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SENATE, No. 4412

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 8, 2026

Sponsored by:
Senator NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI
District 22 (Somerset and Union)
Senator JOSEPH F. VITALE
District 19 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senators Diegnan and McKnight

SYNOPSIS

Provides for youth mental health care professionals in family court.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee on June 11, 2026, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 9/28/2026)

AN ACT providing for youth mental health care professionals in family court, supplementing Title 2A of the New Jersey Statutes, and amending P.L.1982, c.79.

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

1. (New section) a. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill):

"Youth" means an individual under [1]**[**21**]** 18[1] years of age.

"Youth mental health care professional" means a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist licensed or certified pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes with experience in youth development, youth mental health conditions, trauma and the impact of trauma, trauma-informed practices, and evidence-based mental health services.

b. The Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part in each vicinage shall provide for a youth mental health care professional. At the discretion of the Administrative Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, a youth mental health care professional may serve more than one vicinage so long as the youth mental health care professional maintains a reasonable caseload.

c. The youth mental health care professional shall support and advise the court [1]upon the request of a judge, and where the judge determines that the youth may benefit from mental health services,[1] in [1]**[**every**]** an[1] action or proceeding submitted to or heard by the Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part, where a youth is a party to the action or proceeding or a subject of the action or proceeding. The youth mental health care professional shall assist [1]and collaborate with other mental health practitioners and service providers as necessary to assist[1] the court with identifying youth with mental health needs, recognizing when specific mental health interventions are indicated, providing referrals for evidence-based mental health services when appropriate, and connecting youth and caregivers to appropriate supports in a timely manner.

d. Notwithstanding [1]**[**section 1 of P.L.1991, c.119 (C.2B:5-1)**]** N.J.S.2B:5-1[1], a youth mental health care professional hired pursuant to P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) shall be a State employee and shall be in the unclassified service.

e. The youth mental health care professional shall have access to all information and records relevant to the youth, including [1],[1] but not limited to: school records [1]**[**,**]** ;[1] child care records [1]**[**,**]** ;[1] medical and mental health records in the possession of the court [1]**[**,**]** ;[1] family court and juvenile court records [1]**[**,**]** ;[1] and records of the Division of

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.
Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:
[1]Senate SHH committee amendments adopted June 11, 2026.

Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of Children and Families.

f. Except in cases of willful or wanton misconduct, a youth mental health care professional acting in good faith within the scope of the youth mental health care professional's appointment or employment shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result by reason of [1]the[1] youth mental health care professional's actions or failure to act.

2. Section 1 of P.L.1982, c.79 (C.2A:4A-60) is amended to read as follows:

1. Disclosure of juvenile information; penalties for disclosure.

a. Social, medical, psychological, legal and other records of the court and probation division, and records of law enforcement agencies, pertaining to juveniles charged as a delinquent or found to be part of a juvenile-family crisis, shall be strictly safeguarded from public inspection. Such records shall be made available only to:

(1) Any court or probation division;

(2) The Attorney General or county prosecutor;

(3) The parents or guardian and to the attorney of the juvenile;

(4) The Department of Human Services or Department of Children and Families, if providing care or custody of the juvenile;

(5) Any institution or facility to which the juvenile is currently committed or in which the juvenile is placed;

(6) Any person or agency interested in a case or in the work of the agency keeping the records, by order of the court for good cause shown, except that information concerning adjudications of delinquency, records of custodial confinement, payments owed on assessments imposed pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1979, c.396 (C.2C:43-3.1) or restitution ordered following conviction of a crime or adjudication of delinquency, and the juvenile's financial resources, shall be made available upon request to the Victims of Crime Compensation Agency established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2007, c.95 (C.52:4B-3.2), which shall keep such information and records confidential;

(7) The Youth Justice Commission established pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1995, c.284 (C.52:17B-170);

(8) Law enforcement agencies for the purpose of reviewing applications for a permit to purchase a handgun or firearms purchaser identification card;

