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Legislative Document

No. 328

H.P. 253

House of Representatives, January 24, 2019

An Act To Institute Safe Children Court Team Programs

Reference to the Committee on Judiciary suggested and ordered printed.

ROBERT B. HUNT

R(+ B. Hunt

Presented by Representative MADIGAN of Waterville.
Cosponsored by Senator BELLOWS of Kennebec and
Representatives: DODGE of Belfast, GATTINE of Westbrook, MEYER of Eliot, Senator:
CHIPMAN of Cumberland.

1	Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:
2	Sec. 1. 4 MRSA c. 8-C is enacted to read:
3	CHAPTER 8-C
4	SAFE CHILDREN COURT TEAM PROGRAMS
5	§441. Establishment
6 7 8	1. Programs. The Judicial Department may establish safe children court team programs in the Superior Courts and District Courts and may adopt administrative orders and court rules to govern the practice, procedure and administration of these programs.
9 10 11 12	2. Purpose. The purpose of the safe children court team programs established under subsection 1 is to use community knowledge to find local solutions that meet the developmental needs of children who enter into the child protection system, especially the developmental needs of children in foster care.
13 14 15	3. Collaboration. The following shall collaborate with and, to the extent possible, provide financial assistance to the Judicial Department in establishing and maintaining safe children court team programs established under subsection 1:
16 17	A. District attorneys, the Department of the Attorney General and statewide organizations representing prosecutors;
18 19	B. Attorneys who represent parents in child protection proceedings, including statewide organizations representing such attorneys;
20	C. The Department of Health and Human Services;
21	D. The Department of Public Safety;
22	E. The Department of Education; and
23	F. Local service agencies.
24	§442. Programs
25 26 27 28 29	1. Coordinator of Safe Children Court Team Programs. The Judicial Department shall employ a Coordinator of Safe Children Court Team Programs. The Coordinator of Safe Children Court Team Programs shall help the Judicial Department establish, staff, coordinate, operate and evaluate safe children court team programs established under this chapter.
30 31	2. Core components. The core components of the safe children court team programs established under this chapter include the following:
32 33	A. Judicial leadership in focusing on achieving timely, permanent resolution of child placement issues and resolving the issues that brought families into the system;
34 35	B. A development specialist with education and expertise in developmental psychology;

1 2	C. A team of key community stakeholders who commit to restructuring the way the community responds to the needs of children who are subject to abuse or neglect;
3 4	D. Comprehensive services offered to each child, including screening for developmental delays and disabilities, medical care and mental health services that
5 6 7	focus on the parent-child relationship; E. Services addressing the needs of parents and the wide variety of traumatic stressors in parents' lives;
8 9	F. Concurrent planning that places equal emphasis on supporting a 2nd permanent family if reunification is ruled out;
10 11	G. Training and support for the foster parents, mentors and extended family prior to and while foster parents are engaged with a child and the child's family;
12 13	H. Preremoval conferences and monthly family team meetings, the purpose of which is to resolve issues that may lead to removal of a child from home;
14 15	I. Frequent family time to permit a child and parent to maintain their bond and to improve the parent's responsiveness to the child's needs;
16 17 18 19	J. A continuum of mental health services to provide intervention applicable to the specific characteristics of the parent and child as well as the level of preexisting trauma in their relationship and in the parent's own childhood experiences. Recommended interventions include:
20	(1) An assessment of the parent-child relationship;
21 22	(2) In-the-moment opportunities to help parents successfully respond to their child's behavior;
23	(3) Visit coaching;
24	(4) Appropriate parenting intervention; and
25	(5) Child-parent psychotherapy; and
26 27	K. Training and technical assistance for the program community and continuous quality improvement and evaluation planning.
28	SUMMARY
29 30 31 32 33 34	This bill authorizes the Judicial Department to establish safe children court team programs, modeled on the "Safe Babies Court Team" approach supported by the Quality Improvement Center for Research-based Infant-Toddler Court Teams funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. The purpose is to develop a community-based system to provide local systems and services for children and families that interact with the
35	State's child protection system. The core components of such programs are listed.

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