

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 282 — Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

by Appropriations Committee and Senators Rouson, Jones, Book, and Rodrigues

The bill (Chapter 2022-13, L.O.F.) promotes the use of peer specialists to assist an individual's recovery from substance use disorder (SUD) or mental illness. Peer specialists are persons who have recovered from a substance use disorder or mental illness who support a person with a current substance use disorder or mental illness.

Specifically, the bill:

- Adds the use of peer specialists as an essential element of a coordinated system of care;
- Provides legislative findings and intent related to the use of peer specialists in the provision of behavioral health care;
- Requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to designate a managing entity with an existing certified recovery peer specialist training program to provide training for persons seeking certification as peer specialists and requires the managing entity to give preference to trainers who are currently certified peer specialists;
- Requires the training program to coincide with a competency exam and be based on current practice standards;
- Revises background screening requirements for peer specialists;
- Adds offenses for which individuals seeking certification as a peer specialist may seek an exemption from eligibility disqualification, thereby expanding the number of people that may become certified as peer specialists under Florida law;
- Allows peer specialists to work with adults with mental health disorders, in addition to SUDs and co-occurring disorders, while a request for an exemption from a background check disqualification is pending;
- Increases the number of days during which a service provider can work under the supervision of a certified peer specialist while a request for an exemption from a background check disqualification is pending to 180 days from the current 90 days; and
- Provides that individuals certified as peer specialists by July 1, 2022, will be deemed to have met the requirements for certification under the bill, but requires these individuals to comply with minimum standards and requirements needed to maintain certification.

The bill is expected to have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on state government.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2022.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 114-0

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/HB 615 — Human Trafficking

by Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee and Rep. Overdorf (CS/SB 1436 by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senator Garcia)

The bill requires the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking (Statewide Council) to evaluate how social media platforms are used to facilitate human trafficking within Florida and to make recommendations on how to stop or prevent them from being used for such purposes.

The bill also requires certain entities to develop and implement training related to human trafficking, including to require:

- The direct-support organization of the Statewide Council to develop training on human trafficking for fire safety inspectors which is eligible for continuing education credit; and
- Foster parents and agency staff to complete preservice and inservice training on human trafficking at specified intervals.

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

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 112-0

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

CS/CS/SB 692 — Sexual Offenses Definitions

by Rules Committee; Criminal Justice Committee; and Senators Stewart and Harrell

This bill amends numerous statutes relating to various sexual offenses, to replace the terms “vagina” or “vaginal” with “female genitals.” The bill defines “female genitals” to include the labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, vulva, hymen, and vagina.

The bill amends the following sections to replace such terms and apply the above-described definition:

- Section 365.161, F.S., relating to the prohibition of certain obscene telephone calls;
- Section 491.0112, F.S., relating to sexual misconduct by a psychotherapist;
- Section 775.0847, F.S., relating to possession or promotion of certain images of child pornography;
- Section 794.011, F.S., relating to sexual battery;
- Section 794.05, F.S., relating to the unlawful sexual activity with certain minors;
- Section 796.07, F.S., relating to prohibiting prostitution and related acts;
- Section 800.04, F.S., relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of persons less than 16 years of age;
- Section 825.1025, F.S., relating to lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon or in the presence of an elderly person or disabled person;
- Section 827.071, F.S., relating to sexual performance by a child;
- Section 847.001, F.S., providing definitions relating to obscenity;
- Section 872.06, F.S., relating to abuse of a dead human body;
- Section 944.35, F.S., relating to authorized use of force; malicious battery and sexual misconduct; and
- Section 951.27, F.S., relating to blood tests of inmates.

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

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 117-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2022 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

SB 704 — Substance Abuse Service Providers

by Senator Harrell

The bill makes several changes to provisions governing the licensure and regulation of substance abuse treatment programs and providers, including recovery residences and recovery residence administrators.

The bill requires applicants for substance abuse service provider licensure to include the names and locations of recovery residences the applicant plans to refer patients to or accept patients from in their licensure application.

By July 1, 2022, the bill requires licensed substance abuse service providers to record the names and locations of recovery residences to which the applicant has referred patients, or from which the applicant has accepted patients, in the Provider Licensure and Designations System (PLADS) maintained by the Department of Children and Families (the DCF). Providers must update PLADS with the names and locations of any new recovery residences to which patients have been referred, or from which patients have been received, within 30 business days of referring or receiving patients. The bill subjects providers to a \$1,000 administrative fine for non-compliance beginning on July 1, 2022.

