A bill to be entitled
An act relating to child welfare; providing a short
title; amending s. 39.202, F.S.; expanding the list of
titles with access to certain records that relate to
child abandonment, abuse, or neglect held by the
Department of Children and Families; amending s.
39.303, F.S.; requiring Child Protection Teams to be
capable of providing certain training relating to head
trauma and brain injuries in children younger than a
specified age; amending s. 39.401, F.S.; authorizing
the parent or legal guardian of a child to request a
second medical evaluation of a child under certain
circumstances; requiring the court to consider such
evaluation when determining whether to remove the
child from the home; amending s. 39.820, F.S.;
revising the definition of the terms “guardian ad
litem” and “guardian advocate”; amending s. 39.8296,
F.S.; requiring that the guardian ad litem training
program include training on the recognition of and
responses to head trauma and brain injury in specified
children; amending s. 402.40, F.S.; revising
legislative intent and providing legislative findings;
requiring the department to develop and implement a
specified child welfare workforce development
framework in collaboration with other specified
entities; providing requirements for the department
relating to workforce education requirements;
requiring the department to submit an annual report to
the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date;
requiring community-based care lead agencies to submit
a plan and timeline to the department relating to
certain child welfare staff by a specified date;
providing requirements for the department related to
workforce training; providing additional duties for
third-party credentialing entities; requiring certain
attorneys employed by the department to complete
certain training by a specified date; deleting
definitions; deleting provisions relating to core
competencies and specializations; amending s. 409.988,
F.S.; requiring a lead agency to ensure that certain
individuals receive specified training relating to
head trauma and brain injuries in children younger
than a specified age; revising the types of services a
lead agency is required to provide; creating s.
943.17298, F.S.; requiring law enforcement officers to
complete training relating to head trauma and brain
injuries in children younger than a specified age as
part of either basic recruit training or continuing
training or education by a specified date; amending s.
1004.615, F.S.; revising the purpose of the Florida
Institute for Child Welfare; revising requirements for
the institute; revising the contents of the annual
report that the institute must provide to the Governor
and the Legislature; deleting obsolete provisions;
repealing s. 402.402, F.S., relating to child
protection and child welfare personnel and attorneys
employed by the department; amending s. 409.996, F.S.;
authorizing the department, in collaboration with
certain lead agencies, to create and implement a program to more effectively provide case management services to specified children; providing criteria for selecting judicial circuits for implementation of the program; specifying requirements of the program; requiring the department to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature by a specified date under specified conditions; amending s. 1009.25, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. This act may be cited as “Jordan’s Law.”
Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section 39.202, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.202 Confidentiality of reports and records in cases of child abuse or neglect.—

(2) Except as provided in subsection (4), access to such records, excluding the name of, or other identifying information with respect to, the reporter which shall be released only as provided in subsection (5), shall be granted only to the following persons, officials, and agencies:

(a) Employees, authorized agents, or contract providers of the department, the Department of Health, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Office of Early Learning, or county agencies responsible for carrying out:

1. Child or adult protective investigations;
2. Ongoing child or adult protective services;
3. Early intervention and prevention services;
4. Healthy Start services;
5. Licensure or approval of adoptive homes, foster homes, child care facilities, facilities licensed under chapter 393, family day care homes, providers who receive school readiness funding under part VI of chapter 1002, or other homes used to provide for the care and welfare of children;
6. Employment screening for caregivers in residential group homes; 
7. Services for victims of domestic violence when provided by certified domestic violence centers working at the department’s request as case consultants or with shared clients;
8. Credentialing of child welfare services staff pursuant to s. 402.40.

Also, employees or agents of the Department of Juvenile Justice responsible for the provision of services to children, pursuant to chapters 984 and 985.

