1	A bill to be entitled
2	An act relating to proceedings related to children;
3	providing a short title; amending s. 39.001, F.S.;
4	revising purposes of the chapter; requiring specified
5	information on court orders by certain parties;
6	requiring parents to take action to comply with the
7	case plan within a specified time; amending s.
8	39.0136, F.S.; requiring that the timely performance
9	of responsibilities is achieved by all parties and the
10	court; requiring the Department of Children and
11	Families to ensure that parents have the necessary
12	information to contact the designated case manager;
13	requiring a new case manager to timely notify and
14	provide parents with updated contact information;
15	providing that motions by the court count towards the
16	time allowed for continuances or time extensions;
17	amending s. 39.402, F.S.; providing that certain
18	notice requirements to parents and legal custodians be
19	in plain language; providing requirements for such
20	notice; amending s. 39.507, F.S.; requiring parents to
21	provide certain information about relatives who might
22	be considered for out-of-home care; requiring the
23	court to advise parents in plain language of certain
24	responsibilities; amending s. 39.521, F.S.; requiring
25	the department to serve copies of the case plan and
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26 family functioning assessment on the parents and 27 provide copies to all other parties; amending s. 28 39.522, F.S.; requiring that a motion to change 29 placement of a child be made before a child is 30 residing in the approved permanency placement; amending s. 39.6011, F.S.; providing requirements for 31 32 a child's case plan; requiring the department to 33 provide certain information to the parents before signing the case plan; providing a timeframe for the 34 35 completion of referrals for services; amending s. 36 39.6012, F.S.; requiring the case plan to describe 37 strategies to overcome barriers to case plan compliance; amending s. 39.6013, F.S.; conforming a 38 39 cross-reference; amending s. 39.621, F.S.; requiring the court to hold a hearing if a parent makes a 40 41 certain motion after a child is residing in the 42 approved permanency placement; amending s. 39.806, 43 F.S.; providing that a parent's actions or inactions can breach the case plan; amending s. 39.811, F.S.; 44 45 providing a timeframe for when a written order of disposition terminating parental rights must be 46 47 entered; providing an effective date. 48 49 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida: 50

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51 Section 1. This act may be cited as "A Year is a Long Time 52 in the Life of a Child Act." 53 Section 2. Subsection (7) of section 39.001, Florida 54 Statutes, is amended, and paragraph (j) is added to subsection 55 (3) of that section, to read: 56 39.001 Purposes and intent; personnel standards and 57 screening.-58 (3) GENERAL PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN.-It is a purpose of 59 the Legislature that the children of this state be provided with 60 the following protections: The ability to contact their guardian ad litem or 61 (j) 62 attorney ad litem, if appointed, by having that individual's name entered on all orders of the court. 63 64 (7) PARENTAL, CUSTODIAL, AND GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES.-65 Parents, custodians, and quardians are deemed by the state to be responsible for providing their children with sufficient 66 67 support, guidance, and supervision. The state further recognizes 68 that the ability of parents, custodians, and guardians to 69 fulfill those responsibilities can be greatly impaired by economic, social, behavioral, emotional, and related problems. 70 71 It is therefore the policy of the Legislature that it is the 72 state's responsibility to ensure that factors impeding the ability of caregivers to fulfill their responsibilities are 73 74 identified through the dependency process and that appropriate 75 recommendations and services to address those problems are

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76	considered in any judicial or nonjudicial proceeding. <u>The</u>
77	Legislature also recognizes that time is of the essence for
78	establishing permanency for a child in the dependency system.
79	Therefore, parents must take action to comply with the case
80	plan, including notifying the parties and the court of barriers
81	to case plan compliance, so permanency for the child may occur
82	within the shortest period of time possible, but not more than 1
83	year after removal or adjudication of the child.
84	Section 3. Subsections (2), (3), and (4) of section
85	39.0136, Florida Statutes, are amended and renumbered as
86	subsections (3), (4), and (5), respectively, and a new
87	subsection (2) is added to that section, to read:
88	39.0136 Time limitations; continuances
89	(2)(a) All parties and the court must work together to
90	ensure that permanency is achieved as soon as possible for every
91	child through timely performance of their responsibilities under
92	this chapter.
93	(b) The department shall ensure that a parent has the
94	information necessary to contact his or her case manager. When a
95	new case manager is assigned to a case, the case manager shall
96	make a timely and diligent effort to notify the parent and
97	provide updated contact information.
98	(3) (2) The time limitations in this chapter do not
99	include:
100	(a) Periods of delay resulting from a continuance granted
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101 at the request of the child's counsel or the child's guardian ad 102 litem or, if the child is of sufficient capacity to express 103 reasonable consent, at the request or with the consent of the 104 child. The court must consider the best interests of the child 105 when determining periods of delay under this section.

