

**SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 408(JUD)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/5/06

Referred: Finance

Sponsor(s): HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to the standard of proof required to terminate parental rights in child-  
2 in-need-of-aid proceedings; relating to a healing arts practitioner's duty to report a child  
3 adversely affected by or withdrawing from exposure to a controlled substance or  
4 alcohol; relating to disclosure of confidential or privileged information about certain  
5 children by the Departments of Health and Social Services and Administration; relating  
6 to permanent fund dividends paid to foster children and adopted children; relating to  
7 child abuse or neglect investigations and training; amending Rule 18, Alaska Child in  
8 Need of Aid Rules of Procedure; and providing for an effective date."

9 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

10 \* **Section 1.** AS 47.10.086(c) is amended to read:

11 (c) The court may determine that reasonable efforts of the type described in

12 (a) of this section are not required if the court has found by clear and convincing [A

1 PREPONDERANCE OF THE] evidence that

2 (1) the parent or guardian has subjected the child to circumstances that  
3 pose a substantial risk to the child's health or safety; these circumstances include  
4 abandonment, sexual abuse, torture, chronic mental injury, or chronic physical harm;

5 (2) the parent or guardian has

6 (A) committed homicide under AS 11.41.100 - 11.41.130 of a  
7 parent of the child or of a child;

8 (B) aided or abetted, attempted, conspired, or solicited under  
9 AS 11.16 or AS 11.31 to commit a homicide described in (A) of this  
10 paragraph;

11 (C) committed an assault that is a felony under AS 11.41.200 -  
12 11.41.220 and results in serious physical injury to a child; or

13 (D) committed the conduct described in (A) - (C) of this  
14 paragraph that violated a law or ordinance of another jurisdiction having  
15 elements similar to an offense described in (A) - (C) of this paragraph;

16 (3) the parent or guardian has, during the 12 months preceding the  
17 permanency hearing, failed to comply with a court order to participate in family  
18 support services;

19 (4) the department has conducted a reasonably diligent search over a  
20 time period of at least three months for an unidentified or absent parent and has failed  
21 to identify and locate the parent;

22 (5) the parent or guardian is the sole caregiver of the child and the  
23 parent or guardian has a mental illness or mental deficiency of such nature and  
24 duration that, according to the statement of a psychologist or physician, the parent or  
25 guardian will be incapable of caring for the child without placing the child at  
26 substantial risk of physical or mental injury even if the department were to provide  
27 family support services to the parent or guardian for 12 months;

28 (6) the parent or guardian has previously been convicted of a crime  
29 involving a child in this state or in another jurisdiction and, after the conviction, the  
30 child was returned to the custody of the parent or guardian and later removed because  
31 of an additional substantiated report of physical or sexual abuse by the parent or

1 guardian;

2 (7) a child has suffered substantial physical harm as the result of  
3 abusive or neglectful conduct by the parent or guardian or by a person known by the  
4 parent or guardian and the parent or guardian knew or reasonably should have known  
5 that the person was abusing the child;

6 (8) the parental rights of the parent have been terminated with respect  
7 to another child because of child abuse or neglect, the parent has not remedied the  
8 conditions or conduct that led to the termination of parental rights, and the parent has  
9 demonstrated an inability to protect the child from substantial harm or the risk of  
10 substantial harm;

11 (9) the child has been removed from the child's home on at least two  
12 previous occasions, family support services were offered or provided to the parent or  
13 guardian at those times, and the parent or guardian has demonstrated an inability to  
14 protect the child from substantial harm or the risk of substantial harm; or

15 (10) the parent or guardian is incarcerated and is unavailable to care  
16 for the child during a significant period of the child's minority, considering the child's  
17 age and need for care by an adult.

18 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 47.10.088(a) is amended to read:

19 (a) Except as provided in AS 47.10.080(o), the rights and responsibilities of  
20 the parent regarding the child may be terminated for purposes of freeing a child for  
21 adoption or other permanent placement if the court finds

22 [(1)] by clear and convincing evidence that

23 (1) [(A)] the child has been subjected to conduct or conditions  
24 described in AS 47.10.011;

25 (2) [AND (B)] the parent

26 (A) [(i)] has not remedied the conduct or conditions in the  
27 home that place the child at substantial risk of harm; or

28 (B) [(ii)] has failed, within a reasonable time, to remedy the  
29 conduct or conditions in the home that place the child in substantial risk so that  
30 returning the child to the parent would place the child at substantial risk of  
31 physical or mental injury; and

1                   **(3)** [(2) BY PREPONDERANCE OF THE EVIDENCE THAT] the  
 2 department has complied with the provisions of AS 47.10.086 concerning reasonable  
 3 efforts.

4 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 47.10.088(b) is amended to read:

5                   (b) In making a determination under **(a)(2)** [(a)(1)(B)] of this section, the court  
 6 may consider any fact relating to the best interests of the child, including

7                   (1) the likelihood of returning the child to the parent within a  
 8 reasonable time based on the child's age or needs;

9                   (2) the amount of effort by the parent to remedy the conduct or the  
 10 conditions in the home;

11                   (3) the harm caused to the child;

12                   (4) the likelihood that the harmful conduct will continue; and

13                   (5) the history of conduct by or conditions created by the parent.

14 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 47.10.092 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

15                   (f) Each department shall respond to a request made by an official identified  
 16 under (a) of this section within five working days after receiving the request, or by a  
 17 later date specified in the request, by providing access to all or part of the information  
 18 requested or by providing the specific citation to a federal or state law that prohibits  
 19 disclosure of all or part of the information requested.

