

## Senate Bill No. 1264

An act providing for a study on children with developmental delays; providing purposes; providing for a commission and its membership, officers, and meetings; providing for the administration of the study and for staff and expenses; prescribing the components of the study; authorizing the employment of expert consultants; providing for advisory workgroups; requiring reports to the Legislature; providing an appropriation; providing for expiration of the act; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the healthy development of Florida's infants and children is often hampered by their exposure to multiple stresses, traumatic events such as child abuse and family violence, mental or emotional disorders, or developmental delays or disabilities that result in personal and family hardships and extreme financial costs to public and private community-based systems, and

WHEREAS, recent brain research, as well as other clinical and social research, has confirmed that there exists a window of opportunity for successfully intervening with children experiencing and at risk of emotional, social, cognitive, learning, and other developmental delays, and

WHEREAS, the consequences of young children entering school and becoming adults with mental disorders or developmental disabilities and delays not only affect children and families but also affect systems that are publicly supported, such as welfare assistance, child protection, criminal justice, special education, and other public social and health-related systems, and

WHEREAS, there should be a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of Florida's children who are at high risk of significant delays and serious developmental problems that are preventable and an evaluation of the interventions available, and

WHEREAS, Florida's systems of care and public and private resources need to be better integrated and coordinated to intervene early and thus to prevent the adverse effects of child abuse and neglect, community violence, mental disorders, learning disorders, and developmental delays and problems, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Short title.—This act may be cited as the “Study on Children with Developmental Delays Act.”

Section 2. Purpose.—The purpose of this act is to examine how this state can better identify and effectively serve those young children with or at high risk of mental disorders or developmental delays and disabilities, with the goal of optimally minimizing the adverse effects of those delays and disabilities on children in this state. As used in this act, the term “children with

developmental delays” means those infants and young children from birth to 5 years of age who are experiencing or are at high risk for developing emotional, cognitive, social, learning, and other developmental delays or long-term mental or developmental disabilities or conditions. The study must recognize that families, as well as other community-based entities, play a major role in preventing or minimizing certain risks to the child, enhancing the child’s development, and minimizing the long-term disabling impact of any developmental delay or disability. The study should focus on developing early-intervention strategies and programs that provide individualized treatment and other services to infants and young children and to their families so that the children will not suffer unnecessarily because their problems and deficits were never identified or were mislabeled. The study must document the ways in which providing appropriate early interventions to young children who experience these developmental delays or deficits or early negative family circumstances will afford a more productive life for these children as well as result in cost savings to public systems such as the criminal justice and child welfare systems. The study must use to the greatest possible extent the work and findings of other groups.

Section 3. Study on children with developmental delays; administration; study commission membership; components of study.—

(1) ADMINISTRATION OF STUDY; STAFF; EXPENSES.—The Florida Partnership for School Readiness shall conduct the study on children with developmental delays to meet the purposes prescribed in this act. The Executive Office of the Governor, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Children’s Medical Services of the Department of Health shall provide assistance to the partnership on request.

(a) The partnership shall appoint a study commission to carry out the activities required for the study. The commission is to consist of the following 16 members:

1. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice.
2. A representative of the Department of Children and Family Services.
3. A representative of the Department of Education.
4. The Executive Director of the Agency for Health Care Administration.
5. A representative of the Department of Health.
6. The Department of Psychiatry Chair of the University of Florida Brain Institute.
7. The Department of Pediatrics Chair of the University of Miami Medical School.
8. The chair of the Florida School Readiness Partnership Board.
9. The chair of the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers.

10. A professional who has expertise in the needs of children with learning disabilities.

11. A professional who has expertise in the needs of children with emotional or mental disorders.

12. A professional who has expertise in the needs of children with developmental disabilities.

13. A professional with expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of children with speech and language disorders.