(b) Periods of delay resulting from a continuance grantedat the request of any party if the continuance is granted:

108 Because of an unavailability of evidence that is 1. material to the case if the requesting party has exercised due 109 diligence to obtain evidence and there are substantial grounds 110 to believe that the evidence will be available within 30 days. 111 112 However, if the requesting party is not prepared to proceed within 30 days, any other party may move for issuance of an 113 114 order to show cause or the court on its own motion may impose 115 appropriate sanctions, which may include dismissal of the petition. 116

117 2. To allow the requesting party additional time to 118 prepare the case and additional time is justified because of an 119 exceptional circumstance.

(c) Reasonable periods of delay necessary to accomplish notice of the hearing to the child's parent or legal custodian; however, the petitioner shall continue regular efforts to provide notice to the parents during the periods of delay.

124 (4)(3) Notwithstanding subsection (3)(2), in order to 125 expedite permanency for a child, the total time allowed for

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126 continuances or extensions of time, including continuances or 127 extensions by the court on its own motion, may not exceed 60 128 days within any 12-month period for proceedings conducted under 129 this chapter. A continuance or extension of time may be granted 130 only for extraordinary circumstances in which it is necessary to 131 preserve the constitutional rights of a party or if substantial 132 evidence exists to demonstrate that without granting a 133 continuance or extension of time the child's best interests will 134 be harmed.

135 <u>(5)(4)</u> Notwithstanding subsection <u>(3)</u> (2), a continuance 136 or an extension of time is limited to the number of days 137 absolutely necessary to complete a necessary task in order to 138 preserve the rights of a party or the best interests of a child.

139Section 4.Subsections (14), (15), and (18) of section14039.402, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

141

39.402 Placement in a shelter.-

142 (14)(a) The time limitations in this section do not 143 include:

144 <u>1.(a)</u> Periods of delay resulting from a continuance 145 granted at the request or with the consent of the child's 146 counsel or the child's guardian ad litem, if one has been 147 appointed by the court, or, if the child is of sufficient 148 capacity to express reasonable consent, at the request or with 149 the consent of the child's attorney or the child's guardian ad 150 litem, if one has been appointed by the court, and the child.

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151 <u>2.(b)</u> Periods of delay resulting from a continuance 152 granted at the request of any party, if the continuance is 153 granted:

154 a.1. Because of an unavailability of evidence material to 155 the case when the requesting party has exercised due diligence 156 to obtain such evidence and there are substantial grounds to 157 believe that such evidence will be available within 30 days. 158 However, if the requesting party is not prepared to proceed within 30 days, any other party, inclusive of the parent or 159 160 legal custodian, may move for issuance of an order to show cause 161 or the court on its own motion may impose appropriate sanctions, 162 which may include dismissal of the petition.

<u>b.</u>2. To allow the requesting party additional time to
 prepare the case and additional time is justified because of an
 exceptional circumstance.

166 <u>3.(c)</u> Reasonable periods of delay necessary to accomplish 167 notice of the hearing to the child's parents or legal 168 custodians; however, the petitioner shall continue regular 169 efforts to provide notice to the parents or legal custodians 170 during such periods of delay.

171 <u>4.(d)</u> Reasonable periods of delay resulting from a 172 continuance granted at the request of the parent or legal 173 custodian of a subject child.

