

**By** the Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs; and  
Senator Grall

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to child welfare; amending s. 16.56, F.S.; authorizing the Office of Statewide Prosecution in the Department of Legal Affairs to investigate and prosecute specified violations; amending s. 39.01, F.S.; revising the definition of the term "child who is found to be dependent"; defining the term "legal custodian"; creating s. 39.3011, F.S.; defining the term "Family Advocacy Program"; requiring the Department of Children and Families to enter into agreements with certain military installations for child protective investigations involving military families; providing requirements for such agreements; amending s. 39.401, F.S.; authorizing a law enforcement officer or an authorized agent of the department to take a child into custody who is the subject of a specified court order; amending s. 39.5075, F.S.; authorizing, rather than requiring, the department or a community-based care provider to petition the court for a specified order; providing that a certain order may be issued only if a certain petition is filed by specified entities; creating s. 39.5077, F.S.; defining the term "unaccompanied alien child"; requiring any natural person who meets certain criteria to report certain information to the department; requiring that such report be submitted within a specified time period; requiring any natural person who meets certain criteria to verify his or her relationship with an unaccompanied alien child in

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30 certain ways; requiring the person verifying his or  
31 her relationship with such child to pay for DNA  
32 testing; requiring such person to verify his or her  
33 relationship within a specified time period; requiring  
34 certain entities to submit a specified report to the  
35 department within a specified time period; requiring a  
36 specified attestation; providing criminal penalties  
37 and civil fines; requiring the department to notify  
38 certain persons or entities of certain requirements;  
39 requiring the department to notify local law  
40 enforcement, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and  
41 United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
42 under certain circumstances; authorizing the  
43 department to adopt certain rules; requiring certain  
44 persons or entities to submit a report to the central  
45 abuse hotline under certain circumstances; amending s.  
46 39.905, F.S.; authorizing the department to waive a  
47 specified requirement if there is an emergency need  
48 for a new domestic violence center, to issue a  
49 provisional certification to such center under certain  
50 circumstances, and to adopt rules relating to  
51 provisional certifications; amending s. 125.901, F.S.;  
52 revising membership requirements for certain  
53 independent special districts; authorizing the county  
54 governing board to select an interim appointment for a  
55 vacancy under certain circumstances; amending s.  
56 402.305, F.S.; authorizing the department to grant  
57 certain exemptions from disqualification for certain  
58 persons; amending s. 409.145, F.S.; requiring the

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department to establish a fee schedule for daily room and board rates for certain children by a date certain, which may include different rates based on a child's acuity level or the geographic location of the residential child-caring agency; requiring the department to adopt rules; amending s. 409.175, F.S.; authorizing the department to grant certain exemptions from disqualification for certain persons; authorizing the department to extend the expiration date of a license by a specified amount of time for a certain purpose; amending s. 409.993, F.S.; specifying that subcontractors of lead agencies that are direct providers of foster care and related services are not liable for certain acts or omissions; providing that certain contract provisions are void and unenforceable; amending s. 553.73, F.S.; prohibiting the Florida Building Commission from mandating the installation of fire sprinklers or a fire suppression system in certain agencies licensed by the department; amending s. 633.208, F.S.; providing that certain residential child-caring agencies are not required to install fire sprinklers or a fire suppression system under certain circumstances; amending s. 937.0201, F.S.; revising the definition of the term "missing child"; amending s. 937.021, F.S.; specifying the entity with jurisdiction for accepting missing child reports under certain circumstances; amending ss. 402.30501, 1002.57, and 1002.59, F.S.; conforming cross-references; providing effective dates.

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

Section 1. Effective January 1, 2026, paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 16.56, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

16.56 Office of Statewide Prosecution.—

(1) There is created in the Department of Legal Affairs an Office of Statewide Prosecution. The office shall be a separate "budget entity" as that term is defined in chapter 216. The office may:

(a) Investigate and prosecute the offenses of:

1. Bribery, burglary, criminal usury, extortion, gambling, kidnapping, larceny, murder, prostitution, perjury, robbery, carjacking, home-invasion robbery, and patient brokering;

2. Any crime involving narcotic or other dangerous drugs;

3. Any violation of the Florida RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization) Act, including any offense listed in the definition of racketeering activity in s. 895.02(8)(a), providing such listed offense is investigated in connection with a violation of s. 895.03 and is charged in a separate count of an information or indictment containing a count charging a violation of s. 895.03, the prosecution of which listed offense may continue independently if the prosecution of the violation of s. 895.03 is terminated for any reason;

