

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2237
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Youth Health & Safety, Select
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The stress associated with growing up in an environment in which there is violence, neglect, mental illness, or substance abuse can be harmful to a child's developing brain. Scientific research demonstrates that connecting families to needed community-based services and building strong and loving parent-child relationships can protect and heal the brain from trauma and stress. Child first is a home-based mental health intervention for children and their families that operates in other states but not yet in Texas. Child first pairs families with a licensed mental health clinician, who provides therapy to help a caregiver understand their child's behavior and their own mental health challenges, and a care coordinator to connect families with local resources to aid in resolving family stressors and challenges. The child first program addresses and improves child and parent mental health, promotes school readiness, decreases child abuse and neglect, and improves the immediate and long-term health and well-being of families. H.B. 2237 seeks to establish the child first grant program to allow the Department of Family and Protective Services to award funding to organizations to provide these services to Texas families.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2237 amends the Family Code to require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to operate a child first grant program through which DFPS awards grants to 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations to implement, expand, and maintain child first programs in Texas. The bill sets out the following minimum requirements for a grant applicant:

- demonstrate a commitment to a family-centered, system of care approach to providing comprehensive, coordinated services to children and families;
- have experience providing successful early childhood mental health or prevention services for low-income, high-risk families; and
- have experience in providing home-based services to children and families.

H.B. 2237 requires a child first program that is awarded such a grant to be based on the program model developed by the Child First National Service Office and to require that a team consisting of a master's level licensed mental health or developmental clinician and a bachelor's level care coordinator regularly visit the homes of families to improve child and parental mental health, promote school readiness, decrease child abuse and neglect, and improve the immediate and

long-term health and well-being of families. The bill requires the commissioner of DFPS, with that national service office's assistance, to adopt standards for the programs awarded such grants. The bill authorizes DFPS to solicit, contract for, receive, accept, or administer gifts, grants, and donations of money or property from any source for purposes of the grant program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.