



Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

BILL ANALYSIS

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986

House Bill 4976 (Substitute H-3 as reported without amendment)
House Bill 4977 (Substitute H-1 as reported without amendment)
House Bill 4978 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Representative Marcia Hovey-Wright (H.B. 4976)
Representative Jim Runestad (H.B. 4977)
Representative George T. Darany (H.B. 4978)
House Committee: Families, Children, and Seniors
Senate Committee: Families, Seniors and Human Services

CONTENT

The bills would amend the Foster Care and Adoption Services Act to require the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop and implement policies regarding the provision of services to foster children.

House Bill 4976 (H-3) would do the following:

- Require the DHHS to develop and implement the Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Policy and promote the participation of current and former foster children in developing the Policy.
- Require the Policy to ensure that children placed in foster care received certain services.
- Require the DHHS to maintain a written grievance procedure for foster children to address perceived noncompliance with the Policy.
- Provide that, if a grievance were not resolved, the foster child could request his or her lawyer-guardian ad litem to petition the court for injunctive relief.

The DHHS would have to ensure that the Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Policy was developed, implemented by the supervising agency, and made available to the public. The Policy would have to ensure that children placed in foster care were provided with the following:

- Fair, equal, and respectful treatment, including treatment that did not violate the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act.
- Placement with relatives and siblings, when appropriate, as provided in the Act.
- Inventory and security of the foster child's personal belongings.
- Transition planning, including housing, workforce preparation, financial education, access to personal documents, information regarding secondary education and postsecondary education, and independent living preparation, as age-appropriate.
- Ongoing contact and visits with parents, relatives, and friends, if permitted by the court.
- Access to advocacy services for foster children with disabilities.
- Timely enrollment in school with consistent placement in the same school, when possible.
- Participation in extracurricular activities consistent with the foster child's age and developmental level, as allowed by the supervising agency's resources.
- Access to and receipt of information and services, including necessary medical, emotional, psychological, psychiatric, and educational evaluations and treatment, as soon as practicable after identification of the need for services by the screening and assessment process.
- Access to and participation in religious activities, cultural activities, or both.

- Adequate food, necessities, and shelter, including special dietary needs, school supplies, clothing, and hygiene products.
- Information regarding proposed placement, as age-appropriate.
- A permanency plan, as required by State and Federal law, that was designed to facilitate the permanent placement or return home of a foster child in a timely manner.

The Policy also would have to ensure placement in the least restrictive setting, appropriate to the foster child's needs, free from abuse or excessive physical restraint, discrimination, harassment, corporal punishment, mental anguish, or any other form of physical force or mental deprivation. If discipline were required, and physical restraint had been used by a child caring institution, the child caring institution would have to provide a detailed report of the incident to the DHHS.

The DHHS would have to implement the Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Policy within 90 days after the bill's effective date.

House Bill 4977 (H-1) would require the DHHS to maintain an additional policy that would have to address a foster child's access to the following, as age-appropriate and as mandated by the court:

- Regular contact with all of the foster child's caseworkers, attorneys, and advocates.
- Relevant information regarding a change in the foster child's caseworker or attorney.
- Reasonable notification of hearings.
- Involvement in the foster child's own case plan development and development of a plan for his or her future and aging out of the foster care system.
- Help with understanding the services available to foster children and how to obtain those services.
- A permanent plan for placement and the foster child's participation in the development of that plan.
- Protection of the foster child's privacy and confidentiality regarding his or her case.

House Bill 4978 would require the DHHS to prepare and distribute to foster children information describing the Children's Assurance of Quality Foster Care Policy and the grievance process.

Each of the bills is tie-barred to the other two.

MCL 722.953 (H.B. 4976)
 Proposed MCL 722.958c (H.B. 4977)
 Proposed MCL 722.958d (H.B. 4978)

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

The bills could have a fiscal impact on the State and would have no fiscal impact on local government. As the bills would codify existing Department of Health and Human Services policies, any fiscal impact would be due to increased compliance with foster children's grievance procedures.

Date Completed: 12-2-16

Fiscal Analyst: John Maxwell

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.