

Prior law provided that "safety plan" means a short-term plan for the purpose of assuring a child's immediate health and safety by imposing conditions for the continued placement of the child with a custodian and terms for contact between the child and his parents or other persons.

New law provides that "safety plan" means a plan for the purpose of assuring a child's health and safety by imposing conditions for the child to safely remain in the home, or, after a child has been removed from the home, for the continued placement of the child with a custodian and terms for contact between the child and his parents or other persons.

Prior law provided that reports of high and intermediate levels of risk shall be investigated promptly. The investigation shall include a preliminary investigation as to the nature, extent, and cause of the abuse or neglect and the identity of the person actually responsible for the child's condition. The preliminary investigation shall include an interview with the child and his parent or parents or other caretaker and shall include consideration of all available medical information provided to the department pertaining to the child's condition.

Prior law provided that such preliminary investigation shall also include an immediate assessment of any existing visitation or custody order or agreement involving the alleged perpetrator and the child.

Prior law provided the department shall request a temporary restraining order pursuant to prior law, or protective order pursuant to prior law if the department determines that any such previously ordered visitation or custody would put the child's health and safety at risk.

Prior law provided that the admission of the investigator on school premises or access to the child in school shall not be denied by school personnel. However, the request for a temporary restraining order or a protective order in accordance with this prior law shall not independently confer exclusive jurisdiction on the juvenile court in accordance with prior law.

New law provides that the department shall request a temporary restraining order pursuant to prior law, or protective order pursuant to prior law, or an instanter safety plan order pursuant to prior law, if the department determines that any such previously ordered visitation or custody would put the child's health and safety at risk.

Prior law provided that after investigation, the local child protection unit shall make one of the following determinations: the report appears to be justified, in that there is evidence of child abuse, or neglect, and a protective order would eliminate the need for removal of the child in order to protect him from further abuse, in which case it may apply for a temporary restraining order or protective order authorized by prior law.

New law retains prior law and adds an instanter safety plan order as an additional option prior to removal of a child in need of care.

Prior law provided that a peace officer, district attorney, or employee of the local child protection unit of the department may file a verified complaint alleging facts showing that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is in need of care and that emergency removal is necessary to secure the child's protection.

New law includes the implementation of a safety plan as an option available to a peace officer, district attorney, or employee of the local child protection unit of the department to include in a verified complaint alleging facts showing that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is in need of care to secure the child's protection.

Prior law provided that after the complaint has been filed, the parent is without authority to place the child with any individual or institution except the department until legal custody is returned to the parent.

New law provides that after the complaint has been filed, the parent is without authority to place the child with any individual or institution except the department until legal custody is returned to the parent or the safety plan is terminated.

Prior law provided that the court shall immediately determine whether reasonable efforts have been made by the department to prevent or eliminate the need for the child's removal, including whether the department has requested a temporary restraining order pursuant to prior law or protective order pursuant to present law.

Prior law provided that in making and determining reasonable efforts, the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concern. However, the court may authorize the removal of the child even if the department's efforts have not been reasonable.

New law retains prior law and provides that if removal of the child is requested, the court shall immediately determine whether reasonable efforts have been made by the department to prevent or eliminate the need for the child's removal, including whether the department has requested a temporary restraining order pursuant to prior law, a protective order pursuant to prior law, or a safety plan order pursuant to new law.

Prior law provided that upon presentation of the verified complaint, the court shall immediately determine whether emergency removal is necessary to secure the child's protection.

New law adds whether the issuance of a safety plan order is necessary to secure the child's protection.

Prior law provided that if the court determines that the child's welfare cannot be safeguarded without removal, the court shall immediately issue a written instanter order directing that the child be placed in the provisional custody of a suitable relative or other suitable individual capable of protecting the health and safety of the child or taken into the custody of the state.

Prior law provided that the order shall contain written findings of fact supporting the necessity for the child's removal in order to safeguard his welfare. If the court determines that emergency removal is not necessary to secure the child's protection, the court shall issue a written order denying the request for custody.

Prior law provided that if custody is given to a suitable relative or other suitable individual, the safety plan shall be made an order of the court and shall direct the provisional custodian to adhere to the conditions of the safety plan. The safety plan shall set forth conditions of contact with parents or other third parties.

New law removes the provision that if the court determines that emergency removal is not necessary to secure the child's protection, the court shall issue a written order denying the request for custody.