Section 3. Paragraph (h) of subsection (3) of section 39.303, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
3. Child Protection Teams and sexual abuse treatment programs; services; eligible cases.—

(3) The Department of Health shall use and convene the Child Protection Teams to supplement the assessment and protective supervision activities of the family safety and preservation program of the Department of Children and Families. This section does not remove or reduce the duty and responsibility of any person to report pursuant to this chapter.
all suspected or actual cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect or sexual abuse of a child. The role of the Child Protection Teams is to support activities of the program and to provide services deemed by the Child Protection Teams to be necessary and appropriate to abused, abandoned, and neglected children upon referral. The specialized diagnostic assessment, evaluation, coordination, consultation, and other supportive services that a Child Protection Team must be capable of providing include, but are not limited to, the following:

(h) Such training services for program and other employees of the Department of Children and Families, employees of the Department of Health, and other medical professionals as is deemed appropriate to enable them to develop and maintain their professional skills and abilities in handling child abuse, abandonment, and neglect cases. The training services must include training in the recognition of and appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age as required under ss. 402.40 and 943.17298.

A Child Protection Team that is evaluating a report of medical neglect and assessing the health care needs of a medically complex child shall consult with a physician who has experience in treating children with the same condition.

Section 4. Subsection (3) of section 39.401, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.401 Taking a child alleged to be dependent into custody; law enforcement officers and authorized agents of the department.—

(3) If the child is taken into custody by, or is delivered...
to, an authorized agent of the department, the agent shall
review the facts supporting the removal with an attorney
representing the department. The purpose of the review is to
determine whether there is probable cause for the filing of a
shelter petition.

(a) If the facts are not sufficient, the child shall
immediately be returned to the custody of the parent or legal
custodian.

(b) If the facts are sufficient and the child has not been
returned to the custody of the parent or legal custodian, the
department shall file the petition and schedule a hearing, and
the attorney representing the department shall request that a
shelter hearing be held within 24 hours after the removal of the
child. While awaiting the shelter hearing, the authorized agent
of the department may place the child in licensed shelter care
or may release the child to a parent or legal custodian or
responsible adult relative or the adoptive parent of the child’s
sibling who shall be given priority consideration over a
licensed placement, or a responsible adult approved by the
department if this is in the best interests of the child.
Placement of a child which is not in a licensed shelter must be
preceded by a criminal history records check as required under
s. 39.0138. In addition, the department may authorize placement
of a housekeeper/homemaker in the home of a child alleged to be
dependent until the parent or legal custodian assumes care of
the child.

(c) If the decision to remove a child from the home is
predicated upon a medical evaluation performed by a Child
Protection Team pursuant to s. 39.303, the parent or legal
guardian of the child may request that a second, independent evaluation be performed by a physician who has met the relevant qualifications of s. 39.303(2)(b) in order to determine whether the child has been the victim of abuse or neglect. The court must consider this evaluation when determining whether to remove a child from the home.

Section 5. Section 39.820, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.820 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:

(1) “Guardian ad litem” as referred to in any civil or criminal proceeding includes the following: the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office, which includes circuit a certified guardian ad litem programs; program, a duly certified volunteer, a staff member, a staff attorney, a contract attorney, or a certified pro bono attorney working on behalf of a guardian ad litem or the program, staff members of a program office; a court-appointed attorney; or a responsible adult who is appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in a proceeding as provided for by law, including, but not limited to, this chapter, who is a party to any judicial proceeding as a representative of the child, and who serves until discharged by the court.

(2) “Guardian advocate” means a person appointed by the court to act on behalf of a drug dependent newborn under pursuant to the provisions of this part.

Section 6. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 39.8296, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

39.8296 Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office; legislative findings and intent; creation; appointment of executive
director; duties of office.—

(2) STATEWIDE GUARDIAN AD LITEM OFFICE.—There is created a Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office within the Justice Administrative Commission. The Justice Administrative Commission shall provide administrative support and service to the office to the extent requested by the executive director within the available resources of the commission. The Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office is not subject to control, supervision, or direction by the Justice Administrative Commission in the performance of its duties, but the employees of the office are governed by the classification plan and salary and benefits plan approved by the Justice Administrative Commission.

(b) The Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office shall, within available resources, have oversight responsibilities for and provide technical assistance to all guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem programs located within the judicial circuits.

1. The office shall identify the resources required to implement methods of collecting, reporting, and tracking reliable and consistent case data.

2. The office shall review the current guardian ad litem programs in Florida and other states.

3. The office, in consultation with local guardian ad litem offices, shall develop statewide performance measures and standards.

4. The office shall develop a guardian ad litem training program, which shall include, but not be limited to, training on the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age. The office shall establish a curriculum committee to develop the training program specified
in this subparagraph. The curriculum committee shall include, but not be limited to, dependency judges, directors of circuit guardian ad litem programs, active certified guardians ad litem, a mental health professional who specializes in the treatment of children, a member of a child advocacy group, a representative of a domestic violence advocacy group the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and a social worker experienced in working with victims and perpetrators of child abuse.

5. The office shall review the various methods of funding guardian ad litem programs, shall maximize the use of those funding sources to the extent possible, and shall review the kinds of services being provided by circuit guardian ad litem programs.

6. The office shall determine the feasibility or desirability of new concepts of organization, administration, financing, or service delivery designed to preserve the civil and constitutional rights and fulfill other needs of dependent children.

7. In an effort to promote normalcy and establish trust between a court-appointed volunteer guardian ad litem and a child alleged to be abused, abandoned, or neglected under this chapter, a guardian ad litem may transport a child. However, a guardian ad litem volunteer may not be required or directed by the program or a court to transport a child.

8. The office shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court an interim report describing the progress of the office in meeting the goals as described in this section. The office shall submit to the
Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court a proposed plan including alternatives for meeting the state’s guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem needs. This plan may include recommendations for less than the entire state, may include a phase-in system, and shall include estimates of the cost of each of the alternatives. Each year the office shall provide a status report and provide further recommendations to address the need for guardian ad litem services and related issues.

Section 7. Section 402.40, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

(Substantial rewording of section. See s. 402.40, F.S., for present text.)

402.40 Child welfare workforce; development; training; certification; well-being.—

(1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.—

(a) The Legislature finds that positive outcomes for children and families involved with the child welfare system often are attributable to the strong commitment of a well-trained, highly skilled, well-resourced, and dedicated child welfare workforce and that the child welfare system is only as good as the individuals who conduct investigations, provide services to children and families, and manage service delivery.

(b) The Legislature also finds that child welfare agencies experience barriers to establishing and maintaining a stable, effective, and diverse workforce because of issues relating to recruitment, education and training, inadequate supervision, retention and staff turnover, and lack of support for frontline
(c) The Legislature further finds that, although numerous initiatives have been developed to address these challenges, isolated interventions often fail to yield positive results, whereas implementing an integrated framework across multiple domains can help child welfare agencies achieve effective outcomes.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature to ensure a systematic approach to child welfare workforce staff development and the well-being of individuals providing child welfare services by establishing a uniform statewide program.

(2) CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.—In order to promote competency-based, outcome-focused, and data-driven approaches to workforce development, the department, in collaboration with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, shall develop and implement a comprehensive child welfare development workforce framework using a nationally recognized model for workforce development. The framework must address, at a minimum, all of the following components:

(a) Recruitment and hiring.
(b) Education and professional preparation.
(c) Professional training and development.
(d) Supervision.
(e) Retention.
(f) Caseload and workload.
(g) Workforce well-being and support.
(h) Work-life balance and flexible scheduling.
(i) Agency culture and climate.

(3) WORKFORCE EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS.—
(a) The department shall make every effort to recruit and hire qualified professional staff to serve as child protective investigators and child protective investigation supervisors who are qualified by their education and experience to perform social work functions. The department, in collaboration with the lead agencies, subcontracted provider organizations, the Florida Institute for Child Welfare, and other partners in the child welfare system, shall develop a protocol for screening candidates for child protective positions which reflects the preferences specified in subparagraphs 1., 2., and 3. The following persons must be given preference in recruitment, but this preference serves only as guidance and does not limit the department’s discretion to select the best available candidates:

1. Individuals with a baccalaureate degree in social work, and child protective investigation supervisors with a master’s degree in social work, from a college or university social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education.

