

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

[TRULY AGREED TO AND FINALLY PASSED]

SENATE BILL NO. 961

89TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1998

S3993.01T

AN ACT

To repeal section 210.109, RSMo Supp. 1997, relating to the child protection system established by the division of family services, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to the same subject.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 210.109, RSMo Supp. 1997, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 210.109, to read as follows:

210.109. 1. The division of family services shall establish a child protection system [in eight areas of the state selected by the division] **for the entire state.**

2. The child protection system shall seek to promote the safety of children and the integrity and preservation of their families by conducting investigations or family assessments in response to reports of child abuse or neglect. The system shall endeavor to coordinate community resources and provide assistance or services to children and families identified to be at risk, and to prevent and remedy child abuse and neglect.

3. In implementing the child protection system, the division shall:

(1) Receive and maintain reports pursuant to the provisions of subsections 1 and 2 of section 210.145;

(2) Forward the report to the appropriate division staff who shall determine, through the use of protocols developed by the division, whether an investigation or the family assessment and services approach should be used to respond to the allegation. The protocols developed by the

EXPLANATION--Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in this bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

division shall give priority to ensuring the well-being and safety of the child. The division may investigate any report, but shall conduct an investigation involving reports, which if true, would constitute a violation of section 565.050, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, a violation of section 566.030 or 566.060, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, or any other violation of chapter 566, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age and the perpetrator is twenty-one years of age or older, a violation of section 567.050, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, a violation of section 568.020, 568.030, 568.045, 568.050, 568.060, 568.080, or 568.090, RSMo, a violation of section 573.025 or 573.035, RSMo, or an attempt to commit any such crimes;

(3) Communicate reports of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate local office, pursuant to the provisions of subsection 4 of section 210.145;

(4) Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency upon receipt of a report of a violation of section 565.020, 565.021, 565.023, 565.024 or 565.050, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, a violation of section 566.030 or 566.060, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, or any other violation of chapter 566, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age and the perpetrator is twenty-one years of age or older, a violation of section 567.050, RSMo, if the victim is a child less than eighteen years of age, a violation of section 568.020, 568.030, 568.045, 568.050, 568.060, 568.080, or 568.090, RSMo, a violation of section 573.025 or 573.035, RSMo, or an attempt to commit any such crimes, and shall provide such agency with a detailed description of the report received. The appropriate law enforcement agency shall assist the division in the investigation or provide the division, within a reasonable time, an explanation in writing detailing the reasons why it is unable to assist;

(5) Cause a thorough investigation or family assessment and services approach to be initiated within twenty-four hours of receipt of the report from the division, except in cases where the sole basis for the report is educational neglect. If the report indicates that educational neglect is the only complaint and there is no suspicion of other neglect or abuse, the investigation or family assessment and services approach shall be initiated within seventy-two hours of receipt of the report. If the report indicates the child is in danger of serious physical harm or threat to life, an investigation or family assessment and services approach shall include direct observation of the subject child within twenty-four hours of the receipt of the report;

(6) Investigate, if it is determined that an investigation is necessary, in compliance with the provisions of section 210.145;

(7) Assess, in cases where the family assessment and services approach is used, any service needs of the family. The assessment of risk and service needs shall be based on information gathered from the family and other sources;

(8) Provide services, in cases in which the family assessment and services approach is used, which are voluntary and time-limited unless it is determined by the division based on the

assessment of risk that there will be a high risk of abuse or neglect if the family refuses to accept the services. The division shall identify services for families where it is determined that the child is at high risk of future abuse or neglect. The division shall thoroughly document in the record its attempt to provide voluntary services and the reasons these services are important to reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect to the child. If the family continues to refuse voluntary services or the child needs to be protected, the division may commence an investigation;

(9) Commence an immediate investigation if at any time during the family assessment and services approach the division determines that an investigation, as delineated in sections 210.109 to 210.183, is required. The division staff who have conducted the assessment may remain involved in the provision of services to the child and family;

(10) Document at the time the case is closed, the outcome of the family assessment and services approach, any service provided and the removal of risk to the child, if it existed;

(11) Conduct a family assessment and services approach on reports initially referred for an investigation, if it is determined that a complete investigation is not required. If law enforcement officers are involved in the investigation, they shall provide written agreement with this decision. The reason for the termination of the investigative process shall be documented in the record;

(12) Assist the child and family in obtaining services, if at any time during the investigation it is determined that the child or any member of the family needs services;

(13) Collaborate with the community to identify comprehensive local services and assure access to those services for children and families where there is risk of abuse or neglect;

(14) Contact the person who made the report under section 210.115, pursuant to the provisions of section 210.145;

(15) Forward any evidence of malice or harassment to the local prosecuting or circuit attorney as required by the provisions of section 210.145;

(16) Provide services as required by section 210.145;

(17) Use multidisciplinary services as required by section 210.145;

(18) Update the information in the information system within thirty days of an oral report of abuse or neglect. The information system shall contain, at a minimum, the determination made by the division as a result of the investigation or family assessment and services approach, identifying information on the subjects of the report, those responsible for the care of the subject child and other relevant dispositional information. The division shall complete all investigations or family assessments within thirty days, unless good cause for the failure to complete the investigation or assessment is documented in the information system. If the investigation or family assessment is not completed within thirty days the information system shall be updated at regular intervals and upon the completion of the investigation. The information in the information system shall be updated to reflect any subsequent findings, including any changes to

the findings based on an administrative or judicial hearing on the matter;

(19) Maintain a record which contains the facts ascertained which support the determination as well as the facts that do not support the determination.

4. By January 1, 1998, the division of family services shall submit documentation to the speaker of the house of representatives and the president pro tem of the senate on the success or failure of the child protection system established in this section. The general assembly may recommend statewide implementation or cancellation of the child protection system based on the success or failure of the system established in this section.

5. The documentation required by subsection 4 of this section shall include an independent evaluation of the child protection system completed according to accepted, objective research principles.

Unofficial

Bill

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