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IN SENATE

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Introduced by Sens. YOUNG, DeFRANCISCO, GALLIVAN, LARKIN, MARCHIONE,
ORTT -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the executive law, the family court act, the criminal procedure law and the judiciary law, in relation to enacting "Renee's law"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 "Renee's law".
3 § 2. Legislative findings and declaration. The legislature hereby
4 finds and declares that it is a fundamental purpose of this state's
5 juvenile justice system to provide a safe environment for both the residents and the staff of programs licensed, certified and registered by
6 the office of children and family services. The legislature further
7 finds that a safe environment is ensured by providing staff of programs
8 licensed, certified and registered by such office with adequate training
9 and that this function is a primary responsibility of the commissioner
10 of children and family services to ensure. Ensuring the safety of the
11 communities into which the youth are placed is paramount, requiring that
12 a youth be placed in appropriate locations to avoid preventable tragedy.
13 The legislature finds that residents of programs and agencies licensed,
14 certified and registered by the office of children and family services
15 are committing serious crimes within such programs, and that these
16 crimes are not being reported to the proper authorities. The provisions
17 of this act provide a critical framework to improve and maintain safety
18 within such licensed, certified and registered programs, non-profit
19 community based programs and communities throughout the state allowing
20 youths under the office of children and family services' jurisdiction
21

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 the ability to be rehabilitated and receive skills necessary to inhibit
2 recidivism.

3 § 3. Section 501 of the executive law is amended by adding two new
4 subdivisions 7-a and 12-a to read as follows:

5 7-a. To provide for the dissemination of records, files and papers
6 pursuant to subdivision three of section five hundred one-c of this
7 title, paragraph one of subdivision (b) of section one hundred sixty-six
8 of the family court act, paragraph (a) of subdivision five of section
9 720.35 of the criminal procedure law and paragraph (a) of subdivision
10 two of section 725.15 of the criminal procedure law.

11 12-a. To establish and provide for the implementation of a course of
12 training to be completed by all staff members and employees responsible
13 for the care, custody, treatment, housing, education, rehabilitation or
14 guidance of children in facilities in which children are placed or
15 committed by the office of children and family services. The commission-
16 er of such office shall establish programs for preemployment training
17 and in service staff development and training. All such training shall
18 include instruction in child abuse and maltreatment prevention and iden-
19 tification; staff abuse prevention and identification; safety and secu-
20 rity procedures; the principles of child development; the use of phys-
21 ical intervention; techniques of group and individual child management;
22 gang awareness; absent without leave procedures; conflict resolution;
23 and the laws, rules and regulations governing the protection of children
24 from abuse and maltreatment. Such commissioner shall ensure that all
25 training conducted pursuant to this subdivision is evidence based, and
26 evaluated and updated on an annual basis. The failure to provide the
27 training required by this subdivision shall constitute neglect of duty
28 for which the governor may remove the commissioner of children and fami-
29 ly services from office.

30 § 4. Section 501-c of the executive law is amended by adding a new
31 subdivision 3 to read as follows:

32 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision one of this section,
33 the records and files including, but not limited to, unusual incident
34 reports, mental health and developmental disability reports, and
35 progress reports, of each juvenile delinquent, juvenile offender or
36 youthful offender placed with or committed to the custody of the office
37 of children and family services shall be made available:

38 (a) to the staff members and employees of the facility, whether oper-
39 ated by such office or not, in which the delinquent or offender is
40 placed or committed, when the staff member or employee is responsible
41 for the care, custody, treatment, housing, education, rehabilitation or
42 guidance of the affected youth;

43 (b) in the event such delinquent or offender engages in conduct or
44 commits an act which would constitute a crime defined in the penal law
45 if the youth was an adult or commits a crime defined in the penal law,
46 to the court, the presentment agency or district attorney, and the
47 attorney representing the youth upon the filing of charges against the
48 youth relating to such crime; and

49 (c) to any foster parents having custody of such delinquent or offen-
50 der after release from the custody of the office of children and family
51 services, excluding mental health and developmental disability reports.

