

CHILD CARE ORGANIZATIONS (EXCERPT)
Act 116 of 1973

***** 722.124e.added THIS ADDED SECTION IS EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 9, 2015 *****

722.124e.added Legislative findings and declaration; requirement to provide services that conflict with child placing agency's religious beliefs prohibited; adverse action against child placing agency prohibited; information to be provided to applicant; defense in administrative or judicial proceeding; ability of another child placing agency to provide services not limited; definitions.

Sec. 14e. (1) The legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) When it is necessary for a child in this state to be placed with an adoptive or foster family, placing the child in a safe, loving, and supportive home is a paramount goal of this state.

(b) As of the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, there are 105 licensed adoption and foster care agencies in this state that are authorized to participate in and assist families with adoption and foster parent placements of children.

(c) Having as many possible qualified adoption and foster parent agencies in this state is a substantial benefit to the children of this state who are in need of these placement services and to all of the citizens of this state because the more qualified agencies taking part in this process, the greater the likelihood that permanent child placement can be achieved.

(d) As of the effective date of the amendatory act that added this section, the adoption and foster care licensees of this state represent a broad spectrum of organizations and groups, some of which are faith based and some of which are not faith based.

(e) Private child placing agencies, including faith-based child placing agencies, have the right to free exercise of religion under both the state and federal constitutions. Under well-settled principles of constitutional law, this right includes the freedom to abstain from conduct that conflicts with an agency's sincerely held religious beliefs.

(f) Faith-based and non-faith-based child placing agencies have a long and distinguished history of providing adoption and foster care services in this state.

(g) Children and families benefit greatly from the adoption and foster care services provided by faith-based and non-faith-based child placing agencies. Ensuring that faith-based child placing agencies can continue to provide adoption and foster care services will benefit the children and families who receive publicly funded services.

(h) Under well-established department contracting practices, a private child placing agency does not receive public funding with respect to a particular child or particular individuals referred by the department unless that agency affirmatively accepts the referral.

(i) Under well-settled principles of constitutional law distinguishing "private action" from "state action", a private child placing agency does not engage in state action when the agency performs private-adoption or direct-placement services. Similarly, a private child placing agency does not engage in state action relative to a referral for services under a contract with the department before the agency accepts the referral.

(2) To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, a child placing agency shall not be required to provide any services if those services conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child placing agency.

(3) To the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law, the state or a local unit of government shall not take an adverse action against a child placing agency on the basis that the child placing agency has declined or will decline to provide any services that conflict with, or provide any services under circumstances that conflict with, the child placing agency's sincerely held religious beliefs contained in a written policy, statement of faith, or other document adhered to by the child placing agency.

(4) If a child placing agency declines to provide any services under subsection (2), the child placing agency shall provide in writing information advising the applicant of the department's website, the Michigan adoption resource exchange or similar subsequently utilized websites, and a list of adoption or foster care service providers with contact information and shall do at least 1 of the following:

(a) Promptly refer the applicant to another child placing agency that is willing and able to provide the declined services.

(b) Promptly refer the applicant to the webpage on the department's website that identifies other licensed child placement agencies.

(5) A child placing agency may assert a defense in an administrative or judicial proceeding based on this

section.

(6) If a child placing agency declines to provide any services under subsection (2), the child placing agency's decision does not limit the ability of another child placing agency to provide those services.

(7) For the purpose of this section:

(a) "Adverse action" includes, but is not limited to, denying a child placing agency's application for funding, refusing to renew the child placing agency's funding, canceling the child placing agency's funding, declining to enter into a contract with the child placing agency, refusing to renew a contract with the child placing agency, canceling a contract with the child placing agency, declining to issue a license to the child placing agency, refusing to renew the child placing agency's license, canceling the child placing agency's license, taking an enforcement action against a child placing agency, discriminating against the child placing agency in regard to participation in a government program, and taking any action that materially alters the terms or conditions of the child placing agency's funding, contract, or license.

(b) "Services" includes any service that a child placing agency provides, except foster care case management and adoption services provided under a contract with the department.

History: Add. 2015, Act 53, Eff. Sept. 9, 2015.

Compiler's note: Enacting section 1 of Act 53 of 2015 provides:

"Enacting section 1. It is the intent of the legislature to protect child placing agencies' free exercise of religion protected by the United States constitution and the state constitution of 1963. This amendatory act is not intended to limit or deny any person's right to adopt a child or participate in foster care."