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AN ACT

RELATING TO YOUTH; ENACTING THE FOSTERING CONNECTIONS ACT AND AMENDING SECTIONS OF THE CHILDREN'S CODE AND THE ABUSE AND NEGLECT ACT TO PROVIDE FOR SERVICES FOR ELIGIBLE ADULTS IN TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. A new section of the Children's Code is enacted to read:

"SHORT TITLE.--Sections 1 through 10 of this act may be cited as the "Fostering Connections Act"."

SECTION 2. A new section of the Children's Code is enacted to read:

"DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Fostering Connections Act:

A. "eligible adult" means an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the fostering connections program;

B. "foster care maintenance payment" means a payment for the care and support of an eligible adult, which payment rate is established through legislative appropriation and is based on the age and needs of the eligible adult;

C. "host home" means a setting in an eligible adult's former foster home or in another residence in which an eligible adult:

(1) shares a residence with another adult or

1 adults; and

2 (2) agrees to meet the basic expectations
3 established by the:

4 (a) eligible adult;

5 (b) other adult or adults sharing the
6 residence; and

7 (c) department;

8 D. "supervised independent living setting" means
9 an age-appropriate setting that the department approves for
10 placement of an eligible adult, which setting:

11 (1) conforms to federal requirements for
12 supervised independent living settings; and

13 (2) may be a single or shared residence,
14 including:

15 (a) a host home;

16 (b) a college dormitory or other post-
17 secondary education or training housing; or

18 (c) the home of a parent of the
19 eligible adult;

20 E. "transition plan" means a written,
21 individualized plan developed collaboratively between the
22 department and the eligible adult that identifies the:

23 (1) eligible adult's needs, strengths and
24 goals in the areas of safety, housing, education, employment
25 or income, health and mental health, local opportunities for

1 mentors and continuing support services; and

2 (2) activities, responsibilities and time
3 frames for addressing the goals specified in the transition
4 plan;

5 F. "voluntary services and support agreement"
6 means a written agreement, binding on the parties to the
7 agreement, between the department and an eligible adult,
8 which agreement specifies, at a minimum, the legal status of
9 the eligible adult and the rights and obligations of the
10 eligible adult and the department while the eligible adult is
11 participating in the fostering connections program; and

12 G. "young adult" means an individual who is at
13 least eighteen years of age and who is under twenty-one years
14 of age."

15 SECTION 3. A new section of the Children's Code is
16 enacted to read:

17 "FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--ELIGIBILITY.--

18 A. The "fostering connections program" is
19 established in the department. The department shall make the
20 fostering connections program available, on a voluntary
21 basis, to an eligible adult who:

22 (1) has attained at least eighteen years of
23 age and who is younger than:

24 (a) as of July 1, 2020, nineteen years
25 of age;

1 (b) as of July 1, 2021, twenty years of
2 age; and

3 (c) as of July 1, 2022, twenty-one
4 years of age;

5 (2) was adjudicated as an abused or
6 neglected child pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act or its
7 equivalent under tribal law and:

8 (a) upon attaining eighteen years of
9 age, was under an out-of-home placement order; or

10 (b) had attained at least sixteen years
11 of age when a guardianship or adoption assistance agreement
12 was in effect;

13 (3) is:

14 (a) completing secondary education or
15 an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

16 (b) enrolled in an institution that
17 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

18 (c) employed for at least eighty hours
19 per month;

20 (d) participating in a program or
21 activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to
22 employment; or

23 (e) incapable of doing any of the
24 activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this
25 paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition, which

1 incapacity is supported by regularly updated information in
2 the case plan; and

3 (4) enters into a voluntary services and
4 support agreement with the department pursuant to the
5 Fostering Connections Act.

6 B. The citizenship or immigration status of a
7 young adult shall not be a factor when determining the young
8 adult's eligibility pursuant to this section."

