

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 769

(Senator Patterson)

Judicial Proceedings

Department of Juvenile Services - Juvenile Strategic Reentry Program

This bill requires the Secretary of Juvenile Services to establish the Juvenile Strategic Reentry Program for children committed to the custody or under the guardianship of the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). The program's purpose is to reduce recidivism using specified techniques, including by connecting the child to appropriate resources and engaging the family. DJS must direct reentry specialists to oversee the return of children to the community.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DJS can meet the bill's requirements using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The program's purpose is to reduce recidivism by (1) providing supervision to each child who is returning home from committed care; (2) engaging the family of the child at all key case planning decision points; (3) connecting the child to appropriate local education resources; (4) connecting the child to local employment services and resources; and (5) if the child is in need of behavioral or somatic health services, connecting the child to local resources to provide continuity of care.

A reentry specialist must meet with a child 45 days before the child is released from an out-of-home placement. During the meeting, the reentry specialist must review the housing plan, education and occupational needs, ongoing behavioral or somatic health service requirements, and family relationships of the child. The reentry specialist must invite the family of the child to attend and participate in the reentry planning process.

After the child is released from commitment and has been in the community for 30 days, the reentry specialist must meet with the child and the child's family to assess whether the child has accessed all needed services, successfully enrolled in school, and remained in stable and suitable housing. The reentry specialist must then meet with the child every 30 days until the child reaches age 18 or is released from the care and custody of DJS, whichever occurs first. A reentry specialist must report quarterly to DJS regarding the child's progress. DJS may adopt implementing regulations.

Current Law/Background: A disposition in a juvenile delinquency case may include commitment to DJS for out-of-home placement. Placement options include family foster care, group homes, independent living programs, residential treatment centers, and treatment facilities providing secure confinement. In fiscal 2019, 767 youth were committed to DJS; the average length of stay for a committed placement was 185 days.

In fiscal 2016, DJS adopted a strategic reentry plan in order to focus additional efforts on helping youth transition from an out-of-home placement back into the community. The bill generally reflects the strategic reentry plan currently used by DJS.

Step-down Aftercare

Statutory provisions set forth a process by which a child discharged from a committed residential placement must receive "step-down aftercare" for a period of time as determined by DJS. "Step-down aftercare" means a network of programs that provide education and rehabilitation services and treatment to ease the transition of children from the custody of DJS to their homes and communities. A "step-down aftercare plan" is an individualized plan for each child in step-down aftercare that proposes specific assistance, guidance, treatment, services, and supervision that (1) prepares the child for reentry into the specific community to which the child will return; (2) ensures the delivery of prescribed services to the child in the community; and (3) monitors conduct in the community to ensure public safety.

A child in step-down aftercare must receive (1) a step-down aftercare plan; (2) supervision by step-down aftercare staff in accordance with the plan; (3) educational services; and (4) any other services necessary to implement the step-down aftercare plan.

Step-down aftercare staff must (1) prepare an aftercare plan for each child assigned to the program and file the plan with DJS; (2) keep regular records concerning the progress of each child; (3) file a monthly progress report on each child; and (4) file an annual report on the outcome of aftercare plans for the children in the program, as specified.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1344 of 2019 passed the House as amended and received a hearing in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: HB 1004 (Delegate Barron) - Judiciary., HB 1136 (Delegate Haynes, *et al.*) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Department of Juvenile Services; Department of Legislative Services

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