

**Representative Karianne Lisonbee** proposes the following substitute bill:

**ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND DEPENDENCY PROCEEDINGS**

**AMENDMENTS**

2020 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Karianne Lisonbee**

Senate Sponsor: Wayne A. Harper

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill addresses proceedings in regards to the abuse, neglect, or dependency of a child and termination of parental rights.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- ▶ allows a party to request a hearing on reunification services if a petition for termination of parental rights is filed before a dispositional hearing;
- ▶ provides that the court find termination of parental rights is strictly necessary from the child's point of view;
- ▶ requires the court to take into account reunification and kinship preferences in determining whether to terminate parental rights; and
- ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**



26 AMENDS:

27 [78A-6-302](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2019, Chapters 136, 335, and 388

28 [78A-6-304](#), as renumbered and amended by Laws of Utah 2008, Chapter 3

29 [78A-6-306](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2019, Chapters 136, 326, and 335

30 [78A-6-314](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2019, Chapter 71

31 [78A-6-503](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 340

32 [78A-6-507](#), as last amended by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapter 281



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

35 Section 1. Section [78A-6-302](#) is amended to read:

36 **[78A-6-302. Court-ordered protective custody of a child following petition filing --](#)**

37 **Grounds.**

38 (1) When a petition is filed under Section [78A-6-304](#), the court shall apply, in  
39 addressing the petition, the least restrictive means and alternatives available to accomplish a  
40 compelling state interest and to prevent irretrievable destruction of family life as described in  
41 Subsections [62A-4a-201](#)(1) and (7)(a) and Section [78A-6-503](#).

42 ~~(1)~~ (2) After a petition has been filed under Section [78A-6-304](#), if the child who is  
43 the subject of the petition is not in the protective custody of the division, a court may order that  
44 the child be removed from the child's home or otherwise taken into protective custody if the  
45 court finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that any one or more of the following  
46 circumstances exist:

47 (a) (i) there is an imminent danger to the physical health or safety of the child; and

48 (ii) the child's physical health or safety may not be protected without removing the  
49 child from the custody of the child's parent or guardian;

50 (b) (i) a parent or guardian engages in or threatens the child with unreasonable conduct  
51 that causes the child to suffer harm; and

52 (ii) there are no less restrictive means available by which the child's emotional health  
53 may be protected without removing the child from the custody of the child's parent or guardian;

54 (c) the child or another child residing in the same household has been, or is considered  
55 to be at substantial risk of being, physically abused, sexually abused, or sexually exploited, by a  
56 parent or guardian, a member of the parent's or guardian's household, or other person known to

- 57 the parent or guardian;
- 58 (d) the parent or guardian is unwilling to have physical custody of the child;
- 59 (e) the child is abandoned or left without any provision for the child's support;
- 60 (f) a parent or guardian who has been incarcerated or institutionalized has not arranged  
61 or cannot arrange for safe and appropriate care for the child;
- 62 (g) (i) a relative or other adult custodian with whom the child is left by the parent or  
63 guardian is unwilling or unable to provide care or support for the child;
- 64 (ii) the whereabouts of the parent or guardian are unknown; and
- 65 (iii) reasonable efforts to locate the parent or guardian are unsuccessful;
- 66 (h) subject to Subsections 78A-6-105(39) and 78A-6-117(2) and Section 78A-6-301.5,  
67 the child is in immediate need of medical care;
- 68 (i) (i) a parent's or guardian's actions, omissions, or habitual action create an  
69 environment that poses a serious risk to the child's health or safety for which immediate  
70 remedial or preventive action is necessary; or
- 71 (ii) a parent's or guardian's action in leaving a child unattended would reasonably pose  
72 a threat to the child's health or safety;
- 73 (j) the child or another child residing in the same household has been neglected;
- 74 (k) the child's natural parent:
- 75 (i) intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes the death of another parent of the  
76 child;
- 77 (ii) is identified by a law enforcement agency as the primary suspect in an investigation  
78 for intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing the death of another parent of the child; or
- 79 (iii) is being prosecuted for or has been convicted of intentionally, knowingly, or  
80 recklessly causing the death of another parent of the child;
- 81 (l) an infant has been abandoned, as defined in Section 78A-6-316;
- 82 (m) (i) the parent or guardian, or an adult residing in the same household as the parent  
83 or guardian, is charged or arrested pursuant to Title 58, Chapter 37d, Clandestine Drug Lab  
84 Act; and
- 85 (ii) any clandestine laboratory operation was located in the residence or on the property  
86 where the child resided; or
- 87 (n) the child's welfare is otherwise endangered.

