

**EMERGENCY PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN**

2015 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill amends provisions related to the emergency placement of a child who has been removed by the Division of Child and Family Services.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ permits the Division of Child and Family Services (the division) to place a child in an emergency placement with a friend, designated by the custodial parent or guardian, who is not a licensed foster parent;
- ▶ modifies the definition of "relative" as it relates to abuse, neglect, and dependency proceedings;
- ▶ permits the division to place a child in an emergency placement with an adult who is an adoptive parent of the child's sibling;
- ▶ permits the court to award custody of a child with a friend who is not a licensed foster parent; and
- ▶ permits the court to award custody of a child with an adult who is an adoptive parent of a child's sibling.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

AMENDS:

**62A-4a-209**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 416

**78A-6-307**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 416

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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **62A-4a-209** is amended to read:

33           **62A-4a-209. Emergency placement.**

34           (1) As used in this section:

35           (a) "Nonrelative" means an individual, other than a noncustodial parent or a relative.

36           (b) "Relative" is as defined in Subsection 78A-6-307(1)(b).

37           (2) The division may use an emergency placement under Subsection

38 62A-4a-202.1(4)(b)(ii) when:

39           (a) the case worker has made the determination that:

40           (i) the child's home is unsafe;

41           (ii) removal is necessary under the provisions of Section 62A-4a-202.1; and

42           (iii) the child's custodial parent or guardian will agree to not remove the child from the  
43 home of the person that serves as the placement and not have any contact with the child until  
44 after the shelter hearing required by Section 78A-6-306;

45           (b) a person, with preference being given in accordance with Subsection (4), can be  
46 identified who has the ability and is willing to provide care for the child who would otherwise  
47 be placed in shelter care, including:

48           (i) taking the child to medical, mental health, dental, and educational appointments at  
49 the request of the division; and

50           (ii) making the child available to division services and the guardian ad litem; and

51           (c) the person described in Subsection (2)(b) agrees to care for the child on an  
52 emergency basis under the following conditions:

53           (i) the person meets the criteria for an emergency placement under Subsection (3);

54           (ii) the person agrees to not allow the custodial parent or guardian to have any contact  
55 with the child until after the shelter hearing unless authorized by the division in writing;

56           (iii) the person agrees to contact law enforcement and the division if the custodial  
57 parent or guardian attempts to make unauthorized contact with the child;

58           (iv) the person agrees to allow the division and the child's guardian ad litem to have  
59 access to the child;

60           (v) the person has been informed and understands that the division may continue to  
61 search for other possible placements for long-term care, if needed;

62           (vi) the person is willing to assist the custodial parent or guardian in reunification  
63 efforts at the request of the division, and to follow all court orders; and

64 (vii) the child is comfortable with the person.

65 (3) Except as otherwise provided in Subsection (5), before the division places a child  
66 in an emergency placement, the division:

67 (a) may request the name of a reference and may contact the reference to determine the  
68 answer to the following questions:

69 (i) would the person identified as a reference place a child in the home of the  
70 emergency placement; and

71 (ii) are there any other relatives or friends to consider as a possible emergency or  
72 long-term placement for the child;

73 (b) shall have the custodial parent or guardian sign an emergency placement agreement  
74 form during the investigation;

75 (c) (i) if the emergency placement will be with a relative of the child, shall comply with  
76 the background check provisions described in Subsection (7); or

77 (ii) if the emergency placement will be with a person other than a noncustodial parent  
78 or a relative, shall comply with the criminal background check provisions described in Section  
79 78A-6-308 for adults living in the household where the child will be placed;

80 (d) shall complete a limited home inspection of the home where the emergency  
81 placement is made; and

82 (e) shall have the emergency placement approved by a family service specialist.

83 (4) (a) The following order of preference shall be applied when determining the person  
84 with whom a child will be placed in an emergency placement described in this section,  
85 provided that the person is willing, and has the ability, to care for the child:

86 (i) a noncustodial parent of the child in accordance with Section 78A-6-307;

87 (ii) a relative of the child;

88 (iii) subject to Subsection (4)(b), a friend designated by the custodial parent or  
89 guardian of the child~~[-if the friend is a licensed foster parent];~~ and

90 (iv) a shelter facility, former foster placement, or other foster placement designated by  
91 the division.

