

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.
Act 1116 of the Regular Session

State of Arkansas
91st General Assembly
Regular Session, 2017

As Engrossed: S3/7/17 H3/27/17
A Bill

SENATE BILL 40

By: Senator A. Clark
By: Representatives Gates, Hammer

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS IN THE JUVENILE CODE
CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF JUVENILES; AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND PROVISIONS IN THE JUVENILE CODE
CONCERNING THE PLACEMENT OF JUVENILES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 9-27-355 is amended to read as follows:

9-27-355. Placement of juveniles.

(a) The court shall not specify a particular provider for placement of any a foster child.

~~(b)(1) A relative of a juvenile placed in the custody of the Department of Human Services shall be given preferential consideration for placement if the relative caregiver meets all relevant child protection standards and it is in the best interest of the juvenile to be placed with the relative caregiver.~~

(b)(1)(A) When the Department of Human Services takes custody of a juvenile under § 12-18-1001, or when the court determines that a juvenile shall be removed from his or her home under this subchapter, the department shall conduct an immediate assessment to locate:

(i) A noncustodial parent of the juvenile;

(ii) Recommended relatives of the juvenile,

including each grandparent of the juvenile, and all parents of the juvenile's



sibling if the parent has custody of the sibling; and

(iii) Fictive kin identified by the juvenile as one (1) or more persons who play or have a significant positive role in his or her life.

(B)(i) If there is a safety issue identified from a Child Maltreatment Central Registry check or criminal background check, the department is not required to provide further assessment or notice to the persons identified under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section.

(ii) If there is not a safety issue identified in a Child Maltreatment Central Registry check or criminal background check regarding all the persons identified under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section, the department shall provide, in writing, to the persons identified the following notice:

(a) A statement saying that the juvenile has been or is being removed from his or her parent;

(b) An explanation concerning how to participate and be considered for care, placement, and visitation with the juvenile;

(c) Information needed for a child welfare safety check and home study, if the person is interested in placement;

(d) Information about provisional relative foster care, fictive kin, and other supportive benefits available through the department;

(e) A statement saying that failure to timely respond may result in the loss of opportunities to be involved in the care, placement, and visitation with the juvenile; and

(f) The name, number, email, and physical address of the caseworker and supervisor assigned to the case.

(C) If the court has not transferred custody to a noncustodial parent, relative, or other individual, or the department has not placed the juvenile in provisional relative placement or fictive kin placement, the department shall continue its assessment under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section and subdivision (b)(1)(B) of this section throughout the case.

(D) The department shall provide upon request of the

court, parties to the proceeding, or counsel for the parties to the proceeding a record of the efforts made to locate the non-custodial parent, relatives, fictive kin, or other persons identified under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section and the results of the assessment, including the following information concerning the identified person:

(i) Name;

(ii) Last known address and phone number;

(iii) The appropriateness of placement based on the department's assessment of the person; and

(iv) Other identifying or relevant information to the extent known by the department.

(E)(i) A relative or fictive kin identified by the department under subdivision (b)(1)(A) of this section shall be given preferential consideration for placement if the relative or fictive kin meets all relevant protective standards and it is in the best interest of the juvenile to be placed with the relative or fictive kin.

(ii) In all placements, preferential consideration for a relative or fictive kin shall be given at all stages of the case.

(iii) If the court denies placement with a relative or fictive kin, the court shall make specific findings of fact in writing regarding the considerations given to the relative or fictive kin and the reasons the placement was denied.

(iv) The court shall not base its decision to place the juvenile solely upon the consideration of the relationship formed between the juvenile and a foster parent.

(F) The court may transfer custody to any relative or any other person recommended by the department, the parent, or any party upon review of a home study, including criminal background and child maltreatment reports, and a finding that custody is in the best interest of the child.

(2) Placement or custody of a juvenile in the home of a relative, fictive kin, or other person shall not relieve the department of its responsibility to actively implement the goal of the case.

