

Assembly Bill No. 158—Assemblymen Dini, Perkins, Evans, Anderson, Thomas, Parks, Bache, Segerblom, Neighbors, de Braga, Manendo, Carpenter, Koivisto, Williams, Chowning, Giunchigliani, Gibbons, Leslie, Nolan and Buckley

CHAPTER.....

AN ACT relating to children; requiring the notification of certain persons who apply to receive the placement of a child regarding the status of their application; creating a board to expedite and limiting the periods for certain procedures involved in proceedings for the placement of children; making various changes regarding the appointment and duties of a guardian ad litem for certain children in protective custody; making various changes in accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1996; clarifying certain provisions regarding the authority of a court to determine the custody of a child; authorizing the involvement of various persons interested in certain proceedings for the placement of children; providing a preference for the placement of siblings together; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Chapter 127 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section to read as follows:

A child-placing agency shall, to the extent practicable, give preference to the placement of a child for adoption or permanent free care together with his siblings.

Sec. 2. NRS 127.150 is hereby amended to read as follows:

127.150 1. If the court finds that the best interests of the child warrant the granting of the petition, an order or decree of adoption must be made and filed, ordering that henceforth the child is the child of the petitioners. *When determining whether the best interests of the child warrant the granting of a petition that is filed by a foster parent, the court shall give strong consideration to the emotional bond between the child and the foster parent.* A copy of the order or decree must be sent to the nearest office of the division by the petitioners within 7 days after the order or decree is issued. In the decree the court may change the name of the child, if desired. No order or decree of adoption may be made until after the child has lived for 6 months in the home of the petitioners.

2. If the court is not satisfied that the proposed adoption is in the best interests of the child, the court shall deny the petition and may order the child returned to the custody of the person or agency legally vested with custody.

3. After a petition for adoption has been granted, there is a presumption that remaining in the home of the adopting parent is in the child's best interest.

Sec. 3. NRS 127.220 is hereby amended to read as follows:

127.220 As used in NRS ~~127.230~~ 127.220 to 127.310, inclusive, *and section 1 of this act*, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “Arrange the placement of a child” means to make preparations for or bring about any agreement or understanding concerning the adoption of a child.

2. “Child-placing agency” means the division or a nonprofit corporation organized pursuant to chapter 82 of NRS, and licensed by the division to place children for adoption or permanent free care.

3. “Person” includes a hospital.

4. “Recommend the placement of a child” means to suggest to a licensed child-placing agency that a prospective adoptive parent be allowed to adopt a specific child, born or in utero.

Sec. 4. Chapter 128 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section to read as follows:

Except as otherwise required by specific statute, the court shall use its best efforts to ensure that proceedings conducted pursuant to this chapter are completed within 6 months after the petition is filed.

Sec. 5. NRS 128.100 is hereby amended to read as follows:

128.100 1. In any proceeding for terminating parental rights, or any rehearing or appeal thereon, the court may appoint an attorney to represent the child as his counsel and, *if the child does not have a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to NRS 432B.500, as his* guardian ad litem.

2. If the parent or parents of the child desire to be represented by counsel, but are indigent, the court may appoint an attorney for them.

3. Each attorney appointed under the provisions of this section is entitled to the same compensation and expenses from the county as provided in NRS 7.125 and 7.135 for attorneys appointed to represent persons charged with crimes.

Sec. 6. NRS 128.105 is hereby amended to read as follows:

128.105 The primary consideration in any proceeding to terminate parental rights must be whether the best interests of the child will be served by the termination. An order of the court for *the* termination of parental rights must be made in light of the considerations set forth in this section and NRS 128.106 to 128.109, inclusive, and based on evidence and include a finding that:

1. The best interests of the child would be served by the termination of parental rights; and

2. The conduct of the parent or parents *was the basis for a finding made pursuant to subsection 3 of section 18 of this act or* demonstrated at least one of the following:

(a) Abandonment of the child;

(b) Neglect of the child;

(c) Unfitness of the parent;

(d) Failure of parental adjustment;

(e) Risk of serious physical, mental or emotional injury to the child if he were returned to, or remains in, the home of his parent or parents;

(f) Only token efforts by the parent or parents:

(1) To support or communicate with the child

;

- (2) To prevent neglect of the child;
- (3) To avoid being an unfit parent; or
- (4) To eliminate the risk of serious physical, mental or emotional injury to the child; or

(g) With respect to termination of the parental rights of one parent, the abandonment by that parent.

Sec. 7. NRS 128.109 is hereby amended to read as follows:

128.109 1. If a child has been placed outside *of* his home pursuant to chapter 432B of NRS, the following provisions must be applied ~~{for the purposes of determining}~~ *to determine* the conduct of the parent:

(a) If the child has resided outside *of* his home pursuant to that placement for ~~{18}~~ *14* months of any ~~{24}~~ *20* consecutive months, it must be presumed that the parent or parents have demonstrated only token efforts to care for the child as set forth in paragraph (f) of subsection 2 of NRS 128.105.

(b) If the parent or parents fail to comply substantially with the terms and conditions of a plan to reunite the family within 6 months after the date on which the child was placed or the plan was commenced, whichever occurs later, that failure to comply is evidence of failure of parental adjustment as set forth in paragraph (d) of subsection 2 of NRS 128.105.