174 (b) (e) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), the foregoing,
 175 continuances and extensions of time are limited to the number of

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176 days absolutely necessary to complete a necessary task in order 177 to preserve the rights of a party or the best interests of a 178 child. Time is of the essence for the best interests of 179 dependent children in conducting dependency proceedings in 180 accordance with the time limitations set forth in this chapter. 181 Time limitations are a right of the child which may not be 182 waived, extended, or continued at the request of any party in 183 advance of the particular circumstances or need arising upon 184 which delay of the proceedings may be warranted.

(c) (f) Continuances or extensions of time may not total 185 more than 60 days for all parties and the court on its own 186 187 motion, within any 12-month period during proceedings under this 188 chapter. A continuance or extension beyond the 60 days may be 189 granted only for extraordinary circumstances necessary to 190 preserve the constitutional rights of a party or when 191 substantial evidence demonstrates that the child's best 192 interests will be affirmatively harmed without the granting of a continuance or extension of time. 193

(15) The department, at the conclusion of the shelter hearing, shall make available to parents or legal custodians seeking voluntary services, any referral information necessary for participation in such identified services <u>to allow the</u> <u>parents or legal custodians to begin the services as soon as</u> <u>possible</u>. The parents' or legal custodians' participation in the services shall not be considered an admission or other

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201	acknowledgment of the allegations in the shelter petition.
202	(18) The court shall advise the parents <u>or legal</u>
203	custodians in plain language what is expected of them to achieve
204	reunification with their child, including that:
205	(a) Parents or legal custodians must take action to comply
206	with the case plan so permanency for the child may occur within
207	the shortest period of time possible, but no later than 1 year
208	after removal or adjudication of the child.
209	(b) Parents or legal custodians must stay in contact with
210	their attorney and their case manager, and provide updated
211	contact information if their phone number, address, or e-mail
212	address changes.
213	(c) Parents or legal custodians must notify the parties
214	and the court of any barriers to completing case plan tasks
215	within a reasonable time after discovering such barriers. that,
216	(d) If the parents or legal custodians fail to
217	substantially comply with the case plan, their parental rights
218	may be terminated and that the child's out-of-home placement may
219	become permanent.
220	Section 5. Paragraph (c) of subsection (7) of section
221	39.507, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
222	39.507 Adjudicatory hearings; orders of adjudication
223	(7)
224	(c) If a court adjudicates a child dependent and the child
225	is in out-of-home care, the court shall inquire of the parent or
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226 parents whether the parents have relatives who might be 227 considered as a placement for the child. The parent or parents 228 shall provide the court and all parties with identification and location information for such relatives. The court shall advise 229 230 the parents in plain language that: τ 231 1. Parents must take action to comply with the case plan 232 so permanency for the child may occur within the shortest period 233 of time possible, but no later than 1 year after removal or 234 adjudication of the child. 235 2. Parents must stay in contact with their attorney and 236 their case manager, and provide updated contact information if 237 the phone number, address, or e-mail address of the parents 238 changes. 239 3. Parents must notify the parties and the court of any 240 barriers to completing case plan tasks within a reasonable time 241 after discovering such barriers. 242 4. If the parents fail to substantially comply with the 243 case plan, their parental rights may be terminated and that the 244 child's out-of-home placement may become permanent. The parent 245 or parents shall provide to the court and all parties 246 identification and location information of the relatives. Section 6. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 247 39.521, Florida Statutes, is amended to read: 248 39.521 Disposition hearings; powers of disposition.-249 250 (1) A disposition hearing shall be conducted by the court, Page 10 of 22

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if the court finds that the facts alleged in the petition for dependency were proven in the adjudicatory hearing, or if the parents or legal custodians have consented to the finding of dependency or admitted the allegations in the petition, have failed to appear for the arraignment hearing after proper notice, or have not been located despite a diligent search having been conducted.

258 A written case plan and a family functioning (a) 259 assessment prepared by an authorized agent of the department 260 must be approved by the court. The department must file the case 261 plan and the family functioning assessment with the court, serve 262 copies a copy of the case plan on the parents of the child, and 263 provide copies a copy of the case plan to the representative of 264 the guardian ad litem program, if the program has been 265 appointed, and a copy to all other parties:

1. Not less than 72 hours before the disposition hearing, if the disposition hearing occurs on or after the 60th day after the date the child was placed in out-of-home care. All such case plans must be approved by the court.

