

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Seven.

BILL FILING TEMPLATE

Be It Enacted, by the Senate and House of Representatives, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. It is the purpose of this legislation to create in the Commonwealth a coordinated system of out of school time services for school-age children and youth and their families. This system shall respond to the needs of individual communities and shall support both the expansion of out of school time programs and quality improvement in such programs.

SECTION 2. As contained herein, the following words shall have the noted meanings:

“At risk” children and youth shall include, but not be limited to, children and youth whose social, cognitive, physical, or affective development could be adversely impacted as a result of any one or combination of the following factors: poverty, unstable or criminal behavior in the household, truancy, homelessness, history of court involvement or ongoing involvement in the Department of Social Services or the Department of Youth Services, low academic achievement, illness, or disability.

“Out of school time services” shall be defined as comprehensive programs at the community level supporting the cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and physical development of school-age children and youth during non-school hours, including before and after school, weekends, vacations, and holidays.

“School-age children” shall include all children who are eligible to begin the first grade in public school at the beginning of the next school year up to age 14, including those children in non-public school.

“Youth” shall include children from age 14 through age 18, including those with special needs until their 22nd birthday, and including those children in non-public schools and those who are and who are not at risk, as defined in this section.

SECTION 3. There is hereby established the Massachusetts commission on out of school time, hereinafter referred to as the commission. The commission shall advise and make recommendations to the governor and the general court of ways to better coordinate, expand, finance, and improve the current system of services delivered by the commonwealth to school-age children, youth, and their families.

The commission shall:

(a) create an interagency coordinating council to increase the coordination and efficiency of existing after-school and out of school time, the membership of which shall consist of representatives from all state agencies involved in the administration or funding of such programs, including but not limited to, the office of child care services, the department of education, the executive office of health and human services, the department of youth services, the department of social services, the department of public health, the department of mental health, and the executive office of public safety;

(b) review and consolidate existing data on the effectiveness of out of school time and youth development programs in Massachusetts, and raise the visibility and public awareness of such programs;

(c) provide and disseminate information from other states regarding the financing and administration of out of school time and youth development programs as well as effective programs and best practices;

(d) seek input from state and local providers of such services, families of children and youth in the commonwealth, and others invested in out of school time and youth development services.

SECTION 4. There shall be a grant program to support comprehensive and collaborative school-age and youth development services. Funds distributed under the program established in this section may be used for direct grants to include:

(a) subsidies or scholarships for school-age children and youth to participate in out of school time services;

(b) activities to increase the supply of out of school time services for school-age children and youth, with the exception of facilities construction or major renovation;

(c) activities to increase the inclusion of individuals with physical or emotional disabilities, including modification to facilities and equipment;

(d) activities or technical support related to the pursuit of accreditation by the National School Age Care Alliance or other age appropriate, formal measures of quality improvement;

(e) professional development activities for out of school time program staff, including training or higher education;

(f) program evaluation; and

(g) other resources to meet the identified out of school time needs of families.

SECTION 5. Each application for funds shall be preceded by a needs assessment and shall respond to the needs identified. Plans shall be evaluated and approved based on the following criteria:

(a) address the needs of all children and youth in the community, including those who are at risk;

(b) demonstrate broad community collaboration;

(c) include effective strategies for ensuring equal access and services for individuals with disabilities;

(d) maximize the use of community capital resources, including but not limited to public schools, non-public schools, and property held by community based organizations and faith-based organizations; and

(e). include provisions to provide continuity and transition between services funded for school-age children up to age 14 and youth ages 14 and older.

SECTION 6. Applications for funds shall include the following:

- (a) a statement of need;
- (b) a detailed description of priorities, needs, and existing resources;
- (c) a description of goals, objectives, and strategies related to fulfilling those needs;
- (d) an evaluation plan, including a plan for reporting on the community's success in meeting its goals and objectives as defined by the council;
- (e) a plan for aiding direct service providers in working toward the grant program's quality improvement standards described in section 7, and documenting program and youth and child-based outcomes; and
- (f) a description of and documentation of outreach to entities and individuals.

SECTION 7. Programs receiving resources for direct services to either school-age children or to youth under the community grant program shall be required to work toward and show annual progress toward a comprehensive program quality standard.

(a) The program standard shall be based on and draw from existing program standards, including:

- (1) The National School Age Care Alliance accreditation system;
- (2) The YMCA's of the USA Quality Check;
- (3) The Boys and Girls Clubs of America's Commitment to Quality; and
- (4) other established national, state, and local level program standard models.

(b) The program standard shall include provisions regarding key elements of school-age child care and youth development program quality, including but not limited to:

- (1) staff education, training, core competencies, and/or credentialing;
- (2) indoor and outdoor space and facilities, when appropriate;
- (3) health and nutrition;
- (4) enrichment, physical, recreational, and academic activities;
- (5) staff and child interaction;
- (6) program management and administration;
- (7) family and community involvement;
- (8) youth participation in planning, goal setting, and decision-making; and
- (9) a plan for the regular use of a program assessment or evaluation tool.

SECTION 8. Workforce Development System

The commission will develop a workforce development system designed to support the education, training, and compensation of school-age providers. The workforce development system shall include the following:

(a) an inventory of the current resources and systems available for workforce and professional development in the commonwealth to include trainings, community-based trainings, higher education programs, resource and referral agency trainings, state and federally funded workforce development trainings/programs, public school system trainings/credentialing, and other trainings that address the needs of those who work with children, and the recommendations for coordinating the use of those existing resources and systems;

(b) a review of the type, scope, and range of children and youth workers who could potentially benefit from participating in the workforce development system;

(c) analysis and data regarding the current status of the early education and care workforce, including education preparation, training, opportunities, salaries, benefits, and workplace standards;

(d) guidelines for [a] career ladder(s) representing salaries and benefits that suitably compensate professionals, are tied to credentials, and consist of incentives for advancement, including a salary enhancement program;

(e) a mandatory and regularly updated professional development and qualification registry;

(f) incentives and supports for early education and care professionals to seek additional training and education, such as scholarships, loan forgiveness connected to a term of service in the field, credit for prior learning experiences, career counseling and mentoring, release time, and substitutes;

(g) core competencies (a common and shared body of knowledge) for all those working in the early education and care fields;

(h) agreements among higher education institutions for an articulated system of education, training, and professional development in early education and care;

(i) streamlined and coordinated state certification, credentialing, and training within the early education and care fields including OCCS teacher certification, Child Development Associate (CDA) training, current public school teacher certification, and other state approved director, teacher, and provider credentialing requirements as they are phased in over time;

(j) approval of training programs and academic coursework, incentives for associates of arts and bachelor of arts programs to meet best practices and to modify curriculums to reflect current child development research, and certification of trainers and teachers of said programs and coursework established pursuant to this act;

(k) efforts to ensure a range of training opportunities that would provide appropriate coursework for family child care as well as center-based providers;

(l) strategies to recruit and retain individuals into the early education and care workforce who reflect the ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of Massachusetts families based on the most recent census data;

(m) training programs that are provided in languages other than English, and incorporation of such programs into any broader, articulated system that is developed;

(n) new public and private resources to support the workforce development system and the coordination of existing workforce resources among public agencies; and

(o) a data collection and evaluation system for the purposes of ensuring that said workforce and professional development activities established pursuant to this act are meeting established standards of quality and are having the desired effect on recruitment, retention and quality of the workforce (e.g., a longitudinal study to demonstrate the changes in rates of recruitment and retention of early education and care teachers and providers).