

# ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

### **ASSEMBLY, No. 389**

with committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: SEPTEMBER 16, 1996

The Assembly Community Services Committee favorably reports Assembly Bill No.389 with committee amendments.

. As amended by committee, this bill establishes four regional diagnostic and treatment centers for child abuse and neglect affiliated with medical centers in the State that meet standards adopted by the Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. Each center shall demonstrate a multidisciplinary approach to identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect. The center's staff shall include, at a minimum, a pediatrician, a consulting psychiatrist, a psychologist and a social worker who are trained to evaluate and treat children who have been abused and neglected and their families. At least one member of the staff shall also have an appropriate professional credential or significant training and experience in the identification and treatment of substance abuse.

Each center shall establish a liaison with the district office of the Division of Youth and Family Services in the Department of Human Services and with the county prosecutor's office from the county in which the child who is undergoing evaluation and treatment resides.

The regional centers shall: evaluate and treat child abuse and neglect; be resources for the region and develop additional resources within a region; provide training and consultative services; and be available for emergency phone consultation 24-hours a day. The centers shall also be a source for research and training for additional medical and mental health personnel dedicated to the identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

Services provided by the center's staff shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Psychological and medical evaluation and treatment of the child, counseling for family members and substance abuse assessment and mental health and substance abuse counseling for the parents or guardians of the child;
2. Referral for appropriate social services and medical care;
3. Providing testimony regarding alleged child abuse or neglect at

judicial proceedings;

4. Treatment recommendations for the child and mental health and substance abuse treatment recommendations for his family, and mental health and substance abuse treatment recommendations for persons convicted of child abuse or neglect;

5. Receiving referrals from the Division of Youth and Family Services and the county prosecutor's office and assisting them in any investigation of child abuse or neglect; and

6. Providing educational material and seminars on child abuse and neglect and the services the center provides to children, parents, teachers, law enforcement, the judiciary, attorneys and other citizens.

The regional center may charge a sliding scale fee for services provided under this bill.

Regional centers shall act as a resource in the establishment and maintenance of county based multidisciplinary teams which work in conjunction with the county prosecutor and the Division of Youth and Family Services in the investigation of child abuse and neglect in the county in which the child who is undergoing evaluation and treatment resides. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation with the Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, shall establish standards for the county teams.

The bill also establishes an 18-member Diagnostic and Treatment Advisory Council to oversee the programs of the regional centers, help facilitate communications among the centers, county teams, law enforcement officials and the Division of Youth and Family Services, develop standards of care for the treatment of child abuse, and help coordinate any research it deems appropriate.

Finally, the bill appropriates \$1.5 million from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services to carry out the provisions of the bill.

The committee amendments clarify the language in the bill by referring to instances of "child abuse and neglect" rather than only "child abuse." The amendments require that at least one member of the center's staff at the regional diagnostic and treatment center shall also have an appropriate professional credential or significant training and experience in the identification and treatment of substance abuse. The amendments also require that the services provided by the center's staff include substance abuse assessment and mental health and substance abuse counseling for the parents or guardians of the child. The treatment recommendations provided by the staff shall include mental health and substance abuse treatment recommendations for the child's family as well as mental health and substance abuse treatment recommendations for persons convicted of child abuse or neglect.

The amendments additionally require that the county multidisciplinary team shall include a representative who is trained to identify and treat substance abuse.

Finally, the amendments increase the membership of the Diagnostic and Treatment Advisory Council from 14 to 15 members

by adding a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor or other professional appropriately credentialed to identify and treat substance abuse.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 1996-1997 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review which was been performed.

The Assembly Community Services Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No.389.