88           ~~[(2)]~~ (3) (a) For purposes of Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2)(a), if a child has previously been  
89 adjudicated as abused, neglected, or dependent, and a subsequent incident of abuse, neglect, or  
90 dependency occurs involving the same substantiated abuser or under similar circumstance as  
91 the previous abuse, that fact constitutes prima facie evidence that the child cannot safely  
92 remain in the custody of the child's parent.

93           (b) For purposes of Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2)(c):

94           (i) another child residing in the same household may not be removed from the home  
95 unless that child is considered to be at substantial risk of being physically abused, sexually  
96 abused, or sexually exploited as described in Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2)(c) or Subsection ~~[(2)]~~  
97 (3)(b)(ii); and

98           (ii) if a parent or guardian has received actual notice that physical abuse, sexual abuse,  
99 or sexual exploitation by a person known to the parent has occurred, and there is evidence that  
100 the parent or guardian failed to protect the child, after having received the notice, by allowing  
101 the child to be in the physical presence of the alleged abuser, that fact constitutes prima facie  
102 evidence that the child is at substantial risk of being physically abused, sexually abused, or  
103 sexually exploited.

104           ~~[(3)]~~ (4) (a) For purposes of Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2), if the division files a petition under  
105 Section 78A-6-304, the court shall consider the division's safety and risk assessments described  
106 in Section 62A-4a-203.1 to determine whether a child should be removed from the custody of  
107 the child's parent or guardian or should otherwise be taken into protective custody.

108           (b) The division shall make a diligent effort to provide the safety and risk assessments  
109 described in Section 62A-4a-203.1 to the court, guardian ad litem, and counsel for the parent or  
110 guardian, as soon as practicable before the shelter hearing described in Section 78A-6-306.

111           ~~[(4)]~~ (5) In the absence of one of the factors described in Subsection ~~[(1)]~~ (2), a court  
112 may not remove a child from the parent's or guardian's custody on the basis of:

113           (a) educational neglect, truancy, or failure to comply with a court order to attend  
114 school;

115           (b) mental illness or poverty of the parent or guardian; or

116           (c) disability of the parent or guardian, as defined in Section 57-21-2.

117           ~~[(5)]~~ (6) A child removed from the custody of the child's parent or guardian under this  
118 section may not be placed or kept in a secure detention facility pending further court

119 proceedings unless the child is detainable based on guidelines promulgated by the Division of  
120 Juvenile Justice Services.

121 ~~[(6)]~~ (7) This section does not preclude removal of a child from the child's home  
122 without a warrant or court order under Section [62A-4a-202.1](#).

123 ~~[(7)]~~ (8) (a) Except as provided in Subsection ~~[(7)]~~ (8)(b), a court or the Division of  
124 Child and Family Services may not remove a child from the custody of the child's parent or  
125 guardian on the sole or primary basis that the parent or guardian refuses to consent to:

- 126 (i) the administration of a psychotropic medication to a child;
- 127 (ii) a psychiatric, psychological, or behavioral treatment for a child; or
- 128 (iii) a psychiatric or behavioral health evaluation of a child.

129 (b) Notwithstanding Subsection ~~[(7)]~~ (8)(a), a court or the Division of Child and  
130 Family Services may remove a child under conditions that would otherwise be prohibited under  
131 Subsection ~~[(7)]~~ (8)(a) if failure to take an action described under Subsection ~~[(7)]~~ (8)(a) would  
132 present a serious, imminent risk to the child's physical safety or the physical safety of others.

133 Section 2. Section **78A-6-304** is amended to read:

134 **78A-6-304. Petition filed.**

135 (1) For purposes of this section, "petition" means a petition to commence proceedings  
136 in a juvenile court alleging that a child is:

- 137 (a) abused;
- 138 (b) neglected; or
- 139 (c) dependent.

140 (2) (a) Subject to Subsection (2)(b), any interested person may file a petition.

141 (b) A person described in Subsection (2)(a) shall make a referral with the division  
142 before the person files a petition.

143 (3) If the child who is the subject of a petition is removed from the child's home by the  
144 division, the petition shall be filed on or before the date of the initial shelter hearing described  
145 in Section [78A-6-306](#).

