

1 ***** BILL NO. *****

2 INTRODUCED BY *****

3 BY REQUEST OF THE *****

4
5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING PROCEDURES RELATED TO CHILD
6 ABUSE AND NEGLECT PROCEEDINGS; PROVIDING FOR SHARING OF INFORMATION WITH THE
7 OFFICE OF STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER; PROVIDING FOR PREHEARING CONFERENCES BEFORE
8 EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE SERVICES HEARINGS; REMOVING THE EXCEPTION FOR USE OF
9 PREHEARING CONFERENCES AND EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE SERVICES HEARINGS IN CASES
10 SUBJECT TO THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT; CLARIFYING THAT A SUPPORT PERSON MAY BE
11 PRESENT DURING AN EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE SERVICES HEARING; PROVIDING
12 APPROPRIATIONS; AMENDING SECTIONS 41-3-301, 41-3-306, AND 41-3-307, MCA; REPEALING
13 SECTION 8, CHAPTER 529, LAWS OF 2021; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES."

14
15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

16
17 **Section 1.** Section 41-3-301, MCA, is amended to read:

18 **"41-3-301. (Temporary) Emergency protective service.** (1) Any child protection specialist of the
19 department, a peace officer, or the county attorney who has reason to believe any child is in immediate or
20 apparent danger of harm may immediately remove the child and place the child in a protective facility. After
21 ensuring that the child is safe, the department may make a request for further assistance from the law
22 enforcement agency or take appropriate legal action.

23 **(b)** The person or agency placing the child shall notify the parents, parent, guardian, or other person
24 having physical or legal custody of the child of the placement at the time the placement is made or as soon
25 after placement as possible. Notification under this subsection must:

26 **(a)(i)** include the reason for removal;

27 **(b)(ii)** include information regarding the option for an emergency protective services hearing within 5
28 days under 41-3-306, the required show cause hearing within 20 days, and the purpose of the hearings;

1 ~~(e)~~(iii) provide contact information for the child protection specialist, the child protection specialist's
 2 supervisor, and the office of state public defender; and

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

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

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

8 ~~(iii)~~(C) may have a support person present during any ~~in-person~~ meeting with the child protection
 9 specialist concerning emergency protective services, including the emergency protective services hearing
 10 provided for in 41-3-306; and

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

12 (c) A copy of the notification required under subsection (1)(b) must be provided within 1 business day to
 13 the office of state public defender.

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

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

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

28 (c) providing services to help protect the child from being placed with or having unsupervised

1 visitation with the person alleged to have committed partner or family member assault or strangulation of a
2 partner or family member until the department determines that the alleged offender has met conditions
3 considered necessary to protect the safety of the child.

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

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

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

12 (6) If a child is removed from the child's home by the department, a child protection specialist shall
13 submit an affidavit regarding the circumstances of the emergency removal to the county attorney and provide a
14 copy of the affidavit to the office of state public defender and, if possible, the parents or guardian, ~~if possible,~~
15 within 2 working days of the emergency removal. An abuse and neglect petition must be filed within 5 working
16 days, excluding weekends and holidays, of the emergency removal of a child unless arrangements acceptable
17 to the agency for the care of the child have been made by the parents or a written prevention plan has been
18 entered into pursuant to 41-3-302.

19 (7) Except as provided in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, if applicable, a show cause hearing
20 must be held within 20 days of the filing of the petition unless otherwise stipulated by the parties pursuant to 41-
21 3-434.

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

26 (9) The department shall make the necessary arrangements for the child's well-being as are required
27 prior to the court hearing. (Terminates June 30, 2023--sec. 8, Ch. 529, L. 2021.)

28 **41-3-301. (Effective July 1, 2023) Emergency protective service.** (1) Any child protection specialist

1 of the department, a peace officer, or the county attorney who has reason to believe any child is in immediate
2 or apparent danger of harm may immediately remove the child and place the child in a protective facility. After
3 ensuring that the child is safe, the department may make a request for further assistance from the law
4 enforcement agency or take appropriate legal action.

5 (b) The person or agency placing the child shall notify the parents, parent, guardian, or other person
6 having physical or legal custody of the child of the placement at the time the placement is made or as soon
7 after placement as possible. Notification under this subsection must:

8 (a)(i) include the reason for removal;

9 (b)(ii) include information regarding the emergency protective services and show cause hearings and
10 the purpose of the hearings; and

11 (c)(ii) advise the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the
12 child that the parents, parent, guardian, or other person may have a support person present during any in-
13 ~~person meeting~~ with the child protection specialist concerning emergency protective services, including the
14 emergency protective services hearing provided for in 41-3-306.