The bill prohibits certified recovery residence administrators from managing more than 50 patients at once without written justification and approval from a certification credentialing entity and prohibits management of more than 100 patients without exception. The bill also removes a cap on the number of recovery residences a certified recovery residence administrator can manage at any given time. The bill requires substance abuse service providers to return an individual's personal effects upon the individual's discharge from treatment.

The bill also requires the DCF to include approval for contingency management programs in the triennial plan's regional funding priorities component. Contingency management is a type of behavioral therapy used as part of substance abuse treatment in which individuals are rewarded for evidence of positive behavioral change. Every three years, the DCF must create a state master plan for the delivery and financing of substance abuse and mental health services throughout Florida, including funding priorities developed by regions of the state. Currently, the master plan does not include a requirement for such regional funding priorities to include contingency management programs.

The bill is expected to have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the DCF.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/HB 893 — Child Welfare Placements

by Health and Human Services Committee; Children, Families, and Seniors Subcommittee; and Reps. Melo, and Williams, and others (CS/CS/SB 1120 by Appropriations Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senator Rodriguez)

The bill, in part, makes changes to Florida law to align with the new requirements of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Act) related to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP), one of a limited type of congregate care settings approved for placements under the Act. The bill will ensure placements in QRTPs are made in accordance with rule and in compliance with federal requirements. Specifically, the bill:

- Defines the term “therapeutic group home” (TGH) to mean a residential treatment center that offers a 24-hour residential program providing community-based mental health treatment and mental health support services in a nonsecure, homelike setting to children who meet certain criteria.
- Amends the definition of “residential treatment” or “residential treatment program” to include a therapeutic group home as defined above.
- Clarifies the definition of “suitable for residential treatment” or “suitability” to apply when the child requires residential treatment program if the child is expected to benefit from mental or behavioral health treatment.
- Codifies current practice that requires the DCF, rather than the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), to appoint the qualified evaluator to conduct suitability assessments.
- Requires the qualified evaluator for TGH and QRTP to be a psychiatrist licensed under ch. 458, F.S., or ch. 459, F.S., psychologist licensed under ch. 490, F.S., or a mental health counselor licensed under ch. 491, F.S., with at least two years of experience in the diagnosis and treatment of serious emotional disturbances in children and adolescents, as opposed to the stricter requirements for a (PRTF/SIPP) Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility/Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (PRTF/SIPP) placement which requires the evaluator to be a psychiatrist or a psychologist licensed in Florida with three years of experience.
- Modifies the time frame for providing a copy of the assessment to the child’s guardian ad litem and the court to within five days of receipt of the assessment, rather than immediately upon placement as required in current law.
- Removes the specific rulemaking authority from the DCF and ACHA to administer the provisions of s. 39.407, F.S.

Additionally, the bill replaces the term “special needs child” with the term “difficult to place child” regarding children who are not likely to be adopted because of certain characteristics. The bill also amends the term, in part, to include a child who is a member of a racial group that is disproportionately represented among children whose permanent custody has been awarded to the DCF or to a licensed child-placing agency. The term is defined in current law, in part, to mean a child who is black or of racially mixed parentage. The terminology changes do not appear to have any effect on eligibility for adoption subsidies.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 116-0

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

CS/HB 899 — Mental Health of Students

by Education and Employment Committee and Rep. Hunschofsky and others
(SB 1240 by Senator Harrell)

The bill specifies that charter schools must comply with involuntary examination data reporting requirements established by the Legislature in 2021 for traditional public schools and requires the Department of Education to share school-related involuntary examination data with the Department of Children and Families (the DCF) annually by July 1 each year. The bill also requires that the DCF use this data in its biennial analysis of involuntary examinations of minors in Florida.

The bill revises requirements for a school district's annual mental health assistance allocation plan to include policies and procedures that require the provision of information on additional behavioral health services and resources for students currently receiving services and their families. Additionally, the plan's policies and procedures must require school districts to provide any individual living in the same household as a student currently receiving services with information about available behavioral health services, when receipt of such services could benefit the well-being of the student.

The bill requires each district school superintendent to designate a mental health coordinator for their district. The mental health coordinator is required to serve as the district's primary point of contact for the district's coordination, communication, and implementation of student mental health policies, procedures, responsibilities, and reporting.

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

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 114-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2022 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

SB 934 — Public Records/Homelessness Counts and Information Systems

by Senators Gruters and Perry

The bill makes confidential and exempt from public inspection and copying requirements individual identifying information of a person contained in a Point-In-Time Count and Survey or data in a Homeless Management Information System collected pursuant to federal law and regulations. “Individual identifying information” is defined as information that directly or indirectly identifies a specific person, or can be linked with other available information to identify a specific person.

