

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1573 Session of
2025

INTRODUCED BY SHUSTERMAN, HOHENSTEIN, HANBIDGE, DOUGHERTY, HILL-
EVANS, KHAN, D. WILLIAMS, SANCHEZ, WARREN, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ AND
MAYES, JUNE 6, 2025

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH, JUNE 9, 2025

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31, No.21), entitled "An
2 act to consolidate, editorially revise, and codify the public
3 welfare laws of the Commonwealth," in children and youth,
4 further providing for availability of services, providing for
5 purposes and further providing for statistics and assistance
6 for research.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. Section 701 of the act of June 13, 1967 (P.L.31,
10 No.21), known as the Human Services Code, is amended to read:

11 Section 701. Availability of Services.--(a) The department
12 shall assure within the Commonwealth the availability and
13 equitable provision of adequate public child welfare services
14 for all children who need them regardless of religion, race,
15 settlement, residence or economic or social status.

16 (b) At least once every three years, the department shall
17 conduct an inventory of programs and services to address
18 delinquency across all counties of this Commonwealth. The
19 following apply:

1 (1) The inventory shall be conducted in coordination with
2 local judges, county officials and relevant stakeholders across
3 all counties of this Commonwealth.

4 (2) The results of the inventory shall be collated and
5 disseminated publicly.

6 Section 2. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

7 Section 701.1. Purposes.--(a) The purposes of this article
8 are to:

9 (1) Protect children from abuse and neglect.

10 (2) Provide for the care, protection, safety and wholesome
11 mental and physical development of children for whom 42 Pa.C.S.
12 Ch. 63 (relating to juvenile matters) applies or who are
13 receiving services in accordance with this article.

14 (3) Preserve the unity of the family whenever possible or
15 provide an alternative permanent family when the unity of the
16 family cannot be maintained.

17 (4) Consistent with the protection of the public interest,
18 provide programs of supervision, care and rehabilitation for
19 children committing delinquent acts. The programs shall provide
20 balanced attention to:

21 (i) The protection of the community.

22 (ii) The imposition of accountability for offenses
23 committed.

24 (iii) The development of competencies to enable children to
25 become responsible and productive members of the community,
26 including ensuring access to a quality education.

27 (5) Achieve the purposes in a family environment whenever
28 possible, separating a child from the child's parents only when
29 necessary for the child's welfare, safety or health or when
30 necessary for public safety.

1 (b) In accordance with the purposes specified in subsection
2 (a) and the mandate of 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 63 that the court, upon
3 finding a child to be a dependent child, shall enter an order of
4 disposition that is best suited to the safety, protection and
5 physical, mental and moral welfare of the child, the department
6 shall prioritize the following objectives:

7 (1) To increase the use of nonplacement services designed to
8 prevent child abuse and neglect and to strengthen families so
9 that the safety of children is increased and the risk to
10 children is minimized.

11 (2) If placement is necessary, to use kinship care as the
12 first priority and, if kinship care is not available or
13 appropriate, to use family foster care as an alternative.

14 (3) To ensure that the use of congregate care living and
15 institutional placement is short-term and only as long as
16 necessary to stabilize a child so the child can return to a
17 family-like setting.

18 (4) To improve permanency for children to reduce the
19 duration of out-of-home placement.

20 (c) In accordance with the purposes specified in subsection
21 (a) and the mandate under 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 63 that the court, upon
22 finding a child to be a delinquent child, shall enter an order
23 of disposition that is consistent with protection of the public,
24 the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and the
25 development of competencies to enable the child to become a
26 responsible and productive member of the community, the
27 department shall prioritize the following objectives:

28 (1) To increase the use of in-home services when consistent
29 with the protection of the public and the rehabilitation needs
30 of delinquent children.

1 (2) With respect to the placement of delinquent children:

2 (i) To encourage use of the in-home services when consistent
3 with the protection of the public and the treatment,
4 supervision, education and rehabilitation needs of delinquent
5 children.

6 (ii) To operate and encourage the development of placement
7 resources that are consistent with the protection of the public
8 and the treatment, supervision, education and rehabilitation
9 needs of delinquent children, and to ensure that these
10 placements are used only for the duration needed to protect the
11 public.

12 (iii) To encourage the use of community-based residential
13 resources as alternatives to institutional placements when
14 consistent with the protection of the public and to support the
15 treatment, supervision, education and rehabilitation needs of
16 delinquent children.

17 (iv) To encourage the development of services and
18 programming to facilitate the successful transition of
19 delinquent children to their communities from periods of
20 residential placement.

21 Section 3. Section 722 of the act is amended to read:

22 Section 722. Statistics; Assistance for Research.--(a) The
23 department shall gather, collate, interpret and disseminate
24 statistics and reports relating to the problem of juvenile
25 delinquency and to the treatment of juveniles. It shall also
26 assist counties and local public and private agencies to study
27 the causes and methods of prevention of juvenile delinquency.

28 (b) The department shall develop, in collaboration with the
29 Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and any stakeholders as the
30 department deems appropriate, a publicly accessible data

dashboard that includes the following real-time information:

(1) Updates on population in placement, disaggregated by race, gender, ethnicity, disability status and sending county.

(2) Facility bed capacity.

(3) Facility staffing ratios.

(4) Facility programming offered, including education.

(5) Average length of stay in each facility.

(c) With respect to placement instability statistics:

(1) For those children committed by the court to an institution, youth development center, camp or other facility for delinquent children operated under the direction or supervision of the court or other public authority under 42 Pa.C.S. § 6352(a)(3) (relating to disposition of delinquent child), the department, in collaboration with the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee, shall gather, collate, interpret and publicly disseminate each year statistics and reports on the following:

(i) The number of children who are rejected or denied admission.

(ii) The number of children who are ejected or removed after admission.

(iii) The average total length of stay in placement for children who are rejected or denied admission or who are ejected or removed after admission.

(2) The statistics and reports under clause (1) shall be used by a multidisciplinary task force to review the challenges of placement instability and the movements among children subject to out-of-home placements during the course of delinquency cases for the purpose of establishing a more

1 comprehensive policy.

2 Section 4. This act shall take effect in 60 days.