52 § 5. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 501-i to
53 read as follows:

54 § 501-i. Custody, control and discharge of detained youth. 1. Place-
55 ment. The office of children and family services shall place each youth
56 committed to its custody upon the basis of such youth's risk assessment

1 value as set forth in subdivision three of this section. Provided, that
2 no youth convicted of or adjudicated as having committed a designated
3 felony, or found to have committed two or more level C rule violations
4 while in custody, or found to have committed four or more level B rule
5 violations within the previous three months shall be authorized to be
6 placed in any program or facility that is not designated as a secure
7 facility. Furthermore, no youth having a risk level of III shall be
8 placed in any program licensed, registered or certified by the office of
9 children and family services which is not a secure facility.

10 2. Movement to lower level of custody. Prior to the movement of any
11 youth to a lower level of custody, a risk assessment shall be conducted
12 for such youth. Such assessment shall be completed by the staff charged
13 with the daily care and custody of the youth. Upon completion of a risk
14 assessment of a youth, the facility or program which will receive such
15 youth shall verify whether it meets the staffing requirements of subdi-
16 vision six of this section.

17 3. Risk assessment. The commissioner of children and family services,
18 or his or her designee, shall establish a risk assessment value for each
19 youth committed to the custody of the office of children and family
20 services. The risk assessment value of each youth shall be derived by
21 adding the youth's factors for facility rule violations to his or her
22 prior offense history, and subtracting therefrom his or her mitigating
23 factors.

24 (a) Facility rule factors shall be determined by:

25 (i) the number of level B rule violations multiplied by two; and

26 (ii) the number of level C rule violations multiplied by three.

27 (b) Prior offense history factor shall be determined by:

28 (i) the number of open or prior juvenile delinquency determinations
29 within the previous three years: one point per offense, but not to
30 exceed three points;

31 (ii) the number of offenses pending prosecution by the county attor-
32 ney: one point per offense, but not to exceed three points;

33 (iii) a pending family court felony offense: four points;

34 (iv) a pending family court misdemeanor offense: one point per
35 offense, but not to exceed three points;

36 (v) a past felony adjudication within the previous three years: five
37 points;

38 (vi) two or more misdemeanor adjudications within the previous three
39 years: three points; and

40 (vii) one misdemeanor adjudication within the previous three years:
41 one point.

42 (c) Mitigating factor shall be determined by:

43 (i) the lack of prior arrests or adjudications: one point;

44 (ii) not being subject to a person in need of supervision proceeding
45 within the previous three years: one point;

46 (iii) currently actively cooperating in counseling, prevention,
47 services or a program: one point.

48 4. Definitions. As used in this article:

49 (a) "Designated felony" shall mean and include any of the following
50 felonies defined in the penal law: murder in the first degree, murder in
51 the second degree, manslaughter in the first degree, manslaughter in the
52 second degree, kidnapping in the first degree, arson in the first
53 degree, assault in the first degree, gang assault in the first degree,
54 arson in the second degree, robbery in the first degree, gang assault in
55 the second degree, aggravated sexual abuse in the first degree, rape in

1 the first degree, criminal sexual act in the first degree, burglary in
2 the first degree.

3 (b) "Designated risk level" shall mean an assessment of each youth
4 committed to the custody of the office of children and family services,
5 in which, in light of all available records, the number and types of
6 offenses and rule violations committed by such youth while in the care
7 and custody of the office of children and family services and in any
8 program licensed, registered or certified by such office, and previous
9 criminal and juvenile delinquency determinations, such youth is deter-
10 mined to present a low, moderate or high risk of committing another
11 crime defined in the penal law or which would constitute such a crime if
12 committed by an adult, or poses a threat to the safety of himself or
13 herself or others.

14 (i) "Risk level I" means a youth has a low risk of repeating or
15 committing additional offenses or rule violations, or poses no danger to
16 public safety. A youth determined to have a risk level of I shall have a
17 risk factor of three points or less.