The bill provides for retroactive application of the exemption to protect similar information collected prior to the bill becoming a law.

The bill does not prohibit the release of aggregate information from a Point-In-Time Count and Survey or data in a Homeless Management Information System that does not disclose individual identifying information of a person.

The exemption is subject to the Open Government Sunset Review Act and will stand repealed on October 2, 2027, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature. The bill also includes a public necessity statement for the exemption as required by law.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-1; House 113-0

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

CS/CS/HB 963 — Funding for Sheriffs

by Appropriations Committee; Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee; and Rep. Hunschofsky and others (CS/SB 1452 by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senators Book and Jones)

The bill addresses a sheriff's authority to carry forward state funds. Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes a sheriff to carry forward documented unexpended state funds from one fiscal year to the next;
- Restricts the cumulative amount of state funds that may be carried forward to no more than 8 percent of the sheriff's office total contract or grant agreement amount;
- Requires any unexpended state funds in excess of the maximum cumulative amount and all federal funds to be returned to the Department of Children and Families (DCF);
- Restricts any funds carried forward from being used to create increased recurring future obligations or for any type of program or service that is not currently authorized by the existing contract or grant award agreement with the DCF;
- Requires the expenditure of funds carried forward to be separately reported to the DCF; and
- Requires a sheriff to return all unexpended funds to the DCF if that sheriff will no longer be providing child protective investigation services.

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

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 120-0

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

CS/HB 1249 — Treatment of Defendants Adjudicated Incompetent to Stand Trial

by Children, Families and Seniors Subcommittee and Rep. Persons-Mulicka and others
(CS/CS/SB 1600 by Appropriations Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs
Committee; and Senator Bradley)

The bill amends s. 916.106, F.S., revising the definition of “forensic facility” to include separate and secure facilities that, in part, are contracted using funding from the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and to include a mental health facility serving forensic clients committed to the DCF that is operated by a community mental health provider through a contract that may be co-located in a county jail.

The bill may alleviate the waitlist for forensic treatment beds at existing facilities operated by the DCF by creating additional venues where individuals deemed incompetent to stand trial due to a mental illness, but who are likely to regain competence to proceed in the foreseeable future, can receive restoration treatment.

The DCF anticipates that the proposed language would also provide flexibility in identifying and securing community-based or jail-based competency restoration treatment for individuals who can be served in a less restrictive environment.

The bill is likely to have a negative indeterminate fiscal impact on the DCF and may have a positive fiscal impact on private sector entities.

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

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 114-0

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/SB 1262 — Mental Health and Substance Abuse

by Appropriations Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senators Burgess, Rouson, and Perry

The bill makes several changes to procedures surrounding voluntary and involuntary examinations of individuals under the Baker and Marchman Acts. The bill prohibits restrictions on visitors, phone calls, and written correspondence for Baker Act patients unless certain qualified medical professionals document specific conditions are met. The bill requires law enforcement officers to search certain electronic databases for Emergency Contact Information (ECI) of Baker and Marchman Act patients being transported to a receiving facility. The bill also expands the entities who can access the ECI to specifically include receiving facilities, hospitals, and licensed detoxification and addictions receiving facilities.

Under the bill, patients subject to an involuntary Baker Act examination who do not meet the criteria for a petition for involuntary services must be released at the end of 72 hours, regardless of whether the examination period ends on a weekend or holiday, as long as certain discharge criteria are met. The bill also permits psychiatric advanced practice registered nurses practicing under the protocol of a psychiatrist in a nationally accredited community mental health center to conduct discharge examinations for patients held under an involuntary Baker Act.

Additionally, the bill makes it a first degree misdemeanor for a person to knowingly and willfully:

- Furnish false information for the purpose of obtaining emergency or other involuntary admission for any person;
- Cause, or conspire with another to cause, any emergency or other involuntary mental health procedure for the person under false pretenses; or
- Cause, or conspire with another to cause, without lawful justification, any person to be denied their rights under the Baker Act statutes.

The bill requires receiving facilities to offer voluntary Baker and Marchman Act patients the option to authorize the release of clinical information to certain individuals known to the patient within 24 hours of admission.

The bill clarifies that telehealth may be used when discharging patients under an involuntary Baker Act examination, and directs facilities receiving transportation reports detailing the circumstances of a Baker Act to share such reports with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for use in analyzing annual Baker Act data.

