

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas  
90th General Assembly  
Regular Session, 2015

As Engrossed: S2/5/15  
**A Bill**

SENATE BILL 54

By: Senator J. Hutchinson

### **For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT CONCERNING PARENT AND CHILD REPRESENTATION IN  
JUVENILE COURT PROCEEDINGS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

#### **Subtitle**

CONCERNING PARENT AND CHILD  
REPRESENTATION IN JUVENILE COURT  
PROCEEDINGS.

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

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 9-27-401 is amended to read as follows:

9-27-401. Creation – ~~Representation~~ Dependency-neglect representation  
for ~~children and~~ parents.

(a) There is ~~hereby~~ created a Division of Dependency-Neglect Parent  
Representation within the ~~Administrative Office of the Courts~~ University of  
Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs that  
will shall be staffed by a ~~court-appointed special advocate coordinator and~~  
an attorney coordinator.

(b)(1) The ~~Director of the Administrative Office of the Court is~~  
~~authorized to~~ University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School  
of Law Clinical Programs may employ or enter into professional service  
contracts with private individuals or businesses or public agencies to  
represent ~~all children~~ parents in dependency-neglect proceedings.

(2)(A) ~~Before employing or entering into a contract or~~  
~~contracts, the office shall consult with the judge or judges of the circuit~~  
~~court designated to hear dependency neglect cases in their district plan~~  
~~under Supreme Court Administrative Order Number 14, originally issued April~~



~~6, 2001, in each judicial district in accordance with the provisions of § 19-11-1001 et seq.~~

~~(B) Those obtaining employment or contracts through the office as described in subdivision (b)(3) of this section will be designated as the providers for representation of children in dependency neglect cases in each judicial district. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs shall establish guidelines to provide a maximum amount of expenses and fees per hour and per case that shall be paid under this section.~~

~~(3)(A) The office shall advertise employment and contract opportunities.~~

~~(B) The distribution of funds among the judicial districts shall be based on a formula developed by the office and approved by the Juvenile Judges Committee of the Arkansas Judicial Council. A person who is employed by or contracts with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs shall be designated as a provider for the representation of parents in dependency-neglect cases in the judicial district in which the provider is assigned.~~

~~(4) The Supreme Court shall adopt standards of practice and qualifications for service for all attorneys who seek employment or contracts to provide legal representation to children in dependency neglect cases. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs shall advertise employment and contract opportunities.~~

~~(5)(A)(i) In the transition to a state funded system of dependency neglect representation, it is the intent of the General Assembly to provide an appropriate and adequate level of representation to all children in dependency neglect proceedings as required under federal and state law pursuant to § 9-27-316.~~

~~(ii)(a) It is recognized by the General Assembly that in many areas of the state, resources have not been available to support the requirement of representation for children at the necessary level.~~

~~(b) It is also recognized, however, that in other areas a system has been developed that is appropriately and successfully serving children and the courts.~~

~~(iii) With the transition to state funding, it is not the intent of the General Assembly to adversely affect these systems that~~

~~are working well or to put into place a system that is too inflexible to respond to local needs or restrictions.~~

~~(B) In its administration of the system, therefore, the office is charged with the authority and responsibility to establish and maintain a system that:~~

- ~~(i) Equitably serves all areas of the state;~~
- ~~(ii) Provides quality representation;~~
- ~~(iii) Makes prudent use of state resources; and~~
- ~~(iv) Works with those systems now in place to~~

~~provide an appropriate level of representation of children and courts in dependency-neglect cases. Funding currently appropriated to the Administrative Office of the Courts for the representation of parents and children in dependency-neglect cases shall be redistributed to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs for the sole purpose of providing representation of parents in dependency-neglect cases and to the Arkansas Child Abuse/Rape/Domestic Violence Commission for the representation of juveniles in dependency-neglect cases.~~

~~(c) The director is authorized to:~~

- ~~(1) Establish a statewide court-appointed special advocate program;~~
- ~~(2) Provide grants or contracts to local court-appointed special advocate programs; and~~
- ~~(3) Work with judicial districts to establish local programs by which circuit courts may appoint trained volunteers to provide valuable information to the courts concerning the best interests of children in dependency-neglect proceedings. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs shall establish and maintain a division of dependency-neglect parent representation that:~~

- (1) Equitably serves all areas of the state;
- (2) Provides quality representation;
- (3) Makes prudent use of state resources; and
- (4) Works to provide an appropriate level of representation of parents in dependency-neglect cases.

~~(d)(1) The director~~ University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs is authorized to establish a program to represent indigent parents or legal custodians in dependency-neglect cases.

(2) The court shall appoint counsel in compliance with federal law, § 9-27-316(h), and Supreme Court Administrative Order Number 15.

(3)(A) Funding for contracts shall be administered from the state, or funds shall be provided to the judicial district for the county to administer the contracts.

(B) All contracts shall be paid from funds appropriated for the purpose of this section.

(4) When a court orders payment of funds for parent counsel on behalf of an indigent parent or custodian from a state contract, the court shall make written findings in the appointment order in compliance with § 9-27-316(h).

(5) The court may also require the parties to pay all or a portion of the expenses, depending on the ability of the parties to pay.

~~(6) The office shall establish guidelines to provide a maximum amount of expenses and fees per hour and per case that will be paid under this section.~~

~~(7)~~(6) In order to ensure that each judicial district will have an appropriate amount of funds to utilize for indigent parent or custodian representation in dependency-neglect cases, the funds appropriated shall be apportioned based upon a formula developed by the ~~office~~ University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs and approved by the ~~committee~~ Juvenile Judges Committee of the Arkansas Judicial Council.

~~(8)~~(7) The ~~office~~ University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law Clinical Programs shall not be liable directly to any attorney or indirectly to the Arkansas State Claims Commission for the payment of attorney's fees or expenses except to the extent specific funding is appropriated and available for the purpose of providing indigent parent counsel in dependency-neglect cases.

*/s/J. Hutchinson*