2. If a child has been placed outside *of* his home pursuant to chapter 432B of NRS and has resided outside *of* his home pursuant to that placement for ~~{18}~~ *14* months of any ~~{24}~~ *20* consecutive months, the best interests of the child must be presumed to be served by *the* termination of parental rights.

3. The presumptions specified in subsections 1 and 2 must not be overcome or otherwise affected by evidence of failure of the state to provide services to the family.

Sec. 8. NRS 128.110 is hereby amended to read as follows:

128.110 1. Whenever the procedure described in this chapter has been followed, and upon finding grounds for *the* termination of parental rights pursuant to NRS 128.105 at a hearing upon the petition, the court shall make a written order, signed by the judge presiding in the court, judicially depriving the parent or parents of the custody and control of, and terminating the parental rights of the parent or parents with respect to the child, and declaring the child to be free from such custody or control, and placing *the* custody and control *of the child* in some person or agency qualified by the laws of this state to provide services and care to children, or to receive any children for placement.

2. If the child is placed in the custody and control of a person or agency qualified by the laws of this state to receive children for placement, the person or agency, ~~{may,}~~ in seeking to place the child ~~{}~~ :

(a) *May* give preference to *the placement of the child with* any person related within the third degree of consanguinity to the child whom the person or agency finds suitable and able to provide proper care and

guidance for the child, regardless of whether the relative resides within this state.

(b) Shall, if practicable, give preference to the placement of the child together with his siblings.

Any search for a relative with whom to place a child pursuant to this subsection must be completed within 1 year after the initial placement of the child outside of his home.

Sec. 9. Chapter 432 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto a new section to read as follows:

As soon as practicable after the division receives an application by a person to receive the placement of a child, the division shall notify the person in writing as to whether the person will be considered for approval as an adoptive parent or as a provider of foster care.

Sec. 10. NRS 432.032 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432.032 The division shall adopt regulations for the administration of NRS 432.010 to 432.085, inclusive, *and section 9 of this act*, which are binding upon all recipients and local units.

Sec. 11. NRS 432.100 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432.100 1. There is hereby established a statewide central registry for the collection of information concerning the abuse or neglect of a child. This central registry must be maintained by and in the central office of the division.

2. The central registry must contain:

(a) The information in any report of child abuse or neglect made pursuant to NRS 432B.220, and the results, if any, of the investigation of the report;

(b) Statistical information on the protective services provided in this state; and

(c) Any other information which the division determines to be in furtherance of NRS 432.100 to 432.130, inclusive, and 432B.010 to 432B.400, inclusive ~~H~~, *and sections 17 and 18 of this act.*

3. The division may designate a county hospital in each county whose population is 100,000 or more as a regional registry for the collection of information concerning the abuse or neglect of a child.

Sec. 12. Chapter 432B of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto the provisions set forth as sections 13 to 18, inclusive, of this act.

Sec. 13. 1. *The rural advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children, consisting of two members from each local advisory board created by a district court pursuant to section 14 of this act, is hereby created within the division of child and family services.*

2. After the initial terms, the members of the rural advisory board serve terms of 4 years. Any member of the rural advisory board may be reappointed. If a vacancy occurs during the term of a member, the district court that created the local advisory board from which the member was appointed shall appoint a person to replace that member for the remainder of the unexpired term.

3. Members of the rural advisory board serve without compensation, except that necessary travel and per diem expenses may be reimbursed, not to exceed the amounts provided for state officers and employees generally, to the extent that money is made available for that purpose.

4. The division of child and family services shall provide the rural advisory board with administrative support and shall provide any information requested by the rural advisory board to the rural advisory board within 10 working days after receiving the request for information.

5. The rural advisory board shall:

(a) At its first meeting and annually thereafter, elect a chairman from among its members.

(b) Meet at least four times annually and may meet at other times upon the call of the chairman.

(c) Review the findings of each local advisory board created pursuant to section 14 of this act.

(d) Prepare and make available to the public an annual report including, without limitation, a summary of the activities of the rural advisory board.

Sec. 14. 1. The district court in each judicial district that includes a county whose population is less than 100,000 shall create a local advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children. The district court shall appoint to the local advisory board:

(a) One member who is representative of foster parents;

(b) One member who is representative of attorneys in public or private practice;

(c) One member who is employed by the division of child and family services;

(d) One member who is either employed by the public school system and works with children on a regular basis, or works in the field of mental health and works with children on a regular basis; and

(e) One member who is a resident of the judicial district in which the local advisory board is created.

2. The district court shall provide for initial terms of each member of the local advisory board so that the terms are staggered. After the initial terms, the members of the local advisory board shall serve terms of 4 years. Any member of the local advisory board may be reappointed. If a vacancy occurs during the term of a member, the district court shall appoint a person similarly qualified to replace that member for the remainder of the unexpired term. The district court may remove a member from the local advisory board if the member neglects his duty or commits malfeasance in office.

3. The district court shall appoint two members of the local advisory board to serve on the rural advisory board created pursuant to section 13 of this act.

4. Members of a local advisory board serve without compensation, and necessary travel and per diem expenses may not be reimbursed.

5. The division of child and family services shall provide each local advisory board with administrative support and shall provide any information requested by a local advisory board to the local advisory board within 10 working days after receiving the request for information.

6. Each local advisory board shall:

(a) At its first meeting and annually thereafter, elect a chairman from among its members.

