

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

HB 7065 — Child Welfare

by Children, Families, and Seniors Subcommittee and Rep. Altman and others

The bill aids in creating and sustaining safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children and families that allow children to grow up to their full potential. The bill contains provisions aimed at addressing the needs of children and young adults by:

- Requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to identify children that are dually involved with both systems of care and provide a report to the Legislature that includes actions taken by both agencies to better serve such children.
- Requiring the DJJ to be invited to participate in multidisciplinary team assessment staffings if the child is involved in both the DCF and the DJJ systems of care for open dependency and delinquency proceedings, respectively.
- Providing additional requirements related to transition plans for older children in foster care and young adults who are receiving funding through the Independent Living Program that includes an emphasis on financial literacy.
- Requires postsecondary institutions to have knowledgeable, accessible, and responsive liaisons to assist children and young adults who were formerly in foster care and those experiencing homelessness with issues related to the use of a tuition and fee exemption.

In addition, the bill addresses needs specific to fathers and at-risk youth by:

- Directing the DCF to contract for an initiative to promote responsible fatherhood with the goal of providing all fathers resources and inspiration to enhance their positive involvement with their children.
- Creating opportunities for not-for-profit organizations who address the needs of fathers and provide mentorships for at-risk boys to receive funding through grant programs established within the DCF.
- Providing for increased engagement with and provision of services to fathers by requiring Florida's community-based care lead agencies to hire father engagement specialists and requiring the Department of Health to include father engagement activities in the current programs that offer home visiting services.
- Requiring the Legislature to designate the month of June as "Responsible Fatherhood Month" to recognize the importance of fathers in their children's lives.
- Requiring the Department of Revenue to establish a dedicated webpage on its website to provide obligors who have difficulty paying child support due to economic hardship certain information that will, in part, assist the obligor with modifying a child support order or access services from CareerSource Florida.
- Requiring the notification related to delinquent child support to be in writing and include certain information about accessing services to assist the father is satisfying his obligation.
- Requiring the Department of Economic Opportunity to expand grants for organizations that assist certain noncustodial parents with becoming self-sufficient and to be better able to satisfy child support payments.

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- Requiring a children's initiative to update the strategic community plan every five years to reflect the current status of the area served and providing requirements for a children's initiative to receive state funding.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 117-0