2. Individuals with a bachelor’s degree or a master’s degree in psychology, sociology, counseling, special education, education, human development, child development, family development, marriage and family therapy, or nursing.

3. Individuals with baccalaureate degrees who have a combination of directly relevant work and volunteer experience, preferably in a public service field related to children’s services, which demonstrates critical thinking skills, formal assessment processes, communication skills, problem solving, and empathy; a commitment to helping children and families; a capacity to work as part of a team; an interest in continuous development of skills and knowledge; and sufficient personal
strength and resilience to manage competing demands and handle workplace stresses.  
(b) By each October 1, the department shall submit a report on the educational qualifications, turnover, and working conditions of child protective investigators and supervisors to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.  
(c) By January 1, 2021, the community-based care lead agencies shall submit to the department a plan and timeline for recruiting and hiring child welfare staff providing care for dependent children which meet the same educational requirements as required for child protective investigators and child protective investigation supervisors under this subsection. The plan and timeline must include the same recruiting and hiring requirements for child welfare staff employed by subcontractors.  
(4) WORKFORCE TRAINING.—  
(a) In order to enable the state to recruit and retain a qualified and diverse child welfare workforce that is well-trained, well-supervised, and well-supported, the department shall establish a program for a comprehensive system to provide both preservice and inservice child welfare competency-based training curricula that all child welfare staff, including all staff providing care for dependent children employed by a community-based care lead agency or by a subcontractor of such agency, are required to participate in and successfully complete, appropriate to their areas of responsibility. Such program must include training in the recognition of and appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age, which must be developed by the Child  

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Protection Team Program within the Department of Health.

(b) A community-based care lead agency may develop additional training for persons delivering child welfare services in the agency’s service area if the curriculum does not conflict with training required in paragraph (a).

(5) WORKFORCE CERTIFICATION.—The department shall approve one or more third-party credentialing entities for the purpose of developing and administering child welfare certification programs for persons who provide child welfare services. A third-party credentialing entity shall request such approval in writing from the department. In order to obtain approval, the third-party credentialing entity must:

(a) Establish professional requirements and standards that applicants must achieve in order to obtain a child welfare certification and to maintain such certification.

(b) Develop and apply core competencies and examination instruments according to nationally recognized certification and psychometric standards.

(c) Maintain a professional code of ethics and a disciplinary process that apply to all persons holding child welfare certification.

(d) Maintain a database, accessible to the public, of all persons holding child welfare certification, including any history of ethical violations.

(e) Require annual continuing education for persons holding child welfare certification and require certified professionals to comply with the training requirements in subsection (4) as a condition of renewal or initial certification. The third-party credentialing entity shall track and report compliance with this
section to the department on an annual basis.

(f) Administer a continuing education provider program to ensure that only qualified providers offer continuing education opportunities for certificateholders.

(g) All certified child welfare professionals must follow the requirements of the third-party credentialing entity’s code of ethical and professional conduct and disciplinary procedures.

1. The department, community based care lead agencies, sheriff offices and their contracted providers shall report all allegations of suspected or known violations of ethical or professional misconduct standards to the department-approved third-party credentialing entity, including all allegations made to the department’s Office of Inspector General on certified personnel.

2. The department shall review all case records involving the death of a child or other critical incident that is subject to a critical incident rapid response team review to ensure compliance with ethical and professional conduct requirements of any certified child welfare professional staff.

3. The department shall provide any reports to the third-party credentialing entity that indicate that ethical or professional conduct requirements were not met so that the credentialing entity may determine if the individual’s certification requires suspension or revocation.

4. If it is determined that the individual’s certification requires suspension or revocation, the department or employer of the certified staff must immediately remove the individual from their duties that require certification as a condition of employment.
5. Any decision by a department-approved third-party credentialing entity to deny, revoke, or suspend a certification, or otherwise impose sanctions on an individual who is certified, is reviewable by the department. Upon receiving an adverse determination, the person aggrieved may request an administrative hearing pursuant to ss. 120.569 and 120.57(1) within 30 days after completing any appeals process offered by the credentialing entity or the department, as applicable.