(b) Review each case referred to it pursuant to section 15 of this act, and provide the referring court and the office of the attorney general with any recommendations to expedite the completion of the case.

(c) Twice each year, provide a report of its activities and any recommendations to expedite the completion of cases to the district court, the division of child and family services and the legislature, or the legislative commission when the legislature is not in regular session.

7. A local advisory board may review other cases as deemed appropriate by the district court.

Sec. 15. If the court has not approved the permanent placement of a child within 12 months after the initial removal of the child from his home, it shall refer the case to the local advisory board created pursuant to section 14 of this act, if such a local advisory board was created for that judicial district, to obtain recommendations from the local advisory board to expedite the completion of the case.

Sec. 16. 1. To qualify for appointment as a guardian ad litem pursuant to NRS 432B.500 in a judicial district that includes a county whose population is less than 100,000, a special advocate must be a volunteer from the community who completes an initial 12 hours of specialized training and, annually thereafter, completes 6 hours of specialized training. The training must be approved by the court and include information regarding:

(a) The dynamics of the abuse and neglect of children;

(b) Factors to consider in determining the best interests of a child, including planning for the permanent placement of the child;

(c) The interrelationships between the family system, legal process and system of child welfare;

(d) Skills in mediation and negotiation;

(e) Federal, state and local laws affecting children;

(f) Cultural, ethnic and gender-specific issues;

(g) Domestic violence;

(h) Resources and services available in the community for children in need of protection;

(i) Child development;

(j) Standards for guardians ad litem;

(k) Confidentiality issues; and

(l) Such other topics as the court deems appropriate.

2. To qualify for appointment as a guardian ad litem pursuant to NRS 432B.500 in a judicial district that does not include a county whose

population is less than 100,000, a special advocate must be qualified pursuant to the standards for training of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association or its successor. If such an association ceases to exist, the court shall determine the standards for training.

Sec. 17. *The division of child and family services shall:*

1. Establish a panel comprised of volunteer members to evaluate the extent to which agencies which provide protective services are effectively discharging their responsibilities for the protection of children.

2. Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of subsection 1 which must include, without limitation, the imposition of appropriate restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained by the panel and civil sanctions for the violation of those restrictions.

Sec. 18. *1. Except as otherwise provided in this section, an agency which provides protective services shall make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family of a child to prevent or eliminate the need for his removal from his home and to make it possible for his safe return to his home.*

2. In determining the reasonable efforts required by subsection 1, the health and safety of the child must be the paramount concern. The agency which provides protective services may make reasonable efforts to place the child for adoption or with a legal guardian concurrently with making the reasonable efforts required pursuant to subsection 1. If the court determines that continuation of the reasonable efforts required by subsection 1 is inconsistent with the plan for the permanent placement of the child, the agency which provides protective services shall make reasonable efforts to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with that plan and to complete whatever actions are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.

3. An agency which provides protective services is not required to make the reasonable efforts required by subsection 1 if the court finds that:

(a) A parent or other primary caretaker of the child has:

(1) Committed, aided or abetted in the commission of, or attempted, conspired or solicited to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter;

(2) Caused the abuse or neglect of the child, or of another child of the parent or primary caretaker, which resulted in substantial bodily harm to the abused or neglected child;

(3) Caused the abuse or neglect of the child, a sibling of the child or another child in the household, and the abuse or neglect was so extreme or repetitious as to indicate that any plan to return the child to his home would result in an unacceptable risk to the health or welfare of the child; or

(4) Abandoned the child for 60 or more days, and the identity of the parent of the child is unknown and cannot be ascertained through reasonable efforts;

(b) A parent of the child has, for the previous 6 months, had the ability to contact or communicate with the child and made no more than token efforts to do so;

(c) The parental rights of a parent to a sibling of the child have been terminated by a court order upon any basis other than the execution of a voluntary relinquishment of those rights by a natural parent, and the court order is not currently being appealed;

(d) The child or a sibling of the child was previously removed from his home, adjudicated to have been abused or neglected, returned to his home and subsequently removed from his home as a result of additional abuse or neglect; or

(e) The child is less than 1 year of age, the father of the child is not married to the mother of the child and the father of the child:

(1) Has failed within 60 days after learning of the birth of the child, to visit the child, to commence proceedings to establish his paternity of the child or to provide financial support for the child; or

(2) Is entitled to seek custody of the child but fails to do so within 60 days after learning that the child was placed in foster care.

Sec. 19. NRS 432B.280 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.280 1. Reports made pursuant to this chapter, as well as all records concerning these reports and investigations thereof, are confidential.

2. Any person, law enforcement agency or public agency, institution or facility who willfully releases data or information concerning such reports and investigations, except:

(a) Pursuant to a criminal prosecution relating to *the* abuse or neglect of a child; ~~and~~

~~—(b) To persons or agencies enumerated in~~ *or*

(b) As authorized pursuant to NRS 432B.290,
is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Sec. 20. NRS 432B.290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.290 1. Except as otherwise provided in ~~{subsection 2 or 5,}~~ *subsections 2, 5 and 6*, data or information concerning reports and investigations thereof made pursuant to this chapter may be made available only to:

(a) A physician who has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected;

(b) A person authorized to place a child in protective custody, if he has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected and he requires the information to determine whether to place the child in protective custody;

(c) An agency, including, without limitation, an agency in another jurisdiction, responsible for or authorized to undertake the care, treatment or supervision of:

