

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2019**

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**HOUSE BILL 826**

Short Title: Standardized Assessment/Foster Care Pilot. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Dobson, Potts, and White (Primary Sponsors).

*For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.*

Referred to: Appropriations, Health and Human Services, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 18, 2019

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A PILOT PROJECT FOCUSED ON STANDARDIZED SCREENING AND ASSESSMENTS FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Whereas, North Carolina does not have a uniform, standardized process to conduct a quality, comprehensive assessment when a child is removed from the child's home by a county department of social services; and

Whereas, removing a child from the child's home creates adverse traumatic experiences for the child and the family; and

Whereas, the State of North Carolina is responsible for the care and protection, including physical and behavioral health needs, for children in custody; and

Whereas, Benchmarks has piloted a three-county department of social services, private behavioral health provider and local management entities/managed care organizations (LME/MCOs) partnership to develop and implement an evidence-based, trauma-informed assessment for children coming into foster care; and

Whereas, data from the pilot shows that early intervention through proper screening and assessment decreases the utilization of the emergency room, crisis management, and residential treatment placements while cutting Medicaid costs by up to forty-four percent (44%) per child 12 months after entering custody; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Pilot Created. – There is created a pilot project to develop a standardized process for every child, four years of age and older, entering into foster care to receive a standardized, trauma and evidence-informed screening and assessment to ensure an appropriate diagnosis, which will in turn lead to the proper provision of services for the child. Up to three local management entities/managed care organizations (LME/MCOs) shall participate in the pilot project. The LME/MCOs shall collaborate with their county departments of social services in up to four counties within the LME/MCOs' catchment areas on developing and implementing the standardized screening and assessments, with the intent that (i) by July 1, 2019, the LME/MCOs and their county departments of social services begin training for implementation of the assessments and (ii) by February 1, 2020, the LME/MCOs and county departments of social services begin conducting the assessments. The pilot shall include support for the LME/MCOs and county departments of social services for training in trauma-focused care and the use of the screening and assessment tool. For providers, the pilot shall provide ongoing oversight, training, certification, and coaching to ensure fidelity to the screening and assessment



1 model. For purposes of this act, "trauma" is defined as the result of an event, series of events, or  
2 set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or  
3 threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical,  
4 social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

5 **SECTION 2.** Report. – The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of  
6 Social Services, shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and  
7 Human Services by December 1, 2021, that shall include, for each participating county, tracking  
8 of case flow, completion and timing of the trauma checklist and screening tool, a comprehensive  
9 clinical assessment, and diagnostic finding and service recommendations from the assessment.

10 **SECTION 3.** Appropriation. – There is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
11 Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, the sum of eighty  
12 thousand dollars (\$80,000) for the 2019-2020 fiscal year and the sum of one hundred fifty  
13 thousand dollars (\$150,000) for the 2020-2021 fiscal year to implement the standardized  
14 assessment for youth in foster care pilot project created by this act.

15 **SECTION 4.** Effective Date. – This act becomes effective July 1, 2019.