

SENATE BILL NO. 181

INTRODUCED BY D. LENZ

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE PROVISION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION ON INITIAL CONTACT WITH A PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR OTHER PERSON HAVING PHYSICAL OR LEGAL CUSTODY OF A CHILD WHO IS THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT INVESTIGATION."

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

NEW SECTION. Section 1. Provision of information about investigation procedure and rights to parents. (1) On first contact with a parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child who is the subject of an investigation under 41-3-202, the department shall verbally advise the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child:

- (a) of the specific complaint or allegation made against the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child;
- (b) of the fundamental rights of parents under 40-6-701 and 40-4-227 to direct the upbringing, education, health care, and mental health of their children without government interference, but this right should yield to the best interests of the child when the parent's conduct is contrary to the child-parent relationship;
- (c) of the right to seek counsel at any time and to consult with counsel before signing any documents;
- (d) that the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child is not required to permit an investigator from the department to enter the home or submit to a drug or alcohol test, unless ordered to do so by the court;
- (e) that the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child is not required to speak with the investigator and any statements may be used in an administrative or court proceeding; and
- (f) that the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child may record any interactions with a department employee if the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or

1 legal custody of a child informs the department employee that the interaction is being recorded.

2 (2) On first contact with the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a
3 child who is the subject of an investigation under 41-3-202, the department shall provide the parent, guardian,
4 or other person having physical or legal custody of a child with a brief and easily understood written description
5 of:

6 (a) the allegation that prompted the investigation;

7 (b) the investigation process that includes:

8 (i) a statement that the department is undertaking the investigation pursuant to 41-3-202 in
9 response to a report of child abuse or neglect;

10 (ii) the department's procedures for conducting an investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect;

11 (iii) a description of the circumstances under which the department would seek to enter into a
12 written prevention plan or services agreement with the parent or guardian under 41-3-302;

13 (iv) a description of the circumstances under which the department would remove the child from
14 the home and seek a court order for immediate protection and emergency protective services under 41-3-427;

15 (v) an explanation of when the law requires the department to refer a report of alleged child abuse
16 or neglect to a law enforcement agency for a separate determination of whether a criminal violation occurred;

17 (vi) the procedures to file a complaint with the department, the office of the governor's citizens'
18 advocate, and the child and family ombudsman;

19 (vii) the procedure for the department to disclose records to a member of the United States
20 congress or a member of the Montana legislature under 41-3-205(4);

21 (viii) the procedure to request a review of the department's findings made during or at the
22 conclusion of the investigation;

23 (ix) the process for reviewing the department's records of the investigation;

24 (x) an explanation of the right to seek legal counsel at any time and that a court will appoint legal
25 counsel under 41-3-425 for an indigent parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a
26 child if court proceedings are initiated under 41-3-422; and

27 (xi) references to the statutory and regulatory provisions governing child abuse and neglect and
28 how the person may obtain copies of those provisions;

- 1 (c) the right of the parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a child to:
- 2 (i) be treated with dignity and respect without any form of discrimination;
- 3 (ii) have the parent's, guardian's, or other person's culture, language, and religion respected;
- 4 (iii) withhold consent to release the parent's, guardian's, or other person's medical or mental health
- 5 records unless ordered to do so by a court;
- 6 (iv) refuse to submit to a drug or alcohol test unless ordered to do so by a court without threat of
- 7 retaliation;
- 8 (v) refuse to allow an investigator from the department to enter the home unless ordered to do so
- 9 by a court without threat of retaliation; and
- 10 (vi) be provided accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C.
- 11 12101, et seq.; and
- 12 (d) the process when a child is removed from the home under 41-3-301 or a petition is filed under
- 13 41-3-422 that includes:
- 14 (i) timelines for hearings and determinations under this chapter;
- 15 (ii) information about the option for an emergency protective services hearing within 5 days and
- 16 the required show cause hearing within 20 days;
- 17 (iii) an explanation that a parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of a
- 18 child has the right to:
- 19 (A) receive a copy of the affidavit of the child protection specialist regarding the circumstances of
- 20 the emergency removal as provided under 41-3-301;
- 21 (B) attend and participate in hearings, which includes providing a statement to the judge;
- 22 (C) contest the allegations in a petition filed under 41-3-422;
- 23 (D) call witnesses and cross-examine witnesses;
- 24 (E) have a support person or persons present during any meeting with a child protection specialist
- 25 or other department staff;
- 26 (F) request that the child be placed in a kinship foster home as defined in 52-2-602;
- 27 (G) be provided with services, including visitation with the child, unless otherwise ordered by the
- 28 court; and

1 (H) have a citizen review board, if available pursuant to part 10 of this chapter, review the case
2 within 30 days of the show cause hearing, and make a recommendation to the district court as provided in 41-3-
3 1010.

4 (3) The department shall post the information required to be given to a parent, guardian, or other
5 person having physical or legal custody of a child under subsections (1)(b) through (1)(f) and subsections (2)(b)
6 through (2)(d) on a publicly available website and in a conspicuous place in the publicly accessible area of the
7 office of a child protection specialist.

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9 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
10 integral part of Title 41, chapter 3, part 2, and the provisions of Title 41, chapter 3, part 2, apply to [section 1].

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