office shall not be subject to control, supervision, or direction by the Justice Administrative Commission in the performance of its duties, but the employees of the office shall be governed by the classification plan and salary and benefits plan approved by the Justice Administrative Commission.

(b) The Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office shall, within available resources, have oversight responsibilities for and provide technical assistance to all guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem programs located within the judicial circuits.

1. The office shall identify the resources required to implement methods of collecting, reporting, and tracking reliable and consistent case data.

2. The office shall review the current guardian ad litem programs in Florida and other states.

3. The office, in consultation with local guardian ad litem offices, shall develop statewide performance measures and standards.

4. The office shall develop a guardian ad litem training program, which shall include, but not be limited to, training on the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age. The office shall establish a curriculum committee to develop the training program specified in this subparagraph. The curriculum committee shall include, but not be limited to, dependency judges, directors of circuit guardian ad litem programs, active certified guardians ad litem, a mental health professional who specializes in the treatment of children, a member of a child advocacy group, a representative



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of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and a social worker experienced in working with victims and perpetrators of child abuse.

5. The office shall review the various methods of funding guardian ad litem programs, shall maximize the use of those funding sources to the extent possible, and shall review the kinds of services being provided by circuit guardian ad litem programs.

6. The office shall determine the feasibility or desirability of new concepts of organization, administration, financing, or service delivery designed to preserve the civil and constitutional rights and fulfill other needs of dependent children.

7. In an effort to promote normalcy and establish trust between a court-appointed volunteer guardian ad litem and a child alleged to be abused, abandoned, or neglected under this chapter, a guardian ad litem may transport a child. However, a guardian ad litem volunteer may not be required or directed by the program or a court to transport a child.

8. The office shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court an interim report describing the progress of the office in meeting the goals as described in this section. The office shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court a proposed plan including alternatives for meeting the state's guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem needs. This plan may include recommendations for less than the entire state, may



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include a phase-in system, and shall include estimates of the cost of each of the alternatives. Each year the office shall provide a status report and provide further recommendations to address the need for guardian ad litem services and related issues.

Section 5. Subsections (2) and (4) of section 402.402, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

402.402 Child protection and child welfare personnel; attorneys employed by the department.—

(2) SPECIALIZED TRAINING.—All child protective investigators and child protective investigation supervisors employed by the department or a sheriff's office must complete the following specialized training:

(a) Training on the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age.

(b) Training that is either focused on serving a specific population, including, but not limited to, medically fragile children, sexually exploited children, children under 3 years of age, or families with a history of domestic violence, mental illness, or substance abuse, or focused on performing certain aspects of child protection practice, including, but not limited to, investigation techniques and analysis of family dynamics. The specialized training may be used to fulfill continuing education requirements under s. 402.40(3)(e). Individuals hired before July 1, 2014, shall complete the specialized training by June 30, 2016, and individuals hired on or after July 1, 2014, shall complete the specialized training within 2 years after hire. An individual may receive specialized training in multiple areas.



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(4) ATTORNEYS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO HANDLE CHILD WELFARE CASES.—Attorneys hired on or after July 1, 2014, whose primary responsibility is representing the department in child welfare cases shall, within the first 6 months of employment, receive training in all of the following:

(a) The dependency court process, including the attorney's role in preparing and reviewing documents prepared for dependency court for accuracy and completeness. ~~+~~

(b) Preparing and presenting child welfare cases, including at least 1 week shadowing an experienced children's legal services attorney preparing and presenting cases. ~~+~~

(c) Safety assessment, safety decisionmaking tools, and safety plans. ~~+~~

(d) Developing information presented by investigators and case managers to support decisionmaking in the best interest of children. ~~+~~ ~~and~~

(e) The experiences and techniques of case managers and investigators, including shadowing an experienced child protective investigator and an experienced case manager for at least 8 hours.

(f) The recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age.

Section 6. Paragraph (f) of subsection (1) and subsection (3) of section 409.988, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

409.988 Lead agency duties; general provisions.—

(1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

(f) Shall ensure that all individuals providing care for dependent children receive appropriate training and meet the minimum employment standards established by the department.