(1) The child; or

(2) The person responsible for the welfare of the child

;

(d) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer who requires the information in connection with an investigation or prosecution of *the* abuse or neglect of a child;

(e) A court, for in camera inspection only, unless the court determines that public disclosure of the information is necessary for the determination of an issue before it;

(f) A person engaged in bona fide research or an audit, but information identifying the subjects of a report must not be made available to him;

(g) The *attorney and the* guardian ad litem of the child;

(h) A grand jury upon its determination that access to these records is necessary in the conduct of its official business;

(i) ~~[An agency which provides protective services or which is authorized to receive, investigate and evaluate reports of abuse or neglect of a child;]~~
A federal, state or local governmental entity, or an agency of such an entity, that needs access to the information to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse and neglect;

(j) A person ~~[who]~~ or an organization that has entered into a written agreement with an agency which provides protective services to provide assessments or services and that has been trained to make such assessments or provide such services;

(k) A team organized *pursuant to NRS 432B.350* for the protection of a child ; ~~[pursuant to NRS 432B.350;]~~

(l) A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.405 to review the death of a child;

(m) A parent or legal guardian of the child, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential;

(n) The ~~[person named in the report as allegedly being abused or neglected, if he is not a minor or otherwise legally incompetent;]~~ *persons who are the subject of a report;*

(o) An agency that is authorized by law to license foster homes or facilities for children or to investigate persons applying for approval to adopt a child, if the agency has before it an application for that license or is investigating an applicant to adopt a child;

(p) Upon written consent of the parent, any officer of this state or a city or county thereof or legislator authorized by the agency or department having jurisdiction or by the legislature, acting within its jurisdiction, to investigate the activities or programs of an agency that provides protective services if:

(1) The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential;
and

(2) The officer, legislator or a member of his family is not the person alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect;

(q) The division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety for use pursuant to NRS 176.135 in making a presentence investigation and report to the district court; ~~[or]~~

(r) Any person who is required pursuant to NRS 432B.220 to make a report to an agency which provides protective services or to a law enforcement agency ~~H~~;

(s) The rural advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 13 of this act or a local advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 14 of this act; or

(t) The panel established pursuant to section 17 of this act to evaluate agencies which provide protective services.

2. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 3, data or information concerning reports and investigations thereof made pursuant to this chapter may be made available to any member of the general public if the child who is the subject of ~~the~~ a report dies or is critically injured as a result of alleged abuse or neglect, except that the data or information which may be disclosed is limited to:

(a) The fact that a report of abuse or neglect has been made and, if appropriate, a factual description of the contents of the report;

(b) Whether an investigation has been initiated pursuant to NRS 432B.260, and the result of a completed investigation; and

(c) Such other information *as is* authorized for disclosure by a court pursuant to subsection 4.

3. An agency which provides protective services shall not disclose data or information pursuant to subsection 2 if the agency determines that the disclosure is not in the best interests of the child or if disclosure of the information would adversely affect any pending investigation concerning ~~the~~ a report.

4. Upon petition, a court of competent jurisdiction may authorize the disclosure of additional information to the public pursuant to subsection 2 if good cause is shown by the petitioner for the disclosure of the additional information.

5. An agency investigating a report of the abuse or neglect of a child shall, upon request, provide to a person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child:

(a) A copy of:

(1) Any statement made in writing to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(2) Any recording made by the agency of any statement made orally to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(b) A written summary of the allegations made against the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child. The summary must not identify the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect.

6. An agency which provides protective services shall disclose the identity of a person who makes a report or otherwise initiates an

investigation pursuant to this chapter if a court, after reviewing the record in camera and determining that there is reason to believe that the person knowingly made a false report, orders the disclosure.

7. Any person, except for:

- (a) The subject of a report;
- (b) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer initiating legal proceedings; or
- (c) An employee of the division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety making a presentence investigation and report to the district court pursuant to NRS 176.135, who is given access, pursuant to subsection 1 or 2, to information identifying the subjects of a report who makes this information public is guilty of a misdemeanor.

~~[7.]~~ 8. The division of child and family services shall adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of this section.

Sec. 21. NRS 432B.290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.290 1. Except as otherwise provided in ~~subsection 2,~~ *subsections 2 and 3*, data or information concerning reports and investigations thereof made pursuant to this chapter may be made available only to:

- (a) A physician who has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected;
- (b) A person authorized to place a child in protective custody, if he has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected and he requires the information to determine whether to place the child in protective custody;
- (c) An agency, including, without limitation, an agency in another jurisdiction, responsible for or authorized to undertake the care, treatment or supervision of:
 - (1) The child; or
 - (2) The person responsible for the welfare of the child;
- (d) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer who requires the information in connection with an investigation or prosecution of *the* abuse or neglect of a child;
- (e) A court, for in camera inspection only, unless the court determines that public disclosure of the information is necessary for the determination of an issue before it;
- (f) A person engaged in bona fide research or an audit, but information identifying the subjects of a report must not be made available to him;
- (g) The *attorney and the* guardian ad litem of the child;
- (h) A grand jury upon its determination that access to these records is necessary in the conduct of its official business;
- (i) ~~[An agency which provides protective services or which is authorized to receive, investigate and evaluate reports of abuse or neglect of a child;]~~ *A federal, state or local governmental entity, or an agency of such an*

entity, that needs access to the information to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse and neglect;

