

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 896
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H896-PCS40559-CI-28

Short Title: Jesse's Law.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE STUDY COMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
TRAINING STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN CHILD CUSTODY
PROCEEDINGS INVOLVING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Committee Established. – There is established the Study Committee on Domestic Violence Training Standards for Professionals Involved in Child Custody Proceedings Involving Domestic Violence and Child Abuse (Committee). The Committee shall include 13 voting members, as follows:

- (1) One member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (2) One member of the Senate, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- (3) The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts or their designee.
- (4) The Director of the UNC School of Government or their designee.
- (5) The Director of the Dispute Resolution Commission or their designee.
- (6) The Director of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, or their designee.
- (7) The Director of Legal Aid of North Carolina or their designee.
- (8) The Director of the North Carolina Association of District Court Judges or their designee.
- (9) The North Carolina Guardian Ad Litem Administrator or their designee.
- (10) An individual regularly serving as a parenting coordinator and an individual regularly serving as a guardian ad litem in custody cases filed under Chapter 50 of the General Statutes, with one being an attorney and one being a psychologist, social worker, or other mental health provider, appointed by the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.
- (11) The Chair of the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force or their designee.
- (12) The Executive Director of the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence or their designee.

SECTION 2. Cochairs. – The appointed member of the House of Representatives and the appointed member of the Senate shall serve as cochairs of the Committee.

SECTION 3. Vacancies. – A vacancy on the Committee shall be filled by the original appointing authority using the criteria for the prior appointment.

SECTION 4. Duties. – The Committee shall serve as a study and advisory committee on the need for and feasibility of implementing statewide training for judges, judicial officers,



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parenting coordinators, guardians ad litem, family financial mediators, child custody mediators, and other court-affiliated personnel involved in child custody proceedings that include allegations of domestic violence or child abuse. Pursuant to this work, the Committee shall study, at a minimum, each of the following:

- (1) Training requirements. – The appropriate duration, frequency, and content of training for the following professionals:
 - a. Judges, magistrates, and judicial officers.
 - b. Guardians ad litem.
 - c. Family financial mediators and child custody mediators.
 - d. Parent coordinators.
 - e. Professionals referred by the court to conduct reunification treatment.
 - f. Any other individuals the Committee determines to be appropriate.
- (2) Content areas. – Core topics to be covered in such training, including:
 - a. Dynamics of domestic violence, child abuse, coercive control, and trauma.
 - b. Evidence-based practices, including the Duluth Model, the Saunders Study, and adverse childhood experiences research.
- (3) Training providers. – Qualifications and credentials of individuals or organizations eligible to deliver such training, with an emphasis on evidence-based instruction.
- (4) Cost and funding. – Potential fiscal impacts, options for securing funding, and allocating costs.
- (5) Implementation models. – Existing models in other states and potential time lines for phased implementation in North Carolina.
- (6) Any other subject the Committee finds relevant to its work.

SECTION 5. Administration. – The Committee shall meet upon the call of its cochair, and a quorum of the Committee shall be a majority of its voting members. Members of the Committee shall receive per diem and necessary travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, and 138-6, as applicable. The Committee may meet in the Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building. The Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional and clerical staff and provide other necessary resources to assist the Committee in its work.

SECTION 6. Reporting. – No later than March 1, 2026, in an interim report, and June 30, 2026, in a final report, the Committee shall report to the following entities regarding the information studied pursuant to this act, including any related findings and legislative recommendations:

- (1) The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety.
- (2) The Senate Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety.
- (3) The House Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety.

SECTION 7. This act is effective when it becomes law.