

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2025

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Legislative Document

No. 1261

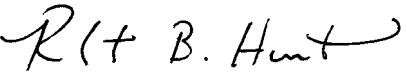
H.P. 836

House of Representatives, March 25, 2025

### **An Act to Support At-risk Families by Establishing the Community Navigator Pilot Program**

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Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

  
ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative BRENNAN of Portland.  
Cosponsored by Senator INGWERSEN of York and  
Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, GRAMLICH of Old Orchard Beach, MEYER of  
Eliot, MOONEN of Portland, SARGENT of York, SHAGOURY of Hallowell, Senator:  
PIERCE of Cumberland.

1       **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2               **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3877** is enacted to read:

3       **§3877. Community Navigator Pilot Program**

4               The Community Navigator Pilot Program, referred to in this section as "the pilot  
5       program," is established within the department as a 2-year pilot program to award contracts  
6       through the department to 4 child abuse and neglect prevention councils selected by the  
7       department for 4 community navigators.

8               **1. Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context indicates otherwise, the  
9       following terms have the following meanings.

10              A. "Community services" means services that provide assistance to individuals or  
11       families, including but not limited to the following services: physical and mental health  
12       care; housing assistance; food access assistance; fuel assistance; child care;  
13       transportation; employment training; and substance use disorder treatment.

14              B. "Mandated reporter" means an adult person required pursuant to section 4011-A,  
15       subsection 1 to report or cause a report to be made to the department when the person  
16       knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or is likely to be abused  
17       or neglected or that a suspicious child death has occurred.

18              C. "Screened out," with respect to a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, means  
19       the department has determined that the report does not meet the department's criteria  
20       to open a child protective services investigation.

21              **2. Community navigator; service population.** A community navigator under the pilot  
22       program shall work with the following populations:

23              A. Families that have been reported to the department for suspected child abuse or  
24       neglect, and the report was screened out, but the families would likely benefit from  
25       available community services for support and to prevent the need for intervention by  
26       child protective services in the future;

27              B. Mandated reporters that reported to the department a family described in paragraph  
28       A; and

29              C. Mandated reporters generally, including, but not limited to, teachers, social workers  
30       and medical professionals.

31              **3. Services provided by community navigator.** This subsection governs the services  
32       provided by a community navigator under the pilot program.

33              A. A community navigator shall work with a family described in subsection 2,  
34       paragraph A to connect that family with appropriate community services. When  
35       appropriate, the community navigator may involve in this process the mandated  
36       reporter that reported the suspected child abuse or neglect, including, but not limited  
37       to, the child's teacher or social worker.

38              B. A community navigator shall engage in outreach activities to provide education and  
39       guidance to mandated reporters designed to:

40                      (1) Improve mandated reporters' knowledge of available community services and  
41                      other resources;

(2) Instruct mandated reporters how to refer a family to community services in the area where the family resides; and

(3) Provide mandated reporters with guidelines for working directly with families in need to help shift the role of mandated reporters from just reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to actively supporting families in need.

**4. Contracts awarded; funding.** Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter to the contrary, the department shall award a contract to 4 child abuse and neglect prevention councils for a community navigator under the pilot program in accordance with this subsection. The department shall determine to which child abuse and neglect prevention councils the contracts are awarded based on which child abuse and neglect prevention councils are most prepared to participate in the pilot program. The department shall provide funding for each community navigator in the amount of \$90,000 per community navigator, per year, for both year one and year 2 of the pilot program. The department shall award the contracts pursuant to this subsection no later than December 1, 2025.

**5. Repeal.** This section is repealed January 30, 2028.

## SUMMARY

This bill establishes a 2-year pilot program in the Department of Health and Human Services to award contracts to 4 child abuse and neglect prevention councils in this State for a community navigator position within each council. The bill requires community navigators to work with families who have been reported to the department for suspected child abuse or neglect but have been determined by the department to not meet the criteria for a child protective services investigation. Community navigators are required to help connect these families with community services as needed.

Under the bill, community navigators are required to provide outreach and education to mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect to enhance their knowledge of available community services for families and how to connect families with those services. The educational outreach must also provide mandated reporters with guidelines for working directly with families in need to help shift the role of mandated reporters from just reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to actively supporting families in need.

The bill requires the department to provide funding for the community navigators in the amount of \$90,000 per position, per year, for both year one and year 2 of the pilot program. The department must determine to which child abuse and neglect councils the contracts are awarded based on which child abuse and neglect prevention councils are most prepared to participate in the pilot program.