(j) A team organized *pursuant to NRS 432B.350* for the protection of a child ; ~~{pursuant to NRS 432B.350;}~~

(k) *A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.405 to review the death of a child;*

(l) A parent or legal guardian of the child, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential;

~~{(l) The person named in the report as allegedly being abused or neglected, if he is not a minor or otherwise legally incompetent;}~~

(m) *The persons who are the subject of a report;*

(n) An agency that is authorized by law to license foster homes or facilities for children or to investigate persons applying for approval to adopt a child, if the agency has before it an application for that license or is investigating an applicant to adopt a child;

~~{(n)}~~ (o) Upon written consent of the parent, any officer of this state or a city or county thereof or legislator authorized, by the agency or department having jurisdiction or by the legislature, acting within its jurisdiction, to investigate the activities or programs of an agency that provides protective services if:

(1) The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential; and

(2) The officer, legislator or a member of his family is not the person alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect; ~~{or~~

~~-(o)}~~ (p) The division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety for use pursuant to NRS 176.135 in making a presentence investigation and report to the district court ~~{or pursuant to section 3 of Senate Bill No. 148 of this session in making a general investigation and report;~~

(q) *The rural advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 13 of this act or a local advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 14 of this act; or*

(r) *The panel established pursuant to section 17 of this act to evaluate agencies which provide protective services.*

2. An agency investigating a report of the abuse or neglect of a child shall, upon request, provide to a person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child:

(a) A copy of:

(1) Any statement made in writing to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(2) Any recording made by the agency of any statement made orally to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(b) A written summary of the allegations made against the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child. The summary must not identify the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect.

3. *An agency which provides protective services shall disclose the identity of a person who makes a report or otherwise initiates an investigation pursuant to this chapter if a court, after reviewing the record in camera and determining that there is reason to believe that the person knowingly made a false report, orders the disclosure.*

4. Any person, except for:

(a) The subject of a report;

(b) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer initiating legal proceedings; or

(c) An employee of the division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety making a presentence investigation and report to the district court pursuant to NRS 176.135 ~~H~~ *or making a general investigation and report pursuant to section 3 of Senate Bill No. 148 of this session,*

who is given access, pursuant to subsection 1, to information identifying the subjects of a report *and* who makes this information public is guilty of a misdemeanor.

~~H~~ 5. The division of child and family services shall adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of this section.

Sec. 22. NRS 432B.395 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.395 An agency which provides protective services shall submit annually to the division of child and family services for its approval a plan to ensure that *the* reasonable efforts *required by subsection 1 of section 18 of this act* are made by that agency . ~~[to prevent or eliminate removal of a child from his home and, when removal is necessary, to facilitate the return of the child to his home.]~~

Sec. 23. NRS 432B.420 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.420 1. A parent or other person responsible for the ~~[child's]~~ welfare *of a child* who is alleged to have abused or neglected ~~[a]~~ *the* child may be represented by an attorney at all stages of any proceedings under NRS 432B.410 to 432B.590, inclusive ~~[H]~~ *, and sections 15 and 16 of this act.* Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, if the person is indigent, the court may appoint an attorney to represent him. The court may, if it finds it appropriate, appoint an attorney to represent the child.

2. If the court determines that the parent of an Indian child for whom protective custody is sought is indigent, the court:

(a) Shall appoint an attorney to represent the parent;

(b) May appoint an attorney to represent the Indian child; and

(c) May apply to the Secretary of the Interior for the payment of the fees and expenses of such an attorney,
as provided in the Indian Child Welfare Act

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3. Each attorney, other than a public defender, if appointed under the provisions of subsection 1, is entitled to the same compensation and payment for expenses from the county as provided in NRS 7.125 and 7.135 for an attorney appointed to represent a person charged with a crime. ~~[An]~~ *Except as otherwise provided in NRS 432B.500, an* attorney appointed to represent a child may also be appointed as guardian ad litem for the child. ~~[pursuant to NRS 432B.500, unless the attorney requests the appointment of a separate guardian ad litem.]~~ He may not receive any compensation for his services as a guardian ad litem.

Sec. 24. NRS 432B.457 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.457 **1.** If the court or a special master appointed pursuant to NRS 432B.455 finds that a person ~~[, including, but not limited to, a parent or other relative, teacher, friend or neighbor of a child:~~
~~—1. Has a personal interest in the well-being of the child; or~~
~~—2. Possesses information that is relevant to the determination of who should take custody of the]~~ *has a special interest in a* child, the court or the special master ~~[may allow]~~ *shall:*

(a) Except for good cause, ensure that the person is involved in and notified of any plan for the temporary or permanent placement of the child and is allowed to offer recommendations regarding the plan; and

(b) Allow the person to testify at any hearing held pursuant to this chapter to determine ~~[the person most qualified and suitable to take custody]~~ *any temporary or permanent placement* of the child.

