

Position Statement

2021

Child Foster Care Relative Placement Resources

Proposal

Issue:

Current Statute: MN Statute 260C.221 (a) requires that the responsible social services agency shall exercise due diligence to identify and notify adult relatives prior to placement or within 30 days after the child's removal from the parent. The county agency shall consider placement with a relative under this section without delay and whenever the child must move from or be returned to foster care. The relative search required by this section shall be comprehensive in scope. After a finding that the agency has made reasonable efforts to conduct the relative search under this paragraph, the agency has the continuing responsibility to appropriately involve relatives, who have responded to the notice required under this paragraph, in planning for the child and to continue to consider relatives according to the requirements of section 260C.212, subdivision 2. At any time during the course of juvenile protection proceedings, the court may order the agency to reopen its search for relatives when it is in the child's best interest to do so.

Implementation Strategy:

The Association is opposed to legislation that would require counties to refer relatives to a private, community organization for Licensing Support, Training and Case Management Services.

As an Association we value relatives as a resource for the children and families that we serve. This is especially true when a child(ren) are placed in out of home care away from their parents. The state standard for relative placement is 35.7% or greater. In 2020, Minnesota's performance outcome was 67.5%. The rate of relative placements has increased over the years which shows counties commitment to search for and identify relatives as foster care options as well as permanency options for children when necessary.

Systemic Priority Alignment (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- Equity
- Integrated Services
- Fiscal Framework

From the GARE Toolkit (See www.racialequityalliance.org): What are the racial equity impacts of this particular decision? Who will benefit from or be burdened by it? Are there strategies to mitigate unintended consequences?

Comments: Relative foster care providers would benefit from additional support if additional funding was available. For many reasons, including racial and cultural reasons, it is imperative that children are placed with a relative or kin whenever possible. This legislation would create unintended inequities for individuals across the state who reside in outstate Minnesota where private, community organizations do not exist. Many counties would not be able to comply with this proposed legislation.

Relevant Committee (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- Adult Services
- Behavioral Health

- **Children's Services**
- **Modernization**
- **Policy**
- **Self-Sufficiency**

Why:

Rationale/Background:

Aspire MN initiated a Kinship Workgroup in June of 2020 which consists of private foster care agencies, DHS and MACSSA representatives. One of the main topics of this workgroup was addressing the lack of resources for relatives and kin desiring to provide care to a relative in the foster care system. The rate of care with relatives has significantly increased across the state of MN and there is agreement that additional resources are needed to support relatives.

Requiring counties to offer relatives a choice to not be licensed by the county agency and offering the option of being licensed by private agencies comes at a significant cost to counties. Private agencies charge counties an administrative rate, in addition to foster care costs once a child(ren) are placed in a foster home licensed by the private agency. Administrative rates range from approximately \$28 to \$75 per day. There is also concern the counties would need to fund the additional training requirements and case management services that the bill outlines that private agencies would be required to provide.

Requiring counties to have a service arrangement with a private, community-based organization to provide additional expertise and capacity for conducting the required relative search appears to be an additional cost to counties not to mention some counties have increased staffing in their agencies to keep up with the increasing volume of relative search requirements. Making the referral and adding an additional entity to the relative search process may cause delays in meeting the timelines for relative search. Some counties have also invested in resources to assure a comprehensive search is completed and these resources would need to be available to private organizations. Once the search has been completed, potential searches will need to be resumed when there is a change of placement needed and at permanency if reunification has not occurred. Subsequent relative search activities are not addressed in the proposed legislation and again may timeliness barriers.

This bill puts counties outside of the metro in a vulnerable position because private, community-based organizations are not readily available in out state Minnesota to provide these required services, including barriers related to travel and timely responsiveness to relative providers. The way the bill is currently written, it would create significant inequities across the state of Minnesota.

MACSSA supports funding for the relative caregiver support call line which would provide 24/7 support relative caregivers and assist them with needed resources.



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Approved on: