

## CHAPTER 100

**AN ACT** concerning mental health services for children, supplementing Title 30 of the Revised Statutes, and making an appropriation.

**BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.30:9A-34 Grant to study mental health care resources for children.

1. a. The Department of Children and Families shall distribute a grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute to assemble a group of stakeholders to:

(1) create a comprehensive visual journey map that outlines families' experiences in obtaining mental health care and related support services for their children;

(2) identify the eligibility rules for various pediatric mental health care programs and resources available to children in this State, steps and barriers to accessing these programs and services, and how these programs and services may connect, disconnect, or compete; and

(3) provide concrete policy suggestions to improve the structure, funding, mission, and interconnectedness of pediatric mental health care programs ensuring that programs are family- and child-focused.

b. The group of stakeholders shall consist of: representatives with subject matter expertise in pediatric mental health care services; pediatric mental health care providers; and mental health care program administrators from counties representing the northern, central, and southern regions of New Jersey.

c. The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute shall:

(1) evaluate the current landscape of pediatric mental health care services across: schools; counties; State agencies including, but not limited to, the Departments of Children and Families, Education, Human Services, and Health; insurers; and the legal system;

(2) identify the eligibility rules, covered services, and funding structures for pediatric mental health care programs available to children in this State;

(3) conduct qualitative research through interviews and focus groups with families, health care providers, and program administrators across three counties representing the northern, central, and southern regions of New Jersey;

(4) review the applicable laws, regulations, and contract terms governing pediatric mental health care services in the State;

(5) highlight barriers to care and analyze payment structures, reimbursement rates, and cost-sharing provisions to identify financial barriers to access to pediatric mental health care services;

(6) compile and analyze data on pediatric mental health outcomes, stratified by payer type, race, ethnicity, and other relevant characteristics that can identify disparities in access to pediatric mental health care services and pediatric mental health outcomes across different populations;

(7) no later than 13 months after the date of enactment of this act, prepare and submit to the Department of Children and Families a document that visually maps the steps a child and family are required to take in order to access mental health care services, covering the initial contact with a mental health care provider to the provision of mental health care and noting all the interactions, required steps, and encountered barriers related to receiving mental health care; and

(8) no later than 13 months after the date of enactment of this act, prepare and submit to the Department of Children and Families a document that: summarizes eligibility criteria, coverage details, and payment policies for pediatric mental health care programs available to children in the State; identifies any key issues related to pediatric mental health care and any disparities in mental health outcomes in the State; and includes the advisory group's policy

recommendations to improve pediatric mental health care program structures, efficiency, coverage, funding, and interconnectedness.

C.30:9A-35 Documents prepared relating to mental health care resources for children, submit to Governor, Legislature, made available on website, Department of Children and Families.

2. a. No later than 15 months after the date of enactment of this act, the Commissioner of Children and Families shall submit to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature the documents prepared pursuant to paragraphs (7) and (8) of subsection c. of section 1 of this act.

b. The commissioner shall make the documents required pursuant to paragraphs (7) and (8) of subsection c. of section 1 of this act available to the public on the Department of Children and Families' Internet website.

3. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Children and Families the sum of \$1,000,000 to effectuate the purposes of this act.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved December 12, 2024.