

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 efforts of the state
 32 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
 33 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
 34 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
 35 of "one 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

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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 efforts of the state
64 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
65 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
66 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
67 of "one 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 efforts of the state courts system to improve the resolution
 89 of 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

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113 the efforts of the state courts system to improve the resolution
114 of 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 efforts of the state
138 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
139 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
140 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept

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141 of "one 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 efforts of the state courts system to improve the resolution
164 of 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

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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 efforts of the state
188 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
189 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
190 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
191 of "one 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 efforts of the state
 212 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
 213 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
 214 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
 215 of "one 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:

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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 efforts of the state
 238 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
 239 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
 240 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
 241 of "one 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 efforts of the state
265 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
266 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
267 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
268 of "one 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. This
276 section may not be construed to contravene legislative intent
277 provided in this chapter relating to protecting the public from
278 acts of delinquency, ensuring that juveniles found to have
279 committed a delinquent act understand the consequences and
280 serious nature of such behavior, and transferring juveniles from

281 the juvenile justice system to the adult system as provided in
282 this chapter.

283 Section 11. Section 1003.201, Florida Statutes, is created
284 to read:

285 1003.201 Legislative intent.--It is the intent of the
286 Legislature to provide all children and families with a fully
287 integrated, comprehensive approach to handling all cases that
288 involve children and families and a resolution of family
289 disputes in a fair, timely, efficient, and cost-effective
290 manner. It is the intent of the Legislature that the courts of
291 this state embrace methods of resolving disputes that do not
292 cause additional emotional harm to the children and families who
293 are required to interact with the judicial system. It is the
294 intent of the Legislature to support the development of a
295 unified family court and to support the efforts of the state
296 courts system to improve the resolution of disputes involving
297 children and families through a fully integrated, comprehensive
298 approach that includes coordinated case management; the concept
299 of "one family, one judge"; collaboration with the community for
300 referral to needed services; and methods of alternative dispute
301 resolution. The Legislature supports the goal that the legal
302 system focus on the needs of children who are involved in the
303 litigation, refer families to resources that will make families'
304 relationships stronger, coordinate families' cases to provide
305 consistent results, and strive to leave families in better
306 condition than when the families entered the system.

307 Section 12. Section 61.402, Florida Statutes, is amended
308 to read:

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309 61.402 Qualifications of guardians ad litem.--A guardian
310 ad litem must be either a citizen certified by the Guardian Ad
311 Litem Program to act in family law cases, a citizen certified by
312 a not-for-profit legal aid organization as defined in s. 68.096,
313 or an attorney who is a member in good standing of The Florida
314 Bar. Prior to certifying a guardian ad litem to be appointed
315 under this chapter, the Guardian Ad Litem Program must conduct a
316 security background investigation as provided in s. 39.821.
317 Certification by a not-for-profit legal aid organization shall
318 qualify a guardian ad litem to serve only in actions described
319 in s. 61.401 other than actions in which the court has
320 determined that there are well-founded allegations of child
321 abuse, abandonment, or neglect as defined in s. 39.01. Prior to
322 certifying a guardian ad litem, a not-for-profit legal aid
323 organization must conduct a security background investigation
324 that conforms to the requirements of s. 39.821.

325 Section 13. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
326 law.