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ASSEMBLY, No. 208
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
211th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2004 SESSION

Sponsored by:

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Assemblymen Dancer, Burzichelli, Conaway, Conners, Fisher, R. Smith, Gusciora and Senator Allen

SYNOPSIS

"Kinship Legal Guardianship Notification Act."

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Family, Women and Children's Services Committee with technical review.

AN ACT concerning kinship legal guardianship and supplementing Title 30 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Kinship Legal Guardianship Notification Act."
2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. An increasing number of relatives in the State, including grandparents, find themselves providing care on a long-term basis to children who cannot reside with their parents due to the parent's incapacity or inability to perform the regular and expected functions of care and support of the child;

b. The State law allows for the appointment of an individual as a kinship legal guardian; a kinship legal guardian has the same rights, responsibilities and authority relating to a child as a birth parent, with the exception of consenting to the adoption of the child or a name change for the child, while the birth parent retains the obligation to pay child support and the right to court-approved visitation or parenting time with the child;

c. The Department of Human Services offers a variety of support services and financial aid to kinship legal guardians, which include monthly payments through the federal TANF program, Medicaid eligibility for the child, funding for short-term or one-time expenses, support groups, child support collection, housing assistance, legal services, child care, respite services and education;

d. The department has established the Kinship Navigator program, which is a referral service designed to help kinship caregivers coordinate the various government and community resources that may be available to them; and

e. It is appropriate for the State to ensure that individuals who may be eligible to become kinship legal guardians are aware of the eligibility requirements for, and the responsibilities of, kinship legal guardianship, and that both individuals who may be eligible to become kinship legal guardians and current kinship legal guardians are aware of the services available to kinship legal guardians in the State.

3. The Department of Human Services shall, in easily understandable language:

a. inform individuals, of whom the department is aware, who may be eligible to become kinship legal guardians of:

(1) the eligibility requirements for, and the responsibilities of, kinship legal guardianship; and

(2) the full-range of services for which kinship legal guardians may be eligible and the eligibility requirements for those services; and

b. inform current kinship legal guardians of the full-range of services for which kinship legal guardians may be eligible and the eligibility requirements for those services.

4. The Commissioner of Human Services shall adopt rules and regulations, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), to effectuate the purposes of this act.

5. This act shall take effect on the 180th day following enactment, but the Commissioner of Human Services may take such anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be necessary for the implementation of the act.