ASSEMBLY, No. 4149

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 11, 2018

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman PAMELA R. LAMPITT
District 6 (Burlington and Camden)
Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON
District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)
Assemblywoman BRITNEE N. TIMBERLAKE
District 34 (Essex and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywomen Schepisi, DiMaso, Assemblyman Mukherji,
Assemblywoman Mosquera and Assemblyman Karabinchak

SYNOPSIS
Establishes two year pilot program requiring certain law enforcement agencies to coordinate with local schools districts to identify and assist at-risk youths.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/22/2018)
AN ACT establishing law enforcement pilot program for at-risk youth.

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

1. a. As used in this act, an “at-risk youth” means a student under the age of 18 who has been involved in a police related incident in the school or community including, but not limited to, being: arrested; reported missing; subjected to violence, including domestic violence; a witness to the arrest of a parent or family member; habitually truant; diagnosed with a mental health issue or substance abuse issue; or affected by family substance abuse problems.

b. There is established in the Department of Law and Public Safety a two-year pilot program for at-risk youths to be administered by the Office of the Attorney General in consultation with the Commissioner of Education. Under the program, participating county and municipal law enforcement agencies shall coordinate with local schools districts to identify at-risk youths within their communities and respond to their needs by providing necessary intervention resources to promote their success and prevent future criminal behavior or involvement with the criminal justice system.

The Attorney General shall select law enforcement agencies to participate in the program based on the commissioner’s recommendation of the number of at-risk youths within a county or municipality. In selecting law enforcement agencies to participate, the Attorney General shall include at least two law enforcement agencies in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State and shall seek a cross section of urban, suburban, and rural municipalities. The Attorney General shall have the discretion to expand the program to more law enforcement agencies.

c. Participating law enforcement agencies shall conduct staff meetings comprised of members of the agency who are assigned to work with families and children. The purpose of the meetings shall be to develop an action plan for each at-risk youth who has been involved in a police related incident within the local school district or community in the prior month. The action plan developed for each at-risk youth may include, but not be limited to:

(1) connecting the at-risk youth with a variety of available social and developmental resources;

(2) identifying a teacher or other adult employed by the school district whom the at-risk youth trusts;

(3) identifying an available diversion program for first time juvenile offenders;

(4) informing the school principal, a school social worker, or a
counselor of the specific needs of the at-risk youth;
(5) initiating family counseling, if available, with a licensed social worker;
(6) identifying community or support groups in which the at-risk youth may be eligible to participate; and
(7) scheduling periodic visits for the at-risk youth with a safe schools resource officer or school liaison to law enforcement.

d. The Attorney General shall develop and submit to participating law enforcement agencies a standard form to be used when a juvenile is present during the arrest of a parent or guardian or has witnessed a traumatic event. The form shall be completed by the responding law enforcement officer and utilized to develop, if necessary, an action plan pursuant to subsection c. of this section.

e. Law enforcement officers participating in the pilot program shall interview every at-risk youth who has been reported missing by a parent or legal guardian upon the youth’s return. The interview shall be a screening tool to identify at-risk youths who may have engaged in, or been exposed to, a traumatic experience, including but not limited to violence, physical or sexual abuse, substance abuse, or depression. A record of the interview shall be utilized to develop, if necessary, an action plan pursuant to subsection c. of this section.

f. A safe schools resource officer or school liaison in the school district served by a participating law enforcement agency shall report to the law enforcement agency when a student is habitually truant. The law enforcement agency shall maintain a record of the report for discussion at the staff meeting pursuant to subsection c. of this section and, if necessary, to develop an action plan.

g. In establishing the pilot program, the Office of the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Education shall consult with county or municipal law enforcement agencies that have implemented similar programs.