270 2. Not less than 72 hours before the case plan acceptance 271 hearing, if the disposition hearing occurs before the 60th day 272 after the date the child was placed in out-of-home care and a 273 case plan has not been submitted pursuant to this paragraph, or 274 if the court does not approve the case plan at the disposition 275 hearing. The case plan acceptance hearing must occur within 30

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276 days after the disposition hearing to review and approve the 277 case plan.

278 Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 39.522, Florida 279 Statutes, is amended to read:

280 39.522 Postdisposition change of custody.-The court may 281 change the temporary legal custody or the conditions of 282 protective supervision at a postdisposition hearing, without the 283 necessity of another adjudicatory hearing.

At any time before a child is residing in the 284 (1)285 permanency placement approved at the permanency hearing, a child 286 who has been placed in the child's own home under the protective 287 supervision of an authorized agent of the department, in the home of a relative, in the home of a legal custodian, or in some 288 289 other place may be brought before the court by the department or 290 by any other interested person, upon the filing of a motion 291 petition alleging a need for a change in the conditions of 292 protective supervision or the placement. If the parents or other legal custodians deny the need for a change, the court shall 293 294 hear all parties in person or by counsel, or both. Upon the 295 admission of a need for a change or after such hearing, the 296 court shall enter an order changing the placement, modifying the 297 conditions of protective supervision, or continuing the conditions of protective supervision as ordered. The standard 298 for changing custody of the child shall be the best interest of 299 300 the child. When applying this standard, the court shall consider

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301 the continuity of the child's placement in the same out-of-home 302 residence as a factor when determining the best interests of the 303 child. If the child is not placed in foster care, then the new 304 placement for the child must meet the home study criteria and 305 court approval pursuant to this chapter.

306 Section 8. Subsections (4) through (8) of section 39.6011, 307 Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (5) through (9), 308 respectively, and subsections (2) and (3), and present 309 subsection (6) of that section are amended, to read:

310

39.6011 Case plan development.-

311 (2) The case plan must be written simply and clearly in 312 English and, if English is not the principal language of the 313 child's parent, to the extent possible in the parent's principal 314 language. Each case plan must contain:

(a) A description of the identified problem being
addressed, including the parent's behavior or acts resulting in
risk to the child and the reason for the intervention by the
department.

319

(b) The permanency goal.

(c) If concurrent planning is being used, a description of the permanency goal of reunification with the parent or legal custodian in addition to a description of one of the remaining permanency goals described in s. 39.01.

If a child has not been removed from a parent, but is
 found to be dependent, even if adjudication of dependency is

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withheld, the court may leave the child in the current placement with maintaining and strengthening the placement as a permanency option.

2. If a child has been removed from a parent and is placed with a parent from whom the child was not removed, the court may leave the child in the placement with the parent from whom the child was not removed with maintaining and strengthening the placement as a permanency option.

334 3. If a child has been removed from a parent and is 335 subsequently reunified with that parent, the court may leave the 336 child with that parent with maintaining and strengthening the 337 placement as a permanency option.

(d) The date the compliance period expires. The case plan must be limited to as short a period as possible for accomplishing its provisions. The plan's compliance period expires no later than 12 months after the date the child was initially removed from the home, the child was adjudicated dependent, or the date the case plan was accepted by the court, whichever occurs first.

(e) A written notice to the parent that:

346 <u>1. It is the parent's responsibility to take action to</u> 347 <u>comply with the case plan so permanency for the child may occur</u> 348 <u>within the shortest period of time possible, but no later than 1</u> 349 <u>year after removal or adjudication of the child.</u>

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The parent must notify the parties and the court of

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351 barriers to completing case plan tasks within a reasonable time 352 after discovering such barriers if the parties are not actively 353 working to overcome them.

354 <u>3.</u> Failure of the parent to substantially comply with the 355 case plan may result in the termination of parental rights<u>.</u>, and 356 that

A material breach of the case plan by the parent's
 action or inaction may result in the filing of a petition for
 termination of parental rights sooner than the compliance period
 set forth in the case plan.

