

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 1550

SPONSOR: Committee on Children and Families and Senator Silver

SUBJECT: Child Care/Home Operator Training

DATE: February 4, 2002 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Dowds	Whiddon	CF	Favorable/CS
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1550 increases the required hours for the child care introductory course from 40 to 45 to include brain research and computer technology. The bill stipulates that the 45-hour introductory course completed by child care personnel will be articulated into community college credit in early childhood education, with the approval of the Articulation Coordinating Committee. Successful completion of the introductory child care course will require passage of a competency examination. The specific degrees, credentials and courses that exempt child care personnel from certain portions of the required training are stipulated. Finally, references to a repealed section of Florida Statute and the State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Program are removed.

This bill substantially amends sections 402.313, 402.3131, and 402.305 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The established view of professionals and researchers in the child care field is that the quality of child care contributes to child development outcomes. Studies have found that quality child care is related to cognitive development, greater academic achievement, school readiness, higher social competence, and fewer behavior problems. One of the important aspects of quality child care typically identified by professionals is staff preparation and qualifications. The level of staff preparation is affected by both the training provided to caregivers and the rate of caregiver turnover. Nationally, efforts to retain qualified staff have included recognizing the professional capabilities of child care givers and creating opportunities to improve and secure higher educational certification, such as college degrees, without leaving the field of early childhood education.

Florida's licensing and registration standards for child care programs contain minimum staff training requirements based on the type of program. A "child care facility" includes any child care center or child care arrangement that is providing child care for a fee to more than five children who are unrelated to the operator of the program [s. 402.302(2), F.S.]. Excluded from programs considered a child care facility are public and non-public schools, resident summer camps, summer day camps, bible schools, and child care services in transient programs.

A child care facility is required to meet the licensing standards defined in s. 402.305, F.S., which include minimum training requirements for child care personnel. All such child care personnel are required to take an approved 40-hour introductory course in child care which must begin within 90 days of employment and be completed within 1 year [s. 402.305(2)(d), F.S.]. The introductory child care course is a 30-hour standardized statewide course which covers the following topic areas: state and local rules and regulations relative to child care; health, safety and nutrition; identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect; child development, including typical and atypical language, cognitive, motor, social and self-help skills development; and observation of developmental behaviors, including use of observation tools and determining the child's developmental age level. The additional 10 hours can be satisfied through one of the following specialized training modules: developmentally appropriate practices for young children, developmentally appropriate practices for school-age children, developmentally appropriate practices for infants and toddlers, developmentally appropriate practices for children with special needs, and owner/operators of child care programs. Successful completion of the stipulated coursework requires attendance for the full course, but no testing or examination of knowledge or competency acquired is required. Child care personnel can receive an exemption from a portion of the required child care training based on educational credentials or passage of competency examinations [s. 402.305(2), F.S.]. Possession of a child development associate (or equivalent) or a 2 year degree or higher in early childhood or child growth and development can exempt child care personnel from the health, safety and nutrition module, as well as the child development module (Rule 65C-22, F.A.C.).

A "family child care home" is a residence where child care is provided for payment to at least two unrelated families. Child care in a family child care home can be provided to no more than 10 children, based on the ages of the children. All family child care home operators, whether licensed or registered, are required to complete an approved 30-hour introductory course in family child care, which, if licensed or registered after October 1, 1999, must be completed prior to caring for any children. Section 402.305(2)(d), F.S., also requires that the operators of family child care homes serving at-risk children as part of the subsidized program, pursuant to s. 402.3015, F.S., are required to take the 40-hour child care course required of child care facility personnel. Section 402.3015, F.S., was repealed effective January 1, 2002 with ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.

A "large family child care home" is also a residence where child care is provided, but a maximum of 12 children may be served, based on the ages of the children. Operators of the large family child care homes are required to complete the 40-hour introductory child care course required of child care facility personnel.

Florida's 1999 School Readiness Act (ch. 99-357, L.O.F.), established requirements related to early childhood career advancement and articulation in s. 240.115(1)(e), F.S. Specifically, the

Commissioner of Education was directed to conduct a statewide assessment of the instruction of child care and early childhood education personnel and the market demands for personnel trained at various levels. The Articulation Coordinating Committee was required to establish an articulation career path for school readiness personnel based on this assessment, beginning at entry-level employment in child care and leading to a baccalaureate degree. As of October, 2001, the result of this initiative was a report, titled *Pathways to Professionalism*, which contained recommendations organized around the proposed framework for an articulated career path. Some of the recommendations included increasing the current state-mandated 40-hour training for child care personnel to 45 hours and making the training competency based. It was also recommended that a college-credit option for the state-mandated training be provided by increasing the state-mandated competency based 45-hour training to a state mandated competency based 60-hour training. Core knowledge and skills were outlined for different levels of early childhood professional, including the level for which a college credit option is recommended.

A process for maximizing articulation and assuring the accrediting bodies that certain courses, diplomas and degrees to be articulated to the next level on a statewide basis meet the content, contact hours and instructor qualifications has been established in the Florida Education Code. Section 229.551(1)(g), F.S., directs the Articulation Coordinating Committee, under the auspices of the Department of Education, to adopt guidelines to allow for public school districts and community colleges to offer courses that may be transferred to a certificate, diploma, or degree program. These guidelines are to include standards that address such aspects as admissions, program curricula, and faculty qualifications. The articulation between secondary and postsecondary education and between the various postsecondary educational institutions is governed by an articulation agreement, as established by the Department of Education [s. 240.115(1), F.S.].

