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Proposed Committee Substitute by the Committee on Appropriations
(Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services)

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to child welfare; providing a short title; amending s. 39.202, F.S.; expanding the list of entities with access to certain records that relate to child abandonment, abuse, or neglect held by the Department of Children and Families; amending s. 39.303, F.S.; requiring Child Protection Teams to be capable of providing certain training relating to head trauma and brain injuries in children younger than a specified age; amending s. 39.401, F.S.; authorizing the parent or legal guardian of a child to request a second medical evaluation of a child under certain circumstances; requiring the court to consider such evaluation when determining whether to remove the child from the home; amending s. 39.820, F.S.; revising the definition of the terms "guardian ad litem" and "guardian advocate"; amending s. 39.8296, F.S.; requiring that the guardian ad litem training program include training on the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in specified children; amending s. 402.40, F.S.; revising legislative findings and providing legislative intent; requiring the department to develop and implement a specified child welfare workforce development framework in collaboration with other specified entities; providing requirements for the department relating to workforce education requirements;



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28 requiring the department to submit an annual report to
29 the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;
30 requiring community-based care lead agencies to submit
31 a plan and timeline to the department relating to
32 certain child welfare staff by a specified date;
33 providing requirements for the department related to
34 workforce training; providing additional duties for
35 third-party credentialing entities; requiring certain
36 attorneys employed by the department to complete
37 certain training by a specified date; deleting
38 definitions; deleting provisions relating to core
39 competencies and specializations; amending s. 409.988,
40 F.S.; requiring a lead agency to ensure that certain
41 individuals receive specified training relating to
42 head trauma and brain injuries in children younger
43 than a specified age; revising the types of services a
44 lead agency is required to provide; creating s.
45 943.17298, F.S.; requiring law enforcement officers to
46 complete training relating to head trauma and brain
47 injuries in children younger than a specified age as
48 part of either basic recruit training or continuing
49 training or education by a specified date; amending s.
50 1004.615, F.S.; revising the purpose of the Florida
51 Institute for Child Welfare; revising requirements for
52 the institute; revising the contents of the annual
53 report that the institute must provide to the Governor
54 and the Legislature; deleting obsolete provisions;
55 repealing s. 402.402, F.S., relating to child
56 protection and child welfare personnel and attorneys



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57 employed by the department; amending s. 409.996, F.S.;
58 authorizing the department and certain lead agencies
59 to create and implement a program to more effectively
60 provide case management services to specified
61 children; providing criteria for selecting judicial
62 circuits for implementation of the program; specifying
63 requirements of the program; requiring the department
64 to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature
65 by a specified date under specified conditions;
66 amending s. 1009.25, F.S.; conforming provisions to
67 changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

68

69 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

70

71 Section 1. This act may be cited as "Jordan's Law."

72 Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section
73 39.202, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

74 39.202 Confidentiality of reports and records in cases of
75 child abuse or neglect.—

76 (2) Except as provided in subsection (4), access to such
77 records, excluding the name of, or other identifying information
78 with respect to, the reporter which shall be released only as
79 provided in subsection (5), shall be granted only to the
80 following persons, officials, and agencies:

81 (a) Employees, authorized agents, or contract providers of
82 the department, the Department of Health, the Agency for Persons
83 with Disabilities, the Office of Early Learning, or county
84 agencies responsible for carrying out:

85 1. Child or adult protective investigations;



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- 86 2. Ongoing child or adult protective services;
87 3. Early intervention and prevention services;
88 4. Healthy Start services;
89 5. Licensure or approval of adoptive homes, foster homes,
90 child care facilities, facilities licensed under chapter 393,
91 family day care homes, providers who receive school readiness
92 funding under part VI of chapter 1002, or other homes used to
93 provide for the care and welfare of children;
94 6. Employment screening for caregivers in residential group
95 homes; ~~or~~
96 7. Services for victims of domestic violence when provided
97 by certified domestic violence centers working at the
98 department's request as case consultants or with shared clients;
99 or
100 8. Credentialing of child welfare services staff pursuant
101 to s. 402.40.
102

103 Also, employees or agents of the Department of Juvenile Justice
104 responsible for the provision of services to children, pursuant
105 to chapters 984 and 985.