146 (4) The petition shall be verified, and contain all of the following:

147 (a) the name, age, and address, if any, of the child upon whose behalf the petition is  
148 brought;

149 (b) the names and addresses, if known to the petitioner, of both parents and any

150 guardian of the child;

151 (c) a concise statement of facts, separately stated, to support the conclusion that the  
152 child upon whose behalf the petition is being brought is abused, neglected, or dependent; and

153 (d) a statement regarding whether the child is in protective custody, and if so, the date  
154 and precise time the child was taken into protective custody.

155 (5) If a petition is filed under this section, and a petition for termination of parental  
156 rights is filed under Section 78A-6-504 before a dispositional hearing, a party may request a  
157 hearing on whether reunification services are appropriate in accordance with the factors  
158 described in ~~§~~ → [Subsection 78A-6-312(23)] Subsections 78A-6-312(21) and (23) ← ~~§~~ .

159 Section 3. Section 78A-6-306 is amended to read:

160 **78A-6-306. Shelter hearing.**

161 (1) A shelter hearing shall be held within 72 hours excluding weekends and holidays  
162 after any one or all of the following occur:

163 (a) removal of the child from the child's home by the division;

164 (b) placement of the child in the protective custody of the division;

165 (c) emergency placement under Subsection 62A-4a-202.1(4);

166 (d) as an alternative to removal of the child, a parent enters a domestic violence shelter  
167 at the request of the division; or

168 (e) a "Motion for Expedited Placement in Temporary Custody" is filed under  
169 Subsection 78A-6-106(4).

170 (2) If one of the circumstances described in Subsections (1)(a) through (e) occurs, the  
171 division shall issue a notice that contains all of the following:

172 (a) the name and address of the person to whom the notice is directed;

173 (b) the date, time, and place of the shelter hearing;

174 (c) the name of the child on whose behalf a petition is being brought;

175 (d) a concise statement regarding:

176 (i) the reasons for removal or other action of the division under Subsection (1); and

177 (ii) the allegations and code sections under which the proceeding has been instituted;

178 (e) a statement that the parent or guardian to whom notice is given, and the child, are  
179 entitled to have an attorney present at the shelter hearing, and that if the parent or guardian is  
180 indigent and cannot afford an attorney, and desires to be represented by an attorney, one will be

181 provided in accordance with Title 78B, Chapter 22, Indigent Defense Act; and

182 (f) a statement that the parent or guardian is liable for the cost of support of the child in  
183 the protective custody, temporary custody, and custody of the division, and the cost for legal  
184 counsel appointed for the parent or guardian under Subsection (2)(e), according to the financial  
185 ability of the parent or guardian.

186 (3) The notice described in Subsection (2) shall be personally served as soon as  
187 possible, but no later than one business day after removal of the child from the child's home, or  
188 the filing of a "Motion for Expedited Placement in Temporary Custody" under Subsection

189 [78A-6-106](#)(4), on:

190 (a) the appropriate guardian ad litem; and

191 (b) both parents and any guardian of the child, unless the parents or guardians cannot  
192 be located.

193 (4) The following persons shall be present at the shelter hearing:

194 (a) the child, unless it would be detrimental for the child;

195 (b) the child's parents or guardian, unless the parents or guardian cannot be located, or  
196 fail to appear in response to the notice;

197 (c) counsel for the parents, if one is requested;

198 (d) the child's guardian ad litem;

199 (e) the caseworker from the division who is assigned to the case; and

200 (f) the attorney from the attorney general's office who is representing the division.

201 (5) (a) At the shelter hearing, the court shall:

202 (i) provide an opportunity to provide relevant testimony to:

203 (A) the child's parent or guardian, if present; and

204 (B) any other person having relevant knowledge; ~~and~~

205 (ii) subject to Section [78A-6-305](#), provide an opportunity for the child to testify[-]; and

206 (iii) in accordance with Subsections [78A-6-307](#)(18)(c) through (e), grant preferential  
207 consideration to a relative or friend for the temporary placement of the child.

208 (b) The court:

209 (i) may consider all relevant evidence, in accordance with the Utah Rules of Juvenile  
210 Procedure;

211 (ii) shall hear relevant evidence presented by the child, the child's parent or guardian,

212 the requesting party, or their counsel; and

213 (iii) may in its discretion limit testimony and evidence to only that which goes to the  
214 issues of removal and the child's need for continued protection.

