AN ACT concerning homeless youth, supplementing Title 9 of the Revised Statutes and making an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New Jersey Homeless Youth Act."

2. The Legislature finds and declares that: homeless youth are a largely invisible population; many of these children have no families and are being exploited by adults or are turning to delinquency as a way to survive on the streets; these young people are urgently in need of services which will prevent them from becoming permanently homeless; therefore, it is in the best interest of the State to establish and support a continuum of services geared specifically for homeless youth, including street outreach or basic center shelter or transitional living programs.

3. As used in this act:
   "Department" means the Department of Human Services.
   "Division" means the Division of Youth and Family Services in the Department of Human Services.
   "Homeless youth" means a person 21 years of age or younger who is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available.

4. The department shall establish and support a comprehensive program for homeless youth in the State by contracting with organizations and agencies, licensed by the department, that provide street outreach or basic center shelter or transitional living services for homeless youth. The department shall establish licensure requirements and shall contract for programs that ensure that services, as specified
by this act, are provided to homeless youth in the State in an appropriate and responsible manner. The commissioner may establish such other requirements for the homeless youth programs as he deems necessary.

5. A street outreach program for homeless youth shall enhance the accessibility of resources to a homeless youth by locating, contacting and providing services to the youth through mobile outreach. The services provided by the street outreach program, as determined by the department's contract, may include, but are not limited to:
   a. Assistance in finding temporary or short-term shelter;
   b. Assistance in obtaining food;
   c. A clothing allowance;
   d. Individual and group counseling in the area of violence prevention;
   e. Information and referral services regarding organizations and agencies that provide support services to homeless youth; and
   f. Assistance in obtaining medical care.

6. a. A basic center shelter program shall provide a homeless youth with 24-hour, seven-day a week, walk-in access to emergency, short-term residential care. The services offered by the program shall provide a homeless youth with a stable out-of-home placement and help reunite the youth with his parent or legal guardian, except in the case where family reunification is not in the youth's best interest. The services provided at the basic center shelter, as determined by the department's contract, may include, but are not limited to, the following core services:
   (1) Family reunification services;
   (2) Individual, family and group counseling;
   (3) Food;
   (4) A clothing allowance;
   (5) Medical care;
   (6) Educational services;
   (7) Recreational activities; and
   (8) Advocacy and referral services.
   b. If a homeless youth under the age of 18 is admitted to a basic center shelter, the shelter shall attempt to notify the youth's parent or legal guardian of the youth's admission within 24 hours after the admission. The notification shall include a description of the youth's physical and emotional condition and the circumstances surrounding the youth's admission to the basic center shelter, unless there are compelling reasons not to provide the parent or legal guardian with this information. Compelling reasons include, but are not limited to,
circumstances in which the youth is or has been a victim of child abuse or neglect.

c. If a homeless youth under the age of 18 is admitted to a basic center shelter, the shelter shall notify the division of the youth's admission to the basic center shelter within 24 hours after the admission to determine if the youth is in the legal care or custody of the division. If the homeless youth is in the legal care or custody of the division, the division, in consultation with the basic center shelter, shall determine what services shall be provided to the youth. The services may include, but are not limited to: crisis intervention services, continued temporary placement in the basic center shelter for up to 30 days, placement in an alternative living arrangement or referral to a transitional living program established pursuant to section 7 of this act or to other appropriate organizations and agencies.

d. When the basic center shelter has reason to believe that the youth is an abused or neglected child as defined in P.L.1974, c.119 (C.9:6-8.21 et seq.), the basic center shelter shall report the allegation to the division pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1971, c.437 (C.9:6-8.10). A homeless youth may remain at a basic center shelter for up to 30 days pending the division's disposition of any case originated pursuant to this subsection.

e. If a homeless youth under the age of 18 is not in the legal care or custody of the division as provided in subsection c. of this section, and a basic center shelter has not made a report to the division pursuant to subsection d. of this section, the basic center shelter shall notify a juvenile-family crisis intervention unit, established pursuant to P.L.1982, c.80 (C.2A:4A-76 et seq.), in the county of residence of the homeless youth, within 24 hours of the youth's admission to the basic center shelter, that a juvenile-family crisis exists as defined in section 3 of P.L.1982, c.77 (C.2A:4A-22).

f. In the event that a basic center shelter notifies a juvenile-family crisis intervention unit pursuant to subsection e. of this section, the homeless youth may remain at the basic center shelter for up to 10 days without the consent of the youth's parent or legal guardian. During this time, the juvenile-family crisis intervention unit and the basic center shelter shall help to reunite the youth with his parent or legal guardian. If reunification with the parent or legal guardian is not in the youth's best interest or not possible because the youth's parent or legal guardian cannot be located, the juvenile-family crisis intervention unit, in consultation with the basic center shelter, shall determine what services shall be provided to the youth. The services may include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention services and continued temporary placement in the basic center shelter for up to an additional 30 days.

g. In the case of a homeless youth from another state who is under the age of 18, a basic center shelter shall notify the Compact
Administrator of the Interstate Compact on Juveniles, as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours of the youth's admission to the basic center shelter. The Compact Administrator shall facilitate the youth's return home to his parent or legal guardian or make other suitable care arrangements for the youth.

7. A transitional living program shall provide residential care and treatment services for up to 18 months to a homeless youth 16 to 21 years of age who demonstrates the maturity to function with minimal adult supervision.

The program shall assist in the maintenance of a homeless youth in a living arrangement that will prepare the youth for independence and self-sufficiency through the direct provision of, or through referrals to, other organizations and agencies for services, as determined by the department's contract, which may include:

   (1) Educational assessment and attachment to an educational program;
   (2) Career planning, employment and life skills training;
   (3) Job placement;
   (4) Budgeting and money management;
   (5) Assistance in securing housing appropriate to a homeless youth's needs and income; and
   (6) Assistance in accessing other social services as may be appropriate.

8. Subject to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Commissioner of Human Services shall adopt rules and regulations for the licensing by the department of organizations and agencies that provide street outreach or basic center shelter or transitional living programs for homeless youth.

9. There is appropriated $4,000,000 from the General Fund to the Department of Human Services. The department shall contract with organizations and agencies licensed by the department pursuant to the provisions of this act, to provide street outreach or basic center shelter or transitional living programs to homeless youth.

Six percent of the annual appropriation to the department under this act shall be allocated to fund the department's administrative costs in implementing the provisions of this act.

10. This act shall take effect 90 days following enactment.

"New Jersey Homeless Youth Act;" appropriates $1 million.