**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 63‑1‑60 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE JOINT COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, TO PROVIDE FOR ITS MEMBERS, POWERS, AND DUTIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PROMOTING AND FACILITATING ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES, TO PROVIDE THAT CLIENT RECORDS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND TO PROVIDE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH RECORDS MAY BE RELEASED.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 1, Title 63 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 63‑1‑60. (A) There is established the Joint Council on Children and Adolescents to be composed of the directors, or their designees, of the following agencies:

(1) Department of Mental Health;

(2) Department of Juvenile Justice;

(3) Department of Social Services;

(4) Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services;

(5) Department of Disabilities and Special Needs;

(6) Department of Education;

(7) Department of Health and Environmental Control; and

(8) The Continuum of Care.

The chairman of the council must be the director of one of the agencies enumerated in this subsection, and the chairman must be rotated annually in the order in which the agencies are listed, beginning with the Director of the Department of Mental Health.

(B) The council may select additional voting members to include representatives from other state agencies, committees, and programs, local governmental agencies, and nonprofit organizations that provide services or advocacy related to the well‑being and health development of children and adolescents.

(C) The council shall promote and facilitate collaborative activities to improve access to quality, responsive, and cost‑effective services for children and adolescents and their families. These activities may include, but are not limited to:

(1) interagency sharing of information and resources;

(2) memoranda of agreements;

(3) common informational forms and referral processes;

(4) coordination of services;

(5) development of best practices and core competencies; and

(6) joint training initiatives.

(D) Information and records of a client or potential client of a member organization is confidential. To the extent permitted by law, court order, proper consent, and regulation, member organizations of the council may disclose among themselves confidential client information and records as may be necessary for the sole purpose to develop or provide appropriate services for a child or an adolescent or the family of a child or adolescent. Nonidentifying client and case information may be disclosed for the purpose of research and program evaluation.

(E) Consistent with state and federal laws and regulations, the council may enact bylaws, establish policies and procedures, and develop rules to govern its conduct and operation.

(F) The council may pursue partnerships with colleges, universities, and other entities and may receive funding as may be provided in the annual general appropriations act or from any other source public or private. The agency staff of the chairman may provide the administration and staff support services for the work of the council, or the council may contract with another organization for its administration and staff support.

(G) The council may submit an annual written report to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Joint Legislative Committee on Children, no later than June thirtieth of each year, beginning in 2011. The annual report must detail the work of the council, including outcomes achieved and any council recommendations.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2010.

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