92 (b) Unless the division agrees otherwise, the custodial parent or guardian described in  
93 Subsection (4)(a)(iii) may designate up to two friends as a potential emergency placement.

94 (5) (a) The division may, pending the outcome of the investigation described in

95 Subsections (5)(b) and (c), place a child in emergency placement with the child's noncustodial  
96 parent if, based on a limited investigation, prior to making the emergency placement, the  
97 division:

98 (i) determines that the noncustodial parent has regular, unsupervised visitation with the  
99 child that is not prohibited by law or court order;

100 (ii) determines that there is not reason to believe that the child's health or safety will be  
101 endangered during the emergency placement; and

102 (iii) has the custodial parent or guardian sign an emergency placement agreement.

103 (b) Either before or after making an emergency placement with the noncustodial parent  
104 of the child, the division may conduct the investigation described in Subsection (3)(a) in  
105 relation to the noncustodial parent.

106 (c) Before, or within one day, excluding weekends and holidays, after a child is placed  
107 in an emergency placement with the noncustodial parent of the child, the division shall conduct  
108 a limited:

109 (i) background check of the noncustodial parent, pursuant to Subsection (7); and

110 (ii) inspection of the home where the emergency placement is made.

111 (6) After an emergency placement, the division caseworker must:

112 (a) respond to the emergency placement's calls within one hour if the custodial parents  
113 or guardians attempt to make unauthorized contact with the child or attempt to remove the  
114 child;

115 (b) complete all removal paperwork, including the notice provided to the custodial  
116 parents and guardians under Section 78A-6-306;

117 (c) contact the attorney general to schedule a shelter hearing;

118 (d) complete the placement procedures required in Section 78A-6-307; and

119 (e) continue to search for other relatives as a possible long-term placement, if needed.

120 (7) (a) The background check described in Subsection (3)(c)(i) shall include:

121 (i) completion of a nonfingerprint-based, Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification  
122 background check; and

123 (ii) a completed search of the Management Information System described in Section  
124 62A-4a-1003.

125 (b) The division shall determine whether a person passes the background check

126 described in this Subsection (7) pursuant to the provisions of Subsections 62A-2-120(2), (3),  
127 and (8).

128 (c) Notwithstanding Subsection (7)(b), the division may not place a child with an  
129 individual who is prohibited by court order from having access to that child.

130 Section 2. Section **78A-6-307** is amended to read:

131 **78A-6-307. Shelter hearing -- Placement -- DCFS custody.**

132 (1) As used in this section:

133 (a) (i) "Natural parent," notwithstanding the provisions of Section 78A-6-105, means:

134 (A) a biological or adoptive mother;

135 (B) an adoptive father; or

136 (C) a biological father who:

137 (D) was married to the child's biological mother at the time the child was conceived or  
138 born; or

139 (II) has strictly complied with the provisions of Sections 78B-6-120 through  
140 78B-6-122, prior to removal of the child or voluntary surrender of the child by the custodial  
141 parent.

142 (ii) The definition of "natural parent" described in Subsection (1)(a)(i) applies  
143 regardless of whether the child has been or will be placed with adoptive parents or whether  
144 adoption has been or will be considered as a long-term goal for the child.

145 (b) "Relative" means:

146 (i) an adult who is a grandparent, great grandparent, aunt, great aunt, uncle, great uncle,  
147 brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepparent, first cousin, stepsibling, sibling of a child, or a first  
148 cousin of the child's parent; ~~and~~

149 (ii) an adult who is an adoptive parent of the child's sibling; or

150 ~~[(ii)] (iii)~~ in the case of a child defined as an "Indian" under the Indian Child Welfare  
151 Act, 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903, "relative" also means an "extended family member" as defined by  
152 that statute.