6. The third-party credentialing entity shall track and report compliance with this subsection to the department.

(h) Maintain an advisory committee, including representatives from each region of the department, each sheriff’s office providing child protective services, and each community-based care lead agency, who shall be appointed by the organization they represent. The third-party credentialing entity may appoint additional members to the advisory committee.

(6) CHILD WELFARE TRAINING TRUST FUND.—

(a) There is created within the State Treasury a Child Welfare Training Trust Fund to be used by the Department of Children and Families for the purpose of funding the professional development of persons providing child welfare services.

(b) One dollar from every noncriminal traffic infraction collected pursuant to s. 318.14(10)(b) or s. 318.18 shall be deposited into the Child Welfare Training Trust Fund.

(c) In addition to the funds generated by paragraph (b), the trust fund shall receive funds generated from an additional fee on birth certificates and dissolution of marriage filings,
as specified in ss. 382.0255 and 28.101, respectively, and may receive funds from any other public or private source.

(d) Funds that are not expended by the end of the budget cycle or through a supplemental budget approved by the department shall revert to the trust fund.

(7) ATTORNEYS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO HANDLE CHILD WELFARE CASES.—With the exception of attorneys hired after July 1, 2014, but before July 1, 2020, who shall complete the training required under this subsection by January 31, 2021, attorneys hired by the department on or after July 1, 2014, whose primary responsibility is representing the department in child welfare cases shall receive training within the first 6 months of employment in:

(a) The dependency court process, including the attorney’s role in preparing and reviewing documents prepared for dependency court for accuracy and completeness;

(b) Preparing and presenting child welfare cases, including at least 1 week of shadowing an experienced children’s legal services attorney who is preparing and presenting cases;

(c) Safety assessment, safety decisionmaking tools, and safety plans;

(d) Developing information presented by investigators and case managers to support decisionmaking in the best interest of children; and

(e) The experiences and techniques of case managers and investigators, including shadowing an experienced child protective investigator and an experienced case manager for at least 8 hours.

(8) ADOPTION OF RULES.—The department shall adopt rules
necessary to administer this section.

Section 8. Paragraph (f) of subsection (1) and subsection (3) of section 409.988, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

409.988 Lead agency duties; general provisions.—

(1) DUTIES.—A lead agency:

(f) Shall ensure that all individuals providing care for dependent children participate in and successfully complete the program of receive appropriate training relevant to the individual’s area of responsibility and meet the minimum employment standards established by the department pursuant to s. 402.40. The training curriculum must include training in the recognition of and appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in a child under 6 years of age developed by the Child Protection Team Program within the Department of Health.

(3) SERVICES.—A lead agency must provide dependent children with services that are supported by research or that are recognized as best practices in the child welfare field. The agency shall give priority to the use of services that are evidence-based and trauma-informed and may also provide other innovative services, including, but not limited to, family-centered and cognitive-behavioral interventions designed to mitigate out-of-home placements, and intensive family reunification services that combine child welfare and mental health services for families with dependent children under 6 years of age.

Section 9. Section 943.17298, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

943.17298 Training in the recognition of and responses to head trauma and brain injury.—Each law enforcement officer must
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successfully complete training on the subject of the recognition
of and appropriate responses to head trauma and brain injury in
a child under 6 years of age developed by the Child Protection
Team Program within the Department of Health to aid an officer
in the detection of head trauma and brain injury due to child
abuse. Such training must be completed as part of the basic
recruit training for a law enforcement officer, as required
under s. 943.13(9), or as a part of continuing training or
education required under s. 943.135(1), before July 1, 2022.

