

Fiscal Note

BILL # HB 2704

TITLE: foster youth permanency project team

SPONSOR: Gress

STATUS: As Introduced

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Description

The bill would require the Department of Child Safety (DCS) to establish a foster youth permanency project team to help remove barriers to permanency for children likely to be in the department's custody when they turn 18 or start participating in the Extended Foster Care program.

Estimated Impact

We estimate the bill may increase workload for DCS staff and may generate costs for contracts between the team and outside professionals. We are unable to estimate the magnitude of the cost without input from DCS. The actual cost will depend on existing staff capacity within DCS as well as DCS' implementation of the bill's provisions.

DCS has not yet responded to our request for an estimated impact.

Analysis

In the context of child welfare, permanency refers to permanent, stable living situations. For children in foster care, permanency can be achieved through family reunification, permanent guardianship, or adoption.

Young adults who do not achieve permanency prior to turning 18 in DCS custody have the option of participating in Extended Foster Care until they turn 21. Participating youth may continue to receive services and supports from the department on the condition of enrolling in an education program, being employed, participating in a program that promotes employment, or having a documented medical condition preventing enrollment in an education program or employment.

The bill would require the department to establish a foster youth permanency project team to help eliminate barriers to permanency for children likely to be in the department's custody at the time they turn 18 or enter the Extended Foster Care Program. DCS would be responsible for appointing staff and volunteers to the team, as specified in the bill. Once established, the team would be charged with developing a methodology for determining children most at risk, reviewing relevant case files, convening team meetings that include all relevant parties, establishing an individualized written permanency plan for each child, convening ongoing meetings to evaluate the children's progress toward permanency, and identifying placement options with individuals and/or families who are willing to provide permanency to children selected by the team. The bill additionally states that the team may contract with a child/adolescent psychiatrist, an attorney, and a private investigator.

In 2009, Georgia implemented a similar program, in which roughly 6% of its foster care population was selected to participate. If the same percentage were applied to the number of children in Arizona's foster care population between 0-17, that would translate to around 550 eligible children at any given time.

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Whether DCS would serve a similar number of children would depend on the methodology developed by the permanency team. In addition, the magnitude of the workload increase for DCS staff and the costs for additional services would depend on who DCS selects to participate on the permanency teams and the extent to which the team would contract for additional services not already provided. As a result, the actual cost will ultimately depend on DCS' implementation of the bill's provisions.

Local Government Impact

None

2/23/24