106 Section 3. Paragraph (h) of subsection (3) of section
107 39.303, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

108 39.303 Child Protection Teams and sexual abuse treatment
109 programs; services; eligible cases.—

110 (3) The Department of Health shall use and convene the
111 Child Protection Teams to supplement the assessment and
112 protective supervision activities of the family safety and
113 preservation program of the Department of Children and Families.
114 This section does not remove or reduce the duty and



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115 responsibility of any person to report pursuant to this chapter
116 all suspected or actual cases of child abuse, abandonment, or
117 neglect or sexual abuse of a child. The role of the Child
118 Protection Teams is to support activities of the program and to
119 provide services deemed by the Child Protection Teams to be
120 necessary and appropriate to abused, abandoned, and neglected
121 children upon referral. The specialized diagnostic assessment,
122 evaluation, coordination, consultation, and other supportive
123 services that a Child Protection Team must be capable of
124 providing include, but are not limited to, the following:

125 (h) Such training services for program and other employees
126 of the Department of Children and Families, employees of the
127 Department of Health, and other medical professionals as is
128 deemed appropriate to enable them to develop and maintain their
129 professional skills and abilities in handling child abuse,
130 abandonment, and neglect cases. The training services must
131 include training in the recognition of and appropriate responses
132 to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age
133 as required under ss. 39.8296, 402.40, and 943.17298.

134
135 A Child Protection Team that is evaluating a report of medical
136 neglect and assessing the health care needs of a medically
137 complex child shall consult with a physician who has experience
138 in treating children with the same condition.

139 Section 4. Subsection (3) of section 39.401, Florida
140 Statutes, is amended to read:

141 39.401 Taking a child alleged to be dependent into custody;
142 law enforcement officers and authorized agents of the
143 department.-



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144 (3) If the child is taken into custody by, or is delivered
145 to, an authorized agent of the department, the agent shall
146 review the facts supporting the removal with an attorney
147 representing the department. The purpose of the review is to
148 determine whether there is probable cause for the filing of a
149 shelter petition.

150 (a) If the facts are not sufficient, the child shall
151 immediately be returned to the custody of the parent or legal
152 custodian.

153 (b) If the facts are sufficient and the child has not been
154 returned to the custody of the parent or legal custodian, the
155 department shall file the petition and schedule a hearing, and
156 the attorney representing the department shall request that a
157 shelter hearing be held within 24 hours after the removal of the
158 child. While awaiting the shelter hearing, the authorized agent
159 of the department may place the child in licensed shelter care
160 or may release the child to a parent or legal custodian or
161 responsible adult relative or the adoptive parent of the child's
162 sibling who shall be given priority consideration over a
163 licensed placement, or a responsible adult approved by the
164 department if this is in the best interests of the child.
165 Placement of a child which is not in a licensed shelter must be
166 preceded by a criminal history records check as required under
167 s. 39.0138. In addition, the department may authorize placement
168 of a housekeeper/homemaker in the home of a child alleged to be
169 dependent until the parent or legal custodian assumes care of
170 the child.

171 (c) If the decision to remove a child from the home is
172 predicated upon a medical evaluation performed by a Child



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173 Protection Team pursuant to s. 39.303, the parent or legal
174 guardian of the child may request that a second, independent
175 evaluation be performed by a physician who has met the relevant
176 qualifications of s. 39.303(2) (b) in order to determine whether
177 the child has been the victim of abuse or neglect. The court
178 must consider this evaluation when determining whether to remove
179 a child from the home.

180 Section 5. Section 39.820, Florida Statutes, is amended to
181 read:

182 39.820 Definitions.—As used in this chapter part, the term:

183 (1) "Guardian ad litem" as referred to in any civil or
184 criminal proceeding includes the following: the Statewide
185 Guardian Ad Litem Office, which includes circuit a certified
186 guardian ad litem programs; program, a duly certified volunteer,
187 a staff member, a staff attorney, a contract attorney, or a
188 certified pro bono attorney working on behalf of a guardian ad
189 litem or the program; staff members of a program office; a
190 court-appointed attorney; or a responsible adult who is
191 appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a
192 child in a proceeding as provided for by law, including, but not
193 limited to, this chapter, who is a party to any judicial
194 proceeding as a representative of the child, and who serves
195 until discharged by the court.

196 (2) "Guardian advocate" means a person appointed by the
197 court to act on behalf of a drug dependent newborn under
198 pursuant to the provisions of this part.

