

SENATE, No. 3462

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 17, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator NIA H. GILL

District 34 (Essex and Passaic)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes Council for Community Recovery and Family Success;
appropriates \$1.8 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 4/19/2021)

1 **AN ACT** establishing the Council for Community Recovery and
2 Family Success, supplementing Title 9 of the Revised Statutes,
3 and making an appropriation.

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

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. As a State, our child and family services and the resources
10 appropriated to fund those services are primarily designed to respond
11 crisis-related events. Consequently, the services provided to children
12 and their families struggle to produce long-term positive results.

13 b. The State's child welfare system is not organized to address
14 the factors that lead to family crises, child maltreatment, and adverse
15 childhood experiences.

16 c. A growing body of literature suggests that comprehensive,
17 integrated, and sustained investments in prevention, early
18 intervention, and child, youth, and family well-being are more cost-
19 effective than a fragmented approach of various programs providing
20 services that only address the symptoms that cause family crises and
21 child maltreatment.

22 d. The solution to improve the outcomes of those children and
23 families who are served by the child welfare system is to provide an
24 interdisciplinary approach in the provision of family support and
25 preventive services and to enact a Children's Bill of Rights. This Bill
26 of Rights, based on the United Nations Treaty on the Rights of the
27 Child, would recognize and protect the rights of children and youth
28 and provide a framework for the provision of preventive services to
29 at-risk children and youth and their families.

30 e. It is therefore in the best interests of the State to invest in and
31 implement programs that promote prevention, early intervention, and
32 child, youth, and family well-being in order to improve the outcomes
33 of those children and families who are served by the child welfare
34 system.

35
36 2. a. There is established the Council for Community Recovery
37 and Family Success in, but not of, the Department of Children and
38 Families. For the purpose of complying with the provisions of
39 Article V, Section IV, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution,
40 the Council for Community Recovery and Family Success is
41 allocated within the Department of Children and Families, but,
42 notwithstanding this allocation, the council shall be independent of
43 any supervision or control by the department or by any officer or
44 employee thereof.

45 b. The council shall consist of 25 members as follows:

46 (1) the Commissioners of Children and Families, Community
47 Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, and Labor,
48 and the Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission in the

1 Department of Law and Public Safety, or their designees, who shall
2 serve ex officio;

3 (2) 13 public members appointed by the Governor who shall
4 include a representative of the Advocates for Children of New Jersey,
5 a representative of the Family Success Institute, a representative of
6 the Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey, a
7 representative of the New Jersey Council on Developmental
8 Disabilities, a representative of the Center for Family Services, a
9 representative of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers, a
10 representative of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, a
11 representative of a family success center; a representative of a faith-
12 based organization, a community leader, a parent or guardian whose
13 child is receiving services through the State's child welfare system,
14 a member who has background in physical or behavioral health care
15 for children, and a member who is a mental health professional; and

16 (3) two public members appointed by the Senate President, one
17 of whom shall be a representative of municipal government, and one
18 of whom shall be a representative of a Promise Neighborhood
19 program, two public members appointed by the Speaker of the
20 General Assembly, one of who shall be a representative of county
21 government, and one of whom shall be a representative of the United
22 Way of New Jersey.

23 c. Vacancies in the membership of the council shall be filled in
24 the same manner provided for the original appointments. The public
25 members of the council shall serve without compensation but may be
26 reimbursed for traveling and other miscellaneous expenses necessary
27 to perform their duties, within the limits of funds made available to
28 the council for its purposes.

29 d. The council shall organize as soon as practicable but no later
30 than 60 days following the appointment of its members and shall
31 select a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among the members.
32 The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a member
33 of the council.

34 e. The council may meet at the call of its chair and hold hearings
35 at the times and in the places it deems appropriate and necessary to
36 fulfill its charge. The council shall be entitled to call to its assistance
37 and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county,
38 or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it
39 may require and as may be available to it for its purposes. The
40 council shall be entitled to call on the assistance of the
41 Administrative Office of the Courts for information relevant to its
42 purposes.

43 f. The council may seek the advice of experts, such as persons
44 specializing in the field of social work, education, law, human
45 services, economic development, workforce development, or other
46 related fields, as deemed appropriate by the membership of the
47 council.

1 g. The Department of Children and Families shall provide staff
2 services to the council.

3
4 3. a. The purpose of the council shall be to guide and oversee
5 the development and implementation of a Statewide initiative
6 focusing on the social and economic well-being of children and
7 families and the provision of holistic, age and developmentally
8 appropriate services that support a child's development from birth to
9 young adulthood. The initiative shall be based on the four pillars of
10 family success:

- 11 (1) positive family relationships and community connections;
12 (2) safety and financial security;
13 (3) high quality education and quality learning environments; and
14 (4) good health and child, youth, and family well-being.