New law provides that if, upon request by the state, the court determines that with the issuance of a safety plan order that the child's welfare can be safeguarded without removal, the court shall immediately issue a written instanter order directing compliance with the terms of the safety plan.

New law provides that the order shall contain written findings of fact supporting the necessity for the safety plan to safeguard his welfare. The safety plan shall set forth conditions as determined by or agreed upon by the state as necessary for the protection of the child's health and safety while remaining in the home.

New law provides that if the court determines that emergency removal or the issuance of a safety plan order is not necessary to secure the child's protection, the court shall issue a written order denying the request for custody or for the implementation of a safety plan.

New law provides that any peace officer having territorial jurisdiction over the child is authorized to serve a summons upon a parent or caretaker, commanding him to appear at court for a continued custody or continued safety plan hearing.

Prior law provided that the summons shall expressly notify the parent or caretaker that the court may issue a binding order in his absence if he fails to appear. A copy of the summons shall be filed in the record as proof of service.

New law provides that an employee of the local child protection unit shall provide written notice to the parents or caretaker of the date, time, and location of the continued custody or continued safety plan hearing. New law retains prior law and adds a continued safety plan.

New law provides that in exceptional circumstances, the facts supporting the issuance of an instanter order and the exceptional circumstances may be relayed orally, including telephonically, to the judge and his order directing that a child be taken into custody or, upon request by the state, that a safety plan order be implemented may be issued orally.

New law provides that in such cases, an affidavit containing the information previously relayed orally, including telephonically, shall be filed with the clerk of the court within 24 hours and a written order shall be issued.

New law provides that the written order shall include the court's findings of fact supporting the necessity for the child's removal or the implementation of a safety plan order in order to safeguard his welfare and, if the child has been removed, shall determine the child's custodian in accordance with prior law.

New law provides that if the court ordered the implementation of a safety plan, the department shall promptly notify the parents or caretaker of the nature of the allegations, the conditions of the safety plan, and the time and place of a continued safety plan order hearing.

Prior law provided that if a child is not released to the care of his parents, a hearing shall be held by the court within three days after the child's removal or entry into custody.

New law provides that if a safety plan has been ordered, a hearing shall be held by the court within three days from the issuance of the safety plan order, unless the parents are in agreement with the safety plan. The parents' signature on the safety plan shall constitute evidence of their agreement with the plan.

New law provides that if it appears from the record that the parent cannot be found or has been served a summons or notified by the department to appear at the continued custody or continued safety plan hearing and fails to appear at the hearing, then the hearing may be held in the parent's absence.

New law provides that at this hearing, the state has the burden to prove the existence of a ground for continued custody or the continued implementation of a safety plan pursuant to prior law.

New law provides that the court may authorize, with the consent of the state, continued implementation of a safety plan prior to the adjudication if there are reasonable grounds to believe the child is in need of care and that the continued implementation of the safety plan is necessary for his safety and protection. The safety plan shall continue to set forth conditions as determined or agreed upon by the state as necessary for the protection of the child's health and safety while remaining in the home.

Prior law provided that the court shall order the appointment of counsel for the child and the appointment of a curator for any parent who is an absentee. The court may order the appointment of counsel for the parents or the appointment of a court-appointed special advocate.

New law provides that if the court finds that the child can safely remain in or return to the home with the implementation of a safety plan developed and agreed upon by the state pending adjudication, the court may order compliance with the conditions of the safety plan.

New law provides that the court shall order the appointment of counsel for the child and the appointment of a curator for any parent who is an absentee. The court may order the appointment of counsel for the parents or the appointment of a court-appointed special advocate.

Prior law provided that if a child is continued in custody prior to adjudication, or if a protective order is issued, a petition requesting that the child be adjudicated in need of care shall be filed within 30 days of the hearing to determine continued custody.

New law provides that if the child remains in the home and a safety plan order has been issued, a petition requesting that the child be adjudicated in need of care shall be filed within 45 days of the issuance of the safety plan order.

Prior law provided that if no petition is filed within the applicable time period, the child shall be returned to the parent. New law retains prior law and adds that the safety plan shall automatically be terminated.

Effective August 1, 2014.

(Amends Ch.C. Arts. 603(27), 612(A)(2), 615(B)(2), 619, 620, 624(A), (C)(1) and (D), 625(A)(intro para) 627(E) and (F), and 632(A) and (C); adds Ch.C. Arts. 626(E) and 627(G))