4. Any violation of the Florida Anti-Fencing Act;

5. Any violation of the Florida Antitrust Act of 1980, as amended;

6. Any crime involving, or resulting in, fraud or deceit

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upon any person;

7. Any violation of s. 847.0135, relating to computer pornography and child exploitation prevention, or any offense related to a violation of s. 847.0135 or any violation of chapter 827 where the crime is facilitated by or connected to the use of the Internet or any device capable of electronic data storage or transmission;

8. Any violation of chapter 815;

9. Any violation of chapter 825;

10. Any criminal violation of part I of chapter 499;

11. Any violation of the Florida Motor Fuel Tax Relief Act of 2004;

12. Any criminal violation of s. 409.920 or s. 409.9201;

13. Any criminal violation of the Florida Money Laundering Act;

14. Any criminal violation of the Florida Securities and Investor Protection Act;

15. Any violation of chapter 787, as well as any and all offenses related to a violation of chapter 787; ~~or~~

16. Any criminal violation of chapter 24, part II of chapter 285, chapter 546, chapter 550, chapter 551, or chapter 849; or

17. Any violation of s. 39.5077;

or any attempt, solicitation, or conspiracy to commit any of the crimes specifically enumerated above. The office shall have such power only when any such offense is occurring, or has occurred, in two or more judicial circuits as part of a related transaction, or when any such offense is connected with an

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146 organized criminal conspiracy affecting two or more judicial  
147 circuits. Informations or indictments charging such offenses  
148 shall contain general allegations stating the judicial circuits  
149 and counties in which crimes are alleged to have occurred or the  
150 judicial circuits and counties in which crimes affecting such  
151 circuits or counties are alleged to have been connected with an  
152 organized criminal conspiracy.

153 Section 2. Subsection (15) of section 39.01, Florida  
154 Statutes, is amended to read:

155 39.01 Definitions.—When used in this chapter, unless the  
156 context otherwise requires:

157 (15) "Child who is found to be dependent" means a child  
158 who, pursuant to this chapter, is found by the court:

159 (a) To have been abandoned, abused, or neglected by the  
160 child's parent or parents or legal custodians;

161 (b) To have been surrendered to the department, the former  
162 Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, or a licensed  
163 child-placing agency for purpose of adoption;

164 (c) To have been voluntarily placed with a licensed child-  
165 caring agency, a licensed child-placing agency, an adult  
166 relative, the department, or the former Department of Health and  
167 Rehabilitative Services, after which placement, under the  
168 requirements of this chapter, a case plan has expired and the  
169 parent or parents or legal custodians have failed to  
170 substantially comply with the requirements of the plan;

171 (d) To have been voluntarily placed with a licensed child-  
172 placing agency for the purposes of subsequent adoption, and a  
173 parent or parents have signed a consent pursuant to the Florida  
174 Rules of Juvenile Procedure;

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(e) To have no parent or legal custodians capable of providing supervision and care;

(f) To be at substantial risk of imminent abuse, abandonment, or neglect by the parent or parents or legal custodians; or

(g) To have been sexually exploited and to have no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative currently known and capable of providing the necessary and appropriate supervision and care.

For purposes of this subsection, the term "legal custodian" includes a sponsor to whom an unaccompanied alien child, as defined in s. 39.5077(1), has been released by the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Department of Health and Human Services. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an unaccompanied alien child may not be found to have been abandoned, abused, or neglected based solely on allegations of abandonment, abuse, or neglect that occurred before placement in this state or by a parent who is not in the United States.

Section 3. Section 39.3011, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

39.3011 Protective investigations involving military families.—

(1) For purposes of this section, the term "Family Advocacy Program" means the program established by the United States Department of Defense to address child abuse, abandonment, and neglect in military families.

(2) The department shall enter into an agreement for child protective investigations involving military families with the

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Family Advocacy Program, or any successor program, of each United States military installation located in this state. Such agreement must include procedures for all of the following:

(a) Identifying the military personnel alleged to have committed the child abuse, neglect, or domestic abuse.

(b) Notifying and sharing information with the military installation when a child protective investigation implicating military personnel has been initiated.

(c) Maintaining confidentiality as required under state and federal law.

Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 39.401, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

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

(1) A child may only be taken into custody:

(a) Pursuant to the provisions of this part, based upon sworn testimony, either before or after a petition is filed; or

(b) By a law enforcement officer, or an authorized agent of the department, if the officer or authorized agent has probable cause to support a finding that the:

1. ~~That the~~ Child has been abused, neglected, or abandoned, or is suffering from or is in imminent danger of illness or injury as a result of abuse, neglect, or abandonment;

2. Child is the subject of a court order to take the child into the custody of the department;

3.2. ~~That the~~ Parent or legal custodian of the child has materially violated a condition of placement imposed by the court; or

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233       ~~4.3. That the~~ Child has no parent, legal custodian, or  
234 responsible adult relative immediately known and available to  
235 provide supervision and care.

