

By the Committees on Appropriations; and Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; and Senators Rouson, Berman, Hooper, Book, and Rader

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to child welfare; providing a short
3 title; amending s. 39.202, F.S.; expanding the list of
4 entities with access to certain records that relate to
5 child abandonment, abuse, or neglect held by the
6 Department of Children and Families; amending s.
7 39.303, F.S.; requiring Child Protection Teams to be
8 capable of providing certain training relating to head
9 trauma and brain injuries in children younger than a
10 specified age; amending s. 39.401, F.S.; authorizing
11 the parent or legal guardian of a child to request a
12 second medical evaluation of a child under certain
13 circumstances; requiring the court to consider such
14 evaluation when determining whether to remove the
15 child from the home; amending s. 39.820, F.S.;
16 revising the definition of the terms "guardian ad
17 litem" and "guardian advocate"; amending s. 39.8296,
18 F.S.; requiring that the guardian ad litem training
19 program include training on the recognition of and
20 responses to head trauma and brain injury in specified
21 children; amending s. 402.40, F.S.; revising
22 legislative intent and providing legislative findings;
23 requiring the department to develop and implement a
24 specified child welfare workforce development
25 framework in collaboration with other specified
26 entities; providing requirements for the department
27 relating to workforce education requirements;
28 requiring the department to submit an annual report to
29 the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;

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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
57 employed by the department; amending s. 409.996, F.S.;
58 authorizing the department, in collaboration with

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

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

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

73 Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section
74 39.202, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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

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

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

- 86 1. Child or adult protective investigations;
87 2. Ongoing child or adult protective services;

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

103

104 Also, employees or agents of the Department of Juvenile Justice

105 responsible for the provision of services to children, pursuant

106 to chapters 984 and 985.

107 Section 3. Paragraph (h) of subsection (3) of section

108 39.303, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

109 39.303 Child Protection Teams and sexual abuse treatment

110 programs; services; eligible cases.—

111 (3) The Department of Health shall use and convene the

112 Child Protection Teams to supplement the assessment and

113 protective supervision activities of the family safety and

114 preservation program of the Department of Children and Families.

115 This section does not remove or reduce the duty and

116 responsibility of any person to report pursuant to this chapter

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

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

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

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

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

145 (3) If the child is taken into custody by, or is delivered

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146 to, an authorized agent of the department, the agent shall
147 review the facts supporting the removal with an attorney
148 representing the department. The purpose of the review is to
149 determine whether there is probable cause for the filing of a
150 shelter petition.

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

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

172 (c) If the decision to remove a child from the home is
173 predicated upon a medical evaluation performed by a Child
174 Protection Team pursuant to s. 39.303, the parent or legal

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

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

183 39.820 Definitions.—As used in this chapter part, the term:

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

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

200 Section 6. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section
201 39.8296, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

202 39.8296 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office; legislative
203 findings and intent; creation; appointment of executive

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204 director; duties of office.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

278 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.-

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

286 (b) The Legislature also finds that child welfare agencies
287 experience barriers to establishing and maintaining a stable,
288 effective, and diverse workforce because of issues relating to
289 recruitment, education and training, inadequate supervision,
290 retention and staff turnover, and lack of support for frontline

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291 individuals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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349 strength and resilience to manage competing demands and handle
350 workplace stresses.

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

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

364 (4) WORKFORCE TRAINING.—

365 (a) In order to enable the state to recruit and retain a
366 qualified and diverse child welfare workforce that is well-
367 trained, well-supervised, and well-supported, the department
368 shall establish a program for a comprehensive system to provide
369 both preservice and inservice child welfare competency-based
370 training curricula that all child welfare staff, including all
371 staff providing care for dependent children employed by a
372 community-based care lead agency or by a subcontractor of such
373 agency, are required to participate in and successfully
374 complete, appropriate to their areas of responsibility. Such
375 program must include training in the recognition of and
376 appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child
377 under 6 years of age, which must be developed by the Child

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378 Protection Team Program within the Department of Health.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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407 section to the department on an annual basis.

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

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

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

421 2. The department shall review all case records involving
422 the death of a child or other critical incident that is subject
423 to a critical incident rapid response team review to ensure
424 compliance with ethical and professional conduct requirements of
425 any certified child welfare professional staff.

426 3. The department shall provide any reports to the third-
427 party credentialing entity that indicate that ethical or
428 professional conduct requirements were not met so that the
429 credentialing entity may determine if the individual's
430 certification requires suspension or revocation.

431 4. If it is determined that the individual's certification
432 requires suspension or revocation, the department or employer of
433 the certified staff must immediately remove the individual from
434 their duties that require certification as a condition of
435 employment.

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

445 6. The third-party credentialing entity shall track and
446 report compliance with this subsection to the department.

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

453 (6) CHILD WELFARE TRAINING TRUST FUND.—

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

459 (b) One dollar from every noncriminal traffic infraction
460 collected pursuant to s. 318.14(10) (b) or s. 318.18 shall be
461 deposited into the Child Welfare Training Trust Fund.

462 (c) In addition to the funds generated by paragraph (b),
463 the trust fund shall receive funds generated from an additional
464 fee on birth certificates and dissolution of marriage filings,

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465 as specified in ss. 382.0255 and 28.101, respectively, and may
466 receive funds from any other public or private source.

