§ 398-d. Child welfare services community demonstration projects. 1. The legislature finds that the centralized delivery of child protective services, preventive services, adoption services and foster care services in a social service district with a population of more than two million hinders their effective delivery and adds unnecessary costs. Numerous studies have recommended that such services serve small areas, be located in such areas, and be integrated. Such relocation will: give caseworkers greater knowledge of their assigned community, the residents of that community and the availability of community-based services; increase the availability of caseworkers; reduce travel time for caseworkers; enable children in foster care to remain in their own communities and schools and maintain their friendships; enable children in foster care to have greater visitation with their parents; provide for more effective delivery of preventive services; and expedite adoptions and otherwise reduce the amount of time children spend in foster care.

The relocation of child welfare service delivery to the community sites will strengthen efforts to provide a wide range of community-based early intervention programs including, but not limited to, school-based health clinics and community schools, thereby ensuring the continued development of a critical mass of community services.

2. No later than March first, nineteen hundred ninety-six, a social service district with a population in excess of two million shall implement at least three demonstration projects for a period of at least two years to provide child welfare services on a community level to improve the delivery of child welfare services, increase adoptions and reduce the rate of foster care placements. These projects shall be located in and serve community school districts which have high rates of: children at risk of becoming a part of the foster care system, poverty, households on public assistance, juvenile delinquency, and unemployment. Such projects shall provide foster care, preventive, adoption and child protective services as required by this article.

3. In proposed demonstration areas, child welfare services must be coordinated with community schools, school health clinics, and other

relevant programs to provide and administer the most efficient services. In one demonstration area, the district shall use a caseworker to client ratio equal to the preferred national average of one to fourteen.

4. A report evaluating such projects shall be presented no later than June first, nineteen hundred ninety-eight, to the governor, the department and the respective chairpersons of the assembly children and families committee, the senate children and families committee, the assembly ways and means committee, and the senate finance committee. Such report shall include:

(a) the number of children and families who received preventive services, child protective services and foster care, (b) the number of delinquent and incarcerated youth in the demonstration projects, (c) the length of an average foster care placement, (d) the number of completed adoptions for youth residing within the demonstration area, including their age, gender, race, ethnicity and religion, (e) the gross expenditures for foster care, compared to the gross expenditures for child protective, preventive and adoption services, (f) changes in the quality and quantity of time spent by caseworkers with clients, (g) staffing ratios of foster care, preventive and child protective services, (h) the perspective (attitude, viewpoint, outlook) of caseworkers serving and clients served in the demonstration project, and (i) recommendations for expansion of community-based provisions for child welfare services. For purposes of the report, the data described above should be compared to the extent possible with non-demonstration areas.