

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT AND CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO STUDY AND DEVELOP A PILOT APPROACH TO IDENTIFY AND PROVIDE PROTECTIVE OR SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO RUNAWAY CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

WHEREAS, between one million six hundred thousand and two million eight hundred thousand children run away in a year; and

WHEREAS, children ages twelve to seventeen are at higher risk for homelessness than adults; and

WHEREAS, children who run away are at high risk of victimization by human traffickers and others; substance abuse; and suicide; and

WHEREAS, children who run away from home are in crisis; and

WHEREAS, there may be many reasons underlying a runaway child's decision to run; and

WHEREAS, running away is not a crime unless the child has been adjudicated delinquent; and

WHEREAS, running away may be seen as a cry for help; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement options for assisting a runaway child are currently limited to helping to locate the runaway child and return the child to the home, or taking the child

into protective custody; and

WHEREAS, there needs to be a middle path for law enforcement that allows for intervention to assess whether the runaway child and the child's family are in need of protective or supportive services and to provide those protective or supportive services; and

WHEREAS, the children, youth and families department is charged with providing protective services for children and youths; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no procedure for law enforcement personnel who have identified or located runaway children to notify the children, youth and families department of the possible need for protective or supportive services; and

WHEREAS, public schools are required under federal law to designate liaisons to identify and immediately enroll unaccompanied youths in school and often have information about children and their family situations that can be helpful in protecting and supporting children; and

WHEREAS, children and their families would be well-served if law enforcement, the children, youth and families department and public schools were authorized to share information to provide protection and support to runaway children and their families;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that a task force be convened to study approaches and costs to improve communication between agencies to enable earlier identification of children and families in need of protective or supportive services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force be composed of representatives from the children, youth and families department, the Bernalillo county sheriff's office and the Albuquerque public school district; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that those representatives identify a law enforcement agency from a community with a population of seventy-five thousand or less and a public school in a community with a population of seventy-five thousand or less and invite them to designate representatives to participate in the task force; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force develop a pilot approach to be tested in Bernalillo county; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force report its findings and make recommendations for proposed legislation and funding to the appropriate interim committee dealing with courts, corrections and justice issues by November 2015; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the co-chairs of the New Mexico legislative council, the children, youth and families department, the Bernalillo county sheriff's office and the Albuquerque public

school district.