2. *For the purposes of this section, a person “has a special interest in a child” if:*

(a) The person is:

- (1) A parent or other relative of the child;*
- (2) A foster parent or other provider of substitute care for the child;*
- (3) A provider of care for the medical or mental health of the child;*

or

(4) A teacher or other school official who works directly with the child; and

(b) The person:

- (1) Has a personal interest in the well-being of the child; or*
- (2) Possesses information that is relevant to the determination of the placement of the child.*

Sec. 25. NRS 432B.500 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.500 **1.** After a petition is filed that a child is in need of protection pursuant to NRS 432B.490, the court shall appoint ~~[a representative of an agency which provides protective services, a juvenile probation officer, an officer of the court or a volunteer as]~~ a guardian ad litem ~~[to represent and protect the best interests of the child. A]~~ *for the child. The person so appointed:*

(a) Must meet the requirements of section 16 of this act or, if such a person is not available, a representative of an agency which provides

protective services, a juvenile probation officer, an officer of the court or another volunteer.

(b) Must not be a parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare . ~~{may not be so appointed.}~~

2. No compensation may be allowed a person serving as a guardian ad litem ~~{.}~~ pursuant to this section.

3. A guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to this section shall:

(a) Represent and protect the best interests of the child until excused by the court;

(b) Thoroughly research and ascertain the relevant facts of each case for which he is appointed, and ensure that the court receives an independent, objective account of those facts;

(c) Meet with the child wherever the child is placed as often as is necessary to determine that the child is safe and to ascertain the best interests of the child;

(d) Explain to the child the role of the guardian ad litem and, when appropriate, the nature and purpose of each proceeding in his case;

(e) Participate in the development and negotiation of any plans for and orders regarding the child, and monitor the implementation of those plans and orders to determine whether services are being provided in an appropriate and timely manner;

(f) Appear at all proceedings regarding the child;

(g) Inform the court of the desires of the child, but exercise his independent judgment regarding the best interests of the child;

(h) Present recommendations to the court and provide reasons in support of those recommendations;

(i) Request the court to enter orders that are clear, specific and, when appropriate, include periods for compliance;

(j) Review the progress of each case for which he is appointed, and advocate for the expedient completion of the case; and

(k) Perform such other duties as the court orders.

Sec. 26. NRS 432B.540 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.540 1. If the court finds that the allegations of the petition are true, it shall order that a report be made in writing by an agency which provides protective services, concerning the conditions in the child's place of residence, the child's record in school, the mental, physical and social background of his family, its financial situation and other matters relevant to the case.

2. If the agency believes that it is necessary to remove the child from the physical custody of his parents, it must submit with the report a plan designed to achieve a placement of the child in a *safe* setting as near to the residence of his parent as is consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child. The plan must include:

(a) A description of the type , *safety* and appropriateness of the home or institution in which the child could be placed, a plan for ~~{assuring}~~

ensuring that he would receive *safe and* proper care and a description of his needs;

(b) A description of the services to be provided to the child and to a parent to facilitate the return of the child to the custody of his parent or to ~~{assure}~~ *ensure* his permanent placement;

(c) The appropriateness of the services to be provided under the plan; and

(d) A description of how the order of the court will be carried out.

3. If the child is not residing in his home, the agency shall include as a part of the plan for the permanent placement of the child, established pursuant to NRS 432B.590, a recommendation to terminate parental rights unless it determines that initiating a petition for the termination of parental rights is not in the best interests of the child. If the agency conclusively determines that initiating a petition for the termination of parental rights is not in the best interests of the child, it shall include a full explanation of the basis for the determination as part of the plan.

Sec. 27. NRS 432B.550 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.550 1. If the court finds that ~~{the}~~ *a* child is in need of protection, it shall determine whether ~~{reasonable efforts were made by}~~ the agency which provides protective services ~~{to prevent or eliminate the need for his removal from his home and to facilitate his return to his home.}~~ *has made the reasonable efforts required by subsection 1 of section 18 of this act.* The court may, by its order, after receipt and review of the report from the agency which provides protective services:

(a) Permit the child to remain in the *temporary or permanent* custody of his parents or *a* guardian with or without supervision by the court or a person or agency designated by the court, *and with or without retaining jurisdiction of the case,* upon such conditions as the court may prescribe;

(b) Place him in the temporary or permanent custody of a relative *or other person* who the court finds suitable to receive and care for him with or without supervision, *and with or without retaining jurisdiction of the case,* upon such conditions as the court may prescribe;

(c) Place him in the temporary custody of a public agency or institution authorized to care for children, the local juvenile probation department, the local department of juvenile services or a private agency or institution licensed by the department of human resources to care for such a child; or

(d) Commit him to the custody of the superintendent of the northern Nevada children's home or the superintendent of the southern Nevada children's home, in accordance with chapter 423 of NRS.

In carrying out this subsection, the court may, in its sole discretion, consider an application pursuant to chapter 159 of NRS for the guardianship of the child. If the court grants such an application, it may retain jurisdiction of the case or transfer the case to another court of competent jurisdiction.

2. If, pursuant to subsection 1, a child is placed other than with a parent ~~{the}~~ :

(a) *The* parent retains the right to consent to adoption, to determine the child's religious affiliation and to reasonable visitation, unless restricted by the court. If the custodian of the child interferes with these rights, the parent may petition the court for enforcement of his rights.

(b) *The court shall set forth good cause why the child was placed other than with a parent.*

3. If, pursuant to subsection 1, the child is to be placed with a relative, the court may consider, among other factors, whether the child has resided with a particular relative for 3 years or more before the incident which brought the child to the court's attention.

4. A copy of the report prepared for the court by the agency which provides protective services must be sent to the custodian and the parent or legal guardian.

