

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1377

C 412 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Changing provisions affecting the placement of children.

Sponsors: By Representatives Pettigrew, Hinkle, Walsh, Haler, Kagi, Appleton, Warnick and Roberts; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is authorized by law to remove a child from his or her home if the child has been abandoned, abused, or neglected by a parent or guardian. When a child is removed from home and taken into the custody of the DSHS, alternative care arrangements for the child must be made. These arrangements are made pursuant to court orders governing the child's placement while in the custody of the DSHS.

The Children's Administration within the DSHS places approximately 7,600 children in out-of-home care each year. When determining the best placement for a child, state and federal laws include a preference for placing the child with a relative who is willing and available to care for and meet any special needs of the child. State law allows some relatives to be an eligible placement option for a child without requiring the relative to be a licensed foster parent. These relatives include blood and half-blood relatives; first cousins; nephews and nieces; grandparents; stepparents; and stepbrothers and stepsisters. Placement of a child with a relative who is not a licensed foster parent is commonly known as a kinship care placement.

Summary:

Kinship care placement options are expanded to include a child's second cousins and the relatives of any half-siblings of the child. Placement of a child with such a relative also is conditioned on the relative being willing and available to care for and meet any special needs of the child.

Subject to court review and a finding that such a placement is in the child's best interests, a child who has been removed from his or her own home may also be placed in the home of another suitable person:

- (1) with whom the child or child's family has a preexisting relationship;
- (2) who has completed the required criminal background check; and
- (3) who otherwise appears to be suitable and competent to care for the child.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	0	
Senate	44	0	(Senate amended)
House			(House refused to concur)
Senate	40	0	(Senate amended)
House	98	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007