199 Section 6. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section
200 39.8296, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

201 39.8296 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office; legislative



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202 findings and intent; creation; appointment of executive
203 director; duties of office.—

204 (2) STATEWIDE GUARDIAN AD LITEM OFFICE.—There is created a
205 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office within the Justice
206 Administrative Commission. The Justice Administrative Commission
207 shall provide administrative support and service to the office
208 to the extent requested by the executive director within the
209 available resources of the commission. The Statewide Guardian Ad
210 Litem Office is ~~shall~~ not ~~be~~ subject to control, supervision, or
211 direction by the Justice Administrative Commission in the
212 performance of its duties, but the employees of the office are
213 ~~shall be~~ governed by the classification plan and salary and
214 benefits plan approved by the Justice Administrative Commission.

215 (b) The Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office shall, within
216 available resources, have oversight responsibilities for and
217 provide technical assistance to all guardian ad litem and
218 attorney ad litem programs located within the judicial circuits.

219 1. The office shall identify the resources required to
220 implement methods of collecting, reporting, and tracking
221 reliable and consistent case data.

222 2. The office shall review the current guardian ad litem
223 programs in Florida and other states.

224 3. The office, in consultation with local guardian ad litem
225 offices, shall develop statewide performance measures and
226 standards.

227 4. The office shall develop a guardian ad litem training
228 program, which shall include, but not be limited to, training on
229 the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury
230 in a child under 6 years of age. The office shall establish a



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231 curriculum committee to develop the training program specified
232 in this subparagraph. The curriculum committee shall include,
233 but not be limited to, dependency judges, directors of circuit
234 guardian ad litem programs, active certified guardians ad litem,
235 a mental health professional who specializes in the treatment of
236 children, a member of a child advocacy group, a representative
237 of a domestic violence advocacy group ~~the Florida Coalition~~
238 ~~Against Domestic Violence~~, and a social worker experienced in
239 working with victims and perpetrators of child abuse.

240 5. The office shall review the various methods of funding
241 guardian ad litem programs, shall maximize the use of those
242 funding sources to the extent possible, and shall review the
243 kinds of services being provided by circuit guardian ad litem
244 programs.

245 6. The office shall determine the feasibility or
246 desirability of new concepts of organization, administration,
247 financing, or service delivery designed to preserve the civil
248 and constitutional rights and fulfill other needs of dependent
249 children.

250 7. In an effort to promote normalcy and establish trust
251 between a court-appointed volunteer guardian ad litem and a
252 child alleged to be abused, abandoned, or neglected under this
253 chapter, a guardian ad litem may transport a child. However, a
254 guardian ad litem volunteer may not be required or directed by
255 the program or a court to transport a child.

256 8. The office shall submit to the Governor, the President
257 of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and
258 the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court an interim report
259 describing the progress of the office in meeting the goals as



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260 described in this section. The office shall submit to the
261 Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House
262 of Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court a
263 proposed plan including alternatives for meeting the state's
264 guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem needs. This plan may
265 include recommendations for less than the entire state, may
266 include a phase-in system, and shall include estimates of the
267 cost of each of the alternatives. Each year the office shall
268 provide a status report and provide further recommendations to
269 address the need for guardian ad litem services and related
270 issues.

271 Section 7. Section 402.40, Florida Statutes, is amended to
272 read:

273 (Substantial rewording of section. See
274 s. 402.40, F.S., for present text.)

275 402.40 Child welfare workforce; development; training;
276 certification; well-being.-

277 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

278 (a) The Legislature finds that positive outcomes for
279 children and families involved with the child welfare system
280 often are attributable to the strong commitment of a well-
281 trained, highly skilled, well-resourced, and dedicated child
282 welfare workforce and that the child welfare system is only as
283 good as the individuals who conduct investigations, provide
284 services to children and families, and manage service delivery.

285 (b) The Legislature also finds that child welfare agencies
286 experience barriers to establishing and maintaining a stable,
287 effective, and diverse workforce because of issues relating to
288 recruitment, education and training, inadequate supervision,



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289 retention and staff turnover, and lack of support for frontline
290 individuals.

291 (c) The Legislature further finds that, although numerous
292 initiatives have been developed to address these challenges,
293 isolated interventions often fail to yield positive results,
294 whereas implementing an integrated framework across multiple
295 domains can help child welfare agencies achieve effective
296 outcomes.

297 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature to ensure a
298 systematic approach to child welfare workforce staff development
299 and the well-being of individuals providing child welfare
300 services by establishing a uniform statewide program.

301 (2) CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.—In order
302 to promote competency-based, outcome-focused, and data-driven
303 approaches to workforce development, the department, in
304 collaboration with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare,
305 shall develop and implement a comprehensive child welfare
306 development workforce framework using a nationally recognized
307 model for workforce development. The framework must address, at
308 a minimum, all of the following components:

- 309 (a) Recruitment and hiring.
- 310 (b) Education and professional preparation.
- 311 (c) Professional training and development.
- 312 (d) Supervision.
- 313 (e) Retention.
- 314 (f) Caseload and workload.
- 315 (g) Workforce well-being and support.
- 316 (h) Work-life balance and flexible scheduling.
- 317 (i) Agency culture and climate.



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318 (3) WORKFORCE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS.-

319 (a) The department shall make every effort to recruit and
320 hire qualified professional staff to serve as child protective
321 investigators and child protective investigation supervisors who
322 are qualified by their education and experience to perform
323 social work functions. The department, in collaboration with the
324 lead agencies, subcontracted provider organizations, the Florida
325 Institute for Child Welfare, and other partners in the child
326 welfare system, shall develop a protocol for screening
327 candidates for child protective positions which reflects the
328 preferences specified in subparagraphs 1., 2., and 3. The
329 following persons must be given preference in recruitment, but
330 this preference serves only as guidance and does not limit the
331 department's discretion to select the best available candidates:

332 1. Individuals with a baccalaureate degree in social work,
333 and child protective investigation supervisors with a master's
334 degree in social work, from a college or university social work
335 program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

336 2. Individuals with a bachelor's degree or a master's
337 degree in psychology, sociology, counseling, special education,
338 education, human development, child development, family
339 development, marriage and family therapy, or nursing.

340 3. Individuals with baccalaureate degrees who have a
341 combination of directly relevant work and volunteer experience,
342 preferably in a public service field related to children's
343 services, which demonstrates critical thinking skills, formal
344 assessment processes, communication skills, problem solving, and
345 empathy; a commitment to helping children and families; a
346 capacity to work as part of a team; an interest in continuous



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347 development of skills and knowledge; and sufficient personal
348 strength and resilience to manage competing demands and handle
349 workplace stresses.

350 (b) By each October 1, the department shall submit a report
351 on the educational qualifications, turnover, and working
352 conditions of child protective investigators and supervisors to
353 the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
354 the House of Representatives.

355 (c) By January 1, 2021, the community-based care lead
356 agencies shall submit to the department a plan and timeline for
357 recruiting and hiring child welfare staff providing care for
358 dependent children which meet the same educational requirements
359 as required for child protective investigators and child
360 protective investigation supervisors under this subsection. The
361 plan and timeline must include the same recruiting and hiring
362 requirements for child welfare staff employed by subcontractors.

363 (4) WORKFORCE TRAINING.-

364 (a) In order to enable the state to recruit and retain a
365 qualified and diverse child welfare workforce that is well-
366 trained, well-supervised, and well-supported, the department
367 shall establish a program for a comprehensive system to provide
368 both preservice and inservice child welfare competency-based
369 training curricula that all child welfare staff, including all
370 staff providing care for dependent children employed by a
371 community-based care lead agency or by a subcontractor of such
372 agency, are required to participate in and successfully
373 complete, appropriate to their areas of responsibility. Such
374 program must include training in the recognition of and
375 appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child



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376 under 6 years of age, which must be developed by the Child
377 Protection Team Program within the Department of Health.

378 (b) A community-based care lead agency may develop
379 additional training for persons delivering child welfare
380 services in the agency's service area if the curriculum does not
381 conflict with training required in paragraph (a).

382 (5) WORKFORCE CERTIFICATION.—The department shall approve
383 one or more third-party credentialing entities for the purpose
384 of developing and administering child welfare certification
385 programs for persons who provide child welfare services. A
386 third-party credentialing entity shall request such approval in
387 writing from the department. In order to obtain approval, the
388 third-party credentialing entity must:

389 (a) Establish professional requirements and standards that
390 applicants must achieve in order to obtain a child welfare
391 certification and to maintain such certification.

