

SENATE No. 81

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Nine

An Act relative to the rights of children in juvenile justice systems..

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 119 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 1 the following section:- Section 1A. In recognition that substance abuse plays a
3 significant role in the commitment of juveniles to the departments of children and families and
4 youth services and that with comprehensive screening, the needs of juveniles with substance
5 abuse problems can be identified and appropriate care provided to them while concurrently
6 improving community safety and reducing the costs of juvenile commitments and future adult
7 incarcerations. To provide juveniles in the custody of said departments with such services as
8 well as physical and mental health services, the following basic and fundamental rights, to the
9 greatest extent possible and subject to appropriation and to available resources, shall be afforded:

10 the right to a comprehensive assessment shall be made of each juvenile's substance use,
11 medical and mental health, education and family issues that may be linked to his commitment;

12 the right to effective, evidence-based treatment services for substance abuse problems
13 and disorders as well as medical, mental and dental issues, based on a comprehensive assessment
14 provided by trained professionals;

the right to a public education, including special education if needed, that meets criteria as established by the department of education;

the right to services to improve family and social functioning;

the right to the least restrictive means appropriate to such juvenile's needs;

the right to be provided with appropriate aftercare to support successful reentry into the community with a continuity of care from placement through release;

the right to have all court and departmental decisions made without regard to religion, race, national origin, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation;

the right to be housed in safe, dedicated juvenile facilities, to be free from any form of abuse, including protection from disproportionate means and the use of force;

the right to free, competent counsel at all stages of proceedings;

the right to appropriate safeguards against self-incrimination, including the vesting in the juvenile of a privilege for any statement by the juvenile given in furtherance of treatment or assessment for treatment;

the right to have the effectiveness of assessments and treatment provided tracked and evaluated over time to ensure that the means employed are scientifically supported and improved; and

the right to have cases processed fairly and quickly.

Nothing in this section shall abridge or abrogate any other recognized rights, entitlements or privileges provided by the General Laws.