

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/HB 43 — Child Welfare

by Health and Human Services Committee and Reps. Latvala, Valdes, and others (CS/CS/SB 122 by Appropriations Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senators Rouson, Berman, Hooper, Book, and Rader)

The bill is titled “Jordan’s Law” and makes a number of changes to the laws related to the child welfare system in an attempt to address issues that were identified in the case of Jordan Belliveau, a two-year old boy who was killed by his mother in Pinellas County in 2018.

The bill requires specified child welfare professionals, circuit and county judges who have responsibility for dependency cases, Guardian ad Litem program staff, and law enforcement officers to receive training developed on the recognition of and response to head trauma and brain injury in children under six years old. Such training for child welfare professionals must be developed by the Child Protection Teams within the Department of Health.

The bill creates a communication process between the Department of Children and Families and law enforcement by requiring the systems used by both agencies to allow the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to make available to law enforcement agencies information that a person is a parent or caregiver involved in the child welfare system. The communication process must be operational by March 1, 2021. The bill further requires that if a law enforcement officer interacts with such a person and has concerns for a child’s health, safety, or well-being, the officer shall contact the Florida central abuse hotline. The hotline must then provide relevant information to individuals involved in the child’s case. Quarterly progress reports are required until all systems enhancements and integrations required to implement these provisions are complete and in production.

The bill also requires third-party credentialing entities that certify child welfare personnel to review the findings and all relevant records involving the death of a child or other critical incident following completion of any reviews by the department, the inspector general, or the Office of the Attorney General if a complaint is filed by an outside party involving certified personnel. This review must assess the certified personnel's compliance with the third-party credentialing entity's published code of ethical and professional conduct and disciplinary procedures. The bill allows credentialing and provides additional duties for the department and third-party credentialing entities.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2020.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 113-0