

HOUSE BILL 862

By White M

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 16;
Title 36 and Title 37, relative to courts specializing
in certain types of cases.

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

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, Chapter 1, is amended by adding the following new part:

37-1-901. This part shall be known and may be cited as the "Tennessee Zero to Five Initiative."

37-1-902.

(a) The general assembly recognizes that a critical need exists in this state for child and family services programs to reduce the incidence of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment, minimize the effects of childhood trauma on small children, and provide stability to parents and children within the state. It is the intent of the general assembly by this part to create an initiative to facilitate the implementation of new and the continuation of existing zero to five court programs.

(b) The goals of the zero to five court programs created under this part include the following:

(1) To reduce the removal of children five (5) years of age or younger from parents by surrounding at risk families with support services;

(2) To reduce incidences of dependency and neglect among children five (5) years of age or younger;

(3) To reduce the long-term and short-term effects of traumatic experiences occurring when a child is five (5) years of age or younger on a child's brain development;

(4) To promote public safety through these reductions;

(5) To increase the personal, familial, and societal accountability of families; and

(6) To promote effective interaction and the use of resources among both public and private state and local child and family services agencies, state and local mental health agencies, and community agencies.

(c) As used in this part, "zero to five court program" means any zero to five court program created within the state that seeks to accomplish the goals stated in subsection (b) and that is established by the judge of a juvenile court. A zero to five court program shall have the same powers as the court that created it.

37-1-903.

(a) On January 1, 2018, there are created and established five (5) zero to five court programs throughout this state.

(b) The administrative office of the courts, in consultation with the department of children's services and the council of juvenile and family court judges, shall determine the location of each program. The administrative office of the courts shall establish at least one (1) program within each of the three (3) grand divisions and shall seek to serve both rural and urban populations.

(c) The department of children's services, in consultation with the administrative office of the courts and the department of mental health and substance abuse services, shall administer the zero to five court programs by:

(1) Defining, developing, and gathering outcome measures for zero to five court programs relating to the goals stated in § 37-1-902;

(2) Collecting, reporting, and disseminating zero to five court program data, including an annual report to be submitted by January 1, 2019, and each following January 1, to the civil justice committee of the house of representatives and the judiciary committee of the senate. The annual report shall summarize the results of the programs' operation during the previous year, including data on the outcomes achieved in zero to five courts compared to the outcomes achieved by other courts exercising similar jurisdiction, and any cost savings associated with the achievement of the goals stated in § 37-1-902;

(3) Sponsoring and coordinating state zero to five court training for the juvenile court judges and staff who will administer the programs; and

(4) Developing standards of operation for zero to five court programs.

37-1-904.

(a) Nothing contained in this part shall confer a right or an expectation of a right of participation in a zero to five court program to a person within the juvenile court system.

(b) Each adult participant in a zero to five court program shall be a voluntary participant in the program.

37-1-905. Nothing in this part shall be construed to limit the ability of any jurisdiction to create or maintain a zero to five court program that strives to accomplish the goals set forth in § 37-1-902.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect January 1, 2018, the public welfare requiring it, and shall cease to be effective January 1, 2022.