392 (b) Develop and apply core competencies and examination
393 instruments according to nationally recognized certification and
394 psychometric standards.

395 (c) Maintain a professional code of ethics and a
396 disciplinary process that apply to all persons holding child
397 welfare certification.

398 (d) Maintain a database, accessible to the public, of all
399 persons holding child welfare certification, including any
400 history of ethical violations.

401 (e) Require annual continuing education for persons holding
402 child welfare certification and require certified professionals
403 to comply with the training requirements in subsection (4) as a
404 condition of renewal or initial certification. The third-party



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405 credentialing entity shall track and report compliance with this
406 section to the department on an annual basis.

407 (f) Administer a continuing education provider program to
408 ensure that only qualified providers offer continuing education
409 opportunities for certificateholders.

410 (g) All certified child welfare professionals must follow
411 the requirements of the third-party credentialing entities code
412 of ethical and professional conduct and disciplinary procedures.

413 1. The department, community based care lead agencies,
414 sheriff offices and their contracted providers shall report all
415 allegations of suspected or known violations of ethical or
416 professional misconduct standards to the department approved
417 third-party credentialing entity, including all allegations made
418 to the department's Office of Inspector General on certified
419 personnel.

420 2. The third-party credentialing entity shall review all
421 case records involving the death of a child or other critical
422 incident to ensure compliance with the third-party credentialing
423 entity's published code of ethical and professional conduct and
424 disciplinary procedures.

425 3. The department shall provide the third-party
426 credentialing entity with all reports necessary to conduct a
427 thorough investigation on all certified child welfare service
428 providers involved with the case.

429 4. The third-party credentialing entity shall immediately
430 suspend the certification of all certified individuals involved
431 in the case pending the results of the initial review of the
432 certified professional's role and performance as it relates to
433 the case circumstance.



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434 5. The department or sub-contracted employer of the
435 certified staff must immediately remove the individual from
436 their duties that require certification as a condition of
437 employment until the initial review is complete and the third-
438 party credentialing entity determines if an ethics case is
439 warranted.

440 6. Any decision by a department approved credentialing
441 entity to deny, revoke, or suspend a certification, or otherwise
442 impose sanctions on an individual who is certified, is
443 reviewable by the department. Upon receiving an adverse
444 determination, the person aggrieved may request an
445 administrative hearing pursuant to ss. 120.569 and 120.57(1)
446 within 30 days after completing any appeals process offered by
447 the credentialing entity or the department, as applicable.

448 7. The third-party credentialing entity shall track and
449 report compliance with this subsection to the department.

450 (h) Maintain an advisory committee, including
451 representatives from each region of the department, each
452 sheriff's office providing child protective services, and each
453 community-based care lead agency, who shall be appointed by the
454 organization they represent. The third-party credentialing
455 entity may appoint additional members to the advisory committee.

456 (6) CHILD WELFARE TRAINING TRUST FUND.—

457 (a) There is created within the State Treasury a Child
458 Welfare Training Trust Fund to be used by the Department of
459 Children and Families for the purpose of funding the
460 professional development of persons providing child welfare
461 services.

462 (b) One dollar from every noncriminal traffic infraction



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463 collected pursuant to s. 318.14(10) (b) or s. 318.18 shall be
464 deposited into the Child Welfare Training Trust Fund.

465 (c) In addition to the funds generated by paragraph (b),
466 the trust fund shall receive funds generated from an additional
467 fee on birth certificates and dissolution of marriage filings,
468 as specified in ss. 382.0255 and 28.101, respectively, and may
469 receive funds from any other public or private source.

470 (d) Funds that are not expended by the end of the budget
471 cycle or through a supplemental budget approved by the
472 department shall revert to the trust fund.

473 (7) ATTORNEYS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO HANDLE CHILD
474 WELFARE CASES.—With the exception of attorneys hired after July
475 1, 2014, but before July 1, 2020, who shall complete the
476 training required under this subsection by January 31, 2021,
477 attorneys hired by the department on or after July 1, 2014,
478 whose primary responsibility is representing the department in
479 child welfare cases shall receive training within the first 6
480 months of employment in:

481 (a) The dependency court process, including the attorney's
482 role in preparing and reviewing documents prepared for
483 dependency court for accuracy and completeness;

484 (b) Preparing and presenting child welfare cases, including
485 at least 1 week of shadowing an experienced children's legal
486 services attorney who is preparing and presenting cases;

487 (c) Safety assessment, safety decisionmaking tools, and
488 safety plans;

489 (d) Developing information presented by investigators and
490 case managers to support decisionmaking in the best interest of
491 children; and



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492 (e) The experiences and techniques of case managers and
493 investigators, including shadowing an experienced child
494 protective investigator and an experienced case manager for at
495 least 8 hours.