15 b. (1) In order to implement the Statewide initiative, the council
16 shall:

17 (a) develop a Children's Bill of Rights, based on the United
18 Nations International Treaty on the Rights of Children, which shall
19 provide a framework for the initiative's implementation;

20 (b) conduct a comprehensive study identifying policies,
21 procedures, practices, and financial priorities relating to preventive
22 services for at-risk children and families and the gaps in those
23 policies, procedures, practices, and financial priorities, and promotes
24 the well-being of children and youth, and encourages family success;

25 (c) review the programs, policies, and initiatives of the
26 Departments of Children and Families, Community Affairs,
27 Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, Labor and
28 Workforce Development, and Law and Public Safety, and any other
29 department of State government or community-based organizations,
30 as appropriate, and make recommendations that will enable them to
31 better coordinate and improve the effectiveness of such programs,
32 policies, and initiatives;

33 (d) conduct ongoing, comprehensive cost benefit analyses of all
34 State department and community-based organization budgets, and
35 State and local funding mechanisms for the child welfare system to
36 identify and make recommendations on how to redirect resources and
37 programmatic focus from distress services to preventive services for
38 at-risk child and families and for family success initiatives;

39 (e) explore strategies to maximize and effectively utilize all
40 State, county, municipal, and federal funding sources, and business
41 and philanthropic investments available for the purpose of providing
42 preventive services to at-risk children and families and to improve
43 family success outcomes; and

44 (f) establish community recovery and family success councils in
45 each county of the State. The councils shall:

46 (i) assess local children and youth demographics, including age,
47 gender, race, socio-economic status, and ethnicity, and indicators of
48 well-being;

1 (ii) collect and analyze information concerning current services
2 and resources available, the cost and availability of services and
3 programs, and the met and unmet needs of at-risk children and
4 families; and

5 (iii) develop recommendations on methods that support innovative
6 preventive services for at-risk children and families and the
7 development of local family success initiatives.

8 (2) The goal of the Statewide initiative shall be to:

9 (a) promote positive family relationships, community
10 connections, and preventive services to ensure financial security
11 quality education, good health, safety, permanency, and well-being
12 of children and families through an integrated service planning and
13 delivery system of care;

14 (b) develop and recommend the adoption of community-informed
15 family success outcomes, including specified performance based
16 outcome measures and objectives;

17 (c) identify obstacles that impede or prevent family success and
18 develop strategies to successfully overcome such obstacles;

19 (d) explore the role of institutional racism and bias in the delivery
20 of services to at-risk children and families, and how racism and bias
21 can impede or prevent family success;

22 (e) identify policies and practices that promote the delivery of
23 preventive services to at-risk children and families and encourage
24 family success; and

25 (f) incorporate input from key stakeholders, including parents,
26 family members, community members, and children receiving
27 preventive services from the Departments of Children and Families,
28 Community Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health, Human
29 Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and Law and Public
30 Safety, and any other department of State government or community-
31 based organization, on the development of a plan to design,
32 strengthen, or implement local family success initiatives.

33 c. All departments and agencies of the State and community-
34 based organizations that provide relevant distress or preventive
35 services, maintain relevant data sets, or perform functions pertinent
36 to relevant distress or prevention programs shall assist the council in
37 its responsibilities pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

38 d. As used in this act, “distress services” means services
39 intended to remediate circumstances, including but not limited to,
40 educational, social, and parental failures, and family crises, that
41 endanger the safety, permanency, health and well-being of children
42 and “preventive services” means services that promote the safety,
43 permanency, health, and well-being of children and their families and
44 divert the need for crisis-related services.

45
46 4. The council shall submit an annual report to the Governor and
47 the Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-
48 19.1), on recommendations for legislative and administrative actions

1 regarding the Statewide investments of federal, State, county,
2 municipal, and business and philanthropic investments to support the
3 development and implementation of innovative family success
4 initiatives and preventive services for at-risk children and families.

5
6 5. The council and the Department of Children and Families
7 shall adopt, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
8 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations necessary
9 to effectuate the purposes of this act.

10

11 6. There is appropriated \$1,800,000 from the General Fund the
12 Department of Children and Families to implement the provisions
13 this act.

14

15 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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20 This bill establishes a 25-member Council for Community
21 Recovery and Family Success in, but not of, the Department of
22 Children and Families. The purpose of the council is to guide and
23 oversee the development and implementation of a Statewide
24 initiative focusing on the social and economic well-being of children
25 and families and the provision of holistic, age and developmentally
26 appropriate services to support a child's development from birth to
27 young adulthood.