236       Section 5. Subsection (4) of section 39.5075, Florida  
237 Statutes, is amended to read:

238       39.5075 Citizenship or residency status for immigrant  
239 children who are dependents.—

240       (4) If the child may be eligible for special immigrant  
241 juvenile status, the department or community-based care provider  
242 may ~~shall~~ petition the court for an order finding that the child  
243 meets the criteria for special immigrant juvenile status. The  
244 ruling of the court on this petition must include findings as to  
245 the express wishes of the child, if the child is able to express  
246 such wishes, and any other circumstances that would affect  
247 whether the best interests of the child would be served by  
248 applying for special immigrant juvenile status. An order finding  
249 that a child meets the criteria for special immigrant juvenile  
250 status may be issued only upon a petition filed by the  
251 department or a community-based care provider under this  
252 section.

253       Section 6. Effective January 1, 2026, section 39.5077,  
254 Florida Statutes, is created to read:

255       39.5077 Unaccompanied alien children.—

256       (1) For purposes of this section, the term “unaccompanied  
257 alien child” means a child who has no lawful immigration status  
258 in the United States, who has not attained 18 years of age, and  
259 with respect to whom:

260       (a) There is no parent or legal guardian in the United  
261 States; or

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262       (b) No parent or legal guardian in the United States is  
263 available to provide care and physical custody.

264       (2) (a) Any natural person who obtains or has obtained  
265 physical custody of an unaccompanied alien child through a  
266 corporation, public or private agency other than the department,  
267 or person other than the child's biological or adoptive parent,  
268 legal guardian, or court-appointed custodian; who retains such  
269 physical custody of the child for 10 or more consecutive days;  
270 and who is not the biological or adoptive parent, legal  
271 guardian, or court-appointed custodian of the child, must report  
272 such physical custody to the department and initiate proceedings  
273 under chapter 63, chapter 744, or chapter 751 to determine legal  
274 custody of the child.

275       (b)1. A person who obtains custody of an unaccompanied  
276 alien child on or after January 1, 2026, must comply with this  
277 subsection within 30 days after obtaining physical custody of  
278 such child.

279       2. A person who obtains custody of an unaccompanied alien  
280 child before January 1, 2026, must comply with this subsection  
281 within 90 days after January 1, 2026.

282       (3) (a) Any natural person who obtains or has obtained  
283 physical custody of an unaccompanied alien child through a  
284 corporation, a public or private agency other than the  
285 department, or any other person and who is the biological or  
286 adoptive parent, legal guardian, or court-appointed custodian of  
287 the child must verify his or her relationship to the child by  
288 submitting to the department a DNA test or other adequate  
289 documentation as determined by the department. The cost of DNA  
290 testing is borne by the person verifying his or her relationship

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291 to the child.

292 (b)1. A person who obtains custody of an unaccompanied  
293 alien child on or after January 1, 2026, must comply with this  
294 subsection within 30 days after obtaining physical custody of  
295 such child.

296 2. A person who obtains custody of an unaccompanied alien  
297 child before January 1, 2026, must comply with this subsection  
298 within 90 days after January 1, 2026.

299 (4) An entity that takes placement of or transfers, or  
300 assists in the transfer of, physical custody of an unaccompanied  
301 alien child to any natural person or entity must report to the  
302 department within 30 days after such placement or transfer all  
303 identifying information of the unaccompanied alien child and the  
304 natural person or entity that received such placement or  
305 transfer of physical custody of the child. An entity that takes  
306 placement of or transfers, or assists in the transfer of,  
307 physical custody of an unaccompanied alien child must attest to  
308 notifying the natural person or entity obtaining physical  
309 custody of the child of all applicable requirements of this  
310 section.

311 (5) A natural person or an entity that willfully violates  
312 subsections (2) and (3) commits a felony of the third degree,  
313 punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.  
314 If the natural person or entity is convicted, the court shall  
315 impose a fine of \$1,000 on the natural person or a fine of  
316 \$10,000 on the entity.

317 (6) If the department believes that a natural person or an  
318 entity has failed to report as required by this section, the  
319 department must notify in writing such person or entity of the

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obligation to report and the requirements of this section.

(7) The department shall notify local law enforcement, the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement if a natural person or an entity fails to report information required under this section within 30 days after receipt of the written notification required in subsection (6).

