

CHAPTER 257

CHILDREN; CUSTODY; LEGITIMACY

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257.05 IMPORTATION.

Subdivision 1. No person, except as provided by subdivision 2, shall bring or send into the state any child for the purpose of placing the child out or procuring the child's adoption without first obtaining the consent of the commissioner of human services, and such person shall conform to all rules of the commissioner of human services and laws of the state of Minnesota relating to protection of children in foster care. Before any child shall be brought or sent into the state for the purpose of being placed in foster care, the person bringing or sending the child into the state shall first notify the commissioner of human services of the person's intention, and shall obtain from the commissioner of human services a certificate stating that the home in which the child is to be placed is, in the opinion of the commissioner of human services, a suitable adoptive home for the child if legal adoption is contemplated or that the home meets the commissioner's requirements for licensing of foster homes if legal adoption is not contemplated. The commissioner is responsible for protecting the child's interests so long as the child remains within the state and until the child reaches the age of 18 or is legally adopted. Notice to the commissioner shall state the name, age, and personal description of the child, and the name and address of the person with whom the child is to be placed, and such other information about the child and the foster home as may be required by the commissioner.

[For text of subd 2, see M.S.1990]

History: 1991 c 326 s 11

257.071 CHILDREN IN FOSTER HOMES; PLACEMENT; REVIEW.

[For text of subd 1, see M.S.1990]

Subd. 1a. **Protection of heritage or background.** The authorized child placing agency shall ensure that the child's best interests are met by giving due consideration of the child's race or ethnic heritage in making a family foster care placement. The authorized child placing agency shall place a child, released by court order or by voluntary release by the parent or parents, in a family foster home selected by following the preferences described in section 260.181, subdivision 3. In instances where a child from a family of color is placed in a family foster home of a different racial or ethnic background, the local social service agency shall review the placement after 30 days and each 30 days thereafter for the first six months to determine if there is another available placement that would better satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.

[For text of subs 2 to 7, see M.S.1990]

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 19

OMBUDSPERSON FOR FAMILIES

257.0755 OFFICE OF OMBUDSPERSON; CREATION; QUALIFICATIONS; FUNCTION.

An ombudsperson for families shall be appointed to operate independently but under the auspices of each of the following groups: the Indian Affairs Council, the Spanish-Speaking Affairs Council, the Council on Black Minnesotans, and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. Each of these groups shall select its own ombudsperson subject to final approval by the advisory board established under section 257.0768. Each ombudsperson shall serve at the pleasure of the advisory board, shall be in the unclassified service, shall be selected without regard to political affiliation, and shall be a person highly competent and qualified to analyze questions of law, administration, and public policy regarding the protection and placement of children from families of color. In addition, the ombudsperson must be experienced in dealing with communities of color and knowledgeable about the needs of those communities. No individual may serve as ombudsperson while holding any other public office. The ombudsperson shall have the authority to investigate decisions, acts, and other matters of an agency, program, or facility providing protection or placement services to children of color.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 20

257.076 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Scope.** For the purposes of sections 257.0755 to 257.0768, the following terms shall have the meanings given them in this section.

Subd. 2. **Agency.** "Agency" means the divisions, officials, or employees of the state departments of human services and health and local district courts or a designated county social service agency as defined in section 256G.02, subdivision 7, engaged in providing child protection and placement services for children. "Agency" also means any individual, service, or program providing child protection or placement services in coordination with or under contract to any other entity specified in this subdivision.

Subd. 3. **Communities of color.** "Communities of color" means the following: American Indian, Hispanic-Latino, Asian-Pacific, African, and African-American communities.

Subd. 4. **Compadrazgo.** "Compadrazgo" is a kinship institution within the Hispanic-Latino community used as a means of parenting and caring for children from birth to adulthood.

Subd. 5. **Family of color.** "Family of color" means any family with a child under the age of 18 who is identified by one or both parents or another trusted adult to be of American Indian, Hispanic-Latino, Asian-Pacific, African, or African-American descent.

Subd. 6. **Facility.** "Facility" means any entity required to be licensed under chapter 245A.