9 SECTION 4. A new section of the Children's Code is
10 enacted to read:

11 "FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--SERVICES--SUPPORTS.--

12 A. The fostering connections program shall provide
13 at least the following services and supports to eligible
14 adults:

15 (1) major medical and behavioral health care
16 coverage;

17 (2) housing, in one of the following
18 settings that the eligible adult chooses:

19 (a) a supervised independent living
20 setting;

21 (b) a transitional living program that
22 the department licenses or approves; or

23 (c) placement in a residential facility
24 or another institution; provided that: 1) except as provided
25 pursuant to Item 2) of this subparagraph, an eligible adult

1 who is residing in a residential facility upon leaving foster
2 care may choose to temporarily stay until the eligible adult
3 is able to transition to a more age-appropriate setting; and
4 2) if the court finds that an eligible adult's developmental
5 level, disability or other condition indicates placement in a
6 residential facility or another institution due to an
7 eligible adult's developmental level, disability or other
8 condition, the eligible adult shall be placed in a
9 residential facility or another institution until the court
10 deems that the eligible adult may be appropriately placed in
11 another setting;

12 (3) foster care maintenance payments;
13 provided that these payments:

14 (a) may be sent by the department, all
15 or in part, directly to: 1) the eligible adult, if the
16 eligible adult is living in a supervised independent living
17 setting; or 2) a transitional living program, if the eligible
18 adult is living in a transitional living program; and

19 (b) shall reflect the eligible adult's
20 status as a parent, if applicable; and

21 (4) case management services that include
22 the development of a case plan, developed jointly by the
23 department and the eligible adult, that includes a
24 description of the identified housing situation or living
25 arrangement, and the resources to assist the eligible adult

1 in the transition from the fostering connections program to
2 adulthood. The case management services shall include
3 assisting the eligible adult in:

4 (a) obtaining employment or other
5 financial support;

6 (b) obtaining a government-issued
7 identification card;

8 (c) opening and maintaining a bank
9 account;

10 (d) obtaining appropriate community
11 resources, including health, mental health, developmental
12 disability and other disability services and support;

13 (e) when appropriate, satisfying any
14 juvenile or criminal justice system requirements and
15 assisting with sealing the eligible adult's children's court
16 record pursuant to Section 32A-2-26 NMSA 1978;

17 (f) completing secondary education;

18 (g) applying for admission and aid for
19 post-secondary education or vocational courses;

20 (h) obtaining the necessary state court
21 findings and then applying for special immigrant juvenile
22 status under federal law or applying for other immigration
23 relief for which the eligible adult may be qualified;

24 (i) obtaining a copy of health and
25 education records of the eligible adult;

1 (j) applying for any public benefits or
2 benefits for which the eligible adult may be entitled or that
3 may be due through the eligible adult's parents or relatives,
4 including state or federal cash assistance, nutritional
5 assistance or low-income home energy assistance;

6 (k) maintaining relationships with
7 individuals who are important to the eligible adult,
8 including searching for individuals with whom the eligible
9 adult has lost contact;

10 (l) accessing information about
11 maternal and paternal relatives, including any siblings;

12 (m) accessing youth empowerment
13 opportunities and peer support groups; and

14 (n) accessing pregnancy and parenting
15 resources and services.

16 B. The department shall not require background
17 checks for other residents of a supervised independent living
18 setting as a condition of approving an eligible adult's
19 supervised independent living setting.

20 C. The department shall develop procedures to
21 provide extended subsidies to families for adoption and
22 guardianship until the eligible adult turns twenty-one years
23 of age if:

24 (1) an adoption assistance or guardianship
25 assistance agreement was in effect for the eligible adult

1 when the eligible adult was sixteen years of age or older;
2 and

3 (2) between the ages of eighteen and twenty-
4 one years, the eligible adult meets at least one of the
5 following participation criteria:

6 (a) completion of a secondary education
7 or a program leading to an equivalent credential;

8 (b) enrollment in an institution that
9 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

10 (c) participation in a program or
11 activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to,
12 employment;

13 (d) employment for at least eighty
14 hours per month; or

15 (e) is incapable of doing any of the
16 activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this
17 paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition."

18 SECTION 5. A new section of the Children's Code is
19 enacted to read:

20 "FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--PARTICIPATION--VOLUNTARY
21 SERVICES AND SUPPORT AGREEMENT--PERIODIC CASE REVIEWS.--

22 A. An eligible adult may participate in the
23 fostering connections program for any duration of time while
24 the eligible adult is between eighteen and twenty-one years
25 of age, by entering into a voluntary services and support

1 agreement immediately upon turning eighteen years of age or
2 any time thereafter.

