

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 704 (Senator Zirkin)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Human Services - Residential Child Care Facilities - Report Cards

This bill requires the departments of Juvenile Services, Human Resources, and Health and Mental Hygiene to jointly develop a report card system by July 1, 2010, to determine whether a residential child care facility that serves State-placed youth meets quality and administrative standards. The results of these reviews must be annually published by the Governor's Office for Children.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: It is expected that the requirements of the bill could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The bill would have no direct impact on providers; however, those that are deficient in meeting standards could receive fewer referrals once the departments began to publicly issue report cards.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 133 of 2007 requires DJS, DHR, and DHMH, in cooperation with the Governor's Office for Children, to jointly develop and implement a system of outcomes evaluation for residential child care programs by July 1, 2008. The system must be used to:

- monitor the services provided in State-supported residential child care programs for use in identifying successful programs;
- establish a system to evaluate safety, quality, and effectiveness; and
- assess the State's residential child care program capacity in each community.

The system for outcomes evaluation must use standardized measures of function to evaluate variables that include the degree of protection and stability afforded to the child, his or her educational and vocational development, and his or her behavioral health. The Governor's Office for Children must annually report on the departments' progress in implementing the required outcomes evaluation system.

Background: Residential child care programs, also referred to as group homes, represent one form of out-of-home placements. Group homes offer homelike settings that provide structure and 24-hour supervision, basic care, social work, and health care services. Many group homes utilize community-based ancillary services and enroll children in the local school system. Each child placed in a group home is also assigned a caseworker from the referring agency responsible for monitoring the child's progress and the appropriateness of the placement.

DJS, DHR, and DHMH license, monitor, and place children in group homes according to individual agency standards. The Governor's Office for Children provides assistance in referring applicants to the appropriate State agency. Licenses are issued for a period of two years and must be obtained for each regulated facility. The licensing agencies monitor group homes through review of records, inspection of facilities, and staff and resident interviews.

State Expenditures: The system of outcome evaluation required by Chapter 133 is focused on child-specific outcomes of stability, development, and behavioral health. The report card system required in this bill is largely directed to a provider's administrative and operational capacity to provide care to children.

Although the evaluations do not measure the same data, it is expected that many of the existing means for collecting and recording data could be applied to the report card system. The Governor's Office advises that the Governor's Office for Children would be able to handle the publishing requirements of the bill with existing resources. Neither DHR nor DHMH reported additional costs associated with the development or coordination of the report card measures. DJS reported that the bill would result in additional personnel and database development expenses.

Given that the licensing agencies have already begun to coordinate their capacities to evaluate group home programs, it is anticipated that the departments could develop an

evaluation system with existing resources. If these resources are not sufficient to implement the program, the departments could jointly submit a request through the budget process for the personnel or contractual services necessary to categorize and measure provider outcomes.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Human Resources, Governor's Office, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Legislative Services

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