

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act providing for a study on children with
3 developmental delays; providing purposes;
4 providing for a commission and its membership,
5 officers, and meetings; providing for the
6 administration of the study and for staff and
7 expenses; prescribing the components of the
8 study; authorizing the employment of expert
9 consultants; providing for advisory workgroups;
10 requiring reports to the Legislature; providing
11 an appropriation; providing for expiration of
12 the act; providing an effective date.

13
14 WHEREAS, the healthy development of Florida's infants
15 and children is often hampered by their exposure to multiple
16 stresses, traumatic events such as child abuse and family
17 violence, mental or emotional disorders, or developmental
18 delays or disabilities that result in personal and family
19 hardships and extreme financial costs to public and private
20 community-based systems, and

21 WHEREAS, recent brain research, as well as other
22 clinical and social research, has confirmed that there exists
23 a window of opportunity for successfully intervening with
24 children experiencing and at risk of emotional, social,
25 cognitive, learning, and other developmental delays, and

26 WHEREAS, the consequences of young children entering
27 school and becoming adults with mental disorders or
28 developmental disabilities and delays not only affect children
29 and families but also affect systems that are publicly
30 supported, such as welfare assistance, child protection,

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1 criminal justice, special education, and other public social
2 and health-related systems, and

3 WHEREAS, there should be a comprehensive evaluation of
4 the needs of Florida's children who are at high risk of
5 significant delays and serious developmental problems that are
6 preventable and an evaluation of the interventions available,
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Florida's systems of care and public and
9 private resources need to be better integrated and coordinated
10 to intervene early and thus to prevent the adverse effects of
11 child abuse and neglect, community violence, mental disorders,
12 learning disorders, and developmental delays and problems,
13 NOW, THEREFORE,

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15 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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17 Section 1. Short title.--This act may be cited as the
18 "Study on Children with Developmental Delays Act."

19 Section 2. Purpose.--The purpose of this act is to
20 examine how this state can better identify and effectively
21 serve those young children with or at high risk of mental
22 disorders or developmental delays and disabilities, with the
23 goal of optimally minimizing the adverse effects of those
24 delays and disabilities on children in this state. As used in
25 this act, the term "children with developmental delays" means
26 those infants and young children from birth to 5 years of age
27 who are experiencing or are at high risk for developing
28 emotional, cognitive, social, learning, and other
29 developmental delays or long-term mental or developmental
30 disabilities or conditions. The study must recognize that
31 families, as well as other community-based entities, play a

1 major role in preventing or minimizing certain risks to the
2 child, enhancing the child's development, and minimizing the
3 long-term disabling impact of any developmental delay or
4 disability. The study should focus on developing
5 early-intervention strategies and programs that provide
6 individualized treatment and other services to infants and
7 young children and to their families so that the children will
8 not suffer unnecessarily because their problems and deficits
9 were never identified or were mislabeled. The study must
10 document the ways in which providing appropriate early
11 interventions to young children who experience these
12 developmental delays or deficits or early negative family
13 circumstances will afford a more productive life for these
14 children as well as result in cost savings to public systems
15 such as the criminal justice and child welfare systems. The
16 study must use to the greatest possible extent the work and
17 findings of other groups.

18 Section 3. Study on children with developmental
19 delays; administration; study commission membership;
20 components of study.--

21 (1) ADMINISTRATION OF STUDY; STAFF; EXPENSES.--The
22 Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall conduct the
23 study on children with developmental delays to meet the
24 purposes prescribed in this act. The Executive Office of the
25 Governor, the Department of Children and Family Services, and
26 the Children's Medical Services of the Department of Health
27 shall provide assistance to the partnership on request.

28 (a) The partnership shall appoint a study commission
29 to carry out the activities required for the study. The
30 commission is to consist of the following 16 members:

31 1. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice.

- 1 2. A representative of the Department of Children and
2 Family Services.
- 3 3. A representative of the Department of Education.
- 4 4. The Executive Director of the Agency for Health
5 Care Administration.
- 6 5. A representative of the Department of Health.
- 7 6. The Department of Psychiatry Chair of the
8 University of Florida Brain Institute.
- 9 7. The Department of Pediatrics Chair of the
10 University of Miami Medical School.
- 11 8. The chair of the Florida School Readiness
12 Partnership Board.
- 13 9. The chair of the Florida Interagency Coordinating
14 Council for Infants and Toddlers.
- 15 10. A professional who has expertise in the needs of
16 children with learning disabilities.
- 17 11. A professional who has expertise in the needs of
18 children with emotional or mental disorders.
- 19 12. A professional who has expertise in the needs of
20 children with developmental disabilities.
- 21 13. A professional with expertise in the diagnosis and
22 treatment of children with speech and language disorders.
- 23 14. A professional with expertise in the
24 early-intervention and prevention services rendered to
25 children in this state.
- 26 15. A professional with expertise in autism and
27 related disorders.
- 28 16. The parent of a child with a learning disability
29 or emotional or mental disorder.
- 30 (b) Appointments to the study commission must be
31 completed within 2 weeks after this act takes effect, and the