5. In determining the placement of a child pursuant to this section, if the child is not permitted to remain in the custody of his parents or guardian, preference must be given to *placing the child:*

(a) *With* any person related within the third degree of consanguinity to the child who is suitable and able to provide proper care and guidance for the child, regardless of whether the relative resides within this state.

(b) *If practicable, together with his siblings.*

Any search for a relative with whom to place a child pursuant to this section must be completed within 1 year after the initial placement of the child outside of his home. If a child is placed with any person who resides outside *of* this state, the placement must be in accordance with NRS 127.330.

Sec. 28. NRS 432B.580 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.580 1. Except as otherwise provided in this section, if a child is placed pursuant to NRS 432B.550 other than with a parent, the placement must be reviewed by the court at least semiannually. Unless the parent, guardian or the custodian objects to the referral, the court may enter an order directing that the placement be reviewed by a panel appointed pursuant to NRS 432B.585.

2. An agency acting as the custodian of the child shall, before any hearing for review of the placement of a child, submit a report to the court, or to the panel if it has been designated to review the matter, which includes an evaluation of the progress of the child and his family and any recommendations for further supervision, treatment or rehabilitation. A copy of the report must be given to the parents, the guardian ad litem and the attorney, if any, representing the parent or the child.

3. The court or the panel shall hold a hearing to review the placement, unless the parent, guardian or ~~the~~ custodian files a motion with the court to dispense with the hearing. If the motion is granted, the court or panel may make its determination from any report, statement or other information submitted to it.

4. Notice of the hearing must be given by registered or certified mail to ~~all parties of~~ :

(a) *All the parties to* any of the prior proceedings ~~to~~; and
(b) *Any persons planning to adopt the child, relatives of the child or providers of foster care who are currently providing care to the child,* except a parent whose rights have been terminated pursuant to chapter 128 of NRS or who has voluntarily relinquished the child for adoption pursuant to NRS 127.040.

5. The court or panel may require the presence of the child at the *hearing and shall provide to each person to whom notice was given pursuant to subsection 4 an opportunity to be heard at the* hearing.

6. The court or panel shall review:

- (a) The continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement;
- (b) The extent of compliance with the plan submitted pursuant to subsection 2 of NRS 432B.540;
- (c) Any progress which has been made in alleviating the problem which resulted in the placement of the child; and
- (d) The date the child may be returned to *and safely maintained in* his home or placed for adoption or under a legal guardianship.

7. The provision of notice and an opportunity to be heard pursuant to this section does not cause any person planning to adopt the child, or any relative or provider of foster care to become a party to the hearing.

Sec. 29. NRS 432B.590 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.590 1. Except as otherwise provided in NRS 432B.600, the court shall hold a hearing concerning the permanent placement of ~~the child~~ *no* *a child*:

(a) *Not* later than ~~18~~ 12 months after the ~~most recent~~ *initial* removal of the child from his home and annually thereafter.

(b) *Within 30 days after making any of the findings set forth in subsection 3 of section 18 of this act.*

Notice of this hearing must be given by registered or certified mail to all ~~[parties of the dispositional proceeding, except a parent whose rights have been terminated pursuant to chapter 128 of NRS or who has voluntarily relinquished the child for adoption pursuant to NRS 127.040.]~~ *of the persons to whom notice must be given pursuant to subsection 4 of NRS 432B.580.*

2. The court may require the presence of the child at the *hearing and shall provide to each person to whom notice was given pursuant to subsection 1 an opportunity to be heard at the* hearing.

3. At the hearing the court shall establish a plan for the permanent placement of the child and determine whether:

- (a) The child should be returned to his parents or other relatives;
- (b) The child's placement in the foster home or other similar institution should be continued; or
- (c) ~~It is in~~ *It is in* the best interests of the child ~~to~~ *to initiate* proceedings to:

(1) Terminate parental rights pursuant to chapter 128 of NRS so that the child can be placed for adoption; or

(2) Establish a guardianship pursuant to chapter 159 of NRS . ~~It should be initiated.~~

If the court determines that it is in the best interests of the child to terminate parental rights, the court shall use its best efforts to ensure that the procedures required by chapter 128 of NRS are completed within 6 months after the date the court makes that determination, including, without limitation, appointing a private attorney to expedite the completion of the procedures.

4. If a child has been placed outside *of* his home and has resided outside *of* his home pursuant to that placement for ~~18~~ 14 months of any ~~24~~ 20 consecutive months, the best interests of the child must be presumed to be served by *the* termination of parental rights.

5. This hearing may take the place of the hearing for review required by NRS 432B.580.

6. The provision of notice and an opportunity to be heard pursuant to this section does not cause any person planning to adopt the child, or any relative or provider of foster care to become a party to the hearing.

