UNANNOTATED

CHAPTER 32A
Children's Code

ARTICLE 1
General Provisions

32A-1-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Children's Code".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 10; 1995, ch. 206, § 1.

32A-1-2. Short title; scope.

A. Chapter 32 [32A], Article 1 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Children's Code General Provisions Act".

B. The provisions of the Children's Code General Provisions Act apply to Chapter 32 [32A] NMSA 1978:

(1) unless the context otherwise requires; and

(2) subject to additional definitions contained in Chapter 32 [32A], Articles 2 through 6 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 11.

32A-1-3. Purpose of act.

The Children's Code shall be interpreted and construed to effectuate the following legislative purposes:

A. first to provide for the care, protection and wholesome mental and physical development of children coming within the provisions of the Children's Code and then to preserve the unity of the family whenever possible. A child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern. Permanent separation of a child from the child's family, however, would especially be considered when the child or another child of the parent has suffered permanent or severe injury or repeated abuse. It is the intent of the legislature that, to the maximum extent possible, children in New Mexico shall be reared as members of a family unit;

B. to provide judicial and other procedures through which the provisions of the Children's Code are executed and enforced and in which the parties are assured a fair hearing and their constitutional and other legal rights are recognized and enforced;

C. to provide a continuum of services for children and their families, from prevention to treatment, considering whenever possible prevention, diversion and early intervention, particularly in the schools;

D. to provide children with services that are sensitive to their cultural needs;

E. to reduce overrepresentation of minority children and families in the juvenile justice, family services and abuse and neglect systems through early intervention, linkages to community support services and the elimination of discrimination;

F. to provide for the cooperation and coordination of the civil and criminal systems for investigation, intervention and disposition of cases, to minimize interagency conflicts and to enhance the coordinated response of all agencies to achieve the best interests of a child victim; and

G. to provide continuity for children and families appearing before the children's court by assuring that, whenever possible, a single judge hears all successive cases or proceedings involving a child or family.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 12; 1999, ch. 77, § 1; 2009, ch. 239, § 6.

32A-1-4. Definitions.

As used in the Children's Code:

A. "active efforts" means efforts that are affirmative, active, thorough and timely and that represent a higher standard of conduct than reasonable efforts;

B. "adult" means a person who is eighteen years of age or older;

C. "child" means a person who is less than eighteen years old;

D. "council" means the substitute care advisory council established pursuant to Section 32A-8-4 NMSA 1978;

E. "court", when used without further qualification, means the children's court division of the district court and includes the judge, special master or commissioner appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Code or supreme court rule;

F. "court-appointed special advocate" means a person appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Court Rules [Rule Set 10 NMRA] to assist the court in

determining the best interests of the child by investigating the case and submitting a report to the court;

G. "custodian" means an adult with whom the child lives who is not a parent or guardian of the child;

H. "department" means the children, youth and families department, unless otherwise specified;

I. "disproportionate minority contact" means the involvement of a racial or ethnic group with the criminal or juvenile justice system at a proportion either higher or lower than that group's proportion in the general population;

J. "federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978" means the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, as that act may be amended or its sections renumbered;

K. "foster parent" means a person, including a relative of the child, licensed or certified by the department or a child placement agency to provide care for children in the custody of the department or agency;

L. "guardian" means a person appointed as a guardian by a court or Indian tribal authority;

M. "guardian ad litem" means an attorney appointed by the children's court to represent and protect the best interests of the child in a case; provided that no party or employee or representative of a party to the case shall be appointed to serve as a guardian ad litem;

N. "Indian" means, whether an adult or child, a person who is:

(1) a member of an Indian tribe; or

(2) eligible for membership in an Indian tribe;

O. "Indian child" means an Indian person, or a person whom there is reason to know is an Indian person, under eighteen years of age, who is neither:

(1) married; or

(2) emancipated;

P. "Indian child's tribe" means:

(1) the Indian tribe in which an Indian child is a member or eligible for membership; or

(2) in the case of an Indian child who is a member or eligible for membership in more than one tribe, the Indian tribe with which the Indian child has more significant contacts;

Q. "Indian custodian" means an Indian who, pursuant to tribal law or custom or pursuant to state law:

(1) is an adult with legal custody of an Indian child; or

(2) has been transferred temporary physical care, custody and control by the parent of the Indian child;

R. "Indian tribe" means an Indian nation, tribe, pueblo or other band, organized group or community of Indians recognized as eligible for the services provided to Indians by the secretary because of their status as Indians, including an Alaska native village as defined in 43 U.S.C. Section 1602(c) or a regional corporation as defined in 43 U.S.C. Section 1606. For the purposes of notification to and communication with a tribe as required in the Indian Family Protection Act, "Indian tribe" also includes those tribal officials and staff who are responsible for child welfare and social services matters;

S. "judge", when used without further qualification, means the judge of the court;

T. "legal custody" means a legal status created by order of the court or other court of competent jurisdiction or by operation of statute that vests in a person, department or agency the right to determine where and with whom a child shall live; the right and duty to protect, train and discipline the child and to provide the child with food, shelter, personal care, education and ordinary and emergency medical care; the right to consent to major medical, psychiatric, psychological and surgical treatment and to the administration of legally prescribed psychotropic medications pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978]; and the right to consent to the child's enlistment in the armed forces of the United States;

U. "member" or "membership" means a determination made by an Indian tribe that a person is a member of or eligible for membership in that Indian tribe;

V. "parent" or "parents" means a biological or adoptive parent if the biological or adoptive parent has a constitutionally protected liberty interest in the care and custody of the child or a person who has lawfully adopted an Indian child pursuant to state law or tribal law or tribal custom;

W. "permanency plan" means a determination by the court that the child's interest will be served best by:

(1) reunification;

(2) placement for adoption after the parents' rights have been relinquished or terminated or after a motion has been filed to terminate parental rights;

(3) placement with a person who will be the child's permanent guardian;

(4) placement in the legal custody of the department with the child placed in the home of a fit and willing relative; or

(5) placement in the legal custody of the department under a planned permanent living arrangement;

X. "person" means an individual or any other form of entity recognized by law;

Y. "plan of care" means a plan created by a health care professional intended to ensure the safety and well-being of a substance-exposed newborn by addressing the treatment needs of the child and any of the child's parents, relatives, guardians, family members or caregivers to the extent those treatment needs are relevant to the safety of the child;

Z. "preadoptive parent" means a person with whom a child has been placed for adoption;

AA. "protective supervision" means the right to visit the child in the home where the child is residing, inspect the home, transport the child to court-ordered diagnostic examinations and evaluations and obtain information and records concerning the child;

BB. "relative" means a person related to another person:

(1) by blood within the fifth degree of consanguinity or through marriage by the fifth degree of affinity; or

(2) with respect to an Indian child, as established or defined by the Indian child's tribe's custom or law;

CC. "reservation" means:

(1) "Indian country" as defined in 18 U.S.C. Section 1151;

(2) any lands to which the title is held by the United States in trust for the benefit of an Indian tribe or individual; or

(3) any lands held by an Indian tribe or individual subject to a restriction by the United States against alienation;

DD. "reunification" means either a return of the child to the parent or to the home from which the child was removed or a return to the noncustodial parent;

EE. "secretary" means the United States secretary of the interior;

FF. "tribal court" means a court with jurisdiction over child custody proceedings that is either a court of Indian offenses, a court established and operated under the law or custom of an Indian tribe or any other administrative body that is vested by an Indian tribe with authority over child custody proceedings;

GG. "tribal court order" means a document issued by a tribal court that is signed by an appropriate authority, including a judge, governor or tribal council member, and that orders an action that is within the tribal court's jurisdiction; and

HH. "tribunal" means any judicial forum other than the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 13; 1995, ch. 206, § 2; 1999, ch. 77, § 2; 2003, ch. 225, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 1; 2009, ch. 239, § 7; 2016, ch. 60, § 1; 2019, ch. 190, § 1; 2022, ch. 41, § 44; 2023, ch. 90, § 2.

32A-1-5. Children's court established as division of district court; transfer.

A. There is established in the district court for each county a division to be known as the children's court. The district court of each judicial district shall designate one or more district judges to sit as judge of the children's court.

B. The supreme court shall adopt rules of procedure not in conflict with the Children's Code governing proceedings in the children's court, including rules and procedures for juries.

C. If, in a criminal action, it appears to a court other than the children's court division of the district court that jurisdiction is properly within the children's court division, the other court shall transfer the matter to the children's court division. Upon transfer, the children's court division obtains jurisdiction over the matter for proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Code.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 14.

32A-1-6. Children's court attorney.

A. The "office of children's court attorney" is established in each judicial district. Except as provided by Subsection C, D or E of this section, each district attorney is the ex-officio children's court attorney for the judicial district of the district attorney.

B. Except as provided by Subsection C, D or E of this section, the children's court attorney may represent the state in any matter arising under the Children's Code when the state is the petitioner or complainant. The children's court attorney shall represent the petitioner in matters arising under the Children's Code when, in the discretion of the judge, the matter presents legal complexities requiring representation by the children's court attorney, whether or not the state is petitioner or complainant, but not in those matters when there is a conflict of interest between the petitioner or complainant and the state. A petitioner or complainant may be represented by counsel in any matter arising under the Children's Code.

C. In cases involving civil abuse or civil neglect and the periodic review of their dispositions, the attorney selected by and representing the department is the children's court attorney. The attorney selected by and representing the department shall provide the district attorney of the appropriate judicial district with a copy of any abuse or neglect petition filed in that judicial district. Upon the request of the district attorney, the attorney selected by and representing the department shall provide the district attorney with reports, investigations and pleadings relating to any abuse or neglect petition.

D. In cases involving families in need of court-ordered services, the periodic review of their dispositions and voluntary placements, the attorney selected by and representing the department is the children's court attorney. The attorney selected by and representing the department shall provide the district attorney of the appropriate judicial district with a copy of any family in need of court-ordered services petition filed in that judicial district. Upon the request of the district attorney, the attorney selected by and representing the department shall provide the district attorney with reports, investigations and pleadings relating to any family in need of court-ordered services petition.

E. In cases involving a child subject to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978] that also involves civil abuse, civil neglect or a family in need of court-ordered services, the attorney selected by and representing the department is the children's court attorney. In cases involving a child subject to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act that does not also involve civil abuse, civil neglect or a family in need of court-ordered services, the district attorney is the ex-officio children's court attorney.

F. In those counties where the children's court attorney has sufficient staff and the workload requires it, the children's court attorney may delegate children's court functions to a staff attorney.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 15; 1995, ch. 206, § 3; 2005, ch. 189, § 2.

32A-1-7. Guardian ad litem; powers and duties.

A. A guardian ad litem shall zealously represent the child's best interests in the proceeding for which the guardian ad litem has been appointed and in any subsequent appeals.

B. Unless excused by a court, a guardian ad litem appointed to represent a child's best interests shall continue the representation in any subsequent appeals.

C. Any party may petition the court for an order to remove a guardian ad litem on the grounds that the guardian ad litem has a conflict of interest or is unwilling or unable to zealously represent the child's best interests.

D. After consultation with the child, a guardian ad litem shall convey the child's declared position to the court at every hearing.

E. Unless a child's circumstances render the following duties and responsibilities unreasonable, a guardian ad litem shall:

(1) meet with and interview the child prior to custody hearings, adjudicatory hearings, dispositional hearings, judicial reviews and any other hearings scheduled in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Code;

(2) communicate with health care, mental health care and other professionals involved with the child's case;

(3) review medical and psychological reports relating to the child and the respondents;

(4) contact the child prior to any proposed change in the child's placement;

(5) contact the child after changes in the child's placement;

(6) attend local substitute care review board hearings concerning the child and if unable to attend the hearings, forward to the board a letter setting forth the child's status during the period since the last local substitute care review board review and include an assessment of the department's permanency and treatment plans;

(7) report to the court on the child's adjustment to placement, the department's and respondent's compliance with prior court orders and treatment plans and the child's degree of participation during visitations; and

(8) represent and protect the cultural needs of the child.

F. A guardian ad litem may retain separate counsel to represent the child in a tort action on a contingency fee basis or any other cause of action in proceedings that are outside the jurisdiction of the children's court. When a guardian ad litem retains separate counsel to represent the child, the guardian ad litem shall provide the court

with written notice within ten days of retaining the separate counsel. A guardian ad litem shall not retain or subsequently obtain any pecuniary interest in an action filed on behalf of the child outside of the jurisdiction of the children's court.

G. In the event of a change of venue, the originating guardian ad litem shall remain on the case until a new guardian ad litem is appointed by the court in the new venue and the new guardian ad litem has communicated with and received all pertinent information from the former guardian ad litem.

H. A guardian ad litem shall receive notices, pleadings or other documents required to be provided to or served upon a party. A guardian ad litem may file motions and other pleadings and take other actions consistent with the guardian ad litem's powers and duties.

I. A guardian ad litem shall not serve concurrently as both the child's delinquency attorney and guardian ad litem.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 16; 1995, ch. 206, § 4; 2005, ch. 189, § 3.

32A-1-7.1. Child's attorney; powers and duties.

A. An attorney shall represent a child in a proceeding for which the attorney has been retained or appointed. The attorney shall provide the same manner of legal representation and be bound by the same duties to the child as is due an adult client, in accordance with the rules of professional conduct.

B. Unless excused by a court, an attorney appointed to represent a child shall represent the child in any subsequent appeals.

C. An attorney representing a child in a proceeding pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] may retain separate counsel to represent the child in a tort action on a contingency fee basis or any other cause of action in proceedings that are outside the jurisdiction of the children's court. When a child's attorney retains separate counsel to represent the child, the attorney shall provide the court with written notice within ten days of retaining the separate counsel. The child's attorney shall not retain or subsequently obtain any pecuniary interest in an action filed on behalf of the child outside of the jurisdiction of the children's court.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 189, § 10.

32A-1-8. Jurisdiction of the court; tribal court jurisdiction; exception.

A. The court has exclusive original jurisdiction of all proceedings under the Children's Code in which a person is eighteen years of age or older and was a child at the time the alleged act in question was committed or is a child alleged to be:

(1) a delinquent child;

(2) a child of a family in need of court-ordered services or a child in need of services pursuant to the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978];

(3) a neglected child;

(4) an abused child;

(5) a child subject to adoption; or

(6) a child subject to placement for a developmental disability or a mental disorder.

B. The court has exclusive original jurisdiction to emancipate a minor.

C. The provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978] govern child custody proceedings involving Indian children. To the extent the provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act conflict with the Children's Code, the provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act shall apply.

D. During abuse or neglect proceedings in which New Mexico is the home state, pursuant to the provisions of the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act [40-10A-101 to 40-10A-403 NMSA 1978], the court shall have jurisdiction over both parents to determine the best interest of the child and to decide all matters incident to the court proceedings.

E. The court may acquire jurisdiction over a Motor Vehicle Code [Articles 1 through 8 of Chapter 66 NMSA 1978] or municipal traffic code violation as set forth in Section 32A-2-29 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 17; 1995, ch. 206, § 5; 1999, ch. 46, § 1; 1999, ch. 78, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 4; 2009, ch. 239, § 8; 2022, ch. 41, § 45.

32A-1-9. Venue and transfer.

A. Proceedings in the court under the provisions of the Children's Code shall begin in the county where the child resides, or in the case of an eligible adult pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act [Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978], where the eligible adult resides. If delinquency is alleged, the proceeding may also be begun in the

county where the act constituting the alleged delinquent act occurred or in the county in which the child is detained. Neglect, abuse, family in need of court-ordered services or mental health proceedings may also begin in the county where the child is present when the proceeding is commenced. A transfer may be made if the residence of the child or eligible adult changes or for other good cause.

B. In neglect, abuse, family in need of court-ordered services or adoption proceedings for the placement of an Indian child, the court shall, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, transfer the proceeding to the jurisdiction of the Indian child's tribe upon the petition of the Indian child's parent, the Indian child's guardian or the Indian child's tribe. The transfer shall be barred if there is an objection to the transfer by a parent of the Indian child or the Indian child's tribe.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 18; 1999, ch. 196, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 5; 2020, ch. 52, § 1.

32A-1-10. Petition; who may sign.

A. A petition initiating proceedings pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 32 [32A], Article 2, 3B, 4 or 6 NMSA 1978 shall be signed by the children's court attorney.

B. An affidavit for an ex-parte custody order may be signed by any person who has knowledge of the facts alleged or is informed of them and believes that they are true.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 19.

32A-1-11. Petition; form and content.

A petition initiating proceedings pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 32A, Article 2, 3B, 4 or 6 NMSA 1978 shall be entitled, "In the Matter of ....., a child", and shall set forth with specificity:

A. the facts necessary to invoke the jurisdiction of the court;

B. if violation of a criminal statute or other law or ordinance is alleged, the citation to the appropriate law;

C. the name, birth date and residence address of the child;

D. the name and residence address of the parents, guardian, custodian or spouse, if any, of the child; and if no parent, guardian, custodian or spouse, if any, resides or can be found within the state or if a residence address is unknown, the name of any known adult relative residing within the state or, if there be none, the known adult relative residing nearest to the court;

E. whether the child is in custody or detention pursuant to the Delinquency Act [Chapter 32A, Article 2 NMSA 1978] and, if so, the place of custody or detention and the time the child was taken into custody;

F. whether the child is an Indian child and, if so, any additional information required pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978]; and

G. if any of the matters required to be set forth by this section are not known, a statement of those matters and the fact that they are not known.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-11, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 20; 2005, ch. 189, § 6; 2022, ch. 41, § 46.

32A-1-12. Summons; issuance and content; waiver of service.

A. After a petition has been filed, summonses shall be issued and served pursuant to children's court rule.

B. The summons shall require the persons to whom directed to appear personally before the court at the time fixed by the summons to answer the allegations of the petition. The summons shall advise the parties of their right to counsel under the Children's Code and shall have attached to it a copy of the petition.

C. The court may endorse upon the summons an order directing the parent, guardian, custodian or other person having the physical custody or control of the child to bring the child to the hearing.

D. If it appears from any sworn statement presented to the court that the child needs to be placed in detention, the judge may endorse on the summons an order that an officer serving the summons shall at once take the child into custody and take the child to the place of detention designated by the court, subject, however, to all of the provisions of the Children's Code relating to detention criteria and post-detention proceedings and the rights of the child in regard thereto.

E. A party other than the child may waive service of summons by written stipulation or by voluntary appearance at the hearing. If the child is present at the hearing, the child's counsel, with the consent of the parent, guardian or custodian, may waive service of summons in the child's behalf.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-12, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 21; 1995, ch. 206, § 6.

32A-1-13. Summons; service.

A. If a party to be served with a summons can be found within the state, the summons shall be served upon the party as provided by the Rules of Civil Procedure for

the District Courts at least forty-eight hours before the hearing, except that for a child party to an action pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978], service shall be on the child's guardian ad litem or attorney and not personally pursuant to children's court rule.

B. If a party to be served is within the state and cannot be found but the party's address is known, service of the summons may be made by mailing a copy of the summons to the party by certified mail at least fifteen days before the hearing.

C. If after reasonable effort a party to be served cannot be found, or address ascertained, within or without the state, the court may order service of the summons by publication in accordance with the provisions of Rule 1-004 of the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts, in which event the hearing shall not be less than five days after the date of last publication.

D. The court may authorize the payment from court funds of the costs of service and of necessary travel expenses incurred by persons summoned or otherwise required to appear at the hearing.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-13, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 22; 1995, ch. 206, § 7; 2005, ch. 189, § 7.

32A-1-14. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-14, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 23; 2005, ch. 189, § 8; 2019, ch. 125, § 1; repealed by Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 71.

32A-1-14.1. Determination of whether a child is an Indian child.

A. If a child is taken into custody by the department, the department shall make active efforts to determine whether there is reason to know the child is an Indian child.

B. At the beginning of every proceeding under the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978], the court shall make a written determination as to whether the Indian Family Protection Act applies to the case.

C. At the commencement of any hearing in a child custody proceeding, the court shall determine whether the child is an Indian child by asking, on the record, each individual present on the matter whether the individual knows or has reason to know that the child is an Indian child. If no individual present at the hearing knows or has reason to know that the child is an Indian child, the court shall instruct each party to inform the court immediately if the individual later receives information that provides reason to know that the child is an Indian child.

D. A court has reason to know that a child is an Indian child if:

(1) an Indian tribe asserts that the child may be eligible for membership;

(2) any party in the proceeding, officer of the court involved in the proceeding or an Indian organization informs the court that the child is an Indian child;

(3) any party at the hearing, officer of the court present at the hearing, Indian tribe or Indian organization informs the court that information has been discovered indicating that the child is an Indian child;

(4) the child indicates to the court that the child is an Indian child;

(5) the court is informed that the domicile or residence of the child, the child's parent, the child's guardian or the child's Indian custodian is on a reservation or in an Alaska native village;

(6) the court is informed that the child is or has been under the jurisdiction of a tribal court;

(7) the court is informed that the child or the child's parent possesses an identification card or other record indicating membership in an Indian tribe;

(8) testimony or documents presented to the court indicate that the child may be an Indian child; or

(9) any other indicia provided to the court or within the court's knowledge indicate that the child is an Indian child.

E. If a court has reason to know that a child is an Indian child but does not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the child is an Indian child, the court shall:

(1) treat the child as an Indian child until the court determines, on the record, that the child is not an Indian child; and

(2) require the department or another party to submit a report, declaration or testimony on the record that the department or other party made active efforts to identify and work with all of the Indian tribes of which there is reason to know the child may be a member or be eligible for membership to verify whether the child is an Indian child.

F. As used in this section, "Indian organization" means a group, association, partnership, corporation or other legal entity owned or controlled by Indians, or a majority of whose members are Indians.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 43.

32A-1-15. Release or delivery from custody.

In all cases begun pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Code, when a child is taken into custody, the child shall be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian in accordance with the conditions and time limits set forth in the Children's Court Rules and Forms.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-15, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 24.

32A-1-16. Basic rights.

A. A child subject to the provisions of the Children's Code is entitled to the same basic rights as an adult, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code.

B. A person afforded rights under the Children's Code shall be advised of those rights at that person's first appearance before the court on a petition under the Children's Code.

C. An eligible adult retains all of the basic rights of an adult while receiving services pursuant to the fostering connections program.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 25; 2019, ch. 149, § 11.

32A-1-17. Appeals.

A. Any party may appeal from a judgment of the court to the court of appeals in the manner provided by law. The appeal shall be heard by the court of appeals upon the files, records and transcript of the evidence of the court. Absent an order of the appellate court, files and records that are required to be kept confidential and closed to the public, pursuant to any provision of the Children's Code shall be kept confidential and closed to the public on appeal.

B. The appeal to the court of appeals does not stay the judgment appealed from, but the court of appeals may order a stay upon application and hearing consistent with the provisions of the Children's Code if suitable provision is made for the care and custody of the child. If the order appealed from grants the legal custody of the child to or withholds it from one or more of the parties to the appeal, the appeal shall be heard at the earliest practicable time.

C. If the court of appeals does not dismiss the petition and order the child released, it shall affirm the court's judgment or it shall modify the court's judgment and remand the child to the jurisdiction of the court for disposition consistent with the appellate court's decision on the appeal. Any party may appeal to the supreme court in the manner provided by law.

D. A child who has filed notice of appeal shall be furnished a transcript of the proceedings, or as much of it as is requested, without cost upon the filing of an affidavit

that the child or the person who is legally responsible for the care and support of the child is financially unable to purchase the transcript.

E. Appeals from the court to the court of appeals shall proceed in accordance with time limits to be established by the supreme court.

F. Appeals from a tribal court order shall proceed pursuant to tribal law to an appropriate tribal court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 26; 1995, ch. 22, § 1; 1995, ch. 206, § 8; 1999, ch. 195, § 1.

32A-1-18. Procedural matters.

A. When it appears from the facts during the course of any proceeding under the Children's Code that some finding or remedy other than or in addition to those indicated by the petition or motion are appropriate, the court may, either on motion by the children's court attorney or that of counsel for the child, amend the petition or motion and proceed to hear and determine the additional or other issues, findings or remedies as though originally properly sought.

B. Upon application of a party, the court shall issue, and upon its own motion the court may issue, subpoenas requiring attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of records, documents or other tangible objects at any hearing.

C. Subject to the laws relating to the procedures therefor and the limitations thereon, the court may punish a person for contempt of court for disobeying an order of the court or for obstructing or interfering with the proceedings of the court or the enforcement of its orders.

D. In any proceeding under the Children's Code, either on motion of a party or on the court's own motion, the court may make an order restraining the conduct of any party over whom the court has obtained jurisdiction if:

(1) the court finds that the person's conduct is or may be detrimental or harmful to the child and will tend to defeat the execution of any order of the court; and

(2) due notice of the motion and the grounds therefor and an opportunity to be heard thereon have been given to the person against whom the order is directed.

E. In any proceeding under the Children's Code, the court may allow a party or witness to the proceeding to participate by the use of electronic communications, consistent with the rights of all parties to the proceeding and pursuant to rules promulgated by the supreme court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-18, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 27; 1995, ch. 206, § 9.

32A-1-19. Court costs and expenses.

A. The following expenses shall be a charge upon the funds of the court upon their certification by the court:

(1) reasonable compensation for services and related expenses for counsel appointed by the court;

(2) reasonable compensation for services and related expenses of a guardian ad litem or a child's attorney appointed by the court; and

(3) the expenses of service of summonses, notices, subpoenas, traveling expenses of witnesses and other like expenses incurred in any proceeding under the Children's Code.

B. A child, the family of a child or a person legally obligated to care for and support a child who is subject to the provisions of the Delinquency Act [Chapter 32A, Article 2 NMSA 1978] shall not be required to pay any court costs, expenses pursuant to Subsection A of this section, fees or fines.

C. Whenever legal custody of an adjudicated child is vested in someone other than the child's parents, including an agency, institution or department of this state, if the court, after notice to the parents or other persons legally obligated to support the child and after a hearing, finds that the parents or other legally obligated persons are financially able to pay all or part of the costs and expenses of the support and treatment, the court may order the parents or other legally obligated persons to pay to the custodian in the manner the court directs a reasonable sum that will cover all or part of the expenses of the support and treatment of the child subsequent to the entry of the custody order. The court may use the child support guidelines set forth in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978 to calculate a reasonable payment. If the parents or other legally obligated persons willfully fail or refuse to pay the sum ordered, the court may proceed with contempt charges and the order for payment may be filed and if filed shall have the effect of a civil judgment.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-19, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 28; 2005, ch. 189, § 9; 2021, ch. 15, § 3.

32A-1-20. Purchase of care from private agency by public agency.

A. When the legal custody of a child or the placement and care responsibility of an eligible adult is vested in a public agency, under the provisions of the Children's Code, the public agency may transfer physical custody of the child or the eligible adult to an appropriate private agency and may purchase care and treatment from the private

agency if the private agency submits periodic reports to the public agency covering the care and treatment the child or eligible adult is receiving and the child's or eligible adult's responses to that care and treatment. These reports shall be made as frequently as the public agency deems necessary, but not less often than once each six months for each child or eligible adult. The private agency shall also afford an opportunity for a representative of the public agency to examine or consult with the child or eligible adult as frequently as the public agency deems necessary.

B. As used in this section, "eligible adult" means an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the fostering connections program established pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-1-20, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 29; 2019, ch. 149, § 12.

32A-1-21. Runaway child; law enforcement; permitted acts.

Whenever a law enforcement agency receives a report from a parent, guardian or custodian that a child over whom the parent, guardian or custodian has custody has, without permission, left the home or residence lawfully prescribed for the child and the parent, guardian or custodian believes the child has run away, a law enforcement agent may help the parent, guardian or custodian locate the child and:

A. return the child to the parent, guardian or custodian unless safety concerns are present;

B. hold the child for up to six hours if the parent, guardian or custodian cannot be located; provided, however, that no child shall be placed in a secured setting pursuant to this section; or

C. after the six hours has expired, follow the procedures outlined in Section 32A-3B-3 NMSA 1978.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 185, § 2; 2009, ch. 239, § 9.

32A-1-22. Medical cannabis program; removal of children; family services intervention; school enrollment; medical care.

A. An individual's participation in the state's medical cannabis program established pursuant to the Lynn and Erin Compassionate Use Act [Chapter 26, Article 2B NMSA 1978] shall not in itself constitute grounds for:

(1) intervention, removal or placement into state custody of a child in that individual's care pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978]; or

(2) the provision of state prevention, diversion or intervention services to that individual's family pursuant to the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3A NMSA 1978].

B. A person shall not be denied custody of or visitation or parenting time with a child, and there is no presumption of neglect or child endangerment, for conduct allowed under the Lynn and Erin Compassionate Use Act.

C. A school shall not refuse to enroll or otherwise penalize a person solely for conduct allowed pursuant to the Lynn and Erin Compassionate Use Act, unless failing to do so would cause the school to lose a monetary or licensing-related benefit under federal law or regulation.

D. For the purposes of medical care, including an organ transplant, a qualified patient's use of cannabis pursuant to the Lynn and Erin Compassionate Use Act shall be considered the equivalent of the use of any other medication under the direction of a physician and shall not be considered to constitute the use of an illicit substance or otherwise disqualify a qualified patient from medical care.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 247, § 14; 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-15, recompiled and amended as § 32A-1-22 by Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 3.

ARTICLE 2
Delinquency

32A-2-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 2 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Delinquency Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 30; 2007, ch. 19, § 1.

32A-2-2. Purpose of act.

The purpose of the Delinquency Act is:

A. consistent with the protection of the public interest, to remove from children committing delinquent acts the adult consequences of criminal behavior, but to still hold children committing delinquent acts accountable for their actions to the extent of the child's age, education, mental and physical condition, background and all other relevant factors, and to provide a program of supervision, care and rehabilitation, including rehabilitative restitution by the child to the victims of the child's delinquent act to the extent that the child is reasonably able to do so;

B. to provide effective deterrents to acts of juvenile delinquency, including an emphasis on community-based alternatives;

C. to strengthen families and to successfully reintegrate children into homes and communities;

D. to foster and encourage collaboration between government agencies and communities with regard to juvenile justice policies and procedures;

E. to develop juvenile justice policies and procedures that are supported by data;

F. to develop objective risk assessment instruments to be used for admission to juvenile detention centers;

G. to encourage efficient processing of cases;

H. to develop community-based alternatives to detention;

I. to eliminate or reduce disparities based upon race or gender;

J. to improve conditions of confinement in juvenile detention centers; and

K. to achieve reductions in the number of warrants issued, the number of probation violations and the number of youth awaiting placements.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 31; 2003, ch. 225, § 2; 2007, ch. 19, § 2.

32A-2-3. Definitions.

As used in the Delinquency Act:

A. "delinquent act" means an act committed by a child that would be designated as a crime under the law if committed by an adult, not including a violation of Section 30-9-2 NMSA 1978, including the following offenses:

(1) any of the following offenses pursuant to municipal traffic codes or the Motor Vehicle Code [Chapter 66, Articles 1 through 8 NMSA 1978]:

(a) driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs;

(b) failure to stop in the event of an accident causing death, personal injury or damage to property;

(c) unlawful taking of a vehicle or motor vehicle;

(d) receiving or transferring of a stolen vehicle or motor vehicle;

(e) homicide by vehicle;

(f) injuring or tampering with a vehicle;

(g) altering or changing of an engine number or other vehicle identification numbers;

(h) altering or forging of a driver's license or permit or any making of a fictitious license or permit;

(i) reckless driving;

(j) driving with a suspended or revoked license; or

(k) an offense punishable as a felony;

(2) buying, attempting to buy, receiving, possessing or being served any alcoholic liquor or being present in a licensed liquor establishment, other than a restaurant or a licensed retail liquor establishment, except in the presence of the child's parent, guardian, custodian or adult spouse. As used in this paragraph, "restaurant" means an establishment where meals are prepared and served primarily for on-premises consumption and that has a dining room, a kitchen and the employees necessary for preparing, cooking and serving meals. "Restaurant" does not include an establishment, as defined in regulations promulgated by the director of the special investigations unit of the department of public safety, that serves only hamburgers, sandwiches, salads and other fast foods;

(3) a violation of Section 30-29-2 NMSA 1978, regarding the illegal use of a glue, aerosol spray product or other chemical substance;

(4) a violation of the Controlled Substances Act [Chapter 30, Article 31 NMSA 1978];

(5) escape from the custody of a law enforcement officer or a juvenile probation or parole officer or from any placement made by the department by a child who has been adjudicated a delinquent child;

(6) a violation of Section 30-15-1.1 NMSA 1978 regarding unauthorized graffiti on personal or real property; or

(7) a violation of an order of protection issued pursuant to the provisions of the Family Violence Protection Act [Chapter 40, Article 13 NMSA 1978];

B. "delinquent child" means a child who has committed a delinquent act;

C. "delinquent offender" means a delinquent child who is subject to juvenile sanctions only and who is not a youthful offender or a serious youthful offender;

D. "detention facility" means a place where a child may be detained under the Children's Code pending court hearing and does not include a facility for the care and rehabilitation of an adjudicated delinquent child;

E. "felony" means an act that would be a felony if committed by an adult;

F. "misdemeanor" means an act that would be a misdemeanor or petty misdemeanor if committed by an adult;

G. "restitution" means financial reimbursement by the child to the victim or community service imposed by the court and is limited to easily ascertainable damages for injury to or loss of property, actual expenses incurred for medical, psychiatric and psychological treatment for injury to a person and lost wages resulting from physical injury, which are a direct and proximate result of a delinquent act. "Restitution" does not include reimbursement for damages for mental anguish, pain and suffering or other intangible losses. As used in this subsection, "victim" means a person who is injured or suffers damage of any kind by an act that is the subject of a complaint or referral to law enforcement officers or juvenile probation authorities. Nothing contained in this definition limits or replaces the provisions of Subsections A and B of Section 32A-2-27 NMSA 1978;

H. "serious youthful offender" means an individual fifteen to eighteen years of age who is charged with and indicted or bound over for trial for first degree murder. A "serious youthful offender" is not a delinquent child as defined pursuant to the provisions of this section;

I. "supervised release" means the release of a juvenile, whose term of commitment has not expired, from a facility for the care and rehabilitation of adjudicated delinquent children, with specified conditions to protect public safety and promote successful transition and reintegration into the community. A juvenile on supervised release is subject to monitoring by the department until the term of commitment has expired and may be returned to custody for violating conditions of release; and

J. "youthful offender" means a delinquent child subject to adult or juvenile sanctions who is:

(1) fourteen to eighteen years of age at the time of the offense and who is adjudicated for at least one of the following offenses:

(a) second degree murder, as provided in Section 30-2-1 NMSA 1978;

(b) assault with intent to commit a violent felony, as provided in Section 30-3-3 NMSA 1978;

(c) kidnapping, as provided in Section 30-4-1 NMSA 1978;

(d) aggravated battery, as provided in Subsection C of Section 30-3-5 NMSA 1978;

(e) aggravated battery against a household member, as provided in Subsection C of Section 30-3-16 NMSA 1978;

(f) aggravated battery upon a peace officer, as provided in Subsection C of Section 30-22-25 NMSA 1978;

(g) shooting at a dwelling or occupied building or shooting at or from a motor vehicle, as provided in Section 30-3-8 NMSA 1978;

(h) dangerous use of explosives, as provided in Section 30-7-5 NMSA 1978;

(i) criminal sexual penetration, as provided in Section 30-9-11 NMSA 1978;

(j) robbery, as provided in Section 30-16-2 NMSA 1978;

(k) aggravated burglary, as provided in Section 30-16-4 NMSA 1978;

(l) aggravated arson, as provided in Section 30-17-6 NMSA 1978; or

(m) abuse of a child that results in great bodily harm or death to the child, as provided in Section 30-6-1 NMSA 1978;

(2) fourteen to eighteen years of age at the time of the offense, who is adjudicated for any felony offense and who has had three prior, separate felony adjudications within a three-year time period immediately preceding the instant offense. The felony adjudications relied upon as prior adjudications shall not have arisen out of the same transaction or occurrence or series of events related in time and location. Successful completion of consent decrees is not considered a prior adjudication for the purposes of this paragraph; or

(3) fourteen years of age and who is adjudicated for first degree murder, as provided in Section 30-2-1 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 32; 1995, ch. 204, § 2; 1995, ch. 205, § 2; 1995, ch. 206, § 10; 1996, ch. 85, § 2; 2003, ch. 225, § 3; 2005, ch. 189, § 11; 2009, ch. 239, § 10; 2019, ch. 101, § 1.

32A-2-4. Detention facilities; standards; reports; appeals.

A. The department shall promulgate updated standards for all detention facilities, including standards for site, design, construction, equipment, care, program, personnel

and clinical services. The department shall certify as approved all detention facilities in the state meeting the standards promulgated. The department may establish by rule appropriate procedures for provisional certification and the waiving of any of its standards for facilities in existence at the time of the adoption of the standards, except that it shall not allow waiver of any standard pertaining to adequate health and safety protection of the residents and staff of the facility. No child shall be detained in a detention facility unless it is certified as approved by the department, except as otherwise provided in Chapter 32A, Article 2 NMSA 1978.

B. The department shall inspect all detention facilities in the state at least once each twelve months and shall require those reports it deems necessary from detention facilities in a form and containing the information determined by the department. If as the result of an inspection a certified detention facility is determined as failing to meet the required standards, its certification is subject to revocation or refusal for renewal by the department.

C. The department shall promulgate rules establishing procedures that provide for prior notice and public hearings on detention facilities' standards adoption and changes. The department shall also promulgate rules establishing procedures for facility certification, renewal of certification, refusal to renew certification and revocation of certification. The procedures adopted on these matters shall provide for adequate prior notice of intended action by the department, opportunity for the aggrieved person to have an administrative hearing and written notification of the administrative decision. Rules promulgated under this subsection shall not be effective unless filed in accordance with the State Rules Act [Chapter 14, Article 4 NMSA 1978].

D. Any person aggrieved by an administrative decision of the department rendered under the provisions of this section may petition for the review of the administrative decision by appealing to the district court pursuant to the provisions of Section 39-3-1.1 NMSA 1978.

E. After January 1, 1994, no state or county detention facility shall hold juveniles sentenced by a federal court, unless the facility meets state standards promulgated by the department.

F. A juvenile detention facility certified by the department shall comply with the daily reporting requirement for children in detention, including reports on the length of stay for each child. This information shall be reported as required by the department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 33; 1998, ch. 55, § 42; 1999, ch. 265, § 44; 2009, ch. 239, § 11.

32A-2-4.1. Adult jails and lockups used as temporary holding facilities; reports.

A. A child arrested and detained for an alleged delinquent act may be temporarily held in an adult jail or lockup for no longer than six hours. A child who is detained in an adult jail or lockup shall be placed in a setting that is physically segregated by sight and sound from adult offenders. After six hours, the child may be placed or detained pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-2-12 NMSA 1978.

B. An adult jail or lockup used as a temporary holding facility for alleged delinquent offenders shall file an annual report regarding its compliance with federal requirements. The juvenile justice advisory committee and the department shall determine the format of the annual reports.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-4.1, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 12.

32A-2-5. Juvenile probation and parole services; establishment; juvenile probation and parole officers; powers and duties.

A. Juvenile probation and parole services shall be provided by the department.

B. To carry out the objectives and provisions of the Delinquency Act, but subject to its limitations, the department has the power and duty to:

(1) receive and examine complaints and allegations that a child is a delinquent child for the purpose of considering beginning a proceeding pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act;

(2) make case referrals for services as appear appropriate or desirable;

(3) make predisposition studies and assessments and submit reports and recommendations to the court;

(4) supervise and assist a child placed on probation or supervised release or under supervision by court order or by the department;

(5) give notice to any individual who has been the subject of a petition filed pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act of the sealing of that individual's records in accordance with that act;

(6) informally dispose of up to three misdemeanor charges brought against a child within two years;

(7) give notice to the children's court attorney of the receipt of any felony complaint and of any recommended adjustment of such felony complaint;

(8) identify an Indian child for the purpose of contacting the Indian child's tribe in delinquency cases; and

(9) upon receipt of a referral, contact an Indian child's tribe to consult and exchange information for the purpose of collaborating on appropriate referrals for services along with case planning throughout the period of involvement with juvenile justice services.

C. A juvenile probation and parole officer does not have the powers of a law enforcement officer. A juvenile probation and parole officer may take into physical custody and place in detention, subject to application of a detention risk assessment instrument, a child who is under supervision as a delinquent child or as a youthful offender when there is reasonable cause to believe that the child has violated the conditions of the child's probation or that the child may leave the jurisdiction of the court. Taking a child into custody under this subsection is subject to and shall proceed in accordance with the provisions of the Delinquency Act relating to custody and detention procedures and criteria.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 34; 1995, ch. 206, § 11; 2003, ch. 225, § 4; 2009, ch. 239, § 13; 2019, ch. 125, § 2.

32A-2-6. Transfer of jurisdiction over child from other tribunals to court.

A. If it appears to a tribunal in a criminal matter that the defendant was under the age of eighteen years at the time the offense charged was alleged to have been committed and the offense charged is a delinquent act pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act, the tribunal shall promptly transfer jurisdiction of the matter and the defendant to the court together with a copy of the accusatory pleading and other papers, documents and transcripts of testimony relating to the case. The tribunal shall not transfer a serious youthful offender.

B. Upon transfer the court shall have exclusive jurisdiction over the proceedings and the defendant. The transferring tribunal shall order that the defendant promptly be taken to the court, or taken to a place of detention designated by the court, or released to the custody of a parent, guardian, custodian or other person legally responsible for the defendant to be brought before the court at a time designated by the court. Upon transfer to the court a petition shall be prepared and filed in the court in accordance with the provisions of the Delinquency Act. If the defendant is not a child at the time of transfer the court retains jurisdiction over the matter only until disposition is made by the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 35.

32A-2-7. Complaints; referral; preliminary inquiry; notice; time waiver.

A. Complaints alleging delinquency shall be referred to probation services, which shall conduct a preliminary inquiry to determine the best interests of the child and of the public with regard to any action to be taken.

B. During the preliminary inquiry on a delinquency complaint, the matter may be referred to another appropriate agency and conferences may be conducted for the purpose of effecting adjustments or agreements that will obviate the necessity for filing a petition. At the commencement of the preliminary inquiry, the parties shall be advised of their basic rights pursuant to Section 32A-2-14 NMSA 1978, and no party may be compelled to appear at any conference, to produce any papers or to visit any place. The child shall be informed of the child's right to remain silent. The preliminary inquiry shall be completed within the time limits set forth in the Children's Court Rules.

C. Prior to a preliminary inquiry being conducted with a child who is detained, the child's parent, guardian or custodian or the child's attorney shall be given reasonable notice by the juvenile probation and parole officer and an opportunity to be present at the preliminary inquiry. If a child is not detained, the preliminary inquiry shall be conducted within thirty days of receipt of the referral from law enforcement. The thirty-day time period may be extended upon a determination by the department that an extension is necessary to conduct a thorough preliminary inquiry and that the extension is not prejudicial to the best interests of the child.

D. When a child is in detention or custody and the children's court attorney does not file a petition within the time limits authorized by the Children's Court Rules, the child shall be released immediately. If a child is not detained and a determination is made to file a petition, the petition shall be filed within sixty days of completion of the preliminary inquiry, unless a motion is granted to extend the time limit for good cause shown. If a child is not in custody or detention, a petition shall not be dismissed for failure to comply with the time limit set forth in this subsection unless there is a showing of prejudice to the child.

E. After completion of the preliminary inquiry on a delinquency complaint involving a misdemeanor, probation services may notify the children's court attorney and recommend an appropriate disposition for the case. If the child has been referred for three or more prior misdemeanors within two years of the instant offense, probation services shall notify the children's court attorney and recommend an appropriate disposition for the case.

F. Probation services shall notify the children's court attorney of the receipt of any complaint involving an act that constitutes a felony under the applicable criminal law. Probation services shall also recommend a disposition to the children's court attorney.

G. The child, through counsel, and the children's court attorney may agree, without judicial approval, to a waiver of time limitations imposed after a petition is filed. A time waiver defers adjudication of the charges. The children's court attorney may place restrictions on a child's behavior as a condition of a time waiver. If the child completes

the agreed upon conditions and no new charges are filed against the child, the pending petition shall be dismissed. If the children's court attorney files a new petition against the child, the children's court attorney may proceed on both the original petition and the new charges. The department shall become a party if probation services are requested as a condition of the time waiver.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 36; 2005, ch. 189, § 12.

32A-2-8. Petition; authorization to file.

A petition alleging delinquency shall not be filed in delinquency proceedings unless the children's court attorney, after consulting with probation services, has determined and endorsed upon the petition that the filing of the petition is in the best interest of the public and the child. The children's court attorney shall furnish legal services in connection with the authorization and preparation of the petition.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 37.

32A-2-9. Taking into custody.

A child may be taken into custody:

A. pursuant to the order of the court issued because a parent, guardian or custodian fails when requested to bring the child before the court after having promised to do so when the child was delivered upon release from custody;

B. pursuant to the laws of arrest for commission of a delinquent act; or

C. by a juvenile probation and parole officer proceeding pursuant to the provisions of Section 32-2-5 [32A-2-5] NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 38.

32A-2-10. Release or delivery from custody.

A. A person taking a child into custody shall, with all reasonable speed:

(1) release the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized by the child's parent, guardian or custodian and issue verbal counsel or warning as may be appropriate;

(2) release the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized to sign on behalf of the child's parent, guardian or custodian upon written promise to bring the child before the court when requested by the court. If the parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized to sign on behalf of the child's parent,

guardian or custodian fails, when requested, to bring the child before the court as promised, the court may order the child taken into custody and brought before the court;

(3) deliver the child to a place of detention as provided in Section 32A-2-12 NMSA 1978;

(4) deliver the child to a medical facility, if available, if the child is believed to be suffering from a serious illness that requires prompt treatment or prompt diagnosis;

(5) deliver the child to an evaluation facility, if available, if the person taking the child into custody has reasonable grounds to believe the child presents a likelihood of serious harm to the child's self or others or is suffering from some other serious mental condition or illness that requires prompt treatment or prompt diagnosis; or

(6) deliver the child to a center or organization that the court or the department recognizes as an alternative to secure detention.

B. When an alleged delinquent child is delivered to a place of detention or a center or organization recognized as an alternative to secure detention as provided in Section 32A-2-12 NMSA 1978, only a department employee or a trained county detention professional designated by the department may place the child in detention or with a center or organization recognized as an alternative to secure detention in accordance with the criteria for detention set forth in Section 32A-2-11 NMSA 1978. If the criteria for detention of an alleged delinquent child are not met, the child shall be released from custody.

C. A child under the age of twelve shall not be held in detention. If a child under the age of twelve poses a substantial risk of harm to the child's self or others, a peace officer may detain and transport that child for emergency mental health evaluation and care in accordance with Section 32A-6A-19 NMSA 1978.

D. If a child is taken into custody and is not released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized by the child's parent, guardian or custodian, the person taking the child into custody shall give written notice thereof as soon as possible, and in no case later than twenty-four hours, to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized by the child's parent, guardian or custodian and to the court, together with a statement of the reason for taking the child into custody.

E. In all cases when a child is taken into custody, the child shall be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or an adult authorized by the child's parent, guardian or custodian in accordance with the conditions and time limits set forth in the Children's Court Rules.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 39; 2003, ch. 225, § 5; 2005, ch. 189, § 13.; 2009, ch. 239, § 14; 2023, ch. 125, § 1.

32A-2-11. Criteria for detention of children.

A. Unless ordered by the court pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act, a child taken into custody for an alleged delinquent act shall not be placed in detention unless a detention risk assessment instrument is completed and a determination is made that the child:

(1) poses a substantial risk of harm to himself;

(2) poses a substantial risk of harm to others; or

(3) has demonstrated that he may leave the jurisdiction of the court.

B. The criteria for detention in this section shall govern the decisions of all persons responsible for determining whether detention is appropriate prior to a detention hearing, based upon review of the detention risk assessment instrument.

C. The department shall develop and implement a detention risk assessment instrument. The department shall collect and analyze data regarding the application of the detention risk assessment instrument. On January 1, 2004, the department shall provide the legislature with a written report with respect to its collection and analysis of data regarding the application of the detention risk assessment instrument.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-11, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 40; 2003, ch. 225, § 6.

32A-2-12. Placement or detention.

A. A child alleged to be a delinquent child may be placed or detained, pending a court hearing, in any of the following places:

(1) a licensed foster home or a home otherwise authorized under the law to provide foster or group care;

(2) a facility operated by a licensed child welfare services agency;

(3) a shelter-care facility provided for in the Children's Shelter Care Act [32A-9-1 to 32A-9-7 NMSA 1978] that is in compliance with all standards, conditions and regulatory requirements and that shall be considered a temporary placement subject to judicial review within thirty days of placement;

(4) a detention facility certified by the department for children alleged to be delinquent children;

(5) any other suitable place, other than a facility for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children to which children adjudicated as delinquent may be

confined pursuant to Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, designated by the court and that meets the standards for detention facilities pursuant to the Children's Code and federal law; or

(6) the child's home or place of residence, under conditions and restrictions approved by the court.

B. A child alleged to be a youthful offender may be detained, pending a court hearing, in any of the following places:

(1) a detention facility, licensed by the department, for children alleged to be delinquent children; or

(2) any other suitable place, other than a facility for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children to which children adjudicated as delinquent children may be confined pursuant to Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, designated by the court and that meets the standards for detention facilities pursuant to the Children's Code and federal law.

C. A child adjudicated as a youthful offender who is violent toward staff or other residents in a detention facility may be transferred and detained, pending a court hearing, in a county jail. In the event that a child is detained in a jail, the director of the jail shall presume that the child is vulnerable to victimization by inmates within the adult population because of the child's age, and shall take measures to provide protection to the child. However, provision of protective measures shall not result in diminishing a child's civil rights to less than those existing for an incarcerated adult.

D. A child who has previously been incarcerated as an adult or a person eighteen years of age or older shall not be detained in a juvenile detention facility or a facility for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children, but may be detained in a county jail. A child shall not be transferred to a county jail solely on the basis of attaining the age of eighteen while detained in a juvenile detention facility. In the event that a child is detained in a jail, the director of the jail shall presume that the child is vulnerable to victimization by inmates within the adult population because of the child's age, and shall take measures to provide protection to the child. However, provision of protective measures shall not result in diminishing a child's civil rights to less than those existing for an incarcerated adult.

E. A child alleged to be a serious youthful offender may be detained pending a court hearing in any of the following places, prior to arraignment in metropolitan, magistrate or district court:

(1) a detention facility, licensed by the department, for children alleged to be delinquent children;

(2) any other suitable place, other than a facility for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children to which children adjudicated as delinquent children may be confined pursuant to Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, designated by the court that meets the standards for detention facilities pursuant to the Children's Code and federal law; or

(3) a county jail, if a facility in Paragraph (1) or (2) of this subsection is not appropriate. In the event that a child is detained in a jail, the director of the jail shall presume that the child is vulnerable to victimization by inmates within the adult population because of the child's age and shall take measures to provide protection to the child. However, provision of protective measures shall not result in diminishing a child's civil rights to less than those existing for an incarcerated adult.

F. When a person who is eighteen years of age or older is taken into custody and transported to an adult facility on a juvenile warrant or an adult warrant or other adult charges and an outstanding juvenile warrant exists, notice shall be given to the children's court attorney and the juvenile probation and parole office in the jurisdiction where the juvenile warrant was issued within one day of the person being taken into custody. The juvenile probation and parole office shall give notice that the person has been taken into custody to the children's court judge and the attorney who represented the person in the juvenile proceeding.

G. In addition to the judicial review required by Paragraph (3) of Subsection A of this section, a child detained in an out-of-home placement pursuant to this section may request judicial review of the appropriateness of the placement.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-12, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 41; 2003, ch. 225, § 7; 2005, ch. 189, § 14; 2009, ch. 239, § 15.

32A-2-13. Detention hearing required on detained children; probable cause determination; court determination; disposition.

A. When a child who has been taken into custody is not released but is detained:

(1) a judicial determination of probable cause shall be made by a judge or special master or magistrate within forty-eight hours, including Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, except for children taken into custody under an arrest warrant pursuant to the Children's Court Rules [10-101 NMRA]. A statement by a law enforcement officer, which shall include the charges, may be the basis of a probable cause determination. The probable cause determination shall be nonadversarial, may be held in the absence of the child and counsel and may be conducted by telephone. If the court finds no probable cause to believe the child committed an offense, the child shall be released;

(2) a petition shall be filed within twenty-four hours from the time the child is taken into custody, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, and if not filed within the stated time, the child shall be released; and

(3) a detention hearing shall be held within twenty-four hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, from the time of filing the petition to determine whether continued detention is required pursuant to the criteria established by the Children's Code. At the request of any party, the court may permit a detention hearing to be conducted by appropriate means of electronic communication; provided that all hearings conducted by electronic means shall be recorded and preserved as part of the record, the child shall have legal representation present with the child, no plea shall be allowed to be taken via electronic communication and the court finds:

(a) that undue hardship will result from conducting the hearing with all parties, including the child, present in the courtroom; and

(b) that the hardship substantially outweighs any prejudice or harm to the child that is likely to result from the hearing being conducted by electronic means.

B. The judge may appoint one or more persons to serve as special master on a full- or part-time basis for the purpose of holding detention hearings. A juvenile probation and parole officer shall not be appointed as a special master. The judge shall approve all contracts with special masters and shall fix their hourly compensation, subject to the approval of the director of the administrative office of the courts.

C. Notice of the detention hearing, either oral or written, stating the time, place and purpose of the hearing shall be given by the person designated by the court to the child's parents, guardian or custodian, if they can be found, and to the child. The department shall be provided with reasonable oral or written notification and an opportunity to be heard. At any hearing held pursuant to this subsection, the department may appear as a party.

D. At the commencement of the detention hearing, the judge or special master shall advise the parties of their basic rights provided in the Children's Code and shall appoint counsel, guardians and custodians, if appropriate.

E. If the judge or special master finds that the child's detention is appropriate under the criteria established by the Children's Code, the judge or special master shall order detention in an appropriate facility in accordance with the Children's Code.

F. If the judge or special master finds that detention of the child is not appropriate under the criteria established by the Children's Code, the judge or special master shall order the release of the child, but, in so doing, may order one or more of the following conditions to meet the individual needs of the child:

(1) place the child in the custody of a parent, guardian or custodian or under the supervision of an agency agreeing to supervise the child;

(2) place restrictions on the child's travel, association with other persons or place of abode during the period of the child's release; or

(3) impose any other condition deemed reasonably necessary and consistent with the criteria for detaining children established by the Children's Code, including a condition requiring that the child return to custody as required.

G. An order releasing a child on any conditions specified in this section may at any time be amended to impose additional or different conditions of release or to return the child to custody or detention for failure to conform to the conditions originally imposed.

H. At the detention hearing, all relevant and material evidence helpful in determining the need for detention may be admitted by the judge or special master even though it would not be admissible in a hearing on the petition.

I. If the child is not released at the detention hearing and a parent, guardian or custodian was not notified of the hearing and did not appear or waive appearance at the detention hearing, the judge or special master shall rehear the detention matter without unnecessary delay upon the filing of an affidavit stating the facts and a motion for rehearing.

J. If a child is not released at the detention hearing, the child's detention may be subsequently reviewed by the court or the court may review the child's detention in conjunction with a pretrial conference.

K. If a child is not placed within ten days after a disposition hearing, the child may be released and placed under appropriate supervision, so long as the child does not pose a flight risk or substantial risk of harm to the child's self or others.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-13, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 42; 2003, ch. 225, § 8; 2009, ch. 239, § 16.

32A-2-14. Basic rights.

A. A child subject to the provisions of the Delinquency Act is entitled to the same basic rights as an adult, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code, including rights provided by the Delinquency Act, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code [32A-1-1 NMSA 1978].

B. If after due notice to the parent, guardian or custodian and after a hearing determining indigency, the parent, guardian or custodian is declared indigent by the court, the public defender shall represent the child. If the court finds that the parent, guardian or custodian is financially able to pay for an attorney but is unwilling to do so, the court shall order the parent, guardian or custodian to reimburse the state for public defender representation.

C. No person subject to the provisions of the Delinquency Act who is alleged or suspected of being a delinquent child shall be interrogated or questioned without first

advising the child of the child's constitutional rights and securing a knowing, intelligent and voluntary waiver.

D. Before any statement or confession may be introduced at a trial or hearing when a child is alleged to be a delinquent child, the state shall prove that the statement or confession offered in evidence was elicited only after a knowing, intelligent and voluntary waiver of the child's constitutional rights was obtained.

E. In determining whether the child knowingly, intelligently and voluntarily waived the child's rights, the court shall consider the following factors:

(1) the age and education of the respondent;

(2) whether the respondent is in custody;

(3) the manner in which the respondent was advised of the respondent's rights;

(4) the length of questioning and circumstances under which the respondent was questioned;

(5) the condition of the quarters where the respondent was being kept at the time of being questioned;

(6) the time of day and the treatment of the respondent at the time of being questioned;

(7) the mental and physical condition of the respondent at the time of being questioned; and

(8) whether the respondent had the counsel of an attorney, friends or relatives at the time of being questioned.

F. Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, no confessions, statements or admissions may be introduced against a child under the age of thirteen years on the allegations of the petition. There is a rebuttable presumption that any confessions, statements or admissions made by a child thirteen or fourteen years old to a person in a position of authority are inadmissible.

G. An extrajudicial admission or confession made by the child out of court is insufficient to support a finding that the child committed the delinquent acts alleged in the petition unless it is corroborated by other evidence.

H. The child and the parent, guardian or custodian of the child shall be advised by the court or its representative that the child shall be represented by counsel at all stages of the proceedings on a delinquency petition, including all post-dispositional court

proceedings. If counsel is not retained for the child or if it does not appear that counsel will be retained, counsel shall be appointed for the child.

I. A child under the age of thirteen alleged or adjudicated to be a delinquent child shall not be fingerprinted or photographed for identification purposes without obtaining a court order.

J. The court, at any stage of the proceeding on a petition under the Children's Code, may appoint a guardian ad litem for a child who is a party if the child has no parent, guardian or custodian appearing on behalf of the child or if the parent's, guardian's or custodian's interests conflict with those of the child. A party to the proceeding or an employee or representative of a party shall not be appointed as guardian ad litem.

K. The court shall appoint a guardian for a child if the court determines that the child does not have a parent or a legally appointed guardian in a position to exercise effective guardianship. No officer or employee of an agency that is vested with the legal custody of the child shall be appointed guardian of the child except when parental rights have been terminated and the agency is authorized to place the child for adoption.

L. A person afforded rights under the Delinquency Act shall be advised of those rights at that person's first appearance before the court on a petition under that act.

M. A serious youthful offender who is detained prior to trial in an adult facility has a right to bail as provided under SCRA 1986, Rule 5-401. A child held in a juvenile facility designated as a place of detention prior to adjudication does not have a right to bail but may be released pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act.

N. The provisions of the Delinquency Act shall not be interpreted to limit the right of a child to petition a court for a writ of habeas corpus.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-14, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 43; 2003, ch. 225, § 9; 2009, ch. 239, § 17.

32A-2-15. Time limitations on delinquency adjudicatory hearing.

The adjudicatory hearing in a delinquency proceeding shall be held in accordance with the time limits set forth in the Children's Court Rules and Forms [10-101 NMRA].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-15, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 44.

32A-2-16. Conduct of hearings; findings; dismissal; dispositional matters; penalty.

A. Hearings on petitions shall be conducted by the court separate from other proceedings. A jury trial on the issues of alleged delinquent acts may be demanded by

the child, parent, guardian, custodian or counsel in proceedings on petitions alleging delinquency when the offense alleged would be triable by jury if committed by an adult. If a jury is demanded and the child is entitled to a jury trial, the jury's function is limited to that of trier of the factual issue of whether the child committed the alleged delinquent acts. If no jury is demanded, the hearing shall be by the court without a jury. Jury trials shall be conducted in accordance with rules promulgated under the provisions of Subsection B of Section 32A-1-5 NMSA 1978. A delinquent child facing a juvenile disposition shall be entitled to a six-member jury. If the children's court attorney has filed a motion to invoke an adult sentence, the child is entitled to a twelve-member jury. A unanimous verdict is required for all jury trials. The proceedings shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic, mechanical or other appropriate means.

B. All hearings to declare a person in contempt of court and all hearings on petitions pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act shall be open to the general public, except where the court in its discretion, after a finding of exceptional circumstances, deems it appropriate to conduct a closed delinquency hearing. Only the parties, their counsel, witnesses and other persons approved by the court may be present at a closed hearing. Those other persons the court finds to have a proper interest in the case or in the work of the court may be admitted by the court to closed hearings on the condition that they refrain from divulging any information concerning the exceptional circumstances that resulted in the need for a closed hearing. Accredited representatives of the news media shall be allowed to be present at closed hearings subject to the conditions that they refrain from divulging information concerning the exceptional circumstances that resulted in the need for a closed hearing and subject to such enabling regulations as the court finds necessary for the maintenance of order and decorum and for the furtherance of the purposes of the Delinquency Act.

C. Those persons or parties granted admission to a closed hearing who intentionally divulge information in violation of Subsection B of this section are guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

D. The court shall determine if the allegations of the petition are admitted or denied. If the allegations are denied, the court shall proceed to hear evidence on the petition. The court after hearing all of the evidence bearing on the allegations of delinquency shall make and record its findings on whether the delinquent acts subscribed to the child were committed by the child. If the court finds that the allegations of delinquency have not been established, it shall dismiss the petition and order the child released from any detention or legal custody imposed in connection with the proceedings.

E. The court shall make a finding of delinquency based on a valid admission of the allegations of the petition or on the basis of proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

F. If the court finds on the basis of a valid admission of the allegations of the petition or on the basis of proof beyond a reasonable doubt that the child is a delinquent, the court may proceed immediately or at a postponed hearing to make disposition of the case.

G. In that part of the hearings held under the Delinquency Act on dispositional issues, all relevant and material evidence helpful in determining the questions presented, including oral and written reports, may be received by the court and may be relied upon to the extent of its probative value even though not competent had it been offered during the part of the hearings on adjudicatory issues.

H. On the court's motion or that of a party, the court may continue the hearing on the petition for a reasonable time to receive reports and other evidence in connection with disposition. The court may continue the hearing pending the receipt of the predisposition study and report if that document has not been prepared and received. During any continuances under this subsection, the court shall make an appropriate order for detention or legal custody.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 45; 2009, ch. 239, § 18.

32A-2-17. Predisposition studies; reports and examinations.

A. After a petition has been filed and either a finding with respect to the allegations of the petition has been made or a notice of intent to admit the allegations of the petition has been filed, the court may direct that a predisposition study and report to the court be made in writing by the department or an appropriate agency designated by the court concerning the child, the family of the child, the environment of the child and any other matters relevant to the need for treatment or to appropriate disposition of the case. The following predisposition reports shall be provided to the parties and the court five days before actual disposition or sentencing:

(1) the adult probation and parole division of the corrections department shall prepare a predisposition report for a serious youthful offender;

(2) the department shall prepare a predisposition report for a serious youthful offender who is convicted of an offense other than first degree murder;

(3) the department shall prepare a predisposition report for a youthful offender concerning the youthful offender's amenability to treatment and if:

(a) the court determines that a juvenile disposition is appropriate, the department shall prepare a subsequent predisposition report; or

(b) the court makes the findings necessary to impose an adult sentence pursuant to Section 32A-2-20 NMSA 1978, the adult probation and parole division of the corrections department shall prepare a subsequent predisposition report; and

(4) the department shall prepare a predisposition report for a delinquent offender, upon the court's request.

B. Where there are indications that the child may have a mental disorder or developmental disability, the court, on motion by the children's court attorney or that of counsel for the child, may order the child to be examined at a suitable place by a physician or psychiatrist, a licensed psychologist, a licensed professional clinical counselor or a licensed independent social worker prior to a hearing on the merits of the petition. An examination made prior to the hearing or as a part of the predisposition study and report shall be conducted on an outpatient basis, unless the court finds that placement in a hospital or other appropriate facility is necessary.

C. The court, after a hearing, may order examination by a physician or psychiatrist, a licensed psychologist or a licensed professional clinical counselor or a licensed independent social worker of a parent or custodian whose ability to care for or supervise a child is an issue before the court.

D. The court may order that a child adjudicated as a delinquent child be administered a predispositional evaluation by a professional designated by the department for purposes of diagnosis, with direction that the court be given a report indicating what disposition appears most suitable when the interests of the child and the public are considered. The evaluation shall be completed within fifteen days of the court's order and the preference shall be for performing the evaluation in the child's community.

E. If a child is detained for purposes of performing a predispositional evaluation, it shall be completed within fifteen days and in no event shall a child be detained for more than fifteen days within a three-hundred-sixty-five-day period for a predispositional evaluation, unless for good cause shown.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-17, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 46; 1995, ch. 206, § 12; 2005, ch. 189, § 15; 2009, ch. 239, § 19.

32A-2-18. Judgment; noncriminal nature; nonadmissibility.

A. The court shall enter a judgment setting forth the court's findings and disposition in the proceeding. A judgment in proceedings on a petition under the Delinquency Act resulting in a juvenile disposition shall not be deemed a conviction of crime nor shall it impose any civil disabilities ordinarily resulting from conviction of a crime nor shall it operate to disqualify the child in any civil service application or appointment. The juvenile disposition of a child and any evidence given in a hearing in court shall not be admissible as evidence against the child in any case or proceeding in any other tribunal whether before or after reaching the age of majority, except in sentencing proceedings after conviction of a felony and then only for the purpose of a presentence study and report.

B. If a judgment resulting from a youthful offender or serious youthful offender proceeding under the Delinquency Act results in an adult sentence, a record of the

judgment shall be admissible in any other case or proceeding in any other court involving the youthful offender or serious youthful offender.

C. If a judgment on a proceeding under the Delinquency Act results in an adult sentence, the determination of guilt at trial becomes a conviction for purposes of the Criminal Code [30-1-1 NMSA 1978].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-18, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 47; 1996, ch. 85, § 3.

32A-2-19. Disposition of an adjudicated delinquent offender.

A. At the conclusion of the dispositional hearing, the court may make and include in the dispositional judgment its findings on the following:

(1) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with the child's parents and siblings and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interests;

(2) the child's adjustment to the child's home, school and community;

(3) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved, including consideration of such factors as the child's brain development, maturity, trauma history and disability;

(4) the wishes of the child as to the child's custodian;

(5) the wishes of the child's parents as to the child's custody;

(6) whether there exists a relative of the child or other individual who, after study by the department, is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child;

(7) the availability of services recommended in the predisposition report; and

(8) the ability of the parents to care for the child in the home.

B. If a child is found to be delinquent, the court may enter its judgment making any of the following dispositions for the supervision, care and rehabilitation of the child:

(1) transfer legal custody to the department, an agency responsible for the care and rehabilitation of delinquent children, which shall receive the child at a facility designated by the secretary of the department as a juvenile reception facility. The department shall thereafter determine the appropriate placement, supervision and rehabilitation program for the child. The judge may include recommendations for placement of the child. Commitments are subject to limitations and modifications set forth in Section 32A-2-23 NMSA 1978. The types of commitments include:

(a) a short-term commitment of one year in a facility for the care and rehabilitation of adjudicated delinquent children. No more than nine months shall be served at the facility and no less than ninety days shall be served on supervised release, unless: 1) a petition to extend the commitment has been filed prior to the commencement of supervised release; 2) the commitment has been extended pursuant to Section 32A-2-23 NMSA 1978; or 3) supervised release is revoked pursuant to Section 32A-2-25 NMSA 1978;

(b) a long-term commitment for no more than two years in a facility for the care and rehabilitation of adjudicated delinquent children. No more than twenty-one months shall be served at the facility and no less than ninety days shall be served on supervised release, unless: 1) supervised release is revoked pursuant to Section 32A-2-25 NMSA 1978; or 2) the commitment is extended pursuant to Section 32A-2-23 NMSA 1978;

(c) if the child is a delinquent offender who committed one of the criminal offenses set forth in Subsection J of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, a commitment to age twenty-one, unless sooner discharged; or

(d) if the child is a youthful offender, a commitment to age twenty-one, unless sooner discharged;

(2) place the child on probation under those conditions and limitations as the court may prescribe;

(3) place the child in a local detention facility that has been certified in accordance with the provisions of Section 32A-2-4 NMSA 1978 for a period not to exceed fifteen days within a three hundred sixty-five day time period; or if a child is found to be delinquent solely on the basis of Paragraph (3) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, the court shall only enter a judgment placing the child on probation or ordering restitution or both; or

(4) if a child is found to be delinquent solely on the basis of Paragraph (2), (3) or (4) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, the court may make any disposition provided by this section and may enter its judgment placing the child on probation and, as a condition of probation, transfer custody of the child to the department for a period not to exceed six months without further order of the court; provided that this transfer shall not be made unless the court first determines that the department is able to provide or contract for adequate and appropriate treatment for the child and that the treatment is likely to be beneficial.

C. When the child is an Indian child, the Indian child's cultural needs shall be considered in the dispositional judgment and reasonable access to cultural practices and traditional treatment shall be provided.

D. A child found to be delinquent shall not be committed or transferred to a penal institution or other facility used for the execution of sentences of persons convicted of crimes.

E. Whenever the court vests legal custody in an agency, institution or department, it shall transmit with the dispositional judgment copies of the clinical reports, predisposition study and report and other information it has pertinent to the care and treatment of the child.

F. Prior to any child being placed in the custody of the department, the department shall be provided with reasonable oral or written notification and an opportunity to be heard.

G. In addition to any other disposition pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the court may make an abuse or neglect report for investigation and proceedings as provided for in the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978]. The report may be made to a local law enforcement agency, the department or a tribal law enforcement or social service agency for an Indian child residing in Indian country.

H. In addition to any other disposition pursuant to this section or any other penalty provided by law, if a child who is fifteen years of age or older is adjudicated delinquent on the basis of Paragraph (2), (3) or (4) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, the child's driving privileges may be denied or the child's driver's license may be revoked for a period of ninety days. For a second or a subsequent adjudication, the child's driving privileges may be denied or the child's driver's license revoked for a period of one year. Within twenty-four hours of the dispositional judgment, the court may send to the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue department the order adjudicating delinquency. Upon receipt of an order from the court adjudicating delinquency, the director of the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue department may revoke or deny the delinquent's driver's license or driving privileges. Nothing in this section may prohibit the delinquent from applying for a limited driving privilege pursuant to Section 66-5-35 NMSA 1978 or an ignition interlock license pursuant to the Ignition Interlock Licensing Act [66-5-501 to 66-5-504 NMSA 1978], and nothing in this section precludes the delinquent's participation in an appropriate educational, counseling or rehabilitation program.

I. In addition to any other disposition pursuant to this section or any other penalty provided by law, when a child is adjudicated delinquent on the basis of Paragraph (6) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, the child shall perform the mandatory community service set forth in Section 30-15-1.1 NMSA 1978. When a child fails to completely perform the mandatory community service, the name and address of the child's parent or legal guardian shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation, accompanied by a notice that the parent or legal guardian is the parent or legal guardian of a child adjudicated delinquent for committing graffiti.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-19, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 48; 1995, ch. 204, § 3; 1995, ch. 206, § 13; 1996, ch. 85, § 4; 2003, ch. 225, § 10; 2003, ch. 239, § 5; 2005, ch. 189, § 16; 2009, ch. 239, § 20; 2021, ch. 15, § 4.

32A-2-20. Disposition of a youthful offender.

A. The court has the discretion to invoke either an adult sentence or juvenile sanctions on a youthful offender. The children's court attorney shall file a notice of intent to invoke an adult sentence within ten working days of the filing of the petition; provided that the court may extend the time for filing of the notice of intent to invoke an adult sentence, for good cause shown, prior to the adjudicatory hearing. A preliminary hearing by the court or a hearing before a grand jury shall be held, within ten days after the filing of the intent to invoke an adult sentence, to determine whether probable cause exists to support the allegations contained in the petition.

B. If the children's court attorney has filed a notice of intent to invoke an adult sentence and the child is adjudicated as a youthful offender, the court shall make the following findings in order to invoke an adult sentence:

(1) the child is not amenable to treatment or rehabilitation as a child in available facilities; and

(2) the child is not eligible for commitment to an institution for children with developmental disabilities or mental disorders.

C. In making the findings set forth in Subsection B of this section, the judge shall consider the following factors:

(1) the seriousness of the alleged offense;

(2) whether the alleged offense was committed in an aggressive, violent, premeditated or willful manner;

(3) whether a firearm was used to commit the alleged offense;

(4) whether the alleged offense was against persons or against property, greater weight being given to offenses against persons, especially if personal injury resulted;

(5) the maturity of the child as determined by consideration of the child's home, environmental situation, social and emotional health, pattern of living, brain development, trauma history and disability;

(6) the record and previous history of the child;

(7) the prospects for adequate protection of the public and the likelihood of reasonable rehabilitation of the child by the use of procedures, services and facilities currently available; and

(8) any other relevant factor, provided that factor is stated on the record.

D. If a child has previously been sentenced as an adult pursuant to the provisions of this section, there shall be a rebuttable presumption that the child is not amenable to treatment or rehabilitation as a child in available facilities.

E. If the court invokes an adult sentence, the court may sentence the child to less than, but shall not exceed, the mandatory adult sentence. A youthful offender given an adult sentence shall be treated as an adult offender and shall be transferred to the legal custody of an agency responsible for incarceration of persons sentenced to adult sentences. This transfer terminates the jurisdiction of the court over the child with respect to the delinquent acts alleged in the petition. A child given an adult sentence shall not be sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of release or parole.

