A BILL FOR AN ACT

CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at http://leg.colorado.gov.)

The bill directs the department of early childhood to contract with a Colorado-based nonprofit entity to provide children's mental health programs.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:
SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, add 26.5-1-105 as follows:

26.5-1-105. Children's mental health program - appropriation - legislative declaration - definitions - repeal. (1) (a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(I) Neurobiological research confirms that stressful experiences early in life can have profound and destructive impacts on the architecture of the brain;

(II) Additional scientific research has shown, however, that responsive, nurturing relationships between young children and their caregivers that lead to secure attachment serve as powerful, protective buffers to stressful experiences early in life;

(III) Providing an evidence-based, two-generation, and home-based prevention and early intervention mental health program can prevent or ameliorate the damage caused by stressful experiences; and

(IV) It is possible to decrease the stress experienced by families by connecting family members to needed services through intensive care coordination. By providing psychotherapy to a caregiver and child together, it is possible to repair the impact of stress on the child and strengthen the caregiving relationship.

(b) The general assembly finds, therefore, that:

(I) Given the harmful consequences of the economic disruptions resulting from and exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency, it is in the best interest of the state to
AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TO CONTRACT WITH
A NONPROFIT ENTITY TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE-BASED, TWO-GENERATION,
AND HOME-BASED PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION CHILDREN'S
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS; AND

(II) THE PURPOSE OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS IS TO
ENHANCE THE MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CAREGIVERS AND
YOUNG CHILDREN. CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS MUST
COMBINE COMPREHENSIVE, COORDINATED SERVICES AND
PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION FOR CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN,
INCREASE ADULT SELF-REGULATION AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING, AND
RESULT IN LONG-TERM POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

(c) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE
DEPARTMENT AND A NONPROFIT ENTITY WORK COLLABORATIVELY TO
SHARE INFORMATION AS NECESSARY TO PROMOTE EFFICIENT AND
EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH
PROGRAMS IN COLORADO.

(d) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FURTHER FINDS AND DECLARES THAT
CONTRACTING WITH A NONPROFIT ENTITY TO PROVIDE CHILDREN'S
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS CONSTITUTES CRITICAL GOVERNMENT
SERVICES.

(2) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE
REQUIRES:

(a) "CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM" MEANS AN
EVIDENCE-BASED, TWO-GENERATION, AND HOME-BASED PREVENTION AND
EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN FROM
PRENATAL TO SIX YEARS OF AGE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC STRESS
AND TRAUMA. A CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM MUST BE PROVEN
TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE CHILD EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH,
CHILD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, AND CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH, AS
WELL AS DECREASE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, RESULTING IN
LONG-TERM POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

(b) "ENTITY" MEANS A COLORADO-BASED NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION.

(3) (a) ON OR BEFORE NOVEMBER 1, 2022, THE DEPARTMENT
SHALL CONTRACT WITH A COLORADO-BASED NONPROFIT ENTITY TO
PROVIDE CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS. THE ENTITY MUST
HAVE PREVIOUS AND CURRENT EXPERIENCE SERVING THE TARGET
DEMOGRAPHIC USING A CURRICULUM THAT:

(I) INCLUDES COMPONENTS THAT PROVIDE FOR INTERVENING WITH
FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WHO ARE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC
STRESS AND TRAUMA. THE CURRICULUM MUST CONNECT THE FAMILIES TO
NEEDED SERVICES THROUGH INTENSIVE CARE COORDINATION WHILE ALSO
PROVIDING PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR THE CHILD AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN.

(II) HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY IMPLEMENTED WITH SUCCESS BY
PROVIDERS IN COLORADO.

(b) THE ENTITY WITH WHICH THE DEPARTMENT CONTRACTS SHALL:

(I) PERFORM COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION READINESS
ASSESSMENTS AND PROVIDE TRAINING, COACHING, AND MONITORING FOR
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS;

(II) PROVIDE ONGOING QUALITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPROVEMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION AND
SUSTAINABILITY OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS;

(III) PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT WITH SITE-SPECIFIC AND
STATEWIDE PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATIONS OF CHILDREN'S MENTAL
HEALTH PROGRAMS; AND

(IV) Annually prepare and submit to the department and the behavioral health administration an evaluation of the outcomes of all of the children's mental health programs implemented.

(4) (a) For the 2022-23 state fiscal year, the general assembly shall appropriate two million dollars to the department for the purposes of implementing this section from the economic recovery and relief cash fund created in section 24-75-228. The department is authorized to expend up to five percent to pay the costs incurred in implementing this section, including the costs incurred in contracting with a nonprofit entity.

(b) Money spent pursuant to this subsection (4) must conform with the allowable purposes set forth in the federal "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021", Pub.L. 117-2, as amended. The department shall either spend or obligate such appropriation prior to December 30, 2024, and expend the appropriation on or before December 31, 2026.

(c) This subsection (4) is repealed, effective September 1, 2027.

(5) The department and the contracted entity shall comply with the compliance, reporting, record-keeping, and program evaluation requirements established by the office of state planning and budgeting and the state controller in accordance with section 24-75-226 (5).

SECTION 2. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds,
determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.