15 (c) A copy of the notification required under subsection (1)(b) must be provided within 1 business day to
16 the office of state public defender.

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

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

27 (b) making reasonable efforts to remove the person who allegedly committed the partner or family
28 member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member from the child's residence if it is determined that

1 member assault or strangulation of a partner or family member from the child's residence if it is determined that
2 the child or another family or household member is in danger of partner or family member assault or
3 strangulation of a partner or family member; and

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

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

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

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

16 (6) If a child is removed from the child's home by the department, a child protection specialist shall
17 submit an affidavit regarding the circumstances of the emergency removal to the county attorney and provide a
18 copy of the affidavit to the office of state public defender and, if possible, the parents or guardian,~~if possible,~~
19 within 2 working days of the emergency removal. An abuse and neglect petition must be filed in accordance
20 with 41-3-422 within 5 working days, excluding weekends and holidays, of the emergency removal of a child
21 unless arrangements acceptable to the agency for the care of the child have been made by the parents or a
22 written prevention plan has been entered into pursuant to 41-3-302.

23 (7) Except as provided in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, if applicable, a show cause hearing
24 must be held within 20 days of the filing of the petition unless otherwise stipulated by the parties pursuant to 41-
25 3-434.

26 (8) If the department determines that a petition for immediate protection and emergency protective
27 services must be filed to protect the safety of the child, the child protection specialist shall interview the parents
28 of the child to whom the petition pertains, if the parents are reasonably available, before the petition may be

1 filed. The district court may immediately issue an order for immediate protection of the child.

2 (9) The department shall make the necessary arrangements for the child's well-being as are required
3 prior to the court hearing."
4

5 **Section 2.** Section 41-3-306, MCA, is amended to read:

6 **"41-3-306. (Temporary) Emergency protective services hearing on request—~~exceptions~~**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 (5) The court may direct the department to develop and implement a treatment plan before the show
23 cause hearing if the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child
24 stipulates to a condition subject to a treatment plan and agrees to immediately comply with the treatment plan if
25 a plan is developed.

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

28 (7) This section does not apply:

1 ~~(a)~~ in judicial districts that are holding voluntary prehearing conferences pursuant to 41-3-307; ~~or~~

2 ~~(b)~~ ~~to cases involving an Indian child who is subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act.~~

3 (8) The emergency protective services hearing is an emergency proceeding for the purposes of the
4 Indian Child Welfare Act and is not subject to the notice requirements of that act. (Terminates June 30, 2023--
5 sec. 8, Ch. 529, L. 2021.)

6 **41-3-306. (Effective July 1, 2023) Emergency protective services hearing ~~exception.~~** (1) (a) A
7 district court shall hold a hearing within 5 business days of a child's removal from the home pursuant to 41-3-
8 301 to determine whether there is probable cause to continue the removal beyond 5 business days.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 (5) The court may direct the department to develop and implement a treatment plan before the show
21 cause hearing if the parents, parent, guardian or other person having physical or legal custody of the child
22 stipulates to a condition subject to a treatment plan and agrees to immediately comply with the treatment plan if
23 a plan is developed.

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

26 (7) ~~This section does not apply to cases involving an Indian child who is subject to~~ The emergency
27 protective services hearing is an emergency proceeding for the purposes of the Indian Child Welfare Act and is
28 not subject to the notice requirements of that act."

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Section 3. Section 41-3-307, MCA, is amended to read:

"41-3-307. ~~(Temporary) Voluntary Availability of~~ 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, an emergency protective services hearing~~ held by the court ~~if the court is participating in a pilot project testing the effectiveness of prehearing conferences pursuant to 41-3-306.~~

(2) A prehearing conference ~~may be held under this section only if it involves~~ must include the following parties:

- (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 May 14, 2021, 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. (Terminates June 30, 2023—sec. 8, Ch. 529, L. 2021.)"~~

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Section 4. Section 41-3-427, MCA, is amended to read:

"41-3-427. Petition for immediate protection and emergency protective services -- order --

service. (1) (a) In a case in which it appears that a child is abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused or neglected, the county attorney, the attorney general, or an attorney hired by the county may file a petition for immediate protection and emergency protective services. In implementing the policy of this section, the child's health and safety are of paramount concern.