(8) The department may adopt rules to implement this section, including rules relating to:

(a) The specific information that must be reported to the department.

(b) Verifying biological or adoptive parentage, legal guardianship, or court-appointed custody as required under subsections (2) and (3).

(c) The creation of forms for all reports required under this section.

(9) A natural person or an entity that is involved with or interacts with an unaccompanied alien child and suspects abuse, abandonment, or neglect of such child must immediately submit a report to the central abuse hotline.

Section 7. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 39.905, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.905 Domestic violence centers.—

(1) Domestic violence centers certified under this part must:

(h) Demonstrate local need and ability to sustain operations through a history of 18 consecutive months' operation as a domestic violence center, including 12 months' operation of an emergency shelter as provided in paragraph (c), and a

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business plan which addresses future operations and funding of future operations. The department may waive this requirement if there is an emergency need for a new domestic violence center to provide services in an area and no other viable options exist to ensure continuity of services. If there is an emergency need, the department may issue a provisional certification to the domestic violence center as long as the center meets all other criteria in this subsection. The department may adopt rules to provide minimum standards for a provisional certificate, including increased monitoring and site visits and the time period that such certificate is valid.

Section 8. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (1) of section 125.901, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

125.901 Children's services; independent special district; council; powers, duties, and functions; public records exemption.—

(1) Each county may by ordinance create an independent special district, as defined in ss. 189.012 and 200.001(8)(e), to provide funding for children's services throughout the county in accordance with this section. The boundaries of such district shall be coterminous with the boundaries of the county. The county governing body shall obtain approval at a general election, as defined in s. 97.021, by a majority vote of those electors voting on the question, to annually levy ad valorem taxes which shall not exceed the maximum millage rate authorized by this section. Any district created pursuant to the provisions of this subsection shall be required to levy and fix millage subject to the provisions of s. 200.065. Once such millage is approved by the electorate, the district shall not be required

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to seek approval of the electorate in future years to levy the previously approved millage. However, a referendum to increase the millage rate previously approved by the electors must be held at a general election, and the referendum may be held only once during the 48-month period preceding the effective date of the increased millage.

(a) The governing body of the district shall be a council on children's services, which may also be known as a juvenile welfare board or similar name as established in the ordinance by the county governing body. Such council shall consist of 10 members, including the superintendent of schools; a local school board member; a representative ~~the district administrator~~ from the appropriate district of the Department of Children and Families, or his or her designee who is a member of the Senior Management Service or of the Selected Exempt Service; one member of the county governing body; and the judge assigned to juvenile cases who shall sit as a voting member of the board, except that said judge shall not vote or participate in the setting of ad valorem taxes under this section. If there is more than one judge assigned to juvenile cases in a county, the chief judge shall designate one of said juvenile judges to serve on the board. The remaining five members shall be appointed by the Governor, and shall, to the extent possible, represent the demographic makeup ~~diversity~~ of the population of the county. After soliciting recommendations from the public, the county governing body shall submit to the Governor recommendations ~~the names of at least three persons~~ for each vacancy occurring among the five members appointed by the Governor, and the Governor may ~~shall~~ appoint members to the council from the candidates

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407 nominated by the county governing body. The Governor shall make  
408 a selection within a 45-day period, but if the Governor fails to  
409 make an appointment within the 45-day period, the county  
410 governing body may select an interim appointment for each  
411 vacancy from the recommendations submitted to the Governor ~~or~~  
412 ~~request a new list of candidates.~~ All members recommended by the  
413 county governing body and appointed by the Governor must ~~shall~~  
414 have been residents of the county for the previous 24-month  
415 period. Such members shall be appointed for 4-year terms, except  
416 that the length of the terms of the initial appointees shall be  
417 adjusted to stagger the terms. The Governor may remove a member  
418 for cause or upon the written petition of the county governing  
419 body. If any of the members of the council required to be  
420 appointed by the Governor under ~~the provisions of this~~  
421 subsection resigns, dies, or is ~~shall resign, die, or be~~ removed  
422 from office, the vacancy thereby created shall, as soon as  
423 practicable, be filled by appointment by the Governor, using the  
424 same method as the original appointment, and such appointment to  
425 fill a vacancy shall be for the unexpired term of the person who  
426 resigns, dies, or is removed from office.