496 (8) ADOPTION OF RULES.—The department shall adopt rules
497 necessary to administer this section.

498 Section 8. Paragraph (f) of subsection (1) and subsection
499 (3) of section 409.988, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

500 409.988 Lead agency duties; general provisions.—

501 (1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

502 (f) Shall ensure that all individuals providing care for
503 dependent children participate in and successfully complete the
504 program of ~~receive appropriate~~ training relevant to the
505 individual's area of responsibility and meet the minimum
506 employment standards established by the department pursuant to
507 s. 402.40. The training curriculum must include training in the
508 recognition of and appropriate responses to head trauma and
509 brain injury in a child under 6 years of age developed by the
510 Child Protection Team Program within the Department of Health.

511 (3) SERVICES.—A lead agency must provide dependent children
512 with services that are supported by research or that are
513 recognized as best practices in the child welfare field. The
514 agency shall give priority to the use of services that are
515 evidence-based and trauma-informed and may also provide other
516 innovative services, including, but not limited to, family-
517 centered and cognitive-behavioral interventions designed to
518 mitigate out-of-home placements, and intensive family
519 reunification services that combine child welfare and mental
520 health services for families with dependent children under 6



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521 years of age.

522 Section 9. Section 943.17298, Florida Statutes, is created
523 to read:

524 943.17298 Training in the recognition of and responses to
525 head trauma and brain injury.—Each law enforcement officer must
526 successfully complete training on the subject of the recognition
527 of and appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in
528 a child under 6 years of age developed by the Child Protection
529 Team Program within the Department of Health to aid an officer
530 in the detection of head trauma and brain injury due to child
531 abuse. Such training must be completed as part of the basic
532 recruit training for a law enforcement officer, as required
533 under s. 943.13(9), or as a part of continuing training or
534 education required under s. 943.135(1), before July 1, 2022.

535 Section 10. Section 1004.615, Florida Statutes, is amended
536 to read:

537 1004.615 Florida Institute for Child Welfare.—

538 (1) There is established the Florida Institute for Child
539 Welfare within the Florida State University College of Social
540 Work. The purpose of the institute is to advance the well-being
541 of children and families who are involved with, or at risk of
542 becoming involved with, the child welfare system by facilitating
543 and supporting statewide partnerships to develop competency-
544 based education, training, and support to prepare a diverse
545 group of social work professionals for careers in child welfare
546 by improving the performance of child protection and child
547 welfare services through research, policy analysis, evaluation,
548 and leadership development. The institute shall consist of a
549 consortium of public and private universities offering degrees



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550 in social work and shall be housed within the Florida State
551 University College of Social Work.

552 (2) Using such resources as authorized in the General
553 Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Families
554 shall collaborate ~~contract~~ with the institute for performance of
555 the duties described in subsection (3) ~~(4)~~ using state
556 appropriations, public and private grants, and other resources
557 obtained by the institute.

558 (3) In order to increase and retain a higher percentage of
559 professionally educated social workers in the child welfare
560 system and serve as a statewide resource for child welfare
561 workforce education and training, the institute, in
562 collaboration with the Department of Children and Families,
563 shall:

564 (a) Design and disseminate a continuum of social work
565 education and training which emphasizes child welfare workforce
566 stabilization and professionalization by aligning social work
567 curriculum and training with critical practice skills pursuant
568 to s. 402.40.

569 (b) Identify methods to promote continuing professional
570 development and systems of workplace support for existing child
571 welfare staff.

572 (c) Develop a best practice model for providing feedback on
573 curriculum to social work programs and for ensuring that interns
574 who will be entering the child welfare profession are well-
575 supervised by university personnel during their internships.

576 (d) Create a Title IV-E program designed to provide
577 professional education and monetary support to undergraduate and
578 graduate social work students who intend to pursue or continue a



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579 career in child welfare. Goals of the program should include:

580 1. Increasing the number of individuals in the child
581 welfare workforce who have a bachelor's degree or master's
582 degree in social work.

