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An Act To Define Services for Maine Runaway and Homeless Youth

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA c. 1071, sub-c. 15, as amended, is repealed.

Sec. 2. 22 MRSA c. 1071, sub-c. 16 is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER 16

MAINE RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

§ 4099-D. Definitions

As used in this subchapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Homeless youth. "Homeless youth" means a person 21 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care or who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. "Homeless youth" does not include a person incarcerated or otherwise detained under federal or state law.

2. Fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. "Fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence" means a dwelling at which a person resides on a regular basis that adequately provides safe shelter. "Fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence" does not include a publicly or privately operated institutional shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; transitional housing; a temporary placement with a peer, friend or family member who has not offered a permanent residence, residential lease or temporary lodging for more than 30 days; or a public or private place not designed for, nor ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

3. Runaway. "Runaway" means an unmarried child under 18 years of age who is absent from the home of a parent or guardian or other lawful placement without the consent of the parent, guardian or lawful custodian.

§ 4099-E. Comprehensive program for homeless youth

The department shall establish and support a comprehensive program for homeless youth in the State by contracting with organizations and agencies licensed by the department that provide street outreach, shelter and transitional living services for homeless youth. The department shall by rule establish licensure requirements and shall establish performance-based contracts with organizations and agencies to provide the following programs and services:

1. Street and community outreach and drop-in programs. Youth drop-in centers to provide walk-in access to crisis intervention and ongoing supportive services, including one-to-one case management services on a self-referral basis and street and community outreach programs to locate, contact and provide information, referrals and services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness and runaways. Information, referrals and services provided may include, but are not limited to family reunification services; conflict resolution or mediation counseling; assistance in obtaining temporary emergency shelter; case management aimed at obtaining food, clothing, medical care or mental health counseling; counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and pregnancy; referrals to other agencies that provide support services to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness and runaways; assistance with education, employment and independent living skills; aftercare services; and specialized services for highly vulnerable runaways and homeless youth, including teen parents, sexually exploited youth and youth with mental illness or developmental disabilities;

2. Emergency shelter program. Emergency shelter programs to provide homeless youth and runaways with referrals and walk-in access to short-term residential care on an emergency basis. The program must provide homeless youth and runaways with safe, dignified, voluntary housing, including private shower facilities, beds and at least one meal each day, and assist a runaway with reunification with family or a legal guardian when required or appropriate. The services provided at emergency shelters may include, but are not limited to, family reunification services or referral to safe, dignified housing; individual, family and group counseling; assistance obtaining clothing; access to medical and dental care and mental health counseling; education and employment services; recreational activities; case management, advocacy and referral services; independent living skills training; and aftercare, follow-up services and transportation; and

3. Transitional living programs. Transitional living programs to help homeless youth find and maintain safe, dignified housing. The program may also provide rental assistance and related supportive services or may refer youth to other organizations or agencies that provide such services. Services provided may include, but are not limited to, provision of safe, dignified housing; educational assessment and referrals to educational programs; career planning, employment, job skills training and independent living skills training; job placement; budgeting and money management; assistance in securing housing appropriate to needs and income; counseling regarding violence, prostitution, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy; referral for medical services or chemical dependency treatment; parenting skills; self-sufficiency support services or life skills training; and aftercare and follow-up services.

§ 4099-F. Data collection

The department shall collect data from its licensed organizations and agencies to ensure that appropriate and high-quality services are being delivered to homeless youth, youth at risk of homelessness and runaways and shall use the data to monitor the success of the contracts and programs as well as changes in the rates of homelessness among youth in the State.

§ 4099-G. Rules

The department shall adopt rules as may be necessary for the effective administration of the comprehensive program under section 4099-E. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

This bill repeals the youth in need of services program in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, chapter 1071, subchapter 15 and establishes a comprehensive program for homeless youth and runaways. The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to implement the comprehensive program through performance-based contracts with organizations and agencies licensed by the department that provide street and community outreach, drop-in programs, emergency shelter and transitional living services. The bill specifies the type of services the program should provide and requires the department to collect data from its licensed organizations and agencies for quality assurance purposes and to monitor the success of the program as well as changes in the rates of homelessness among Maine's youth. The department is authorized to adopt routine technical rules as may be necessary for the effective administration of the program.