

6643

Sponsor(s): Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Schmidt and Carlson

Brief Description: Providing guidelines for family visitation for dependent children.

**SB 6643 - DIGEST**

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Declares that visitation is the right of the family, including the child and the parent, in cases in which visitation is in the best interest of the child. Early, consistent, and frequent visitation is crucial for maintaining parent-child relationships and making it possible for parents and children to safely reunify.

Provides that visitation shall not be limited as a sanction for a parent's failure to comply with court orders or services where the health, safety, or welfare of the child is not at risk as a result of the visitation.

Provides that the court and the agency should rely upon community resources, relatives, foster parents, and other appropriate persons to provide transportation and supervision for visitation to the extent that such resources are available and the child's safety would not be compromised.

Provides that the court may order expert evaluations of parties to obtain information regarding visitation issues or other issues in a case. These evaluations shall be performed by appointed evaluators who are mutually agreed upon by the court, the state, and the parents' counsel, and, if the child is to be evaluated, by the representative for the child. If no agreement can be reached, the court shall select the expert evaluator.

Directs the department of social and health services to develop consistent policies and protocols, based on current relevant research, concerning visitation for dependent children to be implemented consistently throughout the state.

Requires the department of social and health services to report on the policies and protocols required under section 3 of this act to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 1, 2005.