583 2. Prioritizing the enrollment of current child welfare
584 staff employed by the state.

585 3. Prioritizing the enrollment of students who reflect the
586 diversity of the state's child welfare population.

587 4. Providing specific program support through the provision
588 of specialized competency-based child welfare curriculum and
589 monetary support to students.

590 (e) Engage in evaluation and dissemination of evidence-
591 based and promising practices in child welfare and build high-
592 quality evaluation into new program models and pilots.

593
594 ~~The institute shall work with the department, sheriffs providing~~
595 ~~child protective investigative services, community-based care~~
596 ~~lead agencies, community-based care provider organizations, the~~
597 ~~court system, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida~~
598 ~~Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and other partners who~~
599 ~~contribute to and participate in providing child protection and~~
600 ~~child welfare services.~~

601 ~~(4) The institute shall:~~

602 ~~(a) Maintain a program of research which contributes to~~
603 ~~scientific knowledge and informs both policy and practice~~
604 ~~related to child safety, permanency, and child and family well-~~
605 ~~being.~~

606 ~~(b) Advise the department and other organizations~~
607 ~~participating in the child protection and child welfare system~~



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608 ~~regarding scientific evidence on policy and practice related to~~
609 ~~child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.~~

610 ~~(c) Provide advice regarding management practices and~~
611 ~~administrative processes used by the department and other~~
612 ~~organizations participating in the child protection and child~~
613 ~~welfare system and recommend improvements that reduce~~
614 ~~burdensome, ineffective requirements for frontline staff and~~
615 ~~their supervisors while enhancing their ability to effectively~~
616 ~~investigate, analyze, problem solve, and supervise.~~

617 ~~(d) Assess the performance of child protection and child~~
618 ~~welfare services based on specific outcome measures.~~

619 ~~(e) Evaluate the scope and effectiveness of preservice and~~
620 ~~inservice training for child protection and child welfare~~
621 ~~employees and advise and assist the department in efforts to~~
622 ~~improve such training.~~

623 ~~(f) Assess the readiness of social work graduates to assume~~
624 ~~job responsibilities in the child protection and child welfare~~
625 ~~system and identify gaps in education which can be addressed~~
626 ~~through the modification of curricula or the establishment of~~
627 ~~industry certifications.~~

628 ~~(g) Develop and maintain a program of professional support~~
629 ~~including training courses and consulting services that assist~~
630 ~~both individuals and organizations in implementing adaptive and~~
631 ~~resilient responses to workplace stress.~~

632 ~~(h) Participate in the department's critical incident~~
633 ~~response team, assist in the preparation of reports about such~~
634 ~~incidents, and support the committee review of reports and~~
635 ~~development of recommendations.~~

636 ~~(i) Identify effective policies and promising practices,~~



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637 ~~including, but not limited to, innovations in coordination~~
638 ~~between entities participating in the child protection and child~~
639 ~~welfare system, data analytics, working with the local~~
640 ~~community, and management of human service organizations, and~~
641 ~~communicate these findings to the department and other~~
642 ~~organizations participating in the child protection and child~~
643 ~~welfare system.~~

644 ~~(j) Develop a definition of a child or family at high risk~~
645 ~~of abuse or neglect. Such a definition must consider~~
646 ~~characteristics associated with a greater probability of abuse~~
647 ~~and neglect.~~

648 ~~(5)~~ The President of the Florida State University shall
649 appoint a director of the institute. The director must be a
650 child welfare professional with a degree in social work who
651 holds a faculty appointment in the Florida State University
652 College of Social Work. The institute shall be administered by
653 the director, and the director's office shall be located at the
654 Florida State University. The director is responsible for
655 overall management of the institute and for developing and
656 executing the work of the institute consistent with the
657 responsibilities in subsection (3) ~~(4)~~. The director shall
658 engage individuals in other state universities with accredited
659 colleges of social work to participate in the institute.
660 Individuals from other university programs relevant to the
661 institute's work, including, but not limited to, economics,
662 management, law, medicine, and education, may also be invited by
663 the director to contribute to the institute. The universities
664 participating in the institute shall provide facilities, staff,
665 and other resources to the institute to establish statewide



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666 access to institute programs and services.

