

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

On January 25, 2023, the Committee engaged in deliberations and discussions among the members of the Committee and recommended legislation incorporating the following concepts:

- Fund a new hardware secure facility and/or expansion of current Department of Children's Services facilities to address capacity issues. The state needs approximately 180 to 190 additional male beds and 25 additional female beds;
- Increase compensation of the Department of Children's Services staff to help attract and retain personnel;
- Fund additional Department of Children's Services prevention grants to serve the Middle Tennessee area;
- Create a unified court system for juvenile courts;
- Allow courts access records of the Department of Children's Services so that they have accurate information about a juvenile's history with the department, if any;
- Create a stronger clinical presence at youth development centers by requiring psychological and behavioral health services to be available to youth at all times;
- Create a new "Second Look Commission" to study juvenile justice cases through the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth;
- Amend TCA § 37-1-134 to specify that juveniles alleged to have escaped from a youth development center can be transferred to adult court;
- Amend Tennessee Code Annotated Section 37-5-206 to expand the ability of the Department of Children's Services to transfer certain juveniles determined to be incorrigible to the custody of the Department of Correction by lowering the age of the juvenile from 18 years of age to 17 years of age;
- Develop a pilot step-down program for youth housed at the John S. Wilder Youth Development Center;
- Require children committed to the custody of the Department of Children's Services who are 16 years of age or older and retained in a Level III or Level IV juvenile detention facility approved, certified, or licensed by the Department to be housed, educated, and maintained separately from children less than 16 years of age;
- Make chaplain services available to youth at all Department of Children's Services facilities; and
- Provide additional training to Department of Children's Services youth services officers on best practices for behavior management and conflict resolution in the context of supervision of juvenile justice youth.