427 (b) However, any county as defined in s. 125.011(1) may  
428 instead have a governing body consisting of 33 members,  
429 including the superintendent of schools, or his or her designee;  
430 two representatives of public postsecondary education  
431 institutions located in the county; the county manager or the  
432 equivalent county officer; the district administrator from the  
433 appropriate district of the Department of Children and Families,  
434 or the administrator's designee who is a member of the Senior  
435 Management Service or the Selected Exempt Service; the director

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of the county health department or the director's designee; the state attorney for the county or the state attorney's designee; the chief judge assigned to juvenile cases, or another juvenile judge who is the chief judge's designee and who shall sit as a voting member of the board, except that the judge may not vote or participate in setting ad valorem taxes under this section; an individual who is selected by the board of the local United Way or its equivalent; a member of a locally recognized faith-based coalition, selected by that coalition; a member of the local chamber of commerce, selected by that chamber or, if more than one chamber exists within the county, a person selected by a coalition of the local chambers; a member of the early learning coalition, selected by that coalition; a representative of a labor organization or union active in the county; a member of a local alliance or coalition engaged in cross-system planning for health and social service delivery in the county, selected by that alliance or coalition; a member of the local Parent-Teachers Association/Parent-Teacher-Student Association, selected by that association; a youth representative selected by the local school system's student government; a local school board member appointed by the chair of the school board; the mayor of the county or the mayor's designee; one member of the county governing body, appointed by the chair of that body; a member of the state Legislature who represents residents of the county, selected by the chair of the local legislative delegation; an elected official representing the residents of a municipality in the county, selected by the county municipal league; and 4 members-at-large, appointed to the council by the majority of sitting council members. The remaining seven members

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shall be appointed by the Governor in accordance with procedures set forth in paragraph (a), except that the Governor may remove a member for cause or upon the written petition of the council. Appointments by the Governor must, to the extent reasonably possible, represent the geographic and demographic makeup ~~diversity~~ of the population of the county. Members who are appointed to the council by reason of their position are not subject to the length of terms and limits on consecutive terms as provided in this section. The remaining appointed members of the governing body shall be appointed to serve 2-year terms, except that those members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed to serve 4-year terms, and the youth representative and the legislative delegate shall be appointed to serve 1-year terms. A member may be reappointed; however, a member may not serve for more than three consecutive terms. A member is eligible to be appointed again after a 2-year hiatus from the council.

Section 9. Subsection (2) of section 402.305, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

402.305 Licensing standards; child care facilities.—

(2) PERSONNEL.—Minimum standards for child care personnel shall include minimum requirements as to:

(a) Good moral character based upon screening as defined in s. 402.302(15). This screening shall be conducted as provided in chapter 435, using the level 2 standards for screening set forth in that chapter, and include employment history checks, a search of criminal history records, sexual predator and sexual offender registries, and child abuse and neglect registry of any state in which the current or prospective child care personnel resided

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during the preceding 5 years.

(b) Fingerprint submission for child care personnel, which shall comply with s. 435.12.

~~(c) The department may grant exemptions from disqualification from working with children or the developmentally disabled as provided in s. 435.07.~~

~~(d)~~ Minimum age requirements. Such minimum standards shall prohibit a person under the age of 21 from being the operator of a child care facility and a person under the age of 16 from being employed at such facility unless such person is under direct supervision and is not counted for the purposes of computing the personnel-to-child ratio.

(d)~~(e)~~ Minimum training requirements for child care personnel.

1. Such minimum standards for training shall ensure that all child care personnel take an approved 40-clock-hour introductory course in child care, which course covers at least the following topic areas:

a. State and local rules and regulations which govern child care.

b. Health, safety, and nutrition.

c. Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.

d. Child development, including typical and atypical language, cognitive, motor, social, and self-help skills development.

e. Observation of developmental behaviors, including using a checklist or other similar observation tools and techniques to determine the child's developmental age level.

f. Specialized areas, including computer technology for

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professional and classroom use and early literacy and language development of children from birth to 5 years of age, as determined by the department, for owner-operators and child care personnel of a child care facility.

g. Developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder and Down syndrome, and early identification, use of available state and local resources, classroom integration, and positive behavioral supports for children with developmental disabilities.

Within 90 days after employment, child care personnel shall begin training to meet the training requirements. Child care personnel shall successfully complete such training within 1 year after the date on which the training began, as evidenced by passage of a competency examination. Successful completion of the 40-clock-hour introductory course shall articulate into community college credit in early childhood education, pursuant to ss. 1007.24 and 1007.25. Exemption from all or a portion of the required training shall be granted to child care personnel based upon educational credentials or passage of competency examinations. Child care personnel possessing a 2-year degree or higher that includes 6 college credit hours in early childhood development or child growth and development, or a child development associate credential or an equivalent state-approved child development associate credential, or a child development associate waiver certificate shall be automatically exempted from the training requirements in sub-subparagraphs b., d., and e.