28 The membership of the council will include the Commissioners of
29 Children and Families, Community Affairs, Corrections, Education,
30 Health, Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and the
31 Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission in the
32 Department of Law and Public Safety, or their designees, who will
33 serve ex officio; and 17 public members, with 13 appointed by the
34 Governor and two each to be appointed by the Senate President and
35 the Speaker of the General Assembly. The public members
36 appointed by the Governor will include representatives of various
37 organizations that advocate for, or provide services to, at-risk
38 children and youth and their parents.

39 In order to implement the Statewide initiative, the council is to:

40 (1) develop a Children's Bill of Rights, based on the United
41 Nations International Treaty on the Rights of Children, which shall
42 provide a framework for the initiative's implementation; (2) conduct
43 a comprehensive study identifying policies, procedures, practices,
44 and financial priorities relating to preventive services for at-risk
45 children and families and the gaps in those policies, procedures,
46 practices, and financial priorities, and promotes the well-being of
47 children and youth, and encourages family success; (3) review the
48 programs, policies, and initiatives of the Departments of Children

1 and Families, Community Affairs, Corrections, Education, Health,
2 Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and Law and
3 Public Safety, and other State departments or community-based
4 organizations, as appropriate, and make recommendations that will
5 enable them to better coordinate and improve the effectiveness of
6 such programs, policies, and initiatives; (4) conduct ongoing,
7 comprehensive cost benefit analyses of all State department and
8 community-based organization budgets, and State and local funding
9 mechanisms for the child welfare system to identify and make
10 recommendations on how to redirect resources and programmatic
11 focus from distress services to preventive services for at-risk child
12 and families and family success initiatives; (5) explore strategies to
13 maximize and effectively utilize all State, county, municipal, and
14 federal funding sources, and business and philanthropic investments
15 available for the purpose of providing preventive services to at-risk
16 children and families and to improve family success outcomes; and
17 (6) establish community recovery and family success councils in each
18 county of the State that will: assess local children and youth
19 demographics, including age, gender, race, socio-economic status,
20 and ethnicity, and indicators of well-being; collect and analyze
21 information concerning current services and resources available, the
22 cost and availability of services and programs, and the met and unmet
23 needs of at-risk children and families; and develop recommendations
24 on methods that support innovative preventive services for at-risk
25 children and families and the development of local family success
26 initiatives.

27 The goal of the Statewide initiative established by the council will
28 be to: (1) promote positive family relationships, community
29 connections, and preventive services to ensure financial security
30 quality education, good health, safety, permanency, and well-being
31 of children and families through an integrated service planning and
32 delivery system of care; (2) develop and recommend the adoption of
33 community-informed family success outcomes, including specified
34 performance based outcome measures and objectives; (3) identify
35 obstacles that impede or prevent family success and develop
36 strategies to successfully overcome such obstacles (4) explore the
37 role of institutional racism and bias in the delivery of services to at-
38 risk children and families, and how racism and bias can impede or
39 prevent family success; (5) identify policies and practices that
40 promote the delivery of preventive services to at-risk children and
41 families and encourage family success; and (6) incorporate input
42 from key stakeholders, including parents, family members,
43 community members, and children receiving preventive services
44 from the Departments of Children and Families, Community Affairs,
45 Corrections, Education, Health, Human Services, Labor and
46 Workforce Development, and Law and Public Safety, and other State
47 departments or community-based organizations, on the development

1 of a plan to design, strengthen, or implement local family success
2 initiatives.

3 All State departments and agencies and community-based
4 organizations that provide relevant distress or preventive services,
5 maintain relevant data sets, or perform functions pertinent to these
6 programs will be required to assist the council in its responsibilities
7 under the bill.

8 As used in the bill, “distress services” means services intended to
9 remediate circumstances, including but not limited to, educational,
10 social, and parental failures, and family crises, that endanger the
11 safety, permanency, health and well-being of children and
12 “preventive services” means services that promote the safety,
13 permanency, health, and well-being of children and their families and
14 divert the need for crisis-related services.

15 The council is to submit an annual report to the Governor and the
16 Legislature, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1),
17 on recommendations for legislative and administrative actions
18 regarding the Statewide investments of federal, State, county,
19 municipal, and business and philanthropic investments to support the
20 development and implementation of innovative family success
21 initiatives and preventive services for at-risk children and families.

22 The bill appropriates \$1,800,000 from the General Fund to the
23 Department of Children and Families to implement the provisions the
24 bill.