18 (ii) "Risk level II" means a youth has a moderate risk of repeating or
19 committing additional offenses or rule violations, or poses a moderate
20 threat to public safety. A youth determined to have a risk level of II
21 shall have a risk factor of between four and eight points.

22 (iii) "Risk level III" means a youth has a high risk of repeating or
23 committing additional offenses or rule violations, or poses a serious
24 threat to public safety. A youth determined to be a risk level of III
25 shall have a risk factor of nine or more points.

26 (c) "Egregious act" shall mean an act which is conspicuously offen-
27 sive, intentional or blatant.

28 (d) "Persistent pattern" shall mean a course of conduct that is inten-
29 tionally repetitive.

30 5. Rule violations. (a) A youth is guilty of a level B violation when
31 he or she:

32 (i) Attempts to, conspires to or acts as an accessory to an escape
33 attempt from any facility, program or custody;

34 (ii) Withholds information about an attempted escape or absence with-
35 out leave;

36 (iii) Engages in any violent conduct involving the threat of violence;

37 (iv) Practices or instructs others in martial arts, sparring or self
38 defense techniques;

39 (v) Engages in gang-related hand, verbal or written communication;

40 (vi) Intentionally exposes the private parts of their bodies;

41 (vii) Makes any threat verbally, in writing or by gesture to any
42 person;

43 (viii) Possesses unauthorized security-related equipment such as keys,
44 vehicular keys, communication devices or restraint equipment;

45 (ix) Makes, uses, possesses, sells or exchanges, or is under the
46 influence of any alcoholic beverage or intoxicant;

47 (x) Makes, uses, possesses, sells or exchanges, or is under the influ-
48 ence of any narcotic, narcotic paraphernalia or controlled substance;

49 (xi) Possesses outdated or unauthorized types or quantities of medica-
50 tion;

51 (xii) Sells outdated or unauthorized types or quantities of medica-
52 tion;

53 (xiii) Attempts to smuggle or attempts to solicit others to smuggle
54 any item into or out of a facility or program or from one facility or
55 program area to another;

1 (xiv) Engages in any verbal behavior which interferes with the secure
2 and orderly operation of the facility;

3 (xv) Engages in any verbal behavior which may result in injury to
4 staff or residents;

5 (xvi) Engages in any physical, persistent or egregious behavior which
6 interferes with the secure and orderly operation of the facility;

7 (xvii) Engages in any physical, persistent or egregious behavior which
8 may result in injury to staff or residents;

9 (xviii) Spits, urinates or defecates on the floor or any other area;

10 (xix) Throws urine or feces or sanitary items;

11 (xx) Fails to comply or otherwise disrupts facility and program count
12 procedures;

13 (xxi) Mutilates or defaces his or her body, or engages in the mutila-
14 tion or defacement of another person's body; or

15 (xxii) Engages in a persistent pattern of infractions and fails to
16 respond to sanctions previously imposed by an individual charged with
17 such youth's care or custody.

18 (b) A youth is guilty of a level C violation when he or she:

19 (i) Commits or attempts to commit any offense defined in the penal
20 law;

21 (ii) Starts or attempts to start a fire, without authorization;

22 (iii) Causes or attempts to cause an explosion;

23 (iv) Possesses an explosive device or materials which can be used to
24 make an explosive device;

25 (v) Inflicts or attempts to inflict bodily harm upon another resident,
26 a staff member or any other person;

27 (vi) Engages in fighting;

28 (vii) Conspires or takes any action which is intended to or results in
29 the takeover of any area of a facility or program, or, acting in a
30 group, engages in any violent conduct or conduct involving the threat of
31 violence;

32 (viii) Engages with others in any violent conduct or threat of
33 violence;

34 (ix) Leads, organizes or urges other residents to participate in
35 actions detrimental to the order of a facility or program;

36 (x) Engages in or encourages others to engage in unauthorized organ-
37 izational activities or meetings;

38 (xi) Displays, wears, possesses, distributes or uses unauthorized
39 organizational insignia or materials;

