

By Senator Rouson

16-00455-23

2023204__

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the Task Force on the Monitoring of
3 Children in Out-of-Home Care; creating s. 39.4093,
4 F.S.; creating the task force adjunct to the
5 Department of Law Enforcement; requiring the
6 department to provide certain services; specifying the
7 purpose of the task force; specifying the composition
8 of the task force; providing requirements for member
9 appointments, election of a chair, and meetings;
10 specifying duties of the task force; requiring the
11 Florida Institute for Child Welfare to conduct certain
12 focus groups and submit its findings to the task force
13 by a specified date; requiring the Department of
14 Children and Families to submit certain monthly
15 reports to the task force through a specified date;
16 requiring the task force to submit a report to the
17 Governor and Legislature by a specified date;
18 providing for future review and repeal; providing an
19 effective date.

20
21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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23 Section 1. Section 39.4093, Florida Statutes, is created to
24 read:

25 39.4093 Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-
26 Home Care.—

27 (1) CREATION.—The Task Force on the Monitoring of Children
28 in Out-of-Home Care, a task force as defined in s. 20.03(8), is
29 created adjunct to the Department of Law Enforcement. The

16-00455-23

2023204__

30 Department of Law Enforcement shall provide administrative and
31 staff support services relating to the functions of the task
32 force.

33 (2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the task force is to identify
34 and counter the root causes of why children go missing while in
35 out-of-home care and to ensure that prompt and effective action
36 is taken to address such causes. The task force shall examine
37 and recommend improvements to current policies, procedures,
38 programs, and initiatives to prevent children from going missing
39 while in out-of-home care and to ensure that timely and
40 comprehensive steps are taken to find children who are missing
41 for any reason, including, but not limited to, running away,
42 human trafficking, and abduction by or absconding with a parent
43 or an individual who does not have care or custody of the child.

44 (3) MEMBERSHIP; MEETINGS.—

45 (a) The task force is composed of the following members:

46 1. A member of the Senate, appointed by the President of
47 the Senate.

48 2. A member of the House of Representatives, appointed by
49 the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

50 3. The secretary, or his or her designee.

51 4. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice, or his or her
52 designee.

53 5. The executive director of the Statewide Guardian Ad
54 Lite Office, or his or her designee.

55 6. The executive director of the Department of Law
56 Enforcement, or his or her designee.

57 7. A representative from Safe Kids Florida, appointed by
58 the State Surgeon General.

16-00455-23

2023204__

59 8. A representative from the Statewide Council on Human
60 Trafficking, appointed by the Attorney General.

61 9. A representative from a community-based care lead agency
62 that delivers child welfare services in a rural county,
63 appointed by the secretary.

64 10. A representative from a community-based care lead
65 agency that delivers child welfare services in an urban county,
66 appointed by the secretary.

67 11. A licensed foster parent, appointed by the secretary.

68 12. A representative from a residential group care
69 provider, appointed by the secretary.

70 13. A young adult who has aged out of the foster care
71 system, appointed by the secretary.

72 (b) Appointments to the task force must be made by August
73 1, 2023. Each member serves at the pleasure of the official who
74 appointed the member. A vacancy on the task force must be filled
75 in the same manner as the original appointment.

76 (c) The task force shall elect a chair from among its
77 members.

78 (d) The task force shall convene no later than September 1,
79 2023. The task force shall meet monthly or upon the call of the
80 chair. The task force shall hold its meetings through
81 teleconference or other electronic means.

82 (4) DUTIES.—The duties of the task force include all of the
83 following:

84 (a) Analyzing statistical data regarding children in out-
85 of-home care who are missing and the reasons why such children
86 are missing, if known.

87 (b) Identifying the root causes of why children go missing

16-00455-23

2023204__

88 while in out-of-home care and how to prevent children from going
89 missing while in out-of-home care.

90 (c) Assessing the relationship between children who go
91 missing from out-of-home care and the risk of such children
92 becoming victims of human trafficking.

93 (d) Assessing the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of
94 existing policies and procedures for preventing children in out-
95 of-home care from going missing, for promptly determining
96 whether such children are missing, and for locating any such
97 missing children.

98 (e) Evaluating the state's approaches to reporting on the
99 individual status of children missing from out-of-home care and
100 the results of the efforts to locate such children, including,
101 but not limited to, the use of technology, training,
102 communication, and cooperation.

103 (f) Measuring the overall performance of efforts to locate
104 and recover children missing from out-of-home care, including,
105 but not limited to, the communication and response between
106 community-based care lead agencies, the department, and other
107 entities.

108 (g) Collaborating with the Florida Institute for Child
109 Welfare to identify best practices used in other states for
110 monitoring the location of children in out-of-home care who go
111 missing, and evaluating whether such practices should be adopted
112 in this state.

113 (h) Submitting recommendations to improve policies,
114 procedures, and systems in this state, including, but not
115 limited to, technology, training, communication, and
116 cooperation, so that all entities are effectively monitoring

16-00455-23

2023204__

117 children in out-of-home care, responding appropriately when such
118 children go missing, and preventing such children from going
119 missing while in out-of-home care.

120 (5) FOCUS GROUPS.—The Florida Institute for Child Welfare
121 shall conduct focus groups with children in out-of-home care and
122 young adults who have aged out of the foster care system to
123 assist the task force in fulfilling its duties. The focus groups
124 shall, at a minimum, consider the reasons why such children seek
125 to leave their out-of-home placements and identify opportunities
126 and resources to assist and prevent children from leaving their
127 placements and to facilitate the return of such missing
128 children. The institute shall submit the findings from the focus
129 groups to the task force by April 1, 2024.

130 (6) REPORTS.—

131 (a) Through October 1, 2024, the department shall provide
132 monthly reports to the task force to assist the task force in
133 fulfilling its duties. The monthly reports must, at a minimum,
134 address the number and percentage of children in out-of-home
135 care who have been reported missing; the reasons why such
136 children are missing, if known; and the length of time between
137 when such children are reported missing and their recovery or
138 return. The monthly report must categorize the required data by
139 age, county, community-based care lead agency, and reasons why
140 such children are missing, if known.

141 (b) By October 1, 2024, the task force shall submit to the
142 Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
143 House of Representatives a report that compiles the findings and
144 recommendations of the task force.

145 (7) REPEAL.—This section is repealed June 30, 2025, unless

16-00455-23

2023204__

146 reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the
147 Legislature.

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