F. If a juvenile disposition is appropriate, the court shall follow the provisions set forth in Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978. A youthful offender may be subject to extended commitment in the care of the department until the age of twenty-one, pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-2-23 NMSA 1978.

G. A child fourteen years of age or older, charged with first degree murder, but not convicted of first degree murder and found to have committed a youthful offender offense as set forth in Subsection J of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, is subject to the dispositions set forth in this section.

H. A child fourteen years of age or older charged with first degree murder, but found to have committed a delinquent act that is neither first degree murder nor a youthful offender offense as set forth in Subsection J of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, shall be adjudicated as a delinquent subject to the dispositions set forth in Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-20, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 49; 1995, ch. 206, § 14; 1996, ch. 85, § 5; 2003, ch. 225, § 11; 2005, ch. 189, § 17; 2009, ch. 239, § 21; 2023, ch. 24, § 4.

32A-2-21. Disposition of a child with a mental disorder or developmental disability in a delinquency proceeding.

A. If in a hearing at any stage of a proceeding on a delinquency petition the evidence indicates that the child has or may have a mental disorder or developmental disability, the court may:

(1) order the child detained if appropriate under the criteria established pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act; and

(2) initiate proceedings for the involuntary placement of the child as a minor with a mental disorder or developmental disability pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978].

B. If the child is placed for residential treatment or habilitation pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, the department shall retain legal custody during the period of involuntary placement or until further order of the court.

C. If a child is committed to a psychiatric hospital for treatment or habilitation and in the event that the department should be required to pay more than four hundred dollars ($400) per day because of the individualized treatment plan, the annual costs over four hundred dollars ($400) per child per day will be reported annually by the department to the legislative finance committee.

D. The child may remain in the residential treatment or habilitation facility pending the disposition of the delinquency petition.

E. When a child in departmental custody needs involuntary placement for residential mental health or developmental disability services as a result of a mental disorder or developmental disability, the department shall request the children's court attorney to petition for that child's placement pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

F. A child subject to the provisions of the Delinquency Act who receives treatment in a residential treatment or habilitation program shall enjoy all the substantive and procedural rights set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

G. A child's competency to stand trial or participate in his own defense may be raised by a party at any time during a proceeding. If the child has been accused of an act that would be considered a misdemeanor if the child were an adult and the child is found to be incompetent to stand trial, the court shall dismiss the petition with prejudice and may recommend that the children's court attorney initiate proceedings pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. In all other cases, the court shall stay the proceedings until the child is competent to stand trial; provided that a petition shall not be stayed for more than one year. The court may order treatment to enable the child to attain competency to stand trial and may amend the conditions of release pursuant to Sections 32A-2-11 and 32A-2-13 NMSA 1978. The child's competency to stand trial shall be reviewed every ninety days for up to one year. The court shall dismiss the petition without prejudice if, at any time during the year, the court finds that a child cannot be treated to competency or if, after one year, the court

determines that a child is incompetent to stand trial or participate in his own defense. Upon dismissal, the court may recommend that the children's court attorney initiate proceedings pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

H. Involuntary residential treatment shall only occur pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-21, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 50; 1995, ch. 206, § 15; 2005, ch. 189, § 18.

32A-2-22. Continuance under supervision without judgment; consent decree; disposition.

A. At any time after the filing of a delinquency petition and before the entry of a judgment, the court may, on motion of the children's court attorney or that of counsel for the child, suspend the proceedings and continue the child under supervision in the child's own home under terms and conditions negotiated with probation services and agreed to by all the parties affected. The court's order continuing the child under supervision under this section shall be known as a "consent decree". An admission of some or all of the allegations stated in the delinquency petition shall not be required for a consent decree order.

B. If the child objects to a consent decree, the court shall proceed to findings, adjudication and disposition of the case. If the child does not object but an objection is made by the children's court attorney after consultation with probation services, the court shall, after considering the objections and the reasons given, proceed to determine whether it is appropriate to enter a consent decree and may, in its discretion, enter the consent decree.

C. A consent decree shall remain in force for six months unless the child is discharged sooner by probation services. Prior to the expiration of the six-month period and upon the application of probation services or any other agency supervising the child under a consent decree, the court may extend the decree for an additional six months in the absence of objection to extension by the child. If the child objects to the extension, the court shall hold a hearing and make a determination on the issue of extension.

D. If either prior to discharge by probation services or expiration of the consent decree the child allegedly fails to fulfill the terms of the decree, the children's court attorney may file a petition to revoke the consent decree. Proceedings on the petition shall be conducted in the same manner as proceedings on petitions to revoke probation. If the child is found to have violated the terms of the consent decree, the court may:

(1) extend the period of the consent decree; or

(2) make any other disposition that would have been appropriate in the original proceeding.

E. A child who is discharged by probation services or who completes a period under supervision without reinstatement of the original delinquency petition shall not again be proceeded against in any court for the same offense alleged in the petition or an offense based upon the same conduct and the original petition shall be dismissed with prejudice. Nothing in this subsection precludes a civil suit against the child for damages arising from the child's conduct.

F. A judge who pursuant to this section elicits or examines information or material about a child that would be inadmissible in a hearing on the allegations of the petition shall not, over the objection of the child, participate in any subsequent proceedings on the delinquency if:

(1) a consent decree is denied and the allegations in the petition remain to be decided in a hearing where the child denies the allegations; or

(2) a consent decree is granted but the delinquency petition is subsequently reinstated.

G. If a consent decree has been entered pursuant to the filing of a delinquency petition based on Paragraph (2), (3) or (4) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978 for a child who is fifteen years of age or older, a condition of the consent decree agreement may be the denial of the child's driving privileges or the revocation of the child's driver's license for a period of ninety days. For the second or subsequent adjudication, the child's driving privileges may be denied or the child's driver's license revoked for a period of one year. Within twenty-four hours of the entry by the court of a decree consenting to the revocation or denial of the child's driver's license or driving privileges, the court shall send the decree to the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue department. Upon receipt of the decree from the court consenting to the denial or revocation of the child's driving privileges or driver's license, the director of the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue department shall revoke or deny the delinquent child's driver's license or driving privileges. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the delinquent child from applying for a limited driving privilege pursuant to Section 66-5-35 NMSA 1978 or an ignition interlock license pursuant to the Ignition Interlock Licensing Act [66-5-501 to 66-5-504 NMSA 1978], and nothing in this section precludes the delinquent child's participation in an appropriate educational, counseling or rehabilitation program.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-22, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 51; 1995, ch. 206, § 16; 2003, ch. 239, § 6; 2005, ch. 189, § 19.

32A-2-23. Limitations on dispositional judgments; modification; termination or extension of court orders.

A. A judgment transferring legal custody of an adjudicated delinquent child to an agency responsible for the care and rehabilitation of delinquent children divests the court of jurisdiction at the time of transfer of custody, unless the transfer of legal custody is for a commitment not exceeding fifteen days pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, in which case the court retains jurisdiction.

B. A judgment of probation or protective supervision shall remain in force for an indeterminate period not to exceed the term of commitment from the date entered.

C. A child shall be released by an agency and probation or supervision shall be terminated by juvenile probation and parole services or the agency providing supervision when it appears that the purpose of the order has been achieved before the expiration of the period of the judgment. A release or termination and the reasons therefor shall be reported promptly to the court in writing by the releasing authority.

D. Prior to the expiration of a short-term commitment of one year, as provided for in Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, the court may extend the judgment for up to one six-month period if the court finds that the extension is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child or the public safety. If a short-term commitment is extended, the mandatory ninety-day supervised release, as required by Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, shall be included in the extension. Notice and hearing are required for any extension of a juvenile's commitment.

E. Prior to the expiration of a long-term commitment, as provided for in Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, the court may extend the judgment for additional periods of one year until the child reaches the age of twenty-one if the court finds that the extension is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child or the public safety. If a long-term commitment is extended, the mandatory ninety-day supervised release, as required by Section 32A-2-19 NMSA 1978, shall be included in the extension. Notice and hearing are required for any extension of a juvenile's commitment.

F. Prior to the expiration of a judgment of probation, the court may extend the judgment for an additional period of one year until the child reaches the age of twenty-one if the court finds that the extension is necessary to protect the community or to safeguard the welfare of the child.

G. The court may dismiss a motion if it finds after preliminary investigation that the motion is without substance. If the court is of the opinion that the matter should be reviewed, it may, upon notice to all necessary parties, proceed to a hearing in the manner provided for hearings on petitions alleging delinquency. The court may terminate a judgment if it finds that the child is no longer in need of care, supervision or rehabilitation or it may enter a judgment extending or modifying the original judgment if it finds that action necessary to safeguard the child or the public interest.

H. A child may make a motion to modify a children's court or adult disposition within thirty days of the judge's decision. If the court is of the opinion that the matter should be

reviewed, it may, upon notice to all necessary parties, proceed to a hearing in the manner provided for hearings on petitions alleging delinquency.

I. The department may seek a bench warrant from the court when the child absconds from supervised release.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-23, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 52; 1995, ch. 206, § 17; 2003, ch. 225, § 12; 2005, ch. 189, § 20; 2009, ch. 239, § 22.

32A-2-23.1. Release eligibility.

A. The department shall have exclusive jurisdiction and authority to release an adjudicated delinquent child during the term of the child's commitment, consistent with the provisions of the Victims of Crime Act [Chapter 31, Article 26 NMSA 1978]. In determining whether to release a child, the department shall give due consideration to public safety, the extent to which the child has been rehabilitated, the adequacy and suitability of the proposed release plan and the needs and best interests of the child, including the child's need for behavioral health or medical services that are not available in facilities for adjudicated delinquent children.

B. The decision to grant or deny release shall be made by the secretary of children, youth and families or the secretary's designee. The department may impose such conditions of release as it deems appropriate.

C. A child is eligible for release any time after the entry of a judgment transferring legal custody to the department, and the department may consider a reasonable request for release from the child at any time sixty days after the child has been committed.

D. In the event release for a child is denied by the department after release is recommended for the child by the juvenile public safety advisory board, or release is approved by the department after the board has recommended that the child not be released, within ten days, the board may request a review of the decision by the court of the judicial district from which legal custody of the child was transferred, and the department shall transmit the child's records to the court. The court shall have jurisdiction to review the matter without conducting a formal hearing and to issue an order that either denies or grants release to the child. If the board requests review under this section, the child shall not be released until such time as the court has issued a decision. If the board does not petition the district court for review of the department's decision to grant or deny release within ten days of the department's decision, the department's decision shall be final, and the department shall release the child or continue the commitment in accordance with the terms of its decision.

E. The secretary of children, youth and families or the secretary's designee may review the case of any child upon the child's or the juvenile public safety advisory board's reasonable request at any time after release is denied.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-23.1, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 23.

32A-2-23.2. Release proceedings.

A. When the department determines that a child is ready to be released, it shall provide a list of children to the juvenile public safety advisory board at least thirty-five days prior to the next regularly scheduled release consideration meeting. The department shall ensure that all other notifications of a pending release proceeding are accomplished consistent with the provisions of the Victims of Crime Act [Chapter 31, Article 26 NMSA 1978].

B. Release consideration meetings shall be held at least quarterly, are not open to the public and shall include the child, a quorum of the board and a representative of the department. The child's attorney shall receive notice and may be present at the release meeting.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-23.2, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 24.

32A-2-24. Probation revocation; disposition.

A. A child on probation incident to an adjudication as a delinquent child who violates a term of the probation may be proceeded against in a probation revocation proceeding. A proceeding to revoke probation shall be begun by filing in the original proceeding a petition styled as a "petition to revoke probation". Petitions to revoke probation shall be screened, reviewed and prepared in the same manner and shall contain the same information as petitions alleging delinquency. Procedures of the Delinquency Act regarding taking into custody and detention shall apply. The petition shall state the terms of probation alleged to have been violated and the factual basis for these allegations.

B. The standard of proof in probation revocation proceedings shall be evidence beyond a reasonable doubt and the hearings shall be before the court without a jury. In all other respects, proceedings to revoke probation shall be governed by the procedures, rights and duties applicable to proceedings on a delinquency petition. If a child is found to have violated a term of the child's probation, the court may extend the period of probation or make any other judgment or disposition that would have been appropriate in the original disposition of the case.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-24, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 53; 2009, ch. 239, § 25.

32A-2-25. Parole revocation; procedures.

A. A child on parole from an agency that has legal custody who violates a term of parole may be proceeded against in a parole revocation proceeding conducted by the department or the supervising agency or by a hearing officer contracted by the

department who is neutral to the child and the agency in accordance with procedures established by the department in cooperation with the juvenile parole board. A juvenile probation and parole officer may detain a child on parole status who is alleged to have violated a term or condition of parole until the completion and review of a preliminary parole revocation hearing. A child may waive the right to a preliminary parole revocation hearing after consultation with the child's attorney, parent, guardian or custodian.

B. If a retake warrant is issued by the department upon the completion of the preliminary parole revocation hearing, the juvenile institution to which the warrant is issued shall promptly transport the child to that institution at the expense of the department. If a child absconds from parole supervision and is apprehended in another state after the issuance of a retake warrant by the department, the juvenile justice division of the department shall cause the return of the child to this state at the expense of the department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-25, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 54; 2005, ch. 189, § 21.

32A-2-26. Sealing of records.

A. On motion by or on behalf of a person who has been the subject of a delinquency petition or on the court's own motion, the court shall vacate its findings, orders and judgments on the petition and order the legal and social files and records of the court, probation services, and any other agency in the case sealed. If requested in the motion, the court shall also order law enforcement files and records sealed. An order sealing records and files shall be entered if the court finds that:

(1) two years have elapsed since the final release of the person from legal custody and supervision or two years have elapsed since the entry of any other judgment not involving legal custody or supervision;

(2) the person has not, within the two years immediately prior to filing the motion, been convicted of a felony or of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or been found delinquent by a court and no proceeding is pending seeking such a conviction or finding; and

(3) the person is eighteen years of age or older or the court finds that good cause exists to seal the records prior to the child's eighteenth birthday.

B. Reasonable notice of the motion shall be given to:

(1) the children's court attorney;

(2) the authority granting the release;

(3) the law enforcement officer, department and central depository having custody of the law enforcement files and records; and

(4) any other agency having custody of records or files subject to the sealing order.

C. Upon the entry of the sealing order, the proceedings in the case shall be treated as if they never occurred and all index references shall be deleted. The court, law enforcement officers and departments and agencies shall reply, and the person may reply, to an inquiry that no record exists with respect to the person. Copies of the sealing order shall be sent to each agency or official named in the order.

D. Inspection of the files and records or the release of information in the records included in the sealing order may thereafter be permitted by the court only:

(1) upon motion by the person who is the subject of the records and only to those persons named in the motion; and

(2) in its discretion, in an individual case, to any clinic, hospital or agency that has the person under care or treatment or to other persons engaged in fact finding or research.

E. Any finding of delinquency or need of services or conviction of a crime subsequent to the sealing order may at the court's discretion be used by the court as a basis to set aside the sealing order.

F. A court may set aside a sealing order for the juvenile disposition of a youthful offender and any evidence given in a hearing in court for a youthful offender for the purpose of considering the setting of bail or other conditions of release of a person charged with a felony whether charged as an adult or a juvenile.

G. A child who has been the subject of a petition filed pursuant to the provisions of the Delinquency Act shall be notified in writing by the department when the child reaches the age of eighteen or at the expiration of legal custody and supervision, whichever occurs later, that the department's records have been sealed and that the court, the children's court attorney, the child's attorney and the referring law enforcement agency have been notified that the child's records are subject to sealing.

H. The department shall seal the child's files and records when the child reaches the age of eighteen or at the expiration of the disposition, whichever occurs later. The department shall notify the children's court attorney, the child's attorney and the referring law enforcement agency that the child's records are subject to sealing.

I. Youthful offender records sealed pursuant to Subsection H of this section may be unsealed by the court along with any evidence given in a hearing in court for a youthful

offender for the purpose of considering the setting of bail or other conditions of release of a person charged with a felony, whether charged as an adult or juvenile.

J. A child who is determined by the court not to be a delinquent offender shall have the child's files and records in the instant proceeding automatically sealed by the court upon motion by the children's court attorney at the conclusion of the proceedings.

K. After sealing, the department may store and use a person's records for research and reporting purposes, subject to the confidentiality provisions of Section 32A-2-32 NMSA 1978 and other applicable federal and state laws.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-26, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 55; 2003, ch. 225, § 13; 2009, ch. 239, § 26; 2016, ch. 9, § 2.

32A-2-27. Injury to person or destruction of property; liability; costs and attorney fees; restitution.

A. Any person may recover damages not to exceed four thousand dollars ($4,000) in a civil action in a court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction from the parent or guardian having custody and control of a child when the child has maliciously or willfully injured a person or damaged, destroyed or deprived use of property, real or personal, belonging to the person bringing the action.

B. Recovery of damages under this section is limited to the actual damages proved in the action, not to exceed four thousand dollars ($4,000) taxable court costs and, in the discretion of the court, reasonable attorney fees to be fixed by the court or tribunal.

C. Nothing contained in this section limits the discretion of the court to issue an order requiring damages or restitution to be paid by the child when the child has been found to be within the provisions of the Delinquency Act.

D. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed so as to impute liability to any foster parent.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-27, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 56; 2005, ch. 189, § 22.

32A-2-28. Parental responsibility.

A. In any complaint alleging delinquency, a parent of the child alleged to be delinquent may be made a party in the petition. If a parent is made a party and if a child is adjudicated a delinquent, the court may order the parent or parents to submit to counseling, participate in any probation or other treatment program ordered by the court and, if the child is committed for institutionalization, participate in any institutional treatment or counseling program including attendance at the site of the institution. The court shall order the parent to support the child committed for institutionalization by

paying the reasonable costs of support, maintenance and treatment of the child that the parent is financially able to pay. The court may use the child support guidelines set forth in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978 to calculate a reasonable payment.

B. If a fine is imposed against a child by a court of this state, the parent of the child is not liable to pay the fine.

C. The court may enforce any of its orders issued pursuant to this section by use of its contempt power.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-28, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 57.

32A-2-29. Motor Vehicle Code violations.

A. The municipal, magistrate or metropolitan court shall have original exclusive jurisdiction over all Motor Vehicle Code [Chapter 66, Articles 1 through 8 NMSA 1978] or municipal traffic code violations when the person alleged to have committed the violation is a child, with the exception of those violations contained in Paragraph (1) of Subsection A of Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978 and all traffic offenses alleged to have been committed by the child arising out of the same occurrence pursuant to Subsection B of this section.

B. If the court acquires jurisdiction over a child pursuant to Section 32A-2-3 NMSA 1978, it shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all traffic offenses alleged to have been committed by the child arising out of the same occurrence.

C. Disposition as to any delinquent offenses shall be pursuant to the Delinquency Act.

D. Disposition as to a Motor Vehicle Code or municipal traffic code violation in which jurisdiction is acquired as set forth in Subsection B of this section shall be pursuant to the respective Motor Vehicle Code or municipal traffic code in the children's court's discretion and to the extent that it neither conflicts with nor is inconsistent with the dispositional provisions of the Children's Code.

E. All traffic offenses that the child is found to have committed by the municipal, magistrate or metropolitan court or for which the child is adjudicated delinquent by the children's court shall be subject to the reporting requirements and the suspension and revocation provisions of the Motor Vehicle Code and shall not be subject to the confidentiality provisions of the Delinquency Act.

F. Only the children's court may incarcerate a child who has been found guilty of any Motor Vehicle Code or municipal traffic code violations.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-29, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 58; 2003, ch. 225, § 14; 2009, ch. 239, § 27.

32A-2-30. Indigency standard; fee schedule; reimbursement.

A. The court shall use a standard adopted and information provided by the public defender department to determine indigency of children in proceedings on petitions alleging delinquency.

B. The court shall use a fee schedule adopted by the public defender department when appointing attorneys to represent children in proceedings on petitions alleging delinquency.

C. The court shall order reimbursement from the parents or guardians of a child who has received or desires to receive legal representation or another benefit under the Public Defender Act [Chapter 31, Article 15 NMSA 1978] after a determination is made that the child was not indigent according to the standard for indigency of children adopted by the public defender department.

D. Any amounts recovered pursuant to this section shall be paid to the state treasurer for credit to the general fund.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-30, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 59; 2005, ch. 189, § 23.

32A-2-31. Child adjudicated delinquent; victim restitution; compensation; deductions.

A. A delinquent child may be ordered by the court to pay restitution to the victim of the child's delinquent act.

B. The department may provide compensation to a delinquent child engaged in a rehabilitative work program and shall promulgate necessary rules and regulations to provide deductions from that compensation for:

(1) victim restitution ordered by the court and for transmitting those deductions to the clerk of that court;

(2) the crime victims reparation fund and for transmitting those deductions to the state treasurer for credit to that fund; and

(3) the reasonable costs incident to the confinement of the delinquent child.

C. The deductions provided by Subsection B of this section shall not exceed fifty percent of the compensation earned by the child and shall not be less than five percent of that compensation.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-31, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 60.

32A-2-32. Confidentiality; records.

A. All records pertaining to the child, including all related social records, behavioral health screenings, diagnostic evaluations, psychiatric reports, medical reports, social studies reports, records from local detention facilities, client-identifying records from facilities for the care and rehabilitation of delinquent children, pre-parole or supervised release reports and supervision histories obtained by the juvenile probation office, parole officers and the juvenile public safety advisory board or in possession of the department, are confidential and shall not be disclosed directly or indirectly to the public.

B. The disclosure of all mental health and developmental disability records shall be made pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978].

C. The records described in Subsection A of this section, other than mental health and developmental disability records, shall be disclosed only to any of the following, provided that the agency, person or institution receiving information shall not re-release the information without proper consent or as otherwise provided by law:

(1) court personnel;

(2) the child's court appointed special advocates;

(3) the child's attorney or guardian ad litem representing the child in any matter;

(4) department personnel;

(5) corrections department personnel;

(6) law enforcement officials when the request is related to the investigation of a crime;

(7) district attorneys or children's court attorneys;

(8) a state government social services agency in any state;

(9) those persons or entities of a child's Indian tribe specifically authorized to inspect such records pursuant to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or any regulations promulgated under that act;

(10) tribal juvenile justice system and social service representatives;

(11) a foster parent, if the records are those of a child currently placed with that foster parent or of a child being considered for placement with that foster parent, when

the disclosure of the information is necessary for the child's treatment or care and shall include only that information necessary to provide for treatment and care of the child;

(12) school personnel involved with the child if the records concern the child's educational needs, but shall only include that information necessary to provide for the child's educational planning and needs;

(13) a health care or mental health professional involved in the evaluation or treatment of the child, the child's parents, guardians or custodian or other family members;

(14) representatives of the protection and advocacy system;

(15) the child's parent, guardian or legal custodian when the disclosure of the information is necessary for the child's treatment or care and shall include only that information necessary to provide for the treatment or care of the child;

(16) any other person or entity, by order of the court, having a legitimate interest in the case or the work of the court who agrees not to otherwise release the records; and

(17) the child, if fourteen years of age or older.

D. If disclosure of otherwise confidential records is made to the child or any other person or entity pursuant to a valid release of information signed by the child, all victim or witness identifying information shall be redacted or otherwise deleted.

E. Whoever intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records closed to the public pursuant to this section or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of this section is guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

F. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to this section and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules [10-101 NMRA].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-2-32, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 61; 2003, ch. 225, § 15; 2005, ch. 189, § 24; 2009, ch. 239, § 28.

32A-2-32.1. Information not to be disclosed on a public access web site.

A state agency or a political subdivision of the state, including a school district, county, municipality or home-rule municipality, shall not disclose on a public access web site maintained by it any information concerning the following:

A. an arrest or detention of a child;

B. delinquency proceedings for a child;

C. an adjudication of a child;

D. an adult sentence imposed on a child, except information required to be disclosed pursuant to the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act [29-11A-1 NMSA 1978]; or

E. social records pertaining to a child as provided in Section 32A-2-32 NMSA 1978.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 96, § 1.

32A-2-33. Child in possession of a firearm on school premises; detention; hearing.

A. If a public school administrator or employee has reasonable cause to believe that a child is in possession of or has been in possession of a firearm on school premises in violation of Section 30-7-2.1 NMSA 1978, the administrator or employee shall immediately report the child's actions to a law enforcement agency and the children, youth and families department.

B. Upon receipt of a report pursuant to Subsection A of this section, the law enforcement agency may conduct an investigation to determine if there is probable cause to believe that the child possessed a firearm on school premises.

C. If the law enforcement agency determines there is probable cause to believe that the child possessed a firearm on school premises, the law enforcement agency may take the child into custody and deliver the child to a detention facility licensed by the department. After the child is delivered to a detention facility, the department shall comply with the notification provisions set forth in Subsection C of Section 32A-2-10 NMSA 1978. The child shall be detained in the detention facility, pending a detention hearing pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-2-13 NMSA 1978.

D. As used in this section, "firearm" means any weapon that will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosion; the frame or receiver of any such weapon; or any firearm muffler or firearm silencer. "Firearm" includes any handgun, rifle or shotgun.

History: Laws 1999, ch. 216, § 1; 2003, ch. 225, § 16.

ARTICLE 3
Family in Need of Services (Repealed.)

32A-3-1. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 62; repealed by Laws 2005, ch. 189, § 77.

ARTICLE 3A
Voluntary Placement and Family Services

32A-3A-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 3A NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 63; 2005, ch. 189, § 25; 2023, ch. 90, § 4.

32A-3A-2. Definitions.

As used in the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act:

A. "child or family in need of family services" means a family:

(1) whose child's behavior endangers the child's health, safety, education or well-being;

(2) whose child is excessively absent from public school as defined in the Attendance for Success Act;

(3) whose child is absent from the child's place of residence for twenty-four hours or more without the consent of the parent, guardian or custodian;

(4) in which the parent, guardian or custodian of a child refuses to permit the child to live with the parent, guardian or custodian; or

(5) in which the child refuses to live with the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

B. "family services" means services that address specific needs of the child or family;

C. "guardian" means a person appointed as a guardian by a court or Indian tribal authority;

D. "guardianship assistance agreement" means a written agreement entered into by the prospective guardian and the department or Indian tribe prior to the establishment of the guardianship by a court;

E. "guardianship assistance payments" means payments made by the department to a kinship guardian or successor guardian on behalf of a child pursuant to the terms of a guardianship assistance agreement;

F. "guardianship assistance program" means the financial subsidy program provided for in the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act;

G. "kinship" means the relationship that exists between a child and a relative of the child, a godparent, a member of the child's tribe or clan or an adult with whom the child has a significant bond;

H. "subsidized guardianship" means a guardianship that meets subsidy eligibility criteria pursuant to the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act; and

I. "voluntary placement agreement" means a written agreement between the department and the parent or guardian of a child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 64; 2005, ch. 189, § 26; 2019, ch. 223, § 15; 2023, ch. 90, § 5.

32A-3A-3. Request for family services; withdrawal of request; presumption of good faith.

A. Any child or family member who has a reasonable belief that the child or family is in need of family services may request family services from the department.

B. Any person, including a public or private school principal, who has a reasonable belief that a child or family is in need of family services may submit a referral to the department.

C. A family that requests or accepts family services may withdraw its request for or acceptance of family services at any time.

D. A person who refers a child or family for family services is presumed to be acting in good faith and shall be immune from civil or criminal liability, unless the person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 65; 2005, ch. 189, § 27; 2019, ch. 223, § 16.

32A-3A-4. Referral process.

A. The department shall, subject to the availability of resources, design and implement a referral process to assist a child or family in accessing appropriate services.

B. When the child involved in the referral process is an Indian child, the assessment and referral process shall include contact with the Indian child's tribe for the purpose of consulting and exchanging information.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 66; 1995, ch. 206, § 18; 2005, ch. 189, § 28.

32A-3A-5. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 67; repealed by Laws 2005, ch. 189, § 77.

32A-3A-6. Voluntary placement outside home; voluntary placement agreement.

A. The department may accept legal custody of a minor child from a parent or guardian for temporary voluntary placement outside the home through a voluntary placement agreement.

B. When a parent is considering a voluntary placement agreement, the department shall notify the office of family representation and advocacy. The office of family representation and advocacy shall assign the parent or guardian legal counsel prior to the signing and for the duration of the voluntary placement agreement. Prior to the signing of the voluntary placement agreement, counsel shall explain to the parent or guardian:

(1) the terms and consequences of the consent to the voluntary placement agreement, in detail;

(2) that the parent or guardian can withdraw consent at any time and the child shall be returned within forty-eight hours of when the written or verbal demand was made; and

(3) that before the expiration of the forty-eight hours, the department may prevent the immediate return of the child by filing a petition alleging neglect or abuse and by obtaining a court order granting the department temporary custody of the child.

C. The department shall notify the office of family representation and advocacy when the voluntary placement agreement is terminated or expires.

D. The parent or guardian may request a collaborative meeting with the department prior to signing or at any point throughout the duration of the voluntary placement agreement. The department shall schedule the collaborative meeting in a timely manner.

E. Upon the signing of a voluntary placement agreement, the department shall notify the office of family representation and advocacy. The office of family representation and advocacy shall assign the child a guardian ad litem. Only an attorney with appropriate experience shall be appointed as guardian ad litem of the child. When a voluntary placement agreement is subject to court review, the guardian ad litem shall inform the court as to the child's wishes.

F. The parent or guardian, child or department may file a petition for court review of the voluntary placement agreement prior to the signing or at any point throughout the duration of the voluntary placement agreement.

G. If court review is requested prior to signing the voluntary placement agreement, before approving the voluntary placement agreement, the court shall ensure that the voluntary placement agreement is executed in writing. The court shall certify on the record that:

(1) the terms and consequences of the consent were fully explained in detail and in a manner that is understandable to the parent or guardian;

(2) the child's parent or guardian fully understands the English language or that the voluntary placement agreement was interpreted into the primary language of the child's parent or guardian;

(3) the child's parent or guardian is voluntarily entering into the voluntary placement agreement;

(4) confidentiality has been requested or indicated and execution of consent was made in a closed court proceeding not open to the public; and

(5) the child's parent or guardian is of sound mind and judgment.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 68; 2023, ch. 90, § 6.

32A-3A-7. Voluntary placement; time limitation.

A. A child may remain in voluntary placement for up to one hundred eighty consecutive days.

B. Prior to the expiration of the voluntary placement agreement, if the parent or guardian agrees in writing that the child is to remain in voluntary placement for up to an additional one hundred eighty days, the department shall file a petition to extend the voluntary placement. The department shall provide notice of the hearing on the petition for extension to the parent or guardian.

C. The court shall hold a hearing and enter a written final order within thirty days of the filing of the petition. If the court grants an extension of up to one hundred eighty days, the order shall contain findings that proper notice was given, the parent or guardian consents to the extension of the voluntary placement and the voluntary placement agreement is in the child's best interest. If an extension is denied, the court shall enter a written order denying the extension and directing the department to immediately return the child to the parent or guardian.

D. In no event shall a child remain in voluntary placement for a period in excess of three hundred sixty-five days in any two-year period.

E. Any placement described in this section shall not be considered abandonment by a parent, guardian or custodian or other family member.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 69; 2005, ch. 82, § 1; 2023, ch. 90, § 7.

32A-3A-8. Voluntary placement; return of child to parent; department duty upon parent refusal to regain custody.

A. At any time, a parent or guardian may demand and obtain the return of a child voluntarily placed outside the home without seeking or obtaining court approval. The child shall be returned within forty-eight hours of when the written or verbal demand was made. However, before the expiration of the forty-eight-hour period, the department may prevent the immediate return of the child by filing a petition pursuant to the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978] or the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] and proceeding under the applicable act.

B. If the parent or guardian of the child refuses to or cannot accept the child back into the parent's or guardian's custody, before the department files a petition alleging that the child is a neglected child or that the child's family needs court-ordered family services, the department shall:

(1) make reasonable efforts to place the child back in the custody of the parent or guardian and tailor the reasonable efforts to the facts and circumstances of the case and shall:

(a) document in writing the details demonstrating the quality and quantity of services and assistance provided to alleviate the causes and conditions leading to the parent or guardian's refusal or inability to accept the child back into the parent or guardian's custody, on the court record;

(b) assist the child's parent or guardian through the steps of a department case plan and with accessing or developing the resources necessary to satisfy the department case plan; and

(c) conduct a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances of the child's family with a goal of reunification;

(2) make reasonable efforts to maintain or reunite a child with the child's family by:

(a) identifying and establishing appropriate services and assisting the child's parent or guardian to overcome barriers to reunification, including assisting the parent or guardian in obtaining those services;

(b) conducting or causing to be conducted a diligent search for the child's extended family members and contacting and consulting with the child's extended family members and adult relatives to provide family structure and support for the child and the child's parent or guardian;

(c) offering and employing culturally appropriate family preservation strategies;

(d) taking steps to keep the child and the child's siblings together whenever possible; and

(e) identifying community resources, including housing, financial assistance, transportation, mental health services, health care, substance use prevention and treatment and peer support services, and assisting the child's parent or guardian; and

(3) record all efforts made toward reasonable efforts and report them to the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 70; 2005, ch. 82, § 2; 2023, ch. 90, § 8.

32A-3A-9. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 71; repealed by Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 29.

32A-3A-10. Voluntary placement; rights of parent.

A. have visitation with the child;

B. be informed of changes in the child's school or of changes in the child's placement by the department;

C. authorize decisions regarding medical and dental care and behavioral health services, including decisions that affect the daily care, support, safety and well-being of the child;

D. permit the department to consent to emergency services to ensure the safety and well-being of the child, including medical, dental or behavioral health treatment, if the department is unable to make immediate prior contact with the parent or guardian. The department shall notify the parent or guardian within two hours of making emergency decisions due to inability to make prior contact;

E. consent to all nonemergency and nonroutine medical care provided for the child;

F. make decisions regarding participation and attendance in cultural and religious events;

G. make decisions of substantial legal significance; and

H. serve as the educational decision maker unless the department determines that doing so would be contrary to the best interests of the child, in which case the foster parent or other substitute care provider will serve as the educational decision maker.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 72; 2023, ch. 90, § 9.

32A-3A-11. Emergency placement; criminal history record check.

A. In an emergency placement situation, when a child must be placed in a home due to the absence of parents or custodians, the department or a criminal justice agency shall perform a federal name-based criminal history record check of each adult residing in the home. The results of the name-based check shall be provided to the department, and, within fifteen days from the date that the name-based check was conducted, the department shall provide a complete set of each adult resident's fingerprints to the department of public safety for immediate submission to the federal bureau of investigation. The department of public safety shall positively identify the fingerprint subject, if possible, and forward the fingerprints to the federal bureau of investigation within fifteen calendar days from the date that the name-based search was conducted. The child shall be removed from the home immediately if any adult resident fails to provide fingerprints or written permission to perform a federal criminal history record check when requested to do so.

B. When placement of a child in a home is denied as a result of a name-based criminal history record check of a resident and the resident contests that denial, the resident shall, within five business days, submit to the department a complete set of the resident's fingerprints with written permission allowing the department to forward the fingerprints to the department of public safety for submission to the federal bureau of investigation. The resident shall be entitled to review the information obtained from the resident's criminal history record check if that check was performed using the resident's fingerprints submitted pursuant to this subsection.

C. The department may charge the federal fee for processing a fingerprint-based criminal history record check pursuant to this section. The department of public safety shall not charge a state fee for processing a fingerprint-based criminal history record check pursuant to this section.

D. As used in this section, "emergency placement" refers to those limited instances when the department is placing a child in the home of private individuals, including neighbors, friends or relatives, as a result of sudden unavailability of the child's primary caretaker.

History: Laws 2013, ch. 50, § 1; 2016, ch. 64, § 1.

32A-3A-12. Foster families; free admission to museums and state parks; camping passes; fishing licenses.

A. As provided in Subsection B of this section, foster parents and children in the custody of foster parents, young adults enrolled in the fostering connections program and children who are in the custody of the children, youth and families department or in tribal custody, who are residents of the state, shall be provided for free:

(1) admission to state-owned museums and state parks;

(2) a camping pass for up to three consecutive nights of overnight access to a state park; and

(3) a fishing license.

B. Eligibility for free admission shall be contingent on demonstration of proof of identity, residency and status as a foster parent, child in the custody of a foster parent, young adult enrolled in the fostering connections program or child in the custody of the children, youth and families department or in tribal custody in accordance with rules of the:

(1) cultural affairs department, for free day-use admission to state-owned museums;

(2) energy, minerals and natural resources department, for free day-use admission and camping passes to state parks; or

(3) state game commission, for fishing licenses.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 132, § 1; 2023, ch. 135, § 1.

32A-3A-13. Plan of care; guidelines; creation; data sharing; training.

A. By January 1, 2020, the department, in consultation with medicaid managed care organizations, private insurers, the office of superintendent of insurance, the human services department [health care authority department] and the department of health, shall develop rules to guide hospitals, birthing centers, medical providers, medicaid managed care organizations and private insurers in the care of newborns who exhibit physical, neurological or behavioral symptoms consistent with prenatal drug exposure, withdrawal symptoms from prenatal drug exposure or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

B. Rules shall include guidelines to hospitals, birthing centers, medical providers, medicaid managed care organizations and private insurers regarding:

(1) participation in the discharge planning process, including the creation of a written plan of care that shall be sent to:

(a) the child's primary care physician;

(b) a medicaid managed care organization insurance plan care coordinator who will monitor the implementation of the plan of care after discharge, if the child is insured, or to a care coordinator in the children's medical services of the family health bureau of the public health division of the department of health who will monitor the implementation of the plan of care after discharge, if the child is uninsured; and

(c) the child's parent, relative, guardian or caretaker who is present at discharge who shall receive a copy upon discharge. The plan of care shall be signed by an appropriate representative of the discharging hospital and the child's parent, relative, guardian or caretaker who is present at discharge;

(2) definitions and evidence-based screening tools, based on standards of professional practice, to be used by health care providers to identify a child born affected by substance use or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder;

(3) collection and reporting of data to meet federal and state reporting requirements, including the following:

(a) by hospitals and birthing centers to the department when: 1) a plan of care has been developed; and 2) a family has been referred for a plan of care;

(b) information pertaining to a child born and diagnosed by a health care professional as affected by substance abuse, withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder; and

(c) data collected by hospitals and birthing centers for use by the children's medical services of the family health bureau of the public health division of the department of health in epidemiological reports and to support and monitor a plan of care. Information reported pursuant to this subparagraph shall be coordinated with

communication to insurance carrier care coordinators to facilitate access to services for children and parents, relatives, guardians or caregivers identified in a plan of care;

(4) identification of appropriate agencies to be included as supports and services in the plan of care, based on an assessment of the needs of the child and the child's relatives, parents, guardians or caretakers, performed by a discharge planner prior to the child's discharge from the hospital or birthing center, which may include:

(a) public health agencies;

(b) maternal and child health agencies;

(c) home visitation programs;

(d) substance use disorder prevention and treatment providers;

(e) mental health providers;

(f) public and private children and youth agencies;

(g) early intervention and developmental services;

(h) courts;

(i) local education agencies;

(j) managed care organizations; or

(k) hospitals and medical providers; and

(5) engagement of the child's relatives, parents, guardians or caretakers in order to identify the need for access to treatment for any substance use disorder or other physical or behavioral health condition that may impact the safety, early childhood development and well-being of the child.

C. Reports made pursuant to Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section shall be collected by the department as distinct and separate from any child abuse report as captured and held or investigated by the department, such that the reporting of a plan of care shall not constitute a report of suspected child abuse and neglect and shall not initiate investigation by the department or a report to law enforcement.

D. The department shall summarize and report data received pursuant to Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section at intervals as needed to meet federal regulations.

E. The children's medical services of the family health bureau of the public health division of the department of health shall collect and record data reported pursuant to

Subparagraph (c) of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section to support and monitor care coordination of plans of care for children born without insurance.

F. Reports made pursuant to the requirements in this section shall not be construed to relieve a person of the requirement to report to the department knowledge of or a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or neglected child based on criteria as defined by Section 32A-4-2 NMSA 1978.

G. The department shall work in consultation with the department of health to create and distribute training materials to support and educate discharge planners or social workers on the following:

(1) how to assess whether to make a referral to the department pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act;

(2) how to assess whether to make a notification to the department pursuant to Subsection B of Section 32A-4-3 NMSA 1978 for a child who has been diagnosed as affected by substance abuse, withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure or a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder;

(3) how to assess whether to create a plan of care when a referral to the department is not required; and

(4) the creation and deployment of a plan of care.

H. No person shall have a cause of action for any loss or damage caused by any act or omission resulting from the implementation of the provisions of Subsection G of this section or resulting from any training, or lack thereof, required by Subsection G of this section.

I. The training, or lack thereof, required by the provisions of Subsection G of this section shall not be construed to impose any specific duty of care.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 190, § 3

32A-3A-14. Notification to the department of noncompliance with a plan of care.

A. If the parents, relatives, guardians or caretakers of a child released from a hospital or freestanding birthing center pursuant to a plan of care fail to comply with that plan, the department shall be notified and the department may conduct a family assessment. Based on the results of the family assessment, the department may offer or provide referrals for counseling, training, or other services aimed at addressing the underlying causative factors that may jeopardize the safety or well-being of the child. The child's parents, relatives, guardians or caretakers may choose to accept or decline any service or program offered subsequent to the family assessment; provided that if

the child's parents, relatives, guardians or caretakers decline those services or programs, the department may proceed with an investigation.

B. As used in this section, "family assessment" means a comprehensive assessment prepared by the department at the time the department receives notification of failure to comply with the plan of care to determine the needs of a child and the child's parents, relatives, guardians or caretakers, including an assessment of the likelihood of:

(1) imminent danger to a child's well-being;

(2) the child becoming an abused child or neglected child; and

(3) the strengths and needs of the child's family members, including parents, relatives, guardians or caretakers, with respect to providing for the health and safety of the child.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 190, § 4.

32A-3A-15. Recompiled.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 247, § 14; 1978 Comp., § 32A-3A-15, recompiled and amended as § 32A-1-22 by Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 3.

32A-3A-16. Confidentiality.

A. All records or information, whether on file with the court, an agency, the department, an attorney or other provider of professional services, concerning a party to a voluntary placement proceeding shall be confidential and closed to the public.

B. The disclosure of all mental health and developmental disability records shall be made pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978].

C. The records described in Subsection A of this section, other than mental health and developmental disability records, shall be disclosed only to the parties and:

(1) court personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the court to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the court's possession;

(2) the attorney, including a public defender, representing the child in any child proceeding pursuant to the Children's Code;

(3) department personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the department to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the department's possession;

(4) law enforcement officials, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(5) district attorneys, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(6) any state government social services agency in any state or, when in the opinion of the department it is in the best interest of the child, a governmental social services agency of another country;

(7) a foster parent, if the records are those of a child currently placed with that foster parent or of a child being considered for placement with that foster parent and the records concern the cultural, social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the child;

(8) school personnel involved with the child if the records concern the child's cultural, social or educational needs;

(9) a grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin, if the records or information pertain to a child being considered for placement with that grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin and the records or information concern the cultural, social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the child;

(10) health care or mental health professionals involved in the evaluation or treatment of the child or of the child's parents, guardian, custodian or other family members;

(11) protection and advocacy representatives pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Amendments Act of 1991;

(12) children's safehouse organizations conducting investigatory interviews of children on behalf of a law enforcement agency or the department;

(13) representatives of the federal government or their contractors authorized by federal statute or regulation to review, inspect, audit or otherwise have access to records and information pertaining to neglect or abuse proceedings;

(14) any person or entity attending a meeting arranged by the department to discuss the safety, well-being and permanency of a child when the parent, guardian or child over the age of fourteen years has consented to the disclosures occurring during the meeting; and

(15) any other person or entity, by order of the court, having a legitimate interest in the case or the work of the court.

D. Whoever intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records closed to the public pursuant to the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of that act is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

E. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to this section and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 10.

32A-3A-17. Conduct of hearings.

A. All hearings held pursuant to the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act shall be closed to the general public.

B. Only the parties to a proceeding, their counsel and other persons approved by the court may be present at a closed hearing. Other persons the court finds to have a proper interest in the case or in the work of the court may be admitted by the court to closed hearings on the condition they refrain from divulging any information that would identify the child or family involved in the proceedings.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 11.

32A-3A-18. Voluntary placement; placement.

A. If the department accepts legal custody of a child, the child shall be placed in the least restrictive setting that most closely approximates a family in which the child's special needs, if any, may be met. The child shall be placed within reasonable proximity to the child's home, taking into account any special needs of the child. Preference shall be given to placement with:

(1) a relative of the child;

(2) a licensed foster home or any home authorized by law for the provision of foster care or group care or use as a protective residence;

(3) a facility operated by a licensed child welfare services agency; or

(4) a facility provided for in the Children's Shelter Care Act.

B. The department shall provide the child with shelter in an appropriate facility, pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-3B-6 NMSA 1978, that is located as close as possible to the child's residence. The child shall not be held in a jail or other facility intended or used for the incarceration of adults charged or convicted of criminal offenses or a facility for the detention of children alleged to be or adjudicated as delinquent children.

C. If the child is placed in an evaluation facility or out-of-home treatment or rehabilitation program, the child shall be admitted pursuant to the provisions of Sections 32A-6A-19 through 32A-6A-22 NMSA 1978.

D. The department shall make reasonable efforts to place siblings in custody by court order or voluntary placement agreement together, unless such joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings in custody, and whether any siblings not jointly placed have been provided reasonable visitation or other ongoing interaction, unless visitation or other ongoing interaction would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 12.

32A-3A-19. Financial subsidies; eligibility.

A. Prior to a guardianship being granted pursuant to the Kinship Guardianship Act [Chapter 40, Article 10B NMSA 1978] or the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] and in order to be eligible for guardianship assistance payments, the following conditions shall be satisfied:

(1) the child shall be in the custody of the department and have been removed from the child's home:

(a) pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement; or

(b) as a result of a judicial determination that the placement and care of the child should be vested in the department;

(2) the child shall be eligible for foster care maintenance payments while in the home of the prospective guardian;

(3) the child shall have been placed by the department and shall have lived with the prospective guardian for at least six consecutive months following the prospective guardian's licensure as a foster parent;

(4) the child has a strong attachment to the prospective guardian and the prospective guardian is a relative or fictive kin of the child;

(5) the prospective guardian has a strong commitment to caring permanently for the child, documented via a meeting held prior to the proposed guardianship between the prospective guardian and the department discussing the prospective guardian's long-term commitment;

(6) if the child is fourteen years of age or older, the child has been consulted by the department and consents to the guardianship arrangement; and

(7) a fully executed guardianship assistance agreement is approved by the department; or

(8) the child is a sibling of a child who meets the eligibility criteria set forth in this subsection.

B. The department shall promulgate rules for guardianship assistance payments and payment of nonrecurring expenses.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 13.

32A-3A-20. Financial subsidies; nonrecurring expenses.

Nonrecurring expenses incurred by a prospective guardian associated with establishing a subsidized guardianship may be reimbursed for each eligible child, up to an amount established by the department, and also for any of an eligible child's siblings.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 14.

32A-3A-21. Financial subsidies; guardianship assistance agreement.

A. In order for a prospective guardian to receive guardianship assistance payments, the department shall negotiate and enter into a written guardianship assistance agreement before the guardianship is finalized with the prospective guardian of an eligible child. The agreement shall specify the following:

(1) the amount of and manner in which guardianship assistance payments will be provided;

(2) additional services and assistance for which the child and the prospective guardian will be eligible;

(3) a procedure by which the prospective guardian may apply for additional services;

(4) the responsibility of the prospective guardian to report changes in the needs of the child or the circumstances of the prospective guardian that affect guardianship assistance payments;

(5) reasonable and verified nonrecurring expenses associated with establishing a subsidized guardianship pursuant to the provisions of Section 14 of this 2023 act; and

(6) terms by which the guardianship assistance agreement may be terminated and the ability of the department to recoup funds received due to improper payment.

B. A copy of the fully executed guardianship assistance agreement shall be given to the prospective guardian and to the department.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 15.

32A-3A-22. Financial subsidies; successor guardians.

A. In order for a successor guardian to be eligible for guardianship assistance payments if the successor guardian serves as guardian in the event the guardian dies or is incapacitated, the successor guardian shall be named in the guardianship assistance agreement and any amendments thereto.

B. The department may pay the cost of nonrecurring expenses associated with the successor guardian obtaining a subsidized guardianship of the child, up to an amount established by the department.

C. The successor guardian does not need to be a relative and does not need to be licensed as a foster parent to receive guardianship assistance payments.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 16.

32A-3A-23. Financial subsidies; discontinuance of guardianship assistance payments.

A. The department shall immediately discontinue guardianship assistance payments when the department is advised or determines a child or guardian no longer meets the criteria to be eligible for guardianship assistance payments.

B. The department shall notify the guardian in writing of a discontinuation of guardianship assistance payments and the reasons for discontinuation.

C. The discontinuance of guardianship assistance payments does not terminate a guardianship or a guardian's legal responsibility that has been established by a court.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 17.

32A-3A-24. Financial subsidies; administrative appeal of decisions.

A child or prospective guardian may appeal a decision by the department to establish, deny, reduce or discontinue guardianship assistance payments within thirty days of the department's decision.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 18.

32A-3A-25. Department duties; rulemaking.

The department shall promulgate rules as necessary to implement the provisions of the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act.

History: Laws 2023, ch. 90, § 19.

ARTICLE 3B
Families in Need of Court-Ordered Services

32A-3B-1. Short title; purpose.

A. Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act".

B. The Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act shall be interpreted and construed to effectuate the following expressed legislative purposes:

(1) through court intervention, to provide services for a family in need of services when voluntary services have been exhausted; and

(2) to recognize that many instances of truancy and running away by a child are symptomatic of a family in need of services and that in some family situations the child and parent are unable to share a residence.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 73; 2005, ch. 189, § 29.

32A-3B-2. Definitions.

As used in Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978, "family in need of court-ordered services" means the child or the family has refused family services or the department has exhausted appropriate and available family services and court intervention is necessary to provide family services to the child or family and it is a family:

A. whose child, subject to compulsory school attendance, is absent from school without an authorized excuse more than ten days during a school year;

B. whose child is absent from the child's place of residence for a time period of twelve hours or more without consent of the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

C. whose child refuses to return home and there is good cause to believe that the child will run away from home if forced to return to the parent, guardian or custodian;

D. in which the child's parent, guardian or custodian refuses to allow the child to return home and a petition alleging neglect of the child is not in the child's best interests; or

E. whose child is:

(1) alleged to be engaged in an act that would be designated as prostitution if committed by an adult; or

(2) a victim of human trafficking as defined in Section 30-52-1 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 74; 2007, ch. 185, § 1; 2009, ch. 193, § 5; 2019, ch. 101, § 2.

32A-3B-3. Protective custody; interference with protective custody; penalty.

A. A child may be taken into protective custody by a law enforcement officer without a court order when the officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the child:

(1) has run away from the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) without parental supervision is suffering from illness or injury;

(3) has been abandoned;

(4) is endangered by the child's surroundings and removal from those surroundings is necessary to ensure the child's safety;

(5) is engaged in an act that would be designated as prostitution if committed by an adult; or

(6) is a victim of human trafficking as defined in Section 30-52-1 NMSA 1978.

B. A child may be taken into protective custody pursuant to a court order issued after an agency legally charged with the supervision of the child has notified a law enforcement agency that the child has run away from a placement.

C. When a child is taken into protective custody, the department shall make a reasonable effort to determine whether the child is an Indian child.

D. Any person, other than the child taken into protective custody, who interferes with placing the child in protective custody is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 75; 2019, ch. 101, § 3.

32A-3B-4. Protective custody; restrictions; time limitations.

A. A law enforcement officer who takes a child into protective custody shall, with all reasonable speed:

(1) inform the child of the reasons for the protective custody; and

(2) contact the department.

B. When the department is contacted by a law enforcement officer who has taken a child into protective custody, the department shall refer the child to community based services and may:

(1) accept custody of the child and designate an appropriate placement in the community for the child; or

(2) return the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian if the child's safety is assured.

C. A child taken into protective custody shall not be placed in or transported in a law enforcement vehicle or any other vehicle that contains an adult placed under arrest, unless circumstances exist in which any delay in transporting the child to an appropriate facility would be likely to result in substantial danger to the child's physical safety. When such circumstances exist, the circumstances shall be described in writing by the driver of the vehicle and submitted to the driver's supervisor within two days after the driver transported the child.

D. A child taken into protective custody shall not be held involuntarily for more than two days, unless a petition to extend the custody is filed pursuant to the provisions of the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act or the Abuse and Neglect Act.

E. When a petition is filed or any time thereafter, the children's court or district court may issue an ex-parte custody order based upon a sworn written statement of facts showing that probable cause exists to believe that protective custody of the child is necessary.

F. The protective custody order shall be served on the respondent by a person authorized to serve arrest warrants and shall direct the law enforcement officer to take custody of the child and deliver the child to a place designated by the court.

G. The Rules of Evidence do not apply to the issuance of an ex-parte custody order.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 76; 2005, ch. 189, § 30; 2019, ch. 101, § 4.

32A-3B-5. Notification to family; release from protective custody.

A. When the department takes a child into protective custody and the child is not released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, the department shall provide written notice as soon as possible, and in no case later than twenty-four hours, to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, with a statement of the reasons for taking the child into protective custody.

B. When the department releases a child placed in protective custody to the family, the department shall refer the family for voluntary family services.

C. When the department releases a child from protective custody and the child's parent, guardian or custodian refuses to allow the child to return home, the department shall file a petition pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978].

D. If the department is not releasing the child to the parent, guardian or custodian within two days, the department shall notify the tribe if the child is an Indian child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 77; 2005, ch. 189, § 31.

32A-3B-6. Place of custody.

A. Unless a child from a family in need of services who has been placed in department custody is also alleged or adjudicated delinquent:

(1) the child shall not be held in a jail or other facility intended or used for the incarceration of adults charged with criminal offenses or for the detention of children alleged to be delinquent children; and

(2) there shall be a preference that the child be placed in the home of a relative of the child when a relative is available to provide foster care; provided that:

(a) placement with a relative is in the best interest of the child;

(b) the relative signs a sworn statement that the relative will not return the child to or allow unsupervised visits with the parent, guardian or custodian who is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect until otherwise directed by the department or the court; and

(c) within three days of accepting custody of the child, the relative completes an application form for licensure to operate a foster home pursuant to the Children's Code.

B. The department shall make reasonable efforts to locate a relative of the child to provide foster care. If a relative is not available to provide foster care, the child may be placed in:

(1) a licensed foster home or any home authorized under the law for the provision of foster care or group care or use as a protective residence;

(2) a facility operated by a licensed child welfare services agency; or

(3) a facility provided for in the Children's Shelter Care Act [32A-9-1 to 32A-9-7 NMSA 1978].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 78; 2019, ch. 21, § 1.

32A-3B-6.1. Repealed.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 189, § 37; repealed by Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 71.

32A-3B-7. Protective custody hearing; time limitations.

A. When a child of an alleged family in need of court-ordered services is taken into protective custody by the department or the department petitions the court for protective custody of the child, a custody hearing shall be held within ten days from the date the petition is filed to determine if the child should remain with the family or be placed in the custody of the department pending adjudication. Upon written request of the respondent, the hearing may be held earlier, but in no event shall the hearing be held sooner than two days after the date the petition was filed.

B. The parent, guardian or custodian of the child shall be given reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing.

C. When the custody hearing is conducted, the court shall release the child to his parent, guardian or custodian unless probable cause exists to believe that:

(1) the child is in immediate danger from his surroundings and the child's removal from those surroundings is necessary for his safety or well-being;

(2) the child will be subject to injury by others if not placed in the protective custody of the department; or

(3) a parent, guardian or custodian of the child or any other person is unable or unwilling to provide adequate supervision and care for the child.

D. At the conclusion of the protective custody hearing, if the court determines that protective custody pending adjudication is appropriate, the court may:

(1) award custody of the child to the department; or

(2) return the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, subject to conditions that will reasonably assure the safety and well-being of the child.

E. In addition to any disposition made by the court pursuant to the provisions of Subsection D of this section, the court may order the child and family to participate in an assessment and referral process. Copies of any diagnostic or evaluation reports ordered by the court shall be provided to the parties at least five days before the adjudicatory hearing is scheduled. The diagnostic and evaluation reports shall not be sent to the court.

F. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to protective custody hearings conducted pursuant to the provisions of this section.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 79.

32A-3B-8. Basic rights.

A. A child subject to the provisions of the Children's Code is entitled to the same basic rights as an adult, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code.

B. In proceedings on a petition alleging a family in need of court-ordered services, the court may appoint counsel if appointment of counsel would serve the interests of justice.

C. In proceedings on a petition alleging a family in need of court-ordered services, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for a child under the age of fourteen and the court shall appoint an attorney for a child fourteen years of age or older at the inception of the proceedings. An officer or employee of an agency vested with legal custody of the child shall not be appointed as a guardian ad litem or attorney for the child. Only an attorney with appreciable training or experience shall be appointed as guardian ad litem of or attorney for the child.

D. When a child reaches fourteen years of age, the child's guardian ad litem shall continue as the child's attorney; provided that the court shall appoint a different attorney for the child if:

(1) the child requests a different attorney;

(2) the guardian ad litem requests to be removed; or

(3) the court determines that the appointment of a different attorney is appropriate.

E. Whenever it is reasonable and appropriate, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem or attorney who is knowledgeable about the child's cultural background.

F. A person afforded rights pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Code shall be advised of those rights at that person's first appearance before the court on a petition filed under the Children's Code.

G. A child of an alleged or adjudicated family in need of court-ordered services shall not be fingerprinted or photographed for identification purposes, unless pursuant to a court order.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 80; 2005, ch. 189, § 32; 2009, ch. 239, § 29.

32A-3B-9. Change in placement.

A. When a child's placement is changed, including a return to the child's home, written notice of the placement change shall be given to the parties and to the child's tribe if the child is an Indian child ten days prior to the placement change, unless an emergency situation requires moving the child prior to sending notice.

B. When a child's guardian ad litem or attorney requests a court hearing to contest the proposed placement change, the department shall not change the child's placement pending the result of the court hearing, unless an emergency requires changing the child's placement prior to the hearing.

C. When a child's placement is changed and notice pursuant to the provisions of Subsection A of this section is not provided, written notice shall be sent to the parties and to the child's tribe if the child is an Indian child within three days after the placement change.

D. Notice pursuant to the provisions of this section is not required for removal of the child from temporary emergency care, emergency foster care or respite care.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 81; 2005, ch. 189, § 33.

32A-3B-10. Petition; endorsement of petition.

A petition regarding an alleged family in need of court-ordered services shall not be filed unless the children's court attorney, after consultation with the department, determines and endorses upon the petition that filing is in the best interests of the child and family.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 82.

32A-3B-11. Petition; allegations.

A. A petition to initiate a proceeding regarding an alleged family in need of court-ordered services shall include the following allegations:

(1) that the child or the family are in need of court-ordered family services;

(2) that the child and the family participated in or refused to participate in a plan for family services and that the department has exhausted appropriate and available services; and

(3) that court intervention is necessary to assist the department in providing necessary services to the child and the family.

B. In addition to the allegations required pursuant to the provisions of Subsection A of this section, a petition that alleges a child's chronic absence from school shall be accompanied by an affidavit filed by a school official, in accordance with the provisions of Section 32-3A-3 [32A-3A-3] NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-11, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 83.

32A-3B-12. Adjudicatory hearing; time limitations.

A. An adjudicatory hearing for an alleged family in need of court-ordered services shall be commenced within sixty days after the date of service on the respondent.

B. The children's court attorney shall represent the state at the adjudicatory hearing.

C. If the adjudicatory hearing is not commenced within the time limits specified in this section or within the period of any extension of those time limits, the petition shall be dismissed with prejudice.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-12, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 84; 2009, ch. 239, § 30.

32A-3B-13. Conduct of hearings; penalty.

A. All hearings shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic, mechanical or other appropriate means.

B. All hearings regarding a family in need of court-ordered services shall be closed to the general public, subject to the following exceptions:

(1) the parties, the parties' counsel, witnesses and other persons approved by the court may be present at the hearings. Those other persons the court finds to have a proper interest in the case or in the work of the court may be admitted by the court to closed hearings on the condition that they refrain from divulging any information that would identify the child or family involved in the proceedings; and

(2) accredited representatives of the news media shall be allowed to be present at the hearings, subject to the condition that they refrain from divulging information that would identify any child involved in the proceedings or the parent, guardian or custodian of that child and further subject to enabling regulations the court finds necessary for the maintenance of order and decorum and for the furtherance of the purposes of the Children's Code.

C. If the court finds that it is in the best interest of a child under fourteen years of age, the child may be excluded from a hearing under the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act. A child fourteen years of age or older may be excluded from a hearing only if the court makes a finding that there is a compelling reason to exclude the child and states the factual basis for the finding.

D. A person or party granted admission to a closed hearing who intentionally divulges information concerning the hearing in violation of the provisions of this section is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-13, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 85; 2005, ch. 189, § 34.

32A-3B-14. Findings; dismissal; dispositional matters.

A. The court shall determine if the allegations of the petition are admitted or denied by the parent or child. If the allegations are denied, the court shall proceed to hear evidence on the petition. The court, after hearing all of the evidence regarding an alleged family in need of court-ordered services, shall make and record its findings.

B. If the court finds, on the basis of a valid admission of the allegations set forth in the petition or on the basis of clear and convincing evidence that is competent, material and relevant in nature, that the child is a child of a family in need of court-ordered services, the court may proceed immediately or at a postponed hearing to make disposition of the case. If the court does not find that the child is a child of a family in need of court-ordered services, the court shall dismiss the petition.

C. In that part of the hearings regarding dispositional issues, all relevant and material evidence helpful in determining the questions presented, including oral and

written reports, may be received by the court and may be relied upon to the extent of its probative value, even though not competent had it been offered during the part of the hearings regarding adjudicatory issues.

D. On the court's motion or motion of a party, the court may continue the hearing on the petition for a reasonable time to receive reports and other evidence regarding disposition. The court shall continue the hearing pending the receipt of the plan for family services if that document has not been prepared and received. During any continuance granted pursuant to this subsection, the court shall make an appropriate order for legal custody of the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-14, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 86; 1995, ch. 206, § 19.

32A-3B-15. Plan for family services.

A. Prior to holding a dispositional hearing, the court shall direct the department to prepare a written family services plan for submission to the court.

B. The plan for family services shall contain the following information:

(1) a statement of the problem;

(2) the needs of the child;

(3) the needs of the family;

(4) a description of the specific progress needed to be made by both the parent and the child, the reasons why the plan is likely to be useful, the availability of any proposed services and the department's overall plan for ensuring that the services will be delivered;

(5) if removal from the home or continued residence outside the home is recommended for the child, a statement of the likely harm the child will suffer as a result of removal from the home, including emotional harm resulting from separation from the child's parents;

(6) if removal from the home or continued residence outside the home is recommended for the child, a description of any previous efforts to work with the parent and the child in the home and a description of any in-home treatment programs that have been considered and rejected;

(7) a description of the steps that will be taken to minimize any harm to the child that may result if separation from the child's parent occurs or continues;

(8) if removal from the home or continued residence outside the home is recommended for the child and the child is sixteen years of age or older, a description of the specific skills the child requires for successful transition into independent living as an adult, what programs are necessary to develop the skills, the reasons why the programs are likely to be useful, the availability of any proposed programs and the department's overall plan for ensuring that the child will be adequately prepared for adulthood; and

(9) when the child is an Indian child, contact shall be made with the child's Indian tribe for the purpose of consultation and exchange of information and the plan shall indicate the person contacted in the child's Indian tribe and the results of that contact.

C. A copy of the plan shall be provided by the department to all parties at least five days before the dispositional hearing.

D. If the child is a member of an adjudicated family in need of court-ordered services, any temporary custody orders shall remain in effect until the court has received and considered the plan at the dispositional hearing.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-15, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 87.

32A-3B-16. Dispositional judgment.

A. At the conclusion of the dispositional hearing, the court shall set forth its findings on the following issues in the dispositional judgment:

(1) the ability of the parent and child to share a residence;

(2) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with the child's parent, siblings and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest;

(3) the child's adjustment to home, school and community;

(4) whether the child's educational needs are being met;

(5) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved;

(6) the wishes of the child as to the child's custodian;

(7) the wishes of the child's parent, guardian or custodian as to the child's custody;

(8) whether there exists a relative of the child or any other individual who, after study by the department, is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child;

(9) the availability of services recommended in the treatment plan;

(10) the department's efforts to work with the parent and child in the home and a description of the in-home treatment programs that the department has considered and rejected; and

(11) when the child is an undocumented immigrant child, whether the family services plan included referral to nongovernmental agencies that may be able to assist the child, and family when appropriate, in addressing immigration status.

B. When there is an adjudication regarding a family in need of court-ordered services, the court shall enter judgment and make any of the following dispositions:

(1) permit the child to remain with the child's parent, guardian or custodian, subject to conditions and limitations the court may prescribe;

(2) place the child under the protective supervision of the department;

(3) transfer legal custody of the child to:

(a) the department;

(b) an agency responsible for the care of neglected or abused children; or

(c) the child's noncustodial parent, if that is found to be in the child's best interests; or

(4) if the evidence indicates that the child's educational needs are not being met, the local education agency may be joined as a party and directed to assess the child's needs within forty-five days, attempt to meet the child's educational needs and document its efforts to meet the child's educational needs.

C. Unless a child of an adjudicated family in need of court-ordered services is also found to be a delinquent child, the child shall not be confined in an institution established for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children or in a facility for the detention of alleged delinquent children.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 88; 2009, ch. 239, § 31; 2022, ch. 41, § 47.

32A-3B-17. Disposition of a child with a developmental disability or mental disorder; proceedings.

A. If during any stage of a proceeding regarding a family in need of court-ordered services petition the evidence indicates that the child has or may have a developmental disability or a mental disorder, the court may order the department to:

(1) secure an assessment of the child;

(2) prepare appropriate referrals for services for the child; and

(3) if necessary, initiate proceedings for the involuntary placement of the child pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978].

B. When a child in department custody needs involuntary placement for residential mental health or developmental disability services, the department shall file a motion for that child's placement pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

C. A court hearing for consideration of an involuntary placement of a child for residential treatment or habilitation, when the child is subject to the provisions of the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act, may be heard by the court as a part of the family in need of court-ordered services proceedings or may be heard in a separate proceeding. All parties to the family in need of court-ordered services proceedings shall be provided with notice of the involuntary placement hearing.

D. A guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act shall serve as the guardian ad litem for a child for the purposes of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. When a child is fourteen years of age or older, the child shall be represented by an attorney unless, after consultation between the child and the child's attorney, the child elects to be represented by counsel appointed by the court in the proceedings under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

E. When a child is subject to the provisions of the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act and is receiving residential treatment or habilitation services, any documentation required pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be filed with the court as part of the family in need of court-ordered services proceeding. A review of the child's placement in a residential treatment or habilitation program shall occur in the same manner and within the same time requirements as provided in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

F. The clerk of the court shall maintain a separate section within a child's family in need of court-ordered services file for documents pertaining to actions taken under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

G. A child subject to the provisions of the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act who receives treatment in a residential treatment or habilitation program shall enjoy all the substantive and procedural rights set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-17, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 89; 1995, ch. 206, § 20; 2005, ch. 189, § 35.

32A-3B-18. Dispositional judgments; time limitations; modification, termination or extension of court order.

A. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in an agency shall remain in force for an indeterminate period not exceeding two years from the date entered.

B. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in an individual, other than the child's parent, shall remain in force for two years from the date entered unless terminated sooner by court order.

C. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in the child's parent or a permanent guardian shall remain in force for an indeterminate period from the date entered until terminated by court order or until the child is emancipated or reaches the age of majority.

D. At any time prior to expiration, a judgment vesting legal custody or granting protective supervision may be modified, revoked or extended on motion by a party, including the child by and through the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

E. Prior to the expiration of a judgment transferring legal custody to an agency, the court may extend the judgment for additional periods of one year if it finds that the extension is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child or the public interest.

F. When a child reaches eighteen years of age, all family in need of court-ordered services orders affecting the child then in force automatically terminate. The termination of the orders shall not disqualify a child from eligibility for transitional services.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-18, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 90; 2009, ch. 239, § 32.

32A-3B-19. Periodic review of dispositional judgments.

A. Within six months of any original dispositional order and within six months of any subsequent continuation of the order, the department shall petition the court for a review of the disposition of the family in need of court-ordered services order. The review may be carried out by either of the following:

(1) a judicial review hearing conducted by the court; or

(2) a judicial review hearing conducted by a special master; provided, however, that the court approve any findings made by the special master.

B. The children's court attorney shall give twenty days' written notice to all parties of the time, place and purpose of any judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection A of this section.

C. At any judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection A of this section, the department and all persons given notice of the judicial review shall have the opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. At the hearing, the department shall not only show that it has made reasonable effort to implement the plan for family services approved by the court in its dispositional order, but shall also present an updated plan for any period of extension of the dispositional order. The parent, guardian or custodian of the child shall demonstrate to the court the family's effort to comply with the plan for family services approved by the court in its dispositional order and, if applicable, that the family's effort to maintain contact with the child was diligent and made in good faith, given the family's circumstances and abilities.

D. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to hearings held pursuant to this section.

E. At the conclusion of any hearing held pursuant to this section, the court shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law.

F. The court shall determine, during a review of a dispositional or continuation order, whether the placement preferences set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or the placement preferences of the child's Indian tribe have been followed and whether the child's treatment plan provides for maintaining the child's cultural ties. When placement preferences have not been incorporated into an order, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported.

G. Based on its findings, the court shall order one or more of the following dispositions:

(1) permit the child to remain with the child's parent, guardian or custodian, subject to conditions and limitations the court may prescribe, including protective supervision of the child by the department;

(2) return the child to his parents and place the child under the protective supervision of the department;

(3) transfer or continue legal custody of the child to:

(a) the department, subject to the provisions of Paragraph (6) of this subsection;

(b) a relative or other individual who, after study by the department or other agency designated by the court, is found by the court to be qualified to receive and care for the child with protective supervision by the department; or

(c) to the noncustodial parent, if that is found to be in the child's best interests;

(4) dismiss the action and return the child to the child's parent without supervision;

(5) continue the child in the legal custody of the department with or without any required parental involvement in a treatment plan;

(6) make additional orders regarding the treatment plan or placement of the child to protect the child's best interests, if the court determines the department has failed in implementing any material provision of the treatment plan or abused its discretion in the placement or proposed placement of the child;

(7) if at any judicial review the court finds that the child's parent, guardian or custodian has not complied with the court-ordered treatment plan, the court may order the child's parent, guardian or custodian to show cause why he should not be held in contempt of court and subject to sanctions;

(8) provide for a culturally appropriate treatment plan, access to cultural practices and traditional treatment for an Indian child;

(9) direct the department to show cause why an abuse or neglect action has not been filed; or

(10) if the local education agency has been made a party, direct the local education agency to show cause why it has not met the child's educational needs.

H. Dispositional orders entered pursuant to this section shall remain in force for a period of six months.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-19, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 91; 1995, ch. 206, § 21.

32A-3B-20. Parental responsibility.

A. The court shall order the parent to pay the reasonable costs of support and maintenance of the child that the parent is financially able to pay if a child is adjudicated to be a child of a family in need of court-ordered services and the court orders the child placed with an agency or individual other than the parent. The court may use the child support guidelines set forth in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978 to calculate a reasonable payment.

B. The court may enforce any of its orders issued pursuant to this section by use of its contempt power.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-20, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 92.

32A-3B-21. Expungement of records.

A. On motion by or on behalf of an individual who has been the subject of a petition filed under the Children's Code, or on the court's own motion, the court shall vacate its findings, orders and judgments on the petition, and order the legal and social files and records of the court, the department and any other agency in the case expunged, and if requested in the motion the court shall also order law enforcement files and records expunged. An order expunging records and files shall be entered if the court finds that:

(1) two years have elapsed since the final release of the individual from legal custody and supervision or two years have elapsed since the entry of any other judgment not involving legal custody or supervision; and

(2) the individual has not, within the two years immediately prior to filing the motion, been convicted of a felony or of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude or found delinquent by a court, and no proceeding is pending seeking such a conviction or finding.

B. Reasonable notice of the motion shall be given to:

(1) the children's court attorney;

(2) the authority granting the release if the final release was from an agency, parole or probation;

(3) the law enforcement officer, department and central depository having custody of the law enforcement files and records if those records are included in the motion; and

(4) any other agency having custody of records or files subject to the expungement order.

C. Upon the entry of the expungement order, the proceedings in the case shall be treated as if they never occurred, and all index references shall be deleted and the court, law enforcement officers and departments and agencies shall reply, and the individual may reply, to an inquiry that no record exists with respect to such person. Copies of the expungement order shall be sent to each agency or official named in the order.

D. Any finding of delinquency or conviction of a crime, subsequent to the expungement order may at the court's discretion be used by the court as a basis to set aside the expungement order.

E. A person who has been the subject of a petition filed under the Children's Code shall be notified of the right to have records expunged.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-21, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 93.

32A-3B-22. Confidentiality; records; penalty.

A. All records or information concerning a family in need of court-ordered services, including social records, diagnostic evaluation, psychiatric or psychological reports, videotapes, transcripts and audio recordings of a child's statement of abuse or medical reports, obtained as a result of an investigation in anticipation of or incident to a family in need of court-ordered services proceeding shall be confidential and closed to the public.