1 study commission must conduct its initial meeting within 1
2 month after this act takes effect. The partnership executive
3 director shall appoint a study coordinator within 15 days
4 after the appointment of the commission, within funds
5 appropriated. The partnership executive director may appoint
6 one professional staff member and one clerical staff member
7 within funds appropriated, subject to the approval of the
8 partnership. The staff shall serve under the direction of the
9 partnership executive director and shall perform the duties
10 assigned by the partnership. An agency head may not designate
11 a representative to attend study commission meetings on his or
12 her behalf. Professional members of the study commission must
13 be appointed in consultation with the President of the Senate
14 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

15 (c) Members of the study commission and members of the
16 advisory workgroups shall serve without compensation, but are
17 entitled to receive reimbursement for per diem and travel
18 expenses as provided in section 112.061, Florida Statutes.

19 (2) COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY.--The study on children
20 with developmental delays shall contain the following
21 components:

22 (a) Examination of the research and best practices in
23 the pertinent psychiatric/medical, social,
24 psychological/behavioral, and education professions in order
25 to identify early interventions that will prevent or minimize
26 the adverse effects of emotional, social, cognitive, learning,
27 or developmental delays or disabilities on children and their
28 families.

29 (b) Determination of the best existing,
30 age-appropriate screening and evaluation tools, such as School
31 Readiness uniform screening, which are currently used by

1 community service providers and education entities to identify
2 and link children with appropriate specialized interventions
3 and services.

4 (c) Identification of community risk factors such as
5 chronic community and family violence which expose infants and
6 young children to a variety of developmental and clinical
7 problems and limit the effectiveness of parents.

8 (d) Identification of existing services and programs
9 in this state which are effective and which need to be
10 expanded in scope, availability, or geographic access and
11 identification of new services, programs, or interventions
12 that have proven effective by means that include a review of
13 the professional expertise, available and unavailable, in this
14 state to provide these services.

15 (e) Determination of the configuration and
16 organizational arrangement of the delivery systems for
17 early-intervention services and programs to assure
18 coordination and integration with existing systems, which
19 include, but are not limited to, School Readiness, Infants and
20 Toddlers Early Intervention Program, Pre-Kindergarten
21 Disability Program, Healthy Start Program, Healthy Families
22 Florida, Florida KidCare, child and adolescent mental health
23 services, juvenile justice programs, developmental services,
24 foster care services, group care services, domestic violence
25 services, and teenage parent programs.

26 (f) Determination of the costs of providing services
27 and propose funding options.

28 (g) Based upon these finding and conclusions,
29 preparation of a plan for building a comprehensive
30 early-intervention system in this state for young children
31 with or at high risk of developmental delays or problems and

1 recommendation of public policy changes that will address the
2 issue of violence prevention. The plan must include a
3 description of services and programs accessible to all
4 communities in this state, budget and resource needs, proposed
5 statutory revisions, legislative funding options, and an
6 implementation schedule.

7 (3) EXPERT CONSULTANTS.--The study commission, with
8 the approval of the partnership, may invite national experts
9 in the area of brain research, child development and early
10 intervention, and violence intervention to participate in the
11 study activities and to make pertinent recommendations
12 concerning this state's prevention and early-intervention
13 strategies, programs, and services. Fees may be paid to the
14 consultants from the appropriation for the study.

15 (4) ADVISORY WORKGROUPS.--The study commission shall
16 establish at least two advisory workgroups. One must be a
17 scientific advisory workgroup composed of scientific experts
18 who will examine the effectiveness of various
19 early-intervention and prevention programs, preparing a report
20 for the study commission to help guide selection of programs.
21 The other must be a community advisory workgroup composed of
22 state agency program representatives; parents of children who
23 are at-risk of developmental delays or disabilities; parents
24 of children with disorders or disabilities; local providers of
25 child care, early-intervention services, and other relevant
26 services; a local school readiness coalition representative; a
27 regional policy council representative; and other experts in
28 the field or service system. This community advisory workgroup
29 shall provide the study commission with technical assistance
30 on the services and systems of this state.

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1 (5) REPORT.--The partnership must submit its report by
2 January 1, 2001, to the President of the Senate, the Speaker
3 of the House of Representatives, and the chairpersons of the
4 appropriate substantive committees of each house of the
5 Legislature. The recommendations of the task force must
6 include proposed legislation.

7 (6) APPROPRIATION.--There is appropriated for fiscal
8 year 2000-2001 the sum of \$250,000 from the General Revenue
9 Fund to the Florida Partnership on School Readiness to fund
10 the study. Of this appropriation, \$100,000 may be used to
11 reimburse national consultants in child development, brain
12 development, violence prevention, and other related areas who
13 provide consultation and share their expertise with the study
14 commission.

15 Section 4. This act expires June 30, 2001.

16 Section 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
17 law.