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DATE: February 20, 2002

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON
JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT
ANALYSIS**

BILL #: HB 947
RELATING TO: Dependent Child/Psychotropic Meds.
SPONSOR(S): Representative Ryan
TIED BILL(S): none

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) CHILD & FAMILY SECURITY YEAS 8 NAYS 0
 - (2) JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT
 - (3) COUNCIL FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES
 - (4)
 - (5)
-

I. SUMMARY:

THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSTRUING STATUTES, OR TO BE CONSTRUED AS AFFECTING, DEFINING, LIMITING, CONTROLLING, SPECIFYING, CLARIFYING, OR MODIFYING ANY LEGISLATION OR STATUTE.

Current law requires a court order before administration of psychotropic medication to children in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services ("DCF").

This bill provides requirements for obtaining a court order to administer psychotropic medication to a child in DCF custody. This bill requires a prescribing physician to review a child's medical history, in the form of a "medical passport" defined by this bill, prior to a court issuing this order, and further requires that medical records or other evidence demonstrate the medication's appropriateness for the child. The court may seek additional medical consultation prior to issuing an order to prescribe psychotropic medication. Periodic court review of a child's progress under psychotropic medication is required.

This bill also allows a medical provider to dispense psychotropic medication to a child "in an acute care setting" without a court order.

On February 12, 2002, the Committee on Child and Family Security adopted two amendments to this bill. These amendments remove a requirement for expert testimony before a court may order administration of psychotropic medication ended, and provide that a child's other caretakers receive an explanation from the prescribing physician of the medication and treatment.

This bill appears to have an unknown negative fiscal impact on state government. This bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local governments.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain: This bill expands judicial oversight over children in foster care. This bill also allows for judicial intervention into, and oversight of, medical decisions. Finally, this bill appears to require an agency to generate a new document.

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

General Background

Emotional and mental disorders are disproportionately frequent among children who have been abused or neglected. Those same children frequently end up in the foster care system because of that abuse or neglect. Until recently, Department of Children and Families ("DCF") caseworkers routinely provided consent for the use of drugs such as Ritalin for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder ("ADHD"), and for the use of more powerful anti-psychotic drugs such as Risperdal that may have serious side effects.

A series of stories published throughout 2001 by the *Miami Herald* documented the concerns of children's advocates that thousands of foster children were being given potentially harmful psychiatric drugs to mute difficult behaviors and sedate troubled children. Some of the children developed serious side effects, such as shaking, lethargy, drooling, and weight gain.

Often there is no clear information available at judicial review for courts to monitor psychotropic medication of foster care children. One Broward County dependency judge, John A. Frusciante, became so concerned by the lack of medical records for foster children that he ordered DCF to complete medical records for all of the hundreds of children in his division or face a contempt sanction.

In response to these concerns, DCF created a blue-ribbon task force in May 2001 to study the issue and design a model of mental healthcare that might render some drug use unnecessary. DCF is now in the process of revising the state's administrative code and operating procedures to address the concerns raised by the group.

Children in Foster Care are at High Risk of Mental Illness

According to a 2000 report by Dr. John Landsverk of Children's Hospital, San Diego, to the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health, studies of mental health needs specific to the foster care system have firmly established that children in foster care are a high-risk population for socio-emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric problems warranting mental health treatments.

Half of children aged zero to seventeen in foster care have adaptive functioning scores in the “problematic” range. Among children ages zero to six, 50-65 percent are in the “problematic” range in terms of developmental status. Among two- to seventeen-year olds, 50-60 percent have behavior problems. Finally, among six- to seventeen-year olds, roughly 40 percent meet the criteria for any diagnosis with moderate impairment.

Children in foster care use mental health services up to fifteen times more than other children in the Medicaid system. Foster children with behavioral problems are most likely to be seen. Data also show that children with a history of sexual abuse are three times more likely to receive mental health services, while children with a history of neglect are only half as likely to receive treatment. African-American and Hispanic children are least likely to receive services, and they need to display more pathology to be referred for mental health services. Developmental services are accessed significantly less than would be expected based on the high rate of developmental problems observed.

Use of Mental Health Services by Children in Foster Care in Florida

According to the department on March 31, 2001, there were 18,306 children in foster care. This number includes non-relative foster homes, group homes, institutions, independent living and runaway children. In FY 00-01, 6,748 or 36 percent of the children in foster care were served by the mental health system.

Children in Foster Care Children Receiving Mental Health Services by Activity in FY 00-01:*

• Case management	2,232
• Community Support Services	1
• Crisis Services	421
• Outpatient	4,935
• Residential Care	1,257

* Children may receive more than one service.

Despite the large mental health service utilization in the child welfare system, the use of evidence-based treatments is low.

The Proper Use of Psychotropic Medication for Children is a National Concern

Concerns about inappropriate diagnoses—by either over- or under-diagnosis—of children's mental health problems, and about the availability of evidence-based, scientifically proven, treatments and services, have sparked a national debate.

Children with emotional, behavioral, and mental disorders that could be treated with medications may not be treated, or may be treated improperly, because their physicians do not know which products might be most effective or what dosage to administer. Clinicians, families, researchers and advocates are concerned about the unknown, long-term effects of medication on children's development.

