

Senator Todd Weiler proposes the following substitute bill:

**ADOPTION AMENDMENTS**

2015 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Todd Weiler**

House Sponsor: V. Lowry Snow

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill amends the Utah Adoption Act.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ requires an unmarried biological father to file a petition in district court for an order establishing temporary child support before the unmarried biological father may consent to the adoption of a child who is six months of age or less; and
- ▶ creates a process for the juvenile court to consider multiple petitions for adoption.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

AMENDS:

**78B-6-121**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapters 278 and 458

**78B-6-132**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapter 281

**78B-6-133**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2010, Chapter 237

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

27 Section 1. Section **78B-6-121** is amended to read:

28 **78B-6-121. Consent of unmarried biological father.**

29 (1) Except as provided in Subsections (2)(a) and [78B-6-122\(1\)](#), and subject to  
30 Subsections (5) and (6), with regard to a child who is placed with prospective adoptive parents  
31 more than six months after birth, consent of an unmarried biological father is not required  
32 unless the unmarried biological father:

33 (a) (i) developed a substantial relationship with the child by:

34 (A) visiting the child monthly, unless the unmarried biological father was physically or  
35 financially unable to visit the child on a monthly basis; or

36 (B) engaging in regular communication with the child or with the person or authorized  
37 agency that has lawful custody of the child;

38 (ii) took some measure of responsibility for the child and the child's future; and

39 (iii) demonstrated a full commitment to the responsibilities of parenthood by financial  
40 support of the child of a fair and reasonable sum in accordance with the father's ability; or

41 (b) (i) openly lived with the child:

42 (A) (I) for a period of at least six months during the one-year period immediately  
43 preceding the day on which the child is placed with prospective adoptive parents; or

44 (II) if the child is less than one year old, for a period of at least six months during the  
45 period of time beginning on the day on which the child is born and ending on the day on which  
46 the child is placed with prospective adoptive parents; and

47 (B) immediately preceding placement of the child with prospective adoptive parents;  
48 and

49 (ii) openly held himself out to be the father of the child during the six-month period  
50 described in Subsection (1)(b)(i)(A).

51 (2) (a) If an unmarried biological father was prevented from complying with a  
52 requirement of Subsection (1) by the person or authorized agency having lawful custody of the  
53 child, the unmarried biological father is not required to comply with that requirement.

54 (b) The subjective intent of an unmarried biological father, whether expressed or  
55 otherwise, that is unsupported by evidence that the requirements in Subsection (1) have been  
56 met, shall not preclude a determination that the father failed to meet the requirements of

57 Subsection (1).

58 (3) Except as provided in Subsections (6) and 78B-6-122(1), and subject to Subsection  
59 (5), with regard to a child who is six months of age or less at the time the child is placed with  
60 prospective adoptive parents, consent of an unmarried biological father is not required unless,  
61 prior to the time the mother executes her consent for adoption or relinquishes the child for  
62 adoption, the unmarried biological father:

63 (a) initiates proceedings in a district court of Utah to establish paternity under Title  
64 78B, Chapter 15, Utah Uniform Parentage Act;

65 (b) files with the court that is presiding over the paternity proceeding a sworn affidavit:

66 (i) stating that he is fully able and willing to have full custody of the child;

67 (ii) setting forth his plans for care of the child; and

68 (iii) agreeing to a court order of child support and the payment of expenses incurred in  
69 connection with the mother's pregnancy and the child's birth;

70 (c) files a petition in a district court of Utah for a temporary order to establish child  
71 support in accordance with Title 78B, Chapter 12, Utah Child Support Act;

72 [~~(c)~~] (d) consistent with Subsection (4), files notice of the commencement of paternity  
73 proceedings, described in Subsection (3)(a), with the state registrar of vital statistics within the  
74 Department of Health, in a confidential registry established by the department for that purpose;  
75 and

76 [~~(d)~~] (e) offered to pay and paid, during the pregnancy and after the child's birth, a fair  
77 and reasonable amount of the expenses incurred in connection with the mother's pregnancy and  
78 the child's birth, in accordance with his financial ability, unless:

79 (i) he did not have actual knowledge of the pregnancy;

80 (ii) he was prevented from paying the expenses by the person or authorized agency  
81 having lawful custody of the child; or

82 (iii) the mother [~~refuses~~] refused to accept the unmarried biological father's offer to pay  
83 the expenses described in this Subsection (3)[~~(d)~~](e).

