

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Promote Social and Emotional Learning and Development in Early Childhood**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §254, sub-§20** is enacted to read:

**20. Statewide voluntary early childhood consultation program.** Beginning September 1, 2019, the commissioner shall implement a statewide voluntary early childhood consultation program to provide support and guidance to early care and education teachers and to providers working in public preschools, child care centers as defined in Title 22, section 8301-A, subsection 1-A, family child care settings and Head Start programs serving infants and young children who are experiencing challenging behaviors that put them at risk of learning difficulties and removal from early learning settings.

**Sec. 2. Pilot project; early childhood consultation program.** The Department of Education shall develop and implement a pilot project to establish an early childhood consultation program to enable consultants with expertise in the areas of early childhood development and mental health to work on-site with early care and education teachers and providers of child care to aid them in the use of evidence-based strategies that reduce challenging behaviors in children and promote social-emotional growth, as well as provide guidance to parents about their children's behavioral difficulties. The department shall designate an entity to design the pilot project in consultation with the National Center for Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and key stakeholders in the State. The entity designated by the department may be a public entity, a private entity or a public-private partnership. In developing the pilot project, the designated entity shall:

1. Study national and in-state models of early childhood mental health consultations, including but not limited to the Early Childhood Consultation and Outreach Program in Washington County; Maine Roads to Quality at the University of Southern Maine Muskie School of Public Service; and the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership in Connecticut;

2. Explore enhancing cross-sector professional development capacity in the State through partnerships with entities such as the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children, a project funded by the United States Department of Education;

3. Establishing connections between individualized on-site coaching for teachers and caregivers and other forms of professional development, including group training and communities of practice;

4. Develop a system for collecting and analyzing data on implementation and selected outcomes to promote accountability and continuous quality improvement; and

5. Develop a plan for establishing a roster of qualified consultants with the specialized knowledge, skills and experience to effectively coach teachers, caregivers and program directors to promote a child's social and emotional health and decrease challenging behaviors.

The department shall provide a report by January 15, 2019 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters regarding the status of the pilot project and its ability to provide support and guidance to early care and education teachers and to providers working in public preschools, child care centers, family child care settings and Head Start programs serving infants and young children who are experiencing challenging behaviors that put them at risk of learning difficulties and removal from early learning settings. As part of its report, the department shall include its recommendations regarding the amendment of the statewide voluntary early childhood consultation program established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 254, subsection 20. After receipt and review of the report and recommendations, the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters may report out a bill to the First Regular Session of the 129th Legislature.

### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education to implement, beginning September 1, 2019, a statewide voluntary early childhood consultation program to provide support and guidance to early care and education teachers and to providers working in public preschools, child care centers, family child care settings and Head Start programs serving infants and young children who are experiencing challenging behaviors that put them at risk of learning difficulties and removal from early learning settings. The bill authorizes the Department of Education to designate an entity to design and implement an early childhood consultation program as a pilot project, and to report back to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education matters with its recommendations concerning the amendment of the statewide voluntary early childhood consultation program.