

SENATE, No. 1817

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

SYNOPSIS

Requires Commissioner of Children and Families to apply for State waiver for State demonstration project establishing Safe Babies Court Team program.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** concerning child welfare and supplementing Title 9 of the
2 Revised Statutes.

3

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

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7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. The Safe Babies Court Team program is a community
9 engagement and systems-change initiative focused on improving on
10 how family courts, child welfare agencies, early childhood
11 education, and social services and community-based organizations
12 collaborate and coordinate with each other to provide services to
13 infant and toddlers involved in the child welfare system.

14 b. The first Safe Babies Court Team program began in 2005
15 and have been replicated in several states throughout the country.
16 Over 1,000 children and their families have been served under the
17 program's auspices.

18 c. Each Safe Babies Court team is a public-private
19 collaboration between representatives from the Zero to Three
20 organization, local family courts, community leaders, child and
21 family advocates, child welfare and governmental agencies, and
22 private philanthropies committed to improving a community's
23 response to child abuse and neglect.

24 d. This public-private collaboration works toward connecting
25 infant and toddlers and their families with the support and services
26 they need to promote healthy child development while ensuring
27 speedier exits from the child welfare system.

28 e. Research into the results achieved through the Safe Babies
29 Court Team program demonstrate reductions in repeat maltreatment
30 and the time infant and toddlers spend in resource family care.

31 f. It is in the public interest to expand efforts to improve
32 outcomes for, and prevent court involvement in the lives of, infants
33 and toddlers under the care and custody of the Department of
34 Children and Families by establishing a Statewide Safe Babies
35 Court Team program.

36

37 2. a. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the
38 Commissioner of Children and Families shall apply for a waiver of
39 the provisions of Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act (42
40 U.S.C. s.670 et seq.) for a State demonstration project establishing a
41 Safe Babies Court Team program in the Department of Children
42 and Families. The demonstration project shall be implemented to
43 the extent that it is in compliance with section 1130 of the Social
44 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a-9).

45 b. The Safe Babies Court Team program established pursuant
46 to subsection a. of this section shall:

1 (1) be based on the ZERO TO THREE Safe Babies Court Team
2 approach which includes components of judicial leadership,
3 community collaboration, and parental involvement;

4 (2) increase public awareness about the negative impact of child
5 abuse and neglect on infants and toddlers; and

6 (3) improve outcomes for, and prevent court involvement in the
7 lives of, infants and toddlers who are under the care and custody of
8 the Division of Child Protection and Permanency and their families.

9
10 3. The Commissioner shall adopt, pursuant to the provisions of
11 the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-
12 1 et seq.), rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this
13 act.

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15 4. This act shall take effect immediately.
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18 STATEMENT
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20 This bill requires the Commissioner of Children and Families to
21 apply for a waiver of the provisions of Title IV-E of the federal
22 Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. s.670 et seq.) for a State
23 demonstration project establishing a Safe Babies Court Team
24 (SBCT) program in the Division of Child Protection and
25 Permanency (DCPP) in the Department of Children and Families.

26 The SBCT program established pursuant to the bill would: be
27 based on the ZERO TO THREE Safe Babies Court Team approach
28 which includes components of judicial leadership, community
29 collaboration, and parental involvement; increase public awareness
30 about the negative impact of child abuse and neglect on infants and
31 toddlers; and improve outcomes for, and prevent court involvement
32 in the lives of, infants and toddlers who are under the care and
33 custody of DCPP and their families. The State demonstration
34 project would be implemented to the extent that it is in compliance
35 with section 1130 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320a-9).

36 The SBCT program is a community engagement and systems-
37 change initiative focused on improving how family courts, child
38 welfare agencies, early childhood education, and social services and
39 community-based organizations collaborate and coordinate with
40 each other to provide services to infant and toddlers involved in the
41 child welfare system.

42 The first SBCT program began in 2005 and has been replicated
43 in several states throughout the country. Each Safe Babies Court
44 team is a public-private collaboration between representatives from
45 the Zero to Three organization, local family courts, community
46 leaders, child and family advocates, child welfare and governmental
47 agencies, and private philanthropies committed to improving a
48 community's response to child abuse and neglect.

1 The bill would permit the State to apply for a waiver of
2 provisions of the federal Title IV-E program allowing for greater
3 flexibility in the use of federal funds to establish a Safe Babies
4 Court Team program to promote the safety, permanency, and well-
5 being of children in the child welfare system.