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1  
2 An act relating to trauma screening for children  
3 removed from caregivers; amending s. 39.523, F.S.;  
4 revising legislative findings; requiring the  
5 Department of Children and Families or community-based  
6 care lead agency to conduct a trauma screening after a  
7 child's removal from his or her home within a certain  
8 timeframe; requiring the department or community-based  
9 care lead agency to refer the child for a trauma  
10 assessment, if indicated appropriate or necessary by  
11 the screening, within a certain timeframe; requiring  
12 the department or community-based lead agency to refer  
13 the child to services and intervention, as needed;  
14 requiring that the trauma screening, assessment, and  
15 services and intervention be integrated into the  
16 child's overall treatment planning and services;  
17 requiring the department or the community-based care  
18 lead agency to provide certain information and support  
19 for a specified purpose; providing an effective date.  
20

21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
22

23 Section 1. Subsections (1) and paragraph (a) of subsection  
24 (2) of section 39.523, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

25 39.523 Placement in out-of-home care.—

26 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

27 (a) The Legislature finds that it is a basic tenet of child  
28 welfare practice and the law that a child be placed in the least  
29 restrictive, most family-like setting available in close

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30 proximity to the home of his or her parents which meets the  
31 needs of the child, and that a child be placed in a permanent  
32 home in a timely manner.

33 (b) The Legislature ~~also~~ finds that there is an association  
34 between placements that do not meet the needs of the child and  
35 adverse outcomes for the child, that mismatching placements to  
36 children's needs has been identified as a factor that negatively  
37 impacts placement stability, and that identifying the right  
38 placement for each child requires effective assessment.

39 (c) The Legislature also finds that the timely  
40 identification of and therapeutic response to acute presentation  
41 of symptoms indicative of trauma can reduce adverse outcomes for  
42 a child, aid in the identification of services to enhance  
43 initial placement stability and of supports to caregivers, and  
44 reduce placement disruption.

45 (d) It is the intent of the Legislature that whenever a  
46 child is unable to safely remain at home with a parent, the most  
47 appropriate available out-of-home placement shall be chosen  
48 after an assessment of the child's needs and the availability of  
49 caregivers qualified to meet the child's needs.

50 (2) ASSESSMENT AND PLACEMENT.—When any child is removed  
51 from a home and placed in out-of-home care, a comprehensive  
52 placement assessment process shall be completed in accordance  
53 with s. 39.4022 to determine the level of care needed by the  
54 child and match the child with the most appropriate placement.

55 (a) In accordance with rules adopted by the department, the  
56 department or community-based care lead agency ~~or subcontracted~~  
57 ~~agency with the responsibility for assessment and placement~~  
58 must:

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59           1. Coordinate a multidisciplinary team staffing as  
60 established in s. 39.4022 with the necessary participants for  
61 the stated purpose of the staffing.

62           2. Conduct a trauma screening as soon as practicable after  
63 the child's removal from his or her home but no later than 21  
64 days after the shelter hearing. If indicated as appropriate or  
65 necessary by the screening, the department or community-based  
66 care lead agency must, at a minimum:

67           a. Promptly refer the child to appropriate trauma  
68 assessment, which must be completed within 30 days, and if  
69 appropriate, services and intervention as needed. To the extent  
70 possible, the trauma screening, the assessment, and services and  
71 intervention must be integrated into the child's overall  
72 behavioral health treatment planning and services.

73           b. In accordance with s. 409.1415(2)(b)3.f., provide  
74 information and support, which may include, but need not be  
75 limited to, consultation, coaching, training, and referrals to  
76 services, to the caregiver of the child to help the caregiver  
77 respond to and care for the child in a trauma-informed and  
78 therapeutic manner.

79           Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.