SENATE BILL 108

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

Sue Wilson Beffort

AN ACT

RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES; ENACTING THE KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER ACT TO REQUIRE THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT TO ESTABLISH A KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER PILOT PROJECT TO PROVIDE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES TO CERTAIN VULNERABLE FAMILIES IN BERNALILLO, DONA ANA AND VALENCIA COUNTIES; ESTABLISHING THE KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER FUND; CREATING THE KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER WORKING GROUP; PROVIDING FOR DELAYED REPEAL; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. [NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the "Keeping Families Together Act".

SECTION 2. [NEW MATERIAL] DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Keeping Families Together Act:

A. "core service agency" means an entity that
contracts with the state to coordinate care and provide comprehensive services, including psychiatric services, medication management, crisis services and comprehensive community support services, to individuals living with mental illness, emotional disturbance or substance dependence;

B. "department" means the children, youth and families department;

C. "housing services provider" means a governmental, quasi-governmental or nongovernmental entity that helps eligible families obtain affordable long-term housing by administering government housing vouchers, locating appropriate housing, facilitating client interactions with landlords or housing owners, providing assistance with moving and other housing-related expenses or providing similar housing-related services;

D. "keeping families together model" means a program that:

(1) uses long-term supportive housing as a tool to reduce child abuse and neglect and prevent foster care among homeless or inadequately housed families; and

(2) emphasizes immediate access to long-term supportive housing rather than transitional housing or housing contingent on participation in supportive housing programs;

E. "long-term supportive housing" means the provision of a combination of free or low-cost housing and
supportive services, including counseling, substance abuse
treatment, physical and mental health care, assistance in
accessing public benefits, parenting skills training and
employment assistance for a period of not less than twenty-four
months or until a family chooses to leave the provided housing;
and

F. "secretary" means the secretary of children,
youth and families.

SECTION 3. [NEW MATERIAL] KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER PILOT
PROJECT--ELIGIBILITY--SERVICES--PROCUREMENT.--

A. By January 1, 2015, the secretary shall create
the keeping families together pilot project to provide long-
term supportive housing through December 31, 2018 to at least
fifty families who lack secure housing and whose children have
been identified as victims in substantiated findings of child
abuse or neglect. At least twenty-five participating families
shall be residents of Bernalillo county. At least thirteen
participating families shall be residents of Dona Ana county.
At least twelve participating families shall be residents of
Valencia county.

B. To carry out the provisions of the Keeping
Families Together Act, the department shall contract, in
accordance with the recommendations of the procurement team
appointed pursuant to Subsection G of this section, with
supportive housing providers in Bernalillo, Dona Ana and

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Valencia counties to provide long-term supportive housing services as well as a program manager to administer the pilot project. The duties of the supportive housing providers and program manager shall be prescribed by department rules.

C. In order to be deemed eligible to participate in the keeping families together pilot project, a family shall meet the following eligibility criteria, as defined by rules the secretary has adopted and promulgated:

(1) a child in the family has been identified as a victim in a substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect;

(2) the family is homeless or has inadequate housing; and

(3) a family member has been identified as having a substance dependency or mental illness.

D. At a minimum, the department shall provide to a family participating in the keeping families together pilot project the following:

(1) assistance in locating and procuring long-term supportive housing of a size and quality appropriate for that family;

(2) funds for rent, utilities, utility deposits and a security deposit in an amount that guarantees that the family pays no more than thirty percent of its income for housing and utility-related expenses;
(3) family services, including behavioral services, designed to foster the family's health, well-being and stability;

(4) parenting skills training; and

(5) employment assistance.

E. Between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2018, the department shall report annually the progress and outcomes of the keeping families together pilot project to the governor, the legislative health and human services committee and the legislative finance committee.

F. The long-term supportive housing provided pursuant to the Keeping Families Together Act shall:

(1) conform to the keeping families together model;

(2) be consistent at the different pilot sites in order to allow rigorous comparison of results across sites; and

(3) conform to standards that ensure high-quality service delivery and continual quality improvement.

G. The secretary shall appoint a procurement team to conduct the bid process for the services of supportive housing providers and a program manager. The procurement team shall consist of:

(1) a representative of the department; and

(2) a representative of an entity that:
(a) is based in the state;
(b) is nonpartisan;
(c) is a not-for-profit entity;
(d) has at least one year of experience in providing expert legal analysis;
(e) has at least one year of experience in providing analysis of long-term supportive housing programs as a foster-care prevention or family reunification tool; and 
(f) has a demonstrated knowledge of housing service providers and human services providers in the state.

H. By accepting keeping families together pilot project funding, a long-term supportive housing provider shall agree to:

(1) meet monthly with the keeping families together working group;
(2) obtain permission from program participants to collect data about program participants and their program outcomes;
(3) collect, analyze and report data as prescribed by department rules;
(4) store, manage and share data relating to the pilot project with the department, service providers, researchers and state agencies only in accordance with federal and state privacy laws; and

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(5) collect data in a standardized format from
supportive housing sites statewide.

SECTION 4. [NEW MATERIAL] KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

WORKING GROUP--DUTIES--MEMBERSHIP.--

A. The "keeping families together working group" is
created. The keeping families together working group shall
meet monthly at the call of the co-chairs of the working group
and shall ensure the collaboration, the sharing of best
practices and consistency across program sites. It shall
direct the program manager and the long-term supportive housing
service providers in the collection of data and making monthly
reports to the secretary on the progress of the pilot project.

B. The working group shall consist of the following
members:

(1) the members of the procurement team
appointed pursuant to Subsection G of Section 3 of the Keeping
Families Together Act, who shall serve as co-chairs of the
working group;

(2) one representative from each supportive
housing provider that provides services pursuant to the Keeping
Families Together Act;

(3) a representative from each core service
agency that contracts with the department to provide services
to a participant family; and

(4) up to two additional members appointed by
the co-chairs as they deem necessary.

C. Members appointed pursuant to Paragraph (4) of Subsection B of this section may receive per diem and mileage pursuant to the provisions of the Per Diem and Mileage Act but shall receive no other perquisite, compensation or allowance for their services on the keeping families together working group.

SECTION 5. [NEW MATERIAL] KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

FUND--DISBURSEMENTS.--The "keeping families together fund" is created in the state treasury. The fund shall consist of: appropriations; loan payments; federal funds received for the purpose of making loans; gifts; grants; donations; and bequests made to the fund. Income from the fund shall be credited to the fund, and money in the fund shall not revert or be transferred to any other fund until it reverts to the general fund at the end of fiscal year 2019. The department shall administer the fund, and money in the fund is appropriated to the department to provide long-term supportive housing in accordance with the provisions of the Keeping Families Together Act. Money in the fund shall be disbursed upon warrants signed by the secretary of finance and administration pursuant to vouchers signed by the secretary of children, youth and families or the secretary of children, youth and families' authorized representative.

SECTION 6. APPROPRIATION.--Nine hundred ninety-five
thousand seven hundred ninety-nine dollars ($995,799) is appropriated from the general fund to the keeping families together fund for expenditure in fiscal years 2015 through 2019 for the children, youth and families department to fund the keeping families together pilot project for supportive housing. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2019 shall revert to the general fund.

SECTION 7. DELAYED REPEAL.--Sections 1 through 5 of this act are repealed effective January 1, 2019.

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