153 (2) (a) At the shelter hearing, when the court orders that a child be removed from the  
154 custody of the child's parent in accordance with the requirements of Section 78A-6-306, the  
155 court shall first determine whether there is another natural parent with whom the child was not  
156 residing at the time the events or conditions that brought the child within the court's jurisdiction

157 occurred, who desires to assume custody of the child.

158 (b) If another natural parent requests custody under Subsection (2)(a), the court shall  
159 place the child with that parent unless it finds that the placement would be unsafe or otherwise  
160 detrimental to the child.

161 (c) The provisions of this Subsection (2) are limited by the provisions of Subsection  
162 (18)(b).

163 (d) (i) The court shall make a specific finding regarding the fitness of the parent  
164 described in Subsection (2)(b) to assume custody, and the safety and appropriateness of the  
165 placement.

166 (ii) The court shall, at a minimum, order the division to visit the parent's home, comply  
167 with the criminal background check provisions described in Section 78A-6-308, and check the  
168 division's management information system for any previous reports of abuse or neglect  
169 received by the division regarding the parent at issue.

170 (iii) The court may order the division to conduct any further investigation regarding the  
171 safety and appropriateness of the placement.

172 (iv) The division shall report its findings in writing to the court.

173 (v) The court may place the child in the temporary custody of the division, pending its  
174 determination regarding that placement.

175 (3) If the court orders placement with a parent under Subsection (2):

176 (a) the child and the parent are under the continuing jurisdiction of the court;

177 (b) the court may order:

178 (i) that the parent assume custody subject to the supervision of the court; and

179 (ii) that services be provided to the parent from whose custody the child was removed,  
180 the parent who has assumed custody, or both; and

181 (c) the court shall order reasonable parent-time with the parent from whose custody the  
182 child was removed, unless parent-time is not in the best interest of the child.

183 (4) The court shall periodically review an order described in Subsection (3) to  
184 determine whether:

185 (a) placement with the parent continues to be in the child's best interest;

186 (b) the child should be returned to the original custodial parent;

187 (c) the child should be placed in the custody of a relative, pursuant to Subsections (7)

188 through (12); or

189 (d) the child should be placed in the custody of the division.

190 (5) The time limitations described in Section 78A-6-312 with regard to reunification  
191 efforts, apply to children placed with a previously noncustodial parent in accordance with  
192 Subsection (2).

193 (6) Legal custody of the child is not affected by an order entered under Subsection (2)  
194 or (3). In order to affect a previous court order regarding legal custody, the party must petition  
195 that court for modification of the order.

196 (7) If, at the time of the shelter hearing, a child is removed from the custody of the  
197 child's parent and is not placed in the custody of the child's other parent, the court:

198 (a) shall, at that time, determine whether, subject to Subsections (18)(c) through (e),  
199 there is a relative of the child or a friend of a parent of the child who is able and willing to care  
200 for the child;

201 (b) may order the division to conduct a reasonable search to determine whether, subject  
202 to Subsections (18)(c) through (e), there are relatives of the child or friends of a parent of the  
203 child who are willing and appropriate, in accordance with the requirements of this part and  
204 Title 62A, Chapter 4a, Part 2, Child Welfare Services, for placement of the child;

205 (c) shall order the parents to cooperate with the division, within five working days, to,  
206 subject to Subsections (18)(c) through (e), provide information regarding relatives of the child  
207 or friends who may be able and willing to care for the child; and

208 (d) may order that the child be placed in the custody of the division pending the  
209 determination under Subsection (7)(a).

210 (8) This section may not be construed as a guarantee that an identified relative or friend  
211 will receive custody of the child.

212 (9) Subject to Subsections (18)(c) through (e), preferential consideration shall be given  
213 to a relative's or a friend's request for placement of the child, if it is in the best interest of the  
214 child, and the provisions of this section are satisfied.

215 (10) (a) If a willing relative or friend is identified under Subsection (7)(a), the court  
216 shall make a specific finding regarding:

217 (i) the fitness of that relative or friend as a placement for the child; and

218 (ii) the safety and appropriateness of placement with that relative or friend.

