

By: West
(J. Davis of Harris)

S.B. No. 681

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a task force to study the assessments of children in the child welfare system.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 40, Human Resources Code, is amended by adding Section 40.074 to read as follows:

Sec. 40.074. CHILD WELFARE ASSESSMENT TASK FORCE. (a) The child welfare assessment task force is established to:

(1) study the assessments used by the department to determine the appropriate placement, treatment, and service needs for a child;

(2) develop a list of tools for providers to use when conducting behavioral assessments of children in the child welfare system; and

(3) develop guidelines regarding the contents of assessment reports.

(b) The task force consists of the following members appointed by the executive commissioner:

(1) one member from the National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter;

(2) one member from the Texas Foster Family Association;

(3) one member from the Texas Psychological Association;

1 (4) one member who is a member of the department's
2 public-private partnership regarding foster care redesign;

3 (5) one member who receives or has received mental
4 health services as a foster child;

5 (6) one member who is an advocate for children's
6 interests in the child welfare system;

7 (7) one member who is a judge with experience working
8 with cases involving child protective services;

9 (8) one member who is a parent with experience in the
10 child welfare system;

11 (9) three members who are clinicians with experience
12 in, and knowledge of, comprehensive assessments and training in
13 trauma-informed assessment and care;

14 (10) one member from the department; and

15 (11) one member from the commission.

16 (c) Each member appointed to the task force must have
17 experience and expertise relating to children's behavioral health
18 and the study and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

19 (d) The task force shall elect a presiding officer by a vote
20 of the membership of the task force.

21 (e) The task force shall meet at the call of the presiding
22 officer.

23 (f) Not later than December 1, 2012, the task force shall
24 prepare and submit to the commissioner a report containing:

25 (1) a description of the activities of the task force;
26 and

27 (2) the findings and recommendations of the task

1 force, including:

2 (A) a list of tools for providers to use when
3 conducting behavioral assessments of children in the child welfare
4 system; and

5 (B) guidelines regarding the contents of
6 assessment reports.

7 (g) Not later than September 1, 2013, the department shall
8 adopt policies that incorporate the findings and recommendations of
9 the task force described by Subsection (f), to the extent that such
10 recommendations:

11 (1) are generally accepted standards of practice or
12 care for a physician, psychologist, or other professional who would
13 conduct the assessment; and

14 (2) can be implemented within existing fiscal
15 resources appropriated to the department.

16 (h) This section expires September 1, 2014.

17 SECTION 2. The executive commissioner of the Health and
18 Human Services Commission shall make the appointments to the child
19 welfare assessment task force created by this Act not later than
20 January 1, 2012.

21 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
22 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
23 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
24 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
25 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.