

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to court actions involving families;
 3 amending ss. 39.001, 61.001, 63.022, 68.07, 741.2902,
 4 984.01, and 985.02, F.S., and creating ss. 88.1041,
 5 742.016, 743.001, and 1003.201, F.S.; providing additional
 6 purposes relating to implementing a unified family court
 7 program in the circuit courts; providing legislative
 8 intent; amending s. 61.402, F.S.; expanding eligibility
 9 criteria for guardians ad litem; providing requirements
 10 for and limitations on certification of guardians ad litem
 11 by not-for-profit legal aid organizations; providing an
 12 effective date.

13
 14 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

15
 16 Section 1. Paragraph (o) is added to subsection (1) of
 17 section 39.001, Florida Statutes, to read:

18 39.001 Purposes and intent; personnel standards and
 19 screening.--

20 (1) PURPOSES OF CHAPTER.--The purposes of this chapter
 21 are:

22 (o) To provide all children and families with a fully
 23 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
 24 involve children and families and a resolution of family
 25 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
 26 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
 27 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
 28 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who

29 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
 30 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
 31 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
 32 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
 33 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
 34 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
 35 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
 36 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
 37 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
 38 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
 39 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
 40 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
 41 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
 42 condition than when the families entered the system.

43 Section 2. Subsection (2) of section 61.001, Florida
 44 Statutes, is amended to read:

45 61.001 Purpose of chapter.--

46 (2) Its purposes are:

47 (a) To preserve the integrity of marriage and to safeguard
 48 meaningful family relationships. ~~†~~

49 (b) To promote the amicable settlement of disputes that
 50 arise between parties to a marriage. ~~† and~~

51 (c) To mitigate the potential harm to the spouses and
 52 their children caused by the process of legal dissolution of
 53 marriage.

54 (d) To provide all children and families with a fully
 55 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
 56 involve children and families and a resolution of family

57 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
58 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
59 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
60 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
61 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
62 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
63 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
64 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
65 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
66 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
67 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
68 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
69 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
70 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
71 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
72 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
73 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
74 condition than when the families entered the system.

75 Section 3. Subsection (6) is added to section 63.022,
76 Florida Statutes, to read:

77 63.022 Legislative intent.--

78 (6) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide all
79 children and families with a fully integrated, comprehensive
80 approach to handling all cases that involve children and
81 families and a resolution of family disputes in a fair, timely,
82 efficient, and cost-effective manner. It is the intent of the
83 Legislature that the courts of this state embrace methods of
84 resolving disputes that do not cause additional emotional harm

85 to the children and families who are required to interact with
86 the judicial system. It is the intent of the Legislature to
87 support the development of a unified family court and to support
88 the state courts system's efforts to improve the resolution of
89 disputes involving children and families through a fully
90 integrated, comprehensive approach that includes coordinated
91 case management; the concept of "one family, one judge";
92 collaboration with the community for referral to needed
93 services; and methods of alternative dispute resolution. The
94 Legislature supports the goal that the legal system focus on the
95 needs of children who are involved in the litigation, refer
96 families to resources that will make families' relationships
97 stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide consistent
98 results, and strive to leave families in better condition than
99 when the families entered the system.

100 Section 4. Subsection (9) is added to section 68.07,
101 Florida Statutes, to read:

102 68.07 Change of name.--

103 (9) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide all
104 children and families with a fully integrated, comprehensive
105 approach to handling all cases that involve children and
106 families and a resolution of family disputes in a fair, timely,
107 efficient, and cost-effective manner. It is the intent of the
108 Legislature that the courts of this state embrace methods of
109 resolving disputes that do not cause additional emotional harm
110 to the children and families who are required to interact with
111 the judicial system. It is the intent of the Legislature to
112 support the development of a unified family court and to support

113 the state courts system's efforts to improve the resolution of
 114 disputes involving children and families through a fully
 115 integrated, comprehensive approach that includes coordinated
 116 case management; the concept of "one family, one judge";
 117 collaboration with the community for referral to needed
 118 services; and methods of alternative dispute resolution. The
 119 Legislature supports the goal that the legal system focus on the
 120 needs of children who are involved in the litigation, refer
 121 families to resources that will make families' relationships
 122 stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide consistent
 123 results, and strive to leave families in better condition than
 124 when the families entered the system.

125 Section 5. Section 88.1041, Florida Statutes, is created
 126 to read:

127 88.1041 Legislative intent.--It is the intent of the
 128 Legislature to provide all children and families with a fully
 129 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
 130 involve children and families and a resolution of family
 131 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
 132 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
 133 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
 134 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
 135 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
 136 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
 137 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
 138 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
 139 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
 140 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one

141 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
 142 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
 143 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
 144 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
 145 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
 146 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
 147 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
 148 condition than when the families entered the system.