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1550 increases the required hours for the child care introductory course from 40 to 45 to include brain research and computer technology. The bill stipulates that the 45-hour introductory course completed by child care personnel will be articulated into community college credit in early childhood education, with the approval of the Articulation Coordinating Committee. Successful completion of the introductory child care course will require passage of a competency examination. The specific degrees, credentials and courses that exempt child care personnel from certain portions of the required training are stipulated. Finally, references to a repealed section of Florida Statute and the State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Program are removed.

The clock hours required for the introductory course in child care for both child care personnel in child care facilities and large child care homes are increased from 40 to 45 hours. The topic areas which the course is required to cover are expanded to include brain research and computer technology for professional and classroom use. The bill removes in s. 402.305(2)(d), F.S., the requirement that operators of family child care homes serving at-risk children in a subsidized child care program, pursuant to s. 402.3015, F.S., take the 40-hour course. This section and the requirement it imposed relative to the subsidized child care program was repealed during the 2000 session.

Completion of the child care course for staff in child care facilities, operators of family child care homes and operators of large family child care homes, pursuant to ss. 402.305(2), 402.313(1), and 402.3131(3), F.S., is redefined to require passage of a competency examination. The bill specifies in statute that child care staff with the following educational credential are exempt from certain topic areas in the child care course: a 2-year degree or higher with at least 6 college credit hours in early childhood or child development, a child development associate credential, completion of a state-approved child development associate equivalency course, or a child development associate waiver certificate. This mirrors the exemption provided in administrative rule. The topic areas for which the education credential provides exemption are expanded to include the observation of developmental behavior.

Finally, the bill provides that successful completion of the 45-hour introductory course will articulate into community college credit in early childhood education. This provision begins the process of building a career path for child caregivers into a professional early childhood career. Building of professionalism improves the qualifications of the caregivers, and, in turn, the quality of care they provide. While the process for examining the core knowledge and skills for child caregivers that would both equate to community college credit and build to the next level on the career ladder was begun with the *Pathways to Professionalism* initiative, the initiative has not reached its conclusion of providing for an approved articulation agreement that guarantees the statewide articulation of the coursework. However, the bill stipulates that this articulation of the child care course into community college credit must be approved by the Articulation Coordinating Committee which will provide for the necessary verification that the coursework meets the standards required for statewide postsecondary education credit. The department is provided the authority to modify the child care training to meet the requirements of articulation, however, the parameters set forth for the training, such as topic areas of the course, must be maintained. The Division of Community Colleges in the Department of Education has been examining the child care introductory course and have reported they are comfortable with the articulation provided for in the bill.

CS/SB 1550 implements some of the recommendations of the *Pathways to Professionalism* report. It increases the state mandated course from 40 to 45 hours to add brain research and computer technology. The topic of brain research will reinforce the window of opportunity that child caregivers have with young children to enhance their development and better prepare them for school. The computer technology addresses a needed core knowledge and skill identified in the *Pathways to Professionalism* report as important for early childhood professionals, that is the use of computers for instructional purposes, such as to reinforce children's learning. The second recommendation of the report which this bill addresses is requiring that the child care course be competency based. This will ensure that the caregivers completing the course have gained the knowledge and skills intended and needed to adequately care for the children.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The additional 5 clock hours of coursework will have some impact on child care personnel and operators of large family child care homes, in that this additional training may require more time away from the job and may be offered at an increased price. The actual increase in cost will depend upon the venue of delivery, i.e. community colleges, vocational-technical schools, central agencies, training coordinating agencies, etc. However, the training being added should improve the child caregiver's understanding of and ability to offer care and experiences that positively impacts the development of the children.

The requirement that the child care training be competency based may result in individuals, who would like to become child caregivers, not passing the competency examination and not being able to work in a child care center. However, the intent of requiring child care training is to assure that the child caregivers know and are able to perform certain activities determined necessary for the responsibility of caring for the children. An examination to determine if the individual has attained the knowledge required to perform the necessary task provides that assurance.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Department of Children and Families reports that to implement this legislation, four competency examinations will need to be developed for the existing introductory child care training modules at a cost of \$44,000. A new 5 hour training module, Brain Research and Computer Technology, will have to be developed along with a competency examination. The costs of the training module and the competency examination will be \$35,000. Spanish translation of all competency examinations and the new training module will cost \$8,500. These non-recurring costs total \$87,500. The estimated recurring costs for child care training coordinating agencies to implement the new module and administer the competency examinations is \$100,000. Anticipating a 6 month development time for the modules and competency examinations, the first year cost for the child care training coordinating agencies will be \$50,000.

The department reports that there will be minimal impact on the local county child care licensing agencies, which routinely review child care personnel files as part of their child care facility and large family child care home inspections. Review of the records to document completion of the new training requirement will become part of the inspection process. However, this additional responsibility will have minimal, if any, fiscal impact.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
