



AN ACT REVISING LAWS RELATED TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS; ESTABLISHING A VOLUNTARY EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE SERVICES HEARING WITHIN 5 DAYS OF A CHILD'S REMOVAL FROM THE HOME; PROVIDING FOR CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING PILOT PROJECTS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS; AMENDING SECTION 41-3-301, MCA; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A TERMINATION DATE.

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

Section 1. Emergency protective services hearing on request -- exceptions. (1) (a) If requested by the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child removed from the home pursuant to 41-3-301, a district court shall hold an emergency protective services hearing within 5 business days of the child's removal to determine whether to continue the removal beyond 5 business days.

(b) The department shall provide notification of the option for the hearing as required under 41-3-301.

(c) A hearing is not required if the child is released prior to the time of the requested hearing.

(2) The hearing may be held in person, by videoconference, or, if no other means are available, by telephone.

(3) The child and the child's parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child must be represented by counsel at the hearing.

(4) If the court determines that continued out-of-home placement is needed, the court shall:

(a) establish guidelines for visitation by the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child pending the show cause hearing; and

(b) review the availability of options for a kinship placement and make recommendations if appropriate.

(5) The court may direct the department to develop and implement a treatment plan before the show

cause hearing if the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child stipulates to a condition subject to a treatment plan and agrees to immediately comply with the treatment plan if a plan is developed.

(6) If the court determines continued removal is not appropriate, the child must be immediately returned to the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child.

(7) This section does not apply:

- (a) in judicial districts that are holding voluntary prehearing conferences pursuant to [section 2]; or
- (b) to cases involving an Indian child who is subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Section 2. Voluntary prehearing conferences -- pilot project counties. (1) The parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child who has been removed from the home pursuant to 41-3-301 may participate in a conference within 5 days of the child's removal and before a show cause hearing held by the court if the court is participating in a pilot project testing the effectiveness of prehearing conferences.

(2) A prehearing conference may be held under this section only if it involves:

- (a) the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child;
- (b) the person's legal counsel;
- (c) the county attorney's office; and
- (d) a department social worker.

(3) To the greatest degree possible using available funding, the meetings must be conducted by an independent and trained facilitator.

(4) At a minimum, the meetings must involve discussion of:

(a) the child's current placement and options for continued placement if the child remains out of the home;

(b) whether other options exist for an in-home safety plan or resource that may allow the child to remain in the home;

- (c) parenting time schedules; and
- (d) treatment services for the family.

(5) This section does not apply to cases involving an Indian child who is subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

(6) This section applies to a district court participating in the prehearing conference pilot project funded by the court improvement program on [the effective date of this section] and to any district court in a rural county or multicounty district that chooses to hold conferences in accordance with this section on or after that date.

Section 3. Section 41-3-301, MCA, is amended to read:

"41-3-301. Emergency protective service. (1) Any child protective social worker of the department, a peace officer, or the county attorney who has reason to believe any child is in immediate or apparent danger of harm may immediately remove the child and place the child in a protective facility. After ensuring that the child is safe, the department may make a request for further assistance from the law enforcement agency or take appropriate legal action. The person or agency placing the child shall notify the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child of the placement at the time the placement is made or as soon after placement as possible. Notification under this subsection must:

(a) include the reason for removal;

(b) include information regarding the option for an emergency protective services hearing within 5 days under [section 1], the required show cause hearing within 20 days, and the purpose of the show-cause hearing hearings; and

(c) provide contact information for the social worker, the social worker's supervisor, and the office of state public defender; and

(d) must advise the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child that the parents, parent, guardian, or other person:

(i) has the right to receive a copy of the affidavit as provided in subsection (6);

(ii) has the right to attend and participate in an emergency protective services hearing, if one is requested, and the show-cause hearing, including providing statements to the judge;

(iii) may have a support person present during any in-person meeting with the social worker concerning emergency protective services; and

(iv) may request that the child be placed in a kinship foster home as defined in 52-2-602.

(2) If a social worker of the department, a peace officer, or the county attorney determines in an investigation of abuse or neglect of a child that the child is in danger because of the occurrence of partner or family member assault, as provided for in 45-5-206, or strangulation of a partner or family member, as provided for in 45-5-215, against an adult member of the household or that the child needs protection as a result of the occurrence of partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member against an adult member of the household, the department shall take appropriate steps for the protection of the child, which may include:

(a) making reasonable efforts to protect the child and prevent the removal of the child from the parent or guardian who is a victim of alleged partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member;

(b) making reasonable efforts to remove the person who allegedly committed the partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member from the child's residence if it is determined that the child or another family or household member is in danger of partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member; and

(c) providing services to help protect the child from being placed with or having unsupervised visitation with the person alleged to have committed partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member until the department determines that the alleged offender has met conditions considered necessary to protect the safety of the child.

(3) If the department determines that an adult member of the household is the victim of partner or family member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member, the department shall provide the adult victim with a referral to a domestic violence program.

(4) A child who has been removed from the child's home or any other place for the child's protection or care may not be placed in a jail.

(5) The department may locate and contact extended family members upon placement of a child in out-of-home care. The department may share information with extended family members for placement and case planning purposes.

(6) If a child is removed from the child's home by the department, a child protective social worker shall

submit an affidavit regarding the circumstances of the emergency removal to the county attorney and provide a copy of the affidavit to the parents or guardian, if possible, within 2 working days of the emergency removal. An abuse and neglect petition must be filed within 5 working days, excluding weekends and holidays, of the emergency removal of a child unless arrangements acceptable to the agency for the care of the child have been made by the parents or voluntary protective services are provided pursuant to 41-3-302.

(7) Except as provided in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, if applicable, a show cause hearing must be held within 20 days of the filing of the petition unless otherwise stipulated by the parties pursuant to 41-3-434.

(8) If the department determines that a petition for immediate protection and emergency protective services must be filed to protect the safety of the child, the social worker shall interview the parents of the child to whom the petition pertains, if the parents are reasonably available, before the petition may be filed. The district court may immediately issue an order for immediate protection of the child.

(9) The department shall make the necessary arrangements for the child's well-being as are required prior to the court hearing."

Section 4. Notification to tribal governments. The secretary of state shall send a copy of [this act] to each federally recognized tribal government in Montana.

Section 5. Directions to code commissioner. If both House Bill No. 90 and [this act] are passed and approved, then [section 1] of both bills must be codified as the same section with different effective dates.

Section 6. Codification instruction. [Sections 1 and 2] are intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 41, chapter 3, part 3, and the provisions of Title 41, chapter 3, part 3, apply to [sections 1 and 2].

Section 7. Effective dates. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is effective July 1, 2021.

(2) [Section 2] and this section are effective on passage and approval.

Section 8. Termination. [This act] terminates June 30, 2023.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
HB 503, originated in the House.

Chief Clerk of the House

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

HOUSE BILL NO. 503

INTRODUCED BY D. LENZ

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