40 (xii) Makes, possesses, sells, exchanges or uses any gun, firearm or
41 ammunition, knife, razor, sharpened instrument, tool or other item clas-
42 sified as a weapon by use or appearance;

43 (xiii) Conspires to, is an accessory to or commits escape from any
44 program or custody, or withholds information about an escape or absence
45 without leave;

46 (xiv) Intentionally fails or attempts to fail to return at or before
47 the time prescribed for his or her return;

48 (xv) Engages in, encourages, solicits or attempts to force others to
49 engage in sexual acts or gestures;

50 (xvi) Tampers with or threatens witnesses or informants in any inves-
51 tigation; or

52 (xvii) Possesses tools, culinary instruments or other items that may
53 be classified as weapons by use or appearance without authorization.

54 6. Staffing. Programs operated, licensed, certified or registered by
55 the office of children and family services shall comply with the follow-
56 ing staffing requirements:

1 (a) Those programs accepting youths with risk level I assessments
2 shall have staffing sufficient to ensure the safety of the employees and
3 residents of the program.

4 (b) Those programs accepting youths with risk level II assessments
5 shall have staffing sufficient to ensure that no employee shall be
6 required to supervise no more than one such youth, unless the employee
7 is accompanied by not less than one other employee of the program or
8 another appropriate person.

9 (c) Those programs accepting youths with risk level III assessments
10 shall be secure or limited secure facilities.

11 § 6. Subdivision 4 of section 504 of the executive law, as amended by
12 chapter 687 of the laws of 1993, is amended to read as follows:

13 4. The ~~[division]~~ office of children and family services shall deter-
14 mine, subject to the provisions of section five hundred one-i of this
15 article, the particular ~~[division]~~ office facility or program in which a
16 child placed with ~~[the-division]~~ such office shall be cared for, based
17 upon an evaluation of such child. The ~~[division]~~ office of children and
18 family services shall, subject to the provisions of section five hundred
19 one-i of this article and after a complete review of the records and
20 files of a child, also have authority to discharge or conditionally
21 release children placed with it and to transfer such children from a
22 limited secure or non-secure facility to any other limited secure or
23 non-secure facility, when the interest of such children requires such
24 action; provided that a child transferred to a non-secure facility from
25 a limited secure facility may be returned to a limited secure facility
26 upon a determination by the ~~[division]~~ office that, for any reason, care
27 and treatment at the non-secure facility is no longer suitable.
28 Provided, however, that no such discharge, release or transfer shall be
29 authorized if the child's records and files include (a) two or more
30 level C rule violations within three months prior to a proposed place-
31 ment in a less secure facility, or (b) four or more level B rule
32 violations within three months prior to a proposed placement in a less
33 secure facility, or (c) notation of any conduct or act committed by such
34 child which would constitute a crime defined in the penal law if commit-
35 ted by an adult.

36 § 7. Section 507-a of the executive law is amended by adding a new
37 subdivision 6 to read as follows:

38 6. The office of children and family services not less than ten days
39 before the movement of any youth, committed to the custody or super-
40 vision of such office, to any facility or program operated, licensed,
41 registered, certified or authorized by the office, shall provide notice
42 of the movement of such youth to the division of state police and the
43 local law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the facility or
44 program to which the youth is to be moved. Such notice shall include,
45 but not be limited to, reports of the youth's prior assaults, acts of
46 violence, attempted suicides, escapes and attempted escapes while in the
47 care and custody of the office, and criminal charges.

48 § 8. Title 2 of article 19-G of the executive law is amended by adding
49 a new section 510 to read as follows:

50 § 510. Reports of youth criminal activity; required. 1. (a) Every
51 officer and employee of a facility or program, that is subject to the
52 provisions of this title, shall report or cause a report to be made to a
53 law enforcement agency having jurisdiction when such officer or employee
54 has reasonable cause to suspect based upon personal knowledge of facts,
55 conditions or circumstances that a youth in such facility or program has
56 committed an act, which if the youth was an adult, would be a crime

1 defined in the penal law, or has committed a crime defined in the penal
2 law.

3 (b) After submitting a report to the law enforcement agency having
4 jurisdiction, the officer and employee shall provide notice thereof to
5 his or her employer and to the office of children and family services.
6 Neither operator of a facility or program that is subject to the
7 provisions of this title, nor the office of children and family services
8 shall deny a law enforcement agency access to any program, facility,
9 officer, employee or youth while such agency is in the course of an
10 investigation relating to a report submitted pursuant to paragraph (a)
11 of this subdivision.

12 (c) No operator of a program or facility licensed, registered or
13 certified by the office of children and family services shall take any
14 retaliatory personnel action, as such term is defined in paragraph (e)
15 of subdivision one of section seven hundred forty of the labor law,
16 against an employee because such employee believes that he or she has
17 reasonable cause to suspect that a youth has committed a criminal act
18 and that employee therefore makes a report in accordance with this
19 title. No facility or program, licensed, registered or certified by such
20 office shall impose any conditions, including prior approval or prior
21 notification, upon a member of its staff specifically required to report
22 under this title. At the time of the making of a report, or at any time
23 thereafter, such person or official may exercise the right to request
24 the findings of an investigation made pursuant to this section.

25 2. Any person, official or institution required by this title to
26 report a youth's criminal act who willfully conceals the commission of
27 such crime shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

28 3. Any person, official or institution required by this title to
29 report a youth's criminal act who knowingly conceals the commission of
30 such crime shall be civilly liable for the damages proximately caused by
31 such concealment.

32 4. The office of children and family services shall include instruc-
33 tion on the provisions of this section as part of the training required
34 by subdivision twelve-a of section five hundred one of this article.

35 § 9. Subdivision 1 of section 510-c of the executive law, as amended
36 by chapter 465 of the laws of 1992, is amended to read as follows:

37 1. The [division] office of children and family services may, subject
38 to the provisions of section five hundred one-i of this article and
39 after a complete review of the records and the files of a child,
40 discharge from its custody any child placed with the [division] office
41 whenever it deems such discharge to be in the best interest of the child
42 and there is reasonable probability that the child can be discharged
43 without endangering the public safety; provided, however, that no child
44 while absent from [a-division] an office facility without the consent of
45 the director of such facility shall be discharged by the [division]
46 office solely by reason of the absence[~~,-and~~]; provided further that no
47 child in the custody of the [division] office and transferred to the
48 department of mental hygiene, while absent from a department of mental
49 hygiene facility without the consent of the superintendent or director
50 of such facility, shall be discharged by the [division]office; and
51 provided, further, that no child shall be discharged if his or her
52 records and files include (a) two or more level C rule violations within
53 three months prior to a proposed placement in a less secure facility, or
54 (b) four or more level B rule violations within three months prior to a
55 proposed placement in a less secure facility, or (c) notation of any

1 conduct or act committed by such child which would constitute a desig-
2 nated felony crime defined in the penal law if committed by an adult.

3 § 10. Section 837 of the executive law is amended by adding a new
4 subdivision 21 to read as follows:

5 21. Establish rules and regulations requiring, upon request of the
6 operator of a facility or program licensed, registered or certified by
7 the office of children and family services, when a youth has absented
8 himself or herself from such facility or program without authorization,
9 that a police officer having jurisdiction escort an employee of such
10 facility or program to the absent youth's place of residence to investi-
11 gate where such youth has fled. Every such police officer shall assist
12 the employee in taking the youth into custody and returning the youth to
13 the facility or program to which the youth is assigned.

14 § 11. Section 166 of the family court act is amended to read as
15 follows:

16 § 166. Privacy of records. (a) The records of any proceeding in the
17 family court shall not be open to indiscriminate public inspection.
18 However, the court in its discretion in any case may permit the
19 inspection of any papers or records. Any duly authorized agency, associ-
20 ation, society or institution to which a child is committed may cause an
21 inspection of the record of investigation to be had and may in the
22 discretion of the court obtain a copy of the whole or part of such
23 record.