215 (6) If the child is in the protective custody of the division, the division shall report to  
216 the court:

217 (a) the reason why the child was removed from the parent's or guardian's custody;

218 (b) any services provided to the child and the child's family in an effort to prevent  
219 removal;

220 (c) the need, if any, for continued shelter;

221 (d) the available services that could facilitate the return of the child to the custody of  
222 the child's parent or guardian; and

223 (e) subject to Subsections 78A-6-307(18)(c) through (e), whether any relatives of the  
224 child or friends of the child's parents may be able and willing to accept temporary placement of  
225 the child.

226 (7) The court shall consider all relevant evidence provided by persons or entities  
227 authorized to present relevant evidence pursuant to this section.

228 (8) (a) If necessary to protect the child, preserve the rights of a party, or for other good  
229 cause shown, the court may grant no more than one continuance, not to exceed five judicial  
230 days.

231 (b) A court shall honor, as nearly as practicable, the request by a parent or guardian for  
232 a continuance under Subsection (8)(a).

233 (c) Notwithstanding Subsection (8)(a), if the division fails to provide the notice  
234 described in Subsection (2) within the time described in Subsection (3), the court may grant the  
235 request of a parent or guardian for a continuance, not to exceed five judicial days.

236 (9) (a) If the child is in the protective custody of the division, the court shall order that  
237 the child be returned to the custody of the parent or guardian unless it finds, by a  
238 preponderance of the evidence, consistent with the protections and requirements provided in  
239 Subsection 62A-4a-201(1), that any one of the following exists:

240 (i) subject to Subsection (9)(b)(i), there is a serious danger to the physical health or  
241 safety of the child and the child's physical health or safety may not be protected without  
242 removing the child from the custody of the child's parent;



243 (ii) (A) the child is suffering emotional damage that results in a serious impairment in  
244 the child's growth, development, behavior, or psychological functioning;

245 (B) the parent or guardian is unwilling or unable to make reasonable changes that  
246 would sufficiently prevent future damage; and

247 (C) there are no reasonable means available by which the child's emotional health may  
248 be protected without removing the child from the custody of the child's parent or guardian;

249 (iii) there is a substantial risk that the child will suffer abuse or neglect if the child is  
250 not removed from the custody of the child's parent or guardian;

251 (iv) subject to Subsection (9)(b)(ii), the child or a minor residing in the same  
252 household has been, or is considered to be at substantial risk of being, physically abused,  
253 sexually abused, or sexually exploited by a:

254 (A) parent or guardian;

255 (B) member of the parent's household or the guardian's household; or

256 (C) person known to the parent or guardian;

257 (v) the parent or guardian is unwilling to have physical custody of the child;

258 (vi) the child is without any provision for the child's support;

259 (vii) a parent who is incarcerated or institutionalized has not or cannot arrange for safe  
260 and appropriate care for the child;

261 (viii) (A) a relative or other adult custodian with whom the child is left by the parent or  
262 guardian is unwilling or unable to provide care or support for the child;

263 (B) the whereabouts of the parent or guardian are unknown; and

264 (C) reasonable efforts to locate the parent or guardian are unsuccessful;

265 (ix) subject to Subsections 78A-6-105(39)(b) and 78A-6-117(2) and Section  
266 78A-6-301.5, the child is in immediate need of medical care;

267 (x) (A) the physical environment or the fact that the child is left unattended beyond a  
268 reasonable period of time poses a threat to the child's health or safety; and

269 (B) the parent or guardian is unwilling or unable to make reasonable changes that  
270 would remove the threat;

271 (xi) (A) the child or a minor residing in the same household has been neglected; and

272 (B) the parent or guardian is unwilling or unable to make reasonable changes that  
273 would prevent the neglect;

274 (xii) the parent, guardian, or an adult residing in the same household as the parent or  
275 guardian, is charged or arrested pursuant to Title 58, Chapter 37d, Clandestine Drug Lab Act,  
276 and any clandestine laboratory operation was located in the residence or on the property where  
277 the child resided;

278 (xiii) (A) the child's welfare is substantially endangered; and

279 (B) the parent or guardian is unwilling or unable to make reasonable changes that  
280 would remove the danger; or

281 (xiv) the child's natural parent:

282 (A) intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes the death of another parent of the  
283 child;

284 (B) is identified by a law enforcement agency as the primary suspect in an investigation  
285 for intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing the death of another parent of the child; or

286 (C) is being prosecuted for or has been convicted of intentionally, knowingly, or  
287 recklessly causing the death of another parent of the child.

288 (b) (i) Prima facie evidence of the finding described in Subsection (9)(a)(i) is  
289 established if:

290 (A) a court previously adjudicated that the child suffered abuse, neglect, or dependency  
291 involving the parent; and

292 (B) a subsequent incident of abuse, neglect, or dependency involving the parent occurs.