14. A professional with expertise in the early-intervention and prevention services rendered to children in this state.

15. A professional with expertise in autism and related disorders.

16. The parent of a child with a learning disability or emotional or mental disorder.

(b) Appointments to the study commission must be completed within 2 weeks after this act takes effect, and the study commission must conduct its initial meeting within 1 month after this act takes effect. The partnership executive director shall appoint a study coordinator within 15 days after the appointment of the commission, within funds appropriated. The partnership executive director may appoint one professional staff member and one clerical staff member within funds appropriated, subject to the approval of the partnership. The staff shall serve under the direction of the partnership executive director and shall perform the duties assigned by the partnership. An agency head may not designate a representative to attend study commission meetings on his or her behalf. Professional members of the study commission must be appointed in consultation with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) Members of the study commission and members of the advisory workgroups shall serve without compensation, but are entitled to receive reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses as provided in section 112.061, Florida Statutes.

(2) COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY.—The study on children with developmental delays shall contain the following components:

(a) Examination of the research and best practices in the pertinent psychiatric/medical, social, psychological/behavioral, and education professions in order to identify early interventions that will prevent or minimize the adverse effects of emotional, social, cognitive, learning, or developmental delays or disabilities on children and their families.

(b) Determination of the best existing, age-appropriate screening and evaluation tools, such as School Readiness uniform screening, which are currently used by community service providers and education entities to identify and link children with appropriate specialized interventions and services.

(c) Identification of community risk factors such as chronic community and family violence which expose infants and young children to a variety of developmental and clinical problems and limit the effectiveness of parents.

(d) Identification of existing services and programs in this state which are effective and which need to be expanded in scope, availability, or geographic access and identification of new services, programs, or interventions that have proven effective by means that include a review of the professional expertise, available and unavailable, in this state to provide these services.

(e) Determination of the configuration and organizational arrangement of the delivery systems for early-intervention services and programs to assure coordination and integration with existing systems, which include, but are not limited to, School Readiness, Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, Pre-Kindergarten Disability Program, Healthy Start Program, Healthy Families Florida, Florida KidCare, child and adolescent mental health services, juvenile justice programs, developmental services, foster care services, group care services, domestic violence services, and teenage parent programs.

(f) Determination of the costs of providing services and propose funding options.

(g) Based upon these finding and conclusions, preparation of a plan for building a comprehensive early-intervention system in this state for young children with or at high risk of developmental delays or problems and recommendation of public policy changes that will address the issue of violence prevention. The plan must include a description of services and programs accessible to all communities in this state, budget and resource needs, proposed statutory revisions, legislative funding options, and an implementation schedule.

(3) EXPERT CONSULTANTS.—The study commission, with the approval of the partnership, may invite national experts in the area of brain research, child development and early intervention, and violence intervention to participate in the study activities and to make pertinent recommendations concerning this state's prevention and early-intervention strategies, programs, and services. Fees may be paid to the consultants from the appropriation for the study.

(4) ADVISORY WORKGROUPS.—The study commission shall establish at least two advisory workgroups. One must be a scientific advisory workgroup composed of scientific experts who will examine the effectiveness of various early-intervention and prevention programs, preparing a report for the study commission to help guide selection of programs. The other must be a community advisory workgroup composed of state agency program representatives; parents of children who are at-risk of developmental delays or disabilities; parents of children with disorders or disabilities; local providers of child care, early-intervention services, and other relevant services; a local school readiness coalition representative; a regional policy council representative; and other experts in the field or service system. This community advisory workgroup shall provide the study commission with technical assistance on the services and systems of this state.

(5) REPORT.—The partnership must submit its report by January 1, 2001, to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the chairpersons of the appropriate substantive committees of each house of the Legislature. The recommendations of the task force must include proposed legislation.

(6) APPROPRIATION.—There is appropriated for fiscal year 2000-2001 the sum of \$250,000 from the General Revenue Fund to the Florida Partnership on School Readiness to fund the study. Of this appropriation, \$100,000 may be used to reimburse national consultants in child development, brain development, violence prevention, and other related areas who provide consultation and share their expertise with the study commission.

Section 4. This act expires June 30, 2001.

Section 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 20, 2000.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 20, 2000.