219 (b) In order to be considered a "willing relative or friend" under this section, the  
220 relative or friend shall be willing to cooperate with the child's permanency goal.

221 (11) (a) In making the finding described in Subsection (10)(a), the court shall, at a  
222 minimum, order the division to:

223 (i) if the child may be placed with a relative of the child, conduct a background check  
224 that includes:

225 (A) completion of a nonfingerprint-based, Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification  
226 background check of the relative;

227 (B) a completed search, relating to the relative, of the Management Information System  
228 described in Section 62A-4a-1003; and

229 (C) a background check that complies with the criminal background check provisions  
230 described in Section 78A-6-308, of each nonrelative, as defined in Subsection  
231 62A-4a-209(1)(a), of the child who resides in the household where the child may be placed;

232 (ii) if the child will be placed with a noncustodial parent of the child, complete a  
233 background check that includes:

234 (A) the background check requirements applicable to an emergency placement with a  
235 noncustodial parent that are described in Subsections 62A-4a-209(5) and (7);

236 (B) a completed search, relating to the noncustodial parent of the child, of the  
237 Management Information System described in Section 62A-4a-1003; and

238 (C) a background check that complies with the criminal background check provisions  
239 described in Section 78A-6-308, of each nonrelative, as defined in Subsection  
240 62A-4a-209(1)(a), of the child who resides in the household where the child may be placed;

241 (iii) if the child may be placed with an individual other than a noncustodial parent or a  
242 relative of the child, conduct a criminal background check of the individual, and each adult that  
243 resides in the household where the child may be placed, that complies with the criminal  
244 background check provisions described in Section 78A-6-308;

245 (iv) visit the relative's or friend's home;

246 (v) check the division's management information system for any previous reports of  
247 abuse or neglect regarding the relative or friend at issue;

248 (vi) report the division's findings in writing to the court; and

249 (vii) provide sufficient information so that the court may determine whether:

250 (A) the relative or friend has any history of abusive or neglectful behavior toward other  
251 children that may indicate or present a danger to this child;

252 (B) the child is comfortable with the relative or friend;

253 (C) the relative or friend recognizes the parent's history of abuse and is committed to  
254 protect the child;

255 (D) the relative or friend is strong enough to resist inappropriate requests by the parent  
256 for access to the child, in accordance with court orders;

257 (E) the relative or friend is committed to caring for the child as long as necessary; and

258 (F) the relative or friend can provide a secure and stable environment for the child.

259 (b) The division may determine to conduct, or the court may order the division to  
260 conduct, any further investigation regarding the safety and appropriateness of the placement.

261 (c) The division shall complete and file its assessment regarding placement with a  
262 relative or friend as soon as practicable, in an effort to facilitate placement of the child with a  
263 relative or friend.

264 (12) (a) The court may place a child described in Subsection (2)(a) in the temporary  
265 custody of the division, pending the division's investigation pursuant to Subsections (10) and  
266 (11), and the court's determination regarding the appropriateness of that placement.

267 (b) The court shall ultimately base its determination regarding the appropriateness of a  
268 placement with a relative or friend on the best interest of the child.

269 (13) When the court awards custody and guardianship of a child with a relative or  
270 friend:

271 (a) the court shall order that:

272 (i) the relative or friend assume custody, subject to the continuing supervision of the  
273 court; and

274 (ii) any necessary services be provided to the child and the relative or friend;

275 (b) the child and any relative or friend with whom the child is placed are under the  
276 continuing jurisdiction of the court;

277 (c) the court may enter any order that it considers necessary for the protection and best  
278 interest of the child;

279 (d) the court shall provide for reasonable parent-time with the parent or parents from  
280 whose custody the child was removed, unless parent-time is not in the best interest of the child;

281 and

282 (e) the court shall conduct a periodic review no less often than every six months, to  
283 determine whether:

284 (i) placement with the relative or friend continues to be in the child's best interest;

285 (ii) the child should be returned home; or

286 (iii) the child should be placed in the custody of the division.

