

SECTION 1. The General Laws as appearing in the 2004 official edition are hereby amended by adding after chapter 6A, section 16G the following new section:

Section 16H. Community-Based Crisis Intervention Services for Families and Children

1 - *Findings of fact regarding the state of families and children*

Whereas, families in the commonwealth whose children are truant, runaway, and acting in a fashion that results in their parents inability to adequately care for and protect said children are families in crisis; and

Whereas, the issues facing said children and families are complex and the services which would best assist such families are not available from a single agency or department of the commonwealth and the collaboration among multiple public and private agencies and offices is required to ensure that all children and families receive the services they need to succeed; and

Whereas, the current efforts to help said children and families lack accountability and consistency; and

Whereas, services are not consistently available in all communities;

Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Commonwealth to develop a flexible, consistent, accountable system of community-based programs to assist said children and families.

2 - *Intent*

It is the intent of the General Court to create an accountable, community based crisis intervention system that provides consistent services throughout the Commonwealth to address the needs of families and children in crisis, by providing them with an array of resources. The goal of said system is to preserve and strengthen families while ensuring the healthy emotional, mental and social development of the child. These services shall focus on creating a stable environment and strengthening the family as a whole while emphasizing parental responsibility.

Said community based system shall provide the family and child with immediate responses for the stabilization of the family as well as to connect the family to additional services in the community through referrals and advocacy. The services provided to the families and children involved shall be provided on a continuum of increasing intensity with the goal of keeping the child out of the juvenile justice system.

It is the intent of the General Court to reserve judicial intervention for those children and families who require services beyond said community based services in order to achieve stabilization and resolution.