

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED NINTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 217

Introduced by Fredrickson, 20.

Read first time January 14, 2025

Committee:

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to child welfare; to amend section 71-1904,
2 Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and section 71-1924, Revised
3 Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to require suicide awareness
4 and prevention training for employees of child-placing agencies and
5 child welfare workers; to provide an operative date; and to repeal
6 the original sections.

7 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 **Section 1.** For purposes of providing training for individuals
2 involved in the child welfare system, the Department of Health and Human
3 Services shall develop a baseline of curriculum and training materials
4 related to suicide awareness and prevention in consultation with
5 statewide and national organizations and professionals with expertise in
6 behavioral and mental health and suicide prevention, including, but not
7 limited to, the Nebraska State Suicide Prevention Coalition and the
8 Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska. All such suicide
9 awareness and prevention training shall incorporate evidence-based
10 practices and may include, but not be limited to, (1) identification of
11 early warning signs and symptoms of behavioral and mental health issues
12 for youth in the child welfare system and (2) appropriate and effective
13 responses for behavioral and mental health issues and trauma-informed
14 care.

15 **Sec. 2.** All staff involved in the child welfare system of the
16 Department of Health and Human Services that provide direct services to
17 children or families or interact directly with children or families, and
18 any other appropriate personnel as determined by the Division of Children
19 and Family Services of the Department of Health and Human Services, shall
20 have training in suicide awareness and prevention. Such training shall
21 include at least ninety minutes of behavioral and mental health training
22 with a focus on suicide awareness and prevention prior to any independent
23 contact with youth and families and annually thereafter. Such training
24 shall be provided within the framework of existing training programs
25 offered by the department.

26 **Sec. 3.** Section 71-1904, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
27 amended to read:

28 71-1904 (1) The department shall adopt and promulgate rules and
29 regulations pursuant to sections 71-1901 to 71-1906.01 for (a) the proper
30 care and protection of children by licensees under such sections, (b) the
31 issuance, suspension, and revocation of licenses to provide foster care,

1 (c) the issuance, suspension, and revocation of probationary licenses to
2 provide foster care, (d) the issuance, suspension, and revocation of
3 provisional licenses to provide foster care, (e) the provision of
4 training in foster care, which training shall be directly related to the
5 skills necessary to care for children in need of out-of-home care,
6 including, but not limited to, abused, neglected, dependent, and
7 delinquent children, and (f) the proper administration of sections
8 71-1901 to 71-1906.01.

9 (2) The department may issue a waiver for any licensing standard not
10 related to children's safety for a relative home that is pursuing
11 licensure. Such waivers shall be granted on a case-by-case basis upon
12 assessment by the department based upon the best interests of the child.
13 A relative home that receives a waiver pursuant to this subsection shall
14 be considered fully licensed for purposes of federal reimbursement under
15 the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act
16 of 2008, Public Law 110-351.

17 (3) The department shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations
18 establishing new foster home licensing requirements that ensure
19 children's safety, health, and well-being but minimize the use of
20 licensing mandates for nonsafety issues. Such rules and regulations shall
21 provide alternatives to address nonsafety issues regarding housing and
22 provide assistance to families in overcoming licensing barriers,
23 especially in child-specific relative and kinship placements, to maximize
24 appropriate reimbursement under Title IV-E of the federal Social Security
25 Act, as amended, including expanding the use of kinship guardianship
26 assistance payments under 42 U.S.C. 673(d), as such act and section
27 existed on January 1, 2013.

28 (4) The department shall include suicide awareness and prevention
29 training meeting the requirements of section 1 of this act for initial
30 licensure and renewal of licensure pursuant to sections 71-1901 to
31 71-1906.01.

1 **Sec. 4.** Section 71-1924, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
2 2024, is amended to read:

3 71-1924 Sections 71-1924 to 71-1951 and section 5 of this act shall
4 be known and may be cited as the Children's Residential Facilities and
5 Placing Licensure Act.

6 **Sec. 5.** The department shall establish standardized suicide
7 awareness and prevention training requirements for all employees of a
8 child-placing agency prior to any independent contact with youth and
9 families. Such training shall incorporate a baseline of curriculum
10 materials described in section 1 of this act while also allowing a child-
11 placing agency to incorporate training elements that meet the specific
12 needs of the individual agency. The department may approve the existing
13 curriculum of a child-placing agency if such curriculum meets the
14 baseline of curriculum pursuant to section 1 of this act.

15 **Sec. 6.** This act becomes operative on October 1, 2025.

16 **Sec. 7.** Original section 71-1904, Reissue Revised Statutes of
17 Nebraska, and section 71-1924, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement,
18 2024, are repealed.