84 (4) The notice described in Subsection (3)[~~(c)~~](d) is considered filed when received by  
85 the state registrar of vital statistics.

86 (5) Unless his ability to assert the right to consent has been lost for failure to comply  
87 with Section 78B-6-110.1, or lost under another provision of Utah law, an unmarried biological

88 father shall have at least one business day after the child's birth to fully and strictly comply with  
89 the requirements of Subsection (3).

90 (6) Consent of an unmarried biological father is not required under this section if:

91 (a) the court determines, in accordance with the requirements and procedures of Title  
92 78A, Chapter 6, Part 5, Termination of Parental Rights Act, that the unmarried biological  
93 father's rights should be terminated, based on the petition of any interested party;

94 (b) (i) a declaration of paternity declaring the unmarried biological father to be the  
95 father of the child is rescinded under Section 78B-15-306; and

96 (ii) the unmarried biological father fails to comply with Subsection (3) within 10  
97 business days after the day that notice of the rescission described in Subsection (6)(b)(i) is  
98 mailed by the Office of Vital Records within the Department of Health as provided in Section  
99 78B-15-306; or

100 (c) the unmarried biological father is notified under Section 78B-6-110.1 and fails to  
101 preserve his rights in accordance with the requirements of that section.

102 (7) Unless the adoptee is conceived or born within a marriage, the petitioner in an  
103 adoption proceeding shall, prior to entrance of a final decree of adoption, file with the court a  
104 certificate from the state registrar of vital statistics within the Department of Health, stating:

105 (a) that a diligent search has been made of the registry of notices from unmarried  
106 biological fathers described in Subsection (3)~~(c)~~(d); and

107 (b) (i) that no filing has been found pertaining to the father of the child in question; or

108 (ii) if a filing is found, the name of the putative father and the time and date of filing.

109 Section 2. Section 78B-6-132 is amended to read:

110 **78B-6-132. Adoption by married couple.**

111 ~~[(1) In assessing the best interest of a child in the custody of the Division of Child and  
112 Family Services whose foster parents have petitioned for adoption, the court shall give special  
113 consideration to the relationship of the child with his foster parents, if the child has been in that  
114 home for a period of six months or longer.]~~

115 ~~[(2)]~~ Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring an adoption that would be  
116 contrary to the public policy of placing an adoptable child with a married couple whenever  
117 possible.

118 Section 3. Section 78B-6-133 is amended to read:

119           **78B-6-133. Contested adoptions -- Rights of parties -- Determination of custody.**

120           (1) If a person whose consent for an adoption is required pursuant to Subsection  
121 **78B-6-120**(1)[(b), (c), (d), (e), or (f)] refused to consent, the court shall determine whether  
122 proper grounds exist for the termination of that person's rights pursuant to the provisions of this  
123 chapter or Title 78A, Chapter 6, Part 5, Termination of Parental Rights Act.

124           (2) (a) If there are proper grounds to terminate the person's parental rights, the court  
125 shall order that the person's rights be terminated.

126           (b) If there are not proper grounds to terminate the person's parental rights, the court  
127 shall:

128           (i) dismiss the adoption petition;

129           (ii) conduct an evidentiary hearing to determine who should have custody of the child;

130 and

131           (iii) award custody of the child in accordance with the child's best interest.

132           (3) Evidence considered at the custody hearing may include:

133           (a) evidence of psychological or emotional bonds that the child has formed with a third  
134 person, including the prospective adoptive parent; and

135           (b) any detriment that a change in custody may cause the child.