361 The case plan must be signed by all parties, except (3)362 that the signature of a child may be waived if the child is not of an age or capacity to participate in the case-planning 363 364 process. Signing the case plan constitutes an acknowledgment 365 that the case plan has been developed by the parties and that 366 they are in agreement as to the terms and conditions contained 367 in the case plan. The refusal of a parent to sign the case plan 368 does not prevent the court from accepting the case plan if the 369 case plan is otherwise acceptable to the court. Signing the case plan does not constitute an admission to any allegation of 370 371 abuse, abandonment, or neglect and does not constitute consent 372 to a finding of dependency or termination of parental rights.

373 <u>(4)</u> Before signing the case plan, the department shall 374 explain the provisions of the plan to all persons involved in 375 its implementation, including, when appropriate, the child. The

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376 department shall ensure that the parent has contact information 377 for all entities necessary to complete the tasks in the plan. 378 The department shall explain the strategies included in the plan 379 that the parent can use to overcome barriers to case plan 380 compliance and that if a barrier is discovered and the parties 381 are not actively working to overcome such barrier, the parent 382 must notify the parties and the court within a reasonable time 383 after discovering such barrier. (7) (7) (6) After the case plan has been developed, the 384 385 department shall adhere to the following procedural 386 requirements: 387 (a) If the parent's substantial compliance with the case 388 plan requires the department to provide services to the parents 389 or the child and the parents agree to begin compliance with the 390 case plan before the case plan's acceptance by the court, the 391 department shall make the appropriate referrals for services 392 that will allow the parents to begin the agreed-upon tasks and 393 services immediately. 394 (b) All other referrals for services shall be completed as 395 soon as possible, but no later than 7 days after the date of the 396 case plan approval, unless the case plan specifies that a task 397 may not be undertaken until another specified task has been 398 completed or otherwise approved by the court. (c) (b) After the case plan has been agreed upon and signed 399 400 by the parties, a copy of the plan must be given immediately to

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401 the parties, including the child if appropriate, and to other 402 persons as directed by the court.

1. A case plan must be prepared, but need not be submitted to the court, for a child who will be in care no longer than 30 days unless that child is placed in out-of-home care a second time within a 12-month period.

407 2. In each case in which a child has been placed in out-408 of-home care, a case plan must be prepared within 60 days after 409 the department removes the child from the home and shall be 410 submitted to the court before the disposition hearing for the 411 court to review and approve.

After jurisdiction attaches, all case plans must be filed with the court, and a copy provided to all the parties whose whereabouts are known, not less than 3 business days before the disposition hearing. The department shall file with the court, and provide copies to the parties, all case plans prepared before jurisdiction of the court attached.

418 Section 9. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section419 39.6012, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

420

39.6012 Case plan tasks; services.-

(1) The services to be provided to the parent and thetasks that must be completed are subject to the following:

(b) The case plan must describe each of the tasks with
which the parent must comply and the services to be provided to
the parent, specifically addressing the identified problem,

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including: The type of services or treatment. 1. 2. The date the department will provide each service or referral for the service if the service is being provided by the department or its agent. 3. The date by which the parent must complete each task. 4. The frequency of services or treatment provided. The frequency of the delivery of services or treatment provided shall be determined by the professionals providing the services or treatment on a case-by-case basis and adjusted according to their best professional judgment. 5. The location of the delivery of the services. 6. The staff of the department or service provider accountable for the services or treatment. A description of the measurable objectives, including 7. the timeframes specified for achieving the objectives of the case plan and addressing the identified problem. 8. Strategies to overcome barriers to case plan compliance and an explanation that the parent must notify the parties and the court within a reasonable time of discovering a barrier that the parties are not actively working to overcome. Section 10. Subsection (8) of section 39.6013, Florida Statutes, is amended to read: 39.6013 Case plan amendments.-(8) Amendments must include service interventions that are

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451 the least intrusive into the life of the parent and child, must 452 focus on clearly defined objectives, and must provide the most 453 efficient path to quick reunification or permanent placement 454 given the circumstances of the case and the child's need for 455 safe and proper care. A copy of the amended plan must be 456 immediately given to the persons identified in <u>s. 39.6011(7)(c)</u> 457 s. 39.6011(6)(b).