B. The records described in Subsection A of this section shall be disclosed only to the parties and to:

(1) court personnel;

(2) court appointed special advocates;

(3) the child's guardian ad litem or attorney;

(4) the child's attorney representing the child in an abuse or neglect action, a delinquency action or any other action, including a public defender;

(5) department personnel;

(6) any local substitute care review board or any agency contracted to implement local substitute care review boards;

(7) law enforcement officials;

(8) district attorneys;

(9) a state or tribal government social services agency of any state;

(10) those persons or entities of an Indian tribe specifically authorized to inspect the records pursuant to the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 or any regulations promulgated thereunder;

(11) tribal juvenile justice system and social service representatives;

(12) a foster parent, if the records are those of a child currently placed with that foster parent or of a child being considered for placement with that foster parent and the records concern the social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the child;

(13) school personnel involved with the child, if the records concern the child's social or educational needs;

(14) health care or mental health professionals involved in the evaluation or treatment of the child, the child's parents, guardian or custodian or other family members;

(15) protection and advocacy representatives, pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Amendments Act of 1991; and

(16) any other person or entity, by order of the court, having a legitimate interest in the case or the work of the court.

C. Whoever intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records that are closed to the public pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Code or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of that code is guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

D. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to this section and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-3B-22, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 94; 2005, ch. 189, § 36.

ARTICLE 4
Child Abuse and Neglect

32A-4-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Abuse and Neglect Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 95; 2016, ch. 54, § 1.

32A-4-2. Definitions.

As used in the Abuse and Neglect Act:

A. "abandonment" includes instances when the parent, without justifiable cause:

(1) left the child without provision for the child's identification for a period of fourteen days; or

(2) left the child with others, including the other parent or an agency, without provision for support and without communication for a period of:

(a) three months if the child was under six years of age at the commencement of the three-month period; or

(b) six months if the child was over six years of age at the commencement of the six-month period;

B. "abused child" means a child:

(1) who has suffered or who is at risk of suffering serious harm because of the action or inaction of the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) who has suffered physical abuse, emotional abuse or psychological abuse inflicted or caused by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(3) who has suffered sexual abuse or sexual exploitation inflicted by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(4) whose parent, guardian or custodian has knowingly, intentionally or negligently placed the child in a situation that may endanger the child's life or health; or

(5) whose parent, guardian or custodian has knowingly or intentionally tortured, cruelly confined or cruelly punished the child;

C. "aggravated circumstances" includes those circumstances in which the parent, guardian or custodian has:

(1) attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm to the child or great bodily harm or death to the child's sibling;

(2) attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm or death to another parent, guardian or custodian of the child;

(3) attempted, conspired to subject or has subjected the child to torture, chronic abuse or sexual abuse; or

(4) had parental rights over a sibling of the child terminated involuntarily;

D. "educational decision maker" means an individual appointed by the children's court to attend school meetings and to make decisions about the child's education that a parent could make under law, including decisions about the child's educational setting, and the development and implementation of an individual education plan for the child;

E. "fictive kin" means a person not related by birth, adoption or marriage with whom a child has an emotionally significant relationship;

F. "great bodily harm" means an injury to a person that creates a high probability of death, that causes serious disfigurement or that results in permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a member or organ of the body;

G. "neglected child" means a child:

(1) who has been abandoned by the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(2) who is without proper parental care and control or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for the child's well-being because of the faults or habits of the child's parent, guardian or custodian or the failure or refusal of the parent, guardian or custodian, when able to do so, to provide them;

(3) who has been physically or sexually abused, when the child's parent, guardian or custodian knew or should have known of the abuse and failed to take reasonable steps to protect the child from further harm;

(4) whose parent, guardian or custodian is unable to discharge that person's responsibilities to and for the child because of incarceration, hospitalization or physical or mental disorder or incapacity; or

(5) who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of the law; provided that nothing in the Children's Code shall be construed to imply that a child who is being provided with treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer, in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination, by a duly accredited practitioner thereof is for that reason alone a neglected child within the meaning of the Children's Code; and further provided that no child shall be denied the protection afforded to all children under the Children's Code;

H. "physical abuse" includes any case in which the child suffers strangulation or suffocation and any case in which the child exhibits evidence of skin bruising, bleeding, malnutrition, failure to thrive, burns, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling or death and:

(1) there is not a justifiable explanation for the condition or death;

(2) the explanation given for the condition is at variance with the degree or nature of the condition;

(3) the explanation given for the death is at variance with the nature of the death; or

(4) circumstances indicate that the condition or death may not be the product of an accidental occurrence;

I. "relative" means a person related to another person by birth, adoption or marriage within the fifth degree of consanguinity;

J. "sexual abuse" includes criminal sexual contact, incest or criminal sexual penetration, as those acts are defined by state law;

K. "sexual exploitation" includes:

(1) allowing, permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution;

(2) allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging a child in obscene or pornographic photographing; or

(3) filming or depicting a child for obscene or pornographic commercial purposes, as those acts are defined by state law;

L. "sibling" means a brother or sister having one or both parents in common by birth or adoption;

M. "strangulation" has the same meaning as set forth in Section 30-3-11 NMSA 1978;

N. "suffocation" has the same meaning as set forth in Section 30-3-11 NMSA 1978; and

O. "transition plan" means an individualized written plan for a child, based on the unique needs of the child, that outlines all appropriate services to be provided to the child to increase independent living skills. The plan shall also include responsibilities of the child, and any other party as appropriate, to enable the child to be self-sufficient upon emancipation.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 96; 1997, ch. 34, § 1; 1999, ch. 77, § 3; 2009, ch. 239, § 33; 2016, ch. 54, § 2; 2017, ch. 64, § 2; 2018, ch. 30, § 3; 2023, ch. 90, § 20.

32A-4-3. Duty to report child abuse and child neglect; responsibility to investigate child abuse or neglect; penalty; notification of plan of care.

A. Every person, including a licensed physician; a resident or an intern examining, attending or treating a child; a law enforcement officer; a judge presiding during a proceeding; a registered nurse; a visiting nurse; a school employee; a social worker acting in an official capacity; or a member of the clergy who has information that is not

privileged as a matter of law, who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or a neglected child shall report the matter immediately to:

(1) a local law enforcement agency;

(2) the department; or

(3) a tribal law enforcement or social services agency for any Indian child residing in Indian country.

B. A law enforcement agency receiving the report shall immediately transmit the facts of the report and the name, address and phone number of the reporter by telephone to the department and shall transmit the same information in writing within forty-eight hours. The department shall immediately transmit the facts of the report and the name, address and phone number of the reporter by telephone to a local law enforcement agency and shall transmit the same information in writing within forty-eight hours. The written report shall contain the names and addresses of the child and the child's parents, guardian or custodian, the child's age, the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries, and other information that the maker of the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the person responsible for the injuries. The written report shall be submitted upon a standardized form agreed to by the law enforcement agency and the department.

C. The recipient of a report under Subsection A of this section shall take immediate steps to ensure prompt investigation of the report. The investigation shall ensure that immediate steps are taken to protect the health or welfare of the alleged abused or neglected child, as well as that of any other child under the same care who may be in danger of abuse or neglect. A local law enforcement officer trained in the investigation of child abuse and neglect is responsible for investigating reports of alleged child abuse or neglect at schools, daycare facilities or child care facilities.

D. If the child alleged to be abused or neglected is in the care or control of or in a facility administratively connected to the department, the report shall be investigated by a local law enforcement officer trained in the investigation of child abuse and neglect. The investigation shall ensure that immediate steps are taken to protect the health or welfare of the alleged abused or neglected child, as well as that of any other child under the same care who may be in danger of abuse or neglect.

E. A law enforcement agency or the department shall have access to any of the records pertaining to a child abuse or neglect case maintained by any of the persons enumerated in Subsection A of this section, except as otherwise provided in the Abuse and Neglect Act.

F. A person who violates the provisions of Subsection A of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

G. A finding that a pregnant woman is using or abusing drugs made pursuant to an interview, self-report, clinical observation or routine toxicology screen shall not alone form a sufficient basis to report child abuse or neglect to the department pursuant to Subsection A of this section. A volunteer, contractor or staff of a hospital or freestanding birthing center shall not make a report based solely on that finding and shall make a notification pursuant to Subsection H of this section. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent a person from reporting to the department a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or neglected child based on other criteria as defined by Section 32A-4-2 NMSA 1978, or a combination of criteria that includes a finding pursuant to this subsection.

H. A volunteer, contractor or staff of a hospital or freestanding birthing center shall:

(1) complete a written plan of care for a substance-exposed newborn as provided for by department rule and the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978]; and

(2) provide notification to the department. Notification by a health care provider pursuant to this paragraph shall not be construed as a report of child abuse or neglect.

I. As used in this section, "notification" means informing the department that a substance-exposed newborn was born and providing a copy of the plan of care that was created for the child; provided that notification shall comply with federal guidelines and shall not constitute a report of child abuse or neglect.

J. As used in this section, "school employee" includes employees of a school district or a public school.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 97; 1997, ch. 34, § 2; 2003, ch. 189, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 38; 2019, ch. 190, § 2; 2021, ch. 94, § 10.

32A-4-4. Complaints; referral; preliminary inquiry.

A. Reports alleging neglect or abuse shall be referred to the department, which shall conduct an investigation to determine the best interests of the child with regard to any action to be taken. The name and information regarding the person making the report shall not be disclosed absent the consent of the informant or a court order.

B. If a report alleging neglect or abuse meets the criteria established pursuant to Section 32A-4-4.1 NMSA 1978, the department may assign the case to the multilevel response system.

C. During the investigation of a report alleging neglect or abuse, the matter may be referred to another appropriate agency and conferences may be conducted for the purpose of effecting adjustments or agreements that will obviate the necessity for filing a petition. A representative of the department shall, at the initial time of contact with the party subject to the investigation, advise the party of the reports or allegations made, in a manner that is consistent with laws protecting the rights of the informant. The parties shall be advised of their basic rights and no party may be compelled to appear at any conference, to produce any papers or to visit any place. The investigation shall be completed within a reasonable period of time from the date the report was made.

D. After completion of the investigation on a neglect or abuse report, the department shall either recommend or refuse to recommend the filing of a petition.

E. When a child is taken into custody, the department shall file a petition within three days, unless the provisions of Subsection F of Section 32A-4-7 NMSA 1978 apply, in which case the petition shall be filed within five days.

F. When the department files a petition, it shall simultaneously provide to the office of family representation and advocacy, and if a child is an Indian child, to the child's Indian nation, tribe or pueblo:

(1) the petition;

(2) the name, telephone numbers and addresses of each respondent; and

(3) the names, dates of birth and placement information for each child who is a subject of the petition, including:

(a) the type of placement; and

(b) the name, telephone number and address for the person or entity that holds the license for each child's placement.

G. If a petition is not filed in a timely manner, the child shall be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 98; 2005, ch. 189, § 39; 2019, ch. 137, § 1, 2023, ch. 172, § 1.

32A-4-4.1. Multilevel response system.

A. The department shall establish a multilevel response system to evaluate and provide services to a child or the family, relatives, caretakers or guardians of a child with respect to whom a report alleging neglect or abuse has been made. The multilevel response system may include an alternative to investigation upon completion of an evaluation that may be completed at intake by the department, the results of which

indicate that there is no immediate concern for the child's safety; provided, however, that an investigation shall be conducted for any report:

(1) alleging sexual abuse of a child or serious or imminent harm to a child;

(2) indicating a child fatality;

(3) requiring law enforcement involvement, as identified pursuant to rules promulgated by the department; or

(4) requiring a specialized assessment or a traditional investigative approach, as determined pursuant to rules promulgated by the department.

B. The department may remove a case from the multilevel response system and conduct an investigation if imminent danger of serious harm to the child becomes evident. The department may reassign a case from investigation to the multilevel response system at the discretion of the department.

C. For each family, including the child who is the subject of a report to the department and that child's relatives, caretakers or guardians, that receives services under the multilevel response system, the department shall conduct a family assessment. Based on the results of the family assessment, the department may offer or provide referrals for counseling, training or other services aimed at addressing the underlying causative factors jeopardizing the safety or well-being of the child who is the subject of a report to the department. A family member, relative, caretaker or guardian may choose to accept or decline any services or programs offered under the multilevel response system; provided, however, that if a family member, relative, caretaker or guardian declines services, the department may choose to proceed with an investigation.

D. The department shall employ licensed social workers to provide services to families, relatives, caretakers or guardians participating in the multilevel response system to the extent that licensed social workers are available for employment.

E. The department may pilot the multilevel response system prior to statewide implementation.

F. The department may limit implementation of the multilevel response system to areas of the state where appropriate services are available and operate the system within available state and federal resources.

G. The department shall:

(1) provide an annual report of system implementation and outcomes to the legislative finance committee and the department of finance and administration as part of the department's budget submission;

(2) arrange for an independent evaluation of the multilevel response system, including examining outcomes for child safety and well-being and cost-effectiveness;

(3) incorporate the multilevel response system into the department's quality assurance review process;

(4) develop performance measures, as provided in the Accountability in Government Act [Chapter 6, Article 3A NMSA 1978], for the multilevel response system; and

(5) no later than July 1, 2022, if the department pilots or otherwise geographically limits the multilevel response system, submit a plan to the legislative finance committee and the department of finance and administration setting forth how the system could be expanded statewide, including a plan to address service availability, and identifying costs that would be incurred by the department.

H. The department shall promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section.

I. As used in this section, "family assessment" means a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment tool used by the department to determine the needs of a child and the child's family, relatives, caretakers or guardians at the time the department receives a report of child abuse and neglect, including an assessment of the likelihood of:

(1) imminent danger to a child's well-being;

(2) the child becoming an abused child or a neglected child; and

(3) the strengths and needs of the child's family members, relatives, caretakers or guardians with respect to providing for the health and safety of the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-4.1, as enacted by Laws 2019, ch. 137, § 2.

32A-4-5. Admissibility of report in evidence; immunity of reporting person; investigation of report.

A. In any proceeding alleging neglect or abuse under the Children's Code resulting from a report required by Section 32A-4-3 NMSA 1978 or in any proceeding in which that report or any of its contents are sought to be introduced in evidence, the report or its contents or any other facts related thereto or to the condition of the child who is the subject of the report shall not be excluded on the ground that the matter is or may be the subject of a physician-patient privilege or similar privilege or rule against disclosure.

B. Anyone reporting an instance of alleged child neglect or abuse or participating in a judicial proceeding brought as a result of a report required by Section 32A-4-3 NMSA 1978 is presumed to be acting in good faith and shall be immune from liability, civil or

criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed by the law, unless the person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

C. After properly verifying the identity of the public official, any school personnel or other person who has the duty to report child abuse pursuant to Section 32A-4-3 NMSA 1978 shall permit a member of a law enforcement agency, including tribal police officers, an employee of the district attorney's office, an investigative interviewer for a program described in Subsection E of this section or an employee of the department, to interview a child with respect to a report without the permission of the child's parent or guardian. Any person permitting an interview pursuant to this subsection is presumed to be acting in good faith and shall be immune from liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed by law, unless the person acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose.

D. An investigation may be conducted by law enforcement, the district attorney's office, a program described in Subsection E of this section and the department. Interviews shall be conducted in a manner and place that protects the child and family from unnecessary trauma and embarrassment. The investigating entity shall conduct the investigation in a manner that will protect the privacy of the child and the family, with the paramount consideration being the safety of the child. All interactions with child victims and child witnesses shall be conducted in a child-sensitive manner, taking into consideration the special needs of the child and the child's abilities, age and intellectual maturity. The interviews shall be conducted in a place where the child feels secure and in a language that the child uses and understands.

E. If a community has a program for child abuse investigation that includes an investigation interview of the alleged victim or child witness, the investigation may be conducted at a site designated by the community program. The child abuse victim or child witness shall, when possible, be interviewed in an environment where the alleged abuse perpetrator will not be present.

F. Prior to interviewing a child, the department shall notify the parent or guardian of the child who is being interviewed, unless the department determines that notification would adversely affect the safety of the child about whom the report has been made or compromise the investigation.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 99; 1995, ch. 206, § 22; 2005, ch. 189, § 40; 2009, ch. 239, § 34.

32A-4-6. Taking into custody; penalty.

A. A child may be held or taken into custody:

(1) by a law enforcement officer when the officer has evidence giving rise to reasonable grounds to believe that the child is abused or neglected and that there is an immediate threat to the child's safety; provided that the law enforcement officer contacts

the department to enable the department to conduct an on-site safety assessment to determine whether it is appropriate to take the child into immediate custody, except that a child may be taken into custody by a law enforcement officer without a protective services assessment being conducted if:

(a) the child's parent, guardian or custodian has attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm to the child or great bodily harm or death to the child's sibling;

(b) the child's parent, guardian or custodian has attempted, conspired to cause or caused great bodily harm or death to another parent, guardian or custodian of the child;

(c) the child has been abandoned;

(d) the child is in need of emergency medical care;

(e) the department is not available to conduct a safety assessment in a timely manner; or

(f) the child is in imminent risk of abuse; or

(2) by medical personnel when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child has been injured as a result of abuse or neglect and that the child may be at risk of further injury if returned to the child's parent, guardian or custodian. The medical personnel shall hold the child until a law enforcement officer is available to take custody of the child pursuant to Paragraph (1) of this subsection.

B. A child shall not be taken into protective custody solely on the grounds that the child's parent, guardian or custodian refuses to consent to the administration of a psychotropic medication to the child.

C. When a child is taken into custody by law enforcement, the department is not compelled to place the child in an out-of-home placement and may release the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian.

D. When a child is taken into custody, the department shall make active efforts to determine whether the child is an Indian child as required pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978].

E. Any person who intentionally interferes with protection of a child, as provided by Subsection A of this section, is guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 100; 2005, ch. 189, § 41; 2009, ch. 239, § 35; 2015, ch. 51, § 2; 2022, ch. 41, § 48.

32A-4-7. Release or delivery from custody.

A. A person taking a child into custody shall, with all reasonable speed:

(1) release the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian and issue verbal counsel or warning as may be appropriate; or

(2) deliver the child to the department or, in the case of a child who is believed to be suffering from a serious physical or mental condition or illness that requires prompt treatment or diagnosis, deliver the child to a medical facility. If a law enforcement officer delivers a child to a medical facility, the officer shall immediately notify the department that the child has been placed in the department's legal custody.

B. When an alleged neglected or abused child is delivered to the department, a department caseworker shall review the need for placing the child in custody and shall release the child from custody unless custody is appropriate or has been ordered by the court. When a child is delivered to a medical facility, a department caseworker shall review the need for retention of custody within a reasonable time after delivery of the child to the facility and shall release the child from custody unless custody is appropriate or has been ordered by the court.

C. If a child is placed in the legal custody of the department and is not released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, the department shall give written notice thereof as soon as possible, and in no case later than twenty-four hours, to the child's parent, guardian or custodian together with a statement of the reason for taking the child into custody.

D. Reasonable efforts shall be made to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child from the child's home, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety. In all cases when a child is taken into custody, the child shall be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian, unless the department files a petition within three days from the date that the child was taken into custody.

E. The department may release the child at any time within the three-day period after the child was taken into custody if it is determined by the department that release is appropriate or if release has been ordered by the court.

F. If a child that has been taken into custody and released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian is taken into custody again within one year of having been taken into custody, the child shall not be released from custody until a department review is conducted, in consultation with the children's court managing attorney, to review the child's case and documents and determine whether the child should be released to the child's parent, guardian or custodian or if it is in the best interest of the child to file a petition alleging neglect or abuse. The department's review shall be conducted by a person above the level of supervisor who has been authorized by the secretary of children, youth and families to review such cases. If the secretary has not authorized

anyone to review such cases, the department's review shall be conducted by the director of the protective services division of the department. The three-day deadline for filing the petition pursuant to Subsections D and E of this section is extended to five days when the child's case is reviewed pursuant to this subsection.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 101; 1999, ch. 77, § 4; 2005, ch. 189, § 42; 2009, ch. 239, § 36; 2023, ch. 172, § 2.

32A-4-8. Place of temporary custody.

A. Unless a child alleged to be neglected or abused is also alleged or adjudicated delinquent:

(1) the child shall not be held in a jail or other facility intended or used for the incarceration of adults charged with criminal offenses or for the detention of children alleged to be delinquent children; and

(2) there shall be a preference that the child be placed in the home of a relative of the child when a relative is available to provide foster care; provided that:

(a) placement with a relative is in the best interest of the child;

(b) the relative signs a sworn statement that the relative will not return the child to or allow unsupervised visits with the parent, guardian or custodian who is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect, unless otherwise directed by the department or the court; and

(c) within three days of accepting custody of the child, the relative completes an application form for licensure to operate a foster home pursuant to the Children's Code.

B. The department shall make reasonable efforts to locate a relative of the child to provide foster care. If a relative is not available to provide foster care, the child may be placed in:

(1) a licensed foster home or any home authorized under the law for the provision of foster care or group care or use as a protective residence;

(2) a facility operated by a licensed child welfare services agency; or

(3) a facility provided for in the Children's Shelter Care Act [32A-9-1 to 32A-9-7 NMSA 1978].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 102; 2019, ch. 21, § 2.

32A-4-9. Indian child placement; preferences.

A. An Indian child accepted for foster care or pre-adoptive placement shall be placed in the least restrictive setting that most closely approximates a family in which his special needs, if any, may be met. The Indian child shall also be placed within reasonable proximity to the Indian child's home, taking into account any special needs of the Indian child. In any foster care or pre-adoptive placement, a preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with:

(1) a member of the Indian child's extended family;

(2) a foster care home licensed, approved and specified by the Indian child's tribe;

(3) an Indian foster care home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian licensing authority; or

(4) an institution for children approved by the Indian child's tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs.

B. When the placement preferences set forth in Subsection A of this section are not followed or if the Indian child is placed in an institution, a plan shall be developed to ensure that the Indian child's cultural ties are protected and fostered.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 103.

32A-4-10. Basic rights.

A. A child subject to the provisions of the Children's Code is entitled to the same basic rights as an adult, except as otherwise provided in the Children's Code.

B. At the inception of an abuse or neglect proceeding, counsel shall be appointed for the parent, guardian or custodian of the child. The appointed counsel shall represent the parent, guardian or custodian who is named as a party until an indigency determination is made at the custody hearing. Counsel shall also be appointed if, in the court's discretion, appointment of counsel is required in the interest of justice.

C. At the inception of an abuse and neglect proceeding, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for a child under fourteen years of age. If the child is fourteen years of age or older, the court shall appoint an attorney for the child. No officer or employee of an agency that is vested with the legal custody of the child shall be appointed as guardian ad litem of or attorney for the child. Only an attorney with appropriate experience shall be appointed as guardian ad litem of or attorney for the child.

D. When reasonable and appropriate, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem or attorney who is knowledgeable about the child's particular cultural background.

E. When a child reaches fourteen years of age, the child's guardian ad litem shall continue as the child's attorney; provided that the court shall appoint a different attorney for the child if:

(1) the child requests a different attorney;

(2) the guardian ad litem requests to be removed; or

(3) the court determines that the appointment of a different attorney is appropriate.

F. The court shall assure that the child's guardian ad litem zealously represents the child's best interest and that the child's attorney zealously represents the child.

G. A person afforded rights under the Children's Code shall be advised of those rights at that person's first appearance before the court on a petition under the Children's Code.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 104; 2005, ch. 189, § 43.

32A-4-11. Use immunity.

A. At any stage of a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act, the children's court attorney may apply for use immunity for a respondent for in-court testimony. The in-court testimony of an immunized respondent shall not be used against that respondent in a criminal prosecution; provided, however, that the respondent may be prosecuted for perjury that occurs during the respondent's testimony in children's court.

B. At any stage of a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act, the children's court attorney may apply for use immunity for any records, documents or other physical objects produced by the immunized respondent in that children's court proceeding, production of which was compelled by a court order.

C. At any stage of a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act, the children's court attorney may apply for use immunity for a respondent for any statement that a respondent makes in the course of a court-ordered psychological evaluation or treatment program to the professional designated by the department in furtherance of the court's order. Such immunity shall attach only to those statements made during the course of the actual evaluation or treatment and specifically does not attach to statements made to other department employees, agents or other representatives in the course of the investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect.

D. Any other information available to the professional designated by the department to perform the court-ordered evaluation or treatment shall not be the subject of any application or order for immunity.

E. All immunized statements referred to in Subsection C that are subsequently reduced to writing shall be deleted before any report is released to law enforcement officers or district attorneys.

F. Use immunity orders shall not be entered nunc pro tunc.

G. The children's court attorney shall request a hearing on any application for immunity and shall give at least forty-eight hours notice to all parties and to the district attorney for the county in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred. The district attorney shall have standing to object to the order for immunity.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-11, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 105.

32A-4-12. Protective orders.

A. At any stage of a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act, the children's court attorney may apply to the court for a protective order restricting the release of immunized testimony, immunized verbal statements for the purpose of psychological evaluation or treatment, or records, documents or other physical objects produced by an immunized respondent pursuant to a court order. The protective order shall apply to any person, except as designated by court order. The purpose of the protective order is to allow the respondents to engage in evaluation and treatment programs as ordered by the court and to ensure that any statement by the respondents will remain privileged and confidential and will not be divulged to any other person, including law enforcement officers and district attorneys.

B. The children's court attorney shall apply for the protective order and request a hearing, and shall give at least forty-eight hours notice to all parties and to the district attorney for the county in which the alleged abuse or neglect occurred. The district attorney shall have standing to object to the protective order.

C. After the hearing, the court may issue a protective order, if issuance of the order will reasonably assist in the delivery of diagnostic and therapeutic services to the respondent and the respondent is otherwise likely to refuse to make statements on the basis of his privilege against self-incrimination.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-12, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 106.

32A-4-13. Contempt power.

A. At any stage of a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act, the court shall have the power and authority to issue orders to compel the appearance of witnesses, the giving of testimony and production of evidence by witnesses, including any party. Production of evidence includes an order to a respondent to undergo a psychological diagnostic evaluation and treatment.

B. Failure or refusal to obey the court's order may be punished by the court as contempt. A claim that giving testimony or producing evidence might tend to incriminate the person who is the subject of the order shall not excuse the person from complying with the court's order.

C. The children's court attorney shall make application to the court to compel compliance with the orders of the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-13, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 107.

32A-4-14. Change in placement.

A. When the child's placement is changed, including a return to the child's home, written notice of the factual grounds supporting the change in placement shall be sent to the child's guardian ad litem or attorney, all parties, the child's CASA, the child's foster parents and the court ten days prior to the placement change, unless an emergency situation requires moving the child prior to sending notice.

B. When the child, by and through the child's guardian ad litem or attorney, files a motion and requests a court hearing to contest the proposed change, the department shall not change the child's placement pending the results of the court hearing, unless an emergency requires changing the child's placement prior to the hearing.

C. When a child's placement is changed without prior notice as provided for in Subsection A of this section, written notice shall be sent to the child's guardian ad litem or attorney, all parties, the child's CASA, the child's foster parents and the court within three days after the placement change.

D. Written notice is not required for removal of a child from temporary emergency care, emergency foster care or respite care. The department shall provide oral notification of the removal to the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

E. Notice need not be given to the parties, other than the child, or to the court when placement is changed at the request of the child's foster parents or substitute care provider. Notice shall be given to the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-14, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 108; 2005, ch. 189, § 44; 2009, ch. 239, § 37.

32A-4-15. Petition; authorization to file.

A petition alleging neglect or abuse shall not be filed unless the children's court attorney has determined and endorsed upon the petition that the filing of the petition is in the best interests of the child. The children's court attorney shall, upon request of a person authorizing the filing of a petition, furnish legal services in connection with the

authorization and preparation of the petition and the representation of the petitioner if the petitioner so requests.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-15, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 109.

32A-4-16. Ex-parte custody orders.

A. At the time a petition is filed or any time thereafter, the children's court or the district court may issue an ex-parte custody order upon a sworn written statement of facts showing probable cause exists to believe that the child is abused or neglected and that custody under the criteria set forth in Section 32-4-16 [32A-4-18] NMSA 1978 is necessary.

B. The ex-parte custody order shall be served on the respondent by a person authorized to serve arrest warrants and shall direct the officer to take custody of the child and deliver him to a place designated by the court.

C. The Rules of Evidence do not apply to the issuance of an ex-parte custody order.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 110.

32A-4-17. Summons; content.

In addition to the requirements set forth in Section 32-1-11 [32A-1-12] NMSA 1978, in abuse and neglect proceedings, the summons shall clearly state that the proceeding could ultimately result in termination of the respondents' parental rights.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-17, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 111.

32A-4-17.1. Notice to grandparents and relatives.

Within thirty days after a child is taken into custody by law enforcement, or when the department files a petition seeking legal custody of the child, whichever occurs first, the department shall exercise due diligence and make reasonable efforts to identify and provide notice to all grandparents; all parents of a sibling of the child, when the parent has legal custody of the sibling; and other adult relatives of the child, including adult relatives suggested by the parents, unless such notice would be contrary to the best interests of the child due to family or domestic violence. The notice shall:

A. specify that the child has been or is being removed from the custody of the parent or parents of the child;

B. explain the options the relative has under federal, state or other law to participate in the care and placement of the child, including any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice;

C. describe the requirements for becoming a foster family home and the additional services and support that are available for children placed in such a home; and

D. set out the dates of any currently scheduled court hearings that involve the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-17.1, enacted by Laws 2016, ch. 54, § 3.

32A-4-18. Custody hearings; time limitations; notice; probable cause.

A. When a child alleged to be neglected or abused has been placed in the legal custody of the department or the department has petitioned the court for temporary custody, a custody hearing shall be held within ten days from the date the petition is filed to determine if the child should remain in or be placed in the department's custody pending adjudication. Upon written request of the respondent, the hearing may be held earlier, but in no event shall the hearing be held sooner than two days after the date the petition was filed.

B. The parent, guardian or custodian of the child alleged to be abused or neglected shall be given reasonable notice of the time and place of the custody hearing.

C. At the custody hearing, the court shall return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian unless probable cause exists to believe that:

(1) the child is suffering from an illness or injury, and the parent, guardian or custodian is not providing adequate care for the child;

(2) the child is in immediate danger from the child's surroundings and removal from those surroundings is necessary for the child's safety or well-being;

(3) the child will be subject to injury by others if not placed in the custody of the department;

(4) there has been an abandonment of the child by the child's parent, guardian or custodian; or

(5) the parent, guardian or custodian is not able or willing to provide adequate supervision and care for the child.

D. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, if the court determines that probable cause exists pursuant to Subsection C of this section, the court may:

(1) return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian upon such conditions as will reasonably ensure the safety and well-being of the child, including protective supervision or maintenance at home by the department or

participation in programs or services aimed at addressing the underlying causative factors that impact the safety or well-being of the child; or

(2) award legal custody of the child to the department.

E. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety. When the department determines that the home of an adult relative of the child meets all relevant child protection and licensing standards and placement in the home would be in the best interest of the child, the department shall give a preference to placement of the child in that home. The department shall make reasonable efforts to conduct home studies on appropriate relatives who express an interest in providing placement for the child.

F. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, if the court determines that probable cause does not exist pursuant to Subsection C of this section, the court shall:

(1) retain jurisdiction and, unless the court permits otherwise, order that the respondent and child remain in the jurisdiction of the court pending the adjudication;

(2) return legal custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian with conditions to provide for the safety and well-being of the child; and

(3) order that the child's parent, guardian or custodian allow the child necessary contact with the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

G. At the conclusion of the custody hearing, the court may order the respondent or the child alleged to be neglected or abused, or both, to undergo appropriate diagnostic examinations or evaluations. If the court determines that probable cause does not exist, the court may order the respondent or the child alleged to be neglected or abused, or both, to undergo appropriate diagnostic examinations or evaluations as necessary to protect the child's best interests, based upon the allegations in the petition and the evidence presented at the custody hearing. Copies of any diagnostic or evaluation reports ordered by the court shall be provided to the parties at least five days before the adjudicatory hearing is scheduled. The reports shall not be sent to the court.

H. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to custody hearings.

I. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a party aggrieved by an order entered pursuant to this section shall be permitted to file an immediate appeal as a matter of right. If the order appealed from grants the legal custody of the child to or withholds it from one or more of the parties to the appeal, the appeal shall be expedited and shall be heard at the earliest practicable time. While an appeal pursuant to this section is pending, the court shall have jurisdiction to take further action in the case pursuant to Subsection B of Section 32A-1-17 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-18, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 112; 1999, ch. 77, § 5; 2005, ch. 189, § 45; 2009, ch. 239, § 38; 2014, ch. 69, § 1; 2016, ch. 54, § 4; 2019, ch. 137, § 3; 2022, ch. 41, § 49.

32A-4-19. Adjudicatory hearings; time limitations.

A. The adjudicatory hearing in a neglect or abuse proceeding shall be commenced within sixty days after the date of service on the respondent.

B. Prior to the adjudicatory hearing, all parties to the hearing shall attend a mandatory meeting and attempt to settle issues attendant to the adjudicatory hearing and develop a proposed treatment plan that serves the child's best interest.

C. The children's court attorney shall represent the state at the adjudicatory hearing.

D. When the adjudicatory hearing on any petition is not commenced within the time period specified in Subsection A of this section or within the period of any extension granted, the petition shall be dismissed with prejudice.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-19, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 113; 1997, ch. 34, § 3; 2009, ch. 239, § 39.

32A-4-20. Conduct of hearings; findings; dismissal; dispositional matters; penalty.

A. The proceedings shall be recorded by stenographic notes or by electronic, mechanical or other appropriate means.

B. All abuse and neglect hearings shall be closed to the general public.

C. Only the parties, their counsel, witnesses and other persons approved by the court may be present at a closed hearing. The foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child shall be given notice and an opportunity to be heard at the dispositional phase. Those other persons the court finds to have a proper interest in the case or in the work of the court may be admitted by the court to closed hearings on the condition that they refrain from divulging any information that would identify the child or family involved in the proceedings.

D. Accredited representatives of the news media shall be allowed to be present at closed hearings, subject to the condition that they refrain from divulging information that would identify any child involved in the proceedings or the parent, guardian or custodian of that child and subject to enabling regulations as the court finds necessary for the maintenance of order and decorum and for the furtherance of the purposes of the Children's Code. A child who is the subject of an abuse and neglect proceeding and is present at a hearing may object to the presence of the media. The court may exclude

the media if it finds that the presence of the media is contrary to the best interests of the child.

E. If the court finds that it is in the best interest of a child under fourteen years of age, the child may be excluded from a hearing under the Abuse and Neglect Act. A child fourteen years of age or older may be excluded from a hearing only if the court makes a finding that there is a compelling reason to exclude the child and states the factual basis for the finding.

F. Those persons or parties granted admission to a closed hearing who intentionally divulge information in violation of this section are guilty of a petty misdemeanor.

G. The court shall determine if the allegations of the petition are admitted or denied. If the allegations are denied, the court shall proceed to hear evidence on the petition. The court, after hearing all of the evidence bearing on the allegations of neglect or abuse, shall make and record its findings on whether the child is a neglected child, an abused child or both. If the petition alleges that the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances, then the court shall also make and record its findings on whether the aggravated circumstances have been proven.

H. If the court finds on the basis of a valid admission of the allegations of the petition or on the basis of clear and convincing evidence, competent, material and relevant in nature, that the child is neglected or abused, the court shall enter an order finding that the child is neglected or abused and may proceed immediately or at a postponed hearing to make disposition of the case. If the court does not find that the child is neglected or abused, the court shall dismiss the petition and may refer the family to the department for appropriate services.

I. A party aggrieved by an order entered pursuant to Subsection H of this section may file an immediate appeal to the court of appeals.

J. In that part of the hearings held under the Children's Code on dispositional issues, all relevant and material evidence helpful in determining the questions presented, including oral and written reports, may be received by the court and may be relied upon to the extent of its probative value even though not competent had it been offered during the part of the hearings on adjudicatory issues.

K. On the court's motion or that of a party, the court may continue the hearing on the petition for a period not to exceed thirty days to receive reports and other evidence in connection with disposition. The court shall continue the hearing pending the receipt of the predisposition study and report if that document has not been prepared and received. During any continuances under this subsection, the court shall make an appropriate order for legal custody.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-20, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 114; 1997, ch. 34, § 4; 1999, ch. 77, § 6; 2005, ch. 189, § 46; 2009, ch. 239, § 40; 2014, ch. 69, § 2.

32A-4-21. Neglect or abuse predisposition studies, reports and examinations.

A. Prior to holding a dispositional hearing, the court shall direct that a predisposition study and report be submitted in writing to the court by the department.

B. The predisposition study required pursuant to Subsection A of this section shall contain the following information:

(1) a statement of the specific reasons for intervention by the department or for placing the child in the department's custody and a statement of the parent's ability to care for the child in the parent's home without causing harm to the child;

(2) a statement of how an intervention plan is designed to achieve placement of the child in the least restrictive setting available, consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child, including a statement of the likely harm the child may suffer as a result of being removed from the parent's home, including emotional harm that may result due to separation from the child's parents, and a statement of how the intervention plan is designed to place the child in close proximity to the parent's home without causing harm to the child due to separation from parents, siblings or any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest;

(3) the wishes of the child as to the child's custodian;

(4) a statement of the efforts the department has made to identify and locate all grandparents and other relatives and to conduct home studies on any appropriate relative expressing an interest in providing care for the child, and a statement as to whether the child has a family member who, subsequent to study by the department, is determined to be qualified to care for the child;

(5) a description of services offered to the child, the child's family and the child's foster care family and a summary of reasonable efforts made to prevent removal of the child from the child's family or reasonable efforts made to reunite the child with the child's family;

(6) a description of the home or facility in which the child is placed and the appropriateness of the child's placement;

(7) the results of any diagnostic examination or evaluation ordered at the custody hearing;

(8) a statement of the child's medical and educational background;

(9) a case plan that sets forth steps to ensure that the child's physical, medical, cultural, psychological and educational needs are met and that sets forth

services to be provided to the child and the child's parents to facilitate permanent placement of the child in the parent's home;

(10) for children sixteen years of age and older, a plan for developing the specific skills the child requires for successful transition into independent living as an adult, regardless of whether the child is returned to the child's parent's home;

(11) a case plan that sets forth steps to ensure that the child's educational needs are met and, for a child fourteen years of age or older, a case plan that specifically sets forth the child's educational and post-secondary goals; and

(12) a description of the child's foster care placement and whether it is appropriate in terms of the educational setting and proximity to the school the child was enrolled in at the time of the placement, including plans for travel for the child to remain in the school in which the child was enrolled at the time of placement, if reasonable and in the child's best interest.

C. A copy of the predisposition report shall be provided by the department to counsel for all parties five days before the dispositional hearing.

D. If the child is an adjudicated abused child, any temporary custody orders shall remain in effect until the court has received and considered the predispositional study at the dispositional hearing.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-21, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 115; 1997, ch. 34, § 5; 2009, ch. 239, § 41; 2016, ch. 54, § 5; 2022, ch. 41, § 50.

32A-4-22. Disposition of adjudicated abused or neglected child.

A. If not held in conjunction with the adjudicatory hearing, the dispositional hearing shall be commenced within thirty days after the conclusion of the adjudicatory hearing. At the conclusion of the dispositional hearing, the court shall make and include in the dispositional judgment its findings on the following:

(1) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with the child's parent, siblings and any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest;

(2) the child's adjustment to the child's home, school and community;

(3) the mental and physical health of all individuals involved;

(4) the wishes of the child as to the child's placement;

(5) the wishes of the child's parent, guardian or custodian as to the child's custody;

(6) whether reasonable efforts have been made by the department to identify, locate and give notice to all grandparents and other relatives and to conduct home studies on any appropriate relative who expresses an interest in providing care for the child. If the court finds that reasonable efforts in these areas have not been made, the court may make supplemental orders as necessary and may reconsider the matter at the initial judicial review and subsequent periodic review hearings;

(7) whether consideration has been given to the child's familial identity and connections;

(8) whether there exists a relative of the child or other individual who, after study by the department, is found to be qualified to receive and care for the child;

(9) the availability of services recommended in the case plan prepared as a part of the predisposition study in accordance with the provisions of Section 32A-4-21 NMSA 1978;

(10) the ability of the parent to care for the child in the home so that no harm will result to the child;

(11) whether reasonable efforts were made by the department to prevent removal of the child from the home prior to placement in substitute care and whether reasonable efforts were made to attempt reunification of the child with the natural parent; and

(12) whether reasonable efforts were made by the department to place siblings in custody together, unless such joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings in custody, and whether any siblings not jointly placed have been provided reasonable visitation or other ongoing interaction, unless visitation or other ongoing interaction would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.

B. If a child is found to be neglected or abused, the court may enter its judgment making any of the following dispositions to protect the welfare of the child:

(1) permit the child to remain with the child's parent, guardian or custodian, subject to those conditions and limitations the court may prescribe;

(2) place the child under protective supervision of the department; or

(3) transfer legal custody of the child to one of the following:

(a) the noncustodial parent, if it is found to be in the child's best interest; or

(b) the department.

C. If a child is found to be neglected or abused, in its dispositional judgment the court shall also order the department to implement and the child's parent, guardian or custodian to cooperate with any case plan approved by the court. Reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety. The court may determine that reasonable efforts are not required to be made when the court finds that:

(1) the efforts would be futile; or

(2) the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances.

D. Any parent, guardian or custodian of a child who is placed in the legal custody of the department or other person pursuant to Subsection B of this section shall have reasonable rights of visitation with the child as determined by the court, unless the court finds that the best interests of the child preclude any visitation.

E. The court may order reasonable visitation between a child placed in the custody of the department and the child's siblings or any other person who may significantly affect the child's best interest, if the court finds the visitation to be in the child's best interest.

F. Unless a child found to be neglected or abused is also found to be delinquent, the child shall not be confined in an institution established for the long-term care and rehabilitation of delinquent children.

G. When the court vests legal custody in an agency, institution or department, the court shall transmit with the dispositional judgment copies of the clinical reports, the predisposition study and report and any other information it has pertinent to the care and treatment of the child.

H. Prior to a child being placed in the custody or protective supervision of the department, the department shall be provided with reasonable oral or written notification and an opportunity to be heard. At any hearing held pursuant to this subsection, the department may appear as a party.

I. When the court determines pursuant to Subsection C of this section that no reasonable efforts at reunification are required, the court shall conduct, within thirty days, a permanency hearing as described in Section 32A-4-25.1 NMSA 1978. Reasonable efforts shall be made to implement and finalize the permanency plan in a timely manner.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-22, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 116; 1997, ch. 34, § 6; 1999, ch. 77, § 7; 2005, ch. 189, § 47; 2009, ch. 239, § 42; 2016, ch. 54, § 6; 2022, ch. 41, § 51.

32A-4-23. Disposition of a child with a mental disorder or a developmental disability in a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act.

A. If in a hearing, at any stage of a proceeding on a neglect or abuse petition, the evidence indicates that a child has a mental disorder or a developmental disability, the court shall adjudicate the issue of neglect or abuse under the provisions of the Children's Code.

B. When a child in department custody needs involuntary placement for residential mental health or developmental disability services as a result of a mental disorder or developmental disability, the department shall petition for that child's placement pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978].

C. Any child in department custody who is placed for residential treatment or habilitation pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall remain in the legal custody of the department while in residential treatment or habilitation or until further order of the court.

D. A court hearing for consideration of an involuntary placement of a child for residential treatment or habilitation, when the child is subject to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act, may be heard by the court as part of the abuse or neglect proceedings or may be heard in a separate proceeding. All parties to the abuse or neglect proceedings shall be provided with notice of the involuntary placement hearing.

E. A guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act shall serve as a guardian ad litem for a child for the purposes of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. When a child is fourteen years of age or older, the child shall be represented by an attorney unless, after consultation between the child and the child's attorney, the child elects to be represented by counsel appointed in the proceedings under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

F. When a child is subject to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act and is receiving residential treatment or habilitation services, any documentation required pursuant to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be filed with the court as part of the abuse or neglect proceeding. A review of the child's placement in a residential treatment or habilitation program shall occur in the same manner and within the same time requirements as provided in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

G. The clerk of the court shall maintain a separate section within an abuse or neglect file for documents pertaining to actions taken under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

H. A child subject to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act who receives treatment in a residential treatment or habilitation program shall enjoy all the substantive and procedural rights set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-23, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 117; 1995, ch. 206, § 23; 2005, ch. 189, § 48.

32A-4-23.1. Disposition of an undocumented immigrant child in a proceeding under the Abuse and Neglect Act.

A. Whenever the court adjudicates that a child is abused or neglected, the department shall determine the child's immigration status. At the first judicial review, the department shall report the child's immigration status to the court. Services to children alleged to have been abused, neglected or abandoned must be provided without regard to the immigration status of the child except where immigration status is explicitly set forth as a statutory or regulatory condition of coverage or eligibility.

B. If the child is an undocumented immigrant, the department shall include in the treatment plan a recommendation as to whether the permanency plan for the child includes reuniting the child with the child's parents and whether it is in the child's best interest to be returned to the child's country of origin. If the permanency plan does not include reunification and the department does not recommend that the child be returned to the country of origin, the department shall determine whether the child may be eligible for special immigrant juvenile status under federal law.

C. If the child is eligible for special immigrant juvenile status, the department shall move the court for a special immigrant juvenile status order containing the necessary findings to establish that the child meets the criteria for federal special immigrant juvenile status. The department's motion shall include a statement of the express wishes of the child, as expressed by the child or the child's guardian ad litem or attorney.

D. After consultation with the child and the child's guardian ad litem or attorney, the department shall determine whether the child's best interests would be served by the filing of a petition for special immigrant juvenile status and application for adjustment of status and if in the child's best interest, within sixty days after an entry of the special immigrant juvenile status order, the department shall file a petition for special immigrant juvenile status and an application for adjustment of status on behalf of the child.

E. If a petition and application have been filed and the petition and application have not been granted by the time the child reaches eighteen years of age, the court may retain jurisdiction over the case for the sole purpose of ensuring that the child continues to satisfy the requirements for classification as a special immigrant juvenile.

F. Review hearings for the child shall be set solely for the purpose of confirming that the child continues to satisfy such requirements and determining the status of the petition and application.

G. The court's jurisdiction terminates upon the final decision of the federal authorities.

H. Retention of jurisdiction in this instance does not affect the transition services available to the child.

I. The court may not retain jurisdiction of the case after the immigrant child's twenty-first birthday.

J. In a judicial review report provided to the court for a child for whom the court has granted the special immigrant juvenile status order described in Subsection C of this section, the court shall be advised of the status of the petition and application process concerning the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-23.1, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 43.

32A-4-24. Limitations on dispositional judgments; modification, termination or extension of court orders.

A. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in an agency shall remain in force for an indeterminate period not exceeding two years from the date entered.

B. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in an individual, other than the child's parent or permanent guardian, shall remain in force for two years from the date entered, unless sooner terminated by court order.

C. A judgment vesting legal custody of a child in the child's parent or a permanent guardian shall remain in force for an indeterminate period from the date entered until terminated by court order or until the child is emancipated or reaches the age of majority.

D. At any time prior to expiration, a judgment vesting legal custody or granting protective supervision may be modified, revoked or extended on motion by any party, including the child by and through the child's guardian ad litem.

E. Prior to the expiration of a judgment transferring legal custody to an agency, the court may extend the judgment for additional periods of one year if it finds that the extension is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child or the public interest.

F. When a child reaches eighteen years of age, all neglect and abuse orders affecting the child then in force automatically terminate except as provided in Section 32A-4-23.1 NMSA 1978 and Subsection D[C] of Section 32A-4-25.3 NMSA 1978. The

termination of the orders shall not disqualify a child from eligibility for transitional services.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-24, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 118; 2009, ch. 239, § 44.

32A-4-25. Periodic judicial review of dispositional judgments.

A. The initial judicial review shall be held within sixty days of the disposition. At the initial judicial review, the parties shall demonstrate to the court efforts made to implement the treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order. The court shall determine the extent to which the treatment plan has been implemented and make supplemental orders as necessary to ensure compliance with the treatment plan and the safety of the child. Prior to the initial judicial review, the department shall submit a copy of the adjudicatory order, the dispositional order and notice of the initial judicial review to the council. The staff of the council, or an entity contracting with the council, shall review the case. If the staff or contracting entity determines that the case meets the criteria established in council rules, the staff or contracting entity shall designate the case for review by a substitute care review board. A representative of the substitute care review board, if designated, shall be permitted to attend and comment to the court.

B. The court shall conduct subsequent periodic judicial reviews of the dispositional order within six months of the conclusion of the permanency hearing or, if a motion has been filed for termination of parental rights or permanent guardianship, within six months of the decision on that motion and every six months thereafter. Prior to a subsequent periodic judicial review, the department shall submit a progress report to the council or any designated substitute care review board. Prior to any judicial review by the court pursuant to this section, the substitute care review board may review the dispositional order or the continuation of the order and the department's progress report and report its findings and recommendations to the court.

C. Judicial review pursuant to this section may be carried out by either of the following:

(1) a judicial review hearing conducted by the court; or

(2) a judicial review hearing conducted by a special master appointed by the court; provided, however, that the court approve any findings made by the special master.

D. The children's court attorney shall give notice of the time, place and purpose of any judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection A, B or C of this section to:

(1) all parties, including:

(a) the child alleged to be neglected or abused or in need of court-ordered services, by and through the child's guardian ad litem or attorney;

(b) the child's parent, guardian or custodian, who has allegedly neglected or abused the child or is in need of court-ordered services; and

(c) any other person made a party by the court;

(2) the child's foster parent or substitute care provider;

(3) the child's court-appointed special advocate; and

(4) if designated by the council, the substitute care review board.

E. At any subsequent judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the department and all parties given notice pursuant to Subsection D of this section shall have the opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. At the hearing, the department shall show that it has made reasonable effort to implement any treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order and shall present a treatment plan consistent with the purposes of the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978] for any period of extension of the dispositional order. The respondent shall demonstrate to the court that efforts to comply with the treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order and efforts to maintain contact with the child were diligent and made in good faith. The court shall determine the extent of compliance with the treatment plan and whether progress is being made toward establishing a stable and permanent placement for the child.

F. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to hearings held pursuant to this section. The court may admit testimony by any person given notice of the hearing who has information about the status of the child or the status of the treatment plan.

G. At the conclusion of any hearing held pursuant to this section, the court shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law.

H. Based on its findings at a judicial review hearing held pursuant to Subsection B of this section, the court shall order one of the following dispositions:

(1) dismiss the action and return the child to the child's parent without supervision if the court finds that conditions in the home that led to abuse have been corrected and it is now safe for the return of the abused child;

(2) permit the child to remain with the child's parent, guardian or custodian subject to those conditions and limitations the court may prescribe, including protective supervision of the child by the department;

(3) return the child to the child's parent and place the child under the protective supervision of the department;

(4) transfer or continue legal custody of the child to:

(a) the noncustodial parent, if that is found to be in the child's best interests;

(b) a relative or other individual who, after study by the department or other agency designated by the court, is found by the court to be qualified to receive and care for the child and is appointed as a permanent guardian of the child; or

(c) the department, subject to the provisions of Paragraph (6) of this subsection;

(5) continue the child in the legal custody of the department with or without any required parental involvement in a treatment plan; provided that reasonable efforts shall be made to preserve and reunify the family, with the paramount concern being the child's health and safety unless the court finds that such efforts are not required. The court may determine that reasonable efforts are not required to be made when the court finds that:

(a) the efforts would be futile; or

(b) the parent, guardian or custodian has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances;

(6) make additional orders regarding the treatment plan or placement of the child to protect the child's best interests if the court determines the department has failed in implementing any material provision of the treatment plan or abused its discretion in the placement or proposed placement of the child; or

(7) if during a judicial review the court finds that the child's parent, guardian or custodian has not complied with the court-ordered treatment plan, the court may order:

(a) the child's parent, guardian or custodian to show cause why the parent, guardian or custodian should not be held in contempt of court; or

(b) a hearing on the merits of terminating parental rights.

I. Dispositional orders entered pursuant to this section shall remain in force for a period of six months, except for orders that provide for transfer of the child to the child's noncustodial parent or to a permanent guardian.

J. When the court determines, pursuant to Paragraph (5) of Subsection H of this section, that no reasonable efforts at reunification are required, the court shall conduct, within thirty days, a permanency hearing as described in Section 32A-4-25.1 NMSA

1978. The department shall make reasonable efforts to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with the permanency plan and to complete whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-25, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 119; 1995, ch. 206, § 24; 1997, ch. 34, § 7; 1999, ch. 77, § 8; 2005, ch. 189, § 49; 2009, ch. 239, § 45; 2016, ch. 60, § 2; 2022, ch. 41, § 52.

32A-4-25.1. Permanency hearings; permanency review hearings.

A. A permanency hearing shall be commenced within six months of the initial judicial review of a child's dispositional order or within twelve months of a child entering foster care pursuant to Subsection D [E] of this section, whichever occurs first. Prior to the initial permanency hearing:

(1) the department shall submit a copy of any continuation of the dispositional order and notice of hearing to the council or any substitute care review board designated pursuant to Section 32A-8-5 NMSA 1978;

(2) the department shall submit a progress report to any designated substitute care review board;

(3) all parties to the hearing shall attend a mandatory meeting and attempt to settle issues attendant to the permanency hearing and develop a proposed treatment plan that serves the child's best interest; and

(4) any designated substitute care review board may review the child's case and the department's progress report and report its findings and recommendations to the court.

B. At the permanency hearing, all parties shall have the opportunity to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. At the conclusion of the permanency hearing, the court shall order one of the following permanency plans for the child:

(1) reunification;

(2) placement for adoption after the parents' rights have been relinquished or terminated or after a motion has been filed to terminate parental rights;

(3) placement with a person who will be the child's permanent guardian;

(4) placement in the legal custody of the department with the child placed in the home of a fit and willing relative; or

(5) placement in the legal custody of the department under a planned permanent living arrangement, provided that there is substantial evidence that none of the above plans is appropriate for the child.

C. If the court adopts a permanency plan of reunification, the court shall adopt a plan for transitioning the child home within a reasonable period depending on the facts and circumstances of the case, but not to exceed six months, and schedule a permanency review hearing within three months. If the child is reunified, the subsequent hearing may be vacated.

D. At the permanency review hearing, all parties and the child's guardian ad litem or attorney shall have the opportunity to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses. Based on the evidence, the court shall:

(1) change the plan from reunification to one of the alternative plans provided in Subsection B of this section;

(2) dismiss the case and return custody of the child to the child's parent, guardian or custodian;

(3) continue legal custody of the child in the department to complete a transition home to the child's parent, guardian or custodian and continue the case plan for not more than six months, after which the case shall be dismissed unless the plan is changed as provided in Paragraph (1) of this subsection; or

(4) return the child to the custody of the child's parent, guardian or custodian, subject to any conditions or limitations as the court may prescribe, including protective supervision of the child by the department and continuation of the case plan for not more than six months, after which the case shall be dismissed. The department may seek removal of a child from the home by obtaining an order in the pending case or by seeking emergency removal under Section 32A-4-6 NMSA 1978 during the period of protective supervision if the child's best interest requires such action. When a child is removed in this situation, a permanency hearing shall be scheduled within thirty days of the child coming back into the department's legal custody.

E. The court shall hold a permanency hearing and adopt a permanency plan for a child within twelve months of the child entering foster care. For purposes of this section, a child shall be considered to have entered foster care on the earlier of:

(1) the date of the first judicial finding that the child has been abused or neglected; or

(2) sixty days after the date on which the child was removed from the home.

F. The court shall hold permanency hearings every twelve months when a child is in the legal custody of the department.

G. The children's court attorney shall give notice of the time, place and purpose of any permanency hearing or permanency review hearing held pursuant to this section to:

(1) all parties, including:

(a) the child alleged to be neglected or abused or in need of court-ordered services, by and through the child's guardian ad litem or attorney;

(b) the child's parent, guardian or custodian, who has allegedly neglected or abused the child or is in need of court-ordered services; and

(c) any other person made a party by the court;

(2) the child's foster parent or substitute care provider;

(3) the child's court-appointed special advocate; and

(4) if designated by the council, the substitute care review board.

H. The Rules of Evidence shall not apply to permanency hearings. The court may admit testimony by any person given notice of the permanency hearing who has information about the status of the child or the status of the treatment plan. All testimony shall be subject to cross-examination.

History: Laws 1997, ch. 34, § 8; 2005, ch. 189, § 50; 2009, ch. 239, § 46; 2016, ch. 54, § 7; 2016, ch. 60, § 3.

32A-4-25.2. Transition services.

A. Prior to a child's reaching seventeen years of age, the department shall meet with the child, the child's attorney and others of the child's choosing, including biological family members, to develop a transition plan. The department shall assist the child in identifying and planning to meet the child's needs after the child's eighteenth birthday, including housing, education, employment or income, health and mental health, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services.

B. The department shall present the child's proposed transition plan to the court at the first hearing scheduled after the child's seventeenth birthday.

C. The court shall order a transition plan for the child. The transition plan approved by the court shall be reviewed at every subsequent review and permanency hearing.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-25.2, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 47.

32A-4-25.3. Discharge hearing.

A. At the last review or permanency hearing held prior to the child's eighteenth birthday, the court shall review the transition plan and shall determine whether the department has made reasonable efforts to implement the requirements of Subsection B of this section.

B. The court shall determine:

(1) whether written information concerning the child's family history, the whereabouts of any sibling if appropriate and education and health records have been provided to the child;

(2) whether the child's social security card, certified birth certificate, state-issued identification card, death certificate of a parent and proof of citizenship or residence have been provided to the child;

(3) whether assistance in obtaining medicaid has been provided to the child, unless the child is ineligible for medicaid; and

(4) whether referral for a guardianship or limited guardianship if the child is incapacitated has been made.

C. If the court finds that the department has not made reasonable efforts to meet all the requirements of Subsection B of this section and that termination of jurisdiction would be harmful to the young adult, the court may continue to exercise its jurisdiction for a period not to exceed one year from the child's eighteenth birthday. The young adult must consent to continued jurisdiction of the court. The court may dismiss the case at any time after the child's eighteenth birthday for good cause.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-25.3, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 48.

32A-4-26. Parental responsibility.

A. The court shall order the parent to pay the reasonable costs of support and maintenance of the child that the parent is financially able to pay if a child is adjudicated to be neglected or abused and the court orders the child placed with an agency or individual other than the parent. The court may use the child support guidelines set forth in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978 to calculate a reasonable payment.

B. The court may enforce any of its orders issued pursuant to this section by use of its contempt power.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-26, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 120.

32A-4-27. Intervention; persons permitted to intervene.

A. At any stage of an abuse or neglect proceeding, a person described in this subsection may be permitted to intervene as a party with a motion for affirmative relief:

(1) a foster parent with whom the child has resided for at least six months;

(2) a relative within the fifth degree of consanguinity with whom the child has resided;

(3) a stepparent with whom the child has resided; or

(4) a person who wishes to become the child's permanent guardian.

B. When determining whether a person described in Subsection A of this section should be permitted to intervene, the court shall consider:

(1) the person's rationale for the proposed intervention; and

(2) whether intervention is in the best interest of the child.

C. When the court determines that the child's best interest will be served as a result of intervention by a person described in Subsection A of this section, the court may permit intervention unless the party opposing intervention can demonstrate that a viable plan for reunification with the respondents is in progress and that intervention could impede the progress of the reunification plan.

D. A parent of the child who is not named in the petition alleging abuse or neglect shall be permitted to intervene during any stage of an abuse or neglect proceeding.

E. The foster parent shall be permitted to intervene when:

(1) the foster parent desires to adopt the child;

(2) the child has resided with the foster parent for at least six months within the year prior to the termination of parental rights;

(3) a motion for termination of parental rights has been filed by a person other than the foster parent; and

(4) bonding between the child and the child's foster parent is alleged as a reason for terminating parental rights in the motion for termination of parental rights.

F. The foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child shall be given notice of, and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing with respect to the child, except that this subsection shall not be construed to require that any foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child be made a party to such a review or hearing solely on the basis of the notice and opportunity to be heard.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-27, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 121; 1999, ch. 77, § 9; 2022, ch. 41, § 53.

32A-4-28. Termination of parental rights; adoption decree.

A. In proceedings to terminate parental rights, the court shall give primary consideration to the physical, mental and emotional welfare and needs of the child, including the likelihood of the child being adopted if parental rights are terminated.

B. The court shall terminate parental rights with respect to a child when:

(1) there has been an abandonment of the child by the child's parents;

(2) the child has been a neglected or abused child as defined in the Abuse and Neglect Act and the court finds that the conditions and causes of the neglect and abuse are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future despite reasonable efforts by the department or other appropriate agency to assist the parent in adjusting the conditions that render the parent unable to properly care for the child. The court may find in some cases that efforts by the department or another agency are unnecessary, when:

(a) there is a clear showing that the efforts would be futile; or

(b) the parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances; or

(3) the child has been placed in the care of others, including care by other relatives, either by a court order or otherwise and the following conditions exist:

(a) the child has lived in the home of others for an extended period of time;

(b) the parent-child relationship has disintegrated;

(c) a psychological parent-child relationship has developed between the substitute family and the child;

(d) if the court deems the child of sufficient capacity to express a preference, the child no longer prefers to live with the natural parent;

(e) the substitute family desires to adopt the child; and

(f) a presumption of abandonment created by the conditions described in Subparagraphs (a) through (e) of this paragraph has not been rebutted.

C. A finding by the court that all of the conditions set forth in Subparagraphs (a) through (f) of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section exist shall create a rebuttable presumption of abandonment.

D. The department shall not file a motion, and shall not join a motion filed by another party, to terminate parental rights:

(1) when the sole factual basis for the motion is that a child's parent is or was formerly incarcerated; or

(2) if the motion is based, to any extent, on the fact that the child is an Indian child or that the child's parent or parents are Indian.

E. If the court finds that parental rights should be terminated; that the requirements for the adoption of a child have been satisfied; that the prospective adoptive parent is a party to the action; and that good cause exists to waive the filing of a separate petition for adoption, the court may proceed to grant adoption of the child, absent an appeal of the termination of parental rights. The court shall not waive any time requirements set forth in the Adoption Act [Chapter 32A, Article 5 NMSA 1978] unless the termination of parental rights occurred pursuant to the provisions of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section. The court may enter a decree of adoption only after finding that the party seeking to adopt the child has satisfied all of the requirements set forth in the Adoption Act. Unless otherwise stipulated by all parties, an adoption decree shall take effect sixty days after the termination of parental rights, to allow the department sufficient time to provide counseling for the child and otherwise prepare the child for the adoption. The adoption decree shall conform to the requirements of the Adoption Act and shall have the same force and effect as other adoption decrees entered pursuant to that act. The court clerk shall assign an adoption case number to the adoption decree.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-28, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 122; 1995, ch. 206, § 25; 1997, ch. 34, § 9; 1999, ch. 77, § 10; 2001, ch. 41, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 51; 2022, ch. 41, § 54.

32A-4-29. Termination procedure.

A. A motion to terminate parental rights may be filed at any stage of the abuse or neglect proceeding by a party to the proceeding.

B. The motion for termination of parental rights shall set forth:

(1) the date, place of birth and marital status of the child, if known;

(2) the grounds for termination and the facts and circumstances supporting the grounds for termination;

(3) the names and addresses of the persons or authorized agency or agency officer to whom legal custody might be transferred;

(4) whether the child resides or has resided with a foster parent who desires to adopt the child;

(5) whether the motion is in contemplation of adoption;

(6) the relationship or legitimate interest of the moving party to the child; and

(7) whether the child is subject to the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978].

C. Notice of the filing of the motion, accompanied by a copy of the motion, shall be served by the moving party on all other parties, the foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child with whom the child is residing, foster parents with whom the child has resided for six months within the previous twelve months, the custodian of the child, any person appointed to represent any party and any other person the court orders. Service shall be in accordance with the Children's Court Rules for the service of motions, except that foster parents and attorneys of record in this proceeding shall be served by certified mail. The notice shall state specifically that the person served shall file a written response to the motion within twenty days if the person intends to contest the termination. Further notice shall not be required on a parent who has been provided notice previously pursuant to Section 32A-4-17 NMSA 1978 and who failed to make an appearance.

D. When a motion to terminate parental rights is filed, the moving party shall request a hearing on the motion. The hearing date shall be at least thirty days, but no more than sixty days, after service is effected upon the parties entitled to service under this section. The moving party shall also file a motion for court-ordered mediation between the parent and any prospective adoptive parent to discuss an open adoption agreement. If an open adoption agreement is reached at any time before termination of parental rights, it shall be made a part of the court record.

E. In any action for the termination of parental rights brought by a party other than the department and involving a child in the legal custody of the department, the department may:

(1) litigate a motion for the termination of parental rights that was initially filed by another party; or

(2) move that the motion for the termination of parental rights be found premature and denied.

F. When a motion to terminate parental rights is filed, the department shall perform concurrent planning.

G. When a child has been in foster care for not less than fifteen of the previous twenty-two months, the department shall file a motion to terminate parental rights, unless:

(1) a parent has made substantial progress toward eliminating the problem that caused the child's placement in foster care; it is likely that the child will be able to safely return to the parent's home within three months; and the child's return to the parent's home will be in the child's best interests;

(2) the child has a close and positive relationship with a parent and a permanent plan that does not include termination of parental rights will provide the most secure and appropriate placement for the child;

(3) the child is fourteen years of age or older, is firmly opposed to termination of parental rights and is likely to disrupt an attempt to place the child with an adoptive family;

(4) a parent is terminally ill, but in remission, and does not want parental rights to be terminated; provided that the parent has designated a guardian for the child;

(5) the child is not capable of functioning if placed in a family setting. In such a case, the court shall reevaluate the status of the child every ninety days unless there is a final court determination that the child cannot be placed in a family setting;

(6) grounds do not exist for termination of parental rights;

(7) the child is an unaccompanied, refugee minor and the situation regarding the child involves international legal issues or compelling foreign policy issues;

(8) adoption is not an appropriate plan for the child; or

(9) the parent's incarceration or participation in a court-ordered residential substance abuse treatment program constitutes the primary factor in the child's placement in substitute care and termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest.

H. For purposes of this section, a child shall be considered to have entered foster care on the earlier of:

(1) the date of the first judicial finding that the child has been abused or neglected; or

(2) the date that is sixty days after the date on which the child was removed from the home.

I. The grounds for any attempted termination shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence.

J. When the court terminates parental rights, it shall appoint a custodian for the child and fix responsibility for the child's support.

K. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights divests the parent of all legal rights and privileges and dispenses with both the necessity for the consent to or receipt of notice of any subsequent adoption proceeding concerning the child. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights shall not affect the child's rights of inheritance from and through the child's biological parents.

L. When the court denies a motion to terminate parental rights, the court shall issue appropriate orders immediately. The court shall direct the parties to file a stipulated order and interim plan or a request for hearing within thirty days of the date of the hearing denying the termination of parental rights.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-29, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 123; 1997, ch. 34, § 10; 1999, ch. 77, § 11; 2001, ch. 315, § 1; 2003, ch. 108, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 52; 2009, ch. 239, § 49; 2022, ch. 41, § 55.

32A-4-30. Attorney fees.

The court may order the department to pay attorney fees for the child's guardian ad litem or attorney if:

A. the child is in the legal custody of the department;

B. the child's guardian ad litem or the child, through the child's attorney:

(1) requests in writing that the department move for the termination of parental rights;

(2) gives the department written notice that if the department does not move for termination of parental rights, the guardian ad litem or the child, through the child's attorney, intends to move for the termination of parental rights and seek an award of attorney fees;

(3) successfully moves for the termination of parental rights; and

(4) applies to the court for an award of attorney fees; and

C. the department refuses to litigate the motion for the termination of parental rights or fails to act in a timely manner.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-30, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 124; 2005, ch. 189, § 53.

32A-4-31. Permanent guardianship of a child.

A. In proceedings for permanent guardianship, the court shall give primary consideration to the physical, mental and emotional welfare and needs of the child.

Permanent guardianship vests in the guardian all rights and responsibilities of a parent, other than those rights and responsibilities of the natural or adoptive parent, if any, set forth in the decree of permanent guardianship.

B. Any adult, including a relative or foster parent, may be considered as a permanent guardian, provided that the department grants consent to the guardianship if the child is in the legal custody of the department. An agency or institution may not be a permanent guardian. The court shall appoint a person nominated by the child, if the minor is fourteen years of age or older, unless the court finds the appointment contrary to the best interests of the child.

C. The court may establish a permanent guardianship between a child and the guardian when the prospective guardianship is in the child's best interest and when:

(1) the child has been adjudicated as an abused or neglected child;

(2) the department has made reasonable efforts to reunite the parent and child and further efforts by the department would be unproductive;

(3) reunification of the parent and child is not in the child's best interests because the parent continues to be unwilling or unable to properly care for the child; and

(4) the likelihood of the child being adopted is remote or it is established that termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-31, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 125; 2005, ch. 189, § 54.

32A-4-32. Permanent guardianship; procedure.

A. A motion for permanent guardianship may be filed by any party.

B. A motion for permanent guardianship shall set forth:

(1) the date, place of birth and marital status of the child, if known;

(2) the facts and circumstances supporting the grounds for permanent guardianship;

(3) the name and address of the prospective guardian and a statement that the person agrees to accept the duties and responsibilities of guardianship;

(4) the basis for the court's jurisdiction;

(5) the relationship of the child to the petitioner and the prospective guardian; and

(6) whether the child is subject to the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978] and, if so, any additional requirements for that motion as provided pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act.

C. If the motion is not filed by the prospective guardian, the motion shall be verified by the prospective guardian.

D. Notice of the filing of the motion, accompanied by a copy of the motion, shall be served by the moving party on any parent who has not previously been made a party to the proceeding, the parents of the child, foster parents with whom the child is residing, the foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child with whom the child has resided for six months, the child's custodian, the department, any person appointed to represent any party, including the child's guardian ad litem, and any other person the court orders provided with notice. Service shall be in accordance with the Children's Court Rules for the service of motions. Further notice shall not be required to a parent who has been provided notice previously pursuant to Section 32A-4-17 NMSA 1978 and who failed to make an appearance.

E. The grounds for permanent guardianship shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence.

F. A judgment of the court vesting permanent guardianship with an individual divests the biological or adoptive parent of legal custody or guardianship of the child, but is not a termination of the parent's rights. A child's inheritance rights from and through the child's biological or adoptive parents are not affected by this proceeding.

G. Upon a finding that grounds exist for a permanent guardianship, the court may incorporate into the final order provisions for visitation with the natural parents, siblings or other relatives of the child and any other provision necessary to rehabilitate the child or provide for the child's continuing safety and well-being.

H. The court shall retain jurisdiction to enforce its judgment of permanent guardianship.

I. Any party may make a motion for revocation of the order granting guardianship when there is a significant change of circumstances, including:

(1) the child's parent is able and willing to properly care for the child; or

(2) the child's guardian is unable to properly care for the child.

J. The court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the child in all proceedings for the revocation of permanent guardianship if the child is under the age of fourteen. The

court shall appoint an attorney for the child in all proceedings for the revocation of permanent guardianship if the child is fourteen years of age or older at the inception of the proceedings.

K. The court may revoke the order granting guardianship when a significant change of circumstances has been proven by clear and convincing evidence and it is in the child's best interests to revoke the order granting guardianship.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-32, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 126; 1999, ch. 77, § 12; 2005, ch. 189, § 55; 2009, ch. 239, § 50; 2022, ch. 41, § 56.

32A-4-33. Confidentiality; records; penalty.

A. All records or information concerning a party to a neglect or abuse proceeding, including social records, diagnostic evaluations, psychiatric or psychological reports, videotapes, transcripts and audio recordings of a child's statement of abuse or medical reports incident to or obtained as a result of a neglect or abuse proceeding or that were produced or obtained during an investigation in anticipation of or incident to a neglect or abuse proceeding shall be confidential and closed to the public.

B. The records described in Subsection A of this section shall be disclosed only to the parties and:

(1) court personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the court to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the court's possession;

(2) court-appointed special advocates appointed to the neglect or abuse proceeding;

(3) the child's guardian ad litem;

(4) the attorney representing the child in an abuse or neglect action, a delinquency action or any other action under the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978];

(5) department personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the department to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the department's possession;

(6) any local substitute care review board or any agency contracted to implement local substitute care review boards;

(7) law enforcement officials, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(8) district attorneys, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(9) any state government or tribal government social services agency in any state or when, in the opinion of the department it is in the best interest of the child, a governmental social services agency of another country;

(10) a foster parent, if the records are those of a child currently placed with that foster parent or of a child being considered for placement with that foster parent and the records concern the social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the child;

(11) school personnel involved with the child if the records concern the child's social or educational needs;

(12) a grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin, if the records or information pertain to a child being considered for placement with that grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin and the records or information concern the social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the child;

(13) health care or mental health professionals involved in the evaluation or treatment of the child or of the child's parents, guardian, custodian or other family members;

(14) protection and advocacy representatives pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Amendments Act of 1991;

(15) children's safehouse organizations conducting investigatory interviews of children on behalf of a law enforcement agency or the department;

(16) representatives of the federal government or their contractors authorized by federal statute or regulation to review, inspect, audit or otherwise have access to records and information pertaining to neglect or abuse proceedings;

(17) any person or entity attending a meeting arranged by the department to discuss the safety, well-being and permanency of a child, when the parent or child, or parent or legal custodian on behalf of a child younger than fourteen years of age, has consented to the disclosure; and

(18) any other person or entity, by order of the court, having a legitimate interest in the case or the work of the court.