The bill also makes several changes to the Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse (Commission), including:

- Authorizing the Commission to conduct meetings in person at locations throughout the state or via teleconference or other electronic means;
- Authorizing members to receive per diem and reimbursement and travel expenses;

- Authorizing the Commission to access information and records necessary to carry out its duties, including exempt and confidential information, provided that the Commission does not disclose such exempt or confidential information; and
- Modifying the due date for the Commission's interim report from September 1, 2022 to January 1, 2023.

The DCF anticipates that collecting and processing Baker Act transportation reports will cost approximately \$90,000 for the first year of reporting.

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

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 117-0

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/CS/HB 1349 — Guardianship Data Transparency

by Health and Human Services Committee; Appropriations Committee; Children, Families and Seniors Subcommittee; Rep. Chaney and others (CS/CS/SB 1710 by Rules Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senators Bradley, Brandes, and Brodeur)

The bill requires the Florida Clerks of Court Operations Corporation (CCOC) and the Clerks of Court to establish a database of guardian and guardianship information. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the CCOC to create a statewide database to increase judicial oversight that may not be operational to end users until on or after July 1, 2023, and limits access to the database to judges and their direct staff, and court personnel and Clerks of Court personnel authorized by a judge to assist with guardianship matters.
- Provides an enumerated list of data elements that must, at a minimum, be included and list of data elements by which the database must, at a minimum, be searchable.
- Requires the CCOC to upload certain professional guardian information from the database to a publicly accessible webpage and prohibits personal identifying information of wards from inclusion in the publicly accessible webpage.
- Requires the CCOC to generate monthly reports of statewide, circuit-level, and county-level statistical data, including only aggregated and deidentified data, and to publish the reports on the publicly accessible webpage.
- Requires the CCOC to generate other reports from information in the database at the request of the Legislature, the judiciary, or the Department of Elderly Affairs (DOEA).
- Requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to conduct a comparative analysis and to study trends in the use of Florida's guardianship system and provide an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature beginning in 2024 through 2027.
- Requires the DOEA to publish profiles of professional guardians on their webpage on or before July 1, 2023 and prohibits the DOEA from including information from the CCOC database in professional guardian profiles published on the DOEA website.
- Appropriates the CCOC \$2.4 million nonrecurring General Revenue to develop the database and the DOEA \$340,000 from General Revenue, of which \$300,000 is nonrecurring and \$40,000 is recurring, to implement the provisions of the bill.

The bill is anticipated to have a significant negative fiscal impact on the CCOC and the Clerks of Court due to the cost of creating and maintaining the database. Additionally, the bill will likely have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the DOEA related to the transmission of data for inclusion in the database and from publishing professional guardian profiles on their website.

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

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 117-0

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/HB 1577— Homeless Youth

by Health and Human Services Committee; Children, Families, and Seniors Subcommittee; and Rep. Woodson and others (SB 1708 by Senators Garcia, Jones, and Book)

The bill addresses the needs of children and young adults who are experiencing homelessness, including those who are certified by the local school district liaison under current Florida law, and amends provisions that will improve access for youth who are currently in, or were formerly in, foster care.

Specifically, the bill:

- Requires district school boards to issue a homeless youth certified under s. 743.067, F.S., a card that includes information on his or her rights and available benefits, and allows health care providers to accept the issued card as proof of the young adult's status as a certified homeless youth.
- Expands the Keys-to-Independence program that provides assistance with the costs of driver education, licensure, and motor vehicle insurance to children in foster care to include certified homeless youth who meet certain requirements.
- Waives fees for certified copies of a birth certificate for certified homeless youth and young adults who aged out of foster care.
- 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.
- Requires postsecondary institutions to retain original documents on a student's tuition and fee exemption and prohibits additional request for such documentation.
- Clarifies provisions related to homeless youth who are certified under s. 743.067, F.S., and updates the definition and criteria for certification to align with federal law.
- Amends the definition of which students qualify for a tuition and fee exemption as homeless children and youth to align this definition with federal law.
- Requires any student determined to be eligible for a tuition and fee exemption as a result of being a homeless child or youth for a preceding year to be presumed homeless for subsequent years unless an institution has conflicting information.
- Directs the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to evaluate the effectiveness of campus liaisons and of local school districts' delivery of benefits and services available under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

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

Vote: Senate 36-0; House 117-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2022 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

CS/SB 1844 — Mental Health and Substance Abuse

by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senators Bean and Perry

The bill revises the voluntariness provision under the Baker Act to allow a minor's voluntary admission to a receiving facility or hospital after a clinical review of the minor's assent has been conducted, rather than a hearing on the minor's consent as required under current law.

