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Senate Bill 88 Child Placement; Diligent Search

Version A Sectional Analysis

February 14, 2025

Section 1: Adds language to AS 47.10.080(s) to clarify that foster parents may request a hearing regarding the Department of Family and Community Services' decision to transfer a child out of the foster home. Clarifies that while foster parents may request hearings regarding placement under AS 47.10.080(s), they are not parties to child in need of aid cases. Adds language to allow a foster parent to schedule at their own cost medical or psychological evaluations for a child for the purpose of providing evidence during a hearing regarding a proposed transfer.

Section 2: Amends AS 47.10.084(d) to allow foster parents to request and receive the medical records of a child under their care.

Section 3: Amends AS 47.10.088(i) to allow for determination of the best interest of the child when making decisions regarding permanent placement of a child. This section also adds language regarding determination of best interest, including whether a child is under six years old and has been in the care of the foster family for at least 12 consecutive months. Adds direction to follow the new process in AS 47.10.145 when OCS is searching for family when determining permanent placement of a child.

Section 4: Adds language to AS 47.10.142(i) that conforms to the changes in Section 4.

Section 5: Adds a new section, AS 47.10.145, that requires the Department search for adult family members and family friends suitable for placement of a child within 30 days of the State removing the child from the home, describes what constitutes a diligent statutorily required search, and requires ongoing searches until excused to do so by the court or the child is in a permanent placement.

Section 6: Adds language to AS 47.14.100(e) allowing for consideration of placement with a foster family when an adult family member has also expressed interest for children who are under six years old and have been in the care of that foster family for at least 12 consecutive months if it is in the best interest of the child. Also amends language to conform to the change in Section 4.

Section 7: Amends AS 47.14.100(m) to add that consideration of the best interest of a child may not include consideration of poverty of the family member who has requested placement or inadequate or crowded housing. Adds language that non-parties requesting hearings under this and other sections of this statute are not eligible for publicly appointed legal counsel.

Section 8: Adds a new subsections that would require the Department to assist adult family member's and family friend's waivers to licensing requirements under AS 47.32.032 and defines "department" as the Department of Family and Community Services.

Section 9: Provides for a January 1, 2026 effective date.