136           (4) If the court dismisses the adoption petition, the fact that a person relinquished a  
137 child for adoption or consented to the adoption may not be considered as evidence in a custody  
138 proceeding described in this section, or in any subsequent custody proceeding, that it is not in  
139 the child's best interest for custody to be awarded to such person or that:

140           (a) the person is unfit or incompetent to be a parent;

141           (b) the person has neglected or abandoned the child;

142           (c) the person is not interested in having custody of the child; or

143           (d) the person has forfeited the person's parental presumption.

144           (5) Any custody order entered pursuant to this section may also:

145           (a) include provisions for:

146           (i) parent-time; or

147           (ii) visitation by an interested third party; and

148           (b) provide for the financial support of the child.

149           (6) (a) If a person or entity whose consent is required for an adoption under Subsection

150 78B-6-120(1)~~(a) or (g)~~ refuses to consent, the court shall proceed with an evidentiary hearing  
151 and award custody as set forth in Subsection (2).

152 (b) The court may also finalize the adoption if doing so is in the best interest of the  
153 child.

154 (7) (a) A person may not contest an adoption after the final decree of adoption is  
155 entered, if that person:

- 156 (i) was a party to the adoption proceeding;
- 157 (ii) was served with notice of the adoption proceeding; or
- 158 (iii) executed a consent to the adoption or relinquishment for adoption.

159 (b) No person may contest an adoption after one year from the day on which the final  
160 decree of adoption is entered.

161 (c) The limitations on contesting an adoption action, described in this Subsection (7),  
162 apply to all attempts to contest an adoption:

- 163 (i) regardless of whether the adoption is contested directly or collaterally; and
- 164 (ii) regardless of the basis for contesting the adoption, including claims of fraud,  
165 duress, undue influence, lack of capacity or competency, mistake of law or fact, or lack of  
166 jurisdiction.

167 (d) The limitations on contesting an adoption action, described in this Subsection (7),  
168 do not prohibit a timely appeal of:

- 169 (i) a final decree of adoption; or
- 170 (ii) a decision in an action challenging an adoption, if the action was brought within the  
171 time limitations described in Subsections (7)(a) and (b).

172 (8) A juvenile court that has jurisdiction over a child for whom more than one petition  
173 for adoption is filed shall grant a hearing only under the following circumstances:

- 174 (a) to a petitioner:
  - 175 (i) with whom the child is placed;
  - 176 (ii) who has custody or guardianship of the child; or
  - 177 (iii) who has filed a written statement with the juvenile court within 120 days after the  
178 day on which the shelter hearing is held:
    - 179 (A) requesting immediate placement of the child with the petitioner; and
    - 180 (B) expressing the petitioner's intention of adopting the child; or

181 (b) if the child:

182 (i) has been in the current placement for less than ~~Ŝ~~ → [90] 180 ← Ŝ days before the day on  
182a which the

183 petitioner files the petition for adoption; or

184 (ii) is placed with or is in the custody or guardianship of an individual who previously  
185 informed the division or the juvenile court that the individual is unwilling or unable to adopt  
186 the child.

187 (9) (a) If the court grants a hearing on more than one petition for adoption, there is a  
188 rebuttable presumption that it is in the best interest of the child to be placed for adoption with a  
189 petitioner with whom the child has continuously resided for six months or more before the day  
190 on which the petition was filed, if that petitioner has fulfilled the other requirements in Title  
191 78B, Chapter 6, Part 1, Utah Adoption Act.

192 (b) The juvenile court may consider other factors relevant to the best interest of the  
193 child to determine whether the presumption is rebutted.

194 (10) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the division or the child's  
195 guardian ad litem from appearing or participating in any proceeding for a petition for adoption.

196 (11) Neither the juvenile court nor the division is obligated to inform a petitioner of the  
197 petitioner's rights or duties under this section.