667 ~~(5)-(6)~~ By each October 1 ~~of each year~~, the institute shall
668 provide a written report to the Governor, the President of the
669 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which
670 outlines its activities in the preceding year, reports
671 significant research findings, as well as results of other
672 programs, and provides specific recommendations for improving
673 education, training, and support for individuals in the child
674 welfare workforce ~~child protection and child welfare services.~~

675 ~~(a) The institute shall include an evaluation of the~~
676 ~~results of the educational and training requirements for child~~
677 ~~protection and child welfare personnel established under this~~
678 ~~act and recommendations for application of the results to child~~
679 ~~protection personnel employed by sheriff's offices providing~~
680 ~~child protection services in its report due October 1, 2017.~~

681 ~~(b) The institute shall include an evaluation of the~~
682 ~~effects of the other provisions of this act and recommendations~~
683 ~~for improvements in child protection and child welfare services~~
684 ~~in its report due October 1, 2018.~~

685 ~~(7) The institute shall submit a report with~~
686 ~~recommendations for improving the state's child welfare system.~~
687 ~~The report shall address topics including, but not limited to,~~
688 ~~enhancing working relationships between the entities involved in~~
689 ~~the child protection and child welfare system, identification of~~
690 ~~and replication of best practices, reducing paperwork,~~
691 ~~increasing the retention of child protective investigators and~~
692 ~~case managers, and caring for medically complex children within~~
693 ~~the child welfare system, with the goal of allowing the child to~~
694 ~~remain in the least restrictive and most nurturing environment.~~



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695 ~~The institute shall submit an interim report by February 1,~~
696 ~~2015, and final report by October 1, 2015, to the Governor, the~~
697 ~~President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of~~
698 ~~Representatives.~~

699 Section 11. Section 402.402, Florida Statutes, is
700 repealed.

701 Section 12. Subsection (24) is added to section 409.996,
702 Florida Statutes, to read:

703 409.996 Duties of the Department of Children and Families.—
704 The department shall contract for the delivery, administration,
705 or management of care for children in the child protection and
706 child welfare system. In doing so, the department retains
707 responsibility for the quality of contracted services and
708 programs and shall ensure that services are delivered in
709 accordance with applicable federal and state statutes and
710 regulations.

711 (24) The department, in collaboration with the lead
712 agencies serving the judicial circuits selected in paragraph
713 (a), may create and implement a program to more effectively
714 provide case management services for dependent children under 6
715 years of age.

716 (a) If the program is created, the department shall select
717 up to three judicial circuits in which to develop and implement
718 the program, with priority given to a circuit that has a high
719 removal rate, significant case management turnover rate, and the
720 highest numbers of children in out-of-home care or a significant
721 increase in the number of children in out-of-home care over the
722 last 3 fiscal years.

723 (b) If the program is created, it must do each of the



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724 following:

725 1. Include caseloads for dependency case managers comprised
726 solely of children who are under 6 years of age, except as
727 provided in paragraph (c). The maximum caseload for a case
728 manager shall be no more than 15 children, if possible.

729 2. Include case managers who are trained specifically in:

730 a. Critical child development for children under 6 years of
731 age;

732 b. Specific practices of child care for children under 6
733 years of age;

734 c. The scope of community resources available to children
735 under 6 years of age; and

736 d. Working with a parent or caregiver and assisting him or
737 her in developing the skills necessary to care for the health,
738 safety, and well-being of a child under 6 years of age.

739 (c) If a child being served through the program has a
740 dependent sibling, the sibling may be assigned to the same case
741 manager as the child being served through the program; however,
742 each sibling counts toward the case manager's maximum caseload
743 as provided under paragraph (b).

744 (d) If the program is created, the department shall
745 evaluate the permanency, safety, and well-being of children
746 being served through the program and submit a report to the
747 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
748 House of Representatives by October 1, 2025, detailing its
749 findings.

750 Section 13. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
751 1009.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

752 1009.25 Fee exemptions.-



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753 (1) The following students are exempt from the payment of
754 tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that
755 provides workforce education programs, Florida College System
756 institution, or state university:

757 (h) Pursuant to s. 402.403, child protection and child
758 welfare personnel ~~as defined in s. 402.402~~ who are enrolled in
759 an accredited bachelor's degree or master's degree in social
760 work program, provided that the student attains at least a grade
761 of "B" in all courses for which tuition and fees are exempted.

762 Section 14. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.