

## 1 SENATE BILL NO. 153

2 INTRODUCED BY L. JENT

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING THE APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL IN CHILD ABUSE  
5 AND NEGLECT CASES; ALLOWING JUDGES DISCRETION IN APPOINTING COUNSEL FOR A CHILD OR  
6 YOUTH WHEN A GUARDIAN AD LITEM IS APPOINTED FOR THE CHILD OR YOUTH; AND AMENDING  
7 SECTION 41-3-425, MCA."

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9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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11 **Section 1.** Section 41-3-425, MCA, is amended to read:12 **"41-3-425. Right to counsel.** (1) Any party involved in a petition filed pursuant to 41-3-422 has the right  
13 to counsel in all proceedings held pursuant to the petition.14 (2) Except as provided in subsection (3), the court shall immediately appoint or have counsel assigned  
15 for:16 (a) any indigent parent, guardian, or other person having legal custody of a child or youth in a removal,  
17 placement, or termination proceeding pursuant to 41-3-422;18 (b) any child or youth involved in a proceeding under a petition filed pursuant to 41-3-422 when a  
19 guardian ad litem is not appointed for the child or youth; and

20 (c) any party entitled to counsel at public expense under the federal Indian Child Welfare Act.

21 (3) When appropriate, the court may appoint or have counsel assigned for:

22 (a) a guardian ad litem or a court-appointed special advocate involved in a proceeding under a petition  
23 filed pursuant to 41-3-422;24 (b) any child or youth involved in a proceeding under a petition filed pursuant to 41-3-422 when a  
25 guardian ad litem is appointed for the child or youth.26 (4) The court's action pursuant to subsection (2) or (3) must be to order the office of state public  
27 defender, provided for in 47-1-201, to immediately assign counsel pursuant to the Montana Public Defender Act,  
28 Title 47, chapter 1, pending a determination of eligibility pursuant to 47-1-111."

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