287 (14) No later than 12 months after placement with a relative or friend, the court shall  
288 schedule a hearing for the purpose of entering a permanent order in accordance with the best  
289 interest of the child.

290 (15) The time limitations described in Section 78A-6-312, with regard to reunification  
291 efforts, apply to children placed with a relative or friend pursuant to Subsection (7).

292 (16) (a) If the court awards custody of a child to the division, and the division places  
293 the child with a relative, the division shall:

294 (i) conduct a criminal background check of the relative that complies with the criminal  
295 background check provisions described in Section 78A-6-308; and

296 (ii) if the results of the criminal background check described in Subsection (16)(a)(i)  
297 would prohibit the relative from having direct access to the child under Section 62A-2-120, the  
298 division shall:

299 (A) take the child into physical custody; and

300 (B) within three days, excluding weekends and holidays, after taking the child into  
301 physical custody under Subsection (16)(a)(ii)(A), give written notice to the court, and all  
302 parties to the proceedings, of the division's action.

303 (b) Nothing in Subsection (16)(a) prohibits the division from placing a child with a  
304 relative, pending the results of the background check described in Subsection (16)(a) on the  
305 relative.

306 (17) When the court orders that a child be removed from the custody of the child's  
307 parent and does not award custody and guardianship to another parent, relative, or friend under  
308 this section, the court shall order that the child be placed in the temporary custody of the  
309 Division of Child and Family Services, to proceed to adjudication and disposition and to be  
310 provided with care and services in accordance with this chapter and Title 62A, Chapter 4a,  
311 Child and Family Services.

312 (18) (a) Any preferential consideration that a relative or friend is initially granted  
313 pursuant to Subsection (9) expires 120 days from the date of the shelter hearing. After that  
314 time period has expired, a relative or friend who has not obtained custody or asserted an  
315 interest in a child, may not be granted preferential consideration by the division or the court.

316 (b) When the time period described in Subsection (18)(a) has expired, the preferential  
317 consideration, which is initially granted to a natural parent in accordance with Subsection (2),  
318 is limited. After that time the court shall base its custody decision on the best interest of the  
319 child.

320 (c) Prior to the expiration of the 120-day period described in Subsection (18)(a), the  
321 following order of preference shall be applied when determining the person with whom a child  
322 will be placed, provided that the person is willing, and has the ability, to care for the child:

323 (i) a noncustodial parent of the child;

324 (ii) a relative of the child;

325 (iii) subject to Subsection (18)(d), a friend of a parent of the child~~[, if the friend is a~~  
326 ~~licensed foster parent]; and~~

327 (iv) other placements that are consistent with the requirements of law.

328 (d) In determining whether a friend is a willing and appropriate placement for a child,  
329 neither the court, nor the division, is required to consider more than one friend designated by  
330 each parent of the child.

331 ~~[(e) If a parent of the child is not able to designate a friend who is a licensed foster~~  
332 ~~parent for placement of the child, but is able to identify a friend who is willing to become~~  
333 ~~licensed as a foster parent:]~~

334 ~~[(i) the department shall fully cooperate to expedite the licensing process for the friend;~~  
335 ~~and]~~

336 ~~[(ii) if the friend becomes licensed as a foster parent within the time frame described in~~  
337 ~~Subsection (18)(a), the court shall determine whether it is in the best interests of the child to~~  
338 ~~place the child with the friend.]~~

339 (19) If, following the shelter hearing, the child is placed with a person who is not a  
340 parent of the child, a relative of the child, a friend of a parent of the child, or a former foster  
341 parent of the child, priority shall be given to a foster placement with a man and a woman who  
342 are married to each other, unless it is in the best interests of the child to place the child with a

343 single foster parent.

344 (20) In determining the placement of a child, neither the court, nor the division, may  
345 take into account, or discriminate against, the religion of a person with whom the child may be  
346 placed, unless the purpose of taking religion into account is to place the child with a person or  
347 family of the same religion as the child.