

# ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **ASSEMBLY, No. 2985**

with committee amendments

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 7, 1999

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 2985 (ACS).

Assembly Bill No. 2985 (ACS), as amended, is designated the "New Jersey Homeless Youth Act." The bill requires the Department of Human Services to establish and support a comprehensive program for homeless youth by contracting with organizations and agencies that provide street outreach programs or basic center shelter programs or transitional living programs to homeless youth in this State.

A street outreach program would be required to enhance the accessibility of resources to homeless youth by locating, contacting and providing services to the youth through mobile outreach. The services provided, as determined by the department's contract, may include, but are not limited to: assistance in finding temporary or short-term shelter; assistance in obtaining food; a clothing allowance; individual and group counseling in the area of violence prevention; information and referral services regarding organizations and agencies that provide support services to homeless youth; and assistance in obtaining medical care.

A basic center shelter program would be required to provide homeless youth with a 24-hour, seven-day a week, walk-in access to emergency short term residential care. Such a program would provide the homeless youths with a stable out-of-home placement and help reunite them with their family, if family reunification is in their best interest. The services provided, as determined by the department's contract, may include, but are not limited to, the following core services: family reunification services; individual, family and group counseling; food; a clothing allowance; medical care; educational services; recreational activities; and advocacy and referral services.

The bill requires a basic center shelter to attempt to notify the homeless youth's parent or legal guardian, within 24 hours after the youth's admission, if he is under the age of 18. The notification would

provide the homeless youth's parent or legal guardian with a description of the youth's condition and the circumstances surrounding his admission to the basic center shelter, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. Under the provisions of the substitute, compelling reasons include, but are not limited to, circumstances in which the youth is or has been a victim of child abuse or neglect.

If a homeless youth is under the age of 18, the substitute would require the shelter to notify the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) within 24 hours after the youth's admission, in order to determine if the youth is under DYFS' legal care or custody. If the youth is under DYFS' care or custody, DYFS in consultation with the shelter, would determine what services would be provided to the youth. The services may include, but are not limited to: crisis intervention services, continued temporary placement in the basic shelter for up to 30 days, placement in an alternative living arrangement or referral to a transitional living program or to other appropriate organizations and agencies.

The bill provides that when a basic center shelter has reason to believe that the youth is an abused or neglected child, the shelter would be required to report the allegation to DYFS. The youth may remain at the shelter for up to 30 days pending DYFS' disposition of the case.

This bill as amended and reported by the committee is identical to S-1789 (SCS)(CC).

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The bill appropriates \$4,000,000 to the Department of Human Services to contract with organizations and agencies licensed by the department, to provide street outreach or basic center shelter or transitional living programs to homeless youth. The bill also provides that 6 % of the annual appropriation to the department be allocated to fund the department's administrative costs in implementing the provisions of the substitute.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:**

The committee amended the bill to require that if a homeless youth under the age of 18 is not in the legal care or custody of DYFS, and a basic center shelter has not made a report to DYFS concerning an allegation of abuse or neglect, the basic center shelter shall notify a juvenile-family crisis intervention unit, within 24 hours of a homeless youth's admission, that a juvenile-family crisis exists. When such notification is made, the homeless youth may remain at the basic center shelter for up to 10 days without the consent of the youth's parent or legal guardian. During this time, the juvenile-family crisis intervention unit and the basic center shelter shall help to reunite the youth with his parent or legal guardian. If reunification with the youth's parent or legal guardian is not in the youth's best interest or not possible because the youth's parent or legal guardian cannot be

located, the juvenile-family crisis intervention unit, in consultation with the basic center shelter, shall determine what services would be provided to the youth. The services may include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention services and continued temporary placement in the basic center shelter for up to an additional 30 days.

Committee amendments also specify that the services provided by street outreach and basic center shelter programs be determined by the department's contract with the organizations and agencies that administer those programs.

Finally, the committee adopted several technical amendments to make it identical to the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 1789, (Gormley/Vitale), which was released by the Senate Women's Issues, Children and Family Services Committee on May 20, 1999.