293 (ii) For purposes of Subsection (9)(a)(iv), if the court finds that the parent knowingly  
294 allowed the child to be in the physical care of a person after the parent received actual notice  
295 that the person physically abused, sexually abused, or sexually exploited the child, that fact  
296 constitutes prima facie evidence that there is a substantial risk that the child will be physically  
297 abused, sexually abused, or sexually exploited.

298 (10) (a) (i) The court shall also make a determination on the record as to whether  
299 reasonable efforts were made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the  
300 child's home and whether there are available services that would prevent the need for continued  
301 removal.

302 (ii) If the court finds that the child can be safely returned to the custody of the child's  
303 parent or guardian through the provision of those services, the court shall place the child with  
304 the child's parent or guardian and order that those services be provided by the division.

305 (b) In making the determination described in Subsection (10)(a), and in ordering and  
306 providing services, the child's health, safety, and welfare shall be the paramount concern, in  
307 accordance with federal law.

308 (11) Where the division's first contact with the family occurred during an emergency  
309 situation in which the child could not safely remain at home, the court shall make a finding that  
310 any lack of preplacement preventive efforts was appropriate.

311 (12) In cases where actual sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, abandonment, severe  
312 abuse, or severe neglect are involved, neither the division nor the court has any duty to make  
313 "reasonable efforts" or to, in any other way, attempt to maintain a child in the child's home,  
314 return a child to the child's home, provide reunification services, or attempt to rehabilitate the  
315 offending parent or parents.

316 (13) The court may not order continued removal of a child solely on the basis of  
317 educational neglect as defined in Section 78A-6-105, truancy, or failure to comply with a court  
318 order to attend school.

319 (14) (a) Whenever a court orders continued removal of a child under this section, the  
320 court shall state the facts on which that decision is based.

321 (b) If no continued removal is ordered and the child is returned home, the court shall  
322 state the facts on which that decision is based.

323 (15) If the court finds that continued removal and temporary custody are necessary for  
324 the protection of a child pursuant to Subsection (9)(a), the court shall order continued removal  
325 regardless of:

326 (a) any error in the initial removal of the child;

327 (b) the failure of a party to comply with notice provisions; or

328 (c) any other procedural requirement of this chapter or Title 62A, Chapter 4a, Child  
329 and Family Services.

330 Section 4. Section 78A-6-314 is amended to read:

331 **78A-6-314. Permanency hearing -- Final plan -- Petition for termination of**  
332 **parental rights filed -- Hearing on termination of parental rights.**

333 (1) (a) When reunification services have been ordered in accordance with Section  
334 78A-6-312, with regard to a minor who is in the custody of the Division of Child and Family  
335 Services, a permanency hearing shall be held by the court no later than 12 months after the day

336 on which the minor was initially removed from the minor's home.

337 (b) If reunification services were not ordered at the dispositional hearing, a permanency  
338 hearing shall be held within 30 days after the day on which the dispositional hearing ends.

339 (2) (a) If reunification services were ordered by the court in accordance with Section  
340 78A-6-312, the court shall, at the permanency hearing, determine, consistent with Subsection  
341 (3), whether the minor may safely be returned to the custody of the minor's parent.

342 (b) If the court finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that return of the minor to  
343 the minor's parent would create a substantial risk of detriment to the minor's physical or  
344 emotional well-being, the minor may not be returned to the custody of the minor's parent.

345 (c) Prima facie evidence that return of the minor to a parent or guardian would create a  
346 substantial risk of detriment to the minor is established if:

347 (i) the parent or guardian fails to:

348 (A) participate in a court approved child and family plan;

349 (B) comply with a court approved child and family plan in whole or in part; or

350 (C) meet the goals of a court approved child and family plan; or

351 (ii) the minor's natural parent:

352 (A) intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causes the death of another parent of the  
353 minor;

354 (B) is identified by a law enforcement agency as the primary suspect in an investigation  
355 for intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing the death of another parent of the minor; or

356 (C) is being prosecuted for or has been convicted of intentionally, knowingly, or  
357 recklessly causing the death of another parent of the minor.

358 (3) In making a determination under Subsection (2)(a), the court shall review and  
359 consider:

360 (a) the report prepared by the Division of Child and Family Services;

361 (b) any admissible evidence offered by the minor's guardian ad litem;

362 (c) any report submitted by the division under Subsection 78A-6-315(3)(a)(i);

363 (d) any evidence regarding the efforts or progress demonstrated by the parent; and

364 (e) the extent to which the parent cooperated and used the services provided.

