

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to children in foster care; providing for  
 3           the creation of the Community Advisory Panel on Foster  
 4           Care Pilot Program in Duval County; providing purposes and  
 5           goals; providing for cooperative participation by  
 6           specified entities and individuals; creating the Community  
 7           Advisory Panel on Foster Care; providing for panel  
 8           membership; providing for a chairperson; providing duties  
 9           of specified judges and panel members; providing for  
 10          administration by a community-based care lead agency;  
 11          providing for hiring specified personnel; requiring  
 12          development of an assessment tool to determine the  
 13          effectiveness of the program; requiring an annual report;  
 14          providing for future expiration of the pilot program;  
 15          providing an effective date.

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 17   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 19           Section 1. Community Advisory Panel on Foster Care Pilot  
 20 Program; creation; purpose; panel membership; court and panel  
 21 duties; administration; evaluation.--

22           (1) There is created the Community Advisory Panel on  
 23 Foster Care Pilot Program in Duval County. The purpose of the  
 24 program is to identify educational needs and followup strategies  
 25 for foster children who are 6 through 12 years of age and are  
 26 enrolled in the Duval County school system. The goal of the  
 27 program is to ensure that youth who are in foster care will be  
 28 tested appropriately and placed in an educational environment

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29 that optimizes their opportunities for success.

30 (2) The pilot program shall consist of the cooperative  
31 efforts of:

32 (a) The Community Advisory Panel on Foster Care, as  
33 created under this section;

34 (b) The community-based care lead agency for foster care  
35 and adoption in Duval County;

36 (c) The case managers assigned to children in foster care;

37 (d) The Duval County School Board;

38 (e) Nova Southeastern University;

39 (f) The foster care parents of children currently in the  
40 foster care system;

41 (g) When possible, the natural parents of children  
42 currently in the foster care system; and

43 (h) The circuit court judge hearing a foster care case.

44 (3) (a) The Community Advisory Panel on Foster Care is  
45 created in the Fourth Judicial Circuit and shall consist of the  
46 chief judge for the circuit, or another judge from the circuit  
47 designated by the chief judge who is the lead judge in the area  
48 of dependency and adoption, and 15 community volunteers who are  
49 community leaders having abilities and expertise in diverse  
50 areas. The chief judge, or the judge designated by the chief  
51 judge, shall serve as the chair of the panel. The 15 volunteers  
52 shall be comprised of:

53 1. Four members appointed by the chief judge, or by the  
54 judge designated by the chief judge;

55 2. Four members appointed by the Secretary of Children and  
56 Family Services, or his or her designee;

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57       3. Four members appointed by the Duval County School  
58 Board; and

59       4. Three members appointed by the guardian ad litem for  
60 Duval County.

61       (b) The chief judge, or the judge from the circuit  
62 designated by the chief judge, may issue orders and obtain  
63 educational information relating to the students who are 6 to 12  
64 years of age and are in the foster care system in District IV of  
65 the department. Pursuant to the order, the panel shall review  
66 the academic progress, behavioral issues, and attendance of each  
67 student and shall recommend referral of any student for whom the  
68 review demonstrates a need for followup services. The panel may  
69 prioritize referrals by assessing the severity of need and  
70 recommending that the most critical needs be met first. A  
71 student who is failing may be referred for educational testing,  
72 for additional psychological and therapeutic counseling as  
73 recommended, or for both, to determine why he or she is failing  
74 and what accommodations and remediation are needed.

75       (4) The community-based care lead agency shall provide  
76 administrative support for the Community Advisory Panel on  
77 Foster Care and for the operation of the pilot program. In order  
78 to help facilitate the duties of the panel, the agency shall  
79 employ:

80       (a) A full-time project coordinator who shall assist the  
81 student's case manager in identifying resources for educational  
82 testing and psychological and therapeutic counseling. In  
83 addition, the project coordinator shall oversee the development  
84 of an assessment tool that is designed to determine the

85 effectiveness of the pilot program.

86 1. The purpose of the assessment tool is to link systems  
87 among providers of educational services, psychological services,  
88 and case-management services and the court system.

89 2. The entity that designs the assessment tool must,  
90 during the first year of the pilot program, undertake the  
91 following tasks:

92 a. Discovery. This phase includes meeting with information  
93 technology staff from the department, school board staff, and  
94 case managers.

95 b. Development. This phase consists of determining the  
96 best method for data entry, the best database, and the best data  
97 format.

98 c. Implementation. This phase involves completing,  
99 testing, and delivering the assessment tool.

100 d. Maintenance. This phase involves developing a  
101 maintenance plan and schedule after the initiation of the  
102 assessment tool.

103 (b) A full-time psychologist who shall provide educational  
104 testing and psychological and therapeutic counseling to foster  
105 care children and provide advice, research, assessments, and  
106 other services to the judges.

107 (5) The project coordinator shall submit an annual report  
108 on the pilot program to the chief judge of the Fourth Judicial  
109 Circuit, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House  
110 of Representatives, the State Courts Administrator, and the  
111 Secretary of Children and Family Services.

112 (6) The pilot program expires on July 1, 2010.

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Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2007.