

ASSEMBLY, No. 4725

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 11, 2022

Sponsored by:

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes Office of Resilience in DCF.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 10/17/2022)

1 AN ACT establishing the Office of Resilience in the Department of
2 Children and Families and supplementing Title 30 of the Revised
3 Statutes.

4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7

8 1. The Legislature finds and declares:

9 a. Research over the last two decades in the evolving fields of
10 neuroscience, molecular biology, public health, genomics, and
11 epigenetics reveals that adverse childhood experiences in the early
12 developmental years of a person's life produce changes in the
13 biology of the human body that influence physical and mental
14 health and social, emotional, and economic well-being throughout
15 that person's life.

16 b. These adverse experiences may include physical or emotional
17 abuse, physical and emotional neglect, household dysfunction,
18 substance use disorder, untreated mental illness, incarceration of a
19 household member, or domestic violence, separation, or divorce
20 involving a parent or caregiver.

21 c. Strong, frequent, or prolonged stress caused by adverse
22 childhood experiences can become toxic stress and may impact the
23 development of a child's fundamental brain architecture and stress
24 response system.

25 d. Changes to a child's fundamental brain architecture and stress
26 response systems may cause health problems in adulthood that may
27 lead to the most common causes of death and disability in the
28 United States.

29 e. Neurobiological, epigenetics, and psychological studies have
30 shown that traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence can
31 diminish concentration, memory, organizational skills, and
32 language abilities, negatively impacting a student's academic
33 performance, classroom behavior, and ability to form healthy
34 relationships and attachments.

35 f. The emerging science and research on toxic stress and adverse
36 childhood experiences evidence a growing public health crisis with
37 implications for community, juvenile justice, criminal justice, social
38 services, and health care systems.

39 g. Early childhood offers a unique window of opportunity to
40 prevent, mitigate, and heal the impact of adverse childhood
41 experiences and toxic stress on a child's body and brain.

42 h. Positively influencing the architecture of a child's developing
43 brain and reducing a child's exposure to adverse childhood
44 experiences are more effective and less costly than attempting to
45 correct their impact on a child's learning, physical and mental
46 health, and behaviors later in life.

47 i. To bolster the State's ability to create trauma-responsive
48 strategies to help New Jersey become a healthier State, to reduce

1 public costs related to health care, school dropout rates, mental
2 illness, unemployment, and homelessness, it is in the best interest of
3 the State to establish a designated agency to mitigate the effects of
4 adverse childhood experiences and to build resilience in children
5 who have faced trauma and adversity in their lives.

6
7 2. As used in this act:

8 “Adverse childhood experiences” or “ACEs” means traumatic
9 experiences, including abuse, neglect, household dysfunction,
10 substance use disorder, or parental separation, that occur during
11 childhood.

12 “Trauma informed care” or “TIC” means a strength-based
13 approach to service delivery that: considers treating a person’s past
14 trauma and resulting coping mechanism; is grounded in an
15 understanding of, and the responsiveness to, the impact of trauma;
16 emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both
17 treatment providers and survivors of trauma; and creates
18 opportunities for trauma survivors to rebuild a sense of control and
19 empowerment.

20
21 3. a. There is established in the Department of Children and
22 Families in the Executive Branch of State government the Office of
23 Resilience. The office shall be directed by an executive director,
24 who shall report directly to the Commissioner of Children and
25 Families.

26 b. Under the direction of the executive director, the office shall
27 be responsible for hosting, coordinating, and facilitating Statewide
28 initiatives related to raising awareness of, and creating opportunities
29 to eradicate, ACEs through grassroots, community-led efforts that
30 provide technical assistance and strategic support for non-
31 governmental organizations with missions promoting trauma-
32 informed and health-centered services for young people in the State
33 of New Jersey.

34 c. The office shall:

35 (1) develop and share trauma-informed and healing-centered
36 strategies with other State departments and community-based
37 stakeholders to reduce exposure to, and mitigate the effects of,
38 ACEs in the State of New Jersey by supporting collaboration with
39 early childhood organizations and early childhood providers to
40 encourage the development of a Statewide multi-generational
41 support system that promotes positive childhood experiences and
42 assists in the healing of primary and secondary trauma in adults;

43 (2) in partnership with public and private partners, establish a
44 public awareness campaign to educate the public about ACEs and
45 TIC;

46 (3) develop research-based tools to use in creating resilience and
47 empowering individuals who have faced trauma and adversity, and
48 in promoting positive childhood experiences; and

1 (4) provide periodic reports to the Governor, and issue an annual
2 report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
3 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature regarding its activities.

4
5 4. Pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,
6 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Department of Children and
7 Families may adopt any rules and regulations necessary to
8 effectuate the purposes of this act.

9
10 5. This act shall take effect shall take effect immediately.

11
12
13 STATEMENT

14
15 This bill establishes in the Department of Children and Families
16 the Office of Resilience. The office is to be directed by an
17 executive director, who is to report directly to the Commissioner of
18 Children and Families.

19 Under the direction of the executive director, the office is to be
20 responsible for hosting, coordinating, and facilitating Statewide
21 initiatives related to raising awareness of, and creating opportunities
22 to eradicate, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) through
23 grassroots, community-led efforts that provide technical assistance
24 and strategic support for non-governmental organizations with
25 missions promoting trauma-informed and health-centered services
26 for young people in the State of New Jersey.

27 As used in this bill, “adverse childhood experiences” or “ACEs”
28 means traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect, household
29 dysfunction, substance use disorder, or parental separation, that
30 occur during childhood, and “trauma informed care” or “TIC”
31 means a strength-based approach to service delivery that: considers
32 treating a person’s past trauma and resulting coping mechanism; is
33 grounded in an understanding of, and the responsiveness to, the
34 impact of trauma; emphasizes physical, psychological, and
35 emotional safety for both treatment providers and survivors of
36 trauma; and creates opportunities for trauma survivors to rebuild a
37 sense of control and empowerment.

38 Specifically, the office is to: (1) develop and share trauma-
39 informed and healing-centered strategies with other State
40 departments and community-based stakeholders to reduce exposure
41 to, and mitigate the effects of, ACEs in the State of New Jersey by
42 supporting collaboration with early childhood organizations and
43 early childhood providers to encourage the development of a
44 Statewide multi-generational support system that promotes positive
45 childhood experiences and assists in the healing of primary and
46 secondary trauma in adults (2) in partnership with public and
47 private partners, establish a public awareness campaign to educate
48 the public about ACEs and TIC; (3) develop research-based tools to

1 use in creating resilience and empowering individuals who have
2 faced trauma and adversity, and in promoting positive childhood
3 experiences; and (4) provide periodic reports to the Governor, and
4 issue an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature regarding
5 its activities.