“Off Label” Use and Questions of Drug Safety and Efficacy for Children:

There are only a small number of psychotropic drugs approved by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) specifically for the treatment of pediatric psychiatric disorders. These include drugs for:

- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (Zoloft, Luvox and Anafranil)
- ADHD (Ritalin, Cylert and Amphetamines such as Adderall and Dexedrine)
- Tourette's Disorder (Haldol, Orap)
- Mania (Lithium such as Cibalith-S, Eskalith and Lithobid)
- Enuresis (Imipramine)
- Psychoneurosis (Sinequan)
- Various behavior problems (Haldol and Thorazine)

Published pediatric studies demonstrate the effectiveness of these medications for some disorders and for some children. For example, on the basis of hundreds of randomized controlled trials, stimulants such as Ritalin have been shown to be highly effective for 75 to 90 percent of children with ADHD.

According to Dr. F. Daniel Armstrong, who runs the University of Miami's Mailman Center for Child Development, new drug therapies are helping children combat even serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and depression. Troubled children have been able to make dramatic turnarounds and do things they never could before—go to school, be with friends and get along with their family.

However, according to the Surgeon General's Conference on Children's Mental Health, three-fourths of all medications used by children are prescribed "off label," in that they have not been approved by the FDA for use by children. Risperdal and Prozac, for example, are not approved for use under age 18. Ritalin is not approved for children under age 6.

The report states that more research is needed to ensure proper pediatric labeling of medications, indicating how they can be safely and effectively used with children.

Recommendations for the Use of Psychotropic Medication to Treat Children's Mental Health Needs

Professionals strongly recommend that when medication is used with children it should be part of a comprehensive, individualized treatment plan that is monitored closely and regularly by child-trained professionals, recognized under state licensing and certification requirements.

For example, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, use of medication should not be considered the complete treatment program for children with ADHD and should be prescribed only after thorough evaluation.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry suggests that medications are appropriate when there are clear target symptoms, and that parents should be involved in decision-making, and be provided with complete information about side effects, benefits, and alternatives.

Unclear Legal Authority for Use of Psychotropic Medication for Children in Foster Care

DCF believes that it lacks clear authority under current law to consent to extraordinary medical treatment, including not only the administration of psychotropic medications, but also general anesthesia or surgery.

In defining "legal custody," s. 39.01(33), F.S., vests the custodian of a child—who, in the case of a foster child is DCF—the right and duty to provide that child with ordinary medical, dental, psychiatric, and psychological care.

Section 39.407(13), F.S., provides that DCF can consent to "medical treatment" for a dependent child when that child is committed to DCF's custody.

Section 743.0645, F.S., provides that DCF may, without a court order, consent to certain medical care and treatment, but cannot authorize "surgery, general anesthesia, provision of psychotropic medications or other extraordinary procedures"¹ without a court order.

C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill amends s. 39.407, F.S., to provide a framework by which a court may order the dispensing of psychotropic medication to a child who is in the legal custody of the Department of Children and Families ("DCF"). First, the child's prescribing physician must provide a statement to the court that he or she has reviewed the child's medical history, in the form of a "medical passport" prepared by DCF. Then, medical records or other competent evidence must be presented to the court sufficient to demonstrate that:

- the medication is appropriate for the child;
- the prescribing physician has provided an explanation of the purpose, risks and possible side effects of the medication to the child's caregiver and, if age-appropriate, to the child;
- alternative methods of treatment have been considered; and
- any alternative treatment offering comparable benefits is unavailable or undesirable.

This bill also adopts DCF's current administrative definition of the "medical passport" as "a written health history of a child in [DCF custody], which is used to document health care and is to be kept with the child's caregiver in the child's resource record, and updated at each health care provider visit[.]"² This bill requires that a medical passport be created for every child in DCF custody for whom an application for prescribing psychotropic medication is made.

Additionally, this bill authorizes the court to require further medical consultation, including second opinions, prior to issuing an order dispensing psychotropic medication to a child in DCF custody. This bill provides for periodic court review of the child's progress under such treatment, and provides conditions for the court to suspend the treatment.

Finally, this bill authorizes a medical provider "in an acute care setting" to dispense prescribed psychotropic medication to a child in DCF custody without requiring a court order.

D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

None.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

¹ Section 743.0645(1)(b), F.S.

² 65C-12.001(18), F.A.C.

2. Expenditures:

The Department of Children and Families (“DCF”) expects this bill to require expenditure of “additional litigation expenses to pay for medical testimony on behalf of DCF; however, the fiscal impact is impossible to estimate.”³

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority of counties or municipalities to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

³ Department of Children and Families Staff Analysis and Economic Impact (HB 947), January 25, 2002, p. 3.

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

It is unclear to what "acute care setting" this bill refers in which health care providers are allowed to dispense psychotropic medication without a court order.

This bill defines "medical passport" but does not make clear who generates this document, or how.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

On February 12, 2002, the Committee on Child and Family Security adopted two amendments to this bill. Amendment 1 removes a requirement that expert testimony be provided to the court before it may suspend administration of psychotropic medication. Amendment 2 provides that caretakers of a child, other than his or her primary caretaker, must also receive an explanation of the purpose and risks of the medication from the prescribing physician.

The Committee then reported this bill favorably, as amended.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON CHILD & FAMILY SECURITY:

Prepared by:

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Staff Director:

Robert Brown-Barrios

AS REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT:

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