365 (4) With regard to a case where reunification services were ordered by the court, if a  
366 minor is not returned to the minor's parent or guardian at the permanency hearing, the court

367 shall, unless the time for the provision of reunification services is extended under Subsection  
368 (7):

369 (a) order termination of reunification services to the parent;

370 (b) make a final determination regarding whether termination of parental rights,  
371 adoption, or permanent custody and guardianship is the most appropriate final plan for the  
372 minor, taking into account the minor's primary permanency plan established by the court  
373 pursuant to Section 78A-6-312; and

374 (c) establish a concurrent permanency plan that identifies the second most appropriate  
375 final plan for the minor, if appropriate.

376 (5) The court may order another planned permanent living arrangement for a minor 16  
377 years old or older upon entering the following findings:

378 (a) the Division of Child and Family Services has documented intensive, ongoing, and  
379 unsuccessful efforts to reunify the minor with the minor's parent or parents, or to secure a  
380 placement for the minor with a guardian, an adoptive parent, or an individual described in  
381 Subsection 78A-6-306(6)(e);

382 (b) the Division of Child and Family Services has demonstrated that the division has  
383 made efforts to normalize the life of the minor while in the division's custody, in accordance  
384 with Sections 62A-4a-210 through 62A-4a-212;

385 (c) the minor prefers another planned permanent living arrangement; and

386 (d) there is a compelling reason why reunification or a placement described in  
387 Subsection (5)(a) is not in the minor's best interest.

388 (6) Except as provided in Subsection (7), the court may not extend reunification  
389 services beyond 12 months after the day on which the minor was initially removed from the  
390 minor's home, in accordance with the provisions of Section 78A-6-312.

391 (7) (a) Subject to Subsection (7)(b), the court may extend reunification services for no  
392 more than 90 days if the court finds, beyond a preponderance of the evidence, that:

393 (i) there has been substantial compliance with the child and family plan;

394 (ii) reunification is probable within that 90-day period; and

395 (iii) the extension is in the best interest of the minor.

396 (b) (i) Except as provided in Subsection (7)(c), the court may not extend any  
397 reunification services beyond 15 months after the day on which the minor was initially

398 removed from the minor's home.

399 (ii) Delay or failure of a parent to establish paternity or seek custody does not provide a  
400 basis for the court to extend services for that parent beyond the 12-month period described in  
401 Subsection (6).

402 (c) In accordance with Subsection (7)(d), the court may extend reunification services  
403 for one additional 90-day period, beyond the 90-day period described in Subsection (7)(a), if:

404 (i) the court finds, by clear and convincing evidence, that:

405 (A) the parent has substantially complied with the child and family plan;

406 (B) it is likely that reunification will occur within the additional 90-day period; and

407 (C) the extension is in the best interest of the minor;

408 (ii) the court specifies the facts upon which the findings described in Subsection  
409 (7)(c)(i) are based; and

410 (iii) the court specifies the time period in which it is likely that reunification will occur.

411 (d) A court may not extend the time period for reunification services without  
412 complying with the requirements of this Subsection (7) before the extension.

413 (e) In determining whether to extend reunification services for a minor, a court shall  
414 take into consideration the status of the minor siblings of the minor.

415 (8) The court may, in its discretion:

416 (a) enter any additional order that it determines to be in the best interest of the minor,  
417 so long as that order does not conflict with the requirements and provisions of Subsections (4)  
418 through (7); or

419 (b) order the division to provide protective supervision or other services to a minor and  
420 the minor's family after the division's custody of a minor has been terminated.

421 (9) (a) If the final plan for the minor is to proceed toward termination of parental  
422 rights, the petition for termination of parental rights shall be filed, and a pretrial held, within 45  
423 calendar days after the permanency hearing.

424 (b) If the division opposes the plan to terminate parental rights, the court may not  
425 require the division to file a petition for the termination of parental rights, except as required  
426 under Subsection 78A-6-316(2).

427 (10) (a) Any party to an action may, at any time, petition the court for an expedited  
428 permanency hearing on the basis that continuation of reunification efforts are inconsistent with

429 the permanency needs of the minor.

430 (b) If the court so determines, it shall order, in accordance with federal law, that:

431 (i) the minor be placed in accordance with the permanency plan; and

432 (ii) whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the minor be  
433 completed as quickly as possible.

