

AMENDMENTS TO LB595

Introduced by Walz, 15.

1           1. Strike the original sections and all amendments thereto and  
2 insert the following new sections:

3           Section 1. The Legislature finds that:

4           (1) Early intervention is essential to developing life-long well-  
5 being for children facing mental health needs;

6           (2) Mental health challenges are frequently identified in the school  
7 setting;

8           (3) The findings of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study  
9 conducted by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention make  
10 it clear that childhood experiences have a tremendous impact on life-long  
11 health and opportunity;

12           (4) Best practices are available for children and families to  
13 promote health, stability, and well-being through treatment and therapy,  
14 prevention, and early intervention. Such best practices can prevent entry  
15 into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems as well as promote  
16 mental health; and

17           (5) Creation of Children's Connection program initiatives in each of  
18 the behavioral health regions established pursuant to section 71-807 will  
19 provide the best practices described in subdivision (4) of this section.

20           Sec. 2. A Children's Connection program shall be created in each of  
21 the behavioral health regions established pursuant to section 71-807.  
22 Each program shall be a partnership between the behavioral health region  
23 and Nebraska schools serving children in kindergarten through grade  
24 eight.

25           The goals of the programs are to identify children with social and  
26 emotional difficulties and to work with parents, schools, and health care  
27 providers to provide timely, effective, and family-centered services in

1 order to prevent child welfare or juvenile justice system involvement.

2 Sec. 3. The Division of Behavioral Health of the Department of  
3 Health and Human Services shall administer the Children's Connection  
4 program. The division shall:

5 (1) Solicit annual program plans from each behavioral health region  
6 and ensure that the plans meet initiative requirements;

7 (2) Identify evidence-based best practices in interventions for  
8 children and provide evidence-based training to mental health  
9 coordinators and community mental health providers on at least a biannual  
10 basis; and

11 (3) Complete an annual evaluation of the program in each region  
12 based on number of children referred and assessed, number of children  
13 served, implementation of evidence-based practices, and improved health  
14 and academic outcomes for children.

15 Sec. 4. Each behavioral health region shall develop a Children's  
16 Connection program initiative with the following components:

17 (1) Formal agreements with specific referral sources, including, but  
18 not limited to, public and private schools as well as the Nebraska Help  
19 Line;

20 (2) Training for referral sources to recognize and refer children  
21 who could benefit from the program;

22 (3) Formal agreements with community mental health providers to  
23 serve children referred to the program with evidence-based strategies;

24 (4) Implementation of strategies to utilize available health  
25 insurance or the medical assistance program;

26 (5) At least one mental health coordinator who shall meet with  
27 families, assess needs, identify barriers to accessing services, and  
28 assist with making connections to the health care provider;

29 (6) Funding specifically allocated for children who are assessed to  
30 require treatment but do not have the means to pay for such treatment;

31 (7) Plans for collecting and submitting documentation of outcomes

1 and to participate in evaluation activities as required by the division;

2 and

3 (8) A budget including a local match of at least one-fourth of the  
4 total cost of the initiative.

5 Sec. 5. It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate two  
6 million dollars each fiscal year to the Department of Health and Human  
7 Services for distribution to each of the behavioral health regions to  
8 establish a Children's Connection program.