Sec. 29.5. Section 11 of Senate Bill No. 148 of this session is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 11. NRS 432B.290 is hereby amended to read as follows:

432B.290 1. Except as otherwise provided in subsections 2, 5 and 6, data or information concerning reports and investigations thereof made pursuant to this chapter may be made available only to:

(a) A physician who has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected;

(b) A person authorized to place a child in protective custody, if he has before him a child who he reasonably believes may have been abused or neglected and he requires the information to determine whether to place the child in protective custody;

(c) An agency, including, without limitation, an agency in another jurisdiction, responsible for or authorized to undertake the care, treatment or supervision of:

(1) The child; or

(2) The person responsible for the welfare of the child;

(d) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer who requires the information in connection with an investigation or prosecution of the abuse or neglect of a child;

(e) A court, for in camera inspection only, unless the court determines that public disclosure of the information is necessary for the determination of an issue before it;

(f) A person engaged in bona fide research or an audit, but information identifying the subjects of a report must not be made available to him;

(g) The attorney and the guardian ad litem of the child

;

(h) A grand jury upon its determination that access to these records is necessary in the conduct of its official business;

(i) A federal, state or local governmental entity, or an agency of such an entity, that needs access to the information to carry out its legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse and neglect;

(j) A person or an organization that has entered into a written agreement with an agency which provides protective services to provide assessments or services and that has been trained to make such assessments or provide such services;

(k) A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.350 for the protection of a child;

(l) A team organized pursuant to NRS 432B.405 to review the death of a child;

(m) A parent or legal guardian of the child, if the identity of the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect of the child to a public agency is kept confidential;

(n) The persons who are the subject of a report;

(o) An agency that is authorized by law to license foster homes or facilities for children or to investigate persons applying for approval to adopt a child, if the agency has before it an application for that license or is investigating an applicant to adopt a child;

(p) Upon written consent of the parent, any officer of this state or a city or county thereof or legislator authorized by the agency or department having jurisdiction or by the legislature, acting within its jurisdiction, to investigate the activities or programs of an agency that provides protective services if:

(1) The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential; and

(2) The officer, legislator or a member of his family is not the person alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect;

(q) The division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety for use pursuant to NRS 176.135 in making a presentence investigation and report to the district court ~~§~~ *or pursuant to section 3 of this act in making a general investigation and report;*

(r) Any person who is required pursuant to NRS 432B.220 to make a report to an agency which provides protective services or to a law enforcement agency;

(s) The rural advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 13 of *Assembly Bill No. 158 of this ~~act~~ session* or a local advisory board to expedite proceedings for the placement of children created pursuant to section 14 of *Assembly Bill No. 158 of this ~~act~~ session;* or

(t) The panel established pursuant to section 17 of *Assembly Bill No. 158 of this ~~act~~ session* to evaluate agencies which provide protective services.

2. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 3, data or information concerning reports and investigations thereof made pursuant to this chapter may be made available to any member of the general public if the child who is the subject of a report dies or is critically injured as a result of alleged abuse or neglect, except that the data or information which may be disclosed is limited to:

- (a) The fact that a report of abuse or neglect has been made and, if appropriate, a factual description of the contents of the report;
- (b) Whether an investigation has been initiated pursuant to NRS 432B.260, and the result of a completed investigation; and
- (c) Such other information as is authorized for disclosure by a court pursuant to subsection 4.

3. An agency which provides protective services shall not disclose data or information pursuant to subsection 2 if the agency determines that the disclosure is not in the best interests of the child or if disclosure of the information would adversely affect any pending investigation concerning a report.

4. Upon petition, a court of competent jurisdiction may authorize the disclosure of additional information to the public pursuant to subsection 2 if good cause is shown by the petitioner for the disclosure of the additional information.

5. An agency investigating a report of the abuse or neglect of a child shall, upon request, provide to a person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child:

(a) A copy of:

(1) Any statement made in writing to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(2) Any recording made by the agency of any statement made orally to an investigator for the agency by the person named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child; or

(b) A written summary of the allegations made against the person who is named in the report as allegedly causing the abuse or neglect of the child. The summary must not identify the person responsible for reporting the alleged abuse or neglect.

6. An agency which provides protective services shall disclose the identity of a person who makes a report or otherwise initiates an investigation pursuant to this chapter if a court, after reviewing the record in camera and determining that there is reason to believe that the person knowingly made a false report, orders the disclosure.

7. Any person, except for:

- (a) The subject of a report;
- (b) A district attorney or other law enforcement officer initiating legal proceedings; or
- (c) An employee of the division of parole and probation of the department of motor vehicles and public safety making a

presentence investigation and report to the district court pursuant to NRS 176.135 ~~or~~ *or making a general investigation and report pursuant to section 3 of this act,*

who is given access, pursuant to subsection 1 or 2, to information identifying the subjects of a report *and* who makes this information public is guilty of a misdemeanor.

8. The division of child and family services shall adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of this section.

Sec. 29.6. Section 15 of Senate Bill No. 148 of this session is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 15. 1. This section and sections 1 to 11, inclusive, and 13 and 14 of this act become effective on October 1, 1999.

2. Section 11 of this act expires by limitation on June 30, 2001.

~~[3. Section 12 of this act becomes effective on July 1, 2001.]~~

Sec. 30. Section 12 of Senate Bill No. 148 of this session and sections 1, 3, 5 and 6 of Senate Bill No. 232 of this session are hereby repealed.

Sec. 31. 1. This section and sections 1 to 12, inclusive, 14 to 20, inclusive, and 22 to 30, inclusive, of this act become effective on July 1, 1999.

2. Section 13 of this act becomes effective upon the division of child and family services of the department of human resources being notified of the creation of three or more local advisory boards to expedite proceedings for the placement of children pursuant to section 14 of this act.

3. Sections 20 and 29.5 of this act expire by limitation on June 30, 2001.

4. Section 21 of this act becomes effective at 12:02 a.m. on July 1, 2001.

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