

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/CS/CS/HB 1083 — Permanency for Children

by Health & Human Services Committee; Appropriations Committee; Children, Families & Seniors Subcommittee; and Reps. Trabulsy, Abbott, and others (CS/CS/SB 1486 by Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee; and Senator Collins)

When child welfare necessitates that the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) remove a child from the home, a series of dependency court proceedings must occur to adjudicate the child dependent, place that child in out-of-home care, and achieve a permanency outcome for the child in the form of reunification, a permanent guardian, adoption, or another permanent living arrangement.

The bill makes several changes to current law to modernize and streamline the dependency system, with particular focus on permanency for youth and young adults. Specifically, the bill:

- Updates background screening language to meet federal requirements to maintain access to Federal Bureau of Investigation databases.
- Creates a process for the commitment of a child whose parents are deceased to the DCF for subsequent adoption.
- Provides flexibility for service of process in termination of parental rights advisory hearings.
- Allows quicker closure of a case when a child was placed with a relative in permanent guardianship but another approved adult that the child knows is listed as an alternate placement in the guardianship assistance program agreement.
- Shifts judicial review of DCF's decision on an adoption application from a separate administrative process to the dependency court.
- Creates a process for emergency postdisposition change of placement from a court ordered placement, instead of using the shelter process, as is currently done.
- Requires that an individual have completed or be in the process of completing an adoptive home study before they may access photos and information of a child available for adoption and also requires youth 12 years of age or older be consulted when creating their adoption profile and photo.
- Requires a court to issue an order approving or disapproving adoption fees over the statutory limits with a written determination of reasonableness.
- Requires adoption entities to quarterly report specified information on private adoptions to the DCF, beginning January 1, 2025.
- Prohibits the placement of adoption related paid advertisements by non-licensed adoption entities in Florida.
- Expands eligibility for adoption incentive to health care practitioners and tax collector employees and increases the award amounts for all eligible individuals.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 110-0