3 B. When an eligible adult elects to participate in
4 the fostering connections program, the department and the
5 eligible adult shall execute, and the eligible adult shall be
6 provided with a signed copy of, a voluntary services and
7 support agreement that sets forth, at a minimum, the
8 following:

9 (1) a requirement that the eligible adult
10 continue to be eligible in accordance with the Fostering
11 Connections Act for the duration of the voluntary services
12 and support agreement;

13 (2) the services and support that the
14 eligible adult will receive through the fostering connections
15 program;

16 (3) the voluntary nature of the eligible
17 adult's participation and the eligible adult's right to
18 terminate the voluntary services and support agreement at any
19 time; and

20 (4) conditions that may result in the
21 termination of the voluntary services and support agreement
22 and the eligible adult's early discharge from the fostering
23 connections program pursuant to Section 6 of the Fostering
24 Connections Act.

25 C. As soon as possible and no later than forty-

1 five days after the eligible adult and the department execute
2 the voluntary services and support agreement, the department
3 shall conduct a determination of income eligibility for
4 purposes of compliance with federal foster care and
5 transitional care assistance; provided that within fifteen
6 days after execution of the voluntary services and support
7 agreement, the department shall provide those services and
8 supports set forth in that agreement.

9 D. The department shall assign an eligible adult a
10 case manager, who shall be trained in primarily providing
11 services for transition-aged eligible adults.

12 E. The department shall provide reasonable efforts
13 to assist eligible adults in achieving permanency and
14 creating permanent connections after the age of eighteen.

15 F. The department and at least one person who is
16 not responsible for case management, in collaboration with
17 the eligible adult and additional persons identified by the
18 eligible adult, shall conduct periodic case reviews not less
19 than once every one hundred eighty days to evaluate progress
20 made toward meeting the goals set forth in the case plan.

21 The department shall use a team approach in conducting case
22 reviews and shall facilitate the participation of the
23 eligible adult."

24 SECTION 6. A new section of the Children's Code is
25 enacted to read:

1 "TERMINATION OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES AND SUPPORT
2 AGREEMENT--NOTICE--APPEAL--PROCEDURE.--

3 A. An eligible adult may choose to terminate the
4 voluntary services and support agreement and stop receiving
5 services and support under the fostering connections program
6 at any time. If an eligible adult chooses to terminate the
7 voluntary services and support agreement, the department
8 shall provide the eligible adult with a clear and
9 developmentally appropriate written notice informing the
10 eligible adult of:

11 (1) the potential negative effects of
12 terminating the voluntary services and support agreement
13 early;

14 (2) the option to reenter the fostering
15 connections program at any time before attaining twenty-one
16 years of age, so long as the eligibility requirements are
17 met;

18 (3) the procedures for reentering the
19 fostering connections program; and

20 (4) information about and contact
21 information for community resources that may benefit the
22 eligible adult.

23 B. As part of the case management processes, the
24 department shall identify as soon as possible any barriers to
25 maintaining eligibility that an eligible adult is

1 encountering and shall make all reasonable efforts to address
2 those barriers. The department's efforts shall be documented
3 in the case plan.

4 C. Academic breaks in post-secondary education
5 attendance, such as semester and seasonal breaks, and other
6 transitions between status that meet eligibility
7 requirements, including education and employment transitions
8 of no longer than thirty days, shall not be a basis for
9 termination.

10 D. If the department determines that a young adult
11 is no longer eligible for the fostering connections program,
12 the department shall:

13 (1) provide to the young adult a clear and
14 developmentally appropriate:

15 (a) written notice informing the young
16 adult of the department's intent to terminate the voluntary
17 services and support agreement; and

18 (b) explanation of the basis for the
19 termination; and

20 (2) make reasonable efforts to meet in
21 person with the young adult to explain the information in the
22 written termination notice and to assist the young adult in
23 reestablishing eligibility if the young adult wishes to
24 continue participating in the program.

25 E. The department shall not terminate services

1 under the fostering connections program without court
2 approval.

3 F. If an eligible adult remains in the fostering
4 connections program until attaining twenty-one years of age,
5 at least sixty days before the eligible adult's twenty-first
6 birthday, the department shall provide the eligible adult
7 with a clear and developmentally appropriate written notice
8 informing the eligible adult of the termination of the
9 voluntary services and support agreement at twenty-one years
10 of age, the transition plan requirement and information about
11 and contact information for community resources that may
12 benefit the young adult, specifically including information
13 regarding state programs established pursuant to federal law
14 that provide transitional foster care assistance to young
15 adults."

16 SECTION 7. A new section of the Children's Code is
17 enacted to read:

18 "FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--CHILDREN'S COURT
19 PETITION--JURISDICTION--CONTENTS--PROGRAM FILE.--

20 A. An eligible adult participating in the
21 fostering connections program shall remain under the
22 jurisdiction of the children's court while participating in
23 the program. The eligible adult is the eligible adult's own
24 legal custodian.

25 B. Within fifteen days after the voluntary

1 services and support agreement is executed, the department
2 shall file a petition initiating proceedings pursuant to the
3 Fostering Connections Act that shall be entitled, "In the
4 Matter of , an eligible adult", and shall
5 set forth with specificity:

6 (1) the name, birth date and residence of
7 the eligible adult; and

8 (2) the facts necessary to invoke the
9 jurisdiction of the court.

10 C. A petition filed pursuant to Subsection B of
11 this section shall be accompanied by a copy of the eligible
12 adult's voluntary services and support agreement and case
13 plan.

14 D. There shall be no interruption in the foster
15 care maintenance payment, housing, medical assistance
16 coverage or case management for an eligible adult who is
17 eligible and chooses to participate in the fostering
18 connections program immediately following the termination of
19 children's court jurisdiction at age eighteen.

20 E. At the inception of a fostering connections
21 proceeding, the court shall appoint an attorney to represent
22 the eligible adult. If the eligible adult consents to the
23 appointment, the attorney who previously served as the
24 eligible adult's attorney may be appointed as the eligible
25 adult's attorney.

1 F. Unless excused by a court, an attorney
2 appointed to represent an eligible adult shall represent the
3 eligible adult in any subsequent appeals.

4 G. A hearing held pursuant to the Fostering
5 Connections Act shall be commenced within ninety days of the
6 filing of the petition, at which time the court shall review
7 the voluntary services and support agreement and determine
8 whether the agreement is in the best interests of the
9 eligible adult."

10 SECTION 8. A new section of the Children's Code is
11 enacted to read:

12 "REVIEW HEARINGS.--

13 A. The court shall conduct a review hearing at
14 least once per year.

15 B. The primary purpose of the review hearing shall
16 be to ensure that the fostering connections program is
17 providing the eligible adult with the needed services and
18 support to help the eligible adult move toward permanency and
19 a successful transition to adulthood. At the review hearing,
20 the department shall show that it has made reasonable efforts
21 to implement the case plan. A review hearing shall be
22 conducted in a manner that seeks the eligible adult's
23 meaningful participation.

24 C. The department shall prepare and present to the
25 children's court a report addressing progress made in meeting

1 the goals in the case plan, including an independent living
2 transition proposal, and shall propose modifications as
3 necessary to further those goals.

4 D. If the court finds the department has not made
5 reasonable efforts to implement the case plan, the court may
6 order additional services and support to achieve the goals of
7 the case plan and the department's policies or state or
8 federal law."

9 SECTION 9. A new section of the Children's Code is
10 enacted to read:

11 "DISCHARGE HEARING.--

12 A. At the last case review or review hearing held
13 prior to the eligible adult's twentieth birthday, or prior to
14 an eligible adult's discharge from the fostering connections
15 program, the court shall review the eligible adult's
16 transition plan and shall determine whether the department
17 has made reasonable efforts to implement the requirements of
18 Subsection B of this section.

19 B. The court shall determine whether:

20 (1) written information concerning the
21 eligible adult's family history, the whereabouts of any
22 sibling, if appropriate, and education and health records
23 have been provided to the eligible adult;

24 (2) the following have been provided to the
25 eligible adult:

- 1 (a) the eligible adult's social
2 security card;
- 3 (b) the eligible adult's certified
4 birth certificate;
- 5 (c) the eligible adult's state-issued
6 identification card;
- 7 (d) the death certificate of a parent
8 of the eligible adult, if applicable;
- 9 (e) proof of the eligible adult's
10 citizenship or residence; and
- 11 (f) proof that the eligible adult has
12 been in foster care;
- 13 (3) assistance in obtaining medicaid has
14 been provided to the eligible adult, unless the eligible
15 adult is ineligible for medicaid; and
- 16 (4) referral for a guardianship or limited
17 guardianship if the eligible adult is incapacitated has been
18 made.

19 C. If the court finds that the department has not
20 made reasonable efforts to meet all of the requirements of
21 Subsection B of this section and that termination of
22 jurisdiction would be harmful to the eligible adult, the
23 court may continue to exercise its jurisdiction for a period
24 not to exceed one year from the eligible adult's twenty-first
25 birthday or the eligible adult's discharge from the fostering

1 connections program; provided that the eligible adult
2 consents to continued jurisdiction of the court. The court
3 may dismiss the case for good cause at any time after the
4 eligible adult's twenty-first birthday or the eligible
5 adult's discharge from the fostering connections program."

6 SECTION 10. A new section of the Children's Code is
7 enacted to read:

8 "FOSTERING CONNECTIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE--
9 MEMBERSHIP--APPOINTMENT--TERMS--DUTIES--MEETINGS--REPORT.--

10 A. By October 1, 2019, the secretary shall appoint
11 a "fostering connections advisory committee" to make
12 recommendations to the department and to the legislature
13 regarding the fostering connections program. The committee
14 shall meet on a biannual basis to advise the department and
15 the legislature regarding ongoing implementation of the
16 fostering connections program. By September 1, 2020 and each
17 September 1 thereafter, the committee shall provide a written
18 report to the governor, the legislature and the secretary
19 regarding ongoing implementation of the fostering connections
20 program, including the number of participants and the number
21 of early discharges.

22 B. By October 1, 2020 and each October 1
23 thereafter, the committee shall develop specific
24 recommendations for expanding the fostering connections
25 program or improving outcomes for similar groups of at-risk

1 young people.

2 C. The members of the committee shall include:

3 (1) the following seven voting members:

4 (a) the secretary, ex officio, or the
5 secretary's designee;

6 (b) three members who are appointed by
7 the secretary as follows: 1) two youth or young adults who
8 are currently or were previously placed in foster care; and
9 2) one representative of a child advocacy group; and

10 (c) three members who are appointed by
11 the secretary as follows: 1) one representative of a child
12 welfare advocacy organization; 2) one representative of the
13 department; and 3) one representative of an agency providing
14 independent living services; and

15 (2) the following ex-officio nonvoting
16 members:

17 (a) a legislator, appointed by the
18 New Mexico legislative council;

19 (b) a children's court judge, appointed
20 by the administrative office of the courts; and

21 (c) a subject-matter expert, appointed
22 by the secretary.

23 D. Members of the committee shall be appointed for
24 terms of two years; provided that the initial committee
25 members' terms shall be staggered so that no more than five

1 members' terms shall expire in any one year.

2 E. The secretary shall convene a first meeting of
3 the committee by December 1, 2019. At that first meeting,
4 the members of the committee shall choose a chair, and
5 members' terms shall be chosen by lot.

6 F. The secretary shall fill vacancies on the
7 committee as they occur.

8 G. A majority of the committee members constitutes
9 a quorum for voting purposes.

10 H. Members of the committee shall receive per diem
11 and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act and
12 shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance
13 for their service on the committee.

14 I. As used in this section:

15 (1) "committee" means the fostering
16 connections advisory committee; and

17 (2) "secretary" means the secretary of
18 children, youth and families."

19 SECTION 11. Section 32A-1-16 NMSA 1978 (being Laws
20 1993, Chapter 77, Section 25) is amended to read:

21 "32A-1-16. BASIC RIGHTS.--

22 A. A child subject to the provisions of the
23 Children's Code is entitled to the same basic rights as an
24 adult, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code.

25 B. A person afforded rights under the Children's

1 Code shall be advised of those rights at that person's first
2 appearance before the court on a petition under the
3 Children's Code.

4 C. An eligible adult retains all of the basic
5 rights of an adult while receiving services pursuant to the
6 fostering connections program."

7 SECTION 12. Section 32A-1-20 NMSA 1978 (being Laws
8 1993, Chapter 77, Section 29) is amended to read:

9 "32A-1-20. PURCHASE OF CARE FROM PRIVATE AGENCY BY
10 PUBLIC AGENCY.--

11 A. When the legal custody of a child or the
12 placement and care responsibility of an eligible adult is
13 vested in a public agency, under the provisions of the
14 Children's Code, the public agency may transfer physical
15 custody of the child or the eligible adult to an appropriate
16 private agency and may purchase care and treatment from the
17 private agency if the private agency submits periodic reports
18 to the public agency covering the care and treatment the
19 child or eligible adult is receiving and the child's or
20 eligible adult's responses to that care and treatment. These
21 reports shall be made as frequently as the public agency
22 deems necessary, but not less often than once each six months
23 for each child or eligible adult. The private agency shall
24 also afford an opportunity for a representative of the public
25 agency to examine or consult with the child or eligible adult

1 as frequently as the public agency deems necessary.

2 B. As used in this section, "eligible adult" means
3 an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for
4 participation in the fostering connections program
5 established pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act."

6 SECTION 13. Section 32A-5-45 NMSA 1978 (being Laws
7 1993, Chapter 77, Section 172, as amended) is amended to
8 read:

9 "32A-5-45. ADMINISTRATION OF SUBSIDIZED ADOPTIONS.--

10 A. The department shall promulgate all necessary
11 regulations for the administration of the program of
12 subsidized adoptions or placement with permanent guardians.

13 B. Subsidy payments may include payments to
14 vendors for medical and surgical expenses and payments to the
15 adoptive parents or permanent guardians for maintenance and
16 other costs incidental to the adoption, care, training and
17 education of the child. The payments in any category of
18 assistance shall not exceed the cost of providing the
19 assistance in foster care. Payments shall not be made under
20 this section after the child reaches eighteen years of age,
21 except for a child who is enrolled in the medically fragile
22 waiver program, in which case the payments may extend until
23 the child is twenty-one years of age. Payments shall be made
24 pursuant to this section until a child reaches twenty-one
25 years of age if the adoption assistance agreement was in

1 effect when the child was at least sixteen years of age and,
2 between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years of age, the
3 child:

4 (1) has completed secondary education or a
5 program leading to an equivalent credential;

6 (2) is enrolled in an institution that
7 provides post-secondary or vocational education;

8 (3) participates in a program or activity
9 designed to promote or remove barriers to employment;

10 (4) is employed for at least eighty hours
11 per month; or

12 (5) is incapable of doing any of the
13 activities described in Paragraphs (1) through (4) of this
14 subsection due to a medical or behavioral condition, and
15 provides evidence of the child's incapability, which evidence
16 is supported by regularly updated information.

17 C. A written agreement between the adoptive family
18 or permanent guardians and the department shall precede the
19 decree of adoption or permanent guardianship. The agreement
20 shall incorporate the terms and conditions of the subsidy
21 plan based on the individual needs of the child within the
22 permanent family. In cases of subsidies that continue for
23 more than one year, there shall be an annual redetermination
24 of the need for a subsidy. The department shall develop an
25 appeal procedure whereby a permanent family may contest a

1 division determination to deny, reduce or terminate a
2 subsidy.

3 D. As used in this section, "eligible adult" means
4 an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for
5 participation in the fostering connections program
6 established pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act."

7 SECTION 14. TEMPORARY PROVISION--AMENDED STATE PLAN
8 AMENDMENT--CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT RULES.--

9 A. By October 1, 2020, the children, youth and
10 families department shall:

11 (1) submit an amendment to the state plan to
12 seek federal funding for newly eligible adults for whom an
13 adoption subsidy or a guardianship assistance agreement was
14 in effect if the child had attained sixteen years of age
15 before the agreement became effective or for whom a
16 state-funded guardianship assistance agreement was in effect
17 if the youth had attained sixteen years of age before the
18 agreement became effective;

19 (2) implement the fostering connections
20 program pursuant to the provisions of the Fostering
21 Connections Act and maximize the children, youth and families
22 department's access to federal funds for extended
23 guardianship assistance and extended adoption assistance for
24 the benefit of eligible adults participating in the fostering
25 connections program; and

1 (3) adopt and promulgate rules as needed to
2 carry out the provisions of the Fostering Connections Act.

3 B. As used in this section, "eligible adult" means
4 an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for
5 participating in the fostering connections program.

6 SECTION 15. TEMPORARY PROVISION--WORK GROUP--YOUTH
7 ADJUDICATED UNDER THE DELINQUENCY ACT--PARTICIPATION IN
8 FOSTERING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM--DUTIES--REPORTING.--The
9 secretary of children, youth and families shall convene a
10 work group composed of experts in children's services and
11 juvenile justice to collect information and make
12 recommendations on including in the fostering connections
13 program youth who have been adjudicated under the Delinquency
14 Act. The work group shall examine and report to the
15 secretary of children, youth and families and the legislature
16 by November 1, 2019:

17 A. the potential number of young adults who could
18 be included in the fostering connections program;

19 B. the processes by which young adults eligible to
20 participate in the fostering connections program could be
21 identified;

22 C. procedures for assisting young adults to become
23 eligible for the fostering connections program; and

24 D. the potential placement and service array that
25 would be required for including young adults who have been

1 adjudicated under the Delinquency Act in the fostering

2 connections program.

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