Section 10. Section 1004.615, Florida Statutes, is amended
to read:

1004.615 Florida Institute for Child Welfare.—
(1) There is established the Florida Institute for Child
Welfare within the Florida State University College of Social
Work. The purpose of the institute is to advance the well-being
of children and families who are involved with, or at risk of
becoming involved with, the child welfare system by facilitating
and supporting statewide partnerships to develop competency-
based education, training, and support to prepare a diverse
group of social work professionals for careers in child welfare
by improving the performance of child protection and child
welfare services through research, policy analysis, evaluation,
and leadership development. The institute shall consist of a
consortium of public and private universities offering degrees
in social work and shall be housed within the Florida State
University College of Social Work.

(2) Using such resources as authorized in the General
Appropriations Act, the Department of Children and Families
shall collaborate contract

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the duties described in subsection (3) (4) using state
appropriations, public and private grants, and other resources
obtained by the institute.

(3) In order to increase and retain a higher percentage of
professionally educated social workers in the child welfare
system and serve as a statewide resource for child welfare
workforce education and training, the institute, in
collaboration with the Department of Children and Families,
shall:

   (a) Design and disseminate a continuum of social work
education and training which emphasizes child welfare workforce
stabilization and professionalization by aligning social work
curriculum and training with critical practice skills pursuant
to s. 402.40.

   (b) Identify methods to promote continuing professional
development and systems of workplace support for existing child
welfare staff.

   (c) Develop a best practice model for providing feedback on
curriculum to social work programs and for ensuring that interns
who will be entering the child welfare profession are well-
supervised by university personnel during their internships.

   (d) Create a Title IV-E program designed to provide
professional education and monetary support to undergraduate and
graduate social work students who intend to pursue or continue a
career in child welfare. Goals of the program should include:

      1. Increasing the number of individuals in the child
welfare workforce who have a bachelor’s degree or master’s
degree in social work.

      2. Prioritizing the enrollment of current child welfare
staff employed by the state.

3. Prioritizing the enrollment of students who reflect the diversity of the state’s child welfare population.

4. Providing specific program support through the provision of specialized competency-based child welfare curriculum and monetary support to students.

(e) Engage in evaluation and dissemination of evidence-based and promising practices in child welfare and build high-quality evaluation into new program models and pilots.

The institute shall work with the department, sheriffs providing child protective investigative services, community-based care lead agencies, community-based care provider organizations, the court system, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and other partners who contribute to and participate in providing child protection and child welfare services.

(4) The institute shall:

(a) Maintain a program of research which contributes to scientific knowledge and informs both policy and practice related to child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.

(b) Advise the department and other organizations participating in the child protection and child welfare system regarding scientific evidence on policy and practice related to child safety, permanency, and child and family well-being.

(c) Provide advice regarding management practices and administrative processes used by the department and other organizations participating in the child protection and child
welfare system and recommend improvements that reduce burdensome, ineffective requirements for frontline staff and their supervisors while enhancing their ability to effectively investigate, analyze, problem solve, and supervise.

(d) Assess the performance of child protection and child welfare services based on specific outcome measures.

(e) Evaluate the scope and effectiveness of preservice and inservice training for child protection and child welfare employees and advise and assist the department in efforts to improve such training.

(f) Assess the readiness of social work graduates to assume job responsibilities in the child protection and child welfare system and identify gaps in education which can be addressed through the modification of curricula or the establishment of industry certifications.

(g) Develop and maintain a program of professional support including training courses and consulting services that assist both individuals and organizations in implementing adaptive and resilient responses to workplace stress.

(h) Participate in the department’s critical incident response team, assist in the preparation of reports about such incidents, and support the committee review of reports and development of recommendations.

(i) Identify effective policies and promising practices, including, but not limited to, innovations in coordination between entities participating in the child protection and child welfare system, data analytics, working with the local community, and management of human service organizations, and communicate these findings to the department and other
(j) Develop a definition of a child or family at high risk of abuse or neglect. Such a definition must consider characteristics associated with a greater probability of abuse and neglect.