(9) Any potential party in a subsequent civil action for damages related to an act of delinquency committed by a juvenile, including the victim or a member of the victim's immediate family, regardless of whether the action has been filed against the juvenile; provided, however, that records available under this paragraph shall be limited to official court documents, such as complaints, pleadings and orders, and that such records may be disclosed by the recipient only in connection with asserting legal claims or obtaining

indemnification on behalf of the victim or the victim's family and otherwise shall be safeguarded from disclosure to other members of the public. Any potential party in a civil action related to the juvenile offense may file a motion with the civil trial judge seeking to have the juvenile's social, medical or psychological records admitted into evidence in a civil proceeding for damages;

(10) Any potential party in a subsequent civil action for damages related to an act of delinquency committed by a juvenile, including the victim or a member of the victim's immediate family, regardless of whether the action has been filed against the juvenile; provided, however, that records available under this paragraph shall be limited to police or investigation reports concerning acts of delinquency, which shall be disclosed by a law enforcement agency only with the approval of the County Prosecutor's Office or the Division of Criminal Justice. Prior to disclosure, all personal information regarding all individuals, other than the requesting party and the arresting or investigating officer, shall be redacted. Such records may be disclosed by the recipient only in connection with asserting legal claims or obtaining indemnification on behalf of the victim or the victim's family, and otherwise shall be safeguarded from disclosure to other members of the public;

(11) The Office of the Child Advocate established pursuant to P.L.2005, c.155 (C.52:27EE-1 et al.). Disclosure of juvenile information received by the child advocate pursuant to this paragraph shall be in accordance with the provisions of section 76 of P.L.2005, c.155 (C.52:27EE-76);

(12) Law enforcement agencies with respect to information available on the juvenile central registry maintained by the courts pursuant to subsection g. of this section, including, but not limited to: records of official court documents, such as complaints, pleadings and orders for the purpose of obtaining juvenile arrest information; juvenile disposition information; juvenile pretrial information; and information concerning the probation status of a juvenile; **[**and**]**

(13) A Court Appointed Special Advocate as defined in section 1 of P.L.2009, c.217 (C.2A:4A-92); and

(14) A youth mental health care professional appointed pursuant to section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

b. Records of law enforcement agencies may be disclosed for law enforcement purposes, or for the purpose of reviewing applications for a permit to purchase a handgun or a firearms purchaser identification card to any law enforcement agency of this State, another state or the United States, and the identity of a juvenile under warrant for arrest for commission of an act that would constitute a crime if committed by an adult may be disclosed to the public when necessary to execution of the warrant.

c. At the time of charge, adjudication or disposition, information as to the identity of a juvenile charged with an offense, the offense charged, the adjudication and disposition shall, upon request, be disclosed to:

(1) The victim or a member of the victim's immediate family;

(2) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2005, c.165).

(3) On a confidential basis, the principal of the school where the juvenile is enrolled for use by the principal and such members of the staff and faculty of the school as the principal deems appropriate for maintaining order, safety or discipline in the school or to planning programs relevant to the juvenile's educational and social development, provided that no record of such information shall be maintained except as authorized by regulation of the Department of Education; or

(4) A party in a subsequent legal proceeding involving the juvenile, upon approval by the court.

d. A law enforcement or prosecuting agency shall, at the time of a charge, adjudication or disposition, send written notice to the principal of the school where the juvenile is enrolled of the identity of the juvenile charged, the offense charged, the adjudication and the disposition if:

(1) The offense occurred on school property or a school bus, occurred at a school-sponsored function or was committed against an employee or official of the school; or

(2) The juvenile was taken into custody as a result of information or evidence provided by school officials; or

(3) The offense, if committed by an adult, would constitute a crime, and the offense:

(a) resulted in death or serious bodily injury or involved an attempt or conspiracy to cause death or serious bodily injury; or

(b) involved the unlawful use or possession of a firearm or other weapon; or

(c) involved the unlawful manufacture, distribution or possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance or controlled substance analog; or

(d) was committed by a juvenile who acted with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity; or

(e) would be a crime of the first, second, or third degree.

