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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- FAMILY COURT

Introduced By: Senators Vargas, LaMountain, Quezada, Bell, DiMario, Urso, Mack,  
Acosta, Bissaillon, and Euer

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 8-10-23.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 8-10 entitled "Family  
2 Court" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **8-10-23.1. Statewide juvenile hearing board.**

4 (a) The chief judge of the family court shall appoint a statewide juvenile hearing board  
5 coordinator who is qualified by education, training, previous experience in professional social  
6 welfare, personality, character, and special aptitude for the work, to serve at the pleasure of the  
7 chief judge. ~~The juvenile hearing board coordinator shall provide education, training, data  
8 collection and analysis, coordination, and assistance to cities and towns in the establishment and  
9 maintenance of juvenile hearing boards and teen courts. Juvenile hearing boards and/or teen courts  
10 shall report any data deemed necessary by the family court to perform the functions of the juvenile  
11 hearing board coordinator.~~ There is hereby established one full-time equivalent juvenile hearing  
12 board coordinator at the family court to provide support and assistance to all juvenile hearing boards  
13 across the State of Rhode Island. The coordinator's duties shall include, but are not limited to:

14 (1) Coordination with local municipal police departments;

15 (2) Establishing and maintaining a statewide community service program;

16 (3) Providing education and training to juvenile hearing board members as needed;

17 (4) Data collection, analysis and reporting;

18 (5) Assistance to municipal juvenile hearing boards and partnering with nonprofit  
19 organizations engaged in juvenile services.

1           **(b) Any juvenile who is charged for the first time with a misdemeanor offense shall be**  
2 **referred to the juvenile hearing board of the municipality in which the alleged offense occurred,**  
3 **unless the parent or legal guardian and juvenile refuse participation in the juvenile hearing board.**  
4 **This referral shall apply only to an individual juvenile and shall not apply to offenses committed**  
5 **jointly or collectively.** No juvenile hearing board ~~or teen court~~ in the State of Rhode Island shall  
6 hear, or dispose of offenses that constitute felony offenses if committed by an adult, except by the  
7 express written consent of the chief justice of the family court; nor shall any juvenile hearing board  
8 ~~or teen court~~ hear or dispose of any offense which has been amended from a felony offense to a  
9 misdemeanor offense, except by the express written consent of the chief justice of the family court.  
10 ~~Juveniles, wherever they may live, upon a decision to refer the juvenile to the juvenile hearing~~  
11 ~~board or teen court, shall be referred to the hearing board or teen court in the city or town where~~  
12 ~~the offense was committed; provided, however, if the city or town does not have a hearing board~~  
13 ~~or teen court, the juvenile shall be referred to the hearing board or teen court where the juvenile~~  
14 ~~resides. The Statewide hearing board coordinator is responsible for setting up a statewide~~  
15 ~~community service program which may be utilized by any hearing board or teen court.~~

16           ~~(b) The position of statewide juvenile hearing board coordinator is a pilot program which~~  
17 ~~shall commence on July 1, 1998 and terminate on June 30, 2001, unless extended by the general~~  
18 ~~assembly.~~

19           **(c) Each municipality shall have the authority to create a juvenile hearing board. Juveniles**  
20 **shall be referred to the hearing board in the municipality in which they reside; provided, however,**  
21 **if the municipality does not have a hearing board, it may enter into a mutual agreement or**  
22 **memorandum of understanding with a neighboring municipality that maintains an established**  
23 **juvenile hearing board for the purpose of hearing and resolving eligible juvenile matters pursuant**  
24 **to this section. If no neighboring municipality maintains an established juvenile hearing board, the**  
25 **municipality may enter into an agreement or memorandum of understanding with the**  
26 **geographically nearest municipality that maintains an established juvenile hearing board, as**  
27 **determined by the family court.**

28           **(d) Each municipal police department and/or juvenile hearing board shall provide an annual**  
29 **report by January 31 of each year to the family court and members of the general assembly**  
30 **representing their jurisdiction, which shall include the number of juveniles who appeared before**  
31 **the juvenile hearing board in that municipality during the preceding year, the offenses with which**  
32 **the juveniles were charged, the outcome of each case that was referred to the juvenile hearing board,**  
33 **the age, gender, race and ethnicity of the juveniles referred to the juvenile hearing board, the**  
34 **number of re-arrests for each juvenile seen by the juvenile hearing board and the number of times**

1 [the juvenile hearing board met during the preceding year. The names, dates of birth or other](#)  
2 [identifying information of the juveniles shall not be included in the annual report.](#)

3 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- FAMILY COURT

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1           This act would establish a full-time juvenile hearing board coordinator to provide support  
2   and assistance to municipal juvenile hearing boards across the state. Any juvenile charged with a  
3   misdemeanor and who is a first offender, shall be referred to the hearing board. Each board would  
4   be required to submit a report each year detailing the cases that the board heard over the previous  
5   year.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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