(3)(A) The juvenile shall remain in a licensed or approved foster home, shelter, or facility or an exempt child welfare agency as defined ~~at~~ under § 9-28-402(12) until the home is opened as a regular foster home, as a provisional foster home if the person is a relative to one (1) of

the children in the sibling group, including step-siblings, or the court grants custody of the juvenile to the relative, fictive kin, or other person after a written approved home study is presented to the court.

(B) For placement only with a relative or fictive kin:

(i) The juvenile and the juvenile's siblings or step-siblings may be placed in the home of a relative or fictive kin on a provisional basis for up to six (6) months pending the relative or fictive kin's home being opened as a regular foster home;

(ii) If the relative or fictive kin opts to have his or her home opened as a provisional foster home, the relative or fictive kin shall not be paid a board payment until the relative or fictive kin meets all of the requirements and his or her home is opened as a regular foster home;

(iii) Until the relative or fictive kin's home is opened as a regular foster home, the relative or fictive kin may:

(a) Apply for and receive benefits that the relative or fictive kin may be entitled to due to the placement of the juvenile in the home, such as benefits under the Transitional Employment Assistance Program, § 20-76-401, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and

(b) Receive child support or any federal benefits paid on behalf of the juvenile in the relative or fictive kin's home; and

(iv) If the relative or fictive kin's home is not fully licensed as a foster home after six (6) months of the placement of the juvenile and the siblings or step-siblings in the home:

(a) The department shall remove the juvenile and any of the siblings or step-siblings from the relative or fictive kin's home and close the relative or fictive kin's provisional foster home; or

(b) The court shall remove custody from the department and grant custody of the juvenile to the relative or fictive kin subject to the limitations outlined in subdivision (b)(4) of this section.

(4) If the court grants custody of the juvenile and any siblings or step-siblings to the relative, fictive kin, or other person:

(A)(i) The juvenile and any siblings or step-siblings shall not be placed back in the custody of the department while remaining in *the home of the relative, fictive kin, or other person*.

(ii) The juvenile and any siblings or step-siblings *shall not be removed from the custody of the relative, fictive kin, or other person, placed in the custody of the department, and then remain or be returned to the home of the relative, fictive kin, or other person while remaining in the custody of the department;*

(B) *The relative, fictive kin, or other person shall not receive any financial assistance, including board payments, from the department, except for financial assistance for which the relative, fictive kin, or other person has applied and for which the relative, fictive kin, or other person qualifies under the program guidelines, such as the Transitional Employment Assistance Program, § 20-76-401, food stamps, Medicaid, and the federal adoption subsidy; and*

(C) *The department shall not be ordered to pay the equivalent of board payments, adoption subsidies, or guardianship subsidies to the relative, fictive kin, or other person as reasonable efforts to prevent removal of custody from the relative, fictive kin, or other person.*

~~(c)(1) Juveniles who are in the custody of the department shall be allowed trial placements with parents or the person from whom custody was removed for a period not to exceed sixty (60) days~~ *The court may order juveniles who are in the custody of the department to be placed in a trial placement with parents or the person from whom custody was removed for a period not to exceed sixty (60) days, except as approved by the department, and in any event, not to exceed six (6) months.*

(2)(A) At every stage of the case, the court shall consider the least restrictive placement for the juvenile and assess safety concerns that prevent either a trial home placement or the juvenile from being returned to or placed in the custody of the parent of the juvenile.

(B) The court shall detail the safety concerns in subdivision (c)(2)(A) of this section in its written order.

(C) Failure to complete a case plan is not a sufficient reason in and of itself to deny the placement of the juvenile in the home of a parent.

(D) Trial home placements may be made with parents or the person from whom custody was removed.

~~(2)(3) At the end of sixty (60) days trial placement,~~ *the court shall either place custody of the juvenile with the parent or the person from*

whom custody was removed, or the department shall return the juvenile to a licensed or approved foster home, shelter, or facility or an exempt child welfare agency as defined in § 9-28-402(12).

(d) When a juvenile leaves the custody of the department and the court grants custody to the parent or another person, the department is no longer legal custodian of the juvenile, even if the juvenile division of circuit court retains jurisdiction.

/s/A. Clark

APPROVED: 04/07/2017