

SENATE No. 101

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Robyn K. Kennedy

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to families and children in need of assistance.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Robyn K. Kennedy

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

First Worcester

SENATE No. 101

By Ms. Kennedy, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 101) of Robyn K. Kennedy for legislation relative to families and children in need of assistance. Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act relative to families and children in need of assistance.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 6A of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out section
2 16U and replacing it with the following new text:

3 (a) As used in this section, the following words shall have the following meanings:-

4 "Child requiring assistance", as defined in section 21 of chapter 119.

5 "Chronic absenteeism" missing at least ten percent of days enrolled regardless of whether
6 the absences are considered excused, unexcused and/or for disciplinary reasons.

7 "Community-based services", services, including coordination of services, designed to
8 assist families requiring assistance so that, if appropriate, children of the family may continue to
9 reside with their family and attend their community school while enjoying a strengthened
10 relationship with their family.

11 "Family requiring assistance", as defined in section 21 of chapter 119.

12 "Habitually truant", as defined in section 21 of chapter 119.

13 "Secretary", the secretary of health and human services.

14 (b) Subject to appropriation or third party reimbursement, the secretary shall:

15 (1) establish a network of child and family service programs and family resource centers
16 throughout the commonwealth to provide community-based services to families, including
17 families with children requiring assistance under subsection (c);

18 (2) develop guidelines and standards necessary to achieve and maintain, on a statewide
19 basis, a comprehensive and integrated network of community-based services and family resource
20 centers for children and families;

21 (3) promote efficiency by including in the network of community-based services and
22 family resource centers access to the following services: (i) organizations that are part of the
23 comprehensive community-based behavioral health delivery system coordinated by the secretary
24 under section 16S; (ii) organizations that provide services or have experience in coordinating
25 access to community-based services such as local schools; (iii) other local public agencies and
26 private organizations; and (iv) local medical, behavioral or mental health care providers;

27 (4) coordinate the services provided by the network and in the family resource centers
28 including, but not limited to, outreach, intake, screening, assessment and referral to services;

29 (5) encourage cooperation among local providers as needed to provide the full
30 complement of services required under this section;

31 (6) monitor and provide technical assistance to family resource centers and providers of
32 community-based services;

33 (7) require the use of standard intake screening and assessment tools to evaluate families
34 and children seeking community-based services which shall identify the family's strengths,
35 resources and service needs including, but not limited to, mental health, behavioral health or
36 substance abuse treatment, basic family shelter, clothing and food needs, child care needs, health
37 insurance status, legal issues, education placement and child protection; and

38 (8) create a data collection system for use by programs within the community-based
39 services network and family resource centers which shall: (i) maintain the privacy of clients
40 served, (ii) assist programs and the secretary in identifying and addressing the needs of the
41 population to be served, including gaps in service availability and how long clients are waiting to
42 receive services (iii) collect information including, but not limited to, insurance status and
43 benefit coverage of clients served, income documentation as needed to apply a sliding fee scale
44 for payment or waiver of payment for services, (iv) collect data regarding the services received
45 by a family, and (v) such other information deemed necessary to assist the program and the
46 secretary in providing services, identifying service needs and gaps and evaluating the
47 effectiveness of family resource centers and the community-based services network. Annually,
48 the secretary shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on ways and means, the
49 joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the child advocate
50 detailing, but not limited to: (i) the number of children and families served at each center; (ii)
51 the types of programs offered; (iii) program outcomes including referrals to the juvenile court;
52 (iv) service gaps, including unavailable services and services with long wait times (v) client
53 feedback; (vi) progress on data sharing between centers, (vii) the number of children served by a
54 multidisciplinary team pursuant to subsection (c), and (viii) the number of children referred to a

55 Juvenile Court for a child requiring assistance petition following a multidisciplinary team
56 process. All data shall be disaggregated by the child's race, ethnicity, gender, and age.

57 (c) The network of community-based services and family resource centers shall: (i) assist
58 families so that, whenever possible, children may continue residing with their families in their
59 home communities; (ii) assist families to enable children to continue as students in their
60 community schools; (iii) strengthen the relationships between children and their families; and
61 (iv) provide coordinated, comprehensive, community-based services for children at risk of
62 chronic absenteeism, dropping out of school, committing delinquent acts or engaging in
63 behaviors which impede the likelihood of leading healthy, productive lives, or who have been
64 referred from the juvenile court pursuant to section 39E of chapter 119.

65 Services offered through the network shall include, but not be limited to, treatment for or
66 assistance with: eligibility determinations, assistance with applying for state services including
67 MassHealth, financial assistance programs, and services provided or funded by executive branch
68 agencies, behavioral, medical and mental health needs, special education evaluation, remedial
69 education services, assistance with insurance issues, mentoring, family and parent support, civic
70 engagement and community service, after school and out-of-school opportunities, residential
71 programs, crisis management and case management.

72 Subject to appropriation, each FRC shall assign a child and family a case manager who
73 shall convene a multidisciplinary team as needed to fulfil the functions listed in this subsection.
74 Multidisciplinary teams shall consist of but not be limited to the child, the child's
75 parents/caregivers, and family resource center staff, and when appropriate may include family
76 partners, advocates, community-based service providers, educational advocates, representatives

77 from state agencies, or school district representatives. The teams shall work to identify any needs
78 of the child or family with the goal of providing supports to the child and their family outside of
79 the juvenile court process to the extent possible.