h. The Attorney General and Commissioner of Education shall develop procedures for the evaluation of the impact of the pilot program established pursuant to this section and shall report to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), the Legislature 12 months after the organization of the pilot program and within six month after the expiration of the pilot program. The reports shall include the nature and scope of intervention on behalf of participating law enforcement agencies; data pertaining to the recidivism rates of juveniles identified as at-risk youths; the success rates of action plans developed pursuant to subsection c. of this section; and recommendations for any modifications that may be made to the program. The reports also shall evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and recommend whether the program should be continued or expanded.
2. This act shall take effect on the first day of the seventh month following enactment, but the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Education may take any anticipatory administrative action in advance thereof as may be necessary for the implementation of this act.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes in the Department of Law and Public Safety a two-year pilot program for at-risk youths to be administered by the Office of the Attorney General in consultation with the Commissioner of Education. Under the program, participating county and municipal law enforcement agencies would be required to coordinate with local school districts to identify at-risk youths within their communities and respond to their needs by providing necessary intervention resources to promote their success and prevent future criminal behavior or involvement with the criminal justice system.

The bill defines an “at-risk youth” as a student under the age of 18 who has been involved in a police related incident in the school or community including, but not limited to, being: arrested; reported missing; subjected to violence, including domestic violence; witnessing the arrest of a parent or family member; habitually truant; diagnosed with a mental health issue or substance abuse issue; or affected by family substance abuse problems.

The bill requires the Attorney General to select law enforcement agencies to participate in the program based on the commissioner’s recommendation of the number of at-risk youths within a county or municipality. In selecting law enforcement agencies to participate, the Attorney General is to include at least two law enforcement agencies in each of the northern, central, and southern regions of the State and seek a cross section of urban, suburban, and rural municipalities. The Attorney General would have the discretion to expand the program to more law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies participating in the program are required to conduct staff meetings comprised of members of the agency who are assigned to work with families and children. During the meetings, the staff are required to develop an action plan for each at-risk youth who has been involved with a police related incident within the local school district or community in the prior month. The purpose of the action plan is to connect each at-risk youth with certain resources. The resources may include, but are not limited to:

1. connecting the at-risk youth with a variety of available social and developmental resources;
2. identifying a teacher or other adult employed by the school district whom the at-risk youth trusts;
identifying an available diversion program for first time
juvenile offenders;
(4) informing the school principal, a school social worker, or a
counselor of the specific needs of the at-risk youth;
(5) initiating family counseling, if available, with a licensed
social worker;
(6) identifying community or support groups in which the at-risk
youth may be eligible to participate; and
(7) scheduling periodic visits for the at-risk youth with a safe
schools resource officer or school liaison to law enforcement.

In addition, the Attorney General would be required to develop
and submit to participating law enforcement agencies a standard
form to be used when a juvenile is present during the arrest of a
parent or guardian or has witnessed a traumatic event. The form
would be completed by the responding law enforcement officer and
utilized to develop, if necessary, a youth’s action plan.

Law enforcement officers participating in the pilot program
would be required to interview every at-risk youth who has been
reported missing by a parent or legal guardian upon the youth’s
return. The interview would be a screening tool to identify at-risk
youths who may have engaged in, or been exposed to, a traumatic
experience, including but not limited to violence, physical or sexual
abuse, substance abuse, or depression. A record of the interview
would be used to develop, if necessary, a youth’s action plan.

Finally, the bill requires a safe schools resource officer or school
liaison in the school district served by a participating law
enforcement agency to report to the law enforcement agency when a
student is habitually truant. The law enforcement agency would be
required to maintain a record of the report for discussion at the staff
meeting and, if necessary, the development of an action plan.

The bill allows the Attorney General and Commissioner of
Education to consult with county or municipal law enforcement
agencies that have implemented similar programs when establishing
the pilot program. The bill requires the Attorney General and
Commissioner of Education to develop procedures for the
evaluation of the impact of the pilot program and report to the
Governor and the Legislature 12 months after the organization of
the pilot program and within six month after the expiration of the
pilot program. The reports are to include the nature and scope of
intervention on behalf of participating law enforcement agencies;
data pertaining to the recidivism rates of juveniles identified as at-
risk youths; the success rates of the individual action plans; and
recommendations for any modifications that may be made to the
program. In addition, the bill requires the report to evaluate the
effectiveness of the pilot program and recommend whether the
program should be continued or expanded.