(5) The President of the Florida State University shall appoint a director of the institute. The director must be a child welfare professional with a degree in social work who holds a faculty appointment in the Florida State University College of Social Work. The institute shall be administered by the director, and the director’s office shall be located at the Florida State University. The director is responsible for overall management of the institute and for developing and executing the work of the institute consistent with the responsibilities in subsection (3) (4). The director shall engage individuals in other state universities with accredited colleges of social work to participate in the institute. Individuals from other university programs relevant to the institute’s work, including, but not limited to, economics, management, law, medicine, and education, may also be invited by the director to contribute to the institute. The universities participating in the institute shall provide facilities, staff, and other resources to the institute to establish statewide access to institute programs and services.

(5)(6) By each October 1 of each year, the institute shall provide a written report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives which outlines its activities in the preceding year, reports
significant research findings, as well as results of other
programs, and provides specific recommendations for improving
education, training, and support for individuals in the child
welfare workforce child protection and child welfare services.

(a) The institute shall include an evaluation of the
results of the educational and training requirements for child
protection and child welfare personnel established under this
act and recommendations for application of the results to child
protection personnel employed by sheriff’s offices providing
child protection services in its report due October 1, 2017.

(b) The institute shall include an evaluation of the
effects of the other provisions of this act and recommendations
for improvements in child protection and child welfare services
in its report due October 1, 2018.

(7) The institute shall submit a report with
recommendations for improving the state’s child welfare system.
The report shall address topics including, but not limited to,
enhancing working relationships between the entities involved in
the child protection and child welfare system, identification of
and replication of best practices, reducing paperwork,
increasing the retention of child protective investigators and
case managers, and caring for medically complex children within
the child welfare system, with the goal of allowing the child to
remain in the least restrictive and most nurturing environment.
The institute shall submit an interim report by February 1,
2015, and final report by October 1, 2015, to the Governor, the
President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
Representatives.

Section 11. Section 402.402, Florida Statutes, is repealed.
Section 12. Subsection (24) is added to section 409.996, Florida Statutes, to read:

409.996 Duties of the Department of Children and Families.—The department shall contract for the delivery, administration, or management of care for children in the child protection and child welfare system. In doing so, the department retains responsibility for the quality of contracted services and programs and shall ensure that services are delivered in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

(24) The department, in collaboration with the lead agencies serving the judicial circuits selected in paragraph (a), may create and implement a program to more effectively provide case management services for dependent children under 6 years of age.

(a) If the program is created, the department shall select up to three judicial circuits in which to develop and implement the program, with priority given to a circuit that has a high removal rate, significant case management turnover rate, and the highest number of children in out-of-home care or a significant increase in the number of children in out-of-home care over the last 3 fiscal years.

(b) If the program is created, it must do each of the following:

1. Include caseloads for dependency case managers comprised solely of children who are under 6 years of age, except as provided in paragraph (c). The maximum caseload for a case manager shall be no more than 15 children, if possible.

2. Include case managers who are trained specifically in:
a. Critical child development for children under 6 years of age;

b. Specific practices of child care for children under 6 years of age;

c. The scope of community resources available to children under 6 years of age; and

d. Working with a parent or caregiver and assisting him or her in developing the skills necessary to care for the health, safety, and well-being of a child under 6 years of age.

(c) If a child being served through the program has a dependent sibling, the sibling may be assigned to the same case manager as the child being served through the program; however, each sibling counts toward the case manager’s maximum caseload as provided under paragraph (b).

(d) If the program is created, the department shall evaluate the permanency, safety, and well-being of children being served through the program and submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by October 1, 2025, detailing its findings.

Section 13. Paragraph (h) of subsection (1) of section 1009.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1009.25 Fee exemptions.—

(1) The following students are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that provides workforce education programs, Florida College System institution, or state university:

(h) Pursuant to s. 402.403, child protection and child welfare personnel as defined in s. 402.402 who are enrolled in
an accredited bachelor’s degree or master’s degree in social work program, provided that the student attains at least a grade of “B” in all courses for which tuition and fees are exempted.

Section 14. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.