Subd. 7. **Trusted adult.** "Trusted adult" means an individual recognized by the child's parent or legal guardian, the child's community, or both, as speaking for the child's best interest. The term includes compadrazgo and other individuals with a kinship or community relationship with the child.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 21

257.0761 ORGANIZATION OF OFFICE OF OMBUDSPERSON.

Subdivision 1. **Staff; unclassified status; retirement.** The ombudsperson for each group specified in section 257.0755 may select, appoint, and compensate out of available funds the assistants and employees as deemed necessary to discharge responsibilities. All employees, except the secretarial and clerical staff, shall serve at the pleasure of the ombudsperson in the unclassified service. The ombudsperson and full-time staff shall be members of the Minnesota state retirement association.

Subd. 2. **Delegation to staff.** The ombudsperson may delegate to staff members any

of the ombudsperson's authority or duties except the duty of formally making recommendations to an administrative agency or reports to the office of the governor, or to the legislature.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 22

257.0762 DUTIES AND POWERS.

Subdivision 1. Duties. (a) Each ombudsperson shall monitor agency compliance with all laws governing child protection and placement, as they impact on children of color. In particular, the ombudsperson shall monitor agency compliance with sections 256F.07, subdivision 3a; 256F.08; 257.072; 257.075; 257.35 to 257.3579; and 260.181, subdivision 3.

(b) The ombudsperson shall work with local state courts to ensure that:

(1) court officials, public policymakers, and service providers are trained in cultural diversity. The ombudsperson shall document and monitor court activities in order to heighten awareness of diverse belief systems and family relationships;

(2) experts from the appropriate community of color including tribal advocates are used as court advocates and are consulted in placement decisions that involve children of color;

(3) guardians ad litem and other individuals from communities of color are recruited, trained, and used in court proceedings to advocate on behalf of children of color; and

(4) training programs for bilingual workers are provided.

Subd. 2. Powers. In carrying out the duties in subdivision 1, each ombudsperson has the power to:

(1) prescribe the methods by which complaints are to be made, reviewed, and acted upon;

(2) determine the scope and manner of investigations to be made;

(3) investigate, upon a complaint or upon personal initiative, any action of any agency;

(4) request and be given access to any information in the possession of any agency deemed necessary for the discharge of responsibilities. The ombudsperson is authorized to set reasonable deadlines within which an agency must respond to requests for information. Data obtained from any agency under this clause shall retain the classification which it had under section 13.02 and shall be maintained and disseminated by the ombudsperson according to chapter 13;

(5) examine the records and documents of an agency;

(6) enter and inspect, during normal business hours, premises within the control of an agency; and

(7) subpoena any agency personnel to appear, testify, or produce documentary or other evidence which the ombudsperson deems relevant to a matter under inquiry, and may petition the appropriate state court to seek enforcement with the subpoena; provided, however, that any witness at a hearing or before an investigation as herein provided, shall possess the same privileges reserved to such a witness in the courts or under the laws of this state. The ombudsperson may compel nonagency individuals to testify or produce evidence according to procedures developed by the advisory board.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 23

257.0763 MATTERS APPROPRIATE FOR REVIEW.

(a) In selecting matters for review, an ombudsperson should give particular attention to actions of an agency, facility, or program that:

(1) may be contrary to law or rule;

(2) may be unreasonable, unfair, oppressive, or inconsistent with a policy or order of an agency, facility, or program;

(3) may result in abuse or neglect of a child;

(4) may disregard the rights of a child or other individual served by an agency or facility; or

(5) may be unclear or inadequately explained, when reasons should have been revealed.

(b) An ombudsperson shall, in selecting matters for review, inform other interested agencies in order to avoid duplicating other investigations or regulatory efforts, including activities undertaken by a tribal organization under the authority of sections 257.35 to 257.3579.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 24

257.0764 COMPLAINTS.

An ombudsperson may receive a complaint from any source concerning an action of an agency, facility, or program. After completing a review, the ombudsperson shall inform the complainant, agency, facility, or program. Services to a child shall not be unfavorably altered as a result of an investigation or complaint. An agency, facility, or program shall not retaliate or take adverse action, as defined in section 626.556, subdivision 4a, paragraph (c), against an individual who, in good faith, makes a complaint or assists in an investigation.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 25

257.0765 RECOMMENDATIONS TO AGENCY.

(a) If, after reviewing a complaint or conducting an investigation and considering the response of an agency, facility, or program and any other pertinent material, the ombudsperson determines that the complaint has merit or the investigation reveals a problem, the ombudsperson may recommend that the agency, facility, or program:

(1) consider the matter further;

(2) modify or cancel its actions;

(3) alter a rule, order, or internal policy;

(4) explain more fully the action in question; or

(5) take other action as authorized under section 257.0762.

