

Maryland Department of Human Resources

2009 Legislative Summary



The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. In 2008, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.

The following select bills became law following the 2009 Maryland General Assembly Session and will impact DHR's work. Unless otherwise noted, bills become effective October 1, 2009.

CHILD WELFARE

Senate Bill 58

Termination of Parental Rights

Codifies a Maryland Court of Appeals decision that requires the court to articulate specific reasons why a parent is having his or her parental rights terminated.

Senate Bill 83

Child Welfare Workforce Initiative

Allows newly hired social workers and supervisors with existing professional experience to test out of mandated pre-service training. These workers will more quickly be able to carry a full caseload. (Effective July 1, 2009)

Senate Bill 372 and House Bill 538

Waiver of Tuition and Fees for Foster Care Kids

Allows foster children and their siblings who are adopted after the age of 13 to qualify for a college tuition waiver. In addition, they may also be eligible for federal financial aid because they no longer will have to disclose their adoptive parent's annual income on their financial aid application form.

Senate Bill 421 and House Bill 144

Birth Match

Allows DHR and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to share and match birth records of parents whose parental rights have been terminated. Should a parent who previously had their parental rights terminated give birth to a subsequent child – a social worker will assess the safety of the child.

Senate Bill 933 and House Bill 1337

Citizens Review Board for Children

Clarifies the focus and alters the duties of both the state and local review boards. This bill will improve the quality of reviews conducted for foster children. (Effective July 1, 2009)

House Bill 580

Foster Kids Coverage Act

Requires the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide health care services for independent foster care adolescents.



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House Bill 683

Post Adoption Support Services Pilot Program

Expands crisis services to adopted children and their adoptive families regardless of the type of adoption.

House Bill 1382

Disclosure of Juvenile Records

Authorizes DHR and other jurisdictions to access juvenile court records or fingerprints if the disclosure is necessary to administer public assistance, medical assistance, social services, juvenile services, or other child welfare services programs.

CHILD SUPPORT

Senate Bill 70

Medical Support Coverage for Children

Makes Maryland law consistent with federal law by requiring a court to order medical support be provided to a child receiving child support so long as the coverage is available and affordable for either parent. The passage of the bill will likely increase the number of children who have health insurance.

House Bill 1466

Repeal Assignment of Support

Brings the state in compliance with federal law by repealing a provision that requires temporary cash assistance (TCA) applicants to assign to the State the right to receive child support accrued prior to receiving TCA.

ADULT SERVICES

Senate Bill 303 and House Bill 317

Silver Alert Program

Requires the Maryland State Police to establish a program similar to AMBER ALERT to help find missing elderly persons when they go missing.

FAMILY INVESTMENT

Senate Bill 703 and House Bill 736

Energy Assistance

Assists those who qualify for energy assistance to get help paying past-due energy bills more than just once a lifetime. This bill also expands the scope of weatherization assistance funds. (Effective immediately)

Senate Bill 992 and House Bill 268

Welfare to Work – Green Jobs

Allows the state to develop and implement a plan to provide specialized job training that will result in current and former social services recipients getting green state jobs that protect the environment. (Effective July 1, 2009)