434 (11) Nothing in this section may be construed to:

435 (a) entitle any parent to reunification services for any specified period of time;

436 (b) limit a court's ability to terminate reunification services at any time before a  
437 permanency hearing; or

438 (c) limit or prohibit the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights by any  
439 party, or a hearing on termination of parental rights, at any time prior to a permanency hearing  
440 provided that relative placement and custody options have been fairly considered in accordance  
441 with Sections [62A-4a-201](#) and [78A-6-503](#).

442 (12) (a) Subject to Subsection (12)(b), if a petition for termination of parental rights is  
443 filed prior to the date scheduled for a permanency hearing, the court may consolidate the  
444 hearing on termination of parental rights with the permanency hearing.

445 (b) For purposes of Subsection (12)(a), if the court consolidates the hearing on  
446 termination of parental rights with the permanency hearing:

447 (i) the court shall first make a finding regarding whether reasonable efforts have been  
448 made by the Division of Child and Family Services to finalize the permanency plan for the  
449 minor; and

450 (ii) any reunification services shall be terminated in accordance with the time lines  
451 described in Section [78A-6-312](#).

452 (c) A decision on a petition for termination of parental rights shall be made within 18  
453 months from the day on which the minor is removed from the minor's home.

454 (13) If a court determines that a minor will not be returned to a parent of the minor, the  
455 court shall consider appropriate placement options inside and outside of the state.

456 (14) (a) If a minor 14 years of age or older desires an opportunity to address the court  
457 or testify regarding permanency or placement, the court shall give the minor's wishes added  
458 weight, but may not treat the minor's wishes as the single controlling factor under this section.

459 (b) If the court's decision under this section differs from a minor's express wishes if the

460 minor is of sufficient maturity to articulate the wishes in relation to permanency or the minor's  
461 placement, the court shall make findings explaining why the court's decision differs from the  
462 minor's wishes.

463 Section 5. Section **78A-6-503** is amended to read:

464 **78A-6-503. Judicial process for termination -- Parent unfit or incompetent -- Best**  
465 **interest of child.**

466 (1) Under both the United States Constitution and the constitution of this state, a parent  
467 possesses a fundamental liberty interest in the care, custody, and management of the parent's  
468 child. For this reason, the termination of family ties by the state may only be done for  
469 compelling reasons.

470 (2) The court shall provide a fundamentally fair process to a parent if a party moves to  
471 terminate the parent's parental rights.

472 (3) If the party moving to terminate parental rights is a governmental entity, the court  
473 shall find that any actions or allegations made in opposition to the rights and desires of a parent  
474 regarding the parent's child are supported by sufficient evidence to satisfy a parent's  
475 constitutional entitlement to heightened protection against government interference with the  
476 parent's fundamental rights and liberty interests.

477 (4) (a) The fundamental liberty interest of a parent concerning the care, custody, and  
478 management of the parent's child is recognized, protected, and does not cease to exist simply  
479 because:

480 (i) a parent may fail to be a model parent; or [~~because~~]

481 (ii) the parent's child is placed in the temporary custody of the state.

482 (b) The court should give serious consideration to the fundamental right of a parent to  
483 rear the parent's child, and concomitantly, of the right of the child to be reared by the child's  
484 natural parent.

485 (5) At all times, a parent retains a vital interest in preventing the irretrievable  
486 destruction of family life.

487 (6) Prior to an adjudication of unfitness, government action in relation to a parent and a  
488 parent's child may not exceed the least restrictive means or alternatives available to accomplish  
489 a compelling state interest.

490 (7) Until parental unfitness is established and the children suffer, or are substantially



491 likely to suffer, serious detriment as a result, the child and the child's parent share a vital  
492 interest in preventing erroneous termination of their relationship and the court may not presume  
493 that a child and the child's parents are adversaries.

494 (8) It is in the best interest and welfare of a child to be raised under the care and  
495 supervision of the child's natural parents. A child's need for a normal family life in a  
496 permanent home, and for positive, nurturing family relationships is usually best met by the  
497 child's natural parents. Additionally, the integrity of the family unit and the right of parents to  
498 conceive and raise their children are constitutionally protected. For these reasons, the court  
499 should only transfer custody of a child from the child's natural parent for compelling reasons  
500 and when there is a jurisdictional basis to do so.

501 (9) The right of a fit, competent parent to raise the parent's child without undue  
502 government interference is a fundamental liberty interest that has long been protected by the  
503 laws and Constitution of this state and of the United States, and is a fundamental public policy  
504 of this state.

