

WHEREAS, 62 percent of children in Maryland (over 2,700 children) entering out-of-home placement in 1999 had a parent with an identified substance abuse problem; and

WHEREAS, The child welfare system in the United States spends an estimated \$20 billion per year to care for abused and neglected children of drug- and alcohol-abusing parents; and

WHEREAS, The projected cost of a child entering the foster care system in Maryland is \$60,000 per episode; and

WHEREAS, Nearly one-third of substance abusers achieve sustained abstinence in their first attempt at recovery and an additional one-third eventually achieve long-term abstinence; and

WHEREAS, 44 percent of females in drug treatment report being in treatment in order to retain or regain custody of their children; and

WHEREAS, 48 percent of the clients in residential treatment with their children said they would not have been interested in treatment if they had not been able to bring their children with them; and

WHEREAS, Women who complete residential treatment have significantly higher abstinence, employment, and arrest-free rates than do noncompleters; and

WHEREAS, Victims of child abuse and neglect and children of substance-abusing parents have increased risk of substance abuse problems; and

WHEREAS, Linking child welfare and substance abuse programs would make both more effective; and

WHEREAS, The strict time limits placed for family reunification in the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act make timely provision of quality substance abuse treatment programs essential; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Family Law

SUBTITLE 12. INTEGRATION OF CHILD WELFARE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICES.

5-1201.

(A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(B) "AT-RISK PARENT" MEANS A PARENT OF A CHILD ENTERING OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT OR IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK OF ENTERING OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT.