

CHAPTER 2023-247

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 204

An act relating to the Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care; creating s. 39.4093, F.S.; creating the task force adjunct to the Department of Law Enforcement; requiring the department to provide certain services; specifying the purpose of the task force; specifying the composition of the task force; providing requirements for member appointments, election of a chair, and meetings; specifying duties of the task force; requiring the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to conduct certain focus groups and individual interviews and submit its findings to the task force by a specified date; requiring the Department of Children and Families to submit certain monthly reports to the task force through a specified date; requiring the task force to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by a specified date; providing for future review and repeal; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 39.4093, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

39.4093 Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care.

(1) CREATION.—The Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care, a task force as defined in s. 20.03(8), is created adjunct to the Department of Law Enforcement. The Department of Law Enforcement shall provide administrative and staff support services relating to the functions of the task force.

(2) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the task force is to identify and counter the root causes of why children go missing while in out-of-home care and to ensure that prompt and effective action is taken to address such causes. The task force shall examine and recommend improvements to current policies, procedures, programs, and initiatives to prevent children from going missing while in out-of-home care and to ensure that timely and comprehensive steps are taken to find children who are missing for any reason, including, but not limited to, running away, human trafficking, and abduction by or absconding with a parent or an individual who does not have care or custody of the child.

(3) MEMBERSHIP; MEETINGS.—

(a) The task force is composed of the following members:

1. A member of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate.
2. A member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

3. The secretary, or his or her designee.
 4. The Secretary of Juvenile Justice, or his or her designee.
 5. The executive director of the Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office, or his or her designee.
 6. The executive director of the Department of Law Enforcement, or his or her designee.
 7. A representative from Safe Kids Florida, appointed by the State Surgeon General.
 8. A representative from the Statewide Council on Human Trafficking, appointed by the Attorney General.
 9. A representative from a community-based care lead agency that delivers child welfare services in a rural county, appointed by the secretary.
 10. A representative from a community-based care lead agency that delivers child welfare services in an urban county, appointed by the secretary.
 11. A licensed foster parent, appointed by the secretary.
 12. A representative from a residential group care provider, appointed by the secretary.
 13. A young adult who has aged out of the foster care system, appointed by the secretary.
- (b) Appointments to the task force must be made by August 1, 2023. Each member serves at the pleasure of the official who appointed the member. A vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
- (c) The task force shall elect a chair from among its members.
- (d) The task force shall convene no later than September 1, 2023. The task force shall meet monthly or upon the call of the chair. The task force shall hold its meetings through teleconference or other electronic means.
- (4) DUTIES.—The duties of the task force include all of the following:
- (a) Analyzing statistical data regarding children in out-of-home care who are missing and the reasons why such children are missing, if known.
 - (b) Identifying the root causes of why children go missing while in out-of-home care and how to prevent children from going missing while in out-of-home care.

(c) Assessing the relationship between children who go missing from out-of-home care and the risk of such children becoming victims of human trafficking.

(d) Assessing the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of existing policies and procedures for preventing children in out-of-home care from going missing, for promptly determining whether such children are missing, and for locating any such missing children.

(e) Evaluating the state's approaches to reporting on the individual status of children missing from out-of-home care and the results of the efforts to locate such children, including, but not limited to, the use of technology, training, communication, and cooperation.

(f) Measuring the overall performance of efforts to locate and recover children missing from out-of-home care, including, but not limited to, the communication and response between community-based care lead agencies, the department, and other entities.

(g) Collaborating with the Florida Institute for Child Welfare to identify best practices used in other states for monitoring the location of children in out-of-home care who go missing, and evaluating whether such practices should be adopted in this state.

(h) Submitting recommendations to improve policies, procedures, and systems in this state, including, but not limited to, technology, training, communication, and cooperation, so that all entities are effectively monitoring children in out-of-home care, responding appropriately when such children go missing, and preventing such children from going missing while in out-of-home care.

(5) YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT PARTICIPATION.—The Florida Institute for Child Welfare shall conduct focus groups or individual interviews with children in out-of-home care and young adults who have aged out of the foster care system to assist the task force in fulfilling its duties. The focus groups or individual interviews shall, at a minimum, consider the reasons why such children seek to leave their out-of-home placements and identify opportunities and resources to assist and prevent children from leaving their placements and to facilitate the return of such missing children. The institute shall submit the findings from the focus groups and individual interviews to the task force by April 1, 2024.

(6) REPORTS.—

(a) Through October 1, 2024, the department shall provide monthly reports to the task force to assist the task force in fulfilling its duties. The monthly reports must, at a minimum, address the number and percentage of children in out-of-home care who have been reported missing; the reasons why such children are missing, if known; and the length of time between when such children are reported missing and their recovery or return. The

monthly report must categorize the required data by age, county, community-based care lead agency, and reasons why such children are missing, if known.

(b) By October 1, 2024, the task force shall submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report that compiles the findings and recommendations of the task force.

(7) REPEAL.—This section is repealed June 30, 2025, unless reviewed and saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

Section 2. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the sum of \$140,076 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the Operating Trust Fund to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the purpose of providing administrative and support services relating to the Task Force on the Monitoring of Children in Out-of-Home Care.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2023.

Approved by the Governor June 16, 2023.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 16, 2023.