

ACT 129

S.B. NO. 3111

A Bill for an Act Relating to Family Resource Centers.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many families with children in Hawaii are impacted by the continuing health and economic consequences of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and need an array of services. In response to these consequences, staff from the departments of human services, education, health, labor and industrial relations; governor's coordinator on homelessness; executive office on aging; executive office on early learning; workforce development council; and community providers have worked on various initiatives to address the needs of Hawaii's residents.

In August 2020, the National Governors Association for Best Practices and Casey Family Programs launched the child and family well-being learning cohort I and II to coordinate strategic solutions to prevent child abuse and neglect and ensure child and family well-being. Several months into the pandemic, there was a national concern that cases of child abuse and neglect were going unreported as schools, health care systems, and other mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect were providing limited in-person activities. Following the early months of pandemic-related lockdown in 2020, reports of child abuse and neglect declined in some states by twenty to seventy per cent. As part of the cohort, the National Family Support Network presented information and training opportunities about family resource centers, also referred to as family support centers, as a model to assist families and prevent incidents of child abuse and neglect.

Family resource centers play a critical role in preventing child abuse and neglect; strengthening children and families; connecting family-impacting agencies and programs; creating opportunities for community-level coordination; creating connections to resources and support systems; and increasing family engagement, which all lead to greater student success in school. Additionally, various studies show that communities with family resource centers show lower rates of child abuse and neglect investigations, lower numbers of children entering foster care, and an increase in parents or custodians gaining employment within one year after participating in services provided through the centers.

The legislature further finds that the primary goal of family resource centers is to assist families with supportive services before problems become crises that require intervention by child or other protective services. For school-based family resource centers, an added goal is to support a child's educational needs.

Family resource centers serve diverse populations, and are family-focused, culturally sensitive resource hubs that provide families and caregivers targeted services or referrals for services based on the needs and interests of families or caregivers. Family resource centers may provide services that include assistance accessing government programs, job training and placement, educational support, housing assistance, child care, skills training for parents or caregivers on a variety of subjects, counseling, and referrals for case management or treatment services.

The purpose of this Act is to establish and fund a five-year family resource centers pilot program within the department of human services and fund one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) family resource centers coordinator position to:

- (1) Further develop and implement a statewide network of school- and community-based family resource centers;
- (2) Establish definitions, standards, and best practices;
- (3) Identify and align available services, goals, and outcomes;
- (4) Develop referral and data tracking protocols; and
- (5) Make an appropriation for the establishment of one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) family resource centers coordinator position.

SECTION 2. (a) There is established within the department of human services a family resource centers pilot program, which shall:

- (1) Develop and implement a statewide network of school- and community-based family resource centers;
- (2) Establish definitions, standards, and best practices;
- (3) Identify and align available services, goals, and outcomes; and
- (4) Develop referral and data tracking protocols.

(b) There is established within the department of human services one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) family resource centers coordinator position. The director of human services shall appoint the family resource centers coordinator to carry out the functions of the pilot program.

(c) The departments of human services, education, and health may coordinate with other public or private entities, as appropriate, to develop and implement family resource centers, including establishing standards of practice, and a strategic plan to identify minimum services, align goals and outcomes, and document referral and data tracking protocols.

(d) For purposes of the pilot program:

- (1) A family resource center shall be designed to meet the needs, cultures, and interests of the communities served by the family resource center;
- (2) Family services, including family preservation services and the identification of community support systems, may be delivered directly to a family at a family resource center by family resource center staff or by providers who contract with or have provider agreements with the family resource center, or with any of the departments identified in this section; and
- (3) Each family resource center may have one or more family advocates who screen and assess a family's needs and strengths; provided that if requested by the family, the family advocate may assist the family with setting its own goals and, together with the family, develop a written plan for the family to pursue the family's goals while working toward attaining a greater level of self-reliance or self-sufficiency through the pursuit of education, job training, or employment.

(e) As used in this section:

“Community support system” means the support system that may be organized through extended family members, friends, neighbors, religious organizations, community programs, cultural and ethnic organizations, or other support groups or organizations.

“Family preservation services” means in-home or community-based services that draw on the strengths of the family and its individual members, while addressing family needs, to keep the family together where possible. These services include:

- (1) Respite care of children to provide temporary relief for parents and other caregivers;
- (2) Services designed to improve parenting skills with respect to matters including child development, household budgeting, stress management, health, safety, and nutrition; and
- (3) Services designed to promote the well-being of children and families; increase the strength and stability of families; increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities; promote a safe, stable, and supportive family environment for children; and otherwise enhance children's development.

“Family resource center” means a unified single point of entry where families, individuals, children, and youth in communities may obtain information, an assessment of needs, and direct delivery of or referrals for family services, in a manner that is welcoming and strengths-based.

SECTION 3. (a) Contracts entered into by the departments of human services, education, and health for the purposes of this Act shall be procured pursuant to chapters 103D and 103F, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

(b) The departments of human services, education, and health may accept grants, donations, and contributions from private or public sources for the purposes of this Act, which may be expended by the receiving department in a manner consistent with the donors' wishes.

(c) The departments of human services, education, and health shall establish, no later than December 1, 2023, the following:

- (1) Criteria that the departments intend to use to evaluate potential family resource centers;
- (2) Milestones that the departments expect to meet in establishing one or more family resource centers over the course of the five-year pilot program;
- (3) Specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and time-based performance measures that the departments expect to meet by the end of each fiscal year;
- (4) Controls that the departments intend to use to monitor and oversee family resource centers; and
- (5) Data and referral system tracking needs and protocols that comply with applicable state and federal laws.

(d) The family resource centers coordinator shall submit reports to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of each of the regular sessions of 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, and 2027. Each report shall include a description of the items identified in subsection (c) and of any grants, donations, and contributions received by the departments pursuant to subsection (b) in the prior fiscal year.

(e) The pilot program shall cease to exist on June 30, 2027.

SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$300,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for the establishment of the family resource centers pilot program, one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) family resource centers coordinator position, and expenses related to the development and implementation of a statewide network of family resource centers.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of human services for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022, and shall repeal on June 30, 2027.

(Approved June 27, 2022.)