

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 1996

SPONSOR: Children and Families Committee and Senator Lynn

SUBJECT: Child Welfare Training Academies

DATE: April 9, 2003

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Dowds</u>	<u>Whiddon</u>	<u>CF</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>GO</u>	<u>_____</u>
3.	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>AHS</u>	<u>_____</u>
4.	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>_____</u>
5.	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>RC</u>	<u>_____</u>
6.	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>	<u>_____</u>

I. Summary:

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1996 establishes minimum requirements for the development of training for staff delivering child welfare services and for contracting to develop the curricula and deliver the training. The Department of Children and Families is required by the bill to establish core competences for a single integrated pre-service curriculum, minimum standards for a certification process, and minimum standards for trainer qualifications in collaboration with experts in child welfare and providers affected by the curriculum. The requirement to contract with Tallahassee Community College is replaced with the requirement to competitively bid for both the development, validation, and periodic evaluation of the training curricula and for the training academy contracts. The department is required to examine their advanced training needs annually and to submit to appropriate legislative committees the established core competencies, standards for a certification process, and standards for trainer qualifications prior to entering into the competitive bid processes.

This bill substantially amends section 402.40 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Section 402.40, F.S., establishes the statutory framework for the Department of Children and Families' child welfare training. The department is required by this section to provide a systematic approach to staff development and training for all dependency staff using child welfare training academies across the state. Dependency staff include direct care and supervisory staff, as well as support staff with direct contact with the children and families in the dependency system who provide intake, preprotective services, protective services, foster care, shelter and group care, adoption and related services, counseling, supervision, or any custody and care service for children who are at risk of or have entered the dependency process. The

training requirements of s. 402.40, F.S., apply to both department staff and staff of contract providers offering these services.

All dependency staff are required to successfully complete a training program that is specific to their areas of responsibilities [s. 402.40(3), F.S.]. Section 402.731(1), F.S., further requires that all employees and contract providers of the department complete a certification program. The child protection system training developed to meet these requirements includes a pre-service training program for new child protection staff. Specific training is also offered for supervisors and foster parents, or district staff to provide to foster parents. Advanced training is available on topics such as sexual abuse, interviewing, domestic violence, cultural competence, substance abuse, and casework practice. Children and Families Operating Procedures No. 175-78, Certification Procedure for Professional Child Protection Employees, establishes a uniform process for the certification and recertification requirements for all child protection professionals.

The department contracts with Tallahassee Community College for the operation of the Professional Development Center, in accordance with s. 402.40(5), F.S. Contracts are also in place with University of South Florida and Florida International University to participate in curriculum design activities and to deliver training as part of the Professional Development Center services under the administration of Tallahassee Community College. The Professional Development Center was established in 1987 and develops and delivers competency based training and testing for child protection staff in Florida. Currently, there are six regional and sub-regional training centers with 21 training sites and a central office in Tallahassee.

A Child Welfare Training Trust Fund is established in s. 402.40(4), F.S., for the purpose of funding a comprehensive system of child welfare training. Funds deposited into this fund include \$1.00 for every noncriminal traffic infraction collected pursuant to ss. 318.14(10)(b) or 318.18, F.S., \$4.00 for every certificate of birth request pursuant to s. 382.0255, F.S., and \$5.00 for every dissolution of marriage petition filed. In addition, the department receives funding from the Title IV-E Foster Care Grant, Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Grant, Medicaid Administration Grant, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grant for child welfare training.

Issues have been raised relative to the training of the child protection staff. First, the adequacy of the training to fully prepare staff for their child protection positions has been questioned. The Senate Interim Project Report 2003-110, identified the concerns expressed by protective investigators and their supervisors that the current training was not adequately preparing protective investigators for the job. Second, with the implementation of the community-based care initiatives, some lead agencies have become interested in training that is more tailored to meet their private sector needs.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

CS/SB 1996 establishes minimum requirements for the development of training for staff delivering child welfare services and for contracting to develop the curricula and deliver the training. The Department of Children and Families is required by the bill to establish core competencies for a single integrated pre-service curriculum, minimum standards for a certification process, and minimum standards for trainer qualifications in collaboration with

experts in child welfare and providers affected by the curriculum. The requirement to contract with Tallahassee Community College is replaced with the requirement to competitively bid for both the development, validation, and periodic evaluation of the training curricula and for the training academy contracts. The department is required to examine their advanced training needs annually and to submit to appropriate legislative committees the established core competencies, standards for a certification process, and standards for trainer qualifications prior to entering into the competitive bid processes.

Specifically, PCS/SB 1996 requires the Department of Children and Families to establish the core competencies for the knowledge, skills, and abilities that every person delivering child welfare services requires in order to competently perform his or her work responsibilities. These core competencies are to be the basis for a single integrated pre-service curriculum. Every person delivering child welfare services is required to master the components of this pre-service curriculum that are particular to his or her job responsibilities.

The terms defined in the section are revised to reflect “child welfare services” and “persons delivering child welfare services” instead of “dependency program” and “dependency program staff.” The definitions are expanded to include protective investigators and legal services.

The department is required to develop the core competencies in collaboration with individuals with expertise in the field of child welfare, as well as providers that will be affected by the curriculum, including, but not limited to, representatives from community-based care lead agencies, sheriffs’ offices, and child welfare legal services providers. The bill permits the pre-service curriculum to be a compilation of components of the core competencies that are integrated for a comprehensive pre-service curriculum. The requirement to contract with Tallahassee Community College is replaced with the requirement to competitively bid the development, validation, and periodic evaluation of this pre-service training curriculum. Only one training curriculum is permitted to be developed for each component of the core competencies. The ability of state agencies to contract for services with colleges and universities without competitively bidding [s. 287.057(22), F.S.], as well as with other contractors under certain circumstances [s. 287.057(5), F.S.], is negated by this bill.

CS/SB 1996 requires the department to work in collaboration with providers affected by the child welfare training curriculum and experts in the child welfare field to annually examine the advanced training that needs to be available to child welfare staff statewide. This examination is to include whether current advanced training efforts should be continued and plans for incorporating needed advanced training. The department is also required to develop, with the collaboration of the experts and affected providers, minimum standards for a certification process and minimum standards for trainer qualifications. The standards developed for a certification process must ensure persons participating have successfully attained the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to competently perform their work responsibilities. The standards for trainer qualifications are to be required of the training staff of the child welfare training academies in offering the training curricula.

The bill sets forth the roles of the child welfare training academies for which the department may contract to be performed. Training academies may perform one or more of the following roles: offer one or more of the pre-service training curricula; administer the certification process;

develop, validate, and periodically evaluate advanced or additional training curricula; or offer additional training curricula. The Secretary of the Department of Children and Families is responsible for ensuring that the goals of the core competencies and the single integrated pre-service curriculum, the certification process, the trainer qualifications, and the additional training needs are addressed. The contracts for all of the child welfare training academies must also be competitively bid, regardless of the options to contract without the required bid process as provided for in ss. 287.057(5) and (10), F.S.

Finally, the bill requires that the core competencies, the minimum standards for the certification process, and the minimum standards for the trainer qualifications be submitted to the appropriate substantive committees of the House of Representative and the Senate prior to entering into any of the competitive bid processes provided for by the bill.

The bill takes effect upon becoming law.

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:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Tallahassee Community College will be required to competitively bid for the child welfare training academy contracts that are now guaranteed.

The Department of Children and Families does not report any fiscal impact to the department.

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.
