



# Thresholds, Mental Health Advocates Laud Passage of The Custody Relinquishment Prevention Act

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*If enacted, parents will no longer need to give up custody of children in order to get them State-sponsored mental health services*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 22, 2014

**Chicago** – Illinois' leading provider of mental health services today hailed the passage of a bill that, if enacted, will remove a timeworn, draconian requirement that parents give up custody of their child so that they can receive urgent mental health treatment through the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Thresholds, Illinois' largest provider of recovery services for persons with mental illnesses, teamed up with scores of other mental health, housing, psychiatry, and medical services advocates to build support for the Act, which passed the Illinois Senate by a 58-0 vote.

Traditionally in Illinois, families that are unable to get the right mental health services for children with serious mental illnesses have been forced to turn to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to receive treatment. Despite the absence of abuse or neglect, DCFS often requires parents to relinquish custody of their child in this process, tearing families apart and doing irreparable damage to the child.

The Custody Relinquishment Prevention Act (HB5598 HFA2) requires all the relevant state agencies to intercept families on the verge of custody relinquishment if there is no evidence of abuse or neglect, and connect the child to mental health treatment services under the most appropriate child-serving agency through an interagency agreement.

The Child Relinquishment Prevention Act unanimously passed the House earlier this month and will now head to Governor Patrick Quinn's desk for consideration and likely enactment.

"Mothers and fathers should not be forced to give up custody of a child simply because their child is in crisis and they have nowhere else to turn for help," said Thresholds CEO Mark Ishaug. "When this Act becomes law, Illinois will join a long list of states that have decided that breaking up families in the name of getting children much needed mental health services is not the right way to administer care to children. We applaud the bill's chief sponsor Sara Feigenholtz and all the supporters in the General Assembly for ushering this important bill to passage."

“This bill allows the state and our healthcare providers to support families facing extraordinarily difficult circumstances instead of tearing them apart,” said Feigenholtz. “This bill also ensures that children can receive the mental health treatment they need and still remain with their supportive and loving families during and after their treatment. This is a common sense measure to put the best interest of the child first.”

Due to significant budget cuts to children’s mental health services in recent years, custody relinquishments doubled as many families were unable to get services to treat their child’s serious mental illness. Instead, these families turn to DCFS when they are in crisis because wards of the state placed into the care of DCFS are entitled to care to treat a child’s mental illness. However, DCFS often requires parents to completely relinquish custody of their child in this process, despite the *complete absence of abuse or neglect*.

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- See more at: <http://www.thresholds.org/2014/05/thresholds-mental-health-advocates-laud-passage-of-the-custody-relinquishment-prevention-act/#sthash.Qm62x2KL.dpuf>