

HOUSE BILL 453
By Brown

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 5,
relative to children.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 5, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 7 of this act as a new, appropriately designated part.

SECTION 2.

(a) There is created in the department of children's services the Support Our Students (S.O.S) program. The purpose of the program is to award grants to family resource centers, neighborhood-and community-based organizations, and community service agencies to establish local S.O.S. programs that provide high quality after-school activities for school-aged children and provide for comprehensive, collaborative delivery of services by public and nonpublic agencies to these children. These services shall be designed to enrich and make a positive impact on the lives of school-aged children. These after-school activities may include activities after the regular school day and activities on days that students are not required to attend school.

(b) The goals of the program are to:

- (1) Reduce juvenile crime in local communities served by the program;
- (2) Recruit community volunteers to provide positive adult role models for school-aged children and to help supervise after-school activities;

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(3) Reduce the number of students who are unsupervised after school, otherwise known as 'latchkey' children;

(4) Improve the academic performance of students participating in the program;

(5) Meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of students participating in the program and improve their attitudes and behavior; and

(6) Improve coordination of existing resources and enhance collaboration so as to provide services to school-aged children effectively and efficiently.

SECTION 3. As used in this act, "school-aged children" means children enrolled in kindergarten through the ninth grade.

SECTION 4. The department of children services shall develop and implement the Support Our Students (S.O.S.) program. The department shall:

(1) Sponsor a statewide conference each year for teams of interested representatives to provide background information and assistance regarding all aspects of the program;

(2) Disseminate information regarding the program to interested family resource centers, neighborhood and community groups, and community service agencies;

(3) Develop and disseminate a request for applications to establish local S.O.S programs;

(4) Provide initial technical assistance to grant applicants and ongoing technical assistance as grants are implemented;

(5) Administer funds appropriated by the general assembly;

(6) Monitor the grants funded;

(7) Revoke a grant if necessary or appropriate;

(8) Develop and implement a performance-based evaluation system to evaluate the program;

(9) Report on the program implementation to the governor and to appropriate committees of the general assembly; and

(10) Promulgate any rules necessary to implement this act.

SECTION 5.

(a) A community or neighborhood-based 501(c)(3) entity, a family resource center, a community service agency or a consortium consisting of one or more of such entities, centers or agencies may apply for a grant.

(b) Applicants for grants shall submit to the department an application that includes the following information:

(1) Identification of one (1) or more neighborhoods to be served by the local S.O.S. program, based on a needs assessment of existing conditions for school-aged children to be served. Data used in the needs assessment may include for each neighborhood to be served by a local program:

(i) dropout statistics,

(ii) the number and percentage of school-aged children who participate in the federal subsidized lunch program,

(iii) the number of suspensions and expulsions involving school-aged children,

(iv) the number of children to be served,

(v) the number and percentage of students with two working parents or one single parent to be served at a site,

(vi) the incidents of juvenile crime in the neighborhood, and

(vii) any other relevant or unique local demographic data.

(2) A three-year plan that addresses data used in the needs assessment and that includes proposed goals and anticipated outcomes of the local S.O.S. program. The plan shall be prepared after consultation with local after-school programs, schools, community organizations or groups which have as their purpose assisting or helping school-aged children who are at risk of failing in school or entering the juvenile justice system, or other appropriate groups. In addition, the three-year plan shall provide for regular collaborative efforts to seek input and advice from parents of the students being served and from other citizens who reflect the demographic conditions of the students being served;

(3) A statement of how grant funds would be used to address local problems and what other resources would be used to address the problems. This statement should include a list of services to be offered that are related to the goals and outcomes and should include plans for recruiting volunteers to assist in the program's activities; and

(4) A process for assessing on an annual basis the success of the local plan for addressing the goals of the local S.O.S. program.

SECTION 6.

(a) The department shall develop and disseminate a request for applications and establish procedures to be followed in developing and submitting applications to establish local S.O.S. programs and administering grants to establish local S.O.S. programs.

(b) The commissioner of children's services shall appoint a state task force to assist the commissioner in reviewing grant applications. The task force shall include representatives of the department of human services, the department of education, the department of health, the department of children's services, the commission on children

and youth, the council of juvenile and family court judges, parents, and other members the commissioner considers appropriate.

(c) In reviewing grant applications, the commissioner and the task force may consider:

- (i) the severity of the local problems as determined by the needs assessment data,
- (ii) the likelihood that the locally designed plan will result in high quality after-school services for school-aged children,
- (iii) evidence of local collaboration and coordination of services,
- (iv) any innovative or experimental aspects of the plan that will make it a useful model for replication in other neighborhoods and communities, and
- (v) any other factors which affect the well-being of school-aged children.

(d) In determining the amount of funds an applicant receives, the commissioner and the task force may consider:

- (i) the number of children to be served,
- (ii) the number and percentage of children to be served who participate in the subsidized lunch program,
- (iii) the number and percentage of school-aged children with two working parents or one single parent to be served,
- (iv) the availability of other resources or funds, and
- (v) the amount needed to implement the proposal.

(e) The commissioner shall award the grants.

SECTION 7.

(a) The department of children's services shall develop and implement an evaluation system that will assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the S.O.S. program. The department shall design this system to:

(1) Provide information to the department and to the general assembly on how to improve and refine the programs;

(2) Enable the department and the general assembly to assess the overall quality, efficiency, and impact of the existing programs;

(3) Enable the department and the general assembly to determine whether to modify the S.O.S. program; and

(4) Provide a detailed fiscal analysis of how state funds for these programs were used.

(b) The department shall present an annual report no later than January 15, 1998, and annually thereafter, to the governor and to the appropriate committees of the general assembly concerning implementation of this act.

SECTION 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 1997, the public welfare requiring it.