20 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 47.10.093(i) is amended to read:

21                   (i) The commissioner of health and social services or the commissioner's  
 22 designee or the commissioner of administration or the commissioner's designee, as  
 23 appropriate, may disclose to the public, upon request, confidential information, as set  
 24 out in (j) of this section, when

25                   (1) the parent or guardian of a child who is the subject of **one or more**  
 26 **reports** [A REPORT] of harm under AS 47.17 has made a public disclosure  
 27 concerning the department's involvement with the family;

28                   (2) the alleged perpetrator named in **one or more reports** [A  
 29 REPORT] of harm under AS 47.17 has been charged with a crime concerning the  
 30 alleged abuse or neglect; or

31                   (3) **abuse or neglect** [A REPORT OF HARM UNDER AS 47.17] has

1           resulted in the fatality or near fatality of a [THAT] child who is the subject of one or  
 2           more reports of harm under AS 47.17.

3           \* **Sec. 6.** AS 47.10.093(j) is repealed and reenacted to read:

4                   (j) The department may publicly disclose information pertaining to a child or  
 5           an alleged perpetrator named in a report of harm described under (i) of this section, or  
 6           pertaining to a household member of the child or the alleged perpetrator, if the  
 7           information relates to a determination, if any, made by the department regarding the  
 8           nature and validity of a report of harm under AS 47.17 or to the department's activities  
 9           arising from the department's investigation of the report. The commissioner or the  
 10           commissioner's designee

11                           (1) shall withhold disclosure of the child's name, picture, or other  
 12           information that would readily lead to the identification of the child if the department  
 13           determines that the disclosure would be contrary to the best interests of the child, the  
 14           child's siblings, or other children in the child's household; or

15                           (2) after consultation with a prosecuting attorney, shall withhold  
 16           disclosure of information that would reasonably be expected to interfere with a  
 17           criminal investigation or proceeding or a criminal defendant's right to a fair trial in a  
 18           criminal proceeding.

19           \* **Sec. 7.** AS 47.10 is amended by adding a new section to read:

20                   **Sec. 47.10.115. Permanent fund dividend.** (a) The department shall annually  
 21           apply for a permanent fund dividend and retain in trust under AS 43.23.015(e) for the  
 22           benefit of the child the dividend and accrued interest on the dividend if the child is in  
 23           the custody of the department when the application is due.

24                   (b) The department may not distribute the proceeds of a trust under this  
 25           section unless

26                           (1) the child has reached 18 years of age and is no longer in the  
 27           custody of the department;

28                           (2) the child has been adopted and one year has elapsed since the  
 29           adoption;

30                           (3) the child is no longer in the custody of the department and the child  
 31           has been reunited with the child's parents; or

1 (4) ordered to do so by the court in the best interest of the child.

2 (c) Notwithstanding (b)(1) - (3) of this section, the department may not  
3 distribute the proceeds of a trust under this section if the payment would be made to a  
4 guardian of a child who had been in the custody of the department immediately before  
5 the establishment of the guardianship, unless the guardianship was established under  
6 AS 13.26.090 - 13.26.155.

7 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 47.17 is amended by adding a new section to read:

8 **Sec. 47.17.024. Duties of practitioners of the healing arts.** (a) A practitioner  
9 of the healing arts involved in the delivery or care of a child who the practitioner  
10 determines has been adversely affected by, or is withdrawing from exposure to, a  
11 controlled substance or alcohol shall immediately notify the nearest office of the  
12 department of the child's condition.

13 (b) In this section, "controlled substance" has the meaning given in  
14 AS 11.71.900, but does not include a substance lawfully taken under a prescription  
15 from a health care provider who is authorized to prescribe the substance.

16 \* **Sec. 9.** AS 47.17.033 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

17 (j) The training required under (c) of this section must address the  
18 constitutional and statutory rights of children and families that apply throughout the  
19 investigation and department intervention. The training must inform department  
20 representatives of the applicable legal duties to protect the rights and safety of a child  
21 and the child's family.

22 (k) During a joint investigation by the department and a law enforcement  
23 agency, the department shall coordinate an investigation of child abuse or neglect with  
24 the law enforcement agency to ensure that the possibility of a criminal charge is not  
25 compromised.

26 (l) Unless a law enforcement official prohibits or restricts notification under  
27 (k) of this section, at the time of initial contact with a person alleged to have  
28 committed child abuse or neglect, the department shall notify the person of the  
29 specific complaint or allegation made against the person, except that the identity of the  
30 complainant may not be revealed.

31 \* **Sec. 10.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to

1 read:

2           INDIRECT COURT RULE AMENDMENT. Sections 1 - 3 of this Act have the effect  
3 of amending Rule 18, Alaska Child in Need of Aid Rules of Procedure, relating to the  
4 termination of parental rights proceedings by increasing the standard of proof concerning  
5 some elements from proof by a preponderance of the evidence to proof by clear and  
6 convincing evidence.

7       \* **Sec. 11.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
8 read:

9           APPLICABILITY OF SECS. 1 - 3 OF THIS ACT. Sections 1 - 3 of this Act apply to  
10 a child-in-need-of-aid proceeding that is pending before the court, that is on appeal to the  
11 court, or for which the time for appeal to the court has not yet passed on or after the effective  
12 date of this Act.

13       \* **Sec. 12.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
14 read:

15           CONDITIONAL EFFECT. Sections 1 - 3 of this Act take effect only if sec. 10 of this  
16 Act receives the two-thirds majority vote of each house required by art. IV, sec. 15,  
17 Constitution of the State of Alaska.

18       \* **Sec. 13.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).