

SENATE, No. 3985

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 24, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator VIN GOPAL

District 11 (Monmouth)

Senator NIA H. GILL

District 34 (Essex and Passaic)

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.



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,
13 including institutional racism, increased high school drop-out and
14 incarceration rates, higher incidences of child abuse and neglect,
15 substance use and homelessness, and high unemployment and
16 underemployment.

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

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

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

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

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

42

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

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

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

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

- 1 d. To earn a living that allows for a decent standard of living to
2 afford adequate, safe, and appropriate food, clothing, and housing;
3 e. To full and equal participation in making decisions that
4 impact their lives;
5 f. To respect, dignity, equal opportunity, and absolute freedom
6 from any forms of prejudice, bigotry, or discrimination;
7 g. To adequate, affordable, and age and developmentally
8 appropriate medical and mental and behavioral health care;
9 h. To life-long, quality, and age and developmentally
10 appropriate learning and educational opportunities;
11 i. To meaningful spiritual, cultural, and recreational
12 experiences;
13 j. To practice the religion of their choice;
14 k. To learn about and celebrate the rich diversity of all racial,
15 cultural, ethnic, spiritual, and linguistic traditions; and
16 l. To services, public policies, practices, and the allocation of
17 public resources that promote child, youth, and family well-being.
18
- 19 3. a. The Department of Children and Families shall publish a
20 notice of the bill of rights enumerated in section 1 of this act, and
21 shall make the notice available to the public on its Internet website.
22 b. Each health care facility, county welfare agency or county
23 board of social services, Division of Child Protection and
24 Permanency local office, emergency shelter for the homeless,
25 domestic violence shelter, library, school, community-based and
26 non-profit agencies and organizations providing services to children
27 and families in the State shall post a copy of this notice in a
28 conspicuous location that is available to the public.
29
- 30 4. Pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Act,” P.L.1968,
31 c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Department of Children and
32 Families shall adopt rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes
33 of this act.
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- 35 5. This act shall take effect immediately.
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38 STATEMENT
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40 This bill establishes a “Children, Youth, and Families Bill of
41 Rights” that would recognize and protect the following rights of all
42 children, youth and families: to clean and safe land, air, and water;
43 to safety at home and at school, in the workplace, and in their
44 communities; to strong, permanent, loving, and nurturing
45 household; to earn a living that allows for a decent standard of
46 living to afford adequate, safe, and appropriate food, clothing, and
47 housing; to full and equal participation in making decisions that
48 impact their lives; to respect, dignity, equal opportunity, and

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

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

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