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Appropriate training shall include, but is not limited to,  
training on the recognition of and responses to head trauma and  
brain injury in a child under 6 years of age.

(3) SERVICES.—A lead agency must provide dependent children with services that are supported by research or that are recognized as best practices in the child welfare field. The agency shall give priority to the use of services that are evidence-based and trauma-informed and may also provide other innovative services, including, but not limited to, family-centered and cognitive-behavioral interventions designed to mitigate out-of-home placements and intensive family reunification services that combine child welfare and mental health services for families with dependent children under 6 years of age.

Section 7. Subsection (24) is added to section 409.996, Florida Statutes, to read:

409.996 Duties of the Department of Children and Families.—The department shall contract for the delivery, administration, or management of care for children in the child protection and child welfare system. In doing so, the department retains responsibility for the quality of contracted services and programs and shall ensure that services are delivered in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

(24) Subject to an appropriation, the department, in collaboration with the lead agencies serving the judicial circuits selected in paragraph (a), may create and implement a program to more effectively provide case management services for dependent children under 6 years of age.



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(a) The department may select up to three judicial circuits in which to develop and implement a program under this subsection. Priority shall be given to a circuit that has a high removal rate, significant budget deficit, significant case management turnover rate, and the highest numbers of children in out-of-home care or a significant increase in the number of children in out-of-home care over the last 3 fiscal years.

(b) The program shall:

1. Include caseloads for dependency case managers comprised solely of children who are under 6 years of age, except as provided in paragraph (c). The maximum caseload for a case manager shall be no more than 15 children if possible.

2. Include case managers who are trained specifically in:

a. Critical child development for children under 6 years of age.

b. Specific practices of child care for children under 6 years of age.

c. The scope of community resources available to children under 6 years of age.

d. Working with a parent or caregiver and assisting him or her in developing the skills necessary to care for the health, safety, and well-being of a child under 6 years of age.

(c) If a child being served through the program has a dependent sibling, the sibling may be assigned to the same case manager as the child being served through the program; however, each sibling counts toward the case manager's maximum caseload as provided under paragraph (b).

(d) The department shall evaluate the permanency, safety, and well-being of children being served through the program and





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submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate,  
and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 1,  
2024, detailing its findings.

Section 8. Section 943.17297, Florida Statutes, is created  
to read:

943.17297 Training in the recognition of and responses to  
head trauma and brain injury.—Subject to an appropriation, the  
commission shall establish

===== T I T L E   A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Delete lines 9 - 42

and insert:

officers relating to specified individuals, subject to  
an appropriation; providing how such information shall  
be provided to law enforcement officers; providing  
requirements for law enforcement officers and the  
central abuse hotline relating to specified  
interactions with certain persons and how to relay  
details of such interactions; amending s. 39.8296,  
F.S.; requiring that the guardian ad litem training  
program include training on the recognition of and  
responses to head trauma and brain injury in children  
younger than a specified age; amending s. 402.402,  
F.S.; requiring certain investigators, supervisors,  
and attorneys to complete training on the recognition  
of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in  
specified children; amending s. 409.988, F.S.;  
requiring lead agencies to provide certain individuals



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with training on the recognition of and responses to  
head trauma and brain injury in specified children;  
authorizing lead agencies to provide intensive family  
reunification services that combine child welfare and  
mental health services to certain families; amending  
s. 409.996, F.S.; requiring the department and certain  
lead agencies to create and implement a program to  
more effectively provide case management services to  
specified children, subject to an appropriation;  
providing criteria for selecting judicial circuits for  
participation the program; specifying requirements of  
the program; requiring the Department of Children and  
families to evaluate the effectiveness of the program  
and submit a report to the Legislature and Governor by  
a specified date; creating s. 943.17297, F.S.;  
requiring the Criminal Justice Standards and Training  
Commission to incorporate specified training for law  
enforcement officers, subject to an appropriation;  
requiring law enforcement officers, as of a