STATE OF NEW YORK

9222

IN ASSEMBLY

February 16, 2024

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

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing the kinship legal network program

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

Section 1. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 501-i to read as follows:

§ 501-i. Kinship legal network program. 1. There is hereby created within the office of children and family services a kinship legal network program. Such program shall be comprised of not-for-profit legal services organizations and not-for-profit agencies serving kinship caregivers, as defined by subdivision twenty-two of section three hundred seventy-one of the social services law.

2. The kinship legal network program shall:

(a) provide legal representation to kinship caregivers in matters including, but not limited to:

(i) custody and guardianship;

(ii) child support;

(iii) abuse and neglect;

(iv) adoption;

(v) eligibility for public benefits, including, but not limited to, public assistance and supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits; and

(vi) foster care certification; and

(b) establish and coordinate a statewide kinship information and referral network.

3. (a) The office of children and family services shall provide grants of not less than eight million dollars annually to eligible not-for-profit legal services organizations and not-for-profit agencies serving kinship caregivers to provide kinship legal network services pursuant to subdivision two of this section.

(b) Each not-for-profit legal organization shall be awarded no more than fifteen percent of the funding provided pursuant to paragraph (a)

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

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of this subdivision to coordinate and support the kinship legal network program through the following activities:

(i) data collection;

(ii) assisting in preparing the report required pursuant to subdivision four of this section;

(iii) task force meetings; and

(iv) technical assistance.

4. The commissioner of children and family services, on or before October first, two thousand twenty-five, and biannually thereafter, shall submit a report to the chair of the senate finance committee and the chair of the assembly ways and means committee. Such report shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) a review of the basis for selection of entities participating in the kinship legal network program;

(b) the administrative method used to carry out the kinship legal network program;

(c) the number of kinship caregivers assisted through the kinship legal network program and whether their legal matter was resolved by counsel and advice or representation at an administrative or court proceeding, and the outcomes of such proceedings; and

(d) whether such outcomes were reached by settlement or administrative or judicial decision.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.