24 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (a) of this section,
25 the records of every juvenile delinquency proceeding in the family court
26 of a person, who is placed with or committed to the custody of the
27 office of children and family services, shall be open to and be
28 provided:

29 (1) to the staff members and employees of the facility, whether oper-
30 ated by such office or not, in which such person is placed or committed
31 as a juvenile delinquent, juvenile offender or youthful offender by the
32 office of children and family services when the staff member or employee
33 is responsible for the care, custody, treatment, housing, education,
34 rehabilitation or guidance of the person;

35 (2) in the event such person engages in conduct or commits an act
36 which would constitute a crime defined in the penal law if the person
37 was an adult or commits a crime defined in the penal law, to the court,
38 the presentment agency or district attorney, and such person's attorney
39 upon the filing of charges against the person relating to such crime;
40 and

41 (3) to any foster parents having custody of such person after release
42 from the custody of the office of children and family services.

43 § 12. Section 720.35 of the criminal procedure law is amended by
44 adding a new subdivision 5 to read as follows:

45 5. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision two of this section,
46 all official records and papers of a youthful offender, who is committed
47 to the custody of the office of children and family services shall be
48 open to and be provided to:

49 (a) the staff members and employees of the facility, whether operated
50 by such office or not, in which the offender is committed by the office
51 of children and family services when the staff member or employee is
52 responsible for the care, custody, treatment, housing, education, reha-
53 bilitation or guidance of the youthful offender;

54 (b) in the event the youthful offender commits a crime defined in the
55 penal law, to the court, the district attorney, and the youthful

offender's attorney upon the filing of charges against such offender relating to such crime; and

(c) to any foster parents having custody of such youthful offender after release from the custody of the office of children and family services.

§ 13. Section 725.15 of the criminal procedure law, as amended by chapter 7 of the laws of 2007, is amended to read as follows:

§ 725.15 Sealing of records.

1. Except where specifically required or permitted by statute or upon specific authorization of the court that directed removal of an action to the family court all official records and papers of the action up to and including the order of removal, whether on file with the court, a police agency or the division of criminal justice services, are confidential and must not be made available to any person or public or private agency, provided however that availability of copies of any such records and papers on file with the family court shall be governed by provisions that apply to family court records, and further provided that all official records and papers of the action shall be included in those records and reports that may be obtained upon request by the commissioner of mental health or commissioner of [mental retardation and] developmental disabilities, as appropriate; the case review panel; and the attorney general pursuant to section 10.05 of the mental hygiene law.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision one of this section, all official records and papers of an action relating to a juvenile offender, who is placed with the office of children and family services shall be open to and be provided:

(a) to the staff members and employees of the facility, whether operated by such office or not, in which the offender is placed by the office of children and family services when the staff member or employee is responsible for the care, custody, treatment, housing, education, rehabilitation or guidance of the juvenile offender;

(b) in the event the juvenile offender engages in conduct or commits an act which would constitute a crime defined in the penal law if the offender was an adult or commits a crime defined in the penal law, to the court, the presentment agency or district attorney, and such offender's attorney upon the filing of charges against the juvenile offender relating to such crime; and

(c) to any foster parents having custody of such juvenile offender after release from the custody of the office of children and family services.

§ 14. Subdivision 2 of section 212 of the judiciary law is amended by adding a new paragraph (u) to read as follows:

(u) Adopt rules, orders and forms providing for the provision of the official records and papers of juvenile delinquents, juvenile offenders and youthful offenders pursuant to subdivision (a) of section one hundred sixty-six of the family court act, subdivision five of section 720.35 of the criminal procedure law, and subdivision two of section 725.15 of the criminal procedure law.

§ 15. Severability. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid and after exhaustion of all further judicial review, the judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this act directly involved in the controversy in which the judgment shall have been rendered.

1 § 16. This act shall take effect on the first of January next succeed-
2 ing the date on which it shall have become a law; provided that, effec-
3 tive immediately, any rules and regulations necessary to implement the
4 provisions of this act on its effective date are authorized to be
5 promulgated, repealed and/or amended on or before such date.