

ASSEMBLY, No. 5404

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman JAMEL C. HOLLEY

District 20 (Union)

Assemblywoman JOANN DOWNEY

District 11 (Monmouth)

SYNOPSIS

“Establishes Children, Youth, and Families Bill of Rights” to recognize and protect certain rights for children, youth, families.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/8/2021)

1 AN ACT concerning the rights of children, youth, and families and
2 supplementing Title 9 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. Families, in their many shapes and forms, remain the bedrock
9 of our society. Today, families, and the communities in which they
10 live, face challenges that are multi-faceted and often overwhelming.

11 b. A changing economy and limited public resources have
12 contributed to symptoms of family and community distress, including
13 institutional racism, increased high school drop-out and incarceration
14 rates, higher incidences of child abuse and neglect, substance use and
15 homelessness, and high unemployment and underemployment.

16 c. The fewer resources families have in their communities and
17 the greater obstacles they face, the greater chance that families
18 experience poor health outcomes, become dependent on government
19 assistance, and become involved with the child welfare system.

20 d. Studies show that aspects of a child's environment, including
21 living in a distressed community and growing up in a household with
22 substance use, mental health problems, parental separation, or
23 household members being in jail or prison, can undermine the child's
24 sense of safety, stability, and bonding and can lead to trauma that
25 impacts the child's life well into adulthood.

26 e. Childhood trauma can have lasting, negative effects on a
27 child's health, well-being, and opportunity and can increase the risks
28 of suicide, childhood injury, sexually transmitted infections, teen
29 pregnancy, involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of
30 chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes,
31 and heart disease.

32 f. Creating and sustaining safe, stable, nurturing relationships
33 and communities for all children and their families can prevent
34 childhood trauma, promote family success, and help children and
35 families reach their full potential.

36 g. The obligation of the State is to recognize and protect the
37 rights of all children, youth and families through its articulation of a
38 clear and specific bill of rights, and through an affirmation by the
39 State of its commitment to enforce these rights in order to protect and
40 promote the welfare of all its citizens.

41

42 2. All children, youth, and families in the State of New Jersey
43 shall have the following rights;

44 a. To clean and safe land, air, and water;

45 b. To safety at home, at school, in the workplace, and in their
46 communities;

47 c. To strong, permanent, loving, and nurturing households;

1 affordable, and age and developmentally appropriate medical and
2 mental and behavioral health care; to life-long, quality, and age and
3 developmentally appropriate learning and educational opportunities;
4 to meaningful spiritual, cultural, and recreational experiences; to
5 practice the religion of their choice; to learn about and celebrate the
6 rich diversity of all racial, cultural, ethnic, spiritual, and linguistic
7 traditions; and o services, public policies, practices, and the
8 allocation of public resources that promote child, youth, and family
9 well-being.

10 The Department of Children and Families would be required to
11 publish a notice of the bill of rights enumerated in the bill and make
12 the notice available to the public on its Internet website.

13 The bill further stipulates that each health care facility, county
14 welfare agency or county board of social services, Division of Child
15 Protection and Permanency local office, emergency shelter for the
16 homeless, domestic violence shelter, library, school, community-
17 based and non-profit agencies and organizations providing services
18 to children and families in the State would post a copy of this notice
19 in a conspicuous location that is available to the public.