

# SENATE . . . . . No. 101

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## 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:                    | DISTRICT/ADDRESS:                       |                  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Robyn K. Kennedy</i>  | <i>First Worcester</i>                  |                  |
| <i>Adam Gomez</i>        | <i>Hampden</i>                          | <i>4/13/2023</i> |
| <i>Rebecca L. Rausch</i> | <i>Norfolk, Worcester and Middlesex</i> | <i>7/10/2023</i> |

# SENATE . . . . . No. 101

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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.

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subject to appropriation, each FRC shall assign a child and family a case manager who shall convene a multidisciplinary team as needed to fulfil the functions listed in this subsection. Multidisciplinary teams shall consist of but not be limited to the child, the child's parents/caregivers, and family resource center staff, and when appropriate may include family 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.