C. A parent, guardian or legal custodian whose child has been the subject of an investigation of abuse or neglect where no petition has been filed shall have the right to inspect any medical report, psychological evaluation, law enforcement reports or other investigative or diagnostic evaluation; provided that any identifying information related to

the reporting party or any other party providing information shall be deleted. The parent, guardian or legal custodian shall also have the right to the results of the investigation and the right to petition the court for full access to all department records and information except those records and information the department finds would be likely to endanger the life or safety of any person providing information to the department.

D. Whoever intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records closed to the public pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of that act is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

E. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to this section and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-33, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 127; 2005, ch. 189, § 56; 2009, ch. 239, § 51; 2016, ch. 54, § 8; 2022, ch. 41, § 57.

32A-4-33.1. Records release when a child dies.

A. After learning that a child fatality has occurred and that there is reasonable suspicion that the fatality was caused by abuse or neglect, the department shall, upon written request to the secretary of the department, release the following information, if in the department's possession, within five business days:

(1) the age and gender of the child;

(2) the date of death;

(3) whether the child was in foster care or in the home of the child's parent or guardian at the time of death; and

(4) whether an investigation is being conducted by the department.

B. If an investigation is being conducted by the department, then a request for further information beyond that listed in Subsection A of this section shall be answered with a statement that a report is under investigation.

C. Upon completion of a child abuse or neglect investigation into a child's death, if it is determined that abuse or neglect caused the child's death, the following documents shall be released upon request:

(1) a summary of the department's investigation;

(2) a law enforcement investigation report, if in the department's possession; and

(3) a medical examiner's report, if in the department's possession.

D. Prior to releasing any document pursuant to Subsection C of this section, the department shall consult with the district attorney and shall redact:

(1) information that would, in the opinion of the district attorney, jeopardize a criminal investigation or proceeding;

(2) identifying information related to a reporting party or any other party providing information; and

(3) information that is privileged, confidential or not subject to disclosure pursuant to any other state or federal law.

E. Once documents pursuant to this section have been released by the department, the department may comment on the case within the scope of the release.

F. Information released by the department consistent with the requirements of this section does not require prior notice to any other individual.

G. Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring the department to obtain documents not in the abuse and neglect case file.

H. A person disclosing abuse and neglect case file information as required by this section shall not be subject to suit in civil or criminal proceedings for complying with the requirements of this section.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-4-33.1, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 52.

32A-4-34. Duties of employees.

All employees of the department shall be trained in their legal duties to protect the constitutional and statutory rights of children and families from the initial time of contact, during the investigation and throughout any treatment.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 189, § 57.

32A-4-35. Appointment or change of educational decision maker.

A. In all matters involving children alleged by the state to be abused or neglected, including proceedings to terminate parental rights, the children's court shall appoint an educational decision maker in every case.

B. The children's court shall appoint an educational decision maker at the custody hearing; provided that the children's court:

(1) may change the appointment of an educational decision maker upon motion of a party at any stage of the proceedings; and

(2) shall review at each subsequent stage of the proceedings whether to continue or change the appointment of an educational decision maker for the child.

C. The children's court shall appoint a respondent as the child's educational decision maker, unless the children's court determines that doing so would be contrary to the best interests of the child. If the children's court determines that no respondent should be appointed as the child's educational decision maker, the children's court shall appoint another qualified individual, taking into account the following:

(1) whether the individual knows the child and is willing to accept responsibility for making educational decisions;

(2) whether the individual has any personal or professional interests that conflict with the interests of the child; and

(3) whether the individual is permitted to make all necessary educational decisions for the child, including decisions related to whether the child is a child with a disability under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

History: Laws 2017, ch. 64, § 3.

ARTICLE 4A
Children's Advocacy Centers

32A-4A-1. Short title.

This act [32A-4A-1 to 32A-4A-4 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Children's Advocacy Centers Act".

History: Laws 2019, ch. 134, § 1.

32A-4A-2. Definition.

As used in the Children's Advocacy Centers Act, "center" means a children's advocacy center, which is an entity that provides a comprehensive multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse or neglect in a neutral, child-friendly setting by representatives of the following fields and professions:

A. child protective services;

B. family and victim advocacy;

C. forensic interviewers;

D. law enforcement;

E. medical examiners;

F. behavioral health; and

G. services related to those fields and professions listed in Subsections A through F of this section.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 134, § 2.

32A-4A-3. Children's advocacy centers; duties.

A center shall:

A. be an entity that is a private, incorporated agency, a hospital or a governmental entity;

B. have a neutral, child-focused facility where forensic interviews with children take place; provided that all agencies shall have a place to interact with the child as investigative or treatment needs require;

C. have a designated staff trained according to standards approved by the national children's alliance;

D. have a multidisciplinary team established in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Advocacy Centers Act that meets on a regular basis, at least every other month;

E. provide case tracking of child abuse cases seen through the center. Case tracking or data collected shall include:

(1) the number of child abuse cases seen at the center;

(2) demographic data;

(3) the number of cases referred for prosecution; and

(4) the number of cases referred for behavioral health services, medical examinations and other related services;

F. provide medical examinations or mental health services at the center or provide referrals for medical examinations or mental health therapy provided by an agency not located at the center but with which the center has a memorandum of understanding or interagency agreement;

G. provide family and victim advocacy services to a child and to a non-offending caregiver of the child;

H. facilitate the provision of training of center staff and multidisciplinary team members; and

I. adhere to the national children's alliance standards.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 134, § 3.

32A-4A-4. Multidisciplinary child abuse teams; establishment; membership; duties.

A. The following persons shall comprise a multidisciplinary child abuse investigation team in each judicial district in the state:

(1) the district attorney of the judicial district in which the team is created and established, or the district attorney's designee;

(2) a representative from the protective services division of the children, youth and families department, appointed by the director of the division or the director's designee;

(3) a representative from a center that exists in the judicial district in which the team is located; and

(4) the following members, appointed by the agency head or designee of the following agencies:

(a) a representative from each law enforcement agency within the judicial district;

(b) medical personnel with expertise and certification in pediatric sexual assault, child physical abuse and neglect identification or treatment;

(c) a mental health service provider with training and experience in evidence-supported trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy; and

(d) a family or victim advocate from an agency designated for advocacy services in that judicial district.

B. The following multidisciplinary child abuse investigation team members shall be present before a forensic interview can take place:

(1) the center's forensic interviewer; and

(2) when available and as appropriate:

(a) a representative from law enforcement; and

(b) the representative from the protective services division of the children, youth and families department.

C. A multidisciplinary child abuse investigation team shall:

(1) develop a written protocol for the investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect in accordance with each member agency's requirements;

(2) convene on a regular ongoing basis, at least every other month, for the purpose of conducting case tracking, case review and general business and considering proposed modifications to the team's existing protocol; and

(3) train and provide technical assistance to team members, agencies and medical providers that investigate child abuse and neglect cases.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 134, § 4.

ARTICLE 5
Adoptions

32A-5-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 5 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Adoption Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 128; 2003, ch. 294, § 1; 2003, ch. 321, § 1.

32A-5-2. Purpose.

The purpose of the Adoption Act is to:

A. establish procedures to effect a legal relationship between a parent and adopted child that is identical to that of a parent and biological child;

B. provide for family relationships that will give the adopted child protection and economic security and that will enable the child to develop physically, mentally and emotionally to the maximum extent possible; and

C. ensure due process protections.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 129.

32A-5-3. Definitions.

As used in the Adoption Act:

A. "accrediting entity" means an entity that has entered into an agreement with the United States secretary of state pursuant to the federal Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 and regulations adopted by the United States secretary of state pursuant to that act, to accredit agencies and approve persons who provide adoption services related to convention adoptions;

B. "adoptee" means a person who is the subject of an adoption petition;

C. "adoption service" means:

(1) identifying a child for adoption and arranging the adoption of the child;

(2) arranging or assisting in the process of connecting or matching parents who may place a child for adoption with prospective adoptive parents;

(3) providing counseling, advice or guidance related to a potential adoption;

(4) receiving or disbursing funds or anything of value on behalf of a prospective adoptive parent or to a parent who may place or has placed a child for adoption;

(5) securing termination of parental rights to a child or consent to adoption of the child;

(6) performing a background study on a child and reporting on the study;

(7) performing a home study on a prospective adoptive parent and reporting on the study;

(8) making determinations regarding the best interests of a child and the appropriateness of an adoptive placement for the child;

(9) performing post-placement monitoring of a child until an adoption is final; or

(10) when there is a disruption before an adoption of a child is final, assuming custody of the child and providing or facilitating the provision of child care or other social services for the child pending an alternative placement of the child;

D. "agency" means a person certified, licensed or otherwise specially empowered by law to place a child in a home in this or any other state for the purpose of adoption;

E. "agency adoption" means an adoption when the adoptee is in the custody of an agency prior to placement;

F. "acknowledged father" means a father who:

(1) acknowledges paternity of the adoptee pursuant to the putative father registry, as provided for in Section 32A-5-20 NMSA 1978;

(2) is named, with his consent, as the adoptee's father on the adoptee's birth certificate;

(3) is obligated to support the adoptee under a written voluntary promise or pursuant to a court order; or

(4) has openly held out the adoptee as his own child by establishing a custodial, personal or financial relationship with the adoptee as follows:

(a) for an adoptee under six months old at the time of placement: 1) has initiated an action to establish paternity; 2) is living with the adoptee at the time the adoption petition is filed; 3) has lived with the mother a minimum of ninety days during the two-hundred-eighty-day period prior to the birth or placement of the adoptee; 4) has lived with the adoptee within the ninety days immediately preceding the adoptive placement; 5) has provided reasonable and fair financial support to the mother during the pregnancy and in connection with the adoptee's birth in accordance with his means and when not prevented from doing so by the person or authorized agency having lawful custody of the adoptee or the adoptee's mother; 6) has continuously paid child support to the mother since the adoptee's birth in an amount at least equal to the amount provided in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978, or has brought current any delinquent child support payments; or 7) any other factor the court deems necessary to establish a custodial, personal or financial relationship with the adoptee; or

(b) for an adoptee over six months old at the time of placement: 1) has initiated an action to establish paternity; 2) has lived with the adoptee within the ninety days immediately preceding the adoptive placement; 3) has continuously paid child support to the mother since the adoptee's birth in an amount at least equal to the amount provided in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978, or is making reasonable efforts to bring delinquent child support payments current; 4) has contact with the adoptee on a monthly basis when physically and financially able and when not prevented by the person or authorized agency having lawful custody of the adoptee; or 5) has regular

communication with the adoptee, or with the person or agency having the care or custody of the adoptee, when physically and financially unable to visit the adoptee and when not prevented from doing so by the person or authorized agency having lawful custody of the adoptee;

G. "alleged father" means an individual whom the biological mother has identified as the biological father, but the individual has not acknowledged paternity or registered with the putative father registry as provided for in Section 32A-5-20 NMSA 1978;

H. "consent" means a document:

(1) signed by a biological parent whereby the parent grants consent to the adoption of the parent's child by another;

(2) whereby the department or an agency grants its consent to the adoption of a child in its custody; or

(3) signed by the adoptee if the child is fourteen years of age or older;

I. "convention adoption" means:

(1) an adoption by a United States resident of a child who is a resident of a foreign country that is a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption; or

(2) an adoption by a resident of a foreign country that is a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of a child who is a resident of the United States;

J. "counselor" means a person certified by the department to conduct adoption counseling in independent adoptions;

K. "department adoption" means an adoption when the child is in the custody of the department;

L. "foreign born child" means any child not born in the United States who is not a citizen of the United States;

M. "former parent" means a parent whose parental rights have been terminated or relinquished;

N. "full disclosure" means mandatory and continuous disclosure by the investigator, agency, department or petitioner throughout the adoption proceeding and after finalization of the adoption of all known, nonidentifying information regarding the adoptee, including:

(1) health history;

(2) psychological history;

(3) mental history;

(4) hospital history;

(5) medication history;

(6) genetic history;

(7) physical descriptions;

(8) social history;

(9) placement history; and

(10) education;

O. "independent adoption" means an adoption when the child is not in the custody of the department or an agency;

P. "investigator" means an individual certified by the department to conduct pre-placement studies and post-placement reports;

Q. "office" means a place for the regular transaction of business or performance of particular services;

R. "parental rights" means all rights of a parent with reference to a child, including parental right to control, to withhold consent to an adoption or to receive notice of a hearing on a petition for adoption;

S. "placement" means the selection of a family for an adoptee or matching of a family with an adoptee and physical transfer of the adoptee to the family in all adoption proceedings, except in adoptions filed pursuant to Paragraphs (1) and (2) of Subsection C of Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978, in which case placement occurs when the parents consent to the adoption, parental rights are terminated or parental consent is implied;

T. "post-placement report" means a written evaluation of the adoptive family and the adoptee after the adoptee is placed for adoption;

U. "pre-placement study" means a written evaluation of the adoptive family, the adoptee's biological family and the adoptee;

V. "presumed father" means:

(1) the husband of the biological mother at the time the adoptee was born;

(2) an individual who was married to the mother and either the adoptee was born during the term of the marriage or the adoptee was born within three hundred days after the marriage was terminated by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity or divorce; or

(3) before the adoptee's birth, an individual who attempted to marry the adoptee's biological mother by a marriage solemnized in apparent compliance with law, although the attempted marriage is or could be declared invalid and if the attempted marriage:

(a) could be declared invalid only by a court, the adoptee was born during the attempted marriage or within three hundred days after its termination by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity or divorce; or

(b) is invalid without a court order, the adoptee was born within three hundred days after the termination of cohabitation;

W. "record" means any petition, affidavit, consent or relinquishment form, transcript or notes of testimony, deposition, power of attorney, report, decree, order, judgment, correspondence, document, photograph, invoice, receipt, certificate or other printed, written, videotaped or tape-recorded material pertaining to an adoption proceeding;

X. "relinquishment" means the document by which a parent relinquishes parental rights to the department or an agency to enable placement of the parent's child for adoption;

Y. "resident" means a person who, prior to filing an adoption petition, has lived in the state for at least six months immediately preceding filing of the petition for adoption or a person who has become domiciled in the state by establishing legal residence with the intention of maintaining the residency indefinitely; and

Z. "stepparent adoption" means an adoption of the adoptee by the adoptee's stepparent when the adoptee has lived with the stepparent for at least one year following the marriage of the stepparent to the custodial parent.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 130; 1995, ch. 206, § 26; 2001, ch. 162, § 1; 2003, ch. 294, § 2; 2003, ch. 321, § 2; 2005, ch. 189, § 58; 2012, ch. 28, § 1.

32A-5-4. Application of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

The protections set forth in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, including provisions concerning notice to the Indian child's tribe, transfer to tribal court and

placement preferences, apply to all proceedings involving an Indian child under the Adoption Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 131.

32A-5-5. Indian child placement preferences.

A. In any adoptive placement of an Indian child under state law, preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with:

(1) a member of the Indian child's extended family;

(2) other members of the child's Indian tribe; or

(3) other Indian families.

B. An Indian child accepted for pre-adoptive placement shall be placed in the least restrictive setting which most approximates a family in which the child's special needs, if any, may be met. The Indian child shall also be placed within reasonable proximity to the Indian child's home, taking into account special needs of the Indian child. In any foster care or pre-adoptive placement, a preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with:

(1) a member of the Indian child's extended family;

(2) a foster home licensed, approved and specified by the Indian child's tribe;

(3) an Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian licensing authority; or

(4) an institution for children approved by the Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs.

C. If the placement preferences of this section are not followed or if the Indian child is placed in an institution, a plan shall be developed to ensure that the Indian child's cultural ties are protected and fostered.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 132.

32A-5-6. Authority of the department.

A. The department may adopt and promulgate necessary rules and forms for the administration of the Adoption Act, including rules for the assessment of fees. The rules shall not conflict with the provisions of the Adoption Act.

B. The department has the authority to provide or request additional information from an investigator or an attorney representing any person involved in any action filed pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act.

C. The department has the authority to intervene in any action filed pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act. The intervention shall be effected when legal counsel for the department files a motion for an entry of appearance and an appropriate response.

D. The department shall be served by mail by the attorney for the petitioner with copies of all pleadings filed in any action pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act, except for copies of the petition for adoption, the request for placement and the decree of adoption, which shall be served as provided in Section 32A-5-7 NMSA 1978.

E. The department is authorized to act as an accrediting entity on behalf of the state.

F. The department may assess fees for the cost of accrediting an agency or approving a person in matters related to convention adoptions. The department shall establish the amount of the fees by rule and the fees shall be subject to approval by the United States secretary of state. The amount of the fees shall not exceed the cost of similar services provided by the department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 133; 1995, ch. 206, § 27; 2003, ch. 294, § 3; 2003, ch. 321, § 3.

32A-5-7. Clerk of the court; duties.

A. The clerk of the court shall file pleadings captioned pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-9 NMSA 1978. The clerk of the court shall not file incorrectly captioned pleadings.

B. The clerk of the court shall mail a copy of the request for placement to the department within one working day of the request for placement being filed with the court. The attorney for the person requesting placement shall provide to the clerk of the court a copy of the request for placement and a stamped envelope addressed to the department as specified in department rules.

C. The clerk of the court shall mail a copy of the petition for adoption within one working day of the petition for adoption being filed with the court. The attorney for the petitioner shall provide to the clerk of the court a copy of the petition for adoption and a stamped envelope addressed to the department as specified in department rules.

D. The clerk of the court shall mail a copy of the decree of adoption to the department within one working day of the entry of the decree of adoption. The attorney for the petitioner shall provide to the clerk of the court a copy of the decree of adoption and a stamped envelope addressed to the department as specified in department rules.

E. The clerk of the court shall provide a certificate of adoption with an adoptee's new name.

F. The attorney for the petitioner shall forward the certificate of adoption provided for in Subsection E of this section as follows:

(1) for a person born in the United States, to the appropriate vital statistics office of the place, if known, where the adoptee was born; or

(2) for all other persons, to the state registrar of vital statistics.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 134; 1995, ch. 206, § 28; 2005, ch. 189, § 59; 2022, ch. 41, § 58.

32A-5-8. Confidentiality of records.

A. Unless the petitioner agrees to be contacted or agrees to the release of the petitioner's identity to the parent and the parent agrees to be contacted or agrees to the release of the parent's identity to the petitioner, the attorneys, the court, the agency and the department shall maintain confidentiality regarding the names of the parties, unless the information is already otherwise known. After the petition is filed and prior to the entry of the decree, the records in adoption proceedings shall be open to inspection only by the attorney for the petitioner, the department or the agency, any attorney appointed as a guardian ad litem or attorney for the adoptee, any attorney retained by the adoptee or other persons upon order of the court for good cause shown.

B. All records, whether on file with the court, an agency, the department, an attorney or other provider of professional services in connection with an adoption, are confidential and may be disclosed only pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act. All information and documentation provided for the purpose of full disclosure is confidential. Documentation provided for the purpose of full disclosure shall remain the property of the person making full disclosure when a prospective adoptive parent decides not to accept a placement. Immediately upon refusal of the placement, the prospective adoptive parent shall return all full disclosure documentation to the person providing full disclosure. A prospective adoptive parent shall not disclose any confidential information received during the full disclosure process, except as necessary to make a placement decision or to provide information to a child's guardian ad litem or attorney or the court.

C. All hearings in adoption proceedings shall be confidential and shall be held in closed court without admittance of any person other than parties and their counsel.

D. A person who intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records closed to the public pursuant to the Adoption Act or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of that act is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

E. Prior to the entry of the decree of adoption, the parent consenting to the adoption or relinquishing parental rights to an agency or the department shall execute an affidavit stating whether the parent will permit contact or the disclosure of the parent's identity to the adoptee or the adoptee's prospective adoptive parents.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 135; 1995, ch. 206, § 29; 2005, ch. 189, § 60; 2009, ch. 239, § 53.

32A-5-9. Caption.

The caption for adoption proceedings shall be styled "In the Matter of the Adoption Petition of (Petitioner's Name)".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 136.

32A-5-10. Venue.

A petition for adoption may be filed in any county where:

A. a petitioner is a resident;

B. the adoptee is physically present at the time the petition is filed;

C. an office of the agency that placed the adoptee for adoption is located; or

D. the department office from which the child was placed is located.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-10, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 137.

32A-5-11. Who may be adopted; who may adopt.

A. Any child may be adopted.

B. Residents who are one of the following may adopt:

(1) any individual who has been approved by the court as a suitable adoptive parent pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act; and

(2) a married individual without the individual's spouse joining in the adoption if:

(a) the nonjoining spouse is a parent of the adoptee;

(b) the individual and the nonjoining spouse are legally separated; or

(c) the failure of the nonjoining spouse to join in the adoption is excused for reasonable circumstances as determined by the court.

C. Nonresidents who meet the criteria of Subsection B of this section may adopt in New Mexico if the adoptee is a resident of New Mexico or was born in New Mexico but is less than six months of age and was placed by the department or an agency licensed by the state of New Mexico.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-11, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 138.

32A-5-12. Placement for adoption; restrictions; full disclosure.

A. No petition for adoption shall be granted by the court unless the adoptee was placed in the home of the petitioner for the purpose of adoption:

(1) by the department;

(2) by an appropriate public authority of another state;

(3) by an agency; or

(4) pursuant to a court order, as provided in Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978.

B. The provisions of Subsection A of this section do not apply to a child in the department's custody who is being adopted pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978].

C. When an adoptee is not in the custody of the department or an agency, the adoption is an independent adoption and the provisions of this section and Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978 shall apply, except when the following circumstances exist:

(1) a stepparent of the adoptee seeks to adopt the adoptee and prior to the filing of the adoption petition, the adoptee has lived with the stepparent for at least one year since the marriage of the stepparent to the custodial parent and the family has received counseling, as provided for in Section 32A-5-22 NMSA 1978;

(2) a relative within the fifth degree of consanguinity to the adoptee or that relative's spouse seeks to adopt the adoptee, and, prior to the filing of the adoption petition, the adoptee has lived with the relative or the relative's spouse for at least one year; or

(3) a person designated to care for the adoptee in the will of the adoptee's deceased parent seeks to adopt the adoptee, and, prior to the filing of the adoption petition, the adoptee has lived with that person for at least one year.

D. All placements shall be made by the department, an agency or the parent of the adoptee pursuant to Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978.

E. In all adoptions, prior to any placement being made, the person making the placement shall provide full disclosure.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-12, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 139; 1995, ch. 206, § 30.

32A-5-13. Independent adoptions; request for placement; placement order; certification.

A. When a placement order is required, the petitioner shall file a request with the court to allow the placement. An order permitting the placement shall be obtained prior to actual placement.

B. Only a pre-placement study that has been prepared or updated within one year immediately prior to the date of placement, approving the petitioner as an appropriate adoptive parent, shall be filed with the court prior to issuance of a placement order, except as provided in Subsection C of Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978.

C. In order for a person to be certified to conduct pre-placement studies, the person shall meet the standards promulgated by the department.

D. The pre-placement study shall be conducted by an agency or a person certified by the department to conduct the study. A person or agency that wants to be certified to perform pre-placement studies shall file documents verifying their qualifications with the department. The department shall publish a list of persons or agencies certified to conduct a pre-placement study. If necessary to defray additional costs associated with compiling the list, the department may assess and charge a reasonable administrative fee to the person or agency listed.

E. When a person or agency that wants to be certified to perform pre-placement studies files false documentation with the department, the person or agency shall be subject to the provisions of Section 32A-5-42 NMSA 1978.

F. A request for placement shall be filed and verified by the petitioner and shall allege:

(1) the full name, age and place and duration of residence of the petitioner and, if married, the place and date of marriage;

(2) the date and place of birth of the adoptee, if known, or the anticipated date and place of birth of the adoptee;

(3) a detailed statement of the circumstances and persons involved in the proposed placement;

(4) if the adoptee has been born, the address where the adoptee is residing at the time of the request for placement;

(5) if the adoptee has been born, the places where the adoptee has lived within the past three years and the names and addresses of the persons with whom the adoptee has lived. If the adoptee is in the custody of an agency or the department, the address shall be the address of the agency or the county office of the department from which the child was placed;

(6) the existence of any court orders that are known to the petitioner and that regulate custody, visitation or access to the adoptee, copies of which shall be attached to the request for placement as exhibits; if copies of any such court orders are unavailable at the time of filing the request for placement, the copies shall be filed prior to the issuance of the order of placement;

(7) that the petitioner desires to establish a parent and child relationship between the petitioner and the adoptee and that the petitioner is a fit and proper person able to care and provide for the adoptee's welfare;

(8) the relationship, if any, of the petitioner to the adoptee;

(9) whether the adoptee is subject to the Indian Family Protection Act [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978], and, if so, the petition shall allege the actions taken to comply with the Indian Family Protection Act and all other allegations required pursuant to that act;

(10) whether the adoption is subject to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] and what specific actions have been taken to comply with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children; and

(11) the name, address and telephone number of the agency or investigator who has agreed to do the pre-placement study.

G. The request for placement shall be served on all parties entitled to receive notice of the filing of a petition for adoption, as provided in Section 32A-5-27 NMSA 1978. An order allowing placement may be entered prior to service of the request for placement.

H. A hearing and the court decision on the request for placement shall occur within thirty days of the filing of the request.

I. As part of any court order authorizing placement under this section, the court shall find whether the pre-placement study complies with Section 32A-5-14 NMSA 1978

and that the time requirements concerning placement set forth in this section have been met.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-13, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 140; 1995, ch. 206, § 31; 2001, ch. 162, § 2; 2005, ch. 189, § 61; 2022, ch. 41, § 59.

32A-5-14. Pre-placement study.

A. The pre-placement study shall be performed as prescribed by department regulation and shall include at a minimum the following:

(1) an individual interview with each petitioner;

(2) a joint interview with both petitioners; if a joint interview is not conducted, an explanation shall be provided in the pre-placement study;

(3) a home visit, which shall include an interview with the petitioner's children and any other permanent residents of the petitioner's home;

(4) an interview with the adoptee, if age appropriate;

(5) an individual interview with each of the adoptee's parents; if a parent is not interviewed, an explanation shall be provided in the pre-placement study;

(6) full disclosure to the petitioner;

(7) exploration of the petitioners' philosophy concerning discussion of adoption issues with the adoptee;

(8) the initiation of a criminal records check of each petitioner;

(9) a medical certificate dated not more than one year prior to any adoptive placement assessing the petitioner's health as it relates to the petitioner's ability to care for the adoptee;

(10) a minimum of three letters of reference from individuals named by the petitioner or memoranda of the dates and contents of personal contacts with the references;

(11) a statement of the capacity and readiness of the petitioner for parenthood and the petitioner's emotional and physical health and ability to shelter, feed, clothe and educate the adoptee;

(12) verification of the petitioner's employment, financial resources and marital status;

(13) a report of a medical examination performed on the adoptee within one year prior to the proposed adoptive placement;

(14) a statement of the results of any prior pre-placement study or initiation of a pre-placement study, if any, of the petitioners done by any person; and

(15) the investigator shall attach a copy of proof of certification by the department for the investigator to conduct pre-placement studies, or if the preparer of the pre-placement study is out-of-state, the preparer shall attach a statement setting forth qualifications that are equivalent to those required of an investigator pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978 and department regulations.

B. The pre-placement study shall be completed at the cost of the petitioner.

C. Unless directed by the court, a pre-placement study is not required in cases in which the child is being adopted by a stepparent, a relative or a person named in the child's deceased parent's will pursuant to Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978.

D. The pre-placement study shall be filed with the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-14, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 141; 1995, ch. 206, § 32.

32A-5-14.1. Criminal history records check; background checks.

A. A nationwide criminal history records check shall be conducted on a person who files a petition to adopt a child, on prospective foster parents and on other adults residing in the prospective adoptive or foster parent's household. A person who files a petition to adopt a child shall provide the department with a set of fingerprints. The department is authorized to use the set of fingerprints to conduct a background check of the person providing the fingerprints by submitting the fingerprints to the department of public safety and the federal bureau of investigation.

B. Criminal history records obtained by the department pursuant to the provisions of this section are confidential. Criminal history records obtained pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not be used for any purpose other than conducting background checks. Criminal history records obtained pursuant to the provisions of this section and the information contained in those records shall not be released or disclosed to any other person or agency, except pursuant to a court order or with the written consent of the person who is the subject of the records.

C. A person who releases or discloses criminal history records or information contained in those records in violation of the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

History: Laws 2003, ch. 294, § 8 and Laws 2003, ch. 321, § 8; 2005, ch. 189, § 62.

32A-5-15. Termination of parental rights.

A. The physical, mental and emotional welfare and needs of the child shall be the primary consideration for the termination of parental rights. The court may terminate the rights of the child's parents as provided by the Adoption Act.

B. The court shall terminate parental rights with respect to a child when:

(1) the child has been abandoned by the parents;

(2) the child has been a neglected or abused child and the court finds that the conditions and causes of the neglect and abuse are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future; or

(3) the child has been placed in the care of others, including care by other relatives, either by a court order or otherwise, and the following conditions exist:

(a) the child has lived in the home of others for an extended period of time;

(b) the parent-child relationship has disintegrated;

(c) a psychological parent-child relationship has developed between the substitute family and the child;

(d) if the court deems the child of sufficient capacity to express a preference, the child no longer prefers to live with the natural parent;

(e) the substitute family desires to adopt the child; and

(f) a presumption of abandonment created by the conditions described in Subparagraphs (a) through (e) of this paragraph has not been rebutted.

C. A finding by the court that all of the conditions set forth in Subparagraphs (a) through (e) of Paragraph (3) of Subsection B of this section exist shall create a rebuttable presumption of abandonment.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-15, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 142; 1995, ch. 206, § 33; 2022, ch. 41, § 60.

32A-5-16. Termination procedures.

A. A proceeding to terminate parental rights may be initiated in connection with or prior to an adoption proceeding. Venue shall be in the court for the county in which the

child is physically present or in the county from which the child was placed. The proceeding may be initiated by any of the following:

(1) the department;

(2) an agency; or

(3) any other person having a legitimate interest in the matter, including a petitioner for adoption, the child's guardian, the child's guardian ad litem or attorney in another action, a foster parent, a relative of the child or the child.

B. A petition for termination of parental rights shall be signed and verified by the petitioner, be filed with the court and set forth:

(1) the date, place of birth and marital status of the child, if known;

(2) the grounds for termination and the facts and circumstances supporting the grounds for termination;

(3) the names and addresses of the person, authorized agency or agency officer to whom custody might be transferred;

(4) the basis for the court's jurisdiction;

(5) that the petition is in contemplation of adoption;

(6) the relationship or legitimate interest of the applicant to the child; and

(7) whether the child is an Indian child.

C. Notice of the filing of the petition, accompanied by a copy of the petition, shall be served by the petitioner on the parents of the child, the child's guardian, the legal custodian of the child, the person with whom the child is residing, the individuals with whom the child has resided within the past six months and the department. Service shall be in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts for the service of process in a civil action in this state, with the exception that the department may be served by certified mail. The notice shall state specifically that the person served shall file a written response to the petition within twenty days if the person intends to contest the termination.

D. If the identification or whereabouts of a parent is unknown, the petitioner shall file a motion for an order granting service by publication or an order stating that service by publication is not required. A motion for an order granting service by publication shall be supported by the affidavit of the petitioner, the agency or the petitioner's attorney detailing the efforts made to locate the parent. Upon being satisfied that reasonable efforts to locate the parent have been made and that information as to the identity or

whereabouts of the parent is still insufficient to effect service in accordance with SCRA, Rule 1-004, the court shall order service by publication or order that publication is not required because the parent's consent is not required pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-19 NMSA 1978.

E. The court shall, upon request, appoint counsel for an indigent parent who is unable to obtain counsel or if, in the court's discretion, appointment of counsel for an indigent parent is required in the interest of justice. Payment for the appointed counsel shall be made by the petitioner pursuant to the rate determined by the supreme court of New Mexico for court-appointed attorneys.

F. The court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the child in all contested proceedings for termination of parental rights. If the child is fourteen years of age or older and in the custody of the department, the child's attorney appointed pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] shall represent the child in any proceedings for termination of parental rights under this section.

G. Within thirty days after the filing of a petition to terminate parental rights, the petitioner shall request a hearing on the petition. The hearing date shall be at least thirty days after service is effected upon the parent of the child or completion of publication.

H. The grounds for any attempted termination shall be proved by clear and convincing evidence.

I. If the court terminates parental rights, it shall appoint a custodian for the child. Upon entering an order terminating the parental rights of a parent, the court may commit the child to the custody of the department, the petitioner or an agency willing to accept custody for the purpose of placing the child for adoption.

J. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights divests the parent of all legal rights. Termination of parental rights shall not affect the child's right of inheritance through the former parent.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-16, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 143; 1997, ch. 34, § 11; 2001, ch. 162, § 3; 2009, ch. 239, § 54; 2022, ch. 41, § 61.

32A-5-17. Persons whose consents or relinquishments are required.

A. Consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights to the department or an agency licensed by the state of New Mexico shall be required of the following:

(1) the adoptee, if fourteen years of age or older, except when the court finds that the adoptee does not have the mental capacity to give consent;

(2) the adoptee's mother;

(3) the adoptee's proposed adoptive parent;

(4) the presumed father of the adoptee;

(5) the adoptee's acknowledged father;

(6) the department or the agency to whom the adoptee has been relinquished that has placed the adoptee for adoption or the department or the agency that has custody of the adoptee; provided, however, that the court may grant the adoption without the consent of the department or the agency if the court finds the adoption is in the best interests of the adoptee and that the withholding of consent by the department or the agency is unreasonable; and

(7) the guardian of the adoptee's parent when, pursuant to provisions of the Uniform Probate Code [Chapter 45 NMSA 1978], that guardian has express authority to consent to adoption.

B. A consent or relinquishment executed by a parent who is a minor shall not be subject to avoidance or revocation solely by reason of the parent's minority.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-17, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 144; 1995, ch. 206, § 34; 2005, ch. 189, § 63; 2022, ch. 41, § 62.

32A-5-18. Implied consent or relinquishment.

A. A consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights required pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act shall be implied by the court if the parent, without justifiable cause, has:

(1) left the adoptee without provision for the child's identification for a period of fourteen days; or

(2) left the adoptee with others, including the other parent or an agency, without provisions for support and without communication for a period of:

(a) three months if the adoptee was under the age of six years at the commencement of the three-month period; or

(b) six months if the adoptee was over the age of six years at the commencement of the six-month period.

B. A court shall not imply consent or relinquishment under this section unless the parent whose relinquishment or consent is to be implied has been served with notice setting forth the time and place of the hearing at which the consent or relinquishment

may be implied. The implication of a consent or relinquishment under this section shall have the same effect as though the consent or relinquishment had been given voluntarily.

C. The court shall render its decision on the implied consent prior to proceeding with the adjudicatory hearing.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-18, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 145.

32A-5-19. Persons whose consents or relinquishments are not required.

The consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights required pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act shall not be required from:

A. a parent whose rights with reference to the adoptee have been terminated pursuant to law;

B. a parent who has relinquished the child to an agency for an adoption;

C. a biological father of an adoptee conceived as a result of rape or incest;

D. a person who has failed to respond when given notice pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-27 NMSA 1978; or

E. an alleged father who has failed to register with the putative father registry within ten days of the child's birth and is not otherwise the acknowledged father.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-19, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 146; 1997, ch. 34, § 12; 2001, ch. 162, § 4.

32A-5-20. Putative father registry; notice; penalty.

A. The purpose of the putative father registry is to protect the parental rights of fathers who affirmatively assume responsibility for children they may have fathered and to expedite adoptions of children whose biological fathers are unwilling to assume responsibility for their children by registering with the putative father registry or otherwise acknowledging their children. The registry does not relieve the obligation of mothers to identify known fathers.

B. A putative father registry shall be established by the department of health to record the names and addresses of:

(1) any person adjudicated by a court of this state to be the father of a child;

(2) any person who has filed with the registry, before or after birth of a child out of wedlock, a notice of intent to claim paternity of the child;

(3) any person who has filed with the registry an instrument acknowledging paternity; or

(4) any person adjudicated by a court of another state or territory of the United States to be the father of an out-of-wedlock child, when a certified copy of the court order has been filed with the registry.

C. A person filing a notice of intent to claim paternity of a child or an acknowledgment of paternity shall include in the notice the following:

(1) his name;

(2) his current address;

(3) the mother's name and any other identifying information requested by the department of health; and

(4) the child's name, if known, and any other identifying information requested by the department of health.

D. If the person filing the notice of intent to claim paternity of a child or acknowledgment changes his address, the person shall notify the department of health of his new address in the manner prescribed by the department of health.

E. A person who has filed a notice of intent to claim paternity may at any time revoke a notice of intent to claim paternity previously filed. Upon receipt by the registry of the notice of revocation, the revoked notice of intent to claim paternity shall be deemed a nullity nunc pro tunc.

F. No registration fee shall be charged for registering the intent to claim paternity of a child or acknowledgment of paternity. The department of health may charge a reasonable fee as prescribed by regulation for processing searches of the putative father registry.

G. An unrevoked notice of intent to claim paternity of a child may be introduced in evidence by any party in any proceeding in which that fact may be relevant.

H. If a father-child relationship has not been established pursuant to the New Mexico Uniform Parentage Act [40-11A-101 to 40-11A-106 NMSA 1978], a petitioner for adoption of or termination of parental rights regarding a child shall obtain a certificate of search of the putative father registry.

I. If a petitioner for adoption of or termination of parental rights regarding a child has reason to believe that the conception or birth of the child may have occurred in another state, the petitioner shall also obtain a certificate of search from the putative father registry, if any, in that state.

J. The department of health shall furnish to the requester a certificate of search of the registry on request of any court, a state agency, the department, the petitioner's attorney or the mother of the child. The information shall not be disclosed to any other person, except upon order of the court for good cause shown. The requester shall furnish the department with a stamped, self-addressed reply envelope.

K. A certificate provided by the department of health shall be signed on behalf of the department of health and state that:

(1) a search has been made of the registry; and

(2) a registration containing the information required to identify the registrant:

(a) has been found and is attached to the certificate of search; or

(b) has not been found.

L. A petitioner shall file the certificate of search with the district court before a proceeding for adoption of or termination of parental rights regarding a child may be concluded.

M. Subject to any rules established by the New Mexico supreme court, a certificate of search of the registry of paternity in this or another state is admissible in a proceeding for adoption of or termination of parental rights regarding a child and, if relevant, in other legal proceedings.

N. The department of health may promulgate any regulations or forms necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

O. Any person who intentionally and unlawfully releases information from the putative father registry to the public or makes any other unlawful use of the information in violation of the provisions of this section is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-20, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 147; 2009, ch. 215, § 18.

32A-5-21. Form of consent or relinquishment.

A. Except when consent or relinquishment is implied, a consent or relinquishment by a parent shall be in writing, signed by the parent consenting or relinquishing and shall state the following:

(1) the date, place and time of execution;

(2) the date and place of birth of the adoptee and any names by which the adoptee has been known;

(3) if a consent to adoption is being executed, the identity of the petitioner, if known, or when the adoption is an independent adoption and the identity of the petitioner is unknown, how the petitioner was selected by the consenting parent;

(4) if a relinquishment of parental rights is being executed, the name and address of the agency or the department;

(5) that the person executing the consent or relinquishment has been counseled, as provided in Section 32A-5-22 NMSA 1978, by a certified counselor of the person's choice and with this knowledge the person is voluntarily and unequivocally consenting to the adoption of the named adoptee;

(6) that the consenting party has been advised of the legal consequences of the relinquishment or consent either by independent legal counsel or a judge;

(7) if the adoption is closed, that all parties understand that the court will not enforce any contact, regardless of any informal agreements that have made between the parties;

(8) that the consent to or relinquishment for adoption cannot be withdrawn;

(9) that the person executing the consent or relinquishment has received or been offered a copy of the consent or relinquishment;

(10) that a counseling narrative has been prepared pursuant to department rules and is attached to the consent or relinquishment;

(11) that the person who performed the counseling meets the requirements set forth in the Adoption Act; and

(12) that the person executing the consent or relinquishment waives further notice of the adoption proceedings.

B. The consent of an adoptee, if fourteen years of age or older, shall be in writing, signed by the adoptee, consenting to the adoption and shall state the following:

(1) the date, place and time of execution;

(2) the date and place of birth of the adoptee and any names by which the adoptee has been known;

(3) the name of the petitioner;

(4) that the adoptee has been counseled regarding the consent pursuant to department rules;

(5) that the adoptee has been advised of the legal consequences of the consent;

(6) that the adoptee is voluntarily and unequivocally consenting to the adoption;

(7) that the consent or relinquishment cannot be withdrawn;

(8) that a counseling narrative has been prepared pursuant to department rules and is attached to the consent; and

(9) that the person who performed the counseling meets the requirements set forth in the Adoption Act.

C. In cases when the consent or relinquishment is in English and English is not the first language of the consenting or relinquishing person, the person taking the consent or relinquishment shall certify in writing that the document has been read and explained to the person whose consent or relinquishment is being taken in that person's first language, by whom the document was so read and explained and that the meaning and implications of the document are fully understood by the person giving the consent or relinquishment.

D. Unconditional consents or relinquishments are preferred, and, therefore, conditional consents or relinquishments shall be for good cause and approved by the court. However, if the condition is for a specific petitioner or the condition requires the other parent to consent before the decree of adoption is entered, the condition shall be deemed for good cause. In any event, all conditions permitted under this subsection shall be met within one hundred eighty days of the execution of the conditional consent or relinquishment or the conclusion of any litigation concerning the petition for adoption. The court may grant an extension of this time for good cause.

E. Agency or department consents required pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-17 NMSA 1978 shall state the following:

(1) the date, place and time of execution;

(2) the date and place of birth of the adoptee and any names by which the adoptee has been known;

(3) the name of the petitioner; and

(4) the consent of the agency or department.

F. A consent or relinquishment taken by an individual appointed to take consents or relinquishments by an agency shall be notarized, except that a consent or relinquishment signed in the presence of a judge need not be notarized. A hearing before the court for the purpose of taking a consent or relinquishment shall be heard by the court within seven days of request for setting.

G. No consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights shall be valid if executed within forty-eight hours after the adoptee's birth.

H. A consent to or relinquishment for adoption shall not be withdrawn prior to the entry of a decree of adoption unless the court finds, after notice and opportunity to be heard is afforded to the petitioner, to the person seeking the withdrawal and to the agency placing a child for adoption, that the consent or relinquishment was obtained by fraud. In no event shall a consent or relinquishment be withdrawn after the entry of a decree of adoption.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-21, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 148; 2005, ch. 189, § 64; 2022, ch. 41, § 63.

32A-5-22. Persons required to receive counseling; content and form of counseling.

A. Counseling required pursuant to the provisions of this section shall occur prior to:

(1) consent to the adoption; or

(2) the relinquishment of parental rights.

For good cause, the court may waive any or all counseling requirements.

B. Counseling shall be required for the following persons:

(1) the adoptee, if the adoptee is ten years of age or older;

(2) the adoptee's parent who is consenting to the adoption or relinquishing parental rights; and

(3) in a stepparent adoption, when the stepparent and the custodial parent have been married for more than one year, but less than two years:

(a) the custodial parent whose parental rights are not being terminated, but who is consenting to adoption of the adoptee by the stepparent; and

(b) the petitioning stepparent.

C. The content of the counseling shall be as follows:

(1) an adoptee who is ten years of age or older shall be counseled regarding:

(a) the adoptee's understanding of the adoption process, the consequences of the adoption and alternatives to the adoption;

(b) the adoptee's feelings and wishes regarding the adoption;

(c) the adoptee's readiness for the adoption; and

(d) any other issues relevant to the adoption, given the specific circumstances of the adoption;

(2) the adoptee's parent who is consenting to the adoption or relinquishing his parental rights shall be counseled regarding alternatives to and the consequences of adoption; and

(3) in a stepparent adoption, the custodial parent consenting to the adoption of the custodial parent's child by the stepparent and the petitioning stepparent shall be counseled regarding alternatives to adoption, the consequences of the adoption, child custody and child support.

D. The form of the counseling shall be as follows:

(1) adults required to receive counseling shall be counseled individually without the presence of any other person for a minimum of one counseling session; and

(2) for adoptees ten years of age or older and minor biological parents, there shall be a minimum of two separate counseling sessions with at least one of the sessions to be conducted without the presence of the adoptee's parent or guardian, the minor biological parent's parent or guardian or the petitioner.

E. All counseling sessions shall be conducted in the primary language of the person receiving the counseling.

F. A counseling narrative shall be prepared as prescribed by department regulation and shall be attached to the consent or relinquishment form for filing with the court.

G. Counseling may be provided by a counselor, the department or an agency.

H. A person required to receive counseling who is residing outside of New Mexico may receive counseling from a person who possesses qualifications equivalent to a person certified to perform counseling by the state of New Mexico. A person providing

counseling in another state or country shall attach a statement specifying that person's qualification to perform counseling to the counseling narrative. A person providing counseling in New Mexico shall attach a copy of that person's certification to the counseling narrative.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-22, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 149; 1995, ch. 206, § 35.

32A-5-23. Persons who may take consents or relinquishments; accounting of disbursements.

A. A consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights shall be signed before and approved on the record by a judge who has jurisdiction over adoption proceedings, within or without this state, and who is in the jurisdiction in which the child is present or in which the parent resides at the time it is signed.

B. No parent may relinquish parental rights to the department or an agency without the department's or the agency's consent.

C. The consent or relinquishment shall be filed with the court in which the petition for adoption has been filed before adjudication of the petition.

D. Prior to the approval of a consent to adoption or relinquishment of parental rights, a full and specific accounting signed under penalty of perjury shall be filed by the prospective adoptive parents or their representative in the same court where the associated consent or relinquishment may later be heard. The accounting shall be filed no later than seventy-two hours prior to the anticipated hearing on the proposed consent or relinquishment. The disbursements and expenses itemized in the accounting must be approved by the court prior to approval of a consent to adoption or relinquishment or consent to adoption by a parent for the parent's child. The accounting shall itemize in detail, including the dates and purpose of each disbursement or expense payment and the name and address of each person who received or will receive any disbursement or payment:

(1) all disbursements, as well as anticipated or promised disbursements, of anything of value provided by or on behalf of:

(a) the prospective adoptive parents; or

(b) any person who may profit or be compensated as a result of an adoption associated with the consent or relinquishment;

(2) all disbursements of anything of value to the parents of the child or the child; and

(3) all expenses paid on behalf of the parents of the child or the child.

E. The accounting required in Subsection D of this section is not applicable to stepparent adoptions or to adoptions pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978], unless ordered by the court.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-23, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 150; 1995, ch. 206, § 36; 2005, ch. 189, § 65; 2012, ch. 28, § 2.

32A-5-24. Relinquishments to the department.

A. When a parent elects to relinquish parental rights to the department, a petition to accept the relinquishment shall be filed, unless an abuse or neglect proceeding is pending. If an abuse or neglect proceeding is pending, the relinquishment shall be heard in the context of that proceeding.

B. In all hearings regarding relinquishment of parental rights to the department, the child shall be represented by a guardian ad litem. If the child is fourteen years of age or older and in the custody of the department, the child's attorney appointed pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] shall represent the child in any proceeding for termination of parental rights under this section.

C. If a proposed relinquishment of parental rights is not in contemplation of adoption, the court shall not allow the relinquishment of parental rights unless it finds that good cause exists, that the department has made reasonable efforts to preserve the family and that relinquishment of parental rights is in the child's best interest. Whenever a parent relinquishes the parent's rights pursuant to this subsection, the parent shall remain financially responsible for the child. The court may order the parent to pay the reasonable costs of support and maintenance of the child. The court may use the child support guidelines set forth in Section 40-4-11.1 NMSA 1978 to calculate a reasonable payment.

D. When a parent relinquishes the parent's rights under this section, the parent shall be notified that no contact will be enforced by the court, regardless of any informal agreement, unless the parties have agreed to an open adoption pursuant to Section 32A-5-35 NMSA 1978. The consent for relinquishment shall be in writing and shall state that the parties understand that any informal agreement allowing contact will not be enforced by the courts.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-24, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 151; 2005, ch. 189, § 66; 2009, ch. 239, § 55.

32A-5-25. Petition; time of filing.

A. A petition for adoption shall be filed within sixty days of the adoptee's placement into the proposed adoptive home if the adoptee is under the age of one year. If the adoptee is over the age of one year at the time of placement, the petition shall be filed within one hundred twenty days of the placement. For good cause shown, the court may

extend those time limits up to an additional one hundred eighty days if a request for extension is filed prior to the expiration of the initial time limits. No further extensions of time shall be granted after the one hundred eighty day extension period, unless an addendum to the pre-placement study is filed in addition to an affidavit establishing good cause for the delay in filing the adoption petition.

B. If a petition is not filed in a timely manner, any person having knowledge of the proceeding shall notify the department, which may proceed as if the adoptee were a neglected child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-25, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 152; 1995, ch. 206, § 37.

32A-5-26. Petition; content.

A petition for adoption shall be filed and verified by the petitioner and shall allege:

A. the full name, age and place and duration of residence of the petitioner and, if married, the place and date of marriage; the date and place of any prior marriage, separation or divorce; and the name of any present or prior spouse;

B. the date and place of birth of the adoptee, if known;

C. the places where the adoptee has lived within the past three years and the names and addresses of the persons with whom the adoptee has lived, unless the adoptee is in the custody of an agency or the department, in which case the petitioner shall state the name and address of the agency or the department's county office from which the child was placed;

D. the birth name of the adoptee, any other names by which the adoptee has been known and the adoptee's proposed new name; provided that in the case of an agency adoption, if the petitioner and the biological parents have not agreed to the release of the adoptee's identity to the other person, the birth name and any other names by which the adoptee has been known shall be filed with the court as separate documents at the time the petition is filed;

E. where the adoptee is residing at the time of the filing of the petition and, if the adoptee is not living with the petitioner, when the adoptee will commence living with the petitioner;

F. that the petitioner desires to establish a parent and child relationship with the adoptee and that the petitioner is a fit and proper person able to care and provide for the adoptee's welfare;

G. the existence of any court orders, including placement orders, that are known to the petitioner and that regulate custody, visitation or access to the adoptee, copies of which shall accompany and be attached to the petition as exhibits;

H. the relationship, if any, of the petitioner to the adoptee;

I. the name and address of the placing agency, if any;

J. the names and addresses of all persons from whom consents or relinquishments are required, attaching copies of those obtained and alleging the facts that excuse or imply the consents or relinquishments of the others; provided that if the petitioner has not agreed to the release of the petitioner's identity to the parent or if the parent has not agreed to the release of the parent's identity to the petitioner, the names and addresses of all persons from whom consents or relinquishments are required shall be filed with the court as separate documents at the time the petition for adoption is filed;

K. whether the adoption will be an open adoption, pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-35 NMSA 1978;

L. when consent of the child's father is alleged to be unnecessary, the results of a search of the putative father registry;

M. whether the adoptee is an Indian child;

N. whether the adoption is subject to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] and, if so, a copy of the interstate compact form indicating approval shall be attached as an exhibit to the petition;

O. whether the adoptee is foreign-born and, if so, copies of the child's passport and United States visa and of all documents demonstrating that the adoptee is legally free for adoption, including a certificate from the United States secretary of state that certifies that the adoption is a convention adoption;

P. whether the adoption is a convention adoption and, if so, the petition shall allege:

(1) that the country in which the child has been residing is a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption;

(2) that the agency or person who is providing the adoption service has been approved as an accrediting entity; and

(3) that the certificate issued by the United States secretary of state that certifies the adoption as a convention adoption has been filed with the court; and

Q. the name, address and telephone number of the agency or individual who has agreed to conduct the post-placement report in accordance with Section 32A-5-31 NMSA 1978, if different than the agency or individual who prepared the pre-placement study in accordance with Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-26, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 153; 1995, ch. 206, § 38; 2003, ch. 294, § 4; 2003, ch. 321, § 4; 2022, ch. 41, § 64.

32A-5-27. Notice of petition; form of service; waiver.

A. The petition for adoption shall be served by the petitioner on the following, unless it has been previously waived in writing:

(1) the department, by providing a copy to the court clerk for service pursuant to Section 32A-5-7 NMSA 1978;

(2) any person, agency or institution whose consent or relinquishment is required by Section 32A-5-17 NMSA 1978, unless the notice has been previously waived;

(3) any acknowledged father of the adoptee;

(4) the legally appointed custodian or guardian of the adoptee;

(5) the spouse of any petitioner who has not joined in the petition;

(6) the spouse of the adoptee;

(7) the surviving parent of a deceased parent of the adoptee;

(8) any person known to the petitioner having custody of or visitation with the adoptee under a court order;

(9) any person in whose home the child has resided for at least two months within the preceding six months;

(10) the agency or individual authorized to investigate the adoption under Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978; and

(11) any other person designated by the court.

B. Notice shall not be served on the following:

(1) an alleged father; and

(2) a person whose parental rights have been relinquished or terminated.

C. The petitioner shall provide the clerk of the court with a copy of the petition for adoption, to be mailed to the department pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-7 NMSA 1978.

D. The notice shall state that the person served shall respond to the petition within twenty days if the person intends to contest the adoption and shall state that the failure to so respond shall be treated as a default and the person's consent to the adoption shall not be required. Provided, however, that this provision shall not apply to an agency, the department or an investigator preparing the post-placement report pursuant to Section 32A-5-31 NMSA 1978. If an agency, the department or an investigator preparing the post-placement report wants to contest the adoption, it shall notify the court within twenty days after completion of the post-placement report.

E. Service shall be made pursuant to the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts. If the whereabouts of a parent whose consent is required is unknown, the investigator, department or agency charged with investigating the adoption under Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978 shall investigate the whereabouts of the parent and shall file by affidavit the results of the investigation with the court. Upon a finding by the court that information as to the whereabouts of a parent has been sufficiently investigated and is still insufficient to effect service in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts, the court shall issue an order providing for service by publication.

F. As to any other person for whom notice is required under Subsection A of this section, service by certified mail, return receipt requested, shall be sufficient. If the service cannot be completed after two attempts, the court shall issue an order providing for service by publication.

G. The notice required by this section may be waived in writing by the person entitled to notice.

H. Proof of service of the notice on all persons for whom notice is required by this section shall be filed with the court before any hearing adjudicating the rights of the persons.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-27, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 154; 2001, ch. 162, § 5; 2022, ch. 41, § 65.

32A-5-28. Response to petition.

A. Any person responding to a notice of a petition for adoption shall file a verified response to the petition within the time limits specified in Section 32A-5-25 NMSA 1978.

B. The verified response shall follow the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts and shall allege:

(1) the existence of any court orders known to the respondent that regulate custody, visitation or access to the adoptee but have not been filed with the court at the time the response is filed and copies of which shall be attached to the response;

(2) the relationship, if any, of the respondent to the adoptee;

(3) whether the adoptee is an Indian child;

(4) whether the adoption is subject to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978]; and

(5) whether the adoption is an open adoption.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-28, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 155; 2022, ch. 41, § 66.

32A-5-29. Custody pending decree.

Once the adoptee has been placed with the petitioner pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act, the petitioner shall have physical custody and control of the adoptee and shall be responsible for the care, maintenance and support of the adoptee, including all necessary medical, dental, psychological or surgical treatment, pending the further order of the court. Should the child be returned to the parents, this section shall not prohibit petitioners from seeking reimbursement for the child's expenses from the parents.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-29, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 156.

32A-5-30. Removal of adoptee from the county.

During the pendency of an adoption proceeding, the adoptee shall not be removed from the county where the petitioner resides at the time of filing a petition for adoption for a period longer than fifteen days without the permission of the court in which the adoption is pending.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-30, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 157; 1995, ch. 206, § 39.

32A-5-31. Post-placement report.

A. An agency or an individual with the credentials set out in Subsection C of Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978 shall file with the court its post-placement report of the prospective adoptive home and the adoptee. The post-placement report shall be completed as prescribed by department regulations and shall include the following:

(1) the expressed desires of the parents as to the kind of adoptive family sought;

(2) the interaction between the adoptee and petitioner;

(3) the adjustment of the adoptee since placement;

(4) the integration and acceptance of the adoptee in the petitioner's family;

(5) the petitioner's ability to meet the physical and emotional needs of the adoptee;

(6) whether the adoptive home is a suitable home for the proposed adoption;

(7) whether the adoption is in the best interest of the adoptee;

(8) the type and frequency of post-placement services given to the petitioner;

(9) orders, judgments or decrees affecting the adoptee or children of the petitioner;

(10) property owned by the adoptee;

(11) full disclosure;

(12) the costs, expenses and professional fees connected with the adoption;

(13) other circumstances that are relevant to the adoption of the adoptee by the petitioner; and

(14) when the adoptee is placed by an agency, an itemized agency statement of all payments made to any person or entity in connection with the adoption, including the date paid, the amount paid, the payee and the purpose of the payment.

B. The post-placement report shall contain an evaluation of the proposed adoption with a recommendation as to the granting of the petition for adoption and other information required by the court.

C. Unless directed by the court, a post-placement report is not required in cases in which the child is being adopted by a stepparent, a relative or a person named in the child's deceased parent's will pursuant to Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978.

D. The investigation for the post-placement report shall be conducted by the department, an agency or an investigator. The department, agency or investigator conducting the post-placement report may be the same as the agency or individual conducting the pre-placement study and they shall be maintained on the same list as

that compiled for pre-placement studies under Subsection D of Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978.

E. The department, agency or investigator shall observe the adoptee and interview the petitioner in the petitioner's home as specified in department regulations as soon as possible after the receipt of notice of the action, but in any event within thirty days after receipt of the notice.

F. For an adoptee who is under one year of age at the time of placement, the department, agency or investigator shall complete and file the written report with the court within sixty days from receipt of notice of the proceeding and for an adoptee who is one year of age or older at the time of placement, the written report shall be filed with the court within one hundred twenty days from the receipt of notice of the proceeding. Concurrently, the deliverer shall forward a copy of the report to the petitioner's attorney or to the petitioner, if not represented by counsel, and to the department if the report is not generated by the department. Upon a showing of good cause and after notice to the petitioner, the court may grant extensions of time to the department, agency or investigator to file the post-placement report so long as the report is filed at least thirty days before the hearing for the decree of adoption.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-31, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 158; 2001, ch. 162, § 6.

32A-5-32. Stepparent adoptions.

A. Any person may adopt his spouse's child in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption Act.

B. When the adoptee has lived with his stepparent for at least one year following the stepparent's marriage to the custodial parent:

(1) placement shall not be required pursuant to Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978;

(2) a pre-placement study or post-placement report shall not be required unless ordered by the court;

(3) when the stepparent and the custodial parent have been married for less than two years, counseling shall be required for the stepparent and the custodial parent;

(4) the noncustodial parent shall receive counseling unless counseling is waived;

(5) the adoptee, if ten years of age or older, shall receive counseling;

(6) a criminal records check shall be conducted on a stepparent pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-14 NMSA 1978;

(7) a report of fees and charges shall not be prepared, unless ordered by the court pursuant to Section 32A-5-34 NMSA 1978;

(8) the court may waive the ninety-day period between the filing of the petition for adoption and issuance of the decree of adoption; and

(9) when adopted, the adoptee shall take the name designated in the adoption petition, so long as the petitioner's spouse and the adoptee, if ten years of age or older, consent to the name.

C. When an adoptee has not lived with the stepparent for more than one year following the stepparent's marriage to the custodial parent, the adoption shall proceed as an independent adoption.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-32, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 159; 1995, ch. 206, § 40.

32A-5-33. Appointment of guardian ad litem or attorney for the adoptee or other party.

Upon the motion of any party or upon the court's own motion, the court may appoint a guardian ad litem for the adoptee or for any person found to be incompetent or a child who is a party to the proceeding. In any contested proceeding, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the adoptee. The court may appoint the child's attorney appointed pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act if the child is fourteen years of age or older and in the custody of the department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-33, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 160; 2009, ch. 239, § 56.

32A-5-34. Fees and charges; damages.

A. Prior to the final hearing on a petition, the petitioner shall file a full accounting of all disbursements of anything of value made or agreed to be made by or on behalf of the petitioner in connection with an adoption. The accounting report shall be signed under penalty of perjury. The accounting report shall be itemized in detail and shall show the services reasonably relating to the adoption or to the placement of the child for adoption that were received by the parents of the child, by the child or by or on behalf of the petitioner. The report shall also include the dates of each payment and the names and addresses of each attorney, physician, hospital, licensed adoption agency or other person or organization who received any funds or any other thing of value from the petitioner in connection with the adoption or the placement of the child with the

petitioner or who participated in any way in the handling of the funds, either directly or indirectly.

B. Only a prospective adoptive parent, acting alone, through an agency or through an attorney who is licensed in this state, shall make payments for services relating to the adoption or to the placement of the adoptee for adoption for allowed expenses only to third-party vendors, as reasonably practical. These payments shall consist of reasonable and actual fees or charges for:

(1) the services of an agency in connection with an adoption;

(2) medical, hospital, nursing, pharmaceutical, traveling or other similar expenses incurred by a mother or the adoptee in connection with the birth or any illness of an adoptee;

(3) reasonable counseling services relating to the adoption;

(4) living expenses of a mother and her dependent children, including the adoptee, for a reasonable time before the birth or placement of the adoptee and for no more than six weeks after the birth or placement of the adoptee;

(5) expenses incurred for the purposes of full disclosure;

(6) legal services, court costs and traveling or other administrative expenses connected with an adoption, including any legal service performed for a parent who consents to the adoption of a child or relinquishes the child to an agency;

(7) preparation of a pre-placement study and of a post-placement report during the pendency of the adoption proceeding; or

(8) any other service or expense the court finds is reasonably necessary for services relating to the adoption or to the placement of the adoptee for adoption.

C. Any person who makes payments that are not permitted pursuant to the provisions of this section is in violation of the Adoption Act and subject to the penalties set forth in Section 32A-5-42 NMSA 1978.

D. Any person who threatens or coerces a parent to complete the relinquishment of parental rights or to complete the consent to an adoption, by demanding repayment of expenses or by any other threat or coercion, shall be liable to the parent for compensatory and punitive damages.

E. The accounting required in Subsection A of this section is not applicable to stepparent adoptions or to adoptions under the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978], unless ordered by the court.

F. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit payment to a woman for conceiving and carrying a child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-34, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 161; 2001, ch. 162, § 7; 2005, ch. 189, § 67; 2012, ch. 28, § 3.

32A-5-35. Open adoptions.

A. The parents of the adoptee and the petitioner may agree to contact between the parents and the petitioner or contact between the adoptee and one or more of the parents or contact between the adoptee and relatives of the parents. An agreement shall, absent a finding to the contrary, be presumed to be in the best interests of the child and shall be included in the decree of adoption. The agreement may also include contact between siblings and the adoptee based on a finding that it is in the best interests of the adoptee and the adoptee's siblings and a determination that the siblings' parent, guardian or custodian has consented to the agreement. The contact may include exchange of identifying or nonidentifying information or visitation between the parents or the parents' relatives or the adoptee's siblings and the petitioner or visitation between the parents or the parents' relatives or the adoptee's siblings and the adoptee. An agreement entered into pursuant to this section shall be considered an open adoption.

B. The court may appoint a guardian ad litem for the adoptee. The court shall adopt a presumption in favor of appointing a guardian ad litem for the adoptee when visitation between the biological family and the adoptee is included in an agreement; however, this requirement may be waived by the court for good cause shown. When an adoptive placement is made voluntarily through an agency or pursuant to Section 32A-5-13 NMSA 1978, the court may, in its discretion, appoint a guardian ad litem. If the child is fourteen years of age or older, the court may appoint an attorney for the child. In all adoptions other than those in which the child is placed by the department, the court may assess the parties for the cost of services rendered by the guardian ad litem or the child's attorney. The duties of the guardian ad litem or child's attorney end upon the filing of the decree, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

C. In determining whether the agreement is in the adoptee's best interests, the court shall consider the adoptee's wishes, but the wishes of the adoptee shall not control the court's findings as to the best interests of the adoptee.

D. Every agreement entered into pursuant to provisions of this section shall contain a clause stating that the parties agree to the continuing jurisdiction of the court and to the agreement and understand and intend that any disagreement or litigation regarding the terms of the agreement shall not affect the validity of the relinquishment of parental rights, the adoption or the custody of the adoptee.

E. The court shall retain jurisdiction after the decree of adoption is entered, if the decree contains an agreement for contact, for the purpose of hearing motions brought

to enforce or modify an agreement entered into pursuant to the provisions of this section. The court shall not grant a request to modify the agreement unless the moving party establishes that there has been a change of circumstances and the agreement is no longer in the adoptee's best interests.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-35, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 162; 1995, ch. 206, § 41; 2001, ch. 162, § 8; 2005, ch. 189, § 68; 2009, ch. 239, § 57.

32A-5-36. Adjudication; disposition; decree of adoption.

A. The court shall conduct hearings on the petition for adoption so as to determine the rights of the parties in a manner that protects confidentiality. The petitioner and the adoptee shall attend the hearing unless the court for good cause waives a party's appearance. Good cause may include burdensome travel requirements.

B. The petitioner shall file all documents required pursuant to the Adoption Act and serve the department with copies of the documents simultaneously with the request for hearing on the petition for adoption.

C. If any person who claims to be the biological father of the adoptee has appeared before the court and filed a written petition or response seeking custody and assuming financial responsibility of the adoptee, the court shall hear evidence as to the merits of the petition. If the court determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the person is not the biological father of the adoptee or that the child was conceived through an act of rape or incest, the petition shall be dismissed and the person shall no longer be a party to the adoption. If the court determines that the person is the biological father of the adoptee, the court shall further determine whether the person qualifies as a presumed or acknowledged father whose consent is necessary for adoption, pursuant to Section 32A-5-17 NMSA 1978. If the court determines that the person is the biological father, but does not qualify as a presumed or acknowledged father, the court shall adjudicate the person's rights pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act.

D. If the mother or father of the adoptee has appeared before the court and filed a written petition that alleges the invalidity of the mother's or father's own consent or relinquishment for adoption previously filed in the adoption proceeding, the court shall hear evidence as to the merits of the petition. If the court determines that the allegations have not been proved by a preponderance of the evidence, the petition shall be dismissed. If the court determines that the allegations of the petition are true, the consent or relinquishment for adoption shall be held invalid, and the court shall determine, in the best interests of the adoptee, the person who shall have custody of the child.

E. The petitioner shall present and prove each allegation set forth in the petition for adoption by clear and convincing evidence.

F. The court shall grant a decree of adoption if it finds that the petitioner has proved by clear and convincing evidence that:

(1) the court has jurisdiction to enter a decree of adoption affecting the adoptee;

(2) the adoptee has been placed with the petitioner for a period of ninety days if the adoptee is under the age of one year at the time of placement or for a period of one hundred eighty days if the adoptee is one year of age or older at the time of placement, unless, for good cause shown, the requirement is waived by the court;

(3) all necessary consents, relinquishments, terminations or waivers have been obtained;

(4) the post-placement report required by Section 32A-5-31 NMSA 1978 has been filed with the court;

(5) service of the petition for adoption has been made or dispensed with as to all persons entitled to notice pursuant to provisions of Section 32A-5-27 NMSA 1978;

(6) at least ninety days have passed since the filing of the petition for adoption, except the court may shorten or waive this period of time in cases in which the child is being adopted by a stepparent, a relative or a person named in the child's deceased parent's will pursuant to provisions of Section 32A-5-12 NMSA 1978;

(7) the petitioner is a suitable adoptive parent and the best interests of the adoptee are served by the adoption;

(8) if visitation between the biological family and the adoptee is contemplated, that the visitation is in the child's best interests;

(9) if the adoptee is foreign-born, the child is legally free for adoption and a certificate issued by the United States secretary of state that certifies the adoption as a convention adoption has been filed with the court;

(10) the results of the criminal records check required pursuant to provisions of the Adoption Act have been received and considered; and

(11) if the adoption involves the interstate placement of the adoptee, the requirements of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] have been met.

G. In addition to the findings required by Subsection F of this section, the court in any decree of adoption shall make findings with respect to each allegation of the petition.

H. If the court determines that any of the requirements for a decree of adoption pursuant to provisions of Subsections E and F of this section have not been met or that the adoption is not in the best interests of the adoptee, the court shall deny the petition and determine, in the best interests of the adoptee, the person who shall have custody of the child.

I. The decree of adoption shall include the new name of the adoptee and shall not include any other name by which the adoptee has been known or the names of the former parents. The decree of adoption shall order that from the date of the decree, the adoptee shall be the child of the petitioner and accorded the status set forth in Section 32A-5-37 NMSA 1978.

J. A decree of adoption shall be entered within six months of the filing of the petition if the adoptee is under the age of one year at the time of placement or twelve months if the adoptee is one year of age or older at the time of placement, except that the time may be extended by the court upon request of any of the parties or upon the court's own motion for good cause shown.

K. A decree of adoption may not be attacked upon the expiration of one year from the entry of the decree.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-36, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 163; 1995, ch. 206, § 42; 2003, ch. 294, § 5; 2003, ch. 321, § 5; 2022, ch. 41, § 67.

32A-5-37. Status of adoptee and petitioner upon entry of decree of adoption.

A. Once adopted, an adoptee shall take a name designated by the petitioner, except in stepparent adoptions. In stepparent adoptions, the adoptee shall take the new name designated by the petitioner in the petition so long as the petitioner's spouse and the child, if over the age of fourteen years, consent to the new name. The name change need not be requested in the petition.

B. After adoption, the adoptee and the petitioner shall sustain the legal relation of parent and child as if the adoptee were the biological child of the petitioner and the petitioner were the biological parent of the child. The adoptee shall have all rights and be subject to all of the duties of that relation, including the right of inheritance from and through the petitioner, and the petitioner shall have all rights and be subject to all duties of that relation, including right of inheritance from and through the adoptee.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-37, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 164; 2005, ch. 189, § 69.

32A-5-38. Birth certificates.

A. Within thirty days after an adoption decree becomes final, the petitioner shall prepare an application for a birth certificate in the new name of the adoptee, showing the petitioner as the adoptee's parent, and shall provide the application to the clerk of the court. The petitioner shall forward the application:

(1) for a person born in the United States, to the appropriate vital statistics office of the place, if known, where the adoptee was born; or

(2) for all other persons, to the state registrar of vital statistics. In the case of the adoption of a person born outside the United States, if requested by the petitioner, the court shall make findings, based on evidence from the petitioner and other reliable state or federal sources, on the date and place of birth of the adoptee. These findings shall be certified by the court and included with the application for a birth certificate.

B. The state registrar of vital statistics shall prepare a birth record in the new name of the adoptee in accordance with the vital statistics laws, but subject to the requirements of the Adoption Act as to the confidentiality of adoption records.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-38, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 165; 2005, ch. 189, § 70.

32A-5-39. Recognition of foreign decrees.

A. Every decree or order of adoption terminating the parent-child relationship or establishing the relationship of parent and child by adoption entered by a court or other entity in another country acting pursuant to that country's law or pursuant to any convention or treaty or intercountry adoption that the United States has ratified shall be recognized in this state, so that the rights and obligations of the parties as to matters within the jurisdiction of this state shall be determined as though the decree or order of adoption were issued by the courts of this state.

B. A convention adoption in a foreign country that is certified by the United States secretary of state shall be recognized as a final adoption in this state.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-39, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 166; 2003, ch. 294, § 6; 2003, ch. 321, § 6; 2005, ch. 189, § 71.

32A-5-39.1. Application of the federal Intercountry Adoption Act.

The protections and requirements set forth in the federal Intercountry Adoption Act apply to all proceedings involving a convention adoption.

History: Laws 2003, ch. 294, § 7 and Laws 2003, ch. 321, § 7.

32A-5-40. Post-decree of adoption access to records.

A. After the decree of adoption has been entered, all court files containing records of judicial proceedings conducted pursuant to the provisions of the Adoption Act and records submitted to the court in the proceedings shall be kept in separate locked files withheld from public inspection. Upon application to the clerk of the court, the records shall be open to inspection by a former parent if the adoptee is eighteen years of age or older, by an adoptee if the adoptee is eighteen years of age or older at the time application is made for inspection, by the adoptive parent if the adoptee is under eighteen years of age at the time application is made for inspection, by the attorney of any party, by any agency that has exercised guardianship over or legal custody of a child who was the adoptee in the particular proceeding, by the department or by an adoptee's sibling; provided that the identity of the former parents and of the adoptee shall be kept confidential unless the former parents and the adoptee have consented to the release of identity. In the absence of consent to release identity, the inspection shall be limited to the following nonidentifying information:

(1) the health and medical histories of the adoptee's biological parents;

(2) the health and medical history of the adoptee;

(3) the adoptee's general family background, including ancestral information, without name references or geographical designations;

(4) physical descriptions; and

(5) the length of time the adoptee was in the care and custody of persons other than the petitioner.

B. After the entry of the decree of adoption, at any time, a former parent may file with the court, with the placing agency or with the department:

(1) a consent or refusal or an amended consent or refusal to be contacted;

(2) a release of the former parent's identity to the adoptee if the adoptee is eighteen years of age or older or to the adoptive parent if the adoptee is under eighteen years of age; or

(3) information regarding the former parent's location or changes in background information.

C. Any changes to post-adoption access to records referred to in Subsection B of this section shall be filed with the court, the placing agency and the department.

D. The consent or refusal referred to in Subsection B of this section shall be honored by the court, the placing agency or the department unless for good cause the court orders to the contrary.

E. At any time, an adoptee who is eighteen years of age or older may file with the court, a placing agency or the department:

(1) information regarding the adoptee's location; or

(2) a consent or refusal regarding opening of the adoptee's adoption file to the adoptee's former parents.

F. If mutual authorizations for release of identifying information by the parties are not available, an adoptee who is eighteen years of age or older, the biological parents if the adoptee is eighteen years of age or older or the adoptive parents if the adoptee is under the age of eighteen years may file a motion with the court to obtain the release of identifying information for good cause shown. When hearing the motion, the court shall give primary consideration to the best interests of the adoptee, but shall also give due consideration to the interests of the members of the adoptee's former and adoptive families. In determining whether good cause exists for the release of identifying information, the court shall consider:

(1) the reason the information is sought;

(2) any procedure available for satisfying the petitioner's request without disclosing the name or identity of another individual, including appointment of a confidential intermediary to contact the individual and request specific information;

(3) whether the individual about whom identifying information is sought is alive;

(4) the preference, to the extent known, of the adoptee, the adoptive parents, the former parents and other members of the adoptee's former and adoptive families and the likely effect of disclosure on those individuals;

(5) the age, maturity and expressed needs of the adoptee;

(6) the report or recommendation of any individual appointed by the court to assess the request for identifying information; and

(7) any other factor relevant to an assessment of whether the benefit to the adoptee of releasing the information sought will be greater than the benefit to any other individual of not releasing the information.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-40, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 167; 1995, ch. 206, § 43; 1997, ch. 34, § 13; 2005, ch. 189, § 72; 2022, ch. 41, § 68.

32A-5-41. Appointment of confidential intermediary.

A. The court may appoint a confidential intermediary to ascertain whether an individual is willing to be contacted, is willing to release his name or identity or is willing to meet or otherwise communicate about any condition that may affect the moving party's physical or mental health, upon petition to the court by:

(1) an adoptee who is eighteen years of age or older;

(2) an adoptive parent of an adoptee who is less than eighteen years of age;

(3) an adoptee's former parent, when the adoptee is eighteen years of age or older; or

(4) an adoptee's sibling.

B. The confidential intermediary shall make a reasonable effort to determine if the individual whose identity is sought by the petitioner has filed a signed document authorizing or refusing to authorize the release of the individual's name or identity.

C. When the confidential intermediary finds a signed authorization for a party to be contacted or for the release of identifying information, the intermediary shall release that information to the petitioner. Upon the petitioner's written request, the intermediary may assist the petitioner in locating the individual who authorized the release of identifying information, in ascertaining whether the individual is willing to meet or communicate with the petitioner and in facilitating a meeting or other communication.

D. When the confidential intermediary finds a signed refusal to authorize the release of identifying information, the intermediary shall report this to the petitioner and the court and shall not attempt to locate or contact the individual who has refused to authorize contact or the release of identifying information. The petitioner may then withdraw the petition or request the release of identifying information for good cause shown, pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-40 NMSA 1978.

E. When the confidential intermediary does not find any documents concerning the release of identifying information or if the intermediary finds a document indicating that an individual whose identity is sought by the petitioner is undecided about whether to release identifying information, the intermediary shall make a reasonable search for and discreetly contact the individual to ascertain whether the individual is willing to release information to the petitioner or willing to meet or communicate with the petitioner, whom the intermediary may describe to the individual only in general, nonidentifying terms. When the individual consents in writing to the release of information, the intermediary shall release the information to the petitioner, and upon the mutual written request and consent of the petitioner and the individual, the intermediary shall facilitate a meeting or other communication between the petitioner and the individual. If the individual refuses to authorize the release of information sought by the petitioner, the intermediary shall report this to the petitioner and the court and the petitioner may withdraw the motion or

file a motion with the court for an order to release identifying information for good cause shown, pursuant to provisions of Section 32A-5-40 NMSA 1978.

F. When an individual sought by the confidential intermediary is deceased, the intermediary shall report this to the petitioner and the court and, upon the petitioner's request, the court shall determine on the basis of the factors listed in Section 32A-5-40 NMSA 1978 whether good cause exists to release identifying information about the individual to the petitioner.

G. When an individual sought by the confidential intermediary cannot be located within a year, the intermediary shall report this to the petitioner and the court. The court may authorize an additional search for a specified period of time or determine on the basis of the factors listed in Section 32A-5-40 NMSA 1978 whether good cause exists to release identifying information about the individual to the petitioner.

H. A confidential intermediary may charge the petitioner for actual expenses incurred in providing a service requested under this section. Upon motion by the intermediary, the court may authorize a reasonable fee in addition to the expenses.

I. A confidential intermediary shall complete training provided by the department or any other entity approved by the court and shall file an oath of confidentiality in every court in which the intermediary expects to serve.

J. The confidential intermediary oath shall state:

"I, _____, signing under penalty of perjury, affirm that I have completed the requisite training for a confidential intermediary in this state.

I will not disclose to the petitioner, directly or indirectly, any identifying information in sealed records except under the conditions specified in this section.

I will conduct a reasonable search for an individual being sought and make a discreet and confidential inquiry as to whether the individual consents to the release of identifying or medical information to the petitioner or to meeting or communicating with the petitioner. I will report to the petitioner or the court the results of my search and inquiry, along with any signed request or consent I receive from the individual.

If the individual and the petitioner request and consent in writing to meet or communicate with each other, I will act in accordance with the instructions of the petitioner or the court to facilitate any meeting or communication between them.

I will not charge or accept any fee for my services except for reimbursement from the petitioner for actual expenses incurred in performing my services or as authorized by the court.

I recognize that unauthorized release of information is a violation of the Adoption Act and subjects me to penalties pursuant to the provisions of Section 32A-5-42 NMSA 1978 and may subject me to being found in contempt of court with penalties, dismissal by the court and civil liability."

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-41, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 168; 1995, ch. 206, § 44; 1997, ch. 34, § 14.

32A-5-42. Penalties.

A. Any person other than an agency who, in the regular course of business, selects an adoptive family for a prospective adoptee or arranges for the selection is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to imprisonment in the county jail for a definite term of less than one year or to the payment of a fine of not more than one thousand dollars ($1,000), or to both, the penalties to be in the discretion of the judge, for each occurrence; provided, that the exchange of information between persons regarding the existence of a potential adoptee or potential adoptive family shall not be a violation of this section.

B. Any person who violates any provision of the Adoption Act is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to imprisonment in the county jail for a definite term of less than one year or to the payment of a fine of not more than one thousand dollars ($1,000), or both, the penalties to be in the discretion of the judge, for each occurrence.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-42, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 169.

32A-5-42.1. Unauthorized adoption facilitation; penalties.

A. A person, other than a person described in Subsection C of this section, who knowingly or intentionally engages in adoption services with a person in this state for compensation is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced in accordance with the provisions of Section 32A-5-42 NMSA 1978.

B. A violation of this section constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice pursuant to the Unfair Practices Act [Chapter 57, Article 12 NMSA 1978].

C. This section does not apply to the following persons:

(1) the department, a person authorized to act on behalf of the department or a similar agency in another state;

(2) an investigator or counselor;

(3) an agency licensed pursuant to the laws of this state or another state that is providing an adoption service within that state to a parent, prospective adoptive parent or a specific and identified adoptee who resides in that state;

(4) an attorney licensed to practice law in this state or in another state who is providing a legal service within and pursuant to the laws of that state to a parent, prospective adoptive parent or a specific and identified adoptee who resides in that state;

(5) an agency facilitating the adoption of a foreign born child;

(6) an agency facilitating a new placement of a child following a disruption or termination of an adoption; or

(7) a prospective adoptive parent or biological parent acting alone on the parent's own behalf.

History: Laws 2012, ch. 28, § 4.

32A-5-42.2. Advertising adoption services; requirements; penalties.

A. A person, other than a person described in Subsection E of this section, shall not advertise adoption services unless the advertisement includes the following statement: "WARNING: (INSERT NAME OF PERSON ADVERTISED) IS NOT ACCREDITED, CERTIFIED OR LICENSED TO PROVIDE ADOPTION SERVICES WITHIN NEW MEXICO.". If the advertisement is in print, the required statement shall be entirely in uppercase letters and in a print size no smaller than that generally used in the advertisement. If the advertisement is spoken, the required statement shall be spoken at the same pace and volume as that generally used in the advertisement.

B. A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced in accordance with the provisions of Section 32A-5-42 NMSA 1978.

C. A violation of this section constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice pursuant to the Unfair Practices Act [Chapter 57, Article 12 NMSA 1978].

D. For purposes of this section, "advertise" means to communicate, market, promote, induce or solicit by public media originating or distributed in New Mexico, including newspapers, periodicals, telephone book listings, outdoor advertising, radio, television or other electronic media.

E. This section does not apply to:

(1) the department or a person authorized to act on behalf of the department;

(2) an agency licensed by the department;

(3) an investigator or counselor;

(4) an attorney licensed in the state who advertises legal services relating to adoption; or

(5) a prospective adoptive parent who is acting alone on the prospective adoptive parent's own behalf and who has a current, approved pre-placement study as required by the department.

F. An advertising, marketing or promotional medium that accepts and publishes or otherwise distributes in good faith an advertisement that does not meet the requirements of this section is not subject to civil or criminal penalties pursuant to this section.

History: Laws 2012, ch. 28, § 5.

32A-5-43. Purpose of subsidized adoptions.

It is the purpose of Sections 32-5-43 [32A-5-43] through 32-5-45 [32A-5-45] NMSA 1978 to encourage and promote the placement of children who are difficult to place in permanent homes through a subsidized program within the social services division of the department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-43, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 170.

32A-5-44. Eligibility for subsidized adoptions.

A. The social services division of the human services department [health care authority department] may make payments to adoptive parents or to medical vendors on behalf of a child placed for adoption by the division or by an agency when the division determines that:

(1) the child is difficult to place; and

(2) the adoptive family is capable of providing the permanent family relationship needed by the child in all respects, except that the needs of the child are beyond the economic resources and ability of the family.

B. As used in Sections 32A-5-43 through 32A-5-45 NMSA 1978, a "difficult to place child" means a child who has a mental, physical or emotional disability or who is in special circumstances by virtue of age, sibling relationship or racial background.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-44, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 171; 2007, ch. 46, § 39.

32A-5-45. Administration of subsidized adoptions.

A. The department shall promulgate all necessary regulations for the administration of the program of subsidized adoptions or placement with permanent guardians.

B. Subsidy payments may include payments to vendors for medical and surgical expenses and payments to the adoptive parents or permanent guardians for maintenance and other costs incidental to the adoption, care, training and education of the child. The payments in any category of assistance shall not exceed the cost of providing the assistance in foster care. Payments shall not be made under this section after the child reaches eighteen years of age, except as provided in Subsection C of this section.

C. Payments may extend until the child is twenty-one years of age if:

(1) the child is enrolled in the medically fragile waiver program; or

(2) the adoption assistance agreement was in effect when the child was at least sixteen years of age and, when the child is at least eighteen years of age and under twenty-one years of age, the child is:

(a) completing secondary education or an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

(b) enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education;

(c) participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment;

(d) employed for at least eighty hours per month; or

(e) incapable of doing any of the activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is supported by regularly updated information in a transition plan as provided in the Fostering Connections Act [Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978].

D. A written agreement between the adoptive family or permanent guardians and the department shall precede the decree of adoption or permanent guardianship. The agreement shall incorporate the terms and conditions of the subsidy plan based on the individual needs of the child within the permanent family. In cases of subsidies that continue for more than one year, there shall be an annual redetermination of the need for a subsidy. The department shall develop an appeal procedure whereby a permanent family may contest a division determination to deny, reduce or terminate a subsidy.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-5-45, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 172; 2005, ch. 189, § 73; 2019, ch. 149, § 13; 2020, ch. 52, § 2.

ARTICLE 6
Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (Repealed.)

32A-6-1. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 1; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-2. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 2; 1999, ch. 254, § 1; 2007, ch. 46, § 40; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-3. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 3; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-4. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 4; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-5. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 5; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-6. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 6; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-7. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 7; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-8. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 8; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-9. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 9; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-10. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 10; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-10.1. Repealed.

32A-6-11. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 12; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-11.1. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 13; 1999, ch. 254, § 2; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-12. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 14; 1999, ch. 254, § 3; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-13. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 15; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-14. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 16; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-15. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 17; 1998, ch. 32, § 1; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-16. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 18; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-17. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 19; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-18. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 20; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-19. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 21; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-20. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 22; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-21. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 23; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

32A-6-22. Repealed.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 207, § 24; repealed by Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 31.

ARTICLE 6A
Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities

32A-6A-1. Short title.

This act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act".

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 1.

32A-6A-2. Purposes.

The purposes of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act are to:

A. provide children with access to appropriate assessments, services and treatment;

B. provide children access to a continuum of services to address their habilitation and treatment needs;

C. provide children with access to services for identification, prevention and intervention for developmental and mental health needs;

D. promote delivery of services in a culturally appropriate, responsive and respectful manner;

E. protect the substantive and procedural rights of children regardless of service setting; and

F. encourage support for family as critical members of the treatment or habilitation team whenever clinically appropriate.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 2.

32A-6A-3. Scope.

The provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall apply to all children in New Mexico except as otherwise set forth in the Children's Code.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 3.

32A-6A-4. Definitions.

As used in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act:

A. "aversive intervention" means any device or intervention, consequences or procedure intended to cause pain or unpleasant sensations, including interventions causing physical pain, tissue damage, physical illness or injury; electric shock; isolation; forced exercise; withholding of food, water or sleep; humiliation; water mist; noxious taste, smell or skin agents; and over-correction;

B. "behavioral health services" means a comprehensive array of professional and ancillary services for the treatment, habilitation, prevention and identification of mental illnesses, behavioral symptoms associated with developmental disabilities, substance abuse disorders and trauma spectrum disorders;

C. "capacity" means a child's ability to:

(1) understand and appreciate the nature and consequences of proposed health care, including its significant benefits, risks and alternatives to proposed health care; and

(2) make and communicate an informed health care decision;

D. "chemical restraint" means a medication that is not standard treatment for the patient's medical or psychiatric condition that is used to control behavior or to restrict a patient's freedom of movement;

E. "child" means a person who is a minor;

F. "clinician" means a person whose licensure allows the person to make independent clinical decisions, including a physician, licensed psychologist, psychiatric nurse practitioner, licensed independent social worker, licensed marriage and family therapist and licensed professional clinical counselor;

G. "continuum of services" means a comprehensive array of emergency, outpatient, intermediate and inpatient services and care, including screening, early identification, diagnostic evaluation, medical, psychiatric, psychological and social service care, habilitation, education, training, vocational rehabilitation and career counseling;

H. "developmental disability" means a severe chronic disability that:

(1) is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or a combination of mental or physical impairments;

(2) is manifested before a person reaches twenty-two years of age;

(3) is expected to continue indefinitely;

(4) results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activities:

(a) self-care;

(b) receptive and expressive language;

(c) learning;

(d) mobility;

(e) self-direction;

(f) capacity for independent living; or

(g) economic self-sufficiency; and

(5) reflects a person's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary or other supports and services that are of lifelong or extended duration that are individually planned or coordinated;

I. "evaluation facility" means a community mental health or developmental disability program, a medical facility having psychiatric or developmental disability services available or, if none of the foregoing is reasonably available or appropriate, the office of a licensed physician or a licensed psychologist, any of which shall be capable of performing a mental status examination adequate to determine the need for appropriate treatment, including possible involuntary treatment;

J. "family" means persons with a kinship relationship to a child, including the relationship that exists between a child and a biological or adoptive parent, relative of the child, a step-parent, a godparent, a member of the child's tribe or clan or an adult with whom the child has a significant bond;

K. "habilitation" means services, including behavioral health services based on evaluation of the child, that are aimed at assisting the child to prevent, correct or ameliorate a developmental disability. The purpose of habilitation is to enable the child to attain, maintain or regain maximum functioning or independence. "Habilitation" includes programs of formal, structured education and treatment and rehabilitation services;

L. "individual instruction" means a child's direction concerning a mental health treatment decision for the child, made while the child has capacity and is fourteen years of age or older, which is to be implemented when the child has been determined to lack capacity;

M. "least restrictive means principle" means the conditions of habilitation or treatment for the child, separately and in combination that:

(1) are no more harsh, hazardous or intrusive than necessary to achieve acceptable treatment objectives for the child;

(2) involve no restrictions on physical movement and no requirement for residential care, except as reasonably necessary for the administration of treatment or for the protection of the child or others from physical injury; and

(3) are conducted at the suitable available facility closest to the child's place of residence;

N. "legal custodian" means a biological or adoptive parent of a child unless legal custody has been vested in a person, department or agency and also includes a person appointed by an unexpired power of attorney;

O. "licensed psychologist" means a person who holds a current license as a psychologist issued by the New Mexico state board of psychologist examiners;

P. "likelihood of serious harm to self" means that it is more likely than not that in the near future a child will attempt to commit suicide or will cause serious bodily harm to the child by violent or other self-destructive means, as evidenced by behavior causing, attempting or threatening such harm, which behavior gives rise to a reasonable fear of such harm from the child;

Q. "likelihood of serious harm to others" means that it is more likely than not that in the near future the child will inflict serious bodily harm on another person or commit a criminal sexual offense, as evidenced by behavior causing, attempting or threatening such harm, which behavior gives rise to a reasonable fear of such harm from the child;

R. "mechanical restraint" means any device or material attached or adjacent to the child's body that restricts freedom of movement or normal access to any portion of the

child's body and that the child cannot easily remove but does not include mechanical supports or protective devices;

S. "mechanical support" means a device used to achieve proper body position, designed by a physical therapist and approved by a physician or designed by an occupational therapist, such as braces, standers or gait belts, but not including protective devices;

T. "medically necessary services" means clinical and rehabilitative physical, mental or behavioral health services that are:

(1) essential to prevent, diagnose or treat medical conditions or are essential to enable the child to attain, maintain or regain functional capacity;

(2) delivered in the amount, duration, scope and setting that is clinically appropriate to the specific physical, mental and behavioral health care needs of the child;

(3) provided within professionally accepted standards of practice and national guidelines; and

(4) required to meet the physical, mental and behavioral health needs of the child and are not primarily for the convenience of the child, provider or payer;

U. "mental disorder" means a substantial disorder of the child's emotional processes, thought or cognition, not including a developmental disability, that impairs the child's:

(1) functional ability to act in developmentally and age-appropriate ways in any life domain;

(2) judgment;

(3) behavior; and

(4) capacity to recognize reality;

V. "mental health or developmental disabilities professional" means a person who by training or experience is qualified to work with persons with mental disorders or developmental disabilities;

W. "out-of-home treatment or habilitation program" means an out-of-home residential program that provides twenty-four-hour care and supervision to children with the primary purpose of providing treatment or habilitation to children. "Out-of-home treatment or habilitation program" includes, but is not limited to, treatment foster care,

group homes, psychiatric hospitals, psychiatric residential treatment facilities and non-medical and community-based residential treatment centers;

X. "parent" means a biological or adoptive parent of a child whose parental rights have not been terminated;

Y. "physical restraint" means the use of physical force without the use of any device or material that restricts the free movement of all or a portion of a child's body;

Z. "protective devices" means helmets, safety goggles or glasses, guards, mitts, gloves, pads and other common safety devices that are normally used or recommended for use by persons without disabilities while engaged in a sport or occupation or during transportation;

AA. "residential treatment or habilitation program" means diagnosis, evaluation, care, treatment or habilitation rendered inside or on the premises of a mental health or developmental disabilities facility, hospital, clinic, institution, supervisory residence or nursing home when the child resides on the premises and where one or more of the following measures is available for use:

(1) a mechanical device to restrain or restrict the child's movement;

(2) a secure seclusion area from which the child is unable to exit voluntarily;

(3) a facility or program designed for the purpose of restricting the child's ability to exit voluntarily; and

(4) the involuntary emergency administration of psychotropic medication;

BB. "restraint" means the use of a physical, chemical or mechanical restraint;

CC. "seclusion" means the confinement of a child alone in a room from which the child is physically prevented from leaving;

DD. "treatment" means provision of behavioral health services based on evaluation of the child, aimed at assisting the child to prevent, correct or ameliorate a mental disorder. The purpose of treatment is to enable the child to attain, maintain or regain maximum functioning;

EE. "treatment team" means a team consisting of the child, the child's parents unless parental rights have specifically been limited pursuant to an order of a court, legal custodian, guardian ad litem, treatment guardian, clinician and any other professionals involved in treatment of the child, other members of the child's family, if requested by the child, and the child's attorney if requested by the child, unless in the professional judgment of the treating clinician for reasons of safety or therapy one or more members should be excluded from participation in the treatment team; and

FF."treatment plan" means an individualized plan developed by a treatment team based on assessed strengths and needs of the child and family.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 4; 2008, ch. 75, § 1.

32A-6A-5. Competence.

The fact that a child has received treatment or habilitation services or has been accepted at or admitted to a hospital or institutional facility shall not constitute a sufficient basis for a finding of incompetence or the denial of a right or benefit of any nature that the child would otherwise have.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 5.

32A-6A-6. Rights related to treatment and habilitation; scope.

The rights set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall apply to a child who is physically present and receiving treatment or habilitation services in New Mexico. A child who receives treatment or habilitation services shall have rights with respect to such treatment or habilitation, regardless of where services are provided.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 6.

32A-6A-7. Right to individualized treatment or habilitation services and plan.

A. A child receiving mental health or habilitation services shall have the right to prompt treatment and habilitation pursuant to an individualized treatment plan and consistent with the least restrictive means principle.

B. A preliminary treatment plan shall be prepared within seven days of initial provision of mental health or habilitation services.

C. An individualized treatment or habilitation plan shall be prepared within twenty-one days of the provision of mental health or habilitation services.

D. The individualized treatment or habilitation plan shall be developed by the child's treatment team. The child and the child's legal custodian and parent shall, to the maximum extent possible, be involved in the preparation of the child's individualized treatment or habilitation plan.

E. An individualized treatment or habilitation plan shall include:

(1) a statement of the nature of the specific problem and the specific needs of the child;

(2) a statement of the least restrictive conditions necessary to achieve the purposes of treatment or habilitation;

(3) a description of intermediate and long-range goals, with the projected timetable for their attainment;

(4) a statement and rationale for the plan of treatment or habilitation for achieving these intermediate and long-range goals;

(5) specification of staff responsibility and a description of the proposed staff involvement with the child in order to attain these goals;

(6) criteria for release to less restrictive settings for treatment or habilitation, criteria for discharge and a projected date for discharge; and

(7) provision for access to cultural practices and traditional treatments in accordance with the child's assessed needs, and for an Indian child, culturally competent placement, treatment and practices and, after appropriate consent, tribal consultation.

F. A treatment or habilitation plan for a child in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program shall be based on documented assessments that may include assessments of mental status; intellectual function; psychological status, including the use of psychological testing; psychiatric evaluation and medication; education, vocation, psychosocial assessment, physical status and the child's cultural needs.

G. The child's progress in attaining the goals and objectives set forth in the individualized treatment or habilitation plan shall be monitored and noted in the child's records, and revisions in the plan may be made as circumstances require. The members of the child's treatment team shall be informed of major changes and shall have the opportunity to participate in decisions.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 7.

32A-6A-8. Special rules applicable to aversive intervention.

A. An intervention expressly listed in the "aversive intervention" definition in Section 4 [32A-6A-4 NMSA 1978] of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act is prohibited.

B. A treatment plan containing an aversive intervention not specifically listed in Section 4 of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be submitted to the human rights committee of the department of health in advance of a

meeting, except in emergency situations. The human rights committee shall review the plan along with the following additional information as available:

(1) baseline or base rate data;

(2) review of the child's current situation and environment;

(3) the child's history, including previous interventions and results;

(4) the possible adverse effects, if any, of the proposed treatment plan;

(5) success and failure criteria for discontinuing the proposed aversive intervention; and

(6) a written evaluation by the clinician proposing the treatment plan or the intervention.

C. The human rights committee of the department of health shall not approve an intervention specifically listed in the definition of "aversive intervention" in Section 4 of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

D. An invitation to participate in the review shall be extended to the child, the child's legal custodian, the clinician and any other mental health or developmental disability professional who has proposed the treatment. A written or oral presentation shall be made to the human rights commission by the mental health or developmental disability professional proposing the treatment.

E. The results of the human rights committee of the department of health review shall be reported to the clinician, the child and the child's legal custodian within three working days.

F. The department shall work in collaboration with the department of health to promulgate rules for implementing a human rights committee pursuant to this section.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 8.

32A-6A-9. Restraint, generally.

A. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to diminish the rights and protections accorded to children in hospitals or psychiatric residential treatment or habilitation facilities as provided by federal law and regulation.

B. Restraint and seclusion as provided for in this section is not considered treatment. It is an emergency intervention to be used only until the emergency ceases.

C. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the use of:

(1) mechanical supports or protective devices;

(2) a medical restraint prescribed by a physician or dentist as a health-related protective measure during the conduct of a specific medical, surgical or dental procedure; and

(3) holding a child for a very short period of time without undue force to calm or comfort the child or holding a child's hand to escort the child safely from one area to another.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 9; 2008, ch. 75, § 2.

32A-6A-10. Physical restraint and seclusion.

A. When providing any treatment or habilitation, physical restraint and seclusion shall not be used unless an emergency situation arises in which it is necessary to protect a child or another from imminent, serious physical harm or unless another less intrusive, nonphysical intervention has failed or been determined ineffective.

B. A treatment and habilitation program shall provide a child and the child's legal custodian with a copy of the policies and procedures governing the use of restraint and seclusion.

C. When a child is in a restraint or in seclusion, the mental health or developmental disabilities professional shall document:

(1) any less intrusive interventions that were attempted or determined to be inappropriate prior to the incident;

(2) the precipitating event immediately preceding the behavior that prompted the use of restraint or seclusion;

(3) the behavior that prompted the use of a restraint or seclusion;

(4) the names of the mental health or developmental disabilities professional who observed the behavior that prompted the use of restraint or seclusion;

(5) the names of the staff members implementing and monitoring the use of restraint or seclusion; and

(6) a description of the restraint or seclusion incident, including the type and length of the use of restraint or seclusion, the child's behavior during and reaction to the restraint or seclusion and the name of the supervisor informed of the use of restraint or seclusion.

D. The documentation shall be maintained in the child's medical, mental health or educational record and available for inspection by the child's legal custodian.

E. The child's legal custodian shall be notified immediately after each time restraint or seclusion is used. If the legal custodian is not reasonably available, the mental health or developmental disability professional shall document all attempts to notify the legal custodian and shall send written notification within one business day.

F. After an incident of restraint or seclusion, the mental health or developmental disabilities professional involved in the incident shall conduct a debriefing with the child in which the precipitating event, unsafe behavior and preventive measures are reviewed with the intent of reducing or eliminating the need for future restraint or seclusion. The debriefing shall be documented in the child's record and incorporated into the next treatment plan review.

G. As promptly as possible, but under no circumstances later than five calendar days after a child has been subject to restraint or seclusion, the treatment team shall meet to review the incident and revise the treatment plan as appropriate. The treatment team shall identify any known triggers to the behavior that necessitated the use of restraint or seclusion and recommend preventive measures that may be used to calm the child and eliminate the need for restraint or seclusion. In a subsequent review of the treatment plan, the treatment team shall review the success or failure of preventive measures and revise the plan, if necessary, based on such review.

H. Physical restraint shall be applied only by a mental health or developmental disabilities professional trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint.

I. In applying physical restraint, a mental health or developmental disabilities professional shall use only reasonable force as is necessary to protect the child or other person from imminent and serious physical harm.

J. Seclusion shall be applied only by mental health or developmental disabilities professionals who are trained in the appropriate use of seclusion.

K. At a minimum, a room used for seclusion shall:

(1) be free of objects and fixtures with which a child could self-inflict bodily harm;

(2) provide the mental health or developmental disabilities professional an adequate and continuous view of the child from an adjacent area; and

(3) provide adequate lighting and ventilation.

L. During the seclusion of a child, the mental health or developmental disabilities professional shall:

(1) view the child placed in seclusion at all times; and

(2) provide the child placed in seclusion with:

(a) an explanation of the behavior that resulted in the seclusion; and

(b) instructions on the behavior required to return to the environment.

M. At a minimum, a mental health or developmental disabilities professional shall reassess a child in restraint or seclusion every thirty minutes.

N. The use of a mechanical restraint is prohibited in a mental health and developmental disability treatment setting unless the treatment setting is a hospital that is licensed and certified by and meets the requirements of the joint commission for the accreditation of health care organizations or a facility created pursuant to the Adolescent Treatment Hospital Act [23-9-1 to 23-9-7 NMSA 1978].

O. This section does not prohibit a mental health or developmental disabilities professional from using a mechanical support or protective device:

(1) as prescribed by a health professional; or

(2) for a child with a disability, in accordance with a written treatment plan, including but not limited to a school individualized education plan or behavior intervention plan.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 10; 2008, ch. 75, § 3.

32A-6A-11. Training required for a professional who uses restraint or seclusion.

A mental health or developmental disabilities professional who administers restraint or seclusion shall receive training in current professionally accepted practices and standards regarding:

A. positive behavior interventions strategies and supports;

B. functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention planning;

C. prevention of self-injurious behaviors;

D. methods for identifying and defusing potentially dangerous behavior; and

E. restraint and seclusion, to the extent that each may be used in the treatment setting.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 11.

32A-6A-12. Personal rights of a child in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program; scope.

A. A child in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program shall have, in addition to other rights set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, the right to:

(1) be placed in a manner consistent with the least restrictive means principle;

(2) have access to the state's designated protection and advocacy system and access to an attorney of the child's choice, provided that the child is not entitled to appointment of an attorney at public expense, except as otherwise provided in Subsection C of Section 32A-6A-13 NMSA 1978;

(3) receive visitors of the child's own choosing on a daily basis, subject to restrictions imposed in the best interests of the child by the child's clinician for good cause. Hours during which visitors may be received shall be limited only in the interest of effective treatment and the reasonable efficiency of the program and shall be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the individual needs of the child and the child's visitors. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, each child has the right to receive visits from the child's attorney; physician; physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse or certified nurse-midwife working within that person's scope of practice; psychologist; clergy; guardian ad litem; or representatives from the state's protection and advocacy system or children, youth and families department in private at any reasonable time, irrespective of visiting hours, provided the visitor shows reasonable cause for visiting at times other than normal visiting hours;

(4) have writing materials and postage stamps reasonably available for the child's use in writing letters and other communications. Reasonable assistance shall be provided for writing, addressing and posting letters and other documents upon request. The child has the right to send and receive sealed and uncensored mail. The child has the right to reasonable private access to telephones, and, in cases of personal emergencies when other means of communication are not satisfactory, the child shall be afforded reasonable use of long distance calls; provided that for other than mail or telephone calls to a court; an attorney; a physician; a physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse or certified nurse-midwife working within that person's scope of practice; a psychologist; clergy; a guardian ad litem; a representative from the state's protection and advocacy system; or a social worker, mailing or telephone privileges may be restricted by the child's clinician for good cause shown. A child who is indigent shall be furnished writing, postage and telephone facilities without charge;

(5) reasonable access to a legal custodian and a family member through visitation, videoconferencing, telephone access and opportunity to send and receive mail. In-person visitation is preferred, and reasonable efforts shall be made to facilitate

such visitation unless the child and family choose otherwise. Access by legal custodians and family members to the child shall be limited only in the interest of effective treatment and the reasonable efficiency of the program and shall be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the individual needs of legal custodians and family members. Treatment needs that justify limitation on the access rights of a legal custodian or family member must be specifically documented by the clinician in the child's record, and any such limitation automatically expires in seven days;

(6) follow or abstain from the practice of religion. The program shall provide appropriate assistance in this connection, including reasonable accommodations for religious worship and transportation to nearby religious services. A child who does not wish to participate in religious practice shall be free from pressure to do so or to accept religious beliefs;

(7) a humane psychological and physical environment. The child shall be provided a comfortable bed and adequate changes of linen and reasonable secure storage space for personal possessions. Except when curtailed for reasons of safety or therapy as documented in the child's record by the child's physician, the child shall be afforded reasonable privacy in sleeping and personal hygiene practices;

(8) reasonable daily opportunities for physical exercise and outdoor exercise and reasonable access to recreational areas and equipment, including equipment adapted to the child's developmental and physical needs;

(9) a nourishing, well-balanced, varied and appetizing diet;

(10) prompt and adequate medical attention for a physical ailment. Each child shall receive a complete physical examination upon admission, except when documentation is provided that the child has had such examination within the six months immediately prior to the current admission. Each child shall receive a complete physical examination every twelve months thereafter;

(11) a clean, safe and comfortable environment in a structure that complies with applicable fire and safety requirements;

(12) appropriate medication and freedom from unnecessary or excessive medication. Medication shall not be used as discipline, as a substitute for programs, for the convenience of staff or in quantities that interfere with the child's treatment or habilitation program. No medication shall be administered unless by written order of a clinician licensed to prescribe medication or by an oral order noted immediately in the patient's medical record and signed by that clinician within twenty-four hours. All prescriptions for psychotropic medications must be reviewed at least every thirty days. Notation of each child's medication shall be kept in the child's medical records and shall include a notation by the clinician licensed to prescribe medication of the behavioral or symptomatic baseline data upon which the medication order was made; and

(13) a free public education. The child shall be educated in regular classes with nondisabled children whenever appropriate. In no event shall a child be allowed to remain in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program for more than ten days without receiving educational services. If the child's placement in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program is required by an individualized education plan that conforms to the requirements of state and federal law, the sending school is responsible for the provision of education to the child. In all other situations, the local school district in which the out-of-home treatment or habilitation program is located is responsible for the provision of educational services to the child. Nothing in this subsection shall limit a child's right to public education under state, tribal or federal law.

B. A child receiving services in an out-of-home treatment or habilitation program, including but not limited to residential treatment or habilitation programs, shall be provided notice of rights immediately upon admission to such program.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 12; 2015, ch. 116, § 12.

32A-6A-13. Legal representation of children.

A. A child shall be represented by an attorney at all commitment or treatment guardianship proceedings under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act if the child is fourteen years of age or older or by a guardian ad litem if the child is under fourteen years of age.

B. When a child has not retained an attorney or a guardian ad litem in a commitment or treatment guardian proceeding and is unable to do so, the court shall appoint an attorney or a guardian ad litem to represent the child in the proceeding. Only an attorney with appropriate experience shall be appointed as an attorney or a guardian ad litem for the child. Whenever reasonable and appropriate, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem or attorney who is knowledgeable about the child's cultural background.

C. A child of any age shall have access to the state's designated protection and advocacy system pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act and access to an attorney of the child's choice regarding any matter related to the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

D. The child is not entitled to appointment of an attorney at public expense, except as set forth in Subsections A and B of this section.

E. A child shall not be represented or counseled by an attorney or guardian ad litem who has a conflict of interest, including but not limited to any conflict of interest resulting from prior representation of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian or residential treatment or habilitation program.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 13; 2008, ch. 75, § 4.

32A-6A-14. Consent for services; children under fourteen years of age.

A. Except as provided in Subsection B of this section, the informed consent of a child's legal custodian shall be required before treatment or habilitation, including psychotherapy or psychotropic medications, is administered to a child under fourteen years of age.

B. A child under fourteen years of age may initiate and consent to an initial assessment with a clinician and for medically necessary early intervention service limited to verbal therapy as set forth in this section. The purpose of the initial assessment is to allow a clinician to interview the child and determine what, if any, action needs to be taken to ensure appropriate mental health or habilitation services are provided to the child. The clinician may conduct an initial assessment and provide medically necessary early intervention service limited to verbal therapy with or without the consent of the legal custodian if such service will not extend beyond two calendar weeks. If, at any time, the clinician has a reasonable suspicion that the child is an abused or neglected child, the clinician shall immediately make a child abuse and neglect report.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 14.

32A-6A-15. Consent for services; children fourteen years of age or older.

A. A child fourteen years of age or older is presumed to have capacity to consent to treatment without consent of the child's legal custodian, including consent for individual psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, guidance counseling, case management, behavioral therapy, family therapy, counseling, substance abuse treatment or other forms of verbal treatment that do not include aversive interventions. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to provide a child fourteen years of age or older with independent consent rights for the purposes of the provision of special education and related services as set forth in federal law.

B. Psychotropic medications may be administered to a child fourteen years of age or older with the informed consent of the child. When psychotropic medications are administered to a child fourteen years of age or older, the child's legal custodian shall be notified by the clinician.

C. A clinician or other mental health and developmental disabilities professional shall promote the healthy involvement of a child's legal custodians and family members in developing and implementing the child's treatment plan, including appropriate participation in treatment for children fourteen years of age or older. However, nothing in

this section shall limit the rights of a child fourteen years of age or older to consent to services and to consent to disclosure of mental health records.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 15.

32A-6A-16. Consent for services; determination of capacity for children fourteen years of age or older.

A. When a child fourteen years of age or older has been determined according to the provisions of this section to lack capacity, the child's legal custodian may make a mental health or habilitation decision for the child unless the child objects to such decision or the legal custodian's assumption of authority to make mental health or developmental disability treatment decisions or determination of lack of capacity. Nothing in this subsection:

(1) permits a legal custodian to consent to placement of a child in a residential treatment or habilitation program without the proper consent of the child if the child is fourteen years of age or older; or

(2) in any way, limits a child's right to involuntary commitment procedures as set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

B. The determination that a child fourteen years of age or older lacks or has recovered capacity shall be made by two clinicians, one of whom shall be a person who works with children in the ordinary course of that clinician's practice.

C. A child fourteen years of age or older shall not be determined to lack capacity solely on the basis that the child chooses not to accept the treatment recommended by the mental health or developmental disabilities professional.

D. A child fourteen years of age or older may at any time contest a determination that the child lacks capacity by a signed writing or by personally informing a clinician that the determination is contested. A clinician who is informed by a child that such determination is contested shall promptly communicate that the determination is contested to any supervising provider or institution at which the child is receiving care. Such a challenge shall prevail unless otherwise ordered by the court in a proceeding brought pursuant to the treatment guardianship provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

E. A determination of lack of capacity under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall not be evidence of incapacity for any other purpose.

F. The legal custodian shall communicate an assumption of authority as promptly as practicable to the child fourteen years of age or older and to the clinician and to the

supervising mental health or developmental disability treatment and habilitation provider.

G. If more than one legal custodian assumes authority to act as an agent, the consent of both shall be required for nonemergency treatment. In an emergency, the consent of one legal custodian is sufficient, but the treating mental health professional shall provide the other legal custodian with oral notice followed by written documentation.

H. If more than one legal custodian assumes authority to act as an agent and the legal custodians do not agree on a nonemergency mental health treatment decision and the clinician is so informed, the clinician shall not treat the child unless a treatment guardian is appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

I. A legal custodian shall make treatment decisions in accordance with a child's individual instructions, if any, and other wishes to the extent known to the legal custodian. Otherwise, the legal custodian shall make decisions in accordance with the legal custodian's determination of the child's best interests. In determining the child's best interests, the legal custodian shall consider the child's personal values to the extent known to the legal custodian.

J. A mental health treatment decision made by a legal custodian for a child fourteen years of age or older who has been determined to lack capacity shall not be made solely on the basis of the child's pre-existing physical or medical condition or pre-existing or projected disability.

K. A mental health treatment decision made by a legal custodian for a child fourteen years of age or older who has been determined to lack capacity is effective without judicial approval unless contested by the child.

L. If no legal custodian or agent is reasonably available to make mental health or habilitation decisions for the child, any interested party may petition for the appointment of a treatment guardian.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 16.

32A-6A-17. Treatment guardianship proceedings.

A. If no legal custodian is reasonably available to make mental health decisions for a child fourteen years of age or older who has been determined to lack capacity or if a clinician who proposes a course of treatment objects to a challenge made by the child to a determination of incapacity, the clinician shall request that the children's court attorney petition the court for appointment of a treatment guardian to make a substitute decision for the child.

B. In a treatment guardian proceeding, the court shall appoint an attorney for the child unless the child already has an attorney available.

C. A petition shall be served on the child and the child's attorney. A hearing on the petition shall be held within three business days. At the hearing, the child shall be represented by counsel and shall have the right to be present, to present witnesses and to cross-examine opposing witnesses.

D. If, after the hearing, the court finds that the child is not capable of making treatment decisions and treatment is needed, the court shall order the appointment of a treatment guardian. When appointing a treatment guardian, the court shall appoint the child's legal custodian unless the legal custodian is not readily available or the court finds that such an appointment is not in the child's best interests.

E. The treatment guardian shall make a decision on behalf of the child based on the treatment guardian's best judgment of whether the treatment appears to be in the child's best interests and is consistent with the least restrictive means principle for accomplishing the treatment objective. In making this decision, the treatment guardian shall consult with the child and consider the child's expressed opinions. The treatment guardian shall give consideration to previous decisions made by the child in similar circumstances when the child was able to make treatment decisions and shall make the decision in accordance with the values of the child if known, or in the best interests of the child if the values are not known; provided that, if the child has given an individual instruction that is available to the treatment guardian, the instruction shall be followed.

F. If a child who is not a resident of a residential treatment and habilitation program has a treatment guardian and refuses to comply with the decision of the treatment guardian, the treatment guardian may obtain an enforcement order. The enforcement order may authorize a peace officer to take the child into custody or to transport the child to an evaluation facility and may authorize the facility to forcibly administer treatment. The treatment guardian shall consult with the clinician who is proposing treatment, the child's attorney or guardian ad litem and, as deemed appropriate, interested friends or relatives of the child. The evaluation facility shall comply with the treatment guardian's decision unless the clinician finds it to be against the best interests of the child.

G. A child, physician or other professional wishing to contest the decision of the treatment guardian may do so by filing a petition with the court within three calendar days or the next business day, whichever is later, of receiving notice of the treatment guardian's decision. The child shall be represented by counsel in all proceedings before the court. The court may overrule the treatment guardian's decision if it finds that decision to be against the best interests of the child. The court shall rule within seven days of the filing of the petition.

H. If both a petition for an enforcement order and a petition to contest the treatment guardian's decision are filed, they shall be heard in the same proceeding at the same time.

I. When the court appoints a treatment guardian, it shall specify the length of time during which the treatment guardian may exercise treatment guardian powers, up to a maximum period of one year. If, at the end of the guardianship period, the treatment guardian believes that the child still lacks capacity, the treatment guardian shall petition the court for reappointment or for appointment of a new treatment guardian. The guardianship shall be extended or a new guardian shall be appointed only if the court finds the child does not have capacity to make treatment or habilitation decisions at the time of the hearing. The court shall appoint an attorney for the child, and the child shall have the right to be present and to present evidence at all such hearings.

J. If, during the period of a treatment guardian's power, the treatment guardian, the child, the treatment provider or a member of the child's family believes that the child has regained capacity, that person may petition the court for a termination of the treatment guardianship. If the court finds the child has regained capacity, it shall terminate the power of the treatment guardian and restore to the child the power to make treatment decisions.

K. A treatment guardian shall have only those powers enumerated in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

L. If a clinician licensed to prescribe medication believes that the administration of psychotropic medication is necessary to protect the child from serious harm that could occur while the provisions of this section are being satisfied, the licensed clinician may order or administer the medication on an emergency basis. When medication is administered to a child on an emergency basis, the clinician shall prepare and place in the child's medical records a report explaining the nature of the emergency and the reason that no treatment less restrictive than administration of psychotropic medication without proper consent would have protected the child from serious harm. When medication is administered to a child on an emergency basis, the child's legal custodian and the child's attorney or guardian ad litem shall be notified by the residential treatment or habilitation program. If the child is not in a residential setting, the clinician shall petition for a pickup order pursuant to Section 19 [32A-6A-19 NMSA 1978] of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act and have the child transported to a residential facility where the medication will be administered.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 17.

32A-6A-18. Individual instructions.

A. A child fourteen years of age or older who has capacity also has the right to direct the child's own treatment in the event of later incapacity. To do so, the child may

give an individual instruction regarding the child's own treatment or habilitation. The individual instruction may be limited to take effect only if a specified condition arises.

B. An individual instruction shall be effective without judicial approval and shall be written and signed by the child and the child's legal custodian and signed by a witness who is at least eighteen years of age and who attests that the child and the child's legal custodian are known to the witness, that they signed the individual instruction for mental health treatment in the witness' presence and that they appear to have capacity and are not acting under duress, fraud or undue influence.

C. A witness to an individual instruction shall not be related to the child or the child's legal custodian by blood or marriage, the child's attending qualified health care professional or an owner, operator or employee of a mental health facility at which the child is receiving care or of any parent organization, subsidiary or contractor of the mental health facility.

D. If the child's legal custodian refuses to consent to the individual instruction, the child may petition the court for determination of whether the individual instruction is in the child's best interest.

E. A child's legal custodian or treatment guardian shall make treatment decisions in accordance with the child's individual instruction unless the treatment requested is infeasible or unavailable or would not offer the child any significant benefit as determined by the child's clinician.

F. The individual instruction shall be implemented by the child's legal custodian under this section only upon certification that the child lacks capacity. The instruction shall cease to be effective upon a determination that the child has recovered capacity.

G. Written certification that a child lacks or has recovered capacity or that another condition exists that affects an individual instruction shall be made according to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. A child while having capacity may revoke all or part of an individual instruction for mental health treatment at any time and in any manner that communicates an intent to revoke.

H. The fact that a child has executed a written individual instruction for treatment shall not constitute an indication of mental illness.

I. A clinician who knows the existence of an individual instruction for mental health treatment, a revocation or a challenge to a determination or certification of lack of capacity shall obtain a copy and shall place it in the child's health care record.

J. A clinician shall disclose an individual instruction for mental health treatment to other clinicians only when it is determined that the disclosure is necessary to provide treatment in accordance with an individual instruction.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 18.

32A-6A-19. Emergency mental health evaluation and care.

A. A peace officer may detain and transport a child for emergency mental health evaluation and care in the absence of a legally valid order from the court only if the peace officer:

(1) has reasonable grounds to believe the child has just attempted suicide;

(2) based upon personal observation and investigation, has reasonable grounds to believe that the child, as a result of a mental disorder, presents a likelihood of serious harm to self or others and that immediate detention is necessary to prevent such harm. The peace officer shall convey the peace officer's beliefs to the admitting physician or licensed psychologist immediately upon the officer's arrival at the evaluation facility;

(3) has certification from a clinician that the child, as a result of a mental disorder, presents a likelihood of serious harm to self or others and that immediate intervention is necessary to prevent the harm; or

(4) has an involuntary placement order issued by a tribal court that orders the child to be admitted to an evaluation facility.

B. A peace officer shall immediately transport a child detained under this section to an evaluation facility. In the case of an extreme emergency, the child may be held for a period of up to twenty-four hours in temporary emergency placement in:

(1) a foster home licensed to provide specialized or therapeutic care;

(2) a facility operated by a licensed child services agency that meets standards promulgated by the department for the care of children who present the likelihood of serious harm to themselves or others; and

(3) residential care on an emergency basis.

C. A child shall not be held for the purposes of emergency mental health evaluation or care in a jail or other facility intended or used for the incarceration of adults charged with criminal offenses or for the detention of children alleged or adjudicated to be delinquent children.

D. The director of an evaluation facility shall accomplish an emergency evaluation upon the request of a child's legal custodian, a peace officer, a detention facility administrator or the administrator's designee or upon the certification of a clinician. A court order is not required under this section. If an application is made to a court, the

court's power to act in furtherance of an emergency admission shall be limited to ordering that:

(1) the child be seen by a clinician prior to transport to an evaluation facility; and

(2) a peace officer transport the child to an evaluation facility.

E. The admitting physician or licensed psychologist shall evaluate whether reasonable grounds exist to detain the child for evaluation and treatment, and, if reasonable grounds are found, the child shall be detained. If the admitting physician or licensed psychologist determines that reasonable grounds do not exist to detain the child for evaluation and treatment, the child shall not be detained but shall be released to the custody of the child's legal custodian.

F. Upon arrival at an evaluation facility, the child shall be informed orally and in writing by the evaluation facility of the purpose and possible consequences of the proceedings, the allegations in the petition, the child's right to a hearing within seven days, the child's right to counsel and the child's right to communicate with an attorney or a guardian ad litem and an independent mental health professional of the child's own choosing. A child shall have the right to receive necessary and appropriate treatment.

G. A peace officer who transports a child to an evaluation facility pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not require a court order to be reimbursed by the referring county.

H. If a child is transported to or detained at an evaluation facility and is not released to the child's legal custodian, the peace officer transporting the child shall give written notice thereof as soon as possible within twenty-four hours to the child's legal custodian, together with a statement of the reason for taking the child into custody.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 19.

32A-6A-20. Consent to placement in a residential treatment or habilitation program; children younger than fourteen years of age.

A. A child younger than fourteen years of age shall not receive residential treatment for a mental disorder or habilitation for a developmental disability, except as provided in this section.

B. A child younger than fourteen years of age may be admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program for a period not to exceed sixty days with the informed consent of the child's legal custodian, subject to the requirements of this section.

C. In order to admit a child younger than fourteen years of age to a residential treatment or habilitation program, the child's legal custodian shall knowingly and

voluntarily execute a consent to admission document prior to the child's admission. The consent to admission document shall be in a form designated by the supreme court. The consent to admission document shall include a clear statement of the legal custodian's right to consent voluntarily to or refuse the child's admission, the legal custodian's right to request the child's immediate discharge from the residential treatment program at any time and the legal custodian's rights when the legal custodian requests the child's discharge and the child's physician, licensed psychologist or the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program determines that the child needs continued treatment. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall ensure that each statement is clearly explained in the child's and legal custodian's primary language, if that is their language of preference, and in a manner appropriate to the child's and legal custodian's developmental abilities. Each statement shall be initialed by the child's legal custodian.

D. The legal custodian's executed consent to admission document shall be filed with the child's treatment records within twenty-four hours of the time of admission.

E. Upon the filing of the legal custodian's consent to admission document in the child's hospital records, the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program or the director's designee shall, on the next business day following the child's admission, notify the district court or the special commissioner appointed pursuant to Section 32A-6A-25 NMSA 1978 regarding the admission and provide the child's name, date of birth and the date and place of admission. The court or special commissioner shall, upon receipt of notice regarding a child's admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program, establish a sequestered court file.

F. The director of a residential treatment or habilitation program or the director's designee shall, on the next business day following the child's admission, petition the court to appoint a guardian ad litem for the child. When the court receives the petition, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem.

G. Within seven days of a child's admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program, a guardian ad litem, representing the child's best interests and in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act [32A-6A-1 to 32A-6A-30 NMSA 1978], shall meet with the child, the child's legal custodian and the child's clinician. The guardian ad litem shall determine the following:

(1) whether the child's legal custodian understands and consents to the child's admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program;

(2) whether the admission is in the child's best interests; and

(3) whether the admission is appropriate for the child and is consistent with the least restrictive means principle.

H. If a guardian ad litem determines that the child's legal custodian understands and consents to the child's admission and that the admission is in the child's best interests, is appropriate for the child and is consistent with the least restrictive means principle, the guardian ad litem shall so certify on a form designated by the supreme court. The form, when completed by the guardian ad litem, shall be filed in the child's patient record kept by the residential treatment or habilitation program, and a copy shall be forwarded to the court or special commissioner within seven days of the child's admission. The guardian ad litem's statement shall not identify the child by name.

I. Upon reaching the age of fourteen, a child who was admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program pursuant to this section may petition the district court for the records of the district court regarding all matters pertinent to the child's admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program. The district court, upon receipt of the petition and upon a determination that the petitioner is in fact a child who was admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program, shall provide all court records regarding the admission to the petitioner, including all copies in the court's possession, unless there is a showing that release of records would cause substantial harm to the child. Upon reaching the age of eighteen, a person who was admitted to a residential or treatment or habilitation program as a child may petition the district court for such records, and the district court shall provide all court records regarding the admission to the petitioner, including all copies in the court's possession.

J. A legal custodian who consents to admission of a child to a residential treatment or habilitation program has the right to request the child's immediate discharge from the residential treatment or habilitation program, subject to the provisions of this section. If a child's legal custodian informs the director, a physician or other member of the residential treatment or habilitation program staff that the legal custodian desires the child to be discharged from the program, the director, physician or other staff shall provide for the child's immediate discharge and remit the child to the legal custodian's care. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall also notify the child's guardian ad litem. A child whose legal custodian requests the child's immediate discharge shall be discharged, except when the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program, a physician or a licensed psychologist determines that the child requires continued treatment and that the child meets the criteria for involuntary residential treatment. In that event, the director, physician or licensed psychologist shall, on the first business day following the child's legal custodian's request for release of the child from the program, request that the children's court attorney initiate involuntary residential treatment proceedings. The children's court attorney may petition the court for such proceedings. The child has a right to a hearing regarding the child's continued treatment within seven days of the request for release.

K. A residential treatment or habilitation program shall review the admission of a child at the end of a sixty-day period after the date of initial admission, and the child's physician or licensed psychologist shall review the admission to determine whether it is in the best interests of the child to continue the admission. If the child's physician or licensed psychologist concludes that continuation of the residential treatment or

habilitation program is in the child's best interests, the child's clinician shall so state in a form to be filed in the child's patient records. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall notify the guardian ad litem for the child at least seven days prior to the date that the sixty-day period is to end or, if necessary, request a guardian ad litem pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. The guardian ad litem shall then personally meet with the child, the child's legal custodian and the child's clinician and ensure that the child's legal custodian understands and consents to the child's continued admission to the residential treatment or habilitation program. If the guardian ad litem determines that the child's legal custodian understands and consents to the child's continued admission to the residential treatment or habilitation program, that the continued admission is in the child's best interest, that the placement continues to be appropriate for the child and consistent with the least restrictive means principle and that the clinician has recommended the child's continued stay in the program, the guardian ad litem shall so certify on a form designated by the supreme court. The disposition of these forms shall be as set forth in this section, with one copy going in the child's patient record and the other being sent to the district court in a manner that preserves the child's anonymity. This procedure shall take place every sixty days following the child's last admission or a guardian ad litem's certification, whichever occurs first.

L. When a guardian ad litem determines that the child's legal custodian does not understand or consent to the child's admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program, that the admission is not in the child's best interests, that the placement is inappropriate for the child or is inconsistent with the least restrictive means principle or that the child's clinician has not recommended a continued stay by the child in the residential treatment or habilitation program, the child shall be released or involuntary placement procedures shall be initiated.

M. If the child's legal custodian is unavailable to take custody of the child and immediate discharge of the child would endanger the child, the residential treatment or habilitation program may detain the child until a safe and orderly discharge is possible. If the child's legal custodian refuses to take physical custody of the child, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall refer the case to the department for an abuse and neglect or family in need of court-ordered services investigation. The department may take the child into protective custody pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] or the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978].

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 20; 2008, ch. 75, § 5.

32A-6A-21. Voluntary residential treatment or habilitation for children fourteen years of age or older.

A. A child fourteen years of age or older shall not receive treatment for mental disorders or habilitation for developmental disabilities on a voluntary residential basis, except as provided in this section.

B. An admission of a child fourteen years of age or older to a residential treatment or habilitation program is voluntary when it is medically necessary and consented to by the child and the child's legal custodian as set forth in this section, provided that the admission does not exceed sixty days, subject to the requirements of this section.

C. To have a child voluntarily admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program, the child and the child's legal custodian shall knowingly and voluntarily execute, prior to admission, a child's voluntary consent to admission document. The document shall include a clear statement of the child's right to voluntarily consent or to request an immediate discharge from the residential treatment or habilitation program at any time; and the child's rights when the child requests a discharge and the child's physician, licensed psychologist or the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program determines the child needs continued treatment. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall ensure that each statement is clearly explained in the child's and legal custodian's primary language, if that is their language of preference, and in a manner appropriate to the child's and legal custodian's developmental abilities, and each statement shall be initialed by the child and the child's legal custodian.

D. A child who is admitted on a voluntary basis has a right to an attorney. Prior to admission, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall inform the child's legal custodian of the child's right to an independent attorney within seventy-two hours. If the child's legal custodian is unable to obtain an independent attorney, the legal custodian may petition the court to appoint an attorney for the child. If the child's legal custodian obtains an independent attorney for the child, the legal custodian shall notify the residential treatment or habilitation program of that attorney's name within seventy-two hours of the child's voluntary admission.

E. The child's executed voluntary consent to admission document shall be filed in the child's treatment record within twenty-four hours of the time of admission.

F. Upon the filing of the child's voluntary consent to admission document in the child's treatment record, the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program or the director's designee shall, on the next business day following the child's admission, notify the district court or the special commissioner of the admission, giving the child's name, date of birth and the date and place of admission. Upon receipt of notice of a child's voluntary admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program, the court or special commissioner shall establish a sequestered court file.

G. If within seventy-two hours of the child's voluntary admission the child has not met with an independent attorney and the child's legal custodian has not notified the residential treatment or habilitation program of the name of the child's independent attorney, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall during the next business day petition the court to appoint an attorney. When the court receives the petition, the court shall appoint an attorney.

H. If within seventy-two hours of the child's voluntary admission the child has met with an independent attorney or the child's legal custodian has notified the residential treatment or habilitation program of the name of the child's independent attorney, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall during the next business day notify the court or the special commissioner of the name of the child's independent attorney.

I. Within seven days of the admission, an attorney representing the child pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall meet with the child. At the meeting with the child, the attorney shall explain to the child the following:

(1) the child's right to an attorney;

(2) the child's right to terminate the child's voluntary admission and the procedures to effect termination;

(3) the effect of terminating the child's voluntary admission and options of the clinician and other interested parties to petition for an involuntary admission; and

(4) the child's rights under the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, including the right to:

(a) legal representation;

(b) a presumption of competence;

(c) receive daily visitors of the child's choice;

(d) receive and send uncensored mail;

(e) have access to telephones;

(f) follow or abstain from the practice of religion;

(g) a humane and safe environment;

(h) physical exercise and outdoor exercise;

(i) a nourishing, well-balanced, varied and appetizing diet;

(j) medical treatment;

(k) educational services;

(l) freedom from unnecessary or excessive medication;

(m)individualized treatment and habilitation; and

(n) participation in the development of the individualized treatment plan and access to that plan on request.

J. If the attorney determines that the child understands the child's rights and that the child voluntarily and knowingly desires to remain as a patient in a residential treatment or habilitation program, the attorney shall so certify on a form designated by the supreme court. The form, when completed by the attorney, shall be filed in the child's patient record at the residential treatment or habilitation program, and a copy shall be forwarded to the court or special commissioner within seven days of the child's admission. The attorney's statement shall not identify the child by name.

K. Upon reaching the age of fourteen, a child who was a voluntary admittee to a residential treatment or habilitation program may petition the district court for the records of the court regarding all matters pertinent to the child's voluntary admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program. The court, upon receipt of the petition and upon a determination that the petitioner was in fact the child who was a voluntary admittee to a residential treatment or habilitation program, shall give all court records regarding the admission to the petitioner, including all copies in the court's possession unless there is a showing that provision of records would cause substantial harm to the child. A person who was admitted to a residential or treatment or habilitation program as a child, upon reaching the age of eighteen, may petition the district court for such records and the district court shall provide all court records regarding the admission to the petitioner, including all copies in the court's possession.

L. Any child voluntarily admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program has the right to an immediate discharge from the residential treatment or habilitation program upon the child's request, except as provided in this section. If a child informs the director, clinician or other member of the residential treatment or habilitation program staff that the child desires to be discharged from the voluntary program, the director, clinician or other staff member shall provide for the child's immediate discharge. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall not require that the child's request be in writing. Upon the request, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall notify the child's legal custodian to take custody of the child and remit the child to the legal custodian's care. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall also notify the child's attorney. If the child's legal custodian is unavailable to take custody of the child and immediate discharge of the child would endanger the child, the residential treatment or habilitation program may detain the child until a safe and orderly discharge is possible. If the child's legal custodian refuses to take physical custody of the child, the residential treatment or habilitation program shall refer the case to the department for an abuse and neglect or family in need of court-ordered services investigation. The department may take the child into protective custody pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] or the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978]. A child requesting immediate discharge shall be discharged, except in those situations

when the director of the residential treatment or habilitation program, a physician or a licensed psychologist determines that the child requires continued treatment and that the child meets the criteria for involuntary residential treatment or habilitation services as otherwise provided under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. In that event, the director, physician or licensed psychologist, after making the determination, shall, on the first business day following the child's request for release from the voluntary program, request that the child's court attorney initiate involuntary placement proceedings. The child's court attorney may petition for such a placement. The child has a right to a hearing on the child's continued treatment within five days of the child's request for release.

M. A child who is voluntarily admitted to a residential treatment or habilitation program shall have the child's voluntary admission reviewed at the end of a sixty-day period from the date of the child's initial admission to the program. The review shall be accomplished by having the child's physician or licensed psychologist review the child's treatment and determine whether it would be in the best interests of the child to continue the voluntary admission. If the child's physician or licensed psychologist concludes that continuation of treatment is in the child's best interests, the child's clinician shall so state in a form to be filed in the child's patient record. The residential treatment or habilitation program shall notify the child's attorney at least seven days prior to the date that the sixty-day period is to end or, if necessary, request an attorney pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. The attorney shall then personally meet with the child and ensure that the child understands the child's rights as set forth in this section, that the child understands the method for voluntary termination of the child's admission and that the child knowingly and voluntarily consents to the child's continued treatment. If the attorney determines that the child understands these rights and that the child voluntarily and knowingly desires to remain in the residential treatment or habilitation program and that the clinician has recommended the continued stay in the program, the attorney shall so certify on a form designated by the supreme court. The disposition of these forms shall be as set forth in this section, with one copy going in the child's patient record and the other being sent to the district court in a manner that preserves the child's anonymity. This procedure shall take place every sixty days from the last admission or attorney's certification, whichever comes first.

N. If the attorney determines that the child does not voluntarily desire to remain in the program or if the child's clinician has not recommended continued stay by the child in the residential treatment or habilitation program, the child shall be released pursuant to the involuntary placement procedures set forth in this section and the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be followed.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 21.

32A-6A-22. Involuntary residential treatment.

A. A child may not receive treatment for mental disorders or habilitation for developmental disabilities on an involuntary residential basis except as provided in this section.

B. A child afforded rights under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be advised of those rights at that child's first appearance before the court on a petition under that act.

C. A child has the right to be placed in a residential treatment or habilitation program only when the placement is medically necessary.

D. A person who believes that a child, as a result of a mental disorder or developmental disability, is in need of residential mental health or developmental disabilities services may request that a children's court attorney file a petition with the court for the child's involuntary placement. The petition shall include a detailed description of the symptoms or behaviors of the child that support the allegations in the petition, a list of prospective witnesses for involuntary placement and a summary of matters to which they will testify. The petition should also contain a discussion of the alternatives to residential care that have been considered and the reasons for rejecting the alternatives. A copy of the petition shall be served upon the child, the child's legal custodian and the child's attorney or guardian ad litem.

E. The court shall, upon receiving the petition, appoint counsel for the child unless the child has retained an attorney or an attorney or guardian ad litem has been appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act. The attorney or guardian ad litem shall represent the child at all stages of the proceedings.

F. If, after interviewing the child, the child's attorney or guardian ad litem determines that the child understands the child's rights and desires to waive the child's presence at the hearing on the issue of involuntary placement, the attorney or guardian ad litem shall submit a verified written statement to the court explaining the attorney's or guardian ad litem's understanding of the child's intent. If the court is satisfied that the child has voluntarily and knowingly waived the child's right to be present at the hearing, the child may be involuntarily placed in a residential treatment or habilitation program at a hearing at which the child is not present. By waiving the right to be present at the involuntary placement hearing, the child waives no other rights.

G. An involuntary placement hearing shall be held within seven days of the emergency admission of the child to a residential treatment or habilitation program under this section. An involuntary placement hearing shall be held within five days from a child's declaration that the child desires to terminate the child's voluntary admission to a residential treatment or habilitation program if the child's clinician has assessed and documented that involuntary placement is necessary.

H. At the involuntary placement hearing, the child shall:

(1) at all times be represented by counsel;

(2) have the right to present evidence, including the testimony of a mental health and developmental disabilities professional of the child's own choosing;

(3) have the right to cross-examine witnesses;

(4) have the right to a complete record of the proceedings; and

(5) have the right to an expeditious appeal of an adverse ruling.

I. The legal custodian of a child involved in an involuntary placement hearing shall have automatic standing as witnesses and shall be allowed to testify by telephone or through a written affidavit if circumstances make personal testimony too burdensome.

J. The court shall include in its findings either a statement of the child's legal custodian's opinion about whether the child should be involuntarily placed in a residential treatment or habilitation program, a statement detailing the efforts made to ascertain the legal custodian's opinion or a statement of why it was not in the child's best interests to have the legal guardian involved.

K. The court shall make an order involuntarily placing the child in a residential treatment or habilitation program upon a showing by clear and convincing evidence that:

(1) as a result of mental disorder or developmental disability the child needs the treatment or habilitation services proposed;

(2) as a result of mental disorder or developmental disability the child is likely to benefit from the treatment or habilitation services proposed;

(3) the proposed involuntary placement is consistent with the treatment or habilitation needs of the child; and

(4) the proposed involuntary placement is consistent with the least restrictive means principle.

L. If the court determines that the child does not meet the criteria for involuntary placement set forth in this section, it may order the child to undergo nonresidential treatment or habilitation as may be appropriate and necessary or it may order no treatment. If the court determines that the child should not be involuntarily placed in a residential treatment or habilitation program and if the child's legal custodian refuses to take custody of the child, the court shall refer the case to the department for an abuse and neglect investigation. The department may take the child into custody pursuant to the provisions of the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] or the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978].

M. A child receiving involuntary residential treatment or habilitation services for a mental disorder or developmental disability under this section shall have a right to periodic review of the child's involuntary placement at the end of every involuntary placement period. An involuntary placement period shall not exceed sixty days. At the expiration of an involuntary placement period, the child may continue in residential care only after a new involuntary placement hearing and entry of a new order of involuntary placement for one involuntary placement period. Nothing set forth in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act prohibits a child, who has been involuntarily placed and thereafter discharged and released, from subsequently voluntarily consenting to admission under the provisions of that act.

N. If the person seeking the involuntary placement of a child to a residential treatment or habilitation program believes that the child is likely to cause serious bodily harm to self or to others during the period that would be required to hold an involuntary placement hearing as provided in this section, the child may be admitted to residential care on an emergency basis. If the child is admitted on an emergency basis, appointment of counsel and other procedures shall then take place as provided elsewhere in this section.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 22

32A-6A-23. Liability of persons providing treatment or habilitation services.

A. A person providing mental health and developmental disability services to a child and a treatment facility providing mental health and developmental disability services to a child shall not be liable if:

(1) the child does not require detention, treatment or services;

(2) the admission or treatment was made solely on the basis of misrepresentations by a child seeking treatment or habilitation services or by a child's legal custodian, provided the professional or the facility's staff acted in good faith; or

(3) the admission was made solely on the basis of reliance upon a tribal court order, provided the mental health or developmental professional or the facility's staff acted in good faith.

B. Nothing in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be construed to relieve any professional or facility from liability for negligence or intentional misconduct in the diagnosis, treatment or services provided to any child.

C. Nothing in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall be construed to relieve any professional or facility from a duty pursuant to reporting laws relating to the detection of child abuse.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 23.

32A-6A-24. Disclosure of information.

A. Except as otherwise provided in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, a person shall not, without the authorization of the child, disclose or transmit any confidential information from which a person well-acquainted with the child might recognize the child as the described person or any code, number or other means that could be used to match the child with confidential information regarding the child.

B. When the child is under fourteen years of age, the child's legal custodian is authorized to consent to disclosure on behalf of the child. Information shall also be disclosed to a court-appointed guardian ad litem without consent of the child or the child's legal custodian.

C. A child fourteen years of age or older with capacity to consent to disclosure of confidential information shall have the right to consent to disclosure of mental health and habilitation records. A legal custodian who is authorized to make health care decisions for a child has the same rights as the child to request, receive, examine, copy and consent to the disclosure of medical or other health care information when evidence exists that such a child whose consent to disclosure of confidential information is sought does not have capacity to give or withhold valid consent and does not have a treatment guardian appointed by a court. If the legal custodian is not authorized to make decisions for a child under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act, the person seeking authorization shall petition the court for the appointment of a treatment guardian to make a decision for such a child.

D. Authorization from the child or legal custodian for a child less than fourteen years of age shall not be required for the disclosure or transmission of confidential information when the disclosure or transmission:

(1) is necessary for treatment of the child and is made in response to a request from a clinician;

(2) is necessary to protect against a clear and substantial risk of imminent serious physical injury or death inflicted by the child on self or another;

(3) is determined by a clinician not to cause substantial harm to the child and a summary of the child's assessment, treatment plan, progress, discharge plan and other information essential to the child's treatment is made to a child's legal custodian or guardian ad litem;

(4) is to the primary caregiver of the child and the information disclosed was necessary for the continuity of the child's treatment in the judgment of the treating clinician who discloses the information;

(5) is to an insurer contractually obligated to pay part or all of the expenses relating to the treatment of the child at the residential facility. The information disclosed shall be limited to data identifying the child, facility and treating or supervising physician and the dates and duration of the residential treatment. It shall not be a defense to an insurer's obligation to pay that the information relating to the residential treatment of the child, apart from information disclosed pursuant to this section, has not been disclosed to the insurer;

(6) is to a protection and advocacy representative pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act; or

(7) is pursuant to a court order issued for good cause shown after notice to the child and the child's legal custodian and opportunity to be heard is given. Before issuing an order requiring disclosure, the court shall find that:

(a) other ways of obtaining the information are not available or would not be effective; and

(b) the need for the disclosure outweighs the potential injury to the child, the clinician-child relationship and treatment services.

E. A disclosure ordered by the court shall be limited to the information that is essential to carry out the purpose of the disclosure. Disclosure shall be limited to those persons whose need for the information forms the basis for the order. An order by the court shall include such other measures as are necessary to limit disclosure for the protection of the child, including sealing from public scrutiny the record of a proceeding for which disclosure of a child's record has been ordered.

F. An authorization given for the transmission or disclosure of confidential information shall not be effective unless it:

(1) is in writing and signed; and

(2) contains a statement of the child's right to examine and copy the information to be disclosed, the name or title of the proposed recipient of the information and a description of the use that may be made of the information.

G. The child has a right of access to confidential information about the child and has the right to make copies of information about the child and submit clarifying or correcting statements and other documentation of reasonable length for inclusion with the confidential information. The statements and other documentation shall be kept with the relevant confidential information, shall accompany it in the event of disclosure and shall be governed by the provisions of this section to the extent the statements or other documentation contain confidential information. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the denial of access to the records when a physician or other mental health or

developmental disabilities professional believes and notes in the child's medical records that the disclosure would not be in the best interests of the child. In all cases, the child has the right to petition the court for an order granting access.

H. Information concerning a child disclosed under this section shall not be released to any other person, agency or governmental entity or placed in files or computerized data banks accessible to any persons not otherwise authorized to obtain information under this section. Notwithstanding the confidentiality provisions of the Delinquency Act [Chapter 32A, Article 2 NMSA 1978] and the Abuse and Neglect Act [Article 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978], information disclosed under this section shall not be re-released without the express consent of the child or legal custodian authorized under the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act to give consent and any other consent necessary for redisclosure in conformance with state and federal law, including consent that may be required from the professional or the facility that created the document.

I. Nothing in the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act shall limit the confidentiality rights afforded by federal statute or regulation.

J. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to this section and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules [10-101 NMRA].

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 24; 2008, ch. 75, § 6.

32A-6A-25. Special commissioner.

A court may conduct the proceedings required by the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act or may, by general or special order, appoint a special commissioner to do so. The special commissioner shall be a licensed attorney. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the special commissioner shall file findings and recommendations with the court promptly.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 25.

32A-6A-26. Transportation.

When a child is to be placed in a residential treatment or habilitation program or to be returned to the program during placement, the court ordering the placement or authorizing the return of the child may direct the sheriff, the New Mexico state police or other appropriate persons to furnish suitable transportation in order to effect the placement or return by contacting the department for directions as to the destination of the child.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 26.

32A-6A-27. Violation of a child's rights.

A child who believes that rights established by the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act or by the constitution of the United States or the constitution of New Mexico have been violated shall have a right to petition the court for redress. The child shall be represented by counsel. The court shall grant relief as is appropriate, subject to the provisions of the Tort Claims Act [41-4-1 to 41-4-27 NMSA 1978].

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 27.

32A-6A-28. Cost of care.

An indigent child may receive care and treatment at a state-operated facility without charge. The governing authorities of the facility may require payment for the cost of care and treatment from others pursuant to established fee schedules based on ability to pay.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 28.

32A-6A-29. Recognition of tribal court involuntary placement orders.

A. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the contrary, an involuntary placement order for a child issued by a tribal court shall be recognized and enforced by the district court for the judicial district in which the tribal court is located. The involuntary placement order shall be filed with the clerk of the district court. The tribal court, as the court of original jurisdiction, shall retain jurisdiction and authority over the child.

B. A child placed in an evaluation facility pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be subject to the continuing jurisdiction of the tribal court; provided that any decisions regarding discharge or release of the child from the evaluation facility shall be made by the administrator of that facility. Prior to discharging or releasing the child, the facility shall:

(1) make custody arrangements with the child's legal custodian; and

(2) establish a plan for the child's aftercare.

C. When an Indian child is placed in an evaluation facility pursuant to the provisions of this section, any outpatient treatment of the Indian child shall be provided in the same manner as treatment would be provided for any other child.

D. When an Indian child requires emergency treatment or habilitation, that treatment or habilitation shall be provided pursuant to the provisions of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act.

E. An Indian child residing on or off a reservation, as a citizen of this state, shall have the same right to services available to other children of the state.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 162, § 29.

32A-6A-30. Rules.

The department shall promulgate rules for the operation of out-of-home treatment and habilitation programs identified as psychiatric residential treatment facilities or non-medical community-based residential programs in keeping with the purposes of the Children's Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Act and in conformance with applicable federal law and regulation.

History: Laws 2008, ch. 75, § 7.

ARTICLE 7
Juvenile Parole Board (Repealed.)

32A-7-1. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 194; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-2. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 195; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-3. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 196; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-4. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 197; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-5. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 198; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-6. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 199; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-7. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 200; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-8. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-8, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 201; 2003, ch. 225, § 17; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

32A-7-9. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7-9, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 202; repealed by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 70.

ARTICLE 7A
Juvenile Public Safety Advisory Board

32A-7A-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 7A NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Juvenile Public Safety Advisory Board Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-1, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 58.

32A-7A-2. Juvenile public safety advisory board; terms; director.

A. The "juvenile public safety advisory board" is created, consisting of no fewer than three and no more than seven members appointed by the governor. The board is administratively attached to the department. The terms of members of the board shall be six years.

B. A director shall be appointed by the governor as the administrative officer of the juvenile public safety advisory board. The director shall employ other staff as necessary to carry out the duties of the board. Employees shall be employed in classified positions

and shall be subject to the provisions of the Personnel Act [Chapter 10, Article 9 NMSA 1978].

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-2, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 59; 2012, ch. 36, § 1.

32A-7A-3. Board; removal; vacancies.

A member of the juvenile public safety advisory board may be removed by the governor as provided in Article 5, Section 5 of the constitution of New Mexico. Vacancies shall be filled by the governor for the remainder of the unexpired term.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-3, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 60.

32A-7A-4. Board; qualifications.

Members of the juvenile public safety advisory board shall be persons qualified by education or professional training in such fields as criminology, education, health, psychology, psychiatry, law, social work or sociology for children and youth. The membership shall be reasonably representative of the various geographic regions of the state.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-4, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 61.

32A-7A-5. Board; chair.

A. The governor shall designate one member of the juvenile public safety advisory board to serve as chair.

B. The chair may designate two members of the board to serve as regional vice chairs.

C. An employee of the department shall not be designated to serve as chair or vice chair of the board.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-5, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 62; 2012, ch. 36, § 2.

32A-7A-6. Board; powers and duties.

A. The juvenile public safety advisory board shall:

(1) advise the department on release decisions, including the criteria to be used to grant release and participation in decisions to grant or deny release;

(2) meet with the secretary of children, youth and families or the secretary's designee a minimum of twice each year for the purpose of reviewing the activities of the department;

(3) visit each facility for adjudicated delinquent children operated by the department at least once each year and on or before June 30 of each year, submit a written report to the governor and the secretary regarding conditions relating to the care and treatment of youth assigned to the facilities and any other matters pertinent in the judgment of the board;

(4) make recommendations to the secretary of children, youth and families and the director of the juvenile justice division of the department concerning programs and facilities for adjudicated delinquent children; and

(5) adopt rules and regulations as may be necessary for the effectual discharge of duties of the board.

B. Within forty days of a juvenile's arrival at a facility, the juvenile public safety advisory board shall conduct an initial assessment of the juvenile. At regularly scheduled intervals thereafter, the board shall conduct administrative reviews to assess the juvenile's progress or lack thereof. After each administrative review, the board shall prepare a report of the juvenile offender's progress with recommendations as to readiness for release or appropriateness of programming.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-6, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 63.

32A-7A-7. Board; compensation.

The members of the juvenile public safety advisory board shall receive per diem and mileage as provided for nonsalaried public officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-7, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 64.

32A-7A-8. Access.

The juvenile public safety advisory board shall have access at reasonable times to any adjudicated delinquent child and any records pertaining to the child for whom the department is considering release or who has requested release pursuant to procedures established by the department. The agency or facility to which legal custody was transferred shall also provide the board with facilities for communicating with and interviewing children.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-7A-8, as enacted by Laws 2009, ch. 239, § 65.

ARTICLE 8
Citizen Substitute Care Review

32A-8-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 8 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Citizen Substitute Care Review Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 203; 2016, ch. 60, § 4.

32A-8-2. Purpose of act.

The purpose of the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act is to provide a permanent system for independent and objective monitoring of children placed in the custody of the department by examining the policies, procedures and practices of the department and, where appropriate, specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the department is effectively discharging its child protection responsibilities.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 204; 2016, ch. 60, § 5.

32A-8-3. Repealed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 205; repealed by Laws 2016, ch. 60, § 10.

32A-8-4. Substitute care advisory council; members; compensation; responsibilities; advisory committee.

A. The "substitute care advisory council" is created and, in accordance with the provisions of Section 9-1-7 NMSA 1978, is administratively attached to the regulation and licensing department. The general purpose of the council is to oversee substitute care review boards in their monitoring of children placed in the custody of the children, youth and families department to identify systemic policy issues regarding substitute care. The council shall be composed of nine persons, including:

(1) the secretary of public education or the secretary's designee;

(2) the secretary of human services or the secretary's designee;

(3) the secretary of finance and administration or the secretary's designee;

(4) the secretary of health or the secretary's designee;

(5) two public members, appointed by the governor, who:

(a) are at least eighteen and no more than thirty years of age at the time of appointment; and

(b) were previously placed in substitute care;

(6) two public members, appointed by the governor, who have expertise in the area of child welfare; and

(7) one children's court judge, appointed by the governor.

B. The council may hire staff and contract for services to carry out the purposes of the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act. Except as provided pursuant to Paragraph (7) of Subsection A of this section, a person or a relative of a person employed by the department or a district court shall not serve on the council.

C. Terms of office of public members of the council shall be three years. Public members shall be eligible for reappointment. In the event that a vacancy occurs among the members of the council, the governor shall appoint another person to serve the unexpired portion of the term.

D. The council shall select a chairperson, a vice chairperson and other officers as it deems necessary.

E. The council shall meet no less than twice annually and more frequently upon the call of the chairperson.

F. The council shall adopt reasonable rules relating to the functions and procedures of the substitute care review boards and the council in accordance with the duties of the boards as provided in the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act. These rules shall:

(1) establish training requirements for substitute care review board members;

(2) establish criteria for council designation of cases for substitute care review board review;

(3) establish procedures for substitute care review board review of designated cases;

(4) establish criteria for membership and tenure on and operating procedures for substitute care review boards;

(5) specify the information needed for designated cases to be monitored by substitute care review boards; and

(6) specify case information to be tracked and reported to the council.

G. When adopting rules establishing criteria for designation of cases for substitute care review board review, the council shall weigh the importance of the following factors, including:

(1) sibling placements;

(2) the frequency and severity of neglect or abuse;

(3) the behavioral health status of household members;

(4) the placement of children in households where there are no relatives of the children;

(5) data related to demographics; and

(6) relevant trend data.

H. The council shall review and coordinate the activities of the substitute care review boards and make a report with its recommendations to the department, the courts and the appropriate legislative interim committees, on or before November 1 of each year, regarding statutes, rules, policies and procedures relating to substitute care. This report shall include recommendations for any changes to substitute care review boards.

I. Council members shall receive per diem and mileage as provided for nonsalaried public officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978]; provided that, if a different provision of that act applies to a specific member, that member shall be paid pursuant to that applicable provision. Members shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

J. The council shall appoint by October 1 of each year a six-member advisory committee from a list of substitute care review board members that the substitute care review boards shall nominate. The advisory council shall meet with the council at least once per year to advise the council on matters relating to substitute care review. Advisory committee members shall serve terms of one year and may be reappointed.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 206; 2016, ch. 60, § 6.

32A-8-5. Substitute care review boards; appointments; exclusion; terms; training; compensation; meetings.

A. The council shall establish no fewer than three substitute care review boards and, in each judicial district established pursuant to Section 34-6-1 NMSA 1978, no more than the following number of substitute care review boards:

(1) two substitute care review boards in the first judicial district;

(2) three substitute care review boards in the second judicial district;

(3) one substitute care review board in the third judicial district;

(4) two substitute care review boards in the fourth judicial district;

(5) two substitute care review boards in the fifth judicial district;

(6) two substitute care review boards in the sixth judicial district;

(7) two substitute care review boards in the seventh judicial district;

(8) two substitute care review boards in the eighth judicial district;

(9) one substitute care review board in the ninth judicial district;

(10) one substitute care review board in the tenth judicial district;

(11) two substitute care review boards in the eleventh judicial district;

(12) two substitute care review boards in the twelfth judicial district; and

(13) two substitute care review boards in the thirteenth judicial district.

B. The council, or a contractor performing services for the council pursuant to Subsection B of Section 32A-8-4 NMSA 1978, shall provide administrative support to substitute care review boards in accordance with the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act and rules that the council has adopted.

C. A person or a relative of a person employed by the department of finance and administration, the children, youth and families department, the human services department [health care authority department], the public education department, the department of health, a contractor of the council or a district court shall not serve on a substitute care review board.

D. The composition of each substitute care review board shall be broadly representative of the community in which the board serves and include members with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect and may include adult former victims of child abuse or neglect.

E. Each substitute care review board shall meet at least once per quarter to review cases designated in accordance with council rules.

F. Substitute care review board members may receive per diem and mileage as provided for nonsalaried public officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978]; provided that, if a different provision of that act applies to a specific member, that member shall be paid pursuant to that applicable provision. Members shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

G. Upon request of the council, a substitute care review board shall prepare a report summarizing its activities. These reports shall not contain confidential information.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 207; 2016, ch. 60, § 7.

32A-8-6. Substitute care review board reviews of cases.

When council rules designate the review of a case, a substitute care review board shall conduct the review in accordance with the provisions of the Children's Code and the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] and council rules. The designated substitute care review board shall submit a report to the court for each case that it reviews. The substitute care review board shall give the parties in a children's court case under substitute care review board review notice of a substitute care review board meeting related to that case and afford the parties an opportunity to participate fully in the substitute care review board meeting.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 208; 2016, ch. 60, § 8.

32A-8-7. Transfer provisions; funds; contracts; references in law.

On the effective date of this 2016 act:

A. all functions, records, personnel, appropriations, money, furniture, property, equipment and supplies of the department of finance and administration relating to the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act shall be transferred to the council;

B. all appropriations, contract funds and funds for contract administration and staff, the cost of council per diem and travel, training and all other costs relating to the Citizen Substitute Care Review Act shall be transferred from the department of finance and administration to the council;

C. all existing rules and regulations, contracts and agreements of the department of finance and administration relating to the statewide system of substitute care review boards shall be binding and effective on the council; and

D. all references in law to the state advisory committee shall be deemed to be references to the council.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-8-7, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 209; 2016, ch. 60, § 9.

ARTICLE 9
Children's Shelter Care

32A-9-1. Short title.

Sections 1 through 7 [32A-9-1 to 32A-9-7 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "Children's Shelter Care Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-1, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-2. Legislative findings and purpose.

A. The legislature finds and declares that appropriate and distinct programs of supervision and care for children are required to fulfill the purposes of the Children's Code; that many children are needlessly detained in secured facilities on charges for acts that would not be criminal if they were committed by an adult; that these children would benefit from either immediate return to the family or placement in shelter-care homes or nonsecured shelter-care facilities; and that certain alleged delinquents will benefit from nonsecured placements and do not require secure detention.

B. The purpose of the Children's Shelter Care Act is:

(1) to provide funding for the establishment of shelter-care facilities or programs; and

(2) to divert children out of the juvenile justice system and provide for their supervision and care in community-based shelter-care homes and facilities when the immediate return to the child's family is not feasible or when intervention programs alone are not sufficient for the care and treatment of the child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-2, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-3. Definitions.

As used in the Children's Shelter Care Act:

A. "child" means an individual who is less than eighteen years old;

B. "alleged child in need of supervision" means a child who is charged with an offense applicable only to children or not classified as criminal;

C. "child in need of supervision" means a child found by the children's court or family court division of the district court to:

(1) have committed an offense applicable only to children or not classified as criminal; and

(2) be in need of care or rehabilitation;

D. "alleged delinquent child" means a child charged with an act that would be designated as a crime under the Criminal Code [30-1-1 NMSA 1978] if committed by an adult;

E. "community-based shelter-care facility" means a physically nonrestrictive home or living facility to be used as a temporary living place for a child eligible under Section 32-2A-6 [32A-9-6] NMSA 1978, pending the return of such child to his family or his placement in a residential facility designed for long-term placement;

F. "programs of supervision and care" includes programs, placements and services designed to serve as alternatives to the physical detention of alleged children in need of supervision, alleged delinquent children and children in need of supervision; and

G. "department" means the children, youth and families department.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-3, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 3; 1983, ch. 180, § 1; 1992, ch. 57, § 34; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-4. Rules and regulations; promulgation.

The department shall promulgate necessary rules, regulations, standards and procedures to carry out the purposes of the Children's Shelter Care Act.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-4, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 4; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-5. Community-based shelter-care facilities.

The department shall establish and support community-based shelter-care facilities and programs of supervision and care, and shall support existing community-based shelter-care facilities and other programs of supervision and care.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-5, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 5; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-5 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-6. Eligibility of child for placement.

A child is eligible to be placed in a community-based shelter-care facility provided for under Section 5 [32A-9-5 NMSA 1978] of the Children's Shelter Care Act if:

A. the child is an alleged child in need of supervision; a child in need of supervision; or

B. the child is an alleged delinquent child and there is no probable cause to believe that the child will injure others or himself, run away or be taken away so as to be unavailable for proceedings of the court or its officers.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-6, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 6; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-6 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

32A-9-7. Report to the governor and the legislature.

The department shall provide an annual report to the governor and the legislature concerning the projects and programs funded under the Children's Shelter Care Act. The report shall include:

A. a description of the community-based shelter-care facilities and programs of care and supervision funded pursuant to the Children's Shelter Care Act;

B. an accounting of expenditures;

C. an analysis of the effectiveness of the community-based shelter-care facilities and programs of care and supervision funded pursuant to that act; and

D. a description of procedures employed by the department in awarding grants, and auditing, monitoring and evaluating facilities and programs.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32-2A-7, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 108, § 7; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-9-7 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 210.

ARTICLE 10
Interstate Compact for Juveniles

32A-10-1. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-1, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-2. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-2, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-3. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-3, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 3; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-4. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-4, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 4; 1988, ch. 101, § 28; 1992, ch. 57, § 35; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-5. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-5, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 5; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-5 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-6. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-6, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 6; 1988, ch. 101, § 29; 1992, ch. 57, § 36; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-6 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-7. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-7, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 7; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-7 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-8. Repealed.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16-8, enacted by Laws 1973, ch. 238, § 8; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-10-8 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 211; repealed by Laws 2003, ch. 48.

32A-10-9. Interstate Compact for Juveniles.

The Interstate Compact for Juveniles is enacted into law and entered into on behalf of New Mexico with any and all other states legally joining therein in a form substantially as follows:

THE INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR JUVENILES

ARTICLE I - Purpose

A. The compacting states to this interstate compact recognize that each state is responsible for the proper supervision or return of juveniles, delinquents and status offenders who are on probation or parole and who have absconded, escaped or run away from supervision and control and in doing so have endangered their own safety and the safety of others. The compacting states also recognize that each state is responsible for the safe return of juveniles who have run away from home and in doing so have left their state of residence. The compacting states also recognize that congress, by enacting the Crime Control Act, 4 U.S.C. Section 112 (1965), has authorized and encouraged compacts for cooperative efforts and mutual assistance in the prevention of crime.

B. It is the purpose of this compact, through means of joint and cooperative action among the compacting states, to:

(1) ensure that the adjudicated juveniles and status offenders subject to this compact are provided adequate supervision and services in the receiving state as ordered by the adjudicating judge or parole authority in the sending state;

(2) ensure that the public safety interests of the citizens, including the victims of juvenile offenders, in both the sending and receiving states are adequately protected;

(3) return juveniles who have run away, absconded or escaped from supervision or control or have been accused of an offense to the state requesting their return;

(4) make contracts for the cooperative institutionalization in public facilities in member states for delinquent youth needing special services;

(5) provide for the effective tracking and supervision of juveniles;

(6) equitably allocate the costs, benefits and obligations of the compacting states;

(7) establish procedures to manage the movement between states of juvenile offenders released to the community under the jurisdiction of courts, juvenile departments or any other criminal or juvenile justice agency that has jurisdiction over juvenile offenders;

(8) ensure immediate notice to jurisdictions where defined offenders are authorized to travel or to relocate across state lines;

(9) establish procedures to resolve pending charges against juvenile offenders prior to transfer or release to the community under the terms of this compact;

(10) establish a system of uniform data collection on information pertaining to juveniles subject to this compact that allows access by authorized juvenile justice and

criminal justice officials, and regular reporting of compact activities to heads of state executive, judicial and legislative branches and juvenile and criminal justice administrators;

(11) monitor compliance with rules governing interstate movement of juveniles and initiate interventions to address and correct noncompliance;

(12) coordinate training and education regarding the regulation of interstate movement of juveniles for officials involved in that activity; and

(13) coordinate the implementation and operation of the compact with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A 11-1 NMSA 1978], the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision [31-5-20 NMSA 1978] and other compacts affecting juveniles, particularly in those cases where concurrent or overlapping supervision issues arise.

C. It is the policy of the compacting states that the activities conducted by the interstate commission created herein are the formation of public policies and therefore are public business. Furthermore, the compacting states shall cooperate and observe their individual and collective duties and responsibilities for the prompt return and acceptance of juveniles subject to the provisions of this compact.

D. The provisions of this compact shall be reasonably and liberally construed to accomplish the purposes and policies of the compact.

ARTICLE II - Definitions

As used in this compact, unless the context clearly requires a different construction:

A. "bylaws" means those bylaws established by the interstate commission for its governance or for directing or controlling its actions or conduct;

B. "commissioner" means the voting representative of each compacting state appointed pursuant to Article III of this compact;

C. "compact administrator" means the individual in each compacting state appointed pursuant to the terms of this compact, responsible for the administration and management of the state's supervision and transfer of juveniles subject to the terms of this compact, the rules adopted by the interstate commission and policies adopted by the state council under this compact;

D. "compacting state" means any state that has enacted the enabling legislation for this compact;

E. "court" means any court having jurisdiction over delinquent, neglected or dependent children;

F. "deputy compact administrator" means the individual, if any, in each compacting state appointed to act on behalf of a compact administrator pursuant to the terms of this compact and who is responsible for the administration and management of the state's supervision and transfer of juveniles subject to the terms of this compact, the rules adopted by the interstate commission and the policies adopted by the state council under this compact;

G. "interstate commission" means the interstate commission for juveniles created by Article III of this compact;

H. "juvenile" means a person defined as a juvenile in any member state or by the rules of the interstate commission, including:

(1) an accused delinquent, who is a person charged with an offense that, if committed by an adult, would be a criminal offense;

(2) an adjudicated delinquent, who is a person found to have committed an offense that, if committed by an adult, would be a criminal offense;

(3) an accused status offender, who is a person charged with an offense that would not be a criminal offense if committed by an adult;

(4) an adjudicated status offender, who is a person found to have committed an offense that would not be a criminal offense if committed by an adult; and

(5) a non-offender, who is a person in need of supervision who has not been accused or adjudicated as a status offender or delinquent;

I. "noncompacting state" means any state that has not enacted the enabling legislation for this compact;

J. "probation or parole" means any kind of supervision or conditional release of juveniles authorized under the laws of the compacting states;

K. "rule" means a written statement by the interstate commission promulgated pursuant to Article VI of this compact that is of general applicability, that implements, interprets or prescribes a policy or provision of the compact or an organizational, procedural or practice requirement of the commission, and that has the force and effect of statutory law in a compacting state. "Rule" includes the amendment, repeal or suspension of an existing rule; and

L. "state" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Marianas Islands.

ARTICLE III - Interstate Commission for Juveniles

A. The compacting states hereby create the "interstate commission for juveniles". The commission shall be a body corporate and joint agency of the compacting states. The commission shall have all the responsibilities, powers and duties set forth herein, and additional powers as may be conferred upon it by subsequent action of the respective legislatures of the compacting states in accordance with the terms of this compact.

B. The interstate commission shall consist of commissioners appointed by the appropriate appointing authority in each state pursuant to the rules and requirements of each compacting state and in consultation with the "state council for interstate juvenile supervision" created hereunder. The commissioner shall be the compact administrator, deputy compact administrator or designee from that state who shall serve on the interstate commission in such capacity under or pursuant to the applicable law of the compacting state.

C. In addition to the commissioners who are the voting representatives of each state, the interstate commission shall include individuals who are not commissioners, but who are members of interested organizations. Noncommissioner members shall include a member of the national organizations of governors, legislators, state chief justices, attorneys general, a member of the interstate compact for adult offender supervision, a member of the interstate compact for the placement of children, juvenile justice and juvenile corrections officials and crime victims. All noncommissioner members of the interstate commission shall be ex-officio, nonvoting members. The interstate commission may provide in its bylaws for additional ex-officio, nonvoting members, including members of other national organizations, in such numbers as shall be determined by the commission.

D. Each compacting state represented at any meeting of the interstate commission is entitled to one vote. A majority of the compacting states shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, unless a larger quorum is required by the bylaws of the interstate commission.

E. The interstate commission shall meet at least once each calendar year. The chairperson may call additional meetings and, upon the request of a simple majority of the compacting states, shall call additional meetings. Public notice shall be given of all meetings and meetings shall be open to the public.

F. The interstate commission shall establish an executive committee, which shall include commission officers, members and others as determined by the bylaws. The executive committee shall have the power to act on behalf of the interstate commission during periods when the interstate commission is not in session, with the exception of rulemaking and amendments to the compact. The executive committee shall oversee the day-to-day activities managed by an executive director and interstate commission staff, administer enforcement and compliance with the provisions of the compact, bylaws and rules, and perform other duties as directed by the interstate commission or set forth in the bylaws.

G. Each member of the interstate commission shall have the right and power to cast a vote to which that compacting state is entitled and to participate in the business and affairs of the interstate commission. A member shall vote in person and shall not delegate a vote to another compacting state. However, a commissioner, in consultation with the state council, shall appoint another authorized representative, in the absence of the commissioner from that state, to cast a vote on behalf of the compacting state at a specified meeting. The bylaws may provide for members' participation in meetings by telephone or other means of telecommunication or electronic communication.

H. The interstate commission's bylaws shall establish conditions and procedures under which the interstate commission shall make its information and official records available to the public for inspection or copying. The interstate commission may exempt from disclosure any information or official records to the extent they would adversely affect personal privacy rights or proprietary interests.

I. Public notice shall be given of all meetings and all meetings shall be open to the public, except as set forth in the rules or as otherwise provided in the compact. The interstate commission and any of its committees may close a meeting to the public when a determination is made by a two-thirds' vote that an open meeting would be likely to:

(1) relate solely to the interstate commission's internal personnel practices and procedures;

(2) disclose matters specifically exempted from disclosure by statute;

(3) disclose trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential;

(4) involve accusing a person of a crime or formally censuring a person;

(5) disclose information of a personal nature when disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(6) disclose investigative records compiled for law enforcement purposes;

(7) disclose information contained in or related to examination reports, operating reports or condition reports prepared by, prepared on behalf of or prepared for the use of the interstate commission with respect to a regulated person or entity for the purpose of regulation or supervision of the person or entity;

(8) disclose information, the premature disclosure of which would significantly endanger the stability of a regulated person or entity; or

(9) specifically relate to the interstate commission's issuance of a subpoena or its participation in a civil action or other legal proceeding.

J. For every meeting closed pursuant to the provisions of Subsection I of this article, the interstate commission's legal counsel shall publicly certify that, in the legal counsel's opinion, the meeting may be closed to the public and shall reference each relevant provision set forth in Subsection I of this article. The interstate commission shall keep minutes that fully and clearly describe all matters discussed in a meeting and shall provide a full and accurate summary of actions taken and the reasons therefore, including a description of each of the views expressed on an item and the record of a roll call vote. All documents considered in connection with an action shall be identified in the minutes.

K. The interstate commission shall collect standardized data concerning the interstate movement of juveniles, as directed through its rules, which shall specify the data to be collected, the means of collection, data exchange and reporting requirements. The methods of data collection, data exchange and reporting shall, insofar as it is reasonably possible, conform to up-to-date technology and coordinate with information functions used by the appropriate repository of records.

ARTICLE IV - Powers and Duties of the Interstate Commission

The interstate commission shall:

A. provide for dispute resolution among compacting states;

B. promulgate rules to effect the purposes and obligations enumerated in this compact, which shall have the force and effect of statutory law and shall be binding in the compacting states to the extent and in the manner provided in this compact;

C. oversee, supervise and coordinate the interstate movement of juveniles subject to the terms of this compact and any bylaws adopted and rules promulgated by the interstate commission;

D. enforce compliance with compact provisions, the rules promulgated by the interstate commission and bylaws, using all necessary and proper means, including the use of judicial process;

E. establish and maintain offices that shall be located within one or more of the compacting states;

F. purchase and maintain insurance and bonds;

G. borrow, accept, hire or contract for personnel services;

H. establish and appoint committees and hire staff that it deems necessary for carrying out its functions, including an executive committee that shall have the power to act on behalf of the interstate commission in carrying out its powers and duties;

I. elect or appoint officers, attorneys, employees, agents or consultants and to fix their compensation, define their duties and determine their qualifications; and to establish the interstate commission's personnel policies and programs relating to conflicts of interest, rates of compensation and qualifications of personnel;

J. accept any and all donations and grants of money, equipment, supplies, materials and services and to receive, utilize and dispose of same;

K. lease, purchase, accept contributions or donations of, or otherwise to own, hold, improve or use any property, real, personal or mixed;

L. sell, convey, mortgage, pledge, lease, exchange, abandon or otherwise dispose of any property, real, personal or mixed;

M. establish a budget and make expenditures and levy dues as provided in Article VIII of this compact;

N. sue and be sued;

O. adopt a seal and bylaws governing the management and operation of the interstate commission;

P. perform functions as may be necessary or appropriate to achieve the purposes of this compact;

Q. report annually to the legislatures, governors, judiciary and state councils of the compacting states concerning the activities of the interstate commission during the preceding year. The reports shall also include recommendations that may have been adopted by the interstate commission;

R. coordinate education, training and public awareness regarding the interstate movement of juveniles for officials involved in that activity;

S. establish uniform standards for the reporting, collecting and exchanging of data; and

T. maintain its corporate books and records in accordance with the bylaws.

ARTICLE V - Organization and Operation of the Interstate Commission

A. The interstate commission shall, by a majority of the members present and voting, within twelve months after the first interstate commission meeting, adopt bylaws to govern its conduct as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of the compact, including:

(1) establishing the fiscal year of the interstate commission;

(2) establishing an executive committee and other committees as may be necessary;

(3) providing for the establishment of committees governing general or specific delegation of any authority or function of the interstate commission;

(4) providing reasonable procedures for calling and conducting meetings of the interstate commission and ensuring reasonable notice of those meetings;

(5) establishing the titles and responsibilities of the officers of the interstate commission;

(6) providing a mechanism for concluding the operations of the interstate commission and the return of surplus funds that may exist upon the termination of the compact after the payment and reserving of all of its debts and obligations;

(7) providing "start-up" rules for initial administration of the compact; and

(8) establishing standards and procedures for compliance and technical assistance in carrying out the compact.

B. The interstate commission shall, by a majority of the members, elect annually from among its members a chairperson and a vice chairperson, each of whom shall have such authority and duties as may be specified in the bylaws. The chairperson or, in the chairperson's absence or disability, the vice chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the interstate commission. The officers elected shall serve without compensation or remuneration from the interstate commission; provided that, subject to the availability of budgeted funds, the officers shall be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary costs and expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties and responsibilities as officers of the interstate commission.

C. The interstate commission, through its executive committee, shall appoint or retain an executive director, upon terms and conditions and for compensation as the interstate commission may deem appropriate. The executive director shall serve as secretary to the interstate commission, shall not be a member and shall hire and supervise other staff as may be authorized by the interstate commission.

D. The commission's executive director and employees shall be immune from suit and liability, either personally or in their official capacity, for any claim for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or other civil liability caused or arising out of or relating to any actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, or that the person had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided that the person shall not be protected from suit or liability for any damage, loss, injury or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of the person.

E. The liability of any commissioner, or the employee or agent of a commissioner, acting within the scope of the person's employment or duties for acts, errors or omissions occurring within the person's state may not exceed the limits of liability set forth under the constitution and laws of that state for state officials, employees and agents. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to protect the person from suit or liability for any damage, loss, injury or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of the person.

F. The interstate commission shall defend the executive director or the employees or representatives of the interstate commission and, subject to the approval of the attorney general of the state represented by a commissioner of a compacting state, shall defend the commissioner or the commissioner's representatives or employees in a civil action seeking to impose liability arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that the defendant had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties, or responsibilities; provided that the actual or alleged act, error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of the person.

G. The interstate commission shall indemnify and hold the commissioner of a compacting state, the commissioner's representatives or employees or the interstate commission's representatives or employees, harmless in the amount of a settlement or judgment obtained against a person arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that the person had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided that the actual or alleged act, error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of the person.

ARTICLE VI - Rulemaking Functions of the Interstate Commission

A. The interstate commission shall promulgate and publish rules in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the purposes of the compact.

B. Rulemaking shall occur pursuant to the criteria set forth in this article and the bylaws and rules adopted pursuant thereto. Rulemaking shall substantially conform to the principles of the "Model State Administrative Procedures Act", 1981 Act, Uniform Laws Annotated, Vol. 15, p.1 (2000), or other administrative procedures act, as the interstate commission deems appropriate, consistent with due process requirements under the United States constitution as now or hereafter interpreted by the United States supreme court. All rules and amendments shall become binding as of the date specified, as published with the final version of the rule as approved by the interstate commission.

C. When promulgating a rule, the interstate commission shall, at a minimum:

(1) publish the proposed rule's entire text stating the reasons for that proposed rule;

(2) allow and invite persons to submit written data, facts, opinions and arguments, which information shall be added to the record and be made publicly available;

(3) provide an opportunity for an informal hearing if petitioned by ten or more persons; and

(4) promulgate a final rule and its effective date, if appropriate, based on input from state or local officials or interested parties.

D. Allow, not later than sixty days after a rule is promulgated, an interested person to file a petition in the United States district court for the District of Columbia or in the federal district court where the interstate commission's principal office is located for judicial review of the rule. If the court finds that the interstate commission's action is not supported by substantial evidence in the rulemaking record, the court shall hold the rule unlawful and set it aside. For purposes of this subsection, evidence is substantial if it would be considered substantial evidence under the Model State Administrative Procedures Act.

E. If a majority of the legislatures of the compacting states rejects a rule, those states may, by enactment of a statute or resolution in the same manner used to adopt the compact, cause the rule to have no further force and effect in any compacting state.

F. The existing rules governing the operation of the interstate compact on juveniles superseded by this act shall be null and void twelve months after the first meeting of the interstate commission created hereunder.

G. Upon determination by the interstate commission that a state of emergency exists, it may promulgate an emergency rule that shall become effective immediately upon adoption, provided that the usual rule making procedures provided hereunder shall be retroactively applied to the rule as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than ninety days after the effective date of the emergency rule.

ARTICLE VII - Oversight, Enforcement and Dispute Resolution by The Interstate Commission

A. The interstate commission shall oversee the administration and operations of the interstate movement of juveniles subject to this compact in the compacting states and shall monitor activities being administered in noncompacting states that may significantly affect compacting states.

B. The courts and executive agencies in each compacting state shall enforce this compact and shall take all actions necessary and appropriate to effectuate the

compact's purposes and intent. The provisions of this compact and the rules promulgated hereunder shall be received by all the judges, public officers, commissions and departments of the state government as evidence of the authorized statute and administrative rules. All courts shall take judicial notice of the compact and the rules. In a judicial or administrative proceeding in a compacting state pertaining to the subject matter of this compact that may affect the powers, responsibilities or actions of the interstate commission, it shall be entitled to receive all service of process in the proceeding and shall have standing to intervene in the proceeding for all purposes.

C. The compacting states shall report to the interstate commission on all issues and activities necessary for the administration of the compact as well as issues and activities pertaining to compliance with the provisions of the compact and its bylaws and rules.

D. The interstate commission shall attempt, upon the request of a compacting state, to resolve any disputes or other issues that are subject to the compact and that may arise among compacting states and between compacting and noncompacting states. The commission shall promulgate a rule providing for both mediation and binding dispute resolution for disputes between the compacting states.

E. The interstate commission, in the reasonable exercise of its discretion, shall enforce the provisions and rules of this compact using any or all means set forth in Article XI of this compact.

ARTICLE VIII - Finance

A. The interstate commission shall pay or provide for the payment of the reasonable expenses of its establishment, organization and ongoing activities.

B. The interstate commission shall levy on and collect an annual assessment from each compacting state to cover the cost of the internal operations and activities of the interstate commission and its staff, which must be in a total amount sufficient to cover the interstate commission's annual budget as approved each year. The aggregate annual assessment amount shall be allocated based upon a formula to be determined by the interstate commission, taking into consideration the population of each compacting state and the volume of interstate movement of juveniles in each compacting state and shall promulgate a rule binding upon all compacting states that governs the assessment.

C. The interstate commission shall not incur obligations of any kind prior to securing the funds adequate to meet the same; nor shall the interstate commission pledge the credit of any of the compacting states, except by and with the authority of the compacting state.

D. The interstate commission shall keep accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements. The receipts and disbursements of the interstate commission shall be subject to the audit and accounting procedures established under its bylaws. However,

all receipts and disbursements of funds handled by the interstate commission shall be audited yearly by a certified or licensed public accountant and the report of the audit shall be included in and become part of the annual report of the interstate commission.

ARTICLE IX - The State Council

Each member state shall create a "state council for interstate juvenile supervision". While each state may determine the membership of its own state council, its membership must include at least one representative from the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government, victims groups and the compact administrator, deputy compact administrator or designee. Each compacting state retains the right to determine the qualifications of the compact administrator or deputy compact administrator. Each state council will advise and may exercise oversight and advocacy concerning that state's participation in interstate commission activities and other duties as may be determined by that state, including development of policy concerning operations and procedures of the compact within that state.

ARTICLE X - Compacting States, Effective Date and Amendment

A. Any state is eligible to become a compacting state. The compact shall become effective and binding upon legislative enactment of the compact into law by no less than thirty-five of the states. The initial effective date shall be the later of July 1, 2004 or upon enactment into law by the thirty-fifth jurisdiction. Thereafter, it shall become effective and binding as to any other compacting state upon enactment of the compact into law by that state. The governors of noncompacting states or their designees shall be invited to participate in the activities of the interstate commission on a nonvoting basis prior to adoption of the compact by all states and territories of the United States.

B. The interstate commission may propose amendments to the compact for enactment by the compacting states. An amendment shall not become effective and binding upon the interstate commission and the compacting states unless and until it is enacted into law by unanimous consent of the compacting states.

ARTICLE XI - Withdrawal, Default, Termination and Judicial Enforcement

A. Once effective, the compact shall continue in force and remain binding upon each and every compacting state; provided that a compacting state may withdraw from the compact by specifically repealing the statute that enacted the compact into law. The effective date of withdrawal is the effective date of the repeal. The withdrawing state shall immediately notify the chairperson of the interstate commission in writing upon the introduction of legislation repealing this compact in the withdrawing state. The interstate commission shall notify the other compacting states of the withdrawing state's intent to withdraw within sixty days of its receipt thereof. The withdrawing state is responsible for all assessments, obligations and liabilities incurred through the effective date of withdrawal, including any obligations, the performance of which extend beyond the effective date of withdrawal. Reinstatement following withdrawal of a compacting state

shall occur upon the withdrawing state reenacting the compact or upon a later date as determined by the interstate commission.

B. If the interstate commission determines that a compacting state has at any time defaulted in the performance of its obligations or responsibilities under this compact, or the bylaws or duly promulgated rules, the interstate commission may impose any or all of the following penalties:

(1) remedial training and technical assistance as directed by the interstate commission;

(2) alternative dispute resolution;

(3) fines, fees and costs in amounts as are deemed to be reasonable as fixed by the interstate commission; and

(4) suspension or termination of membership in the compact, which shall be imposed only after all other reasonable means of securing compliance under the bylaws and rules have been exhausted and the interstate commission has therefore determined that the offending state is in default. Immediate notice of suspension shall be given by the interstate commission to the governor, the chief justice or the chief judicial officer of the state, the majority and minority leaders of the defaulting state's legislature and the state council.

C. The grounds for default include failure of a compacting state to perform obligations or responsibilities imposed upon it by this compact, the bylaws or duly promulgated rules and any other grounds designated in commission bylaws and rules. The interstate commission shall immediately notify the defaulting state in writing of the penalty imposed by the interstate commission and of the default pending a cure of the default. The commission shall stipulate the conditions and the time period within which the defaulting state must cure its default. If the defaulting state fails to cure the default within the time period specified by the interstate commission, the defaulting state shall be terminated from the compact upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the compacting states and all rights, privileges and benefits conferred by this compact shall be terminated from the effective date of termination.

D. Within sixty days of the effective date of termination of a defaulting state, the interstate commission shall notify the governor, the chief justice or chief judicial officer of the state, the majority and minority leaders of the defaulting state's legislature and the state council of the termination.

E. The defaulting state is responsible for all assessments, obligations and liabilities incurred through the effective date of termination, including any obligations that extend beyond the effective date of termination.

F. The interstate commission shall not bear any costs relating to the defaulting state unless otherwise mutually agreed upon in writing between the interstate commission and the defaulting state.

G. Reinstatement following termination of a compacting state requires both a reenactment of the compact by the defaulting state and the approval of the interstate commission pursuant to the rules.

H. The interstate commission may, by majority vote of the members, initiate legal action in the United States district court for the District of Columbia or, at the discretion of the interstate commission, in the federal district where the interstate commission has its offices, to enforce compliance with the provisions of the compact, its duly promulgated rules and bylaws, against any compacting state in default. In the event judicial enforcement is necessary, the prevailing party shall be awarded all costs of the litigation, including reasonable attorneys fees.

I. The compact dissolves effective upon the date of the withdrawal or default of the compacting state, which reduces membership in the compact to one compacting state. Upon the dissolution of this compact, the compact becomes null and void and shall be of no further force or effect, and the business and affairs of the interstate commission shall be concluded and any surplus funds shall be distributed in accordance with the bylaws.

ARTICLE XII - Severability and Construction

A. The provisions of this compact shall be severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence or provision is deemed unenforceable, the remaining provisions of the compact shall be enforceable.

B. The provisions of this compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purposes.

ARTICLE XIII - Binding Effect of Compact and Other Laws

A. Nothing herein prevents the enforcement of any other law of a compacting state that is not inconsistent with this compact. All compacting states' laws other than state constitutions and other interstate compacts conflicting with this compact are superseded to the extent of the conflict.

B. All lawful actions of the interstate commission, including all rules and bylaws promulgated by the interstate commission, are binding upon the compacting states.

C. All agreements between the interstate commission and the compacting states are binding in accordance with their terms.

D. Upon the request of a party to a conflict over meaning or interpretation of interstate commission actions, and upon a majority vote of the compacting states, the interstate commission may issue advisory opinions regarding the meaning or interpretation.

E. In the event a provision of this compact exceeds the constitutional limits imposed on the legislature of a compacting state, the obligations, duties, powers or jurisdiction sought to be conferred by the provision upon the interstate commission shall be ineffective and the obligations, duties, powers or jurisdiction shall remain in the compacting state and shall be exercised by the agency to which the obligations, duties, powers or jurisdiction are delegated by law in effect at the time this compact becomes effective.

ARTICLE XIV - Repeal

Sections 32A-10-1 through 32A-10-8 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1973, Chapter 238, Sections 1 through 8, as amended) are repealed.

History: Laws 2003, ch. 48, § 1.

ARTICLE 11
Interstate Compact on Placement of Children

32A-11-1. Interstate compact.

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is hereby enacted into law and entered into with all other jurisdictions legally joining therein in form substantially as follows:

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

Article 1 - Purpose and Policy

It is the purpose and policy of the party states to cooperate with each other in the interstate placement of children to the end that:

A. each child requiring placement shall receive the maximum opportunity to be placed in a suitable environment and with persons or institutions having appropriate qualifications and facilities to provide a necessary and desirable degree and type of care;

B. the appropriate authorities in a state where a child is to be placed may have full opportunity to ascertain the circumstances of the proposed placement, thereby promoting full compliance with requirements for the protection of the child;

C. the proper authorities of the state from which the placement is made may obtain the most complete information on the basis of which to evaluate a projected placement before it is made; and

D. appropriate jurisdictional arrangements for the care of children will be promoted.

Article 2 - Definitions

As used in this compact:

A. "child" means a person who by reason of minority is legally subject to parental, guardianship or similar control;

B. "sending agency" means a party state, officer or employee thereof; a political subdivision of a party state, or officer or employee thereof; a court of a party state; a person, corporation, association, charitable agency or other entity which sends, brings or causes to be sent or brought any child to another party state;

C. "receiving state" means the state to which a child is sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought, whether by public authorities or private persons or agencies, and whether for placement with state or local public authorities or for placement with private agencies or persons; and

D. "placement" means the arrangement for the care of the child in a family, free or boarding home or in a child-placement agency or institution but does not include any institution caring for the mentally ill, mentally defective or epileptic or any institution primarily educational in character, or any hospital or other medical facility.

Article 3 - Conditions for Placement

A. No sending agency shall send, bring or cause to be sent or brought into any other party state any child for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption unless the sending agency shall comply with each and every requirement set forth in this article and with the applicable laws of the receiving state governing the placement of children therein.

B. Prior to sending, bringing or causing any child to be sent or brought into a receiving state for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption, the sending agency shall furnish the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state written notice of the intention to send, bring or place the child in the receiving state. The notice shall contain:

(1) the name, date and place of birth of the child;

(2) the identity and address or addresses of the parents or legal guardian;

(3) the name and address of the person, agency or institution to or with which the sending agency proposes to send, bring or place the child; and

(4) a full statement of the reasons for such proposed action and evidence of the authority pursuant to which the placement is proposed to be made.

C. Any public officer or agency in a receiving state which is in receipt of a notice pursuant to Paragraph B of this article may request of the sending agency, or any other appropriate officer or agency of or in the sending agency's state, and shall be entitled to receive therefrom, such supporting or additional information as it may deem necessary under the circumstances to carry out the purpose and policy of this compact.

D. The child shall not be sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought into the receiving state until the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state shall notify the sending agency, in writing, to the effect that the proposed placement does not appear to be contrary to the interests of the child.

Article 4 - Penalty for Illegal Placement

The sending, bringing or causing to be sent or brought into any receiving state of a child in violation of the terms of this compact shall constitute a violation of the laws respecting the placement of children of both the state in which the sending agency is located or from which it sends or brings the child and of the receiving state. Such violation may be punished or subjected to penalty in either jurisdiction in accordance with its laws. In addition to liability for any such punishment or penalty, any such violation shall constitute full and sufficient grounds for the suspension or revocation of any license, permit or other legal authorization held by the sending agency which empowers or allows it to place or care for children.

Article 5 - Retention of Jurisdiction

A. The sending agency shall retain jurisdiction over the child sufficient to determine all matters in relation to the custody, supervision, care, treatment and disposition of the child which it would have had if the child had remained in the sending agency's state, until the child is adopted, reaches majority, becomes self-supporting or is discharged with the concurrence of the appropriate authority in the receiving state. Such jurisdiction shall also include the power to effect or cause the return of the child or his transfer to another location and custody pursuant to law. The sending agency shall continue to have financial responsibility for support and maintenance of the child during the period of the placement. Nothing contained herein shall defeat a claim of jurisdiction by a receiving state sufficient to deal with an act of delinquency or crime committed therein.

B. When the sending agency is a public agency, it may enter into an agreement with an authorized public or private agency in the receiving state providing for the performance of one or more services in respect of such case by the latter as agency for the sending agency.

C. Nothing in this compact shall be construed to prevent a private charitable agency authorized to place children in the receiving state from performing services or acting as agent in that state for a private charitable agency of the sending state; nor to prevent the agency in the receiving state from discharging, on behalf of the sending agency, the financial responsibility for the support and maintenance of a child who has been placed, without relieving the responsibility set forth in Paragraph A of Article 5 hereof.

Article 6 - Institutional Care of Delinquent Children

A child adjudicated delinquent may be placed in an institution in another party jurisdiction pursuant to this compact but no such placement shall be made unless the child is given a court hearing after notice to the parent or guardian with opportunity to be heard, prior to his being sent to such other party jurisdiction for institutional care, and the court finds that:

A. equivalent facilities for the child are not available in the sending agency's jurisdiction; and

B. institutional care in the other jurisdiction is in the best interest of the child and will not produce undue hardship.

Article 7 - Compact Administrator

The executive head of each jurisdiction party to this compact shall designate an officer who shall be general coordinator of activities under this compact in his jurisdiction and who, acting jointly with like officers of other party jurisdictions, shall have power to promulgate rules and regulations to carry out more effectively the terms and provisions of the compact.

Article 8 - Limitations

This compact shall not apply to:

A. the sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state by his parent, step-parent, grandparent, adult brother or sister, adult uncle or aunt, or his guardian and leaving the child with any such relative or non-agency guardian in the receiving state; or

B. any placement, sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state pursuant to any other interstate compact to which both the state from which the child is sent or brought and the receiving state are party, or to any other agreement between said states which has the force of law.

Article 9 - Enactment and Withdrawal

This compact shall be open to joinder by any state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and with the

consent of congress, the government of Canada or any province thereof. It shall become effective with respect to any such jurisdiction when such jurisdiction has entered the same into law. Withdrawal from this compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing the same, but shall not take effect until two years after the effective date of such statute and until written notice of the withdrawal has been given by the withdrawing state to the governor of each other party jurisdiction. Withdrawal of a party state shall not affect the rights, duties and obligations under this compact of any sending agency therein with respect to a placement made prior to the effective date of withdrawal.

Article 10 - Construction and Severability

The provisions of this compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate the purposes thereof. The provisions of this compact shall be severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence or provision of this compact is declared to be contrary to the constitution of any party state or of the United States, or the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this compact and the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person or circumstance shall not be affected thereby. If this compact shall be held contrary to the constitution of any state party thereto, the compact shall remain in full force and effect as to the remaining states and in full force and effect as to the state affected as to all severable matters.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-1, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-1. Interstate compact. (Contingent effective date. See note below.)

The Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is hereby enacted into law and entered into with all other jurisdictions legally joining therein in form substantially as follows:

REVISED INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

ARTICLE 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Revised Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children is to:

A. provide a process through which children subject to this compact are placed in safe and suitable homes in a timely manner;

B. facilitate ongoing supervision of a placement, the delivery of services and communication between the states;

C. provide operating procedures that will ensure that children are placed in safe and suitable homes in a timely manner;

D. provide for the promulgation and enforcement of administrative rules implementing the provisions of this compact and regulating the covered activities of the member states;

E. provide for uniform data collection and information sharing between member states under this compact;

F. promote coordination between this compact, the Interstate Compact for Juveniles [32A-10-9 NMSA 1978], the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance [40-7B-1 NMSA 1978] and other compacts affecting the placement of and which provide services to children otherwise subject to this compact;

G. provide for a state's continuing legal jurisdiction and responsibility for placement and care of a child that it would have had if the placement were intrastate; and

H. provide for the promulgation of guidelines, in collaboration with Indian nations, tribes and pueblos, for interstate cases involving Indian children as is or may be permitted by federal law.

ARTICLE 2. DEFINITIONS

As used in this compact:

A. "approved placement" means the public child placing agency in the receiving state has determined that the placement is both safe and suitable for the child;

B. "assessment" means an evaluation of a prospective placement by a public child placing agency in the receiving state to determine if the placement meets the individualized needs of the child, including but not limited to the child's safety and stability, health and well-being and mental, emotional and physical development. An assessment is only applicable to a placement by a public child placing agency;

C. "child" means an individual who has not attained the age of eighteen;

D. "certification" means to attest, declare or swear to before a judge or notary public;

E. "default" means the failure of a member state to perform the obligations or responsibilities imposed upon it by this compact, the bylaws or rules of the interstate commission;

F. "home study" means an evaluation of a home environment conducted in accordance with the applicable requirements of the state in which the home is located,

and documents the preparation and the suitability of the placement resource for the placement of a child in accordance with the laws and requirements of the state in which the home is located;

G. "Indian nations, tribes and pueblos" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo or other organized group or community of Indians recognized as eligible for services provided to Indians by the United States secretary of the interior because of their status as Indians, including any Alaskan native village as defined in section 3 (c) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act at 43 U.S.C. Section 1602(c);

H. "interstate commission for the placement of children" means the commission that is created under Article 8 of this compact and that is generally referred to as the "interstate commission";

I. "jurisdiction" means the power and authority of a court to hear and decide matters;

J. "legal risk placement" or "legal risk adoption" means a placement made preliminary to an adoption where the prospective adoptive parents acknowledge in writing that a child can be ordered returned to the sending state or the birth mother's state of residence, if different from the sending state, and a final decree of adoption shall not be entered in any jurisdiction until all required consents are obtained or are dispensed with in accordance with applicable law;

K. "member state" means a state that has enacted this compact;

L. "noncustodial parent" means a person who, at the time of the commencement of court proceedings in the sending state, does not have sole legal custody of the child or has joint legal custody of a child and who is not the subject of allegations or findings of child abuse or neglect;

M. "nonmember state" means a state that has not enacted this compact;

N. "notice of residential placement" means information regarding a placement into a residential facility provided to the receiving state, including the name, date and place of birth of the child, the identity and address of the parent or legal guardian, evidence of authority to make the placement, and the name and address of the facility in which the child will be placed; "notice of residential placement" also includes information regarding a discharge and any unauthorized absence from the facility;

O. "placement" means the act by a public or private child placing agency intended to arrange for the care or custody of a child in another state;

P. "private child placing agency" means any private corporation, agency, foundation, institution or charitable organization, or any private person or attorney that

facilitates, causes or is involved in the placement of a child from one state to another and that is not an instrumentality of the state or acting under color of state law;

Q. "provisional placement" means a determination made by the public child placing agency in the receiving state that the proposed placement is safe and suitable and, to the extent allowable, the receiving state has temporarily waived its standards or requirements otherwise applicable to prospective foster or adoptive parents so as to not delay the placement. Completion of the receiving state requirements regarding training for prospective foster or adoptive parents shall not delay an otherwise safe and suitable placement;

R. "public child placing agency" means any government child welfare agency or child protection agency or a private entity under contract with such an agency, regardless of whether they act on behalf of a state, county, municipality or other governmental unit and which facilitates, causes or is involved in the placement of a child from one state to another;

S. "receiving state" means the state to which a child is sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought;

T. "relative" means someone who is related to the child as a parent, step-parent, sibling by half or whole blood or by adoption, grandparent, aunt, uncle or first cousin or a non-relative with such significant ties to the child that they may be regarded as relatives as determined by the court in the sending state;

U. "residential facility" means a facility providing a level of care that is sufficient to substitute for parental responsibility or foster care, and is beyond what is needed for assessment or treatment of an acute condition. For purposes of the compact, "residential facilities" do not include institutions primarily educational in character, hospitals or other medical facilities;

V. "rule" means a written directive, mandate, standard or principle issued by the interstate commission promulgated pursuant to Article 9 of this compact that is of general applicability and that implements, interprets or prescribes a policy or provision of the compact; "rule" has the force and effect of an administrative rule in a member state, and includes the amendment, repeal or suspension of an existing rule;

W. "sending state" means the state from which the placement of a child is initiated;

X. "service member's permanent duty station" means the military installation where an active duty armed services member is currently assigned and is physically located under competent orders that do not specify the duty as temporary;

Y. "service member's state of legal residence" means the state in which the active duty armed services member is considered a resident for tax and voting purposes;

Z. "state" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and any other territory of the United States;

AA. "state court" means a judicial body of a state that is vested by law with responsibility for adjudicating cases involving abuse, neglect, deprivation, delinquency or status offenses of individuals who have not attained the age of eighteen; and

BB. "supervision" means monitoring provided by the receiving state once a child has been placed in a receiving state pursuant to this compact.

ARTICLE 3. APPLICABILITY

A. Except as otherwise provided in Section B of this article, this compact shall apply to:

(1) the interstate placement of a child subject to ongoing court jurisdiction in the sending state, due to allegations or findings that the child has been abused, neglected or deprived as defined by the laws of the sending state; provided however, that the placement of such a child into a residential facility shall only require notice of residential placement to the receiving state prior to placement;

(2) the interstate placement of a child adjudicated delinquent or unmanageable based on the laws of the sending state and subject to ongoing court jurisdiction of the sending state if:

(a) the child is being placed in a residential facility in another member state and is not covered under another compact; or

(b) the child is being placed in another member state and the determination of safety and suitability of the placement and services required is not provided through another compact; and

(3) the interstate placement of any child by a public child placing agency or private child placing agency as defined in this compact as a preliminary step to a possible adoption.

B. The provisions of this compact shall not apply to:

(1) the interstate placement of a child in a custody proceeding in which a public child placing agency is not a party; provided that the placement is not intended to effectuate an adoption;

(2) the interstate placement of a child with a non-relative in a receiving state by a parent with the legal authority to make such a placement; provided, however, that the placement is not intended to effectuate an adoption;

(3) the interstate placement of a child by one relative with the lawful authority to make such a placement directly with a relative in a receiving state;

(4) the placement of a child, not subject to Section A of this article into a residential facility by the child's parent;

(5) the placement of a child with a noncustodial parent; provided that:

(a) the noncustodial parent proves to the satisfaction of a court in the sending state a substantial relationship with the child;

(b) the court in the sending state makes a written finding that placement with the noncustodial parent is in the best interests of the child; and

(c) the court in the sending state dismisses its jurisdiction in interstate placements in which the public child placing agency is a party to the proceeding;

(6) a child entering the United States from a foreign country for the purpose of adoption or leaving the United States to go to a foreign country for the purpose of adoption in that country;

(7) cases in which a United States citizen child living overseas with the child's family, at least one of whom is in the United States armed services and who is stationed overseas, is removed and placed in a state; and

(8) the sending of a child by a public child placing agency or a private child placing agency for a visit as defined by the rules of the interstate commission.

C. For purposes of determining the applicability of this compact to the placement of a child with a family in the armed services, the public child placing agency or private child placing agency may choose the state of the service member's permanent duty station or the service member's declared legal residence.

D. Nothing in this compact shall be construed to prohibit the concurrent application of the provisions of this compact with other applicable interstate compacts, including the Interstate Compact for Juveniles and the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance. The interstate commission may in cooperation with other interstate compact commissions having responsibility for the interstate movement, placement or transfer of children, promulgate like rules to ensure the coordination of services, timely placement of children and the reduction of unnecessary or duplicative administrative or procedural requirements.

ARTICLE 4. JURISDICTION

A. Except as provided in Section H of Article 4 and Paragraphs (2) and (3) of Section B of Article 5 concerning private and independent adoptions, and in interstate

placements in which the public child placing agency is not a party to a custody proceeding, the sending state shall retain jurisdiction over a child with respect to all matters of custody and disposition of the child that it would have had if the child had remained in the sending state. Such jurisdiction shall also include the power to order the return of the child to the sending state.

B. When an issue of child protection or custody is brought before a court in the receiving state, the court shall confer with the court of the sending state to determine the most appropriate forum for adjudication.

C. In cases that are before courts and subject to this compact, the taking of testimony for hearings before any judicial officer may occur in person or by telephone, audio-video conference or such other means as approved by the rules of the interstate commission; and judicial officers may communicate with other judicial officers and persons involved in the interstate process as may be permitted by their canons of judicial conduct and any rules promulgated by the interstate commission.

D. In accordance with its own laws, the court in the sending state shall have authority to terminate its jurisdiction if:

(1) the child is reunified with the parent in the receiving state who is the subject of allegations or findings of abuse or neglect, only with the concurrence of the public child placing agency in the receiving state;

(2) the child is adopted;

(3) the child reaches the age of majority under the laws of the sending state;

(4) the child achieves legal independence pursuant to the laws of the sending state;

(5) a guardianship is created by a court in the receiving state with the concurrence of the court in the sending state;

(6) an Indian tribe has petitioned for and received jurisdiction from the court in the sending state; or

(7) the public child placing agency of the sending state requests termination and has obtained the concurrence of the public child placing agency in the receiving the state.

E. When a sending state court terminates its jurisdiction, the receiving state child placing agency shall be notified.

F. Nothing in this article shall defeat a claim of jurisdiction by a receiving state court sufficient to deal with an act of truancy, delinquency, crime or behavior involving a child

as defined by the laws of the receiving state committed by the child in the receiving state which would be a violation of its laws.

G. Nothing in this article shall limit the receiving state's ability to take emergency jurisdiction for the protection of the child.

H. The substantive laws of the state in which an adoption will be finalized shall solely govern all issues relating to the adoption of the child and the court in which the adoption proceeding is filed shall have subject matter jurisdiction regarding all substantive issues relating to the adoption, except:

(1) when the child is a ward of another court that established jurisdiction over the child prior to the placement;

(2) when the child is in the legal custody of a public agency in the sending state; or

(3) when a court in the sending state has otherwise appropriately assumed jurisdiction over the child, prior to the submission of the request for approval of placement.

I. A final decree of adoption shall not be entered in any jurisdiction until the placement is authorized as an "approved placement" by the public child placing agency in the receiving state.

ARTICLE 5. PLACEMENT EVALUATION

A. Prior to sending, bringing or causing a child to be sent or brought into a receiving state, the public child placing agency shall provide a written request for assessment to the receiving state.

B. For placements by a private child placing agency, a child may be sent or brought, or caused to be sent or brought, into a receiving state, upon receipt and immediate review of the required content in a request for approval of a placement in both the sending and receiving state public child placing agency. The required content to accompany a request for approval shall include all of the following:

(1) a request for approval identifying the child, the birth parent(s), the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the supervising agency, signed by the person requesting approval;

(2) the appropriate consents or relinquishments signed by the birth parents in accordance with the laws of the sending state, or where permitted by the laws of the state where the adoption will be finalized;

(3) certification by a licensed attorney or authorized agent of a private adoption agency that the consent or relinquishment is in compliance with the applicable laws of the sending state, or where permitted by the laws of the state where finalization of the adoption will occur;

(4) a home study; and

(5) an acknowledgment of legal risk signed by the prospective adoptive parents.

C. The sending state and the receiving state may request additional information or documents prior to finalization of an approved placement, but they may not delay travel by the prospective adoptive parents with the child if the required content for approval has been submitted, received and reviewed by the public child placing agency in both the sending state and the receiving state.

D. Approval from the public child placing agency in the receiving state for a provisional or approved placement is required as provided for in the rules of the interstate commission.

E. The procedures for making and the request for an assessment shall contain all information and be in a form as provided for in the rules of the interstate commission.

F. Upon receipt of a request from the public child placing agency of the sending state, the receiving state shall initiate an assessment of the proposed placement to determine its safety and suitability. If the proposed placement is a placement with a relative, the public child placing agency of the sending state may request a determination for a provisional placement.

G. The public child placing agency in the receiving state may request from the public child placing agency or the private child placing agency in the sending state, and shall be entitled to receive, supporting or additional information necessary to complete the assessment or approve the placement.

H. The public child placing agency in the receiving state shall approve a provisional placement and complete or arrange for the completion of the assessment within the time frames established by the rules of the interstate commission.

I. For a placement by a private child placing agency, the sending state shall not impose any additional requirements to complete the home study that are not required by the receiving state, unless the adoption is finalized in the sending state.

J. The interstate commission may develop uniform standards for the assessment of the safety and suitability of interstate placements.

ARTICLE 6. PLACEMENT AUTHORITY

A. Except as otherwise provided in this compact, no child subject to this compact shall be placed into a receiving state until approval for such placement is obtained.

B. If the public child placing agency in the receiving state does not approve the proposed placement, then the child shall not be placed. The receiving state shall provide written documentation of any such determination in accordance with the rules promulgated by the interstate commission. Such determination is not subject to judicial review in the sending state.

C. If the proposed placement is not approved, any interested party shall have standing to seek an administrative review of the receiving state's determination;

(1) the administrative review and any further judicial review associated with the determination shall be conducted in the receiving state pursuant to its applicable administrative procedures act; and

(2) if a determination not to approve the placement of the child in the receiving state is overturned upon review, the placement shall be deemed approved; provided, however, that all administrative or judicial remedies have been exhausted or the time for such remedies has passed.

ARTICLE 7. PLACING AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

A. For the interstate placement of a child made by a public child placing agency or state court:

(1) the public child placing agency in the sending state shall have financial responsibility for:

(a) the ongoing support and maintenance for the child during the period of the placement, unless otherwise provided for in the receiving state; and

(b) as determined by the public child placing agency in the sending state, services for the child beyond the public services for which the child is eligible in the receiving state;

(2) the receiving state shall only have financial responsibility for:

(a) any assessment conducted by the receiving state; and

(b) supervision conducted by the receiving state at the level necessary to support the placement as agreed upon by the public child placing agencies of the receiving and sending state; and

(3) nothing in this provision shall prohibit public child placing agencies in the sending state from entering into agreements with licensed agencies or persons in the receiving state to conduct assessments and provide supervision.

B. For the placement of a child by a private child placing agency preliminary to a possible adoption, the private child placing agency shall be:

(1) legally responsible for the child during the period of placement as provided for in the law of the sending state until the finalization of the adoption; and

(2) financially responsible for the child absent a contractual agreement to the contrary.

C. The public child placing agency in the receiving state shall provide timely assessments, as provided for in the rules of the interstate commission.

D. The public child placing agency in the receiving state shall provide, or arrange for the provision of, supervision and services for the child, including timely reports, during the period of the placement.

E. Nothing in this compact shall be construed as to limit the authority of the public child placing agency in the receiving state from contracting with a licensed agency or person in the receiving state for an assessment or the provision of supervision or services for the child or otherwise authorizing the provision of supervision or services by a licensed agency during the period of placement.

F. Each member state shall provide for coordination among its branches of government concerning the state's participation in, and compliance with, the compact and interstate commission activities through the creation of an advisory council or use of an existing body or board.

G. Each member state shall establish a central state compact office that shall be responsible for state compliance with the compact and the rules of the interstate commission.

H. The public child placing agency in the sending state shall oversee compliance with the provisions of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (25 U.S.C. Section 1901, et seq.) for placements subject to the provisions of this compact, prior to placement.

I. With the consent of the interstate commission, states may enter into limited agreements that facilitate the timely assessment and provision of services and supervision of placements under this compact.

ARTICLE 8. INTERSTATE COMMISSION FOR THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

The member states hereby establish, by way of this compact, a commission known as the "interstate commission for the placement of children". The activities of the interstate commission are the formation of public policy and are a discretionary state function. The interstate commission shall:

A. be a joint commission of the member states and shall have the responsibilities, powers and duties set forth herein, and such additional powers as may be conferred upon it by subsequent concurrent action of the respective legislatures of the member states;

B. consist of one commissioner from each member state who shall be appointed by the executive head of the state human services administration with ultimate responsibility for the child welfare program. The appointed commissioner shall have the legal authority to vote on policy related matters governed by this compact binding the state;

(1) each member state represented at a meeting of the interstate commission is entitled to one vote;

(2) a majority of the member states shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, unless a larger quorum is required by the bylaws of the interstate commission;

(3) a representative shall not delegate a vote to another member state; and

(4) a representative may delegate voting authority to another person from the representative's state for a specified meeting;

C. in addition to the commissioners of each member state, the interstate commission shall include persons who are members of interested organizations as defined in the bylaws or rules of the interstate commission. Such members shall be ex officio and shall not be entitled to vote on any matter before the interstate commission; and

D. establish an executive committee that shall have the authority to administer the day-to-day operations and administration of the interstate commission. The executive committee shall not have the power to engage in rulemaking.

ARTICLE 9. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION

The interstate commission shall have the following powers:

A. to promulgate rules and take all necessary actions to effect the goals, purposes and obligations as enumerated in this compact;

B. to provide for dispute resolution among member states;

C. to issue, upon request of a member state, advisory opinions concerning the meaning or interpretation of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children or the commission's bylaws, rules or actions;

D. to enforce compliance with this compact or the bylaws or rules of the interstate commission pursuant to Article 12;

E. collect standardized data concerning the interstate placement of children subject to this compact as directed through its rules, which shall specify the data to be collected, the means of collection and data exchange and reporting requirements;

F. to establish and maintain offices as may be necessary for the transacting of its business;

G. to purchase and maintain insurance and bonds;

H. to hire or contract for services of personnel or consultants as necessary to carry out its functions under this compact and establish personnel qualification policies and rates of compensation;

I. to establish and appoint committees and officers, including an executive committee as required by Article 10;

J. to accept any and all donations and grants of money, equipment, supplies, materials and services, and to receive, utilize and dispose thereof;

K. to lease, purchase, accept contributions or donations of, or otherwise to own, hold, improve or use any property, real, personal or mixed;

L. to sell, convey, mortgage, pledge, lease, exchange, abandon or otherwise dispose of any property, real, personal or mixed;

M. to establish a budget and make expenditures;

N. to adopt a seal and bylaws governing the management and operation of the interstate commission;

O. to report annually to the legislatures, governors, the judiciary and state advisory councils of the member states concerning the activities of the interstate commission during the preceding year. Such reports shall also include any recommendations that may have been adopted by the interstate commission;

P. to coordinate and provide education, training and public awareness regarding the interstate movement of children for officials involved in such activity;

Q. to maintain books and records in accordance with the bylaws of the interstate commission; and

R. to perform such functions as may be necessary or appropriate to achieve the purposes of this compact.

ARTICLE 10. ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION

A. Bylaws:

(1) within twelve months after the first interstate commission meeting, the interstate commission shall adopt bylaws to govern its conduct as may be necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this compact; and

(2) the interstate commission's bylaws and rules shall establish conditions and procedures under which the interstate commission shall make its information and official records available to the public for inspection or copying. The interstate commission may exempt from disclosure information or official records to the extent they would adversely affect personal privacy rights or proprietary interests.

B. Meetings:

(1) the interstate commission shall meet at least once each calendar year. The chairperson may call additional meetings and, upon the request of a simple majority of the member states, shall call additional meetings;

(2) public notice shall be given by the interstate commission of all meetings and all meetings shall be open to the public, except as set forth in the rules or as otherwise provided in this compact. The interstate commission and its committees may close a meeting, or portion thereof, where it determines by a two-thirds' vote that an open meeting would be likely to:

(a) relate solely to the interstate commission's internal personnel practices and procedures;

(b) disclose matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal law;

(c) disclose financial or commercial information that is privileged, proprietary or confidential in nature;

(d) involve accusing a person of a crime or formally censuring a person;

(e) disclose information of a personal nature when disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy or physically endanger one or more persons;

(f) disclose investigative records compiled for law enforcement purposes; or

(g) specifically relate to the interstate commission's participation in a civil action or other legal proceeding;

(3) for a meeting, or portion of a meeting, closed pursuant to this provision, the interstate commission's legal counsel or designee shall certify that the meeting may be closed and shall reference each relevant exemption provision. The interstate commission shall keep minutes that shall fully and clearly describe all matters discussed in a meeting and shall provide a full and accurate summary of actions taken, and the reasons therefore, including a description of the views expressed and the record of a roll call vote. All documents considered in connection with an action shall be identified in such minutes. All minutes and documents of a closed meeting shall remain under seal, subject to release by a majority vote of the interstate commission or by court order; and

(4) the bylaws may provide for meetings of the interstate commission to be conducted by telecommunication or other electronic communication.

C. Officers and Staff:

(1) the interstate commission may, through its executive committee, appoint or retain a staff director for such period, upon such terms and conditions and for such compensation as the interstate commission may deem appropriate. The staff director shall serve as secretary to the interstate commission, but shall not have a vote. The staff director may hire and supervise such other staff as may be authorized by the interstate commission;

(2) the interstate commission shall elect, from among its members, a chairperson and a vice chairperson of the executive committee and other necessary officers, each of whom shall have such authority and duties as may be specified in the bylaws.

D. Qualified Immunity, Defense and Indemnification:

(1) the interstate commission's staff director and its employees shall be immune from suit and liability, either personally or in their official capacity, for a claim for damage to or loss of property or personal injury or other civil liability caused or arising out of or relating to an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred, or that a person had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided that such person shall not be protected from suit or liability for damage, loss, injury or liability caused by a criminal act or the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of such person;

(a) the liability of the interstate commission's staff director and employees or interstate commission representatives, acting within the scope of the person's

employment or duties for acts, errors or omissions occurring within the person's state may not exceed the limits of liability set forth under the constitution and laws of that state for state officials, employees and agents. The interstate commission is considered to be an instrumentality of the states for the purposes of any such action. Nothing in this subparagraph shall be construed to protect such person from suit or liability for damage, loss, injury or liability caused by a criminal act or the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of such person;

(b) the interstate commission shall defend the staff director and its employees and, subject to the approval of the attorney general or other appropriate legal counsel of the member state, shall defend the commissioner of a member state in a civil action seeking to impose liability arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that the defendant had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided that the actual or alleged act, error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of the person; and

(c) to the extent not covered by the state involved, member state or the interstate commission, the representatives or employees of the interstate commission shall be held harmless in the amount of a settlement or judgment, including attorney fees and costs, obtained against such persons arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that such persons had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided that the actual or alleged act, error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such persons.

ARTICLE 11. RULEMAKING FUNCTIONS OF THE INTERSTATE COMMISSION

A. The interstate commission shall promulgate and publish rules in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the purposes of this compact.

B. Rulemaking shall occur pursuant to the criteria set forth in this article and the bylaws and rules adopted pursuant thereto. Such rulemaking shall substantially conform to the principles of the "Model State Administrative Procedures Act," 1981 Act, Uniform Laws Annotated, Vol.215, p.1 (2000), or other administrative procedure acts that the interstate commission deems appropriate and consistent with due process requirements under the United States constitution as now or hereafter interpreted by the United States supreme court. All rules and amendments shall become binding as of the date specified, as published with the final version of the rule as approved by the interstate commission.

C. When promulgating a rule, the interstate commission shall, at a minimum:

(1) publish the proposed rule's entire text stating the reason(s) for that proposed rule;

(2) allow and invite any and all persons to submit written data, facts, opinions and arguments, which information shall be added to the record, and be made publicly available; and

(3) promulgate a final rule and its effective date, if appropriate, based on input from state or local officials or interested parties.

D. Rules promulgated by the interstate commission shall have the force and effect of administrative rules and shall be binding in the compacting states to the extent and in the manner provided for in this compact.

E. Not later than sixty days after a rule is promulgated, an interested person may file a petition in the United States district court for the District of Columbia or in the federal district court where the interstate commission's principal office is located for judicial review of such rule. If the court finds that the interstate commission's action is not supported by substantial evidence in the rulemaking record, the court shall hold the rule unlawful and set it aside.

F. If a majority of the legislatures of the member states rejects a rule, those states may, by enactment of a statute or resolution in the same manner used to adopt the compact, cause that such rule shall have no further force and effect in any member state.

G. The existing rules governing the operation of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children superseded by this act shall be null and void no less than twelve, but no more than twenty-four months after the first meeting of the interstate commission created hereunder, as determined by the members during the first meeting.

H. Within the first twelve months of operation, the interstate commission shall promulgate rules addressing the following:

(1) transition rules;

(2) forms and procedures;

(3) time lines;

(4) data collection and reporting;

(5) rulemaking;

(6) visitation;

(7) progress reports and supervision;

(8) sharing of information and confidentiality;

(9) financing of the interstate commission;

(10) mediation, arbitration and dispute resolution;

(11) education, training and technical assistance;

(12) enforcement; and

(13) coordination with other interstate compacts.

I. Upon determination by a majority of the members of the interstate commission that an emergency exists:

(1) the interstate commission may promulgate an emergency rule only if it is required to:

(a) protect the children covered by this compact from an imminent threat to their health, safety and well-being;

(b) prevent loss of federal or state funds; or

(c) meet a deadline for the promulgation of an administrative rule required by federal law;

(2) an emergency rule shall become effective immediately upon adoption; provided that the usual rulemaking procedures provided hereunder shall be retroactively applied to said rule as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than ninety days after the effective date of the emergency rule; and

(3) an emergency rule shall be promulgated as provided for in the rules of the interstate commission.

ARTICLE 12. OVERSIGHT, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, ENFORCEMENT

A. Oversight:

(1) the interstate commission shall oversee the administration and operation of this compact;

(2) the executive, legislative and judicial branches of state government in each member state shall enforce this compact and the rules of the interstate commission and shall take all actions necessary and appropriate to effectuate this

compact's purposes and intent. This compact and its rules shall be binding in the compacting states to the extent and in the manner provided for in this compact;

(3) all courts shall take judicial notice of this compact and the rules in any judicial or administrative proceeding in a member state pertaining to the subject matter of this compact; and

(4) the interstate commission shall be entitled to receive service of process in any action in which the validity of a compact provision or rule is the issue for which a judicial determination has been sought and shall have standing to intervene in any proceedings. Failure to provide service of process to the interstate commission shall render any judgment, order or other determination, however so captioned or classified, void as to the interstate commission, this compact, its bylaws or rules of the interstate commission.

B. Dispute Resolution:

(1) the interstate commission shall attempt, upon the request of a member state, to resolve disputes that are subject to the compact and that may arise among member states and between member and non-member states; and

(2) the interstate commission shall promulgate a rule providing for both mediation and binding dispute resolution for disputes among compacting states. The costs of such mediation or dispute resolution shall be the responsibility of the parties to the dispute.

C. Enforcement:

(1) if the interstate commission determines that a member state has defaulted in the performance of its obligations or responsibilities under this compact, its by laws or rules, the interstate commission may:

(a) provide remedial training and specific technical assistance;

(b) provide written notice to the defaulting state and other member states, of the nature of the default and the means of curing the default. The interstate commission shall specify the conditions by which the defaulting state must cure its default;

(c) by majority vote of the members, initiate against a defaulting member state legal action in the United States district court for the District of Columbia or, at the discretion of the interstate commission, in the federal district where the interstate commission has its principal office, to enforce compliance with the provisions of this compact, its bylaws or rules. The relief sought may include both injunctive relief and damages. In the event judicial enforcement is necessary, the prevailing party shall be awarded all costs of such litigation, including reasonable attorney fees; or

(d) avail itself of any other remedies available under state law or the regulation of official or professional conduct.

ARTICLE 13. FINANCING OF THE COMMISSION

A. The interstate commission shall pay, or provide for the payment of the reasonable expenses of its establishment, organization and ongoing activities.

B. The interstate commission may levy on and collect an annual assessment from each member state to cover the cost of the operations and activities of the interstate commission and its staff, which must be in a total amount sufficient to cover the interstate commission's annual budget as approved by its members each year. The aggregate annual assessment amount shall be allocated based upon a formula to be determined by the interstate commission, which shall promulgate a rule binding upon all member states.

C. The interstate commission shall not incur obligations of any kind prior to securing the funds adequate to meet the same; nor shall the interstate commission pledge the credit of any of the member states, except by and with the authority of the member states.

D. The interstate commission shall keep accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements. The receipts and disbursements of the interstate commission shall be subject to the audit and accounting procedures established under its bylaws. However, all receipts and disbursements of funds handled by the interstate commission shall be audited yearly by a certified or licensed public accountant and the report of the audit shall be included in and become part of the annual report of the interstate commission.

ARTICLE 14. MEMBER STATES, EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENT

A. Any state is eligible to become a member state.

B. This compact shall become effective and binding upon legislative enactment of the compact into law by no less than thirty-five states. The effective date shall be the later of July 1, 2007 or upon enactment of the compact into law by the thirty-fifth state. Thereafter, it shall become effective and binding as to any other member state upon enactment of the compact into law by that state. The executive heads of the state human services administration with ultimate responsibility for the child welfare program of non-member states or their designees shall be invited to participate in the activities of the interstate commission on a non-voting basis prior to adoption of this compact by all states.

C. The interstate commission may propose amendments to this compact for enactment by the member states. No amendment shall become effective and binding on the member states unless and until it is enacted into law by unanimous consent of the member states.

ARTICLE 15. WITHDRAWAL AND DISSOLUTION

A. Withdrawal:

(1) once effective, the compact shall continue in force and remain binding upon each and every member state; provided that a member state may withdraw from the compact specifically repealing the statute that enacted the compact into law;

(2) withdrawal from this compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing the same. The effective date of withdrawal shall be the effective date of the repeal of the statute;

(3) the withdrawing state shall immediately notify the president of the interstate commission in writing upon the introduction of legislation repealing this compact in the withdrawing state. The interstate commission shall then notify the other member states of the withdrawing state's intent to withdraw;

(4) the withdrawing state is responsible for all assessments, obligations and liabilities incurred through the effective date of withdrawal; and

(5) reinstatement following withdrawal of a member state shall occur upon the withdrawing state reenacting the compact or upon such later date as determined by the members of the interstate commission.

B. Dissolution of Compact:

(1) this compact shall dissolve effective upon the date of the withdrawal or default of the member state that reduces the membership in the compact to one member state;

(2) upon the dissolution of this compact, the compact becomes null and void and shall be of no further force or effect, and the business and affairs of the interstate commission shall be concluded and surplus funds shall be distributed in accordance with the bylaws.

ARTICLE 16. SEVERABILITY AND CONSTRUCTION

A. The provisions of this compact shall be severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence or provision is deemed unenforceable, the remaining provisions of the compact shall be enforceable.

B. The provisions of this compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purposes.

C. Nothing in this compact shall be construed to prohibit the concurrent applicability of other interstate compacts to which the states are members.

ARTICLE 17. BINDING EFFECT OF COMPACT AND OTHER LAWS

A. Other Laws:

(1) nothing herein prevents the enforcement of any other law of a member state that is not inconsistent with this compact.

B. Binding Effect of the Compact:

(1) all lawful actions of the interstate commission, including all rules and bylaws promulgated by the interstate commission, are binding upon the member states;

(2) all agreements between the interstate commission and the member states are binding in accordance with their terms; and

(3) in the event any provision of this compact exceeds the constitutional limits imposed on the legislature of any member state, such provision shall be ineffective to the extent of the conflict with the constitutional provision in question in that member state.

ARTICLE 18. INDIAN NATIONS, TRIBES AND PUEBLOS

Notwithstanding any other provision in this compact, the interstate commission may promulgate guidelines to permit Indian nations, tribes and pueblos to utilize the compact to achieve any or all of the purposes of the compact as specified in Article 1. The interstate commission shall make reasonable efforts to consult with Indian nations, tribes and pueblos in promulgating guidelines to reflect the diverse circumstances of the various Indian nations, tribes and pueblos.

History: *1953 Comp., § 13-16A-1, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212; repealed and reenacted by Laws 2023, ch. 118, § 1.*

32A-11-2. Financial responsibility; default in compact.

Financial responsibility for any child placed pursuant to the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Article 5 thereof in the first instance. However, in the event of partial or complete default of performance thereunder, the provisions of the New Mexico law fixing responsibility for the support of children also may be invoked.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-2, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-2. Financial responsibility; default in compact. (Contingent effective date. See note below.)

Financial responsibility for any child placed pursuant to the provisions of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Article 7 and Article 12 of that compact in the first instance. However, in the event of partial or complete default of performance under that compact, the provisions of the New Mexico law fixing responsibility for the support of children also may be invoked.

History: *1953 Comp., § 13-16A-2, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212; 2023, ch. 118, § 2.*

32A-11-3. Notices; health and social services department [human services department][health care authority department]. (Contingent repeal. *See* note.)

The "appropriate public authorities" as used in Article 3 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children shall, with reference to New Mexico, mean the health and social services department [human services department][health care authority department], and said department shall receive and act with reference to notices required by said Article 3.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-3, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 3; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-4. "Appropriate authority"; health and social services department [human services department][health care authority department]. (Contingent repeal. *See* note.)

As used in Paragraph A of Article 5 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, the phrase, "appropriate authority in the receiving state," with reference to New Mexico shall mean the health and social services department [human services department][health care authority department].

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-4, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 4; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-5. Financial commitment; approval.

The officers and agencies of the state and of its political subdivisions having authority to place children are hereby empowered to enter into agreements with appropriate officers or agencies of or in other party states pursuant to Paragraph B of Article 5 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Any such agreement which contains a financial commitment or imposes a financial obligation on the state or political subdivision or agency thereof shall not be binding unless it has the approval in writing of the secretary of finance and administration and of the chief local fiscal officer in the case of a political subdivision of the state.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-5, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 5; 1983, ch. 301, § 73; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-5 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-5. Financial commitment; approval. (Contingent effective date. See note below.)

The officers and agencies of the state and of its political subdivisions having authority to place children are hereby empowered to enter into agreements with appropriate officers or agencies of or in other party states pursuant to Paragraph (3) of Section A of Article 7 of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978]. Any such agreement that contains a financial commitment or imposes a financial obligation on the state or political subdivision or agency thereof shall not be binding unless it has the approval in writing of the secretary of finance and administration and of the chief local fiscal officer in the case of a political subdivision of the state.

History: *1953 Comp., § 13-16A-5, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 5; 1983, ch. 301, § 73; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-5 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212; 2023, ch. 118, § 3.*

32A-11-6. Court jurisdiction in placement of delinquent children.

Any court having jurisdiction to place delinquent children may place such a child in an institution in another state pursuant to Article 6 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and shall retain jurisdiction as provided in Article 5 thereof.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-6, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 6; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-6 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-6. Court jurisdiction in placement of delinquent children. (Contingent effective date. See note below.)

Any court having jurisdiction to place delinquent children may place such a child in an institution in another state pursuant to Article 3 of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] and shall retain jurisdiction as provided in Article 4 of that compact.

History: *1953 Comp., § 13-16A-6, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 6; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-6 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212; 2023, ch. 118, § 4.*

32A-11-7. Governor.

As used in Article 7 of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, the term "executive head" means the governor. The governor is hereby authorized to appoint a compact administrator in accordance with the terms of said Article 7.

History: 1953 Comp., § 13-16A-7, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 7; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-7 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212.

32A-11-7. Governor. (Contingent effective date. See note below.)

As used in Article 8 of the Revised Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, [32A-11-1 NMSA 1978] the term "executive head" means the governor. The governor is hereby authorized to appoint a compact administrator in accordance with the terms of Article 8 of that compact.

History: *1953 Comp., § 13-16A-7, enacted by Laws 1977, ch. 151, § 7; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-11-7 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 212; 2023, ch. 118, § 5.*

ARTICLE 12
Residential Treatment Program

32A-12-1. Residential treatment program established.

A. There is established within the children, youth and families department a residential treatment program for youths. The program shall be for the purpose of providing residential treatment or therapeutic group home care to youths. Residential treatment services shall be provided to youths who are determined to be in need of such services pursuant to Section 43-1-16 or 43-1-16.1 NMSA 1978.

B. Services shall be provided through a grant or contract with local community providers who have demonstrated the capability of providing such services. All program facilities used for provision of residential treatment or therapeutic group home care shall meet all applicable licensing requirements.

C. Contracts may be let to out-of-state providers only upon a finding by the secretary of children, youth and families that appropriate in-state providers are not available.

D. The secretary of human services and the secretary of children, youth and families shall execute an agreement specifying the manner in which clients and funds in the custody of the human services department [health care authority department] shall be transferred to the children, youth and families department for treatment and the ongoing responsibilities of each agency toward the clients served.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 227, § 1; 1983, ch. 93, § 1; 1992, ch. 57, § 37; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-12-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 213.

32A-12-2. Residential treatment programs; rules.

The secretary of children, youth and families shall adopt rules to provide for:

A. minimum standards that shall be met by a residential treatment program, including a requirement that the program make reasonable provisions for adequate physical space for a school district to provide the required free appropriate public education;

B. procedures and forms for applying for a departmental grant or contract;

C. procedures and criteria for review and approval or denial of such applications;

D. procedures for approval of facilities and programs in or through which services are to be performed;

E. procedures and specifications of programmatic and financial information to be reported by residential treatment programs to the children, youth and families department for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of programs funded by the department; and

F. procedures for review of potential clients for residential treatment or therapeutic group home care.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 227, § 2; 1992, ch. 57, § 38; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-12-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 213; 2009, ch. 162, § 2.

ARTICLE 13
Juvenile Assistance Programs

32A-13-1. Purpose.

The legislature finds that juvenile crime is steadily increasing and that a reliable process of disposition of juvenile offenders and the availability of treatment alternatives is likely to decrease repeated criminal activity. The legislature further finds that there is a need for a community-based system for juveniles which would provide reintegration assistance, diagnostic evaluations and referral to community-based treatment programs for courts, district attorneys and other service agencies. Two programs related to such a system and associated with the judicial and criminal justice systems have been tested for the past three years. They have been found to be successful in providing evaluation and treatment and have shown significant reduction of repeated criminal activity. These programs are the forensic evaluation program and the wilderness experience program.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 300, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-13-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 214.

32A-13-2. Juvenile forensic evaluation program.

A. There is created within the children, youth and families department the "juvenile forensic evaluation program". The program shall be staffed by juvenile forensic evaluation teams and shall provide evaluation of children alleged or found to be in need of supervision and alleged delinquents upon request of the court, law enforcement agencies and juvenile probation officers.

B. The juvenile forensic evaluation teams shall recommend referral of children alleged or found to be in need of supervision or alleged delinquents to the children, youth and families department, department of health or human services department [health care authority department] or recommend any other appropriate legal disposition based on the diagnostic evaluation. Juvenile forensic evaluation teams shall follow the juvenile in each stage of treatment, utilizing a data management system established by the children, youth and families department, and shall provide information upon request to state agencies, pursuant to applicable confidentiality provisions pertaining to children.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 300, § 2; 1989, ch. 328, § 11; 1992, ch. 57, § 39; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-13-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 214.

32A-13-3. Wilderness experience program.

A wilderness experience program shall be provided by the children, youth and families department as needed for the treatment of children alleged or found to be delinquent or in need of supervision. This program shall work in conjunction with the other forensic programs and criminal justice agencies throughout the state by providing a wilderness-based evaluation and treatment experience for juveniles. It shall be the responsibility of this program to provide, in conjunction with the juvenile forensic evaluation program, programming for juveniles referred from criminal justice agencies and diagnosed as in need of such treatment. The wilderness experience program staff shall make comprehensive reports based on the evaluation of individuals during the treatment experience and shall make recommendations for further treatment and referral to other service programs as necessary.

History: Laws 1979, ch. 300, § 3; 1988, ch. 101, § 30; 1992, ch. 57, § 40; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-13-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 214.

ARTICLE 14
Missing Child Reporting (Repealed.)

32A-14-1. Repealed.

History: Laws 1987, ch. 25, § 1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-14-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 215; repealed by Laws 2010, ch. 33, § 15.

32A-14-2. Repealed.

History: Laws 1987, ch. 25, § 2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-14-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 215; repealed by Laws 2010, ch. 33, § 15.

32A-14-3. Repealed.

History: Laws 1987, ch. 25, § 3; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-14-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 215; 2001, ch. 187, § 1; repealed by Laws 2010, ch. 33, § 15.

32A-14-4. Repealed.

History: Laws 1987, ch. 25, § 4; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-14-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 215; repealed by Laws 2010, ch. 33, § 15.

ARTICLE 15
Children's and Juvenile Facility Criminal Records Screening

32A-15-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 15 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "New Mexico Children's and Juvenile Facility and Program Criminal Records Screening Act".

History: Laws 1985, ch. 103, § 1 and Laws 1985, ch. 140, § 1; 1978 Comp., § 24-18-1, recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32-9-1; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-15-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 216; 2003, ch. 261, § 1; 2005, ch. 189, § 74.

32A-15-2. Purpose.

The purpose of the New Mexico Children's and Juvenile Facility and Program Criminal Records Screening Act is to comply with the provisions of Public Law 98-473 and Public Law 108-36 and to protect the safety and welfare of children.

History: Laws 1985, ch. 103, § 2 and Laws 1985, ch. 140, § 2; 1978 Comp., § 24-18-2, recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32-9-2; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-15-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 216; 2005, ch. 189, § 75.

32A-15-3. Criminal history records check; background checks.

A. State and national criminal history records checks shall be conducted on all operators, employees, student interns and volunteers and prospective operators, employees, student interns and volunteers of every facility or program that has primary custody of children for twenty hours or more per week, and juvenile detention facilities, juvenile correction facilities or treatment facilities. State and national criminal history records checks shall also be conducted on all prospective foster or adoptive parents

and other adult relatives and non-relatives residing in the prospective foster or adoptive parent's household. The objective of conducting the records checks is to protect the children involved and promote the children's safety and welfare while receiving service from the facilities and programs.

B. For purposes of investigating the suitability of persons enumerated in Subsection A of this section, the department shall have access to criminal history records information furnished by the department of public safety and the federal bureau of investigation, subject to any restrictions imposed by federal law. As directed by the department, a person enumerated in Subsection A of this section shall submit a set of electronic fingerprints to the department of public safety. The department of public safety shall conduct a check of state criminal history records and forward the fingerprints to the federal bureau of investigation for a national criminal history records check to determine the existence and content of records of convictions and arrests in this state or other law enforcement jurisdictions and to generate a criminal history records check in accordance with rules of the department and regulations of the federal bureau of investigation. The department of public safety shall review the information returned from the criminal history records check and compile and disseminate the criminal history record information to the department, which shall use the information to investigate and determine whether a person is qualified to provide care for a child or be a foster or adoptive parent.

C. Criminal history records obtained pursuant to the provisions of this section are confidential and are not a public record for purposes of the Inspection of Public Records Act [Chapter 14, Article 3 NMSA 1978] and shall not be used for any purpose other than determining suitability for licensure, employment, volunteer service, fostering or adoption. Criminal history records obtained pursuant to the provisions of this section and the information contained in those records shall not be released or disclosed to any other person or agency, except pursuant to a court order or with the written consent of the person who is the subject of the records.

D. A person who releases or discloses criminal history records or information contained in those records in violation of the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

E. As used in this section:

(1) "behavior management skills development" means services for children and adolescents with psychological, emotional, behavioral, neurobiological or substance abuse problems in the home, community or school when such problems are of such severity that highly supportive and structured therapeutic behavioral interventions are required. These services are designed to maintain the client in the client's home, community or school setting;

(2) "case management" means services provided in order to assist children and adolescents with identifying and meeting multiple and complex, special physical, cognitive and behavioral health care needs through planning, securing, monitoring, advocating and coordinating services;

(3) "child placement agency" means an individual or an entity licensed by the department as an adoption agency, foster care agency or both that is undertaking to place a child in a home in this or any other state for the purpose of providing foster care or adoption services;

(4) "comprehensive community support services" means a variety of interventions, primarily face-to-face and in community locations, that address barriers that impede the development of skills necessary to independent functioning in the community;

(5) "day treatment" means a coordinated and intensive set of structured individualized therapeutic services, in a school or a facility licensed by the department, provided for children, adolescents and their families who are living in the community;

(6) "employee" means a person working for a facility or program who has direct care responsibilities or potential unsupervised access to care recipients;

(7) "facility" means a juvenile correction facility, a juvenile detention facility or a treatment facility;

(8) "group home" means mental and behavioral health services offered in a supervised, licensed facility that provides structured therapeutic group living for children or adolescents with moderate behavioral, psychological, neurobiological or emotional problems, when clinical history and opinion establish that the needs of the client cannot be met in a less restrictive environment;

(9) "intensive outpatient programming" means a time-limited, multifaceted approach to treatment services for children or adolescents who require structure and support to achieve and sustain recovery;

(10) "juvenile correction facility" means the physical plant and buildings operated by or on behalf of the juvenile justice division of the department or any other facility or location designated by the juvenile justice division's director to house or provide care to clients committed to the custody of the department;

(11) "juvenile detention facility" means a place where a child may be detained under the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978] pending a court hearing and does not include a facility for the care and rehabilitation of an adjudicated delinquent child;

(12) "operator" means a person who has any oversight over a facility's or program's employees or day-to-day operations;

(13) "prevention, intervention and reunification services" means prevention awareness, family support and reunification services for families that are at high risk of child maltreatment;

(14) "primary custody" means that a facility or program holds temporary or long-term custody or supervision over children in the absence of a parent or guardian;

(15) "program" means behavior management skills development, case management, a group home, day treatment, treatment foster care services, a child placement agency, licensed shelter care, comprehensive community support services, intensive outpatient programming, supervised visitation and safe exchange and children, youth and families department contractors and providers receiving funding or reimbursement to provide prevention, intervention and reunification services;

(16) "residential treatment facility" means a program that provides twenty-four-hour therapeutic care to children or adolescents with severe behavioral, psychological, neurobiological or emotional problems who are in need of psychosocial rehabilitation in a residential facility;

(17) "shelter care" means any facility that provides short-term emergency living accommodations to children in a crisis situation, such as abandonment, abuse or neglect, or who are runaways;

(18) "student intern" means a person who is paid or unpaid and is present in a facility or program to work, observe or gain skills in a particular profession;

(19) "supervised visitation and safe exchange" means a service that provides children and their parents with a safe, nurturing environment for supervised visitation and exchange, allowing a child to continue the child's relationship with the noncustodial parent without being placed in the middle of parental conflicts;

(20) "treatment facility" means a residential treatment facility or group home;

(21) "treatment foster care services" means a program that provides therapeutic services to children or adolescents who are psychologically or emotionally disturbed or behaviorally disordered and are placed in a foster family setting; and

(22) "volunteer" means a person who spends less than six hours per week at a program, is under direct physical supervision and is not counted in the program facility ratio.

History: Laws 1985, ch. 103, § 3 and Laws 1985, ch. 140, § 3; 1978 Comp., § 24-18-3, recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32-9-3; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-15-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 216; 1999, ch. 146, § 1; 2003, ch. 261, § 2; 2005, ch. 189, § 76; 2022, ch. 30, § 14; 2024, ch. 28, § 2.

32A-15-4. Procedures.

By December 31, 1993, procedures shall be established by regulation to provide for employment history and background checks for all present and prospective personnel identified in Section 32-9-3 [32A-15-3] NMSA 1978:

A. by the secretary of children, youth and families for child care facilities and juvenile detention and correction facilities; and

B. by the secretary of health for health and treatment facilities.

History: Laws 1985, ch. 103, § 4 and Laws 1985, ch. 140, § 4; 1978 Comp., § 24-18-4, recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32-9-4; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-15-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 216; 1993, ch. 263, § 1.

ARTICLE 16
Child Development (Repealed.)

32A-16-1. Repealed.

History: Laws 1989, ch. 290, § 1; 1992, ch. 57, § 44; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-16-1 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 217; repealed by Laws 2012, ch. 14, § 2.

32A-16-2. Repealed.

History: Laws 1989, ch. 290, § 2; 1991, ch. 167, § 1; 1992, ch. 57, § 45; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-16-2 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 217; repealed by Laws 2012, ch. 14, § 2.

32A-16-3. Repealed.

History: Laws 1989, ch. 290, § 3; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-16-3 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 217; repealed by Laws 2012, ch. 14, § 2.

32A-16-4. Repealed.

History: Laws 1989, ch. 290, § 4; 1991, ch. 167, § 2; 1992, ch. 57, § 46; recompiled as 1978 Comp., § 32A-16-4 by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 217; 2007, ch. 46, § 41; repealed by Laws 2012, ch. 14, § 2.

ARTICLE 17
Family Support

32A-17-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 17 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Family Support Act".

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 218; 2005, ch. 68, § 5.

32A-17-2. Definition.

As used in the Family Support Act, "family support services" means short-term, intensive services, provided to a family whose child may reasonably be expected to face out-of-home placement, that are designed to teach a family new skills to help the family remain intact and able to care for the child at home.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 219; 2005, ch. 68, § 6.

32A-17-3. Eligibility.

Family support services may be provided, considering available resources, to a family whose child is at risk for placement as:

A. an abused child;

B. a neglected child;

C. a child of a family in need of services;

D. an emotionally disturbed child; or

E. a delinquent child.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 220; 2005, ch. 68, § 7.

32A-17-4. Service delivery.

A. The department shall coordinate and implement the provision of family support services. The public education department shall assist the department by identifying children in public schools who are at risk for the purpose of making family support services available to the families of those children. The department shall ensure the statewide quality of family support services by:

(1) providing standards and policies for family support services that are family-centered and that identify family strengths;

(2) monitoring the provision of family support services to ensure that the services satisfy standards established by the department;

(3) providing training for persons who provide family support services; and

(4) establishing a standardized intake process for the purpose of rapidly assessing the needs of a child and family referred for family support services.

B. A person who works in a family support services program shall:

(1) provide family support services in the family's home or any other natural setting;

(2) provide direct crisis intervention and therapeutic services, to be available twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week, as needed for each family;

(3) assist with the solution of practical problems that contribute to family stress, so as to affect improved parental performance and enhanced functioning of the family unit; and

(4) arrange for additional assistance, to the extent of available resources, for the family, including housing, child care, education and training, emergency cash grants, state and federally funded public assistance or any other basic support or social service appropriate for the family.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 221; 2005, ch. 68, § 8.

32A-17-5. Qualifications.

A person who provides family support services shall have appropriate training, experience, supervision and continuing education to carry out the person's duties.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-5, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 222; 2005, ch. 68, § 9.

32A-17-6. Evaluation.

The secretary of the department shall conduct an annual evaluation of family support services, and the data collected during the evaluation shall be compiled in a manner that promotes comparison with data collected from similar programs in other states.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-17-6, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 223; 2005, ch. 68, § 10.

ARTICLE 18
Training for Cultural Recognition

32A-18-1. Cultural recognition.

A. A person who serves as a judge, prosecutor, child's attorney, guardian ad litem, treatment guardian, court appointed attorney, court appointed special advocate, foster parent, mental health commissioner or mental health treatment service provider for a child subject to an abuse or neglect petition, a family in need of services petition or a mental health placement shall receive periodic training, to the extent of available resources, to develop his knowledge about children, the physical and psychological formation of children and the impact of ethnicity on a child's needs. Institutions that serve children and their families shall, considering available resources, provide similar training to institutional staff.

B. The training shall include study of:

(1) cross-cultural dynamics and sensitivity;

(2) child development;

(3) family composition and dynamics;

(4) parenting skills and practices;

(5) culturally appropriate treatment plans; and

(6) alternative health practices.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-18-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 224; 1995, ch. 206, § 45; 1999, ch. 254, § 4; 2009, ch. 239, § 66.

32A-18-2. Coordination of training.

The department shall coordinate the training required pursuant to the provisions of Section 32-18-1 [32A-18-1] NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-18-2, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 225.

32A-18-3. Delinquency proceeding; training required for person who represents a child.

A person who represents a child during a delinquency proceeding shall participate in the training required pursuant to the provisions of Section 32-18-1 [32A-18-1] NMSA 1978.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-18-3, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 226.

32A-18-4. Cultural awareness; culturally appropriate placements.

A. An Indian child placed in foster care, preadoptive placement, adoptive placement or a secure facility shall be allowed to maintain the child's cultural ties and shall be permitted to participate in activities that strengthen cultural awareness.

B. An Indian child placed in a secure facility shall be permitted to participate in activities that strengthen cultural awareness. A representative of the child's culture shall be allowed access to the secure facility to provide activities that strengthen cultural awareness; provided that the activities are restricted to the premises of the secure facility.

C. Upon determining that a placement out of the home is medically necessary for an Indian child, the interagency behavioral health purchasing collaborative and its contractors shall make reasonable efforts to place the child with a licensed residential treatment center, group home or treatment foster care home that provides culturally competent care and access to appropriate cultural practices, including traditional treatment, as determined in consultation with the child's tribe.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-18-4, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 227; 2005, ch. 188, § 1.

ARTICLE 19
Quality Assurance Office

32A-19-1. Quality assurance office.

A. The department shall maintain a quality assurance office under the office of the secretary [secretary of the children youth and families department].

B. The purpose of the quality assurance office shall be to facilitate department efforts to efficiently implement the purposes of the Children's Code.

C. In order to measure the quality of services provided, to facilitate satisfactory outcomes for children and families that receive services and to provide a continuing opportunity to improve service delivery, the quality assurance office shall:

(1) monitor the system for receiving and resolving complaints and grievances;

(2) perform periodic investigations and evaluations to assure compliance with the Children's Code and other applicable state and federal laws and regulations;

(3) facilitate monitoring of indicators of the department's performance to determine whether the department is:

(a) providing children and families with individualized, needs-based service plans;

(b) providing services in a timely manner; and

(c) in compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations;

(4) identify any deficiencies and recommend corrective action to the secretary of the department;

(5) have access to any records maintained by the department, including confidential information; and

(6) promote continuous improvement of all department processes serving children and families.

D. The quality assurance office shall contribute to and facilitate the publication of public reports assessing the performance of the department. The reports shall not disclose the identity of any individual mentioned in the report, including children or families that receive or are eligible for services or any department employee.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-19-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 228; 1997, ch. 34, § 15.

ARTICLE 20
Uniform Case Numbering

32A-20-1. Uniform case numbering system.

A. As used in this section, "uniform case numbering system" means a system of referring to cases of alleged child abuse or neglect, including child sexual abuse, to allow only one numerical designation to be assigned to each case of child abuse or neglect. The uniform case numbering system shall provide for uniform reference to each case by all state agencies and organizations supported by state funds.

B. In any investigation, intervention or disposition of a case involving child abuse or neglect, including child sexual abuse, a uniform case number shall be assigned to the investigation and shall be maintained and referred to by all persons or agencies having

occasion to become involved in any way in the investigation, intervention or disposition of the case.

C. A uniform case numbering system shall be devised, proposed and, after opportunity for public input, adopted by:

(1) the department;

(2) the secretary of public safety or his designee;

(3) the secretary of the department or his designee;

(4) the secretary of health or his designee;

(5) the superintendent of public instruction or his designee;

(6) the chief justice of the supreme court or his designee; and

(7) a representative of the elected or appointed district attorneys.

D. The data collected in connection with the uniform case numbering system shall be limited to the names of the alleged offender and alleged victim, the date of the alleged occurrence and a unique case number which encodes the county of the alleged offense, the type of alleged offense and the case disposition, if known. The names of the alleged offender and alleged victim shall be purged as soon as the uniform case number is disseminated to all agencies involved in investigation and rehabilitative service provision in that case, or within six months of the date the uniform case number is assigned, whichever is first.

History: 1978 Comp., § 32A-20-1, enacted by Laws 1993, ch. 77, § 229.

ARTICLE 21
Emancipation of Minors

32A-21-1. Short title.

Sections 47 through 53 [32A-21-1 to 32A-21-7 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "Emancipation of Minors Act".

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 47.

32A-21-2. Legislative findings and purpose.

It is the purpose of the Emancipation of Minors Act to provide a clear statement defining emancipation and its consequences and to permit an emancipated minor to obtain a court declaration of his status.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 48.

32A-21-3. Emancipated minors; description.

An emancipated minor is any person sixteen years of age or older who:

A. has entered into a valid marriage, whether or not the marriage was terminated by dissolution;

B. is on active duty with any of the armed forces of the United States of America; or

C. has received a declaration of emancipation pursuant to the Emancipation of Minors Act.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 49.

32A-21-4. Emancipation by declaration.

Any person sixteen years of age or older may be declared an emancipated minor for one or more of the purposes enumerated in the Emancipation of Minors Act if he is willingly living separate and apart from his parents, guardian or custodian, is managing his own financial affairs and the court finds it in the minor's best interest.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 50.

32A-21-5. Over the age of majority; purposes.

An emancipated minor shall be considered as being over the age of majority for one or more of the following purposes:

A. consenting to medical, dental or psychiatric care without parental consent, knowledge or liability;

B. his capacity to enter into a binding contract;

C. his capacity to sue and be sued in his own name;

D. his right to support by his parents;

E. the rights of his parents to his earnings and to control him;

F. establishing his own residence;

G. buying or selling real property;

H. ending all vicarious liability of the minor's parents, guardian or custodian for the minor's torts; provided that nothing in this section shall affect any liability of a parent, guardian, custodian, spouse or employer of a minor imposed by the Motor Vehicle Code [Chapter 66, Articles 1 through 8 NMSA 1978] or any vicarious liability that arises from an agency relationship; or

I. enrolling in any school or college.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 51.

32A-21-6. Public entitlement of emancipated minors.

A declared emancipated minor shall not be denied benefits from any public entitlement program to which he may have been entitled in his own right prior to the declaration of emancipation.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 52.

32A-21-7. Declaration of Emancipation; petition; contents; notice; mandate.

A. A minor may petition the children's court of the district in which he resides for a declaration of emancipation as described in the Emancipation of Minors Act. The petition shall be verified and shall set forth with specificity the facts bringing the minor within the provisions of the Emancipation of Minors Act.

B. Before the petition is heard, notice shall be given to the minor's parents, guardian or custodian in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure for the District Courts [1-001 NMRA].

C. If the court finds that the minor is sixteen years of age or older and is a person described under Section 48 [32A-21-2 NMSA 1978] of this act, the court may grant the petition unless, after having considered all of the evidence introduced at the hearing, it finds that granting the petition would be contrary to the best interests of the minor.

D. If the petition is sustained, the court shall immediately issue a declaration of emancipation containing specific findings of fact and one or more purposes of the emancipation, which shall be filed by the county clerk.

E. If the petition is denied, the minor has a right to file a petition for a writ of mandamus.

F. If the petition is sustained, the parents, guardian or custodian of the minor has a right to file a petition for a writ of mandamus if he appeared in the proceeding and opposed the granting of the petition.

G. A declaration of emancipation granted in accordance with the Emancipation of Minors Act shall be conclusive evidence that the minor is emancipated.

History: Laws 1995, ch. 206, § 53.

ARTICLE 22
Children's Cabinet

32A-22-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 22 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Children's Cabinet Act".

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 1; 2019, ch. 48, § 16.

32A-22-2. Children's cabinet created.

A. The "children's cabinet" is created and is administratively attached to the office of the governor. The children's cabinet shall meet at least six times each year.

B. The children's cabinet consists of:

(1) the governor;

(2) the lieutenant governor;

(3) the secretary of children, youth and families;

(4) the secretary of early childhood education and care;

(5) the secretary of corrections;

(6) the secretary of human services;

(7) the secretary of workforce solutions;

(8) the secretary of health;

(9) the secretary of finance and administration;

(10) the secretary of economic development;

(11) the secretary of public safety;

(12) the secretary of aging and long-term services;

(13) the secretary of Indian affairs; and

(14) the secretary of public education.

C. Each year, the governor shall select a person to serve as chair of the cabinet.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 2; 2019, ch. 48, 17.

32A-22-3. Powers; duties; goals.

A. The children's cabinet shall study and make recommendations for the design of a coordinated system to maximize outcomes among children and youth under age twenty-one, particularly those in disadvantaged situations, in the following areas:

(1) physical and mental health fitness;

(2) family and community safety and support;

(3) preparedness for and success in school;

(4) successful transition to meaningful and purposeful adulthood and employment; and

(5) valued contributions to and active participation in communities.

B. Departments participating in the children's cabinet may enter into joint powers agreements pursuant to the Children's Cabinet Act.

C. At least twice each year, the children's cabinet shall meet with parents, children, youth, educators, public officials and representatives of faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, public schools and public school districts, colleges and universities, health care providers, nonprofit organizations, youth service providers, political subdivisions, the interim legislative health and human services committee and the legislative education study committee. The children's cabinet may coordinate with these persons as needed to design or implement the coordinated system.

D. By September 1 of each year, the children's cabinet shall report and make recommendations to the governor and the legislature, including:

(1) a child and youth report card that identifies the status and well-being of children and youth, including special target populations of children and youth that are disproportionately at risk, based on the outcomes in Subsection A of this section; and

(2) a child and youth policy and inventory budget identifying state programs and initiatives that affect the well-being of children and youth, including proposed budget allocations toward the outcome areas in Subsection A of this section based on age, ethnicity and special target populations as determined by the children's cabinet.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 3.

32A-22-4. Children's cabinet department liaisons.

Each member of the children's cabinet shall name an employee to serve as a liaison to ensure coordination and communication among departments and agencies and to address cross-jurisdictional issues in an efficient, effective and expeditious manner.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 64, § 4.

ARTICLE 23
Pre-Kindergarten

32A-23-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 23 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Pre-Kindergarten Act".

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 1; 2019, ch. 48, § 18.

32A-23-2. Findings and purpose.

The legislature finds that:

A. special needs are present among the state's population of three- and four-year-old children and those needs warrant the provision of early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs;

B. participation in quality early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten has a positive effect on children's intellectual, emotional, social and physical development; and

C. early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten will advance governmental interests and childhood development and readiness.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 2; 2019, ch. 48, § 19.

32A-23-3. Definitions.

As used in the Pre-Kindergarten Act:

A. "community" means an area defined by school district boundaries, tribal boundaries or joint boundaries of a school district and tribe or any combination of school districts and tribes;

B. "department" means the early childhood education and care department;

C. "early pre-kindergarten program" means a statewide, voluntary developmental readiness program for children who have attained their third birthday prior to September 1 that delivers to eligible children programs that address their total developmental needs, including their physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs, and that supports their development in the areas of health care, nutrition and safety and multicultural awareness;

D. "eligible child" means a person age three or four on September 1 of the early pre-kindergarten or pre-kindergarten program year;

E. "eligible provider" means a person licensed by the department to provide early childhood developmental readiness services or preschool special education, or is a public provider or a tribal program or head start program;

F. "mixed delivery programming" means the provision of pre-kindergarten programs through an equal distribution of funds to programs administered by the public schools and other programs licensed by the department;

G. "pre-kindergarten program" means a statewide, voluntary developmental readiness program for children who have attained their fourth birthday prior to September 1 that delivers to eligible children programs that address their total developmental needs, including their physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs, and that supports their development in the areas of health care, nutrition and safety and multicultural awareness;

H. "public provider" means a school district or charter school; and

I. "tribe" means an Indian nation, tribe or pueblo located in New Mexico.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 3; 2019, ch. 48, § 20.

32A-23-4. Early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs; interagency cooperation; contracts; contract monitoring; research.

A. The department shall develop and implement an early pre-kindergarten program and a pre-kindergarten program. The department may transfer funds to the public

education department for an approved public provider or may contract with any other eligible provider for the delivery of early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services.

B. The department shall establish standards and performance measures for the early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs to ensure the delivery of high-quality, effective services that prepare participating children for kindergarten. The department and the public education department shall cooperate to align standards for early pre-kindergarten, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs. Those departments shall enter into an agreement to share data necessary to report on the early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs' performance, including the percentage of program participants who:

(1) enter kindergarten:

(a) developmentally prepared for it;

(b) needing special services; and

(c) proficient in reading and mathematics; and

(2) are retained in kindergarten or first, second or third grade.

C. The department shall coordinate with federal head start agencies to avoid duplication of effort and maximize the use of available resources in the implementation of the early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs.

D. The department shall promulgate rules on pre-kindergarten program services, including state policies and standards defining length of service for pre-kindergarten and early pre-kindergarten programs, and shall review the process for making contract awards and for the expenditure and use of contract funds.

E. The department shall monitor activity under early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program contracts to ensure adherence to child-centered, developmentally appropriate practices and outcomes. The department shall provide early childhood training and technical assistance to contract award recipients.

F. Each year, the department shall provide an annual report to the governor and the legislature on the early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 4; 2019, ch. 48, § 21.

32A-23-5. Repealed.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 5; 2011, ch. 140, § 1; repealed by Laws 2019, ch. 48, § 37.

32A-23-6. Requests for proposals; contracts for services.

A. The department shall solicit the delivery of both half-day and full-day early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services by publishing a request for proposals or a request for applications that contains the same requested information for pre-kindergarten services.

B. Eligible providers shall submit proposals to the department that shall include a description of the services that will be provided, including:

(1) how the provider's services meet department standards;

(2) the number of eligible children the provider can serve;

(3) the provider's site and floor plans and a description of its facilities;

(4) the revenue sources and non-state funding available for the provider's delivery of services;

(5) a description of the qualifications and experience of the provider's service-delivery staff for each site;

(6) the provider's plan for communicating with and involving parents of children in the early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs;

(7) how the provider's services meet the continuum of services to children; and

(8) other relevant information.

C. The department shall accept and evaluate proposals or applications for the delivery of early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services by eligible providers.

D. In selecting among proposals and applications for the delivery of early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services, the department shall give priority to programs in communities with public elementary schools designated as Title I schools in which at least sixty-six percent of the children served reside within the attendance zone of a Title I elementary school. It shall further consider:

(1) the number of eligible children residing in the community and the number of eligible children proposed to be served;

(2) the adequacy and capacity of pre-kindergarten facilities in the community;

(3) the availability of language and literacy services in the community;

(4) the cultural, historic and linguistic responsiveness to the community;

(5) the availability of parent education services for parents of eligible children in the community;

(6) staff professional development plans;

(7) the capacity of local organizations and persons interested in and involved in programs and services for eligible children and their commitment to work together;

(8) the degree of local support for early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services in the community; and

(9) other relevant criteria specified by department rule.

E. A contract with an eligible provider for early pre-kindergarten and pre-kindergarten program services shall provide that funds not be used for any religious, sectarian or denominational purposes, instruction or material.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 6; 2011, ch. 140, § 2; 2019, ch. 48, § 22.

32A-23-7. Repealed.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 7; repealed by Laws 2019, ch. 48, § 37.

32A-23-8. Repealed.

History: Laws 2005, ch. 170, § 8; repealed by Laws 2019, ch. 48, § 37.

32A-23-9. Equal division of appropriations.

Any money appropriated for pre-kindergarten programs shall be divided equally between programs administered by the public schools and other programs licensed by the department.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 126, § 1; 2019, ch. 48, § 23.

32A-23-10. Mixed delivery of pre-kindergarten programs.

Any money appropriated for pre-kindergarten programs shall be distributed for mixed delivery programming. The public education department shall access funds from the early childhood education and care department to support pre-kindergarten in the public education system. Pre-kindergarten funding transfers to public providers shall be processed through the public education department to those public providers that demonstrate adherence to standards developed by the department.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 48, § 24.

ARTICLE 23A
Early Childhood Care and Education

32A-23A-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 23A NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Early Childhood Care and Education Act".

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 1; 2019, ch. 48, § 25.

32A-23A-2. Definitions.

As used in the Early Childhood Care and Education Act:

A. "department" means the early childhood education and care department;

B. "early childhood" means the period of a person's life from birth to age five;

C. "fund" means the early childhood care and education fund; and

D. "secretary" means the secretary of early childhood education and care.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 2; 2019, ch. 48, § 26.

32A-23A-3. Findings and purpose.

A. The legislature finds that an early childhood care and education system is vital in ensuring that every New Mexico child is eager to learn and ready to succeed by the time that child enters kindergarten, that high-quality early learning experiences have been proven to prepare children for success in school and later in life and that cost-benefit research demonstrates a high return on investment for money spent on early childhood care and education for at-risk children.

B. The legislature further finds that, to be successful, an early childhood care and education system should be:

(1) developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate and include the implementation of program models, standards and curriculum based on research and best practices;

(2) data-driven, including the identification and prioritization of communities most at risk while striving to make the system universally available to all those who wish to participate;

(3) accountable through developmentally appropriate methods of measuring, reporting and tracking a child's growth and development and the improvement of the system's programs;

(4) accessible, especially to those children most at risk for school failure;

(5) of the highest possible quality through the utilization of qualified practitioners who have completed specialized training in early childhood growth, development and learning that is specific to the practitioner's role in the system and the maintenance of quality rating methods for the programs in the system;

(6) fully aligned within each community to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources by combining funding sources and supporting seamless transitions for children within the system and for children transitioning into kindergarten;

(7) family-centered by recognizing that parents are the first and most important teachers of their children and providing the support and referrals necessary for parents to assume this critical role in their child's development; and

(8) a partnership between the state and private individuals or institutions with an interest or expertise in early childhood care and education.

C. The purpose of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act is to establish a comprehensive early childhood care and education system through an aligned continuum of state and private programs, including home visitation, early intervention, child care, early head start, head start, early childhood special education, family support and pre-kindergarten, and to maintain or establish the infrastructure necessary to support quality in the system's programs.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 3.

32A-23A-4. Repealed.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 4; repealed by Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 7.

32A-23A-5. Council and department duties.

A. The council is designated as the council required pursuant to the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. The council shall fulfill all the duties required under the federal act for early childhood care and education. The council shall also lead the development or enhancement of a high-quality, comprehensive system of early childhood development and care that ensures statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services within the state, including child care, early head start, head start, federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs for preschool, infants and families and pre-kindergarten programs and services.

B. The council and department may apply for and accept gifts, grants, donations or bequests for the fund from any source, public or private, and enter into contracts or other transactions with any federal or state agency, any private organization or any other source in furtherance of the purpose of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act.

C. In addition to the duties assigned to the council under federal law, the council shall:

(1) make recommendations to the department and the legislature on the most efficient and effective way to leverage state and federal funding for early childhood care and education, including on grant applications made by the department to benefit the fund; and

(2) make recommendations to the department and the legislature on how to coordinate and align an early childhood care and education system to include child care, pre-kindergarten, home visitation, early head start, head start, early childhood special education, early intervention and family support and to provide New Mexico families with consistent access to appropriate care and education services. In developing recommendations, the council shall:

(a) consider how to consolidate and coordinate resources and public funding streams for early childhood care and education and ensure the accountability and coordinated development of all early childhood care and education services;

(b) consider a system of seamless transition from prenatal to early childhood programs to kindergarten;

(c) take into account a parent's decisive role in the planning, operation and evaluation of programs that aid families in the care and education of children;

(d) examine ways to provide consumer education and accessibility to early childhood care and education resources;

(e) consider the advancement of quality early childhood care and education programs in order to support the healthy development of children and preparation for their success in school;

(f) consider the development of a seamless service delivery system with local points of entry for early childhood care and education programs administered by local, state and federal agencies;

(g) ensure effective collaboration with state and local child welfare programs and early childhood health and behavioral health programs;

(h) consider how to develop and manage effective data collection systems to support the necessary functions of a coordinated system of early childhood care and education and track children through the education system from prenatal to early childhood to kindergarten to higher education, in order to enable accurate evaluation of the impact of early childhood care and education;

(i) focus on the diversity, cultural heritage and strengths of the families and communities of the state;

(j) consider the development of an aligned system of professional development for professionals providing early childhood care and education; and

(k) consider the establishment of an administrative framework to promote the development of high-quality early childhood care and education services that are staffed by well-qualified professionals and are available in every community for all families that express a need for them.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 5.

32A-23A-6. Early childhood care and education fund; created; purpose; administration; grant applications.

A. The "early childhood care and education fund" is created as a nonreverting fund in the state treasury. The fund shall be administered by the department and shall consist of gifts, grants, donations and bequests made to the fund.

B. Money in the fund is subject to appropriation by the legislature to the department for awarding grants to the council and early childhood care and education providers for carrying out the provisions of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act.

C. The department shall adopt rules on qualifications for grants and specify the format, procedure and deadlines for grant applications. For grants to early childhood care and education providers, the council shall review all grant applications and submit those applications recommended for final approval to the secretary.

D. Disbursements from the fund shall be made upon vouchers issued and signed by the secretary or the secretary's designee upon warrants drawn by the secretary of finance and administration.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 6.

32A-23A-7. Termination of agency life; delayed repeal.

The council is terminated on July 1, 2017 pursuant to the provisions of the Sunset Act [12-9-11 to 12-9-21 NMSA 1978]. The council shall continue to operate pursuant to the provisions of Sections 4 [32A-23A-4 NMSA 1978] and 5 [32A-23A-5 NMSA 1978] of

the Early Childhood Care and Education Act until July 1, 2018. Effective July 1, 2018, Section 4 of the Early Childhood Care and Education Act is repealed.

History: Laws 2011, ch. 123, § 7.

ARTICLE 23B
Home Visiting Accountability

32A-23B-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 23B NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Home Visiting Accountability Act".

History: Laws 2013, ch. 118, § 1; 2019, ch. 48, § 27.

32A-23B-2. Definitions.

As used in the Home Visiting Accountability Act:

A. "culturally and linguistically appropriate" means appropriate when taking into consideration the culture, customs and language of an eligible family's home;

B. "department" means the early childhood education and care department;

C. "eligible family" means a family that elects to receive home visiting services and includes:

(1) a child, from birth until kindergarten entry; or

(2) a pregnant woman, an expectant father, a parent or a primary caregiver;

D. "home visiting":

(1) means:

(a) delivering a variety of informational, educational, developmental, referral and other support services for eligible families who are expecting or who have children who have not yet entered kindergarten and that is designed to promote child well-being and prevent adverse childhood experiences; and

(b) providing a comprehensive array of services that promote parental competence and successful early childhood health and development by building long-term relationships with families and optimizing the relationships between parents and children in their home environments; and

(2) does not include:

(a) provision of case management or a one-time home visit or infrequent home visits, such as a home visit for a newborn child or a child in preschool;

(b) home visiting provided as a supplement to other services; or

(c) services delivered through an individualized family service plan or an individualized education program under Part B or Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

E. "home visiting program" means a program that:

(1) uses home visiting as a primary service delivery strategy; and

(2) offers services on a voluntary basis to pregnant women, expectant fathers and parents and primary caregivers of children from birth to kindergarten entry;

F. "home visiting system" means the infrastructure and programs that support and provide home visiting. A "home visiting system":

(1) provides universal, voluntary access;

(2) provides a common framework for service delivery and accountability across all home visiting programs;

(3) establishes a consistent statewide system of home visiting; and

(4) allows for the collection, aggregation and analysis of common data; and

G. "standards-based program" means a home visiting program that:

(1) is research-based and grounded in relevant, empirically based best practices and knowledge that:

(a) is linked to and measures the following outcomes: 1) babies are born healthy; 2) children are nurtured by their parents and caregivers; 3) children are physically and mentally healthy; 4) children are ready for school; 5) children and families are safe; and 6) families are connected to formal and informal supports in their communities;

(b) has comprehensive home visiting standards that ensure high-quality service delivery and continuous quality improvement; and

(c) has demonstrated significant, sustained positive outcomes;

(2) follows program standards that specify the purpose, outcomes, duration and frequency of services that constitute the program;

(3) follows a research-based curriculum or combinations of research-based curricula, or follows the curriculum of an evidence-based home visiting model or promising approach that the home visiting program has adopted pursuant to department rules defining "evidence-based model" and "promising approach";

(4) employs well-trained and competent staff and provides continual professional supervision and development relevant to the specific program or model being delivered;

(5) demonstrates strong links to other community-based services;

(6) operates within an organization that ensures compliance with home visiting standards;

(7) continually evaluates performance to ensure fidelity to the program standards;

(8) collects data on program activities and program outcomes; and

(9) is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

History: Laws 2013, ch. 118, § 2; 2019, ch. 48, § 28.

32A-23B-3. Home visiting programs; accountability; exclusions; contracting; reporting.

A. The department shall provide statewide home visiting services using a standards-based program and promulgate rules governing the program.

B. The department shall fund only standards-based home visiting programs that include periodic home visits to improve the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of eligible families. The department may prioritize funding for programs associated with strong evidence of effectiveness and for programs that serve high-risk populations.

C. A home visiting program shall provide culturally and linguistically appropriate, face-to-face visits by nurses, social workers and other early childhood and health professionals or by trained and supervised lay workers.

D. A home visiting program shall do two or more of the following:

(1) improve prenatal, maternal, infant or child health outcomes, including reducing preterm births;

(2) promote positive parenting practices;

(3) build healthy parent and child relationships;

(4) enhance children's social-emotional and language development;

(5) support children's cognitive and physical development;

(6) improve the health of eligible families;

(7) provide resources and supports that may help to reduce child maltreatment and injury;

(8) increase children's readiness to succeed in school; and

(9) improve coordination of referrals for, and the provision of, other community resources and supports for eligible families.

E. The department shall develop internal processes that provide for a greater ability to collaborate with other state agencies, local governments and private entities and share relevant home visiting data and information. The processes may include a uniform format for the collection of data relevant to each home visiting program.

F. The department shall enter into a joint powers agreement with the human services department [health care authority department] to use medicaid to finance department-approved, evidence-based home visiting programs. Providers approved for medicaid home visiting are subject to the Home Visiting Accountability Act.

G. When the department authorizes funds through payments, contracts or grants that are used for home visiting programs, it shall include language regarding home visiting in its funding agreement contract or grant that is consistent with the provisions of the Home Visiting Accountability Act.

H. Beginning January 1, 2020 and annually thereafter, the department shall submit to the governor and the legislature an annual outcomes report that includes:

(1) the goals and achieved outcomes of the home visiting system implemented pursuant to the Home Visiting Accountability Act; and

(2) data regarding:

(a) the cost per eligible family served;

(b) the number of eligible families served;

(c) demographic data on eligible families served;

(d) the duration of participation by eligible families in the program;

(e) the number and type of programs that the department has funded;

(f) any increases in school readiness, child development and literacy;

(g) decreases in child maltreatment or child abuse;

(h) any reductions in risky parental behavior;

(i) the percentage of children receiving regular well-child exams, as recommended by the American academy of pediatrics;

(j) the percentage of infants on schedule to be fully immunized by age two;

(k) the number of children who received an ages and stages questionnaire and what percent scored age appropriately in all developmental domains;

(l) the number of children identified with potential developmental delay and, of those, how many began services within two months of the screening; and

(m) the percentage of children receiving home visiting services who are enrolled in high-quality licensed child care programs.

History: Laws 2013, ch. 118, § 3; 2019, ch. 48, § 29.

ARTICLE 23C
Early Childhood Care Accountability

32A-23C-1. Short title.

This act [32A-23C-1 to 32A-23C-5 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Early Childhood Care Accountability Act".

History: Laws 2018, ch. 44, § 1.

32A-23C-2. Definitions.

As used in the Early Childhood Care Accountability Act:

A. "child care assistance" means the assistance administered by the department that provides child care through the child care assistance program for school-aged children as the primary service delivery strategy through a contract with the department that offers services based on income and need for care to parents with children who are school-aged, as department rules define "school-aged";

B. "culturally and linguistically appropriate" means taking into consideration the culture, customs and language of an eligible family;

C. "early childhood care assistance" means assistance administered by the department that provides child care through the child care assistance program for children under five years of age as the primary service delivery strategy through a contract with the department and that offers services based on income criteria and need for care to parents with children who have not yet entered kindergarten;

D. "eligible family" means a family that receives early childhood care assistance or child care assistance through the department;

E. "licensed child care program" means a publicly or privately funded program that:

(1) provides child care in the state in accordance with department standards to school-aged children, as department rules define "school-aged"; and

(2) is licensed by the department;

F. "licensed early childhood care program" means a publicly or privately funded program that provides child care in accordance with department standards to children under five years of age in the state and that is licensed by the department; and

G. "licensed exempt child care program" means a child care home or facility that is exempt from child care licensing requirements pursuant to the Public Health Act [Chapter 24, Article 1 NMSA 1978].

History: Laws 2018, ch. 44, § 2.

32A-23C-3. Licensed early childhood care programs; requirements.

A. The department shall adopt and promulgate rules to establish specific standards for licensure and registration of licensed early childhood care programs that provide care for children from birth to five years of age. As part of these standards, the department shall establish and implement a voluntary rating scale and determine levels that accord with levels of service quality. The standards shall ensure that the health, safety, social-emotional support, school readiness and staff qualifications components are consistent in accordance with the tier levels that the department has established by rule. The department shall use the tiered ratings it has established to pay higher rates for higher-rated individual licensed early childhood care program providers. Standards for licensed early childhood care programs shall:

(1) specify the purpose and outcomes of services that constitute the program;

(2) define high-quality service delivery and continuous quality improvement;

(3) provide a common framework for early childhood care service delivery and accountability across all early childhood care programs;

(4) be designed to promote child well-being, early education, social-emotional support and an emphasis on school readiness;

(5) allow for the collection, aggregation and analysis of common data;

(6) be grounded in best practices geared toward optimal health and developmental outcomes; and

(7) establish foundational and continuing education requirements for staff.

B. A licensed early childhood care program shall:

(1) ensure the health and safety of children while they are in care;

(2) comply with the department's background check requirements for all staff members, educators and volunteers in licensed early childhood care programs;

(3) provide positive discipline and guidance;

(4) continually evaluate program performance;

(5) collect data on program activities and outcomes for reporting in accordance with the tier levels that the department has established in rule, pursuant to Section 4 [32A-23C-4 NMSA 1978] of the Early Childhood Care Accountability Act;

(6) be culturally and linguistically appropriate;

(7) measure the promotion of positive development and appropriate early childhood educational practices, in accordance with the tier levels that the department has established in rule, pursuant to Section 4 of the Early Childhood Care Accountability Act;

(8) ensure that enrolled children are up-to-date with immunizations, in accordance with state law;

(9) train staff on reporting any suspected child abuse and neglect to the department's protective services division and to local authorities;

(10) ensure that the program has established and shared with parents a curriculum statement that supports school readiness; and

(11) follow a curriculum that is aligned with child development functional areas, including the New Mexico early learning guidelines, in accordance with the tier levels that the department has established by rule.

History: Laws 2018, ch. 44, § 3.

32A-23C-4. Licensed early childhood care programs; reporting.

Beginning December 31, 2019 and annually thereafter, the department shall produce an annual outcomes report for the legislature and the governor that includes:

A. the goals and achieved outcomes of the licensed early childhood care program standards implemented pursuant to the Early Childhood Care Accountability Act; and

B. the following data:

(1) the number of substantiated incidents and substantiated complaints received for each licensed early childhood care program rating level;

(2) the income levels of eligible families statewide receiving early childhood care assistance;

(3) the stated reasons that eligible families have applied for early childhood care assistance;

(4) the percentage of children receiving early childhood care assistance by quality level and provider type;

(5) the average annual enrollment in early childhood care assistance;

(6) the percentage of children participating in early childhood care assistance who have one or more substantiated child abuse cases while participating in early childhood care assistance;

(7) by rating level, any evidence of an increase in school readiness, child development and literacy among children receiving early childhood care assistance;

(8) the number and type of licensed early childhood care programs statewide;

(9) the capacity in licensed early childhood care programs by rating level;

(10) the number of children enrolled in licensed early childhood care programs who participate in the child and adult care food program;

(11) the percentage of children enrolled in licensed early childhood care programs receiving health and developmental screenings or assessments in accordance with department rules; and

(12) the percentage of children enrolled in licensed early childhood care programs who have received health or developmental screenings or assessments as department rules require who are referred to services.

History: Laws 2018, ch. 44, § 4.

32A-23C-5. Applicability.

The provisions of this act [32A-23C-1 to 32A-23C-5 NMSA 1978] shall not be construed to apply to the licensure or regulation of child care assistance, any licensed child care program or licensed exempt child care program.

History: Laws 2018, ch. 44, § 5.

ARTICLE 24
Child Helmet Safety

32A-24-1. Short title.

This act [Chapter 32A, Article 24 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Child Helmet Safety Act".

History: Laws 2007, ch. 66, § 1.

32A-24-2. Definitions.

As used in the Child Helmet Safety Act:

A. "bicycle" means a human-powered vehicle with two wheels in tandem designed to transport, by the act of pedaling, one or more persons seated on one or more saddle seats on its frame and includes an electric-assisted bicycle and a human-powered vehicle designed to transport by the act of pedaling, which has more than two wheels when the vehicle is used on a public roadway, public bicycle path or other public road or right of way, including a tricycle;

B. "electric-assisted bicycle" means a bicycle with fully operable pedals and an electric motor not exceeding seven hundred fifty watts of power;

C. "minor" means a person under eighteen years of age;

D. "operator" means a person under eighteen years of age who travels on a bicycle seated on a saddle seat from which that person is intended to and can pedal the bicycle, or who propels the person's self by way of using inline skates, roller skates, a skateboard or a scooter;

E. "passenger" means a person under eighteen years of age who travels on a bicycle or scooter in any manner except as an operator;

F. "protective helmet" means a piece of headgear that meets or exceeds the impact standard for protective helmets set by the United States consumer product safety commission federal safety standard and those standards developed by the American national standards institute, the Snell memorial foundation or the American society for testing and materials;

G. "public bicycle path" means a right of way under the jurisdiction and control of the state or a local political subdivision for use primarily by bicyclists and pedestrians;

H. "public roadway" means a right of way under the jurisdiction and control of the state or a local political subdivision for use primarily by motor vehicular traffic;

I. "public skateboard park" means an area of public property set aside, designed and maintained for recreation by persons using bicycles, scooters, skateboards or skates;

J. "scooter" means a wheeled vehicle, regardless of the number or placement of those wheels, that has handlebars, designed to be stood on by the operator or passenger and used to glide or propel the operator or passenger over the ground;

K. "skateboard" means a set of wheels attached to a platform or flat surface, regardless of the number or placement of those wheels, and used to glide or propel the operator over the ground; and

L. "skates" means a pair of devices worn on the feet with a set of wheels attached and used to glide or propel the user over the ground and may be either inline or roller, but "skates" does not include a pair of devices, similar to a pair of common shoes, that has one or more wheels embedded in the sole of each device.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 66, § 2; 2023, ch. 93, § 1.

32A-24-3. Helmet use requirements; civil penalty.

A. It is unlawful for a parent or legal guardian of a minor to knowingly permit that minor to operate or be a passenger on a bicycle, skates, scooter or skateboard unless that minor wears a well-fitted protective bicycle helmet, fastened securely upon the head with the straps of the helmet.

B. Except as provided in Subsection C of this section, a parent or legal guardian found guilty of violating Subsection A of this section shall pay a civil penalty of not more than ten dollars ($10.00). Magistrate and municipal courts shall have concurrent jurisdiction.

C. If a violation of Subsection A of this section is a first offense, the magistrate or municipal court may issue a verbal warning or require, in lieu of the fine imposed in Subsection B of this section, that the person found in violation provide proof that a protective helmet has been purchased for use by the minor found on the bicycle, skates, scooter or skateboard without a protective helmet.

D. A municipal court may issue only a verbal warning for a first or later violation.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 66, § 3.

32A-24-4. Equipment sales or rentals.

A person engaged in the business of renting bicycles, skates, scooters or skateboards shall provide a protective helmet to a minor who will be an operator of or passenger on a rented bicycle, skates, scooter or skateboard if the minor does not already have a helmet in the minor's possession. A reasonable fee may be charged for the protective helmet rental.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 66, § 4.

32A-24-5. Negligence.

Failure to wear a protective helmet shall not limit or apportion damages.

History: Laws 2007, ch. 66, § 5.

ARTICLE 25
Carlos Vigil Memorial

32A-25-1. Short title.

This act [32A-25-1 to 32A-25-5 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Carlos Vigil Memorial Act" in honor of Carlos Vigil.

History: Laws 2015, ch. 132, § 1.

32A-25-2. Purposes.

The purposes of the Carlos Vigil Memorial Act are to:

A. cultivate a statewide culture where bullying is not accepted;

B. educate New Mexicans about recognizing bullying behaviors and understanding the potential consequences of bullying; and

C. provide grants for providers of services and programs for the prevention, resolution and eradication of bullying statewide.

History: Laws 2015, ch. 132, § 2.

32A-25-3. Carlos Vigil memorial board; created.

A. The "Carlos Vigil memorial board" is created to review grant applications and to award grants from the eradicate bullying fund.

B. The board consists of five voting members who together provide diverse experience and expertise in:

(1) administering or delivering services in an organization focused on preventing bullying or suicide;

(2) administering or delivering services in an organization focused on providing counseling and support services to victims and perpetrators of bullying;

(3) professional development workshops on the topic of bullying or suicide prevention;

(4) coalescing and leading communities; or

(5) administering or delivering public health services.

C. Board appointments shall be as follows:

(1) one member shall be appointed by the president pro tempore of the senate;

(2) one member shall be appointed by the minority floor leader of the senate;

(3) one member shall be appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(4) one member shall be appointed by the minority floor leader of the house of representatives; and

(5) one member shall be appointed by the governor from department of health staff.

D. The chair of the board shall be elected by a quorum of the board members. The board shall meet at the call of the chair or whenever two members submit a request in writing to the chair, but not less often than once each calendar year. A majority of members constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. The affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum present shall be necessary for an action to be taken by the board.

E. Members of the board shall be appointed to two-year terms. Vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the governor for the remainder of the unexpired term. Any member of the board shall be eligible for reappointment.

F. Public members of the board may be paid per diem and mileage as provided for nonsalaried officers in the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] but shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance.

History: Laws 2015, ch. 132, § 3.

32A-25-4. Carlos Vigil memorial board; duties.

The Carlos Vigil memorial board shall:

A. adopt and promulgate rules governing the acceptance, evaluation and prioritization of applications for grants, including applicant qualifications and the format, procedure and deadlines for grant applications;

B. review grant applications from public agencies and institutions and nonprofit private entities that indicate the qualifications and expertise to provide services for the prevention, resolution and eradication of bullying;

C. process, evaluate and prioritize applications based on the criteria delineated in the board's rules; and

D. award grants to the most qualified grant applicants and reach a broad spectrum of New Mexicans.

History: Laws 2015, ch. 132, § 4.

32A-25-5. Eradicate bullying fund created; grant application review.

A. The "eradicate bullying fund" is created in the state treasury. The fund shall be administered by the board of regents of the university of New Mexico. Money in the fund is appropriated to the board of regents of the university of New Mexico for disbursement to grant recipients selected by the Carlos Vigil memorial board.

B. The fund shall consist of:

(1) money appropriated by the legislature to carry out the purposes of the Carlos Vigil Memorial Act;

(2) grants, gifts, donations and bequests to the fund; and

(3) earnings from investment of the money in the fund.

C. Disbursements from the fund shall be made by warrant of the secretary of finance and administration pursuant to vouchers signed by the president of the board of regents of the university of New Mexico or the president's designee.

D. Unexpended and unencumbered balances in the fund shall not revert to the general fund at the end of a fiscal year.

E. An applicant may apply for a grant from the fund in accordance with rules promulgated by the Carlos Vigil memorial board. Allocations from the fund shall be based on a competitive process with applications reviewed by the board.

History: Laws 2015, ch. 132, § 5.

ARTICLE 26
Fostering Connections

32A-26-1. Short title.

Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the "Fostering Connections Act".

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 1; 2020, ch. 52, § 3.

32A-26-2. Definitions.

As used in the Fostering Connections Act:

A. "active efforts" means a heightened standard that is greater than reasonable efforts that include affirmative, active, thorough and timely efforts;

B. "eligible adult" means an individual who meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the fostering connections program;

C. "foster care maintenance payment" means a payment for the care and support of an eligible adult, which is based on the needs of the eligible adult;

D. "host home" means a setting in an eligible adult's former foster home or in another residence in which an eligible adult:

(1) shares a residence with another adult or adults; and

(2) agrees to meet the basic expectations established by the:

(a) eligible adult;

(b) other adult or adults sharing the residence; and

(c) department;

E. "placement and care" means the day-to-day care and protection of the child or eligible adult, including responsibility for placement decisions about the child or eligible adult;

F. "supervised independent living setting" means an age-appropriate setting that the department approves for placement of an eligible adult, which setting:

(1) is consistent with federal law and guidance for a supervised setting in which an eligible adult lives independently; and

(2) may be a residence where the eligible adult lives alone or shares a residence with others, including:

(a) a host home;

(b) a college dormitory or other post-secondary education or training housing; or

(c) the home of a parent of the eligible adult;

G. "transition plan" means a written, individualized plan developed collaboratively between the department and the eligible adult that assesses the eligible adult's strengths and needs, establishes goals and identifies the services and activities that will be provided to the eligible adult to achieve the established goals, the time frames for achieving the goals and the individuals or entities responsible for providing the identified services and activities as provided by rule;

H. "voluntary services and support agreement" means a written agreement, binding on the parties to the agreement, between the department and an eligible adult, which agreement is consistent with the requirements of a voluntary placement agreement pursuant to federal law and which specifies, at a minimum, the legal status of the eligible adult and the rights and obligations of the eligible adult and the department while the eligible adult is participating in the fostering connections program; and

I. "young adult" means an individual who is at least eighteen years of age and who is under twenty-one years of age and is not currently participating in the fostering connections program pursuant to Section 32A-26-3 NMSA 1978.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 2; 2020, ch. 52, § 4.

32A-26-3. Fostering connections program; eligibility.

A. The "fostering connections program" is established in the department. The department shall make the fostering connections program available, on a voluntary basis, to an eligible adult who:

(1) has attained at least eighteen years of age and who is younger than:

(a) as of July 1, 2020, nineteen years of age;

(b) as of July 1, 2021, twenty years of age; and

(c) after July 1, 2022, twenty-one years of age;

(2) meets one of the following criteria:

(a) has attained at least eighteen years of age and: 1) was adjudicated pursuant to the Children's Code or its equivalent under tribal law; 2) was subject to a court order that placement and care be the responsibility of the department or the Indian tribe that entered into an agreement with the department; and 3) was subject to an out-of-home placement order; or

(b) attained at least fourteen years of age when a guardianship assistance agreement or adoption assistance agreement was in effect and whose guardianship assistance agreement or adoption assistance agreement was terminated or the guardian or parents are no longer willing to provide emotional or financial support after the child attained eighteen years of age;

(3) is:

(a) completing secondary education or an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

(b) enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education;

(c) employed for at least eighty hours per month;

(d) participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment; or

(e) incapable of doing any of the activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is supported by regularly updated information in the transition plan; and

(4) enters into a voluntary services and support agreement with the department pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act.

B. The citizenship or immigration status of a young adult shall not be a factor when determining the young adult's eligibility pursuant to this section.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 3; 2020, ch. 52, § 5.

32A-26-4. Fostering connections program; services; supports.

A. The fostering connections program shall provide at least the following services and supports to eligible adults:

(1) major medical and behavioral health care coverage;

(2) housing, in one of the following settings that the eligible adult chooses:

(a) a supervised independent living setting;

(b) a transitional living program that the department licenses or approves; or

(c) a residential facility or another institution; provided that an eligible adult who is residing in a residential facility upon leaving foster care may choose to temporarily stay until the eligible adult is able to transition to a more age-appropriate setting;

(3) foster care maintenance payments; provided that these payments:

(a) shall be sent by the department, all or in part, directly to: 1) the eligible adult, if the eligible adult is living in a supervised independent living setting; or 2) a transitional living program, if the eligible adult is living in a transitional living program; and

(b) shall reflect the eligible adult's status as a parent, if applicable; and

(4) services that include the development of a transition plan, developed jointly by the department and the eligible adult, that includes a description of the identified housing situation or living arrangement, and the resources to assist the eligible adult in the transition from the fostering connections program to adulthood. The services shall include assisting the eligible adult in effectuating each element of a transition plan.

B. The department shall not require background checks for other residents of a supervised independent living setting or a transitional living program as a condition of approving an eligible adult's living setting.

C. The department shall develop procedures to provide extended subsidies to families for adoption and guardianship until the eligible adult turns twenty-one years of age if:

(1) an adoption assistance or guardianship assistance agreement was in effect for the eligible adult when the eligible adult was sixteen years of age or older; and

(2) when at least eighteen years of age and under twenty-one years of age, the eligible adult meets at least one of the following participation criteria:

(a) completing secondary education or an educational program leading to an equivalent credential;

(b) enrolled in an institution that provides post-secondary or vocational education;

(c) participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment;

(d) employed for at least eighty hours per month; or

(e) is incapable of doing any of the activities described in Subparagraphs (a) through (d) of this paragraph due to a medical or behavioral condition that is supported by regularly updated information in the transition plan.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 4; 2020, ch. 52, § 6.

32A-26-5. Fostering connections program; participation; voluntary services and support agreement; periodic reviews.

A. An eligible adult may participate in the fostering connections program for any duration of time by entering into a voluntary services and support agreement immediately upon turning eighteen years of age or any time thereafter.

B. There is no limit to the number of times an eligible adult may opt out of and reenter the fostering connections program.

C. When an eligible adult elects to participate in the fostering connections program, the department and the eligible adult shall execute, and the eligible adult shall be provided with a signed copy of, a voluntary services and support agreement that sets forth, at a minimum, the following:

(1) a requirement that the eligible adult continue to be eligible in accordance with the Fostering Connections Act for the duration of the voluntary services and support agreement;

(2) the services and support that the eligible adult will receive through the fostering connections program;

(3) the voluntary nature of the eligible adult's participation and the eligible adult's right to terminate the voluntary services and support agreement at any time; and

(4) conditions that may result in the termination of the voluntary services and support agreement and the eligible adult's early discharge from the fostering connections program pursuant to Section 32A-26-6 NMSA 1978.

D. As soon as possible and no later than forty-five days after the eligible adult and the department execute the voluntary services and support agreement, the department shall conduct a determination of income eligibility for purposes of compliance with federal foster care and transitional care assistance; provided that within fifteen days after execution of the voluntary services and support agreement, the department shall provide those services and supports set forth in that agreement.

E. The department shall assign an eligible adult a case manager, who shall be trained in primarily providing services for transition-aged eligible adults.

F. The department shall make active efforts to assist eligible adults in achieving permanency and creating permanent connections.

G. The department and at least one person who is not responsible for case management, in collaboration with the eligible adult and additional persons identified by the eligible adult, shall conduct periodic reviews of the transition plan not less than once every one hundred eighty days to evaluate progress made toward meeting the goals set forth in the transition plan. The department shall use a team approach in conducting periodic reviews of the transition plan and shall facilitate the participation of the eligible adult.

H. The department shall hold the periodic review of the transition plan no more than thirty days before and no less than five days before each review hearing.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 5; 2020, ch. 52, § 7.

32A-26-6. Termination of voluntary services and support agreement; notice; procedure.

A. An eligible adult may choose to terminate the voluntary services and support agreement and stop receiving services and support under the fostering connections program at any time. If an eligible adult chooses to terminate the voluntary services and

support agreement, the department shall provide the eligible adult with a clear and developmentally appropriate written notice informing the eligible adult of:

(1) the potential negative effects of terminating the voluntary services and support agreement early;

(2) the option to reenter the fostering connections program at any time before attaining twenty-one years of age, so long as the eligibility requirements are met;

(3) the procedures for reentering the fostering connections program; and

(4) information about and contact information for community resources that may benefit the eligible adult.

B. As part of the case management processes, the department shall identify as soon as possible any barriers to maintaining eligibility that an eligible adult is encountering and shall make active efforts to assist the eligible adult to overcome identified barriers and maintain eligibility. The department's efforts shall be documented in the transition plan.

C. Academic breaks in post-secondary education attendance, such as semester and seasonal breaks, and other transitions between status that meet eligibility requirements, including education and employment transitions of no longer than thirty days, shall not be a basis for termination.

D. If the department determines that a young adult is no longer eligible for the fostering connections program, the department shall:

(1) no more than fifteen days after the determination and prior to requesting a discharge hearing, provide to the young adult and the young adult's attorney a clear and developmentally appropriate:

(a) written notice informing the young adult of the department's intent to terminate the voluntary services and support agreement; and

(b) explanation of the basis for the termination; and

(2) make active efforts to meet in person with the young adult to explain the information in the written termination notice and to assist the young adult in reestablishing eligibility if the young adult wishes to continue participating in the program.

E. The department shall not terminate services under the fostering connections program without court approval after a discharge hearing.

F. If an eligible adult remains in the fostering connections program until attaining twenty-one years of age, at least sixty days before the eligible adult's twenty-first birthday, the department shall provide the eligible adult with:

(1) a clear and developmentally appropriate written notice informing the eligible adult of the termination of the voluntary services and support agreement at twenty-one years of age;

(2) an updated plan with ongoing goals; and

(3) information about and contact information for community resources that may benefit the young adult, including information regarding state programs established pursuant to federal law that provide transitional foster care assistance to young adults.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 6; 2020, ch. 52, § 8.

32A-26-7. Fostering connections program; children's court petition; jurisdiction; contents; program file.

A. An eligible adult participating in the fostering connections program shall remain under the jurisdiction of the children's court while participating in the program. The eligible adult is the eligible adult's own legal custodian.

B. Within fifteen days after the voluntary services and support agreement is executed, the department shall file a petition initiating proceedings pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act that shall be entitled, "In the Matter of . . . . . , an eligible adult", and shall set forth with specificity:

(1) the name, birth date and residence of the eligible adult; and

(2) the facts necessary to invoke the jurisdiction of the court.

C. A petition filed pursuant to Subsection B of this section shall be accompanied by a copy of the eligible adult's voluntary services and support agreement and transition plan.

D. There shall be no interruption in the foster care maintenance payment, housing, medical assistance coverage or case management for an eligible adult who is eligible and chooses to participate in the fostering connections program immediately following the termination of children's court jurisdiction at age eighteen.

E. At the inception of a fostering connections proceeding, the court shall appoint an attorney to represent the eligible adult. If the eligible adult consents, the attorney who previously served as the eligible adult's attorney may be appointed.

F. Until excused by a court, an attorney appointed to represent an eligible adult shall represent the eligible adult in any subsequent appeals.

G. A hearing held pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act shall be commenced within ninety days of the filing of the petition, at which time the court shall review the voluntary services and support agreement and determine whether the agreement is in the best interests of the eligible adult and the transition plan meets the requirements of the Fostering Connections Act.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 7; 2020, ch. 52, § 9.

32A-26-8. Review hearings.

A. The court shall conduct a review hearing at least once every six months.

B. The primary purpose of the review hearing shall be to ensure that the fostering connections program is providing the eligible adult with the needed services and support to help the eligible adult move toward permanency and a successful transition to adulthood. At the review hearing, the department shall show that it has made active efforts to comply with the voluntary services and support agreement and effectuate the transition plan. A review hearing shall be conducted in a manner that seeks the eligible adult's meaningful participation by considering procedural modifications and flexible times.

C. The department shall prepare and present to the children's court a report addressing progress made in meeting the goals in the transition plan, including an independent living transition proposal, and shall propose modifications as necessary to further those goals.

D. If the court finds the department has not made active efforts to comply with the voluntary support and services agreement and effectuate the transition plan, the court may order additional services and support to achieve the goals of the transition plan and the goals of state and federal law.

E. At every review hearing that occurs after the child attains sixteen years and six months of age, the court shall make a finding that the child has been notified about the fostering connections program and of the benefits of the program.

F. At the review hearing that occurs no later than three months before the child attains eighteen years of age, the court shall make a finding of whether the child has decided to participate in the fostering connections program and whether the child has been provided an opportunity to develop a voluntary services and support agreement.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 8; 2020, ch. 52, § 10.

32A-26-9. Discharge hearing.

A. At the last review hearing held prior to the eligible adult's twenty-first birthday, or prior to an eligible adult's discharge from the fostering connections program, the court shall review the eligible adult's transition plan and shall determine whether the department has made active efforts to implement the requirements of Subsection B of this section.

B. The court shall determine whether the department made active efforts to assist the eligible adult in effectuating each element of the transition plan.

C. If the court finds that the department has not made active efforts to assist the eligible adult in effectuating each element of the transition plan and that termination of jurisdiction would be harmful to the eligible adult, the court may continue to exercise its jurisdiction for a period not to exceed one year from the eligible adult's twenty-first birthday or the eligible adult's discharge from the fostering connections program; provided that the eligible adult consents to continued jurisdiction of the court. The court may dismiss the case for good cause at any time after the eligible adult's twenty-first birthday or the eligible adult's discharge from the fostering connections program.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 9; 2020, ch. 52, § 11.

32A-26-10. Fostering connections advisory committee; membership; appointment; terms; duties; meetings; report.

A. By October 1, 2019, the secretary shall appoint a "fostering connections advisory committee" to make recommendations to the department and to the legislature regarding the fostering connections program. The committee shall meet on a biannual basis to advise the department and the legislature regarding ongoing implementation of the fostering connections program. By September 1, 2020 and each September 1 thereafter, the committee shall provide a written report to the governor, the legislature and the secretary regarding ongoing implementation of the fostering connections program, including the number of participants and the number of early discharges.

B. By October 1, 2020, the committee shall develop a proposal for qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data to be collected to drive ongoing program design and implementation. Each October 1 thereafter, the committee shall develop specific recommendations for improving the fostering connections program and outcomes for the eligible adults it serves and expanding the fostering connections program or improving outcomes for similar groups of at-risk young adults.

C. The members of the committee shall include:

(1) the following seven voting members:

(a) the secretary, ex officio, or the secretary's designee;

(b) three members who are appointed by the secretary as follows: 1) two youth or young adults who are currently or were previously placed in foster care; and 2) one representative of a child advocacy group; and

(c) three members who are appointed by the secretary as follows: 1) one representative of a child welfare advocacy organization; 2) one representative of the department; and 3) one representative of an agency providing independent living services; and

(2) the following nonvoting members:

(a) a legislator, appointed by the New Mexico legislative council;

(b) a children's court judge, appointed by the administrative office of the courts; and

(c) a subject-matter expert, appointed by the secretary.

D. Members of the committee shall be appointed for terms of two years; provided that the initial committee members' terms shall be staggered so that no more than five members' terms shall expire in any one year.

E. The secretary shall convene a first meeting of the committee by December 1, 2019. At that first meeting, the members of the committee shall choose a chair, and members' terms shall be chosen by lot.

F. The secretary shall fill vacancies on the committee as they occur.

G. A majority of the committee members constitutes a quorum for voting purposes.

H. Members of the committee shall receive per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other compensation, perquisite or allowance for their service on the committee.

I. As used in this section:

(1) "committee" means the fostering connections advisory committee; and

(2) "secretary" means the secretary of children, youth and families.

History: Laws 2019, ch. 149, § 10; 2020, ch. 52, § 12.

32A-26-11. Administrative appeals.

A young adult may appeal an adverse eligibility determination in accordance with rules promulgated by the department. The department shall provide the young adult, in

the young adult's primary language, with clear and developmentally appropriate verbal and written information concerning the administrative appeal process.

History: Laws 2020, ch. 52, § 13.

32A-26-12. Duties of the department.

A. The department shall notify every child in its custody about the fostering connections program beginning when the child attains sixteen years of age and at every transition planning meeting thereafter.

B. Prior to attaining seventeen years and six months of age, every child in the custody of the department shall be provided detailed information about the fostering connections program and given the opportunity to develop a voluntary services and support agreement that would be finalized and executed upon the child attaining eighteen years of age.

History: Laws 2020, ch. 52, § 14.

ARTICLE 27
Family Representation and Advocacy

32A-27-1. Short title.

This act [32A-27-1 to 32A-27-8 NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Family Representation and Advocacy Act".

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 1.

32A-27-2. Definitions.

As used in the Family Representation and Advocacy Act:

A. "at risk of being placed" means conditions within a child's family may require the child be removed from the custody of a parent, custodian or guardian and placed in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department;

B. "client" means:

(1) an eligible adult pursuant to the Fostering Connections Act [Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978];

(2) a child who is, or is at risk of, being placed in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department; or

(3) a parent, custodian or guardian of a child who is, or is at risk of, being placed in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department;

C. "commission" means the family representation and advocacy commission that provides oversight of the office of family representation and advocacy;

D. "director" means the director of the office of family representation and advocacy; and

E. "office" means the office of family representation and advocacy.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 2.

32A-27-3. Office created; duties.

A. The "office of family representation and advocacy" is created as an adjunct agency pursuant to Section 9-1-6 NMSA 1978 and shall be overseen by the commission.

B. The office shall:

(1) work closely with the children, youth and families department to leverage federal funding pursuant to Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act; and

(2) appoint, compensate, evaluate and retain attorneys and other staff to provide legal representation for eligible adults under the Fostering Connections Act [Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978] and for children and parents, custodians or guardians whose children are, or are at risk of being placed, in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 3.

32A-27-4. Duty of director to establish appellate division; duty of appellate division.

A. The director shall establish an appellate division within the office. The appellate division shall be led by a chief appellate attorney.

B. The appellate division shall assist the director by providing representation before the court of appeals and the supreme court in appellate proceedings involving persons represented pursuant to the Family Representation and Advocacy Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 4.

32A-27-5. Duty of director to establish regional offices; appointment of regional managers.

A. The director shall establish at least five regional offices that align with the five regional offices of the children, youth and families department to accommodate all judicial districts that exist within the five regions. One regional office shall be located each in the northwest, northeast, southwest, southeast and the Bernalillo county metropolitan area.

B. The director shall appoint a regional manager in each region. The regional manager shall administer the operation of the region and shall serve at the pleasure of the director. Each regional manager shall reside in this state and shall be an attorney licensed to practice law in the highest courts of the state.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 5.

32A-27-6. Family representation and advocacy commission; membership; terms; removal.

A. The "family representation and advocacy commission" is created.

B. The commission consists of thirteen members, including:

(1) the director of the university of New Mexico school of law's Corinne Wolfe center for child and family justice, or the director's designee;

(2) the director of the administrative office of the courts' court improvement project, or the director's designee;

(3) the dean of the New Mexico state university school of social work or the dean of New Mexico highlands university school of social work, or the dean's designee, in alternating terms;

(4) three members appointed by the governor who demonstrate a commitment to high-quality legal representation or to working with and advocating for the population served by the office;

(5) five members appointed by the chief justice of the supreme court, including:

(a) two members who either served as former children's court judges or attorneys in the child welfare system; and

(b) three members, including: 1) a youth with lived experience in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department; 2) a parent with lived experience

having one or more children in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department; and 3) a member with lived experience with the children, youth and families department or another child welfare agency as a youth, a parent or both;

(6) one member appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; and

(7) one member appointed by the president pro tempore of the senate.

C. Initial appointments to the commission shall be made no later than September 30, 2022. The director of the university of New Mexico school of law's Corinne Wolfe center for child and family justice and the director of the administrative office of the courts' court improvement project shall serve as permanent members. Initial terms of members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and the president pro tempore of the senate shall be for two years. Initial terms of members appointed by the governor, the chief justice of the supreme court and the dean of a school of social work shall be for three years.

D. Subsequent terms for appointed members shall be for four years. Appointed commission members shall not serve more than two consecutive terms. An appointed commission member shall serve until the member's successor has been appointed and qualified. The commission shall fill a vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term pursuant to Subsection B of this section.

E. A member may be removed by the commission for malfeasance, misfeasance or neglect of duty.

F. If a member's professional status changes in a way that renders the member ineligible pursuant to the provisions of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act, the member shall resign immediately.

G. Members of the commission shall be entitled to compensation pursuant to the provisions of the Per Diem and Mileage Act [10-8-1 to 10-8-8 NMSA 1978] and shall receive no other perquisite, compensation or allowance.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 6.

32A-27-7. Family representation and advocacy commission; member qualifications.

A. A member of the commission shall:

(1) possess significant experience in the representation of children, youth, parents, custodians or guardians in abuse and neglect proceedings;

(2) possess significant experience with the child welfare system as a parent, custodian, guardian or former foster youth; or

(3) demonstrate a commitment to high-quality legal representation or to working with and advocating for the population served by the office.

B. The following persons shall not be appointed to serve on the commission:

(1) current employees of the children, youth and families department;

(2) current employees of the office;

(3) current judges, judicial officials or their employees; and

(4) persons who currently contract with or receive funding from the office or their employees.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 7.

32A-27-8. Family representation and advocacy commission; organization; meetings.

A. The commission shall hold its first meeting no later than thirty days after it has completed the appointment process and shall elect a chair at that meeting. Thereafter, the commission shall meet at least four times a year, as determined by a majority of commission members. Meetings shall be held at the call of the chair or director or at the request of four commission members.

B. The commission shall appoint a director no later than December 31, 2022.

C. A majority of commission members constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, and an action by the commission shall not be valid unless seven or more members concur.

D. The commission may adopt rules and shall keep a record of its proceedings.

E. A commission member may select a designee to serve in the member's place no more than once per year.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 8.

32A-27-9. Family representation and advocacy commission; powers and duties; restriction on individual members.

A. The commission shall exercise independent oversight of the office of family representation and advocacy to review and approve standards and provide guidance and support to the director.

B. The commission shall review and approve fair and consistent policies for the operation of the office of family representation and advocacy and the provision of services to eligible adults under the Fostering Connections Act [Chapter 32A, Article 26 NMSA 1978] and to children and parents, custodians or guardians whose children are, or are at risk of being placed, in the legal custody of the children, youth and families department.

C. A member of the commission shall not interfere with the discretion, professional judgment or advocacy of an appointed attorney, contract attorney, staff attorney, contract employee or office employee in the representation and advocacy of a client pursuant to the Family Representation and Advocacy Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 9.

32A-27-10. Office of family representation and advocacy; administration; finance.

A. The headquarters of the office shall be located in the Bernalillo county metropolitan region.

B. All salaries and other expenses of the office shall be paid upon warrants drawn by the secretary of finance and administration, supported by vouchers signed by the director or the director's authorized representative and in accordance with budgets approved by the state budget division of the department of finance and administration.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 10.

32A-27-11. Office of family representation and advocacy; gifts, grants and donations.

On behalf of the state, the office may receive gifts, grants, donations or bequests from any source to be used in carrying out the purposes of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act. Gifts, grants, donations or bequests from a person who has any matter currently being handled by the office, or from a person within three degrees of consanguinity with a person who has any matter currently being handled by the office, shall not be accepted.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 11.

32A-27-12. Director; appointment; qualifications; removal.

A. The director is the administrative head of the office. The commission shall appoint a director for a term of four years upon approval of two-thirds of its members. The commission may reappoint a director for subsequent terms. A vacancy in the office of director shall be filled by appointment of the commission.

B. The commission shall appoint as director an attorney with the following qualifications:

(1) licensed to practice law in this state or will be licensed within one year of appointment;

(2) at least five years of experience in the field of representation of children or adults in abuse and neglect cases in a practicing attorney, management, supervisory or policymaking position or equivalent experience as determined by the commission; and

(3) clearly demonstrated management or executive experience.

C. The director may be removed by the commission upon approval of two-thirds of commission members; provided that no removal shall occur without notice and an opportunity for a hearing.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 12.

32A-27-13. Director; general duties and powers.

A. The director is responsible to the commission for the operation of the office. The director shall manage all operations of the office and shall:

(1) administer and carry out the provisions of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(2) exercise authority over and provide general supervision of employees;

(3) oversee funding, including federal funding;

(4) administer and supervise contracts for attorneys and other employees; and

(5) represent and advocate for the office and its clients.

B. The director is granted every power express and implied that is necessary for the fulfillment of the director's duties, including authority to:

(1) set standards relating to:

(a) the minimum experience, training and qualifications for contract and staff attorneys for child welfare cases;

(b) monitoring and evaluating contract and staff attorneys and other contract and office staff, including attorneys appointed to cases to resolve conflicts of interest;

(c) managing caseloads and workloads, including load monitoring protocols for staff attorneys, contract attorneys, office staff and contract staff; and

(d) the competent and efficient representation of clients whose cases present conflicts of interest;

(2) exercise general supervisory authority over all employees of the office;

(3) delegate authority to subordinates as the director deems necessary and appropriate;

(4) employ and fix the compensation of persons necessary to discharge the director's duties and enter into contracts with private attorneys and law firms as necessary to carry out the provisions of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(5) organize the office into units as the director deems necessary and appropriate to carry out the director's duties;

(6) develop and annually update a strategic plan with measurable goals and metrics;

(7) conduct research and studies that will improve the operation of the office and the administration of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(8) provide courses of instruction and practical training for employees of the office that will improve the operation of the office and the administration of the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(9) purchase or lease property and lease real property for use of the office;

(10) maintain records and statistical data that reflect the operation and administration of the office, including a system that allows the office to:

(a) collect and analyze data on outcomes for children and families;

(b) maintain client confidentiality of information;

(c) evaluate the effectiveness of the office's programs and practices; and

(d) inform and guide continuous quality improvement;

(11) submit an annual report and budget for the operation of the office;

(12) formulate a fee schedule for attorneys or law firms who are not employees of the office but who serve as contracted counsel pursuant to the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(13) formulate a fee schedule for other contract staff who are not employees of the office but who serve clients pursuant to the Family Representation and Advocacy Act;

(14) establish a grievance procedure for clients represented by a staff attorney or contract attorney or served by office or contract staff;

(15) certify contracts and expenditures for litigation expenses, including contracts and expenditures for experts, investigators, witnesses and attorney contracts; and

(16) perform other duties as set forth by the commission.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 51, § 13.

ARTICLE 28
Indian Family Protection

32A-28-1. Short title.

Sections 1 through 42 [32A-28-1 to 32A-28-42 NMSA 1978] of this act may be cited as the "Indian Family Protection Act"."

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 1.

32A-28-2. Definitions.

As used in the Indian Family Protection Act:

A. "active efforts" means efforts that are affirmative, active, thorough and timely and that represent a higher standard of conduct than reasonable efforts;

B. "adoptive placement" means a permanent placement of an Indian child for adoption, including an action resulting in a final decree of adoption;

C. "child custody proceeding" means an action for foster care placement, termination of parental rights, permanent guardianship or adoptive placement or an action pursuant to Section 32A-3A-8 NMSA 1978 or the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978] and includes investigations

and other preliminary activities preceding the formal initiation of an action, but does not include:

(1) delinquency proceedings; and

(2) custodial proceedings or kinship guardianships pursuant to Chapter 40 NMSA 1978;

D. "cultural compact" means an agreement that documents how an Indian child placed in an adoptive or guardianship home will continue to actively participate in the child's cultural learning and activities and that is entered into among:

(1) the adoptive parents or guardians of the Indian child, which parents or guardians are not members of the Indian child's tribe; and

(2) the Indian child's tribe;

E. "discussion with an Indian tribe" means documented good faith efforts to actively communicate and work with an Indian tribe;

F. "extended family member" means a person who is defined to be an extended family member by law or custom of an Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, means a person who is eighteen years of age or older and who is an Indian child's grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece or nephew, first or second cousin, stepparent or godparent;

G. "fictive kin" means a person:

(1) who is not a relative or an extended family member of an Indian child and who has a significant, family-like relationship with the child or the child's family, which relationship existed prior to the child's entry into foster care;

(2) who meets the definition of "fictive kin" as established by an Indian child's tribe's law, custom or tradition; or

(3) chosen by an Indian child who is fourteen years of age or older, regardless of when the relationship between the person and the Indian child was established, when it is in the best interest of the child to identify that person as fictive kin; and

H. "foster care placement" means:

(1) an action pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] removing an Indian child from the child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian for temporary placement in a foster home or institution or the home of a

guardian where the parent or Indian custodian cannot have the child returned upon demand, but in which parental rights have not been terminated; or

(2) the temporary placement of an Indian child in foster care pursuant to a voluntary agreement entered into between a parent, guardian or Indian custodian and the department pursuant to the Voluntary Placement and Family Services Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 2; 2023, ch. 90, § 21.

32A-28-3. Indian child's domicile; determination of domicile and residence.

A. In a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child, the court shall determine and make an order of the domicile and residence of the Indian child and whether the Indian child is under the jurisdiction of a tribal court.

B. The department shall communicate with the Indian child's tribe as necessary to assist the court in making a determination pursuant to this section. If it is unclear which tribe is the Indian child's tribe, the department shall communicate with any tribe with which there is reason to know that the Indian child may be a member or eligible for membership.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 3.

32A-28-4. Active efforts required in child custody proceedings, including voluntary placement agreements.

In a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child:

A. active efforts to maintain or reunite an Indian child with the Indian child's family shall be made pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act. Active efforts shall be tailored to the facts and circumstances of each case. The department shall not seek findings of futility or aggravated circumstances;

B. the department shall, in cooperation with the Indian child and the Indian child's parents, extended family members, guardian, Indian custodian and Indian tribe, make active efforts to maintain or reunite an Indian child with the Indian child's family and tailor the active efforts to the facts and circumstances of the case and shall:

(1) document in writing the details demonstrating the quality and quantity of services and assistance provided to alleviate the causes and conditions leading to the child custody proceeding, on the court record;

(2) assist the Indian child's parent or parents, guardian or Indian custodian through the steps of a department case plan and with accessing or developing the resources necessary to satisfy the department case plan;

(3) provide assistance in a manner consistent with the prevailing social and cultural standards and way of life of the Indian child's tribe; and

(4) conduct a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances of an Indian child's family with a goal of reunification;

C. the department may make active efforts to maintain or reunite an Indian child with the Indian child's family by:

(1) identifying and establishing appropriate services and assisting the Indian child's parents to overcome barriers to reunification, including actively assisting the parents in obtaining those services;

(2) identifying, notifying and inviting representatives of the Indian child's tribe to participate in family team meetings, team decision meetings, permanency planning, resolution of placement issues and providing support and services to the Indian child's family;

(3) conducting or causing to be conducted a diligent search for the Indian child's extended family members and contacting and consulting with the Indian child's extended family members and adult relatives to provide family structure and support for the Indian child and the Indian child's parents;

(4) offering and employing culturally appropriate family preservation strategies and facilitating the use of remedial and rehabilitative services provided by the Indian child's tribe;

(5) taking steps to keep the Indian child and the Indian child's siblings together whenever possible;

(6) supporting regular visits with the Indian child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian, in the most natural setting as possible, as well as trial home visits during a period of removal, consistent with the need to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Indian child;

(7) identifying community resources, including housing, financial assistance, transportation, mental health services, health care, substance use prevention and treatment and peer support services and actively assisting the Indian child's parents, guardian or Indian custodian or, when appropriate, the Indian child's family and extended family members, in using and accessing those resources;

(8) monitoring progress and participation of the Indian child's parents, guardian, Indian custodian or extended family members if the services described in Paragraphs (1), (2), (4) and (7) of this subsection are not available and considering alternative ways to address the needs of the Indian child's parents, guardian, Indian custodian and, where appropriate, the family, if the optimum services do not exist or are not available;

(9) providing post-reunification services and monitoring for the duration of the court's jurisdiction;

(10) allowing the Indian child to participate in customs and traditions, including attending and participating in traditional ceremonies centered around the Indian child and the Indian child's family; or

(11) any other efforts that are appropriate to the Indian child's circumstances;

D. prior to accepting an Indian child for voluntary placement, the department shall document the active efforts:

(1) made by the department to provide or arrange services by other public or private agencies that would be affordable to the family; and

(2) that would alleviate the conditions leading to the placement request;

E. the department shall record all efforts made toward active efforts and report them to the court; and

F. the court shall make a written determination at the conclusion of every proceeding as to whether the department has made active efforts to maintain or reunite the Indian child with the Indian child's family. The court shall make a written determination based on evidence on the record as to whether the department has made active efforts to provide services and support to preserve and reunify the family.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 4.

32A-28-5. Notice to Indian tribes.

A. In a child custody proceeding when the court knows or has reason to know that an Indian child is involved, the department shall notify the parent, guardian or Indian custodian and the Indian child's tribe, by certified mail with return receipt requested, of:

(1) the pending proceedings;

(2) the right of the Indian child's parent, guardian, Indian custodian and Indian child's tribe to:

(a) intervention; and

(b) petition the court to transfer the proceeding to the tribal court;

(3) the right of the Indian child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian to court-appointed counsel if the court determines that person is unable to afford counsel; and

(4) the right of the Indian child's tribe to participate in the child custody proceeding whether or not the Indian child's tribe intervenes.

B. In the event that the department attempts to enter into discussion with an Indian tribe and the tribe does not respond within the time frame provided for in the Indian Family Protection Act, the department may proceed; provided that the absence of a tribal response does not:

(1) eliminate other requirements of future communication and work with the Indian tribe concerning the child; or

(2) affect the Indian tribe's ability to respond to an action that has not yet been taken.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 5.

32A-28-6. Tribal membership; department assistance.

When an Indian child is placed in the custody of the department, the department shall work with the parent, the guardian, the Indian custodian or the Indian child's tribe to establish membership, at the direction of the parent or the Indian tribe. The department shall not determine tribal membership. An Indian tribe shall have the sole right to determine membership and membership eligibility, as defined by the Indian tribe's law, custom, tradition and practice. The department shall provide records to assist with determining membership eligibility at the request of the parent or the Indian child's tribe.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 6.

32A-28-7. Indian child custody proceedings; jurisdiction; transfer.

A. An Indian tribe has exclusive jurisdiction over a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child who resides or is domiciled within the reservation of the Indian tribe, except when jurisdiction is otherwise vested in the state by federal law or pursuant to a tribal-state agreement. When an Indian child is under the jurisdiction of the tribal court, the Indian tribe shall retain exclusive jurisdiction, notwithstanding the residence or domicile of the child.

B. In a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child not domiciled or residing within the reservation of the Indian child's tribe, the court and the tribal court have concurrent jurisdiction.

C. At the inception of a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child not domiciled or residing within the reservation of the Indian child's tribe, or upon a motion for transfer at any stage of the proceeding, the department shall, without delay, ask the Indian child's tribe in writing whether the Indian child's tribe will accept jurisdiction over the child custody proceeding.

D. If the Indian child's tribe declines to accept jurisdiction, the court retains jurisdiction. A parent, guardian, Indian custodian or the Indian child's tribe retains the right to move the court to transfer the proceeding to the tribal court at any stage of the proceeding. A transfer motion may be made orally on the record or in writing.

E. If the Indian child's tribe accepts jurisdiction in writing provided to the court, the court shall transfer the child custody proceeding to the tribal court unless:

(1) either parent of the Indian child objects to the transfer; or

(2) good cause exists to deny the transfer.

F. If any party asserts that good cause to deny the transfer exists, the reasons for that belief or assertion shall be placed on the record in a written motion, and the motion shall be served on the parties and the Indian child's tribe. The court shall hold a hearing on the record in which:

(1) all parties and the Indian child's tribe, even if the tribe has not formally intervened in the case, have an opportunity to present facts and legal arguments;

(2) the burden to establish good cause is on the party opposing the transfer; and

(3) good cause shall be established by clear and convincing evidence.

G. For the purpose of transferring a case, a finding of good cause shall not be based on:

(1) the advanced stage of a child custody proceeding if the parent, guardian, Indian custodian or Indian child's tribe did not receive notice of the proceeding until an advanced stage;

(2) the timing of the tribe's intervention;

(3) whether there have been prior proceedings in the court involving the Indian child for which no petition to transfer was filed;

(4) predictions of whether the transfer could result in a change in the placement of the Indian child;

(5) the Indian child's cultural connections with the Indian tribe or its reservation;

(6) consideration of any perceived inadequacy of an Indian tribe's judicial systems;

(7) consideration of the perceived socioeconomic conditions within an Indian tribe or reservation; or

(8) a delay in placing an Indian child with the Indian child's extended family members or adult relatives, regardless of the stage of the child custody proceeding.

H. If the court denies the transfer for good cause, the basis for the decision shall be stated orally on the record and in a written order.

I. When a court authorizes transfer, the court:

(1) retains jurisdiction and shall not dismiss the case until the tribal court exercises jurisdiction and confirms that the tribe has received all information required by this section;

(2) shall expeditiously transfer to the tribal court all records related to the proceeding, including all pleadings and the court record; and

(3) shall direct the department to:

(a) coordinate with the tribal court and the Indian child's tribe to ensure that the transfer is accomplished with minimal disruption of services to the Indian child and the Indian child's family; and

(b) expeditiously provide at no cost to the appropriate tribal agency: 1) all records and original documents related to the Indian child in the department's possession, including a birth certificate, social security card, certificate of Indian birth and similar documents; 2) documentation related to the Indian child's eligibility for state and federal assistance; and 3) the entire case record in the possession of the department.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 7.

32A-28-8. Tribal-state agreements.

A. The department shall make a good faith effort to enter into a tribal-state agreement for the coordination of care and custody of Indian children with each Indian tribe within the borders of this state.

B. The department may enter into a tribal-state agreement with any Indian tribe outside of this state if there are children residing in this state who are members of or are eligible to become members of that Indian tribe.

C. Any state services requiring a tribal-state agreement based on a funding source shall be negotiated and entered into to meet the provisions of this section.

D. A tribal-state agreement may include an agreement regarding:

(1) whether a case needs to be filed, and whether the case would be filed by the department in court or by the appropriate tribal agency in tribal court;

(2) exclusive jurisdiction over cases filed by the department in which the court and tribal court would otherwise have concurrent jurisdiction;

(3) the process to transfer cases between a court and tribal court; and

(4) procedures for the assessment, removal, placement and custody of Indian children.

E. A tribal-state agreement shall:

(1) provide for cooperative delivery of child welfare services to Indian children in this state, including the use, to the extent available, of services provided by the Indian tribe; and

(2) if services provided by the Indian tribe are unavailable, provide for the department's use of community services and resources developed specifically for Indian families and that have demonstrated experience and capacity to provide culturally relevant and effective services to children.

F. The department shall review the tribal-state agreement every five years and invite the tribe to propose updates to the tribal-state agreement.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 8.

32A-28-9. Full faith and credit.

The state shall recognize and give full faith and credit to public acts, records and judicial proceedings regarding parentage, nonparentage, adoption and custody decided in an Indian tribe's jurisdiction.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 9.

32A-28-10. Right to services.

An Indian child residing on or off a reservation, as a resident of this state, shall have the same right to services that are available to other children of this state. The cost of the services provided to an Indian child or the Indian child's parents, guardian or Indian custodian shall be determined and provided for in the same manner as services are made to other children of the state, using tribal, state and federal funds.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 10.

32A-28-11. Temporary emergency jurisdiction.

A. The department shall file a petition for temporary emergency removal where the department demonstrates that an Indian child is a resident of or domiciled on a reservation but temporarily located off a reservation. The department shall provide notice and request receipt of notice to the Indian child's tribe, parents, guardian and Indian custodian within twenty-four hours of the filing of the petition.

B. A court of this state has temporary emergency jurisdiction if the Indian child is present in this state but is domiciled on a reservation and the Indian child has been abandoned or it is necessary in an emergency to protect the Indian child because the Indian child, or a sibling or parent of the Indian child, is subjected to or threatened with abuse or neglect.

C. A child custody determination made under this section remains in effect until an order is obtained from a tribal court. If a child custody proceeding has not been or is not commenced in tribal court, the department may file a petition alleging abuse and neglect.

D. A court of this state that has been asked to make a temporary emergency order for temporary jurisdiction, upon being informed that a child custody proceeding has been commenced in, or a child custody determination has been made by, a tribal court having jurisdiction shall immediately communicate with that tribal court to resolve the emergency, protect the safety of the parties and the Indian child and determine a period for the duration of the temporary order.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 11.

32A-28-12. Investigations.

A. Within twenty-four hours of initiating an investigation that involves an Indian child, the department shall notify the Indian child's tribe of:

(1) the investigation;

(2) the involvement of the Indian child;

(3) the department's obligation to collaborate with the Indian child's tribe to identify a potential qualified expert witness or witnesses to participate in the proceeding if the investigation results in a child custody proceeding; and

(4) the department's obligation to identify a potential qualified expert witness or witnesses no later than thirty days prior to a child custody or termination proceeding.

B. During an investigation that involves an Indian child, the department shall:

(1) coordinate services with the Indian child's tribe to prevent taking the child into custody;

(2) provide culturally appropriate remedial services designed to prevent the breakup of the Indian family; and

(3) make active efforts to identify extended family members and fictive kin able to be alternative care providers or to ensure the safety of the child.

C. The department's active efforts to coordinate services to prevent taking the Indian child into custody shall be documented in any subsequent action that may result in the child coming into the department's custody.

D. Before filing a petition related to an Indian child, the department shall notify the Indian child's tribe of the results of the investigation, including the active efforts that have been made to provide remedial services and rehabilitative programs designed to prevent the breakup of the Indian family and that these efforts have proved unsuccessful, resulting in the department's intention to file the petition.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 12.

32A-28-13. Pending court proceedings; notice; standards of evidence; documentation of applicability and compliance.

A. The court shall not make findings of futility or aggravated circumstances in the child custody proceeding.

B. The standards of evidence of the following child custody proceedings are as follows:

(1) the court shall not order a foster care placement of an Indian child at adjudication unless clear and convincing evidence is presented, including the testimony of one or more qualified expert witnesses, demonstrating that the child's continued custody by the child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child;

(2) the court shall not order a termination of parental rights for an Indian child unless evidence beyond a reasonable doubt is presented, including the testimony of one or more qualified expert witnesses, demonstrating that the child's continued custody by the child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child;

(3) for a foster care placement at adjudication or termination of parental rights, the evidence shall show a causal relationship between the particular conditions in the home and the likelihood that continued custody of the child will result in serious emotional or physical damage to the particular child who is the subject of the child custody proceeding; and

(4) without a causal relationship identified in Paragraph (3) of this subsection, evidence that shows only the existence of community or family poverty, isolation, single parenthood, custodian age, crowded or inadequate housing, substance abuse or nonconforming social behavior shall not by itself constitute clear and convincing evidence or evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that continued custody is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child.

C. If there is a reason to know that the Indian child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian has limited English proficiency and may not understand the contents of the notice pursuant to Subsection A of this section, the court shall provide language access services as required by Title 6 of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other applicable federal and state laws. If the court is unable to secure translation or interpretation support, the court shall contact or direct a party to contact the Indian child's tribe or the local office of the United States department of the interior bureau of Indian affairs for assistance identifying a qualified translator or interpreter.

D. If the identity or location of the parent, guardian or Indian custodian and the Indian tribe cannot be determined, a notice shall be given to the secretary in the same manner as provided in Subsection A of this section. The secretary shall have fifteen days after receipt of the notice to provide the same notice to the parent, guardian or Indian custodian and the Indian tribe.

E. A foster care placement or termination of parental rights proceeding shall not be held until at least ten days after receipt of notice by the parent, guardian or Indian custodian and the Indian tribe or the secretary pursuant to this section; provided that the parent, guardian or Indian custodian or the Indian tribe shall, upon request, be granted up to twenty additional days to prepare for that proceeding.

F. Nothing in this section prevents a court from reviewing a removal of an Indian child from the child's parent, guardian or Indian custodian at an emergency custody proceeding before the expiration of the waiting periods provided in Subsections D and E of this section to determine the appropriateness of the removal and potential return of the child.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 13.

32A-28-14. Intervention.

A. An Indian child's tribe has the right to intervene at any point in a child custody proceeding.

B. In any court proceeding subject to the Indian Family Protection Act for the foster care placement, guardianship placement, adoptive placement of or termination of parental rights to an Indian child, the Indian child's relative or extended family member, the guardian, the Indian custodian or a foster parent with whom the child has resided for at least twelve months may file a motion to intervene at any point in the proceeding.

C. When determining whether a person described in Subsection B of this section should be permitted to intervene, the court shall consider:

(1) the person's rationale for the proposed intervention; and

(2) whether intervention is in the best interest of the Indian child.

D. When the court determines that the Indian child's best interest will be served as a result of intervention by a person described in Subsection B of this section, the court may permit intervention unless the party opposing intervention can demonstrate that a viable plan for reunification with the respondents is in progress and that intervention could impede the progress of the reunification plan.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 14.

32A-28-15. Petition; form and content.

In a petition initiating a child custody proceeding, the department shall include a statement as to whether the child who is the subject of the child custody proceeding is an Indian child and shall include information about:

A. the Indian child's tribe;

B. the tribal affiliations of the Indian child's parents;

C. active efforts made to provide remedial services and rehabilitative programs designed to prevent the breakup of the Indian family and that these efforts were proven to be unsuccessful and the reasons these efforts were unsuccessful, if known;

D. active efforts made to comply with the notice requirements pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act, including results of the contact and the names, addresses, titles and telephone numbers of the persons contacted. Copies of any correspondence with the Indian child's tribe shall be attached as exhibits to the petition; and

E. active efforts made to comply with the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 15.

32A-28-16. Record of Indian child's tribe; Indian tribe's right to participate.

A. The department shall keep a record of:

(1) an Indian tribe of which the Indian child is a member or eligible for membership, as determined by the Indian child's tribe;

(2) whether the Indian child is a member of one Indian tribe but is eligible for membership in one or more other Indian tribes;

(3) the Indian tribe designated by agreement between one or more Indian tribes if the Indian child is not a member of each of those Indian tribes but is eligible for membership in each of those Indian tribes; or

(4) the Indian tribe recorded by the court pursuant to Subsection D of this section if the Indian child is eligible for membership in each of those Indian tribes and the Indian tribes cannot agree on the designation of the Indian child's tribe.

B. If the department files a petition, the department shall inform the court on the record of the Indian tribe or tribes of which the Indian child is a member or eligible for membership.

C. If there is no dispute, the court shall make a record of the Indian child's tribe.

D. If there is a dispute as to which Indian tribe is the Indian child's tribe, the court shall, after a hearing, record the Indian tribe with which the Indian child has more significant contacts, taking into consideration:

(1) the preference of each of the Indian child's parents;

(2) the duration of the Indian child's current or prior domicile or residence on or near the reservation of each Indian tribe;

(3) the tribal membership of the Indian child's custodial parent or Indian custodian;

(4) the interests asserted by each Indian tribe;

(5) whether the Indian tribe has previously adjudicated a case involving an Indian child;

(6) the Indian tribe's custom and tradition; and

(7) if the court determines that the Indian child is of sufficient age and capacity to meaningfully self-identify the Indian child's tribe, the self-identification of the Indian child.

E. If an Indian child is a member of or is eligible for membership in more than one Indian tribe, the court shall permit an Indian tribe, in addition to the Indian child's tribe as determined pursuant to Subsection D of this section, to participate in the child custody proceeding as an intervenor.

F. In a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child, the Indian child's tribe may be present and may participate at a closed hearing regardless of whether the Indian child's tribe has intervened.

G. The Indian child's tribe or any Indian tribe claiming the Indian child as a member, whether or not the Indian tribe has intervened, shall have the right to examine all reports or other documents filed with the court upon which a decision with respect to the action may be based.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 16.

32A-28-17. Qualified expert witness.

A. The court shall receive testimony from one or more qualified expert witnesses in all adjudicatory hearings pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978] and all hearings to terminate parental rights. The court shall receive testimony from a qualified expert witness regardless of whether the parties to the proceeding have stipulated to a finding of abuse or neglect.

B. A person may be qualified by the court to serve as a qualified expert witness if the court finds that the person is:

(1) knowledgeable about the prevailing social and cultural standards of the tribe and is familiar with the family and child-rearing practices of the Indian child's tribe;

(2) able to testify regarding whether the Indian child's continued custody by the parent, guardian or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child; and

(3) a member of the Indian child's tribe; or

(4) a person recommended by the Indian child's tribe.

C. When the department notifies an Indian child's tribe of the pendency of an investigation involving an Indian child from that Indian tribe, the department shall

request in writing that the Indian child's tribe designate a qualified expert witness to testify in any child custody or termination proceedings that may result from the investigation. The department shall make active efforts to collaborate with the Indian tribe to identify a person to serve as a qualified expert witness.

D. If, after active efforts and in no case later than fifteen days after filing the petition, the department does not receive a designation from the Indian tribe or if the department, after good faith efforts, is unable to retain the Indian tribe's designated qualified expert witness, the department may identify a qualified expert witness who meets the requirements provided in Paragraph (1) of Subsection B of this section from a list of qualified expert witnesses compiled through cooperation among the Indian tribes in the state and the department.

E. If, thirty days after filing the petition, the department has not identified a qualified expert witness to testify as required by the Indian Family Protection Act, in considering a motion by the department for a continuance, the court shall consider whether it is in the best interest of the Indian child to remain in the department's custody for additional time.

F. At least thirty days prior to an adjudicatory hearing pursuant to the Abuse and Neglect Act and a hearing to terminate parental rights, the department shall disclose to the Indian child's tribe the name of the qualified expert witness designated by the department to testify at the hearing.

G. An Indian child's tribe shall have the opportunity to question a qualified expert witness in all hearings involving an Indian child in which the qualified expert witness testifies, regardless of whether the Indian child's tribe has intervened. An Indian child's tribe may designate a qualified expert witness to testify in addition to any qualified expert witness designated by the department.

H. An employee of the department shall not serve as a qualified expert witness pursuant to this section.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 17.

32A-28-18. Voluntary placement agreements; parental rights; consent; withdrawal; fraud or duress.

A. Prior to entering any voluntary placement agreement, the department shall make active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act.

B. In a voluntary foster care placement involving an Indian child, an Indian child's parent or guardian may enter into a voluntary placement agreement with the department. An Indian child's parent's or guardian's consent is voidable unless it is executed in writing and recorded before the court.

C. The department shall notify the Indian child's tribe by certified mail, with return receipt requested, of the pending voluntary placement agreement and of the Indian child's tribe's right to intervene.

D. Before approving a voluntary placement agreement, the court shall ensure that the voluntary placement agreement is executed in writing. The court shall certify on the record that:

(1) the terms and consequences of the consent were fully explained in detail and in a manner that is understandable to the parent or guardian;

(2) the Indian child's parent or guardian fully understands the English language or that the voluntary placement agreement was interpreted into the primary language of the Indian child's parent or guardian;

(3) the child is an Indian child;

(4) there is no pending child abuse or neglect investigation involving the Indian child;

(5) the Indian child's parent or guardian is voluntarily entering into the voluntary placement without any threat of removal of the Indian child by the department;

(6) the department provided notice to the Indian child's tribe via certified or registered mail with return receipt requested;

(7) confidentiality has been requested or indicated and execution of consent was made in a closed court proceeding not open to the public;

(8) if not represented, the Indian child's parent or guardian is proceeding without an attorney and has the right to consult with an attorney of the Indian child's parent's or guardian's own choosing; and

(9) the Indian child's parent or guardian is of sound mind and judgment.

E. The request for voluntary placement shall be initiated in writing by the Indian child's parent or guardian, and if good cause is shown and the requirements of Subsection D of this section are met, the department may accept temporary custody or placement and care responsibility. Placement and care responsibility means that the department is legally accountable for the day-to-day care and protection of the Indian child in foster care. Responsibility for placement and care allows the department to make placement decisions about the Indian child, such as where the child is placed and the type of placement that is most appropriate for the Indian child.

F. During voluntary placement, the department shall make active efforts to provide tailored case planning to alleviate the causes and conditions leading to the voluntary placement agreement.

G. Any consent to a foster care placement that is given prior to or within ten days after birth of an Indian child is voidable.

H. An Indian child's parent or guardian may withdraw consent to a voluntary foster care placement of an Indian child pursuant to the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978] at any time. Upon receipt of a request to withdraw, the Indian child shall be returned to the Indian child's parent or guardian. The department shall have up to forty-eight hours after withdrawal of consent to allow for transition arrangements to be made for the Indian child's return to the Indian child's parent or guardian.

I. An Indian child shall not remain in voluntary placement for longer than one hundred eighty consecutive days or for more than one hundred eighty days in a calendar year; provided that a child may remain in voluntary placement up to an additional one hundred eighty consecutive days upon order of the court. If the Indian child's parent or guardian seeks to extend the voluntary placement, the department shall file a petition for an extension of voluntary placement prior to the expiration of the initial one-hundred-eighty-day period. The court shall hold a hearing and make a finding within the initial one-hundred-eighty-day period that the extension of voluntary placement is in the best interest of the Indian child.

J. If a request for an extension is not filed with the court prior to the initial one-hundred-eighty-day period, the agreement expires. No later than thirty days before the expiration of the initial agreement, the court shall hold a review hearing to determine if the voluntary placement should be extended.

K. In no event shall an Indian child remain in voluntary placement for a period in excess of three hundred sixty-five days in any two-year period.

L. Any voluntary placement pursuant to this section shall not be considered abandonment, neglect or abuse by an Indian child's parent, guardian or extended family member.

M. The parent or guardian whose Indian child is in voluntary placement pursuant to this section shall have the following rights to:

(1) have visitation with the child;

(2) be informed of changes in the Indian child's school or of changes in the child's placement by the department;

(3) authorize decisions regarding medical and dental care and behavioral health services, including decisions that affect the daily care, support, safety and well-being of the child;

(4) permit the department to consent to emergency services to ensure the safety and well-being of the Indian child, including medical, dental or behavioral health treatment, if the department is unable to make immediate prior contact with the parent or guardian. The department shall notify the parent or guardian within two hours of making emergency decisions due to inability to make prior contact;

(5) consent to all non-emergency and non- routine medical care provided for the child;

(6) make decisions regarding participation and attendance in cultural and religious events, including traditional and cultural events offered by the Indian child's tribe; and

(7) make decisions of substantial legal significance.

N. If new safety concerns are identified during the voluntary placement, the department shall not extend a voluntary placement agreement, but instead shall make a new report of suspected abuse or neglect to be screened for determination of a new department investigation.

O. The voluntary placement shall adhere to and be in accordance with the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act.

P. All records or information concerning the voluntary placement shall be confidential in accordance with the confidentiality provision of the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 18.

32A-28-19. Termination of parental rights.

A. In a termination of parental rights proceeding, with respect to an Indian child, the court shall consider whether an alternative to termination of parental rights, including permanent guardianship of the child, would best support the Indian child.

B. In a termination of parental rights proceeding in court, when the court knows an Indian child is involved, the party seeking to effectuate the termination of parental rights shall notify the Indian child's tribe by certified mail, with return receipt requested, of the pending proceedings and of its right to intervene. The court shall not order a termination of parental rights proceeding until the department files documentation with the court that the Indian child's tribe received notice of the proceeding.

C. In a termination of parental rights proceeding, bonding between the Indian child and the Indian child's foster parent shall not be considered as a factor in terminating parental rights.

D. In a termination of parental rights proceeding, a termination shall not be ordered unless:

(1) the Indian child's tribe was provided timely notice of the proceeding in accordance with the Indian Family Protection Act and provided an opportunity to state whether it opposes the termination; and

(2) the Indian child's tribe proposes an alternate permanency plan, unless the department can show good cause supported by clear and convincing evidence why the alternate permanency plan should not be ordered.

E. In a proceeding involving an Indian child, the grounds for any attempted termination shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt and shall meet the requirements set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act.

F. In a termination proceeding involving an Indian child, the court shall, in any termination order, make specific findings of all active efforts and ensure that all of the requirements of the Indian Family Protection Act have been met.

G. After the entry of a final decree of adoption of an Indian child in a court that is made pursuant to the Adoption Act [Chapter 32A, Article 5 NMSA 1978], the parent may withdraw consent to the adoption upon the grounds that consent was obtained through fraud or duress and may petition the court to vacate the decree. Upon a finding that the consent was obtained through fraud or duress, the court shall vacate the decree and return the Indian child to the parent. An adoption that has been in effect for at least two years shall not be invalidated except as otherwise provided by law.

H. In an adoption proceeding involving a child who is an Indian child, the court-ordered mediation pursuant to Section 32A-4-29 NMSA 1978 shall not be waived and the Indian child's tribe shall be allowed to participate, whether or not the Indian child's tribe intervenes.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 19.

32A-28-20. Petition to court to invalidate action.

An Indian child who is the subject of a child custody proceeding, a parent, guardian or Indian custodian from whose custody the child was removed or the Indian child's tribe may petition the court to invalidate that action upon a showing that the action violated any provision of Section 4 [32A-28-4 NMSA 1978], 5 [32A-28-5 NMSA 1978], 7 [32A-28-7 NMSA 1978], 9 [32A-28-9 NMSA 1978], 12 [32A-28-12 NMSA 1978], 13 [32A-28-13 NMSA 1978], 14 [32A-28-14 NMSA 1978], 16 [32A-28-16 NMSA 1978], 17 [32A-28-

17 NMSA 1978], 18 [32A-28-18 NMSA 1978], 19 [32A-28-19 NMSA 1978], 21 [32A-28-21 NMSA 1978], 28 [32A-28-28 NMSA 1978], 34 [32A-28-34 NMSA 1978] or 35 [32A-28-35 NMSA 1978] of the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 20.

32A-28-21. Placement preferences; foster care placement; adoption; guardianship; placement of Indian children.

A. In the case of a foster care placement of an Indian child, except as provided in Subsection C of this section, the child shall be placed in the least restrictive setting that:

(1) most closely approximates a family, taking into consideration the Indian child's sibling attachment;

(2) allows the Indian child's special needs, if any, to be met;

(3) is in reasonable geographic proximity to the Indian child's home, extended family members or siblings; and

(4) is in accordance with the order of preference established by the Indian child's tribe by any means, or, if that Indian tribe has not established placement preferences, preference shall be given in accordance with the following order of preference:

(a) an extended family member of the Indian child;

(b) a foster home licensed, approved or specified by the Indian child's tribe; or

(c) a foster home licensed or approved by a licensing authority in New Mexico and in which one or more of the licensed or approved foster parents is an Indian.

B. Under no circumstances shall an Indian child under three months of age be placed outside of the placement preferences provided in this section.

C. If an Indian child is placed in a foster care placement that is contrary to the placement preferences provided in this section, a secondary permanency plan shall not be simultaneously permitted, and before the child's placement may be changed to an adoptive or other permanent placement, the department shall:

(1) conduct monitoring at least every thirty days to determine whether a placement that comports with the placement preferences provided in this section is available;

(2) at the inception of the case and periodically through the pendancy of the case, make active efforts to identify a placement that aligns with the placement preferences as soon as practicable; and

(3) at the inception of the case and periodically through the pendancy of the case, document all active efforts made to identify a placement that aligns with the placement preferences. At minimum, this shall include:

(a) contacting the Indian child's tribe;

(b) conducting a relative search;

(c) interviewing relatives throughout the case;

(d) making ongoing active efforts to search for and identify relatives to the Indian child throughout the case;

(e) providing the Indian child's tribe with all information regarding family members;

(f) offering relatives an expedited foster care license;

(g) assisting relatives with practical supports through the licensing process and actively supporting relatives in overcoming barriers for licensure;

(h) conducting timely home studies when identifying a placement that aligns with the placement preference;

(i) providing continued contact, including visitation; and

(j) providing access to culturally appropriate interventions.

D. If the Indian child is in a foster care placement that is not a preferred placement, the court shall hold hearings no less than every six months. The department shall continue to bear the burden of establishing why good cause continues to exist for the current placement or why the Indian child is not in a preferred placement.

E. Whenever there is any change in placement of an Indian child, the department shall file a notice of placement change with the court. The department shall also notify the Indian child's tribe, by certified mail with return receipt requested.

F. If there is a voluntary placement agreement in which the Indian child at first was not determined to be an Indian child and was later determined to be an Indian child, the agreement is voided.

G. If the Indian child's tribe has established a different order of preference than that specified in the Indian Family Protection Act, the Indian child's tribe's placement preferences shall apply.

H. In determining whether good cause exists, the court shall not permit departure from the placement preferences based on:

(1) the socioeconomic status of the placement;

(2) a home environment that does not impact the safety and well-being of the Indian child;

(3) ordinary bonding or attachment that occurred from time spent in a non-preferred placement that was made in violation of the Indian Family Protection Act; or

(4) the extent of the participation of the parents or the Indian child in tribal, cultural, social, religious or political activities.

I. In the case of a foster care placement, adoptive placement or guardianship of an Indian child pursuant to the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978], if the Indian child's tribe establishes a different order of preference, the adoption agency or court effecting the placement shall follow the order of preference established by the Indian child's tribe. When appropriate, the preference of the Indian child or parent may be considered; provided that the court has not terminated the parental rights of the Indian child's parent.

J. The department shall support and not delay the placement of the Indian child with the Indian child's extended family members and adult relatives regardless of the stage of the case in the child custody proceedings.

K. Whenever there is any change in the placement of an Indian child, the department shall file notice of the placement change with the court.

L. If the court finds there was a delay in placement with the Indian child's extended family members or adult relatives pursuant to Paragraph (3) of Subsection C of Section 4 [32A-28-4 NMSA 1978] of the Indian Family Protection Act, this factor shall not be used in a finding for good cause to deviate from the placement preferences of this section or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe.

M. An Indian child shall be placed in accordance with the placement preferences unless there is good cause to depart from the placement preferences as determined by the court after a hearing; provided that:

(1) the party that asserts good cause exists not to follow the placement preferences shall state the reasons for this assertion in writing to the court. The court

shall make a record. The party making the assertion shall provide all parties to the case and the Indian child's tribe with a copy;

(2) the party seeking the departure from the placement preferences has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that there is good cause to depart from the preferences; and

(3) a court's determination of good cause to depart from the placement preferences shall be made in writing and be based on the considerations set forth by the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 21.

32A-28-22. Indian Family Protection Act responsiveness training.

A. The administrative office of the courts in collaboration with the department shall develop and deliver annual mandatory training to all children's court judges, district court judges, attorneys, guardians ad litem and youth attorneys who are court appointed. The training shall include information on:

(1) the Indian Family Protection Act, including cultural compacts; and

(2) the Indian tribes geographically located within the state.

B. The training required in this section shall be required at least annually or no less than every fifteen months. The training shall be open for attorneys or other professionals to attend.

C. If an Indian child is placed in a household that does not include a foster parent or guardian who is a member of the Indian child's tribe, upon placement and at least annually thereafter, the department shall provide mandatory training to the foster parent. Training shall address conditions on foster care placements under federal, state and tribal law. The department shall work with each Indian tribe in New Mexico to develop the training required in this section.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 22.

32A-28-23. Adoptive and guardianship placements; maintenance of culture; cultural compacts.

To ensure that the Indian Family Protection Act is fully implemented and that all Indian children have the opportunity to maintain strong connections to their culture, if the household into which an Indian child is placed for adoption or guardianship does not include a parent who is a member of the Indian child's tribe, the court shall require the parties to the adoption to enter a cultural compact, at the discretion of the Indian child's tribe, that documents the parties' agreement regarding how the Indian child will continue

to actively participate in the Indian child's cultural learning and activities and engagement with family members. Each cultural compact shall be specific to the Indian child and shall articulate the Indian child's understanding as the Indian child grows and matures. The cultural compact shall become part of the court record, shall be enforced by the court and shall be included in the adoption decree.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 23.

32A-28-24. Transition services.

A. Prior to an Indian child's reaching seventeen years of age, the department shall meet with the Indian child, the Indian child's tribe, the Indian child's attorney and others of the Indian child's choosing, including biological family members, to develop a transition plan. The department shall assist the Indian child in identifying and planning to meet the Indian child's needs after the Indian child's eighteenth birthday, including maintenance of culture, housing, education, employment or income, health and mental health, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services.

B. The Indian child's tribe shall be included in developing the transition plan and shall be provided a copy of the transition plan prior to the presentation of the plan to the court pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 24.

32A-28-25. Discharge hearing.

A. At the last review or permanency hearing held prior to the Indian child's eighteenth birthday, the court shall determine whether documentation of the Indian child's tribal membership and any information regarding the Indian child's tribal affiliation have been provided to the Indian child.

B. If the court finds that the department has not made active efforts to meet all of the requirements of Section 32A-4-25.3 NMSA 1978 and of Subsection A of this section and that termination of jurisdiction would be harmful to the Indian child, the court may continue to exercise its jurisdiction. The court may dismiss the case at any time after the Indian child's eighteenth birthday for good cause.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 25.

32A-28-26. Abuse or neglect predisposition studies; reports and examinations.

If the child is an Indian child, all predispositional studies and reports shall follow the requirements listed in Section 32A-4-21 NMSA 1978 and shall also document:

A. whether the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe were followed;

B. whether the Indian child's case plan provides for maintaining the Indian child's cultural ties as well as the plan detailing how the department shall establish and maintain the Indian child's cultural connections, in conjunction with the Indian child's tribe and family;

C. whether active efforts were made by the department to prevent removal of the Indian child from the home prior to placement in substitute care and whether active efforts were made to attempt reunification of the Indian child with the natural parent;

D. whether active efforts were made by the department to place siblings in custody together, unless such joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings in custody, and whether any siblings not jointly placed have been provided reasonable visitation or other ongoing interaction, unless visitation or other ongoing interaction would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings; and

E. whether the department has provided notification to the Indian child's tribe consistent with the requirements of the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 26.

32A-28-27. Permanency hearings; permanency review hearings.

A. The department shall submit a copy of any continuation of the dispositional order and notice of any permanency and permanency review hearings to the Indian child's tribe pursuant to notice requirements of the Indian Family Protection Act.

B. The department shall submit a progress report that documents:

(1) that the Indian child's tribe has been invited to attend the pre-permanency meeting and is included in any attempt to settle issues attendant to the permanency hearing and has the opportunity to participate in developing a proposed treatment plan that serves the Indian child's best interest;

(2) that active efforts were conducted to prevent the breakup of the Indian family or to reunify the Indian family;

(3) that the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe were followed. When placement preferences have not been followed, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported by clear and convincing evidence;

(4) the active efforts made pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act to implement the Indian child's cultural maintenance plan in conjunction with the Indian child's tribe and family;

(5) the inclusion of the Indian child's tribe in the department's active efforts for case planning and documentation of the Indian tribe's input; and

(6) that all requirements pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act were followed.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 27.

32A-28-28. Dispositional judgments; court findings.

A. At the conclusion of a dispositional hearing in a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child, in addition to other requirements for a court's findings pursuant to the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978], when the judgment is made in a child custody proceeding held pursuant to the Family in Need of Court-Ordered Services Act [Chapter 32A, Article 3B NMSA 1978] or the Abuse and Neglect Act [Chapter 32A, Article 4 NMSA 1978], a court shall include findings of:

(1) whether the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act have been incorporated into a plan for family services made pursuant to Section 32A-3B-15 NMSA 1978 or in a case plan as described in Section 32A-4-21 NMSA 1978; provided that if those placement preferences are not incorporated into the plan for family services or the case plan, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported by clear and convincing evidence;

(2) whether the plan for family services or the case plan provides for maintenance of the Indian child's cultural ties;

(3) how the Indian child's cultural needs are considered and how, when reasonable, access to cultural practices and traditional treatment will be provided to the child; and

(4) whether the Indian child's tribe was included in developing the case plan for the Indian child and was provided a copy of the transition plan prior to the presentation of the plan to the court.

B. The court shall determine during a review of a dispositional judgment involving an Indian child pursuant to Section 32A-4-25 NMSA 1978 whether the judgment complies with the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe and whether the child's case plan as described in Section 32A-4-21 NMSA 1978 provides for maintaining the Indian child's cultural ties. When placement preferences are not followed, good cause for noncompliance shall be clearly stated and supported by clear and convincing evidence.

A court's determination of good cause shall be made on the record or in writing and shall be based on the considerations set forth in the federal regulations or other factors authorized by federal and state law.

C. The court shall make findings determining that the department made active efforts pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act to meet the requirements of this section and may continue to exercise its jurisdiction for a period not to exceed one year from the Indian child's eighteenth birthday. The young adult must consent to continued jurisdiction of the court. Additionally, the Indian child may volunteer to participate in the fostering connections program through the department. The court may dismiss the case at any time after the Indian child's eighteenth birthday for good cause.

D. When the child is an Indian child, the court shall determine during review of a dispositional order whether all requirements pursuant to Section 27 [32A-28-27 NMSA 1978] of the Indian Family Protection Act were followed.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 28.

32A-28-29. Periodic review of dispositional judgments.

A. The initial judicial review shall be held within sixty days of the dispositional judgment. At the initial judicial review:

(1) the parties shall demonstrate to the court the active efforts made to implement the treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order; and

(2) the court shall determine the extent to which the treatment plan has been implemented and make supplemental orders as necessary to ensure compliance with the treatment plan and the safety of the Indian child.

B. The court shall determine during review of a dispositional order whether the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the Indian child's tribe were followed and whether the department has made active efforts pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act to implement the Indian child's treatment plan and reunify the Indian family.

C. The children's court attorney shall give notice to the Indian child's tribe of the time, place and purpose of any judicial review hearing held pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act.

D. At any subsequent judicial review hearing held pursuant to Section 32A-4-25 NMSA 1978, the department shall show that it has made active efforts to implement any treatment plan approved by the court in its dispositional order and shall present a treatment plan consistent with the purposes of the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978] for any period of extension of the dispositional order.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 29.

32A-28-30. Permanent guardianship.

A. A motion for permanent guardianship shall set forth:

(1) the tribal affiliations of the Indian child's parents;

(2) the specific actions taken by the petitioner to notify the parents' Indian tribe and the results of the contacts, including the names, addresses, titles and telephone numbers of the persons contacted. Copies of any correspondence with the Indian tribes shall be attached as exhibits to the petition;

(3) the specific active efforts made to comply with the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act or the placement preferences of the appropriate Indian tribes and any additional requirements for that motion as provided pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act; and

(4) that notice has been sent by certified mail, with return receipt requested, to the Indian child's tribe and to any Indian custodian pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act.

B. The grounds for permanent guardianship shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt and meet the requirements of the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 30.

32A-28-31. Independent adoptions; pre-placement studies.

To be certified to conduct pre-placement studies for the adoption of an Indian child, a person shall meet the standards adopted by the department.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 31.

32A-28-32. Termination procedures in independent adoptions; notice of petition; burden of proof; required findings.

A. In addition to the requirements of the Adoption Act [Chapter 32A, Article 5 NMSA 1978], a petition for termination of parental rights involving an Indian child shall set forth:

(1) the tribal affiliations of the Indian child's parents;

(2) the specific actions taken by the moving party to notify the parents' Indian tribe and the results of the contacts, including the names, addresses, titles and

telephone numbers of the persons contacted. Copies of any correspondence with the Indian tribe shall be attached as exhibits to the petition; and

(3) the specific active efforts made to comply with the placement preferences of the Indian Family Protection Act.

B. Notice of the filing of the petition, accompanied by a copy of the petition, shall be served by the petitioner by certified or registered mail with return receipt requested on the Indian child's tribe and on the Indian child's parents or guardians.

C. The grounds for any termination shall be proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

D. A judgment of the court terminating parental rights shall include findings establishing that each requirement of the Indian Family Protection Act was met.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 32.

32A-28-33. Persons whose consents or relinquishments are required in an independent adoption.

In an independent adoption, consent from the parent or guardian of an Indian child to adoption by the petitioner or relinquishment of parental rights shall be obtained in the manner required by the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 33.

32A-28-34. Adjudication; disposition; decree of adoption; invalidation.

A. The court shall grant a decree of adoption if it finds that:

(1) the petitioner has proved by clear and convincing evidence that the placement preferences set forth in the Indian Family Protection Act, or the placement preferences established by the Indian child's tribe, have been followed or, if not followed, good cause for noncompliance has been proved by clear and convincing evidence; and

(2) provision has been made to ensure that the Indian child's cultural ties to the Indian child's tribe are protected and fostered.

B. In any adoption involving an Indian child, the clerk of the court shall provide the secretary with a copy of the final decree of adoption or adoptive placement order.

C. A parent may withdraw consent to a voluntary adoption of the Indian child at any time before entry of the final decree of adoption.

D. Within two years after a final decree of adoption of an Indian child, the court may invalidate a voluntary adoption upon finding that the parent's consent was obtained by fraud or duress.

E. Upon filing of a petition to vacate the final decree of adoption of the parent's Indian child, the petitioner shall give notice to all parties to the adoption proceedings and the Indian child's tribe, and the court shall hold a hearing on the petition.

F. Where the court finds that the parent's consent was obtained through fraud or duress, the court shall vacate the final decree of adoption, order the consent revoked and order that the child be returned to the parent.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 34.

32A-28-35. Return of custody.

Whenever an Indian child has been adopted and the relationship between the adoptive parent and the Indian child has been severed for any reason, a biological parent, guardian or prior Indian custodian may petition for return of custody, and there shall be a presumption that the Indian child shall be returned to the biological parent, guardian or prior Indian custodian, unless the return of custody is not in the best interests of the Indian child. The provisions of this section shall not be deemed to conflict with other provisions pertaining to return of custody in the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 35.

32A-28-36. Best interests of Indian child.

When making a determination regarding the best interests of an Indian child pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act, a court shall, after allowing testimony from all parties and the Indian child's tribe, consider the following relevant factors:

A. the prioritization of placement of the Indian child in accordance with the placement preferences provided by the Indian Family Protection Act;

B. the prevention of unnecessary out-of-home placement of the Indian child;

C. the critical importance to the Indian child of establishing, developing or maintaining a political, cultural, social and spiritual relationship with the Indian child's tribe and tribal community and with familial ties such as clanship and family with unique cultural characteristics;

D. the importance to the Indian child of the ability of the Indian child's tribe to maintain its existence and integrity in promotion of the stability and security of Indian children and families; and

E. the protection, safety and well-being of the Indian child.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 36.

32A-28-37. Access to post-decree adoption records; tribal affiliation and other information.

A. Pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act, an Indian tribe shall have access to the post-decree adoption records that involve an Indian child who is a member or eligible for membership in the Indian tribe.

B. Upon application by an Indian person who has reached the age of eighteen and who was the subject of an adoptive placement in this state prior to the enactment of the Indian Family Protection Act, the court that entered the final decree shall inform that Indian person of the tribal affiliation, if any, of the Indian person's biological parents and provide any other information necessary to protect any rights flowing from the Indian person's tribal relationship.

C. If the adoption predated enactment of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, the court shall attempt to find information related to the adoption and may order the department to assist. If the adoption of an Indian person was completed after enactment of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, the Indian person may contact the secretary for necessary information regarding the Indian person's adoption. If the secretary certifies that the secretary does not have that information, the state court shall attempt to find the information and may order the department to assist.

D. If an Indian person does not know the court that issued the adoption decree, the Indian person may request that information from the department. The department shall provide to the Indian person the name and location of the court that entered the final decree, if known.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 37.

32A-28-38. Adoption decrees; information availability.

A. The clerk of a court entering a final decree or order in an adoptive placement of an Indian child shall provide the secretary with a copy of that decree, adoptive placement order and any other information necessary to show:

(1) the birth name and birthdate of the Indian child;

(2) any information relating to tribal membership or eligibility for membership of the adopted Indian child;

(3) the tribal affiliation and name of the Indian child after adoption;

(4) the names and addresses of the biological parents;

(5) the names and addresses of the adoptive parents;

(6) the name and contact information of any agency having files or information relating to the adoption; and

(7) any affidavit signed by the biological parent or parents asking that their identity remain confidential.

B. The attorney for the prospective adoptive parent shall provide to the clerk of the court a copy of the decree of adoption, an adoptive placement order or any other information required by the Indian Family Protection Act and a stamped envelope addressed to the secretary marked "Confidential".

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 38.

32A-28-39. Confidentiality; records; penalty.

A. All records or information, whether on file with the court, an agency, the department, an attorney or other provider of professional services, concerning a party to any proceedings pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act, including social records, diagnostic evaluations, psychiatric or psychological reports, videotapes, transcripts and audio recordings of an Indian child's statement of abuse or medical reports incident to or obtained as a result of an investigation or proceeding pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act or that were produced or obtained during an investigation in anticipation of or incident to any proceeding pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act, shall be confidential and closed to the public.

B. The records described in Subsection A of this section shall be disclosed only to the parties and:

(1) court personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the court to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the court's possession;

(2) court-appointed special advocates appointed to the Indian child in a child custody proceeding;

(3) the Indian child's guardian ad litem;

(4) the attorney, including a public defender, representing the Indian child in any child custody proceeding pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act;

(5) department personnel and persons or entities authorized by contract with the department to review, inspect or otherwise have access to records or information in the department's possession;

(6) any local substitute care review board or any agency contracted to implement local substitute care review boards;

(7) law enforcement officials, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(8) district attorneys, except when use immunity is granted pursuant to Section 32A-4-11 NMSA 1978;

(9) any state social services agency in any state or when, in the opinion of the department it is in the best interest of the Indian child, a governmental social services agency of another country;

(10) an Indian child's tribe;

(11) a foster parent, if the records are those of an Indian child currently placed with that foster parent or of an Indian child being considered for placement with that foster parent and the records concern the cultural, social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the Indian child;

(12) school personnel involved with the Indian child if the records concern the Indian child's cultural, social or educational needs;

(13) a grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin, if the records or information pertain to an Indian child being considered for placement with that grandparent, parent of a sibling, relative or fictive kin and the records or information concern the cultural, social, medical, psychological or educational needs of the Indian child;

(14) health care or mental health professionals involved in the evaluation or treatment of the Indian child or of the Indian child's parents or guardian, or other family members;

(15) protection and advocacy representatives pursuant to the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and the federal Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Amendments Act of 1991;

(16) children's safehouse organizations conducting investigatory interviews of children on behalf of a law enforcement agency or the department;

(17) representatives of the federal government or their contractors authorized by federal statute or regulation to review, inspect, audit or otherwise have access to records and information pertaining to neglect or abuse proceedings;

(18) any person or entity attending a meeting arranged by the department to discuss the safety, well-being and permanency of an Indian child, when the parent or child, or parent or guardian on behalf of a child younger than fourteen years of age, has consented to the disclosure; and

(19) any other person or entity, by order of the court, having a legitimate interest in the case or the work of the court.

C. A parent or guardian whose Indian child has been the subject of an investigation of abuse or neglect where no petition has been filed shall have the right to inspect any medical report, psychological evaluation, law enforcement reports or other investigative or diagnostic evaluation; provided that any identifying information related to the reporting party or any other party providing information shall be deleted. The parent or guardian shall also have the right to the results of the investigation and the right to petition the court for full access to all department records and information except those records and information the department finds would be likely to endanger the life or safety of any person providing information to the department.

D. In an adoption proceeding, all hearings held pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act shall be confidential and shall be held in closed court without admittance of any person other than parties and their counsel and the Indian child's tribe.

E. In an adoption proceeding, unless the petitioner agrees to be contacted or agrees to the release of the petitioner's identity to the parent and the parent agrees to be contacted or agrees to the release of the parent's identity to the petitioner, the attorneys, the court, the adoption agency and the department shall maintain confidentiality regarding the names of the parties, unless the information is already otherwise known. After the petition is filed and prior to the entry of the decree, the records in adoption proceedings shall be open to inspection only by the attorney for the petitioner, the department or the adoption agency, any attorney appointed as a guardian ad litem or attorney for the adoptee, the Indian child's tribe, any attorney retained by the adoptee or other persons upon order of the court for good cause shown.

F. In an adoption proceeding, all information and documentation provided for the purpose of full disclosure is confidential. Documentation provided for the purpose of full disclosure shall remain the property of the person making full disclosure when a prospective adoptive parent decides not to accept a placement. Immediately upon refusal of the placement, the prospective adoptive parent shall return all full disclosure documentation to the person providing full disclosure. A prospective adoptive parent shall not disclose any confidential information received during the full disclosure process, except as necessary to make a placement decision or to provide information to an Indian child's guardian ad litem or attorney or the court.

G. In an adoption proceeding, prior to the entry of the decree of adoption, the parent consenting to the adoption or relinquishing parental rights to an agency or the department shall execute an affidavit stating whether the parent will permit contact or the disclosure of the parent's identity to the adoptee or the adoptee's prospective adoptive parents.

H. Whoever intentionally and unlawfully releases any information or records closed to the public pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act or releases or makes other unlawful use of records in violation of that act is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be sentenced pursuant to the provisions of Section 31-19-1 NMSA 1978.

I. The department shall promulgate rules for implementing disclosure of records pursuant to the Indian Family Protection Act and in compliance with state and federal law and the Children's Court Rules.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 39.

32A-28-40. Indian Family Protection Act supplemental to other provisions of law; conflict of laws.

A. To the greatest extent possible, the Indian Family Protection Act shall be read as in harmony with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

B. The provisions of the Children's Code [Chapter 32A NMSA 1978] are supplemental to and in harmony with the Indian Family Protection Act. The provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act govern child custody proceedings involving Indian children. To the extent the provisions of those acts or any provision of New Mexico state law conflicts with the provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act, the provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act shall apply.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 40.

32A-28-41. Office of tribal affairs; creation.

The "office of tribal affairs" is created in the department. The office shall be dedicated to ensuring the department's compliance with and full implementation of the Indian Family Protection Act.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 41.

32A-28-42. Indian child welfare rules.

The department, through discussion with the Indian nations, tribes and pueblos of the state, shall promulgate rules to implement the provisions of the Indian Family Protection Act. The administrative office of the courts shall also discuss with the Indian

nations, tribes and pueblos of the state the recommendation of court rules for potential adoption by the courts of the state.

History: Laws 2022, ch. 41, § 42.