505 (10) (a) The state recognizes that:

506 [(a)] (i) a parent has the right, obligation, responsibility, and authority to raise, manage,  
507 train, educate, provide for, and reasonably discipline the parent's ~~children~~ child; and

508 [(b)] (ii) the state's role is secondary and supportive to the primary role of a parent.

509 [(c)] (b) It is the public policy of this state that ~~parents~~ a parent retain the fundamental  
510 right and duty to exercise primary control over the care, supervision, upbringing, and education  
511 of ~~their children~~ the parent's child.

512 [(d)] (c) The interests of the state favor preservation and not severance of natural  
513 familial bonds in situations where a positive, nurturing parent-child relationship can exist,  
514 including extended family association and support.

515 (11) This part provides a judicial process for voluntary and involuntary severance of  
516 the parent-child relationship, designed to safeguard the rights and interests of all parties  
517 concerned and promote their welfare and that of the state.

518 (12) (a) Wherever possible, family life should be strengthened and preserved, but if a  
519 parent is found, by reason of ~~his~~ the parent's conduct or condition, to be unfit or incompetent  
520 based upon any of the grounds for termination described in this part, the court shall then  
521 consider the welfare and best interest of the child of paramount importance in determining

522 whether termination of parental rights shall be ordered.

523 (b) In determining whether termination is in the best interest of the child, and in  
524 finding that termination of parental rights, from the child's point of view, is strictly necessary,  
525 the court shall consider, among other relevant factors, whether:

526 (i) sufficient efforts were dedicated to reunification in accordance with Subsection  
527 78A-6-507(3)(a); and

528 (ii) the efforts to place the child with kin who have, or are willing to come forward to  
529 care for the child, were given due weight.

530 Section 6. Section 78A-6-507 is amended to read:

531 **78A-6-507. Grounds for termination of parental rights -- Findings regarding**  
532 **reasonable efforts.**

533 (1) Subject to the protections and requirements of Section 78A-6-503, and if the court  
534 finds termination of a parent's parental rights, from the child's point of view, is strictly  
535 necessary, the court may terminate all parental rights with respect to [a] the parent if the court  
536 finds any one of the following:

537 (a) that the parent has abandoned the child;

538 (b) that the parent has neglected or abused the child;

539 (c) that the parent is unfit or incompetent;

540 (d) (i) that the child is being cared for in an out-of-home placement under the  
541 supervision of the court or the division;

542 (ii) that the parent has substantially neglected, wilfully refused, or has been unable or  
543 unwilling to remedy the circumstances that cause the child to be in an out-of-home placement;  
544 and

545 (iii) that there is a substantial likelihood that the parent will not be capable of  
546 exercising proper and effective parental care in the near future;

547 (e) failure of parental adjustment, as defined in this chapter;

548 (f) that only token efforts have been made by the parent:

549 (i) to support or communicate with the child;

550 (ii) to prevent neglect of the child;

551 (iii) to eliminate the risk of serious harm to the child; or

552 (iv) to avoid being an unfit parent;

553 (g) (i) that the parent has voluntarily relinquished the parent's parental rights to the  
554 child; and

555 (ii) that termination is in the child's best interest;

556 (h) that, after a period of trial during which the child was returned to live in the child's  
557 own home, the parent substantially and continuously or repeatedly refused or failed to give the  
558 child proper parental care and protection; or

559 (i) the terms and conditions of safe relinquishment of a newborn child have been  
560 complied with, pursuant to Title 62A, Chapter 4a, Part 8, Safe Relinquishment of a Newborn  
561 Child.

562 (2) The court may not terminate the parental rights of a parent because the parent has  
563 failed to complete the requirements of a child and family plan.

564 (3) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (3)(b), in any case in which the court has  
565 directed the division to provide reunification services to a parent, the court must find that the  
566 division made reasonable efforts to provide those services before the court may terminate the  
567 parent's rights under Subsection (1)(b), (c), (d), (e), (f), or (h).

568 (b) Notwithstanding Subsection (3)(a), the court is not required to make the finding  
569 under Subsection (3)(a) before terminating a parent's rights:

570 (i) under Subsection (1)(b), if the court finds that the abuse or neglect occurred  
571 subsequent to adjudication; or

572 (ii) if reasonable efforts to provide the services described in Subsection (3)(a) are not  
573 required under federal law, and federal law is not inconsistent with Utah law.