149 Section 6. Subsection (3) is added to section 741.2902,
 150 Florida Statutes, to read:

151 741.2902 Domestic violence; legislative intent with
 152 respect to judiciary's role.--

153 (3) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide all
 154 children and families with a fully integrated, comprehensive
 155 approach to handling all cases that involve children and
 156 families and a resolution of family disputes in a fair, timely,
 157 efficient, and cost-effective manner. It is the intent of the
 158 Legislature that the courts of this state embrace methods of
 159 resolving disputes that do not cause additional emotional harm
 160 to the children and families who are required to interact with
 161 the judicial system. It is the intent of the Legislature to
 162 support the development of a unified family court and to support
 163 the state courts system's efforts to improve the resolution of
 164 disputes involving children and families through a fully
 165 integrated, comprehensive approach that includes coordinated
 166 case management; the concept of "one family, one judge";
 167 collaboration with the community for referral to needed
 168 services; and methods of alternative dispute resolution. The

169 Legislature supports the goal that the legal system focus on the
170 needs of children who are involved in the litigation, refer
171 families to resources that will make families' relationships
172 stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide consistent
173 results, and strive to leave families in better condition than
174 when the families entered the system.

175 Section 7. Section 742.016, Florida Statutes, is created
176 to read:

177 742.016 Legislative intent.--It is the intent of the
178 Legislature to provide all children and families with a fully
179 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
180 involve children and families and a resolution of family
181 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
182 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
183 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
184 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
185 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
186 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
187 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
188 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
189 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
190 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
191 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
192 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
193 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
194 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
195 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
196 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide

197 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
198 condition than when the families entered the system.

199 Section 8. Section 743.001, Florida Statutes, is created
200 to read:

201 743.001 Legislative intent.--It is the intent of the
202 Legislature to provide all children and families with a fully
203 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
204 involve children and families and a resolution of family
205 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
206 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
207 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
208 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
209 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
210 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
211 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
212 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
213 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
214 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
215 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
216 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
217 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
218 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
219 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
220 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
221 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
222 condition than when the families entered the system.

223 Section 9. Paragraph (g) is added to subsection (1) of
224 section 984.01, Florida Statutes, to read:

225 984.01 Purposes and intent; personnel standards and
 226 screening.--
 227 (1) The purposes of this chapter are:
 228 (g) To provide all children and families with a fully
 229 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
 230 involve children and families and a resolution of family
 231 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
 232 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
 233 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
 234 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
 235 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
 236 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
 237 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
 238 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
 239 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
 240 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
 241 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
 242 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
 243 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
 244 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
 245 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
 246 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
 247 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
 248 condition than when the families entered the system.

249 Section 10. Paragraph (j) is added to subsection (1) of
 250 section 985.02, Florida Statutes, to read:

251 985.02 Legislative intent for the juvenile justice
 252 system.--

253 (1) GENERAL PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN.--It is a purpose of
254 the Legislature that the children of this state be provided with
255 the following protections:

256 (j) A fully integrated, comprehensive approach to handling
257 all cases that involve children and families and a resolution of
258 family disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
259 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
260 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
261 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
262 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
263 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
264 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
265 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
266 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
267 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
268 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
269 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
270 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
271 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
272 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
273 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
274 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
275 condition than when the families entered the system.

276 Section 11. Section 1003.201, Florida Statutes, is created
277 to read:

278 1003.201 Legislative intent.--It is the intent of the
279 Legislature to provide all children and families with a fully
280 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that

281 involve children and families and a resolution of family
 282 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
 283 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
 284 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
 285 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
 286 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
 287 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
 288 unified family court and to support the state courts system's
 289 efforts to improve the resolution of disputes involving children
 290 and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive approach
 291 that includes coordinated case management; the concept of "one
 292 family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
 293 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
 294 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
 295 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
 296 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
 297 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
 298 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
 299 condition than when the families entered the system.

300 Section 12. Section 61.402, Florida Statutes, is amended
 301 to read:

302 61.402 Qualifications of guardians ad litem.--A guardian
 303 ad litem must be either a citizen certified by the Guardian Ad
 304 Litem Program to act in family law cases, a citizen certified by
 305 a not-for-profit legal aid organization as defined in s. 68.096,
 306 or an attorney who is a member in good standing of The Florida
 307 Bar. Prior to certifying a guardian ad litem to be appointed
 308 under this chapter, the Guardian Ad Litem Program must conduct a

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309 security background investigation as provided in s. 39.821.
310 Certification by a not-for-profit legal aid organization shall
311 qualify a guardian ad litem to serve only in actions described
312 in s. 61.401 other than actions in which the court has
313 determined that there are well-founded allegations of child
314 abuse, abandonment, or neglect as defined in s. 39.01. Prior to
315 certifying a guardian ad litem, a not-for-profit legal aid
316 organization must conduct a security background investigation
317 that conforms to the requirements of s. 39.821.

318 Section 13. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
319 law.