

### §4003. Purposes

Recognizing that the health and safety of children must be of paramount concern and that the right to family integrity is limited by the right of children to be protected from abuse and neglect and recognizing also that uncertainty and instability are possible in extended foster home or institutional living, it is the intent of the Legislature that this chapter: [PL 1997, c. 715, Pt. B, §4 (AMD).]

**1. Authorization.** Authorize the department to protect and assist abused and neglected children, children in circumstances which present a substantial risk of abuse and neglect, and their families; [PL 1979, c. 733, §18 (NEW).]

**2. Removal from parental custody.** Provide that children will be removed from the custody of their parents only where failure to do so would jeopardize their health or welfare; [PL 2017, c. 411, §5 (AMD).]

**3. Rehabilitation and reunification.** Require that reasonable efforts be made to rehabilitate and reunify families as a means for protecting the welfare of children, but prevent needless delay for permanent plans for children when rehabilitation and reunification is not possible; [PL 2017, c. 470, §1 (AMD).]

**3-A. Kinship placement.** Consistent with sections 4005-G and 4005-H, place children who are removed from the custody of their parents with an adult relative when possible; [PL 2017, c. 411, §6 (AMD).]

**3-B. Sibling placement.** Consistent with sections 4005-G and 4005-H, place children who are removed from the custody of their parents with as many of those children's siblings as possible; [PL 2017, c. 411, §7 (NEW).]

**4. Permanent plans for care and custody.** Promote the early establishment of permanent plans for the care and custody of children who cannot be returned to their family. It is the intent of the Legislature that the department reduce the number of children receiving assistance under the United States Social Security Act, Title IV-E, who have been in foster care more than 24 months, by 10% each year beginning with the federal fiscal year that starts on October 1, 1983; and [PL 1999, c. 731, Pt. AA, §4 (AMD).]

**5. Report on children in department's custody and children of incarcerated parents.** Require the department to report monthly to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs and health and human services matters on the status of children served by the Office of Child and Family Services. The report must include, at a minimum, information on the department's case load, the location of the children in the department's custody and the number of cases of abuse and neglect that were not opened for assessment. This information must be identified by program and funding source. The report must also include information on the number of children in the department's custody known to have one or more incarcerated parents and information on the number of those children for whom the case goal is reunification. [PL 2021, c. 620, §1 (AMD).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1979, c. 733, §18 (NEW). PL 1981, c. 369, §9 (AMD). PL 1981, c. 698, §96 (AMD). PL 1985, c. 739, §4 (AMD). PL 1997, c. 715, Pt. B, §4 (AMD). PL 1999, c. 731, Pt. AA, §§3-5 (AMD). PL 2005, c. 374, §1 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 368, Pt. CCCC, §7 (REV). PL 2017, c. 411, §§5-7 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 470, §1 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 620, §1 (AMD).

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