STATE OF NEW YORK

2797

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 27, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. HEVESI -- read once and referred to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to establishing a statewide kinship navigator program

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

Section 1. The title heading of title 10 of article 6 of the social services law, as added by section 4 of part F of chapter 58 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

KINSHIP GUARDIANSHIP ASSISTANCE **AND STATEWIDE KINSHIP NAVIGATOR** PROGRAM

§ 2. The social services law is amended by adding a new section 458-g to read as follows:

§ 458-g. Statewide kinship navigator program. 1. The statewide kinship navigator program (hereinafter the "program"), is hereby established within the office of children and family services.

2. Such program shall assist kinship caregivers who are seeking information or assistance related to services and benefits that may be available to the caregiver or child. Within appropriations available, such information and assistance shall include but not be limited to:

(a) referral services;

(b) access to a free legal consultation for kinship caregivers in need of legal assistance or assistance understanding their legal rights;

(c) assistance applying for publicly funded benefits including but not limited to public assistance, Medicaid, child health plus, child care subsidies, and the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP); and

(d) information related to services available pursuant to section three hundred ninety-two of this chapter.

3. For purposes of this section, "kinship caregiver" shall have the same meaning as defined by subdivision twenty-two of section three

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

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hundred seventy-one of this chapter, who is currently caring for a child or is a prospective kinship caregiver. It shall also include relative guardians and prospective relative guardians, as defined in section four hundred fifty-eight-a of this title.

4. (a) The commissioner shall administer the statewide kinship navigator program, either directly or through contract. In addition to providing information and assistance, as required by subdivision two of this section, the program shall also have the following responsibilities, within appropriations available, which shall include but not be limited to:

(i) statewide coordination of services, including coordination of efforts among the office of children and family services, the department of health, the office for the aging, the education department, the office of temporary and disability assistance, the office of addiction services and supports, the office of mental health, the office for people with developmental disabilities, local social services districts and relevant community-based organizations;

(ii) the provision of information as to the availability of, eligibility criteria for, and application procedure for available benefits and services;

(iii) compilation of statistical data from state and local agencies and dissemination to the public;

(iv) operation of a toll-free telephone number that may be called to obtain basic information about the rights of, and services available to kinship caregivers;

(v) operation of local respite services;

(vi) training related to caring for children; and

(vii) the consolidation of existing programs with existing contractors that are satisfactorily performing as determined by the office of children and family services and the expansion of service provision to comply with federally approved standards; such consolidation plan shall provide for submission of information regarding outcome-based measures that demonstrate quality of services provided and program effectiveness to the office of children and family services in a form and manner and at such times as required by such office.

(b) The commissioner shall divide the state into not less than seven and not greater than twelve regions in order for the kinship care navigator program to develop regional expertise in carrying out the provisions of this section.

5. The commissioner shall make grants, within amounts appropriated therefor, to a community-based organization or consortia of community-based organizations to operate the statewide kinship navigator program.

6. The commissioner shall promulgate any rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this section.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.