458 Section 11. Subsection (10) of section 39.621, Florida 459 Statutes, is amended to read:

460

39.621 Permanency determination by the court.-

(10) The permanency placement is intended to continue until the child reaches the age of majority and may not be disturbed absent a finding by the court that the circumstances of the permanency placement are no longer in the best interest of the child.

466 (a) If, after a child is residing in the permanency 467 placement approved at the permanency hearing, a parent who has 468 not had his or her parental rights terminated makes a motion for 469 reunification or increased contact with the child, the court 470 shall hold a hearing to determine whether the dependency case 471 should be reopened and whether there should be a modification of 472 the order.

473 (b) At the hearing, the parent must demonstrate that the 474 safety, well-being, and physical, mental, and emotional health 475 of the child is not endangered by the modification.

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476 (c) (11) The court shall base its decision concerning any 477 motion by a parent for reunification or increased contact with a 478 child on the effect of the decision on the safety, well-being, 479 and physical, mental, and emotional health of the child. Factors 480 that must be considered and addressed in the findings of fact of 481 the order on the motion must include all of the following: 482 1.(a) The compliance or noncompliance of the parent with 483 the case plan.+ 2.(b) The circumstances which caused the child's 484 485 dependency and whether those circumstances have been resolved.+ 486 3.(c) The stability and longevity of the child's 487 placement.; 4.(d) The preferences of the child, if the child is of 488 489 sufficient age and understanding to express a preference.+ 490 5.(e) The recommendation of the current custodian.; and 491 6.(f) The recommendation of the guardian ad litem, if one 492 has been appointed. 493 Section 12. Paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of section 494 39.806, Florida Statutes, is amended to read: 495 39.806 Grounds for termination of parental rights.-(1) Grounds for the termination of parental rights may be 496 497 established under any of the following circumstances: When a child has been adjudicated dependent, a case 498 (e) plan has been filed with the court, and: 499 500 The child continues to be abused, neglected, or 1.

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501 abandoned by the parent or parents. The failure of the parent or 502 parents to substantially comply with the case plan for a period 503 of 12 months after an adjudication of the child as a dependent 504 child or the child's placement into shelter care, whichever 505 occurs first, constitutes evidence of continuing abuse, neglect, 506 or abandonment unless the failure to substantially comply with 507 the case plan was due to the parent's lack of financial 508 resources or to the failure of the department to make reasonable 509 efforts to reunify the parent and child. The 12-month period begins to run only after the child's placement into shelter care 510 or the entry of a disposition order placing the custody of the 511 512 child with the department or a person other than the parent and the court's approval of a case plan having the goal of 513 514 reunification with the parent, whichever occurs first; or

515 The parent or parents have materially breached the case 2. 516 plan by his or her action or inaction. Time is of the essence 517 for permanency of children in the dependency system. In order to 518 prove the parent or parents have materially breached the case 519 plan, the court must find by clear and convincing evidence that 520 the parent or parents are unlikely or unable to substantially 521 comply with the case plan before time to comply with the case 522 plan expires.

523 3. The child has been in care for any 12 of the last 22 524 months and the parents have not substantially complied with the 525 case plan so as to permit reunification under s. 39.522(2)

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526 unless the failure to substantially comply with the case plan 527 was due to the parent's lack of financial resources or to the 528 failure of the department to make reasonable efforts to reunify 529 the parent and child.

530 Section 13. Subsection (5) of section 39.811, Florida 531 Statutes, is amended to read:

39.811 Powers of disposition; order of disposition.-

(5) If the court terminates parental rights, the court
shall enter a written order of disposition within 30 days after
<u>conclusion of the hearing</u> briefly stating the facts upon which
its decision to terminate the parental rights is made. An order
of termination of parental rights, whether based on parental
consent or after notice served as prescribed in this part,
permanently deprives the parents of any right to the child.

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Section 14. This act shall take effect October 1, 2019.

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