2. The introductory course in child care shall stress, to

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the extent possible, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of children.

3. The introductory course shall cover recognition and prevention of shaken baby syndrome; prevention of sudden infant death syndrome; recognition and care of infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder and Down syndrome; and early childhood brain development within the topic areas identified in this paragraph.

4. On an annual basis in order to further their child care skills and, if appropriate, administrative skills, child care personnel who have fulfilled the requirements for the child care training shall be required to take an additional 1 continuing education unit of approved inservice training, or 10 clock hours of equivalent training, as determined by the department.

5. Child care personnel shall be required to complete 0.5 continuing education unit of approved training or 5 clock hours of equivalent training, as determined by the department, in early literacy and language development of children from birth to 5 years of age one time. The year that this training is completed, it shall fulfill the 0.5 continuing education unit or 5 clock hours of the annual training required in subparagraph 4.

6. Procedures for ensuring the training of qualified child care professionals to provide training of child care personnel, including onsite training, shall be included in the minimum standards. It is recommended that the state community child care coordination agencies (central agencies) be contracted by the department to coordinate such training when possible. Other district educational resources, such as community colleges and career programs, can be designated in such areas where central

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581 agencies may not exist or are determined not to have the  
582 capability to meet the coordination requirements set forth by  
583 the department.

584 7. Training requirements shall not apply to certain  
585 occasional or part-time support staff, including, but not  
586 limited to, swimming instructors, piano teachers, dance  
587 instructors, and gymnastics instructors.

588 8. The child care operator shall be required to take basic  
589 training in serving children with disabilities within 5 years  
590 after employment, either as a part of the introductory training  
591 or the annual 8 hours of inservice training.

592 (e)~~(f)~~ Periodic health examinations.

593 (f)~~(g)~~ A credential for child care facility directors. The  
594 credential shall be a required minimum standard for licensing.  
595

596 The department may grant limited exemptions authorizing a person  
597 to work in a specified role or with a specified population.

598 Section 10. Paragraph (e) is added to subsection (3) of  
599 section 409.145, Florida Statutes, to read:

600 409.145 Care of children; "reasonable and prudent parent"  
601 standard.—The child welfare system of the department shall  
602 operate as a coordinated community-based system of care which  
603 empowers all caregivers for children in foster care to provide  
604 quality parenting, including approving or disapproving a child's  
605 participation in activities based on the caregiver's assessment  
606 using the "reasonable and prudent parent" standard.

607 (3) ROOM AND BOARD RATES.—

608 (e) By July 1, 2026, the department shall, in coordination  
609 with its providers, establish a fee schedule for daily room and

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board rates for children in out-of-home care who are placed in a residential child-caring agency as defined in s. 409.175(2)(1). The fee schedule may include different payment rates based on factors including, but not limited to, the acuity level of the child being placed and the geographic location of the residential child-caring agency. The department shall adopt rules to implement this paragraph.

Section 11. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5), subsection (7), and paragraph (e) of subsection (14) of section 409.175, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

409.175 Licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public records exemption.—

(5) The department shall adopt and amend rules for the levels of licensed care associated with the licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies. The rules may include criteria to approve waivers to licensing requirements when applying for a child-specific license.

(b) The requirements for licensure and operation of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies shall include:

1. The operation, conduct, and maintenance of these homes and agencies and the responsibility which they assume for children served and the evidence of need for that service.

2. The provision of food, clothing, educational opportunities, services, equipment, and individual supplies to assure the healthy physical, emotional, and mental development of the children served.

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3. The appropriateness, safety, cleanliness, and general adequacy of the premises, including fire prevention and health standards, to provide for the physical comfort, care, and well-being of the children served.

4. The ratio of staff to children required to provide adequate care and supervision of the children served and, in the case of family foster homes, the maximum number of children in the home.

5. The good moral character based upon screening, education, training, and experience requirements for personnel and family foster homes.

~~6. The department may grant exemptions from disqualification from working with children or the developmentally disabled as provided in s. 435.07.~~

~~7.~~ The provision of preservice and inservice training for all foster parents and agency staff.

~~7.8.~~ Satisfactory evidence of financial ability to provide care for the children in compliance with licensing requirements.

~~8.9.~~ The maintenance by the agency of records pertaining to admission, progress, health, and discharge of children served, including written case plans and reports to the department.

~~9.10.~~ The provision for parental involvement to encourage preservation and strengthening of a child's relationship with the family.

