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H.B. 897
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Rep. Brewer

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SUMMARY

- Requires each guardian ad litem and child advocate appointed by the court in a juvenile court proceeding to complete at least three hours of trauma-informed care training every two years.
- Specifies topics that must be included in the trauma-informed care training.
- Allows the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Continuing Legal Education to recognize the trauma-informed care training hours toward an attorney's continuing legal education hours and the Ohio Supreme Court to approve organizations or providers as qualified to provide the trauma-informed care training.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Training for guardians ad litem and child advocates

Background

Under current Ohio Supreme Court rules, guardians ad litem must complete 12 hours of pre-service education and six hours of continuing education annually, provided by the Supreme Court, Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA),[1] or a court-approved provider. Six of the pre-service education hours must include training on the following:

- Basic human needs, stages of child development, and the impact of trauma;
- Communication skills;
- Child abuse, neglect, dependency, unruliness, delinquency, and assessing risk and safety;

[1] OhioCASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children.

- Family and child issues;
- Legal processes, available community agencies and resources, methods of service, records checks, the role of a guardian ad litem in court, local resources and service practice, report content, mediation, and other types of dispute resolution processes;
- Any other topic that concerns the role of the guardian ad litem to help determine the best interest of the child.[2]

Mandatory trauma-informed care training

Within 120 days of the bill's effective date, each guardian ad litem and child advocate appointed in a juvenile court proceeding must complete at least three hours of trauma-informed care training. Under the bill, "child advocate" includes any CASA or victim advocate appointed or employed to assist the court in determining what is in a minor child's best interest.

The training must be completed every two years, in addition to the other continuing education required under Ohio Supreme Court rules. The trauma-informed care training must include the following topics:

- The effects of trauma on child development, attachment, cognition, behavior, and emotional regulation;
- Conducting meetings and interviews with a child and representing a child in a trauma-sensitive manner to avoid retraumatization of the child;
- Recognizing secondary or vicarious trauma in the guardian ad litem's or child advocate's own self.

The bill allows the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Continuing Legal Education to recognize the hours required under the bill toward the number of continuing legal education hours required for attorneys. Additionally, the Ohio Supreme Court may approve organizations or providers as qualified to provide the trauma-informed care training, including nonprofit organizations, legal aid organizations, universities, and certified trauma care agencies.

Within 120 days of the bill's effective date, a guardian ad litem or child advocate appointed in a juvenile court proceeding must demonstrate compliance with the bill's training requirements.[3]

[2] Sup. R. 48.04.

[3] R.C. 2151.282.

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	05-12-26

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