(b) A petition for immediate protection and emergency protective services must state the specific authority requested and must be supported by an affidavit signed by a representative of the department stating in detail the alleged facts upon which the request is based and the facts establishing probable cause or, if the case is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, clear and convincing evidence that a child is abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused or neglected. The affidavit of the department representative must contain information, if any, regarding statements made by the parents about the facts of the case.

(c) If from the alleged facts presented in the affidavit it appears to the court that there is probable cause or, if the case is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, clear and convincing evidence to believe that the child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused and neglected, the judge shall grant emergency protective services and the relief authorized by subsection (2) until the adjudication hearing or the temporary investigative hearing. If it appears from the alleged facts contained in the affidavit that there is insufficient probable cause or, if the case is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, clear and convincing evidence to believe that the child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused or neglected, the court shall dismiss the petition.

(d) If the parents, parent, guardian, person having physical or legal custody of the child, or attorney for the child disputes the material issues of fact contained in the affidavit or the veracity of the affidavit, the person may request a contested show cause hearing pursuant to 41-3-432 within 10 days following service of the petition and affidavit.

(e) The petition for immediate protection and emergency protective services must include a notice advising the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child that the parents, parent, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody of the child may have a support

1 person present during any ~~in-person~~ meeting with a child protection specialist concerning emergency protective
2 services. Reasonable accommodation must be made in scheduling ~~an in-person~~ a meeting with the child
3 protection specialist.

4 (2) Pursuant to subsection (1), if the court finds probable cause or, if the case is subject to the federal
5 Indian Child Welfare Act, clear and convincing evidence based on the petition and affidavit, the court may issue
6 an order for immediate protection of the child. The court shall consider the parents' statements, if any, included
7 with the petition and any accompanying affidavit or report to the court. If the court finds probable cause or, if the
8 case is subject to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, clear and convincing evidence, the court may issue an
9 order granting the following forms of relief, which do not constitute a court-ordered treatment plan under 41-3-
10 443:

11 (a) the right of entry by a peace officer or department worker;

12 (b) the right to place the child in temporary medical or out-of-home care, including but not limited to
13 care provided by a noncustodial parent, kinship or foster family, group home, or institution;

14 (c) the right of the department to locate, contact, and share information with any extended family
15 members who may be considered as placement options for the child;

16 (d) a requirement that the parents, guardian, or other person having physical or legal custody furnish
17 information that the court may designate and obtain evaluations that may be necessary to determine whether a
18 child is a youth in need of care;

19 (e) a requirement that the perpetrator of the alleged child abuse or neglect be removed from the home
20 to allow the child to remain in the home;

21 (f) a requirement that the parent provide the department with the name and address of the other
22 parent, if known, unless parental rights to the child have been terminated;

23 (g) a requirement that the parent provide the department with the names and addresses of extended
24 family members who may be considered as placement options for the child who is the subject of the
25 proceeding; and

26 (h) any other temporary disposition that may be required in the best interests of the child that does not
27 require an expenditure of money by the department unless the court finds after notice and a hearing that the
28 expenditure is reasonable and that resources are available for payment. The department is the payor of last

1 resort after all family, insurance, and other resources have been examined.

2 (3) An order for removal of a child from the home must include a finding that continued residence of
3 the child with the parent is contrary to the welfare of the child or that an out-of-home placement is in the best
4 interests of the child.

5 (4) The order for immediate protection of the child must require the person served to comply
6 immediately with the terms of the order and to appear before the court issuing the order on the date specified
7 for a show cause hearing. Upon a failure to comply or show cause, the court may hold the person in contempt
8 or place temporary physical custody of the child with the department until further order.

9 (5) The petition must be served as provided in 41-3-422."
10

11 NEW SECTION. ~~Section 5, Section 4.~~ {standard} Repealer. Section 8, Chapter 529, Laws of 2021,
12 is repealed.
13

14 NEW SECTION. ~~Section 6, Section 5.~~ Appropriation. (1) There is appropriated \$450,00 from the
15 general fund to the office of court administrator for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, to pay for the costs of
16 training and hiring facilitators for the prehearing conferences provided for in [section 3].

17 (2) There is appropriated \$300,000 from the general fund to the office of state public defender for the
18 biennium beginning July 1, 2023, to pay for the costs of providing legal representation to parents and guardians
19 during the emergency protective services hearing provided for in [section 2] and the prehearing conferences
20 provided for in [section 3].
21

22 NEW SECTION. ~~Section 7, Section 6.~~ Effective dates. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2),
23 [this act] is effective on passage and approval.

24 (2) [Section 5] is effective June 30, 2023.

25 (3) [Sections 3 and 6] are effective July 1, 2023.

26 - END -