The bill also requires that a clinical review be held to verify the voluntariness of a minor's assent before a minor patient's status is transferred from involuntary to voluntary status under the Baker Act.

The bill requires law enforcement officers transporting an individual to a receiving facility for an involuntary examination under the Baker and Marchman Acts to restrain the individual in the least restrictive manner available and appropriate under the circumstances.

The bill would have an indeterminate, positive fiscal impact on the State Courts System and no fiscal impact on local governments.

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

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 117-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2022 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

SB 7008 — OGSR/Substance Abuse Impaired Persons

by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

The bill saves from repeal the public records exemption for all petitions for involuntary assessment and stabilization, pleadings, court orders, and related records filed with or by a court under Part V of the Marchman Act, relating to involuntary admissions procedures. Such information is confidential and exempt from public record requirements but may be disclosed by the clerk of the court under certain circumstances to specific parties and entities.

The public records exemption stands repealed on October 2, 2022, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature under the Open Government Sunset Review Act. The bill removes the scheduled repeal of the exemption to continue the confidential and exempt status of the petitions, court orders, and related records.

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

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 113-0

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2022 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

**Committee on Children, Families,
and Elder Affairs**

SB 7010 — OGSR/Public and Professional Guardians

by Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

The bill saves from repeal the public records exemption for certain information held by the Department of Elder Affairs (the DOEA) in connection with a complaint filed against, or an investigation of, a professional guardian. Specifically, the exemption covers the following investigative information:

- The names and identifying information of a ward and guardian;
- The ward’s personal health and financial records; and
- All photographs and video recordings. All other investigative information becomes public once an investigation concludes.

The bill defines what is considered an ‘active’ investigation and modifies the exemption for photos and video recordings to cover only photos and video recordings of a complainant or ward. Narrowing the exemption will provide the public with important information on the status of ongoing guardianship investigations without compromising the privacy of wards and their families.

The public records exemption stands repealed on October 2, 2022, unless reviewed and reenacted by the Legislature under the Open Government Sunset Review Act. The bill removes the scheduled repeal of the exemption to continue the confidential and exempt status of the information.

The bill will likely have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the DOEA.

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

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 113-1

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 7034 — Child Welfare

by Appropriations Committee and Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee

The bill makes three important changes to current law aimed at benefiting the lives of children in foster care.

First, the bill increases the monthly payment amounts for relative and nonrelative caregivers who have children placed with them in out-of-home care to achieve parity with the rates for Level II through Level V family foster home placements under the following circumstances:

- For caregivers who have obtained licensure as a child-specific Level I foster placement who have a child placed with them, regardless of whether a court has found that the child is dependent, from the time the child is placed in their care until the child reaches permanency.
- For caregivers, regardless of whether they have obtained a child-specific Level I license, who have a dependent child placed with them, from the date the child is found to be dependent or from the date the child is placed with them, whichever is later, for a period of not more than 6 months or until the child achieves permanency, whichever occurs first. This provision ensures that the 6 month timeline for licensure only begins once two circumstances are satisfied, including both that the child has been found to be dependent and that the child has actually been placed with the relative or nonrelative.

Additionally, the bill provides that relatives or nonrelatives who do not obtain licensure as a child-specific Level I foster placement within 6 months from the specified date will receive a monthly payment less than the \$333 monthly payment provided to a participant enrolled in the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) as determined by rule and will be applicable until the child achieves permanency or the relative or nonrelative caregiver obtains licensure as a child-specific Level I foster placement, whichever occurs first.

The bill also provides a \$200 per month per child subsidy to any foster parents and relative and nonrelative caregivers who have a child placed in their home between the ages of birth to school entry regardless of whether the caregiver is licensed or not. The subsidy may be provided as long as the child is placed in out-of-home care with the caregiver and is the subject of an open dependency proceeding.

Lastly, the bill expands the scope of potential students eligible for a tuition and fee exemption at a workforce education program, a Florida College System institution or a state university, to certain students who have been the subject of a shelter, dependency, or termination of parental rights proceeding, and who:

- Is in a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families relative caregiver placement at the time he or she reached 18 years of age;
- After reaching 14 years of age, spent at least 18 months in out-of-home care and were then reunited with his or her parents who were the subject of the dependency proceeding before reaching 18 years of age; and

- Were placed in a permanent guardianship and remains in such guardianship either until the student either reaches 18 years of age or, if before reaching 18 years of age, he or she enrolls in an eligible institution.

The bill is expected to have a significant recurring fiscal impact on state government expenditures.

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

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 112-0

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.
- 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