~~10.11.~~ The transportation safety of children served.

~~11.12.~~ The provisions for safeguarding the cultural, religious, and ethnic values of a child.

~~12.13.~~ Provisions to safeguard the legal rights of children served.

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668       ~~13.14.~~ Requiring signs to be conspicuously placed on the  
669 premises of facilities maintained by child-caring agencies to  
670 warn children of the dangers of human trafficking and to  
671 encourage the reporting of individuals observed attempting to  
672 engage in human trafficking activity. The signs must advise  
673 children to report concerns to the local law enforcement agency  
674 or the Department of Law Enforcement, specifying the appropriate  
675 telephone numbers used for such reports. The department shall  
676 specify, at a minimum, the content of the signs by rule.

677  
678 The department may grant limited exemptions authorizing a person  
679 to work in a specified role or with a specified population.

680       (7) The department may extend a license expiration date  
681 once for a period of up to 90 ~~30~~ days to allow for the  
682 implementation of corrective measures. However, the department  
683 may not extend a license expiration date more than once during a  
684 licensure period.

685       (14)

686       (e)1. In addition to any other preservice training required  
687 by law, foster parents, as a condition of licensure, and agency  
688 staff must successfully complete preservice training related to  
689 human trafficking which must be uniform statewide and must  
690 include, but need not be limited to, all of the following:

691           a. Basic information on human trafficking, such as an  
692 understanding of relevant terminology, and the differences  
693 between sex trafficking and labor trafficking.~~;~~

694           b. Factors and knowledge on identifying children at risk of  
695 human trafficking.~~;~~ ~~and~~

696           c. Steps that should be taken to prevent at-risk youths

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697 from becoming victims of human trafficking.

698 2. Foster parents, before licensure renewal, and agency  
699 staff, during each full year of employment, must complete  
700 inservice training related to human trafficking to satisfy the  
701 training requirement under subparagraph (5) (b) 6 ~~(5) (b) 7~~.

702 Section 12. Present paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of  
703 section 409.993, Florida Statutes, is redesignated as paragraph  
704 (c), a new paragraph (b) is added to that subsection, and  
705 paragraph (a) of that subsection is amended, to read:

706 409.993 Lead agencies and subcontractor liability.—

707 (3) SUBCONTRACTOR LIABILITY.—

708 (a) A subcontractor of an eligible community-based care  
709 lead agency that is a direct provider of foster care and related  
710 services to children and families, and its employees or  
711 officers, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (c) ~~(b)~~,  
712 must, as a part of its contract, obtain a minimum of \$1 million  
713 per occurrence with a policy period aggregate limit of \$3  
714 million in general liability insurance coverage. The  
715 subcontractor of a lead agency must also require that staff who  
716 transport client children and families in their personal  
717 automobiles in order to carry out their job responsibilities  
718 obtain minimum bodily injury liability insurance in the amount  
719 of \$100,000 per person in any one automobile accident, and  
720 subject to such limits for each person, \$300,000 for all damages  
721 resulting from any one automobile accident, on their personal  
722 automobiles. In lieu of personal motor vehicle insurance, the  
723 subcontractor's casualty, liability, or motor vehicle insurance  
724 carrier may provide nonowned automobile liability coverage. This  
725 insurance provides liability insurance for automobiles that the

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subcontractor uses in connection with the subcontractor's business but does not own, lease, rent, or borrow. This coverage includes automobiles owned by the employees of the subcontractor or a member of the employee's household but only while the automobiles are used in connection with the subcontractor's business. The nonowned automobile coverage for the subcontractor applies as excess coverage over any other collectible insurance. The personal automobile policy for the employee of the subcontractor shall be primary insurance, and the nonowned automobile coverage of the subcontractor acts as excess insurance to the primary insurance. The subcontractor shall provide a minimum limit of \$1 million in nonowned automobile coverage. In a tort action brought against such subcontractor or employee, net economic damages shall be limited to \$2 million per liability claim and \$200,000 per automobile claim, including, but not limited to, past and future medical expenses, wage loss, and loss of earning capacity, offset by any collateral source payment paid or payable. In a tort action brought against such subcontractor, noneconomic damages shall be limited to \$400,000 per claim. A claims bill may be brought on behalf of a claimant pursuant to s. 768.28 for any amount exceeding the limits specified in this paragraph. Any offset of collateral source payments made as of the date of the settlement or judgment shall be in accordance with s. 768.76.

(b) A subcontractor of a lead agency that is a direct provider of foster care and related services is not liable for the acts or omissions of the lead agency; the department; or the officers, agents, or employees of the lead agency or the department. Any provision in a contract between a subcontractor

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and a lead agency which is in conflict with this paragraph is  
void and unenforceable.