Information provided to the principal pursuant to this subsection shall be maintained by the school and shall be treated as confidential but may be made available to such members of the staff and faculty of the school as the principal deems appropriate for maintaining order, safety or discipline in the school or for planning programs relevant to a juvenile's educational and social development.

e. Nothing in this section prohibits a law enforcement or prosecuting agency from providing the principal of a school with

information identifying one or more juveniles who are under investigation or have been taken into custody for commission of any act that would constitute an offense if committed by an adult when the law enforcement or prosecuting agency determines that the information may be useful to the principal in maintaining order, safety or discipline in the school or in planning programs relevant to the juvenile's educational and social development. Information provided to the principal pursuant to this subsection shall be treated as confidential but may be made available to such members of the staff and faculty of the school as the principal deems appropriate for maintaining order, safety or discipline in the school or for planning programs relevant to the juvenile's educational and social development. No information provided pursuant to this section shall be maintained.

f. Information as to the identity of a juvenile adjudicated delinquent, the offense, the adjudication and the disposition shall be disclosed to the public where the offense for which the juvenile has been adjudicated delinquent if committed by an adult, would constitute a crime of the first, second or third degree, or aggravated assault, destruction or damage to property to an extent of more than $500.00, unless upon application at the time of disposition the juvenile demonstrates a substantial likelihood that specific and extraordinary harm would result from such disclosure in the specific case. Where the court finds that disclosure would be harmful to the juvenile, the reasons therefor shall be stated on the record.

g. (1) Nothing in this section shall prohibit the establishment and maintaining of a central registry of the records of law enforcement agencies relating to juveniles for the purpose of exchange between State and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors of this State, another state, or the United States. These records of law enforcement agencies shall be available on a 24-hour basis.

(2) Certain information and records relating to juveniles in the central registry maintained by the courts, as prescribed in paragraph (12) of subsection a. of this section, shall be available to State and local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors on a 24-hour basis.

h. Whoever, except as provided by law, knowingly discloses, publishes, receives, or makes use of or knowingly permits the unauthorized use of information concerning a particular juvenile derived from records listed in subsection a. or acquired in the course of court proceedings, probation, or police duties, shall, upon conviction thereof, be guilty of a disorderly persons offense.

i. Juvenile delinquency proceedings.

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the court may, upon application by the juvenile or his parent or guardian, the prosecutor or any other interested party, including the victim or complainant or members of the news media, permit public attendance during any court proceeding at a delinquency case, where it determines that a substantial likelihood that specific harm

to the juvenile would not result. The court shall have the authority to limit and control attendance in any manner and to the extent it deems appropriate;

(2) The court or, in cases where the county prosecutor has entered an appearance, the county prosecutor shall notify the victim or a member of the victim's immediate family of any court proceeding involving the juvenile and the court shall permit the attendance of the victim or family member at the proceeding except when, prior to completing testimony as a witness, the victim or family member is properly sequestered in accordance with the law or the Rules Governing the Courts of the State of New Jersey or when the juvenile or the juvenile's family member shows, by clear and convincing evidence, that such attendance would result in a substantial likelihood that specific harm to the juvenile would result from the attendance of the victim or a family member at a proceeding or any portion of a proceeding and that such harm substantially outweighs the interest of the victim or family member to attend that portion of the proceeding;

(3) The court shall permit a victim, or a family member of a victim to make a statement prior to ordering a disposition in any delinquency proceeding involving an offense that would constitute a crime if committed by an adult.

j. The Department of Education, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall adopt, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations concerning the creation, maintenance and disclosure of pupil records including information acquired pursuant to this section.

(cf: P.L.2025, c.35, s.13)

3. This act shall take effect on the first day of the thirteenth month following enactment, except that the Administrative Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts may take such anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be necessary for the implementation of this act.