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

470 (7) ATTORNEYS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO HANDLE CHILD
471 WELFARE CASES.—With the exception of attorneys hired after July
472 1, 2014, but before July 1, 2020, who shall complete the
473 training required under this subsection by January 31, 2021,
474 attorneys hired by the department on or after July 1, 2014,
475 whose primary responsibility is representing the department in
476 child welfare cases shall receive training within the first 6
477 months of employment in:

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

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

484 (c) Safety assessment, safety decisionmaking tools, and
485 safety plans;

486 (d) Developing information presented by investigators and
487 case managers to support decisionmaking in the best interest of
488 children; and

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

493 (8) ADOPTION OF RULES.—The department shall adopt rules

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494 necessary to administer this section.

495 Section 8. Paragraph (f) of subsection (1) and subsection
496 (3) of section 409.988, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

497 409.988 Lead agency duties; general provisions.—

498 (1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

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

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

519 Section 9. Section 943.17298, Florida Statutes, is created
520 to read:

521 943.17298 Training in the recognition of and responses to
522 head trauma and brain injury.—Each law enforcement officer must

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

532 Section 10. Section 1004.615, Florida Statutes, is amended
533 to read:

534 1004.615 Florida Institute for Child Welfare.—

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

549 (2) Using such resources as authorized in the General
550 Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Families
551 shall collaborate ~~contract~~ with the institute for performance of

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552 the duties described in subsection (3) ~~(4)~~ using state
553 appropriations, public and private grants, and other resources
554 obtained by the institute.

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

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

566 (b) Identify methods to promote continuing professional
567 development and systems of workplace support for existing child
568 welfare staff.

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

573 (d) Create a Title IV-E program designed to provide
574 professional education and monetary support to undergraduate and
575 graduate social work students who intend to pursue or continue a
576 career in child welfare. Goals of the program should include:

577 1. Increasing the number of individuals in the child
578 welfare workforce who have a bachelor's degree or master's
579 degree in social work.

580 2. Prioritizing the enrollment of current child welfare

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581 staff employed by the state.

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

584 4. Providing specific program support through the provision
585 of specialized competency-based child welfare curriculum and
586 monetary support to students.

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

590

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

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

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

603 ~~(b) Advise the department and other organizations~~
604 ~~participating in the child protection and child welfare system~~
605 ~~regarding scientific evidence on policy and practice related to~~
606 ~~child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.~~

607 ~~(c) Provide advice regarding management practices and~~
608 ~~administrative processes used by the department and other~~
609 ~~organizations participating in the child protection and child~~

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610 ~~welfare system and recommend improvements that reduce~~
611 ~~burdensome, ineffective requirements for frontline staff and~~
612 ~~their supervisors while enhancing their ability to effectively~~
613 ~~investigate, analyze, problem solve, and supervise.~~

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

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

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

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

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

633 ~~(i) Identify effective policies and promising practices,~~
634 ~~including, but not limited to, innovations in coordination~~
635 ~~between entities participating in the child protection and child~~
636 ~~welfare system, data analytics, working with the local~~
637 ~~community, and management of human service organizations, and~~
638 ~~communicate these findings to the department and other~~

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639 ~~organizations participating in the child protection and child~~
640 ~~welfare system.~~

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

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

664 (5) ~~(6)~~ By each October 1 ~~of each year~~, the institute shall
665 provide a written report to the Governor, the President of the
666 Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which
667 outlines its activities in the preceding year, reports

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668 significant research findings, as well as results of other
669 programs, and provides specific recommendations for improving
670 education, training, and support for individuals in the child
671 welfare workforce ~~child protection and child welfare services.~~

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

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

682 ~~(7) The institute shall submit a report with~~
683 ~~recommendations for improving the state's child welfare system.~~
684 ~~The report shall address topics including, but not limited to,~~
685 ~~enhancing working relationships between the entities involved in~~
686 ~~the child protection and child welfare system, identification of~~
687 ~~and replication of best practices, reducing paperwork,~~
688 ~~increasing the retention of child protective investigators and~~
689 ~~case managers, and caring for medically complex children within~~
690 ~~the child welfare system, with the goal of allowing the child to~~
691 ~~remain in the least restrictive and most nurturing environment.~~
692 ~~The institute shall submit an interim report by February 1,~~
693 ~~2015, and final report by October 1, 2015, to the Governor, the~~
694 ~~President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of~~
695 ~~Representatives.~~

696 Section 11. Section 402.402, Florida Statutes, is repealed.

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

699 409.996 Duties of the Department of Children and Families.—
700 The department shall contract for the delivery, administration,
701 or management of care for children in the child protection and
702 child welfare system. In doing so, the department retains
703 responsibility for the quality of contracted services and
704 programs and shall ensure that services are delivered in
705 accordance with applicable federal and state statutes and
706 regulations.

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

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

719 (b) If the program is created, it must do each of the
720 following:

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

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

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726 a. Critical child development for children under 6 years of
727 age;

728 b. Specific practices of child care for children under 6
729 years of age;

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

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

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

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

746 Section 13. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section
747 1009.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

748 1009.25 Fee exemptions.—

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

753 (h) Pursuant to s. 402.403, child protection and child
754 welfare personnel ~~as defined in s. 402.402~~ who are enrolled in

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755 an accredited bachelor's degree or master's degree in social
756 work program, provided that the student attains at least a grade
757 of "B" in all courses for which tuition and fees are exempted.

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