Section 13. Paragraph (c) is added to subsection (20) of  
section 553.73, Florida Statutes, to read:

553.73 Florida Building Code.—

(20) The Florida Building Commission may not:

(c) Mandate the installation of fire sprinklers or a fire  
suppression system in a residential child-caring agency licensed  
by the Department of Children and Families under s. 409.175  
which operates in a single-family residential property that is  
licensed for a capacity of five or fewer children who are  
unrelated to the licensee.

Section 14. Subsection (12) is added to section 633.208,  
Florida Statutes, to read:

633.208 Minimum firesafety standards.—

(12) Notwithstanding subsection (8), a residential child-  
caring agency licensed by the Department of Children and  
Families under s. 409.175 which operates in a single-family  
residential property that is licensed for a capacity of five or  
fewer children who are unrelated to the licensee is not required  
to install fire sprinklers or a fire suppression system as long  
as the licensee meets the requirements for portable fire  
extinguishers, fire alarms, and smoke detectors under this  
chapter.

Section 15. Subsection (3) of section 937.0201, Florida  
Statutes, is amended to read:

937.0201 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:

(3) "Missing child" means a person younger than 18 years of  
age whose temporary or permanent residence is in, or is believed

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to be in, this state, whose location has not been determined, and who has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency. The term includes a child who is the subject of a court order to take the child into the custody of the Department of Children and Families.

Section 16. Subsection (3) of section 937.021, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

937.021 Missing child and missing adult reports.—

(3) A report that a child or adult is missing must be accepted by and filed with the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the county or municipality in which the child or adult was last seen. The filing and acceptance of the report imposes the duties specified in this section upon the law enforcement agency receiving the report. This subsection does not preclude a law enforcement agency from accepting a missing child or missing adult report when agency jurisdiction cannot be determined. If agency jurisdiction cannot be determined for cases in which there is a child who is the subject of a court order to take the child into the custody of the Department of Children and Families, the sheriff's office of the county in which the court order was entered must take jurisdiction.

Section 17. Section 402.30501, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

402.30501 Modification of introductory child care course for community college credit authorized.—The Department of Children and Families may modify the 40-clock-hour introductory course in child care under s. 402.305 or s. 402.3131 to meet the requirements of articulating the course to community college credit. Any modification must continue to provide that the

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course satisfies the requirements of s. 402.305(2)(d) ~~s.~~  
~~402.305(2)(e)~~.

Section 18. Subsections (3) and (4) of section 1002.57,  
Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1002.57 Prekindergarten director credential.—

(3) The prekindergarten director credential must meet or  
exceed the requirements of the Department of Children and  
Families for the child care facility director credential under  
s. 402.305(2)(f) ~~s. 402.305(2)(g)~~, and successful completion of  
the prekindergarten director credential satisfies these  
requirements for the child care facility director credential.

(4) The department shall, to the maximum extent  
practicable, award credit to a person who successfully completes  
the child care facility director credential under s.  
402.305(2)(f) ~~s. 402.305(2)(g)~~ for those requirements of the  
prekindergarten director credential which are duplicative of  
requirements for the child care facility director credential.

Section 19. Subsection (1) of section 1002.59, Florida  
Statutes, is amended to read:

1002.59 Emergent literacy and performance standards  
training courses.—

(1) The department, in collaboration with the Just Read,  
Florida! Office, shall adopt minimum standards for courses in  
emergent literacy for prekindergarten instructors. Each course  
must consist of 5 clock hours and provide instruction in  
strategies and techniques to address the age-appropriate  
progress of prekindergarten students in developing emergent  
literacy skills, including oral communication, knowledge of  
print and letters, phonological and phonemic awareness,

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vocabulary and comprehension development, and foundational background knowledge designed to correlate with the content that students will encounter in grades K-12, consistent with the evidence-based content and strategies grounded in the science of reading identified pursuant to s. 1001.215(7). The course standards must be reviewed as part of any review of subject coverage or endorsement requirements in the elementary, reading, and exceptional student educational areas conducted pursuant to s. 1012.586. Each course must also provide resources containing strategies that allow students with disabilities and other special needs to derive maximum benefit from the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. Successful completion of an emergent literacy training course approved under this section satisfies requirements for approved training in early literacy and language development under ss. 402.305(2)(d)5. ~~ss. 402.305(2)(e)5.,~~ 402.313(6), and 402.3131(5).

Section 20. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this act, this act shall take effect July 1, 2025.