(b) At the ombudsperson's request, the agency, facility, or program shall, within a reasonable time, inform the ombudsperson about the action taken on the recommendation or the reasons for not complying with it.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 26

257.0766 RECOMMENDATIONS AND PUBLIC REPORTS.

Subdivision 1. **Specific reports.** An ombudsperson may send conclusions and suggestions concerning any matter reviewed to the governor and shall provide copies of all reports to the advisory board and to the groups specified in section 257.0768, subdivision 1. Before making public a conclusion or recommendation that expressly or implicitly criticizes an agency, facility, program, or any person, the ombudsperson shall inform the governor and the affected agency, facility, program, or person concerning the conclusion or recommendation. When sending a conclusion or recommendation to the governor that is adverse to an agency, facility, program, or any person, the ombudsperson shall include any statement of reasonable length made by that agency, facility, program, or person in defense or mitigation of the ombudsperson's conclusion or recommendation.

Subd. 2. **General reports.** In addition to whatever conclusions or recommendations the ombudsperson may make to the governor on an ad hoc basis, the ombudsperson shall at the end of each year report to the governor concerning the exercise of the ombudsperson's functions during the preceding year.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 27

257.0767 CIVIL ACTIONS.

The ombudsperson and designees are not civilly liable for any action taken under sections 257.0755 to 257.0768 if the action was taken in good faith, was within the scope of the ombudsperson's authority, and did not constitute willful or reckless misconduct.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 28

257.0768 OMBUDSPERSON'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Subdivision 1. **Membership.** The appointment of each ombudsperson is subject to approval by an advisory committee consisting of no more than 17 members. Members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the following groups: the Indian Affairs Council; the Spanish-Speaking Affairs Council; the Council on Black Minnesotans; and the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans. The committee shall provide advice and counsel to each ombudsperson.

Subd. 2. **Compensation; chair.** Members do not receive compensation but are entitled to receive reimbursement for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred. The members shall designate four rotating chairpersons to serve annually at the pleasure of the members.

Subd. 3. **Meetings.** The committee shall meet at least four times a year at the request of its chair or the ombudspersons.

Subd. 4. **Duties.** The committee shall advise and assist the ombudspersons in selecting matters for attention; developing policies, plans, and programs to carry out the ombudspersons' functions and powers; establishing protocols for working with the communities of color; developing procedures for the ombudspersons' use of the subpoena power to compel testimony and evidence from nonagency individuals; and making reports and recommendations for changes designed to improve standards of competence, efficiency, justice, and protection of rights. The committee shall function as an advisory body.

Subd. 5. **Terms, compensation, removal, and expiration.** The membership terms, compensation, and removal of members of the committee and the filling of membership vacancies are governed by section 15.0575.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 29

257.0769 FUNDING FOR THE OMBUDSPERSON PROGRAM.

(a) Money is appropriated from the special fund authorized by section 256.01, subdivision 2, clause (15), to the Indian Affairs Council for the purposes of sections 257.0755 to 257.0768.

(b) Money is appropriated from the special fund authorized by section 256.01, subdivision 2, clause (15), to the Spanish-speaking Affairs Council for the purposes of sections 257.0755 to 257.0768.

(c) Money is appropriated from the special fund authorized by section 256.01, subdivision 2, clause (15), to the Council of Black Minnesotans for the purposes of sections 257.0755 to 257.0768.

(d) Money is appropriated from the special fund authorized by section 256.01, subdivision 2, clause (15), to the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans for the purposes of sections 257.0755 to 257.0768.

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 30

257.352 SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY AND PRIVATE LICENSED CHILD PLACING AGENCY NOTICE TO TRIBES.

[For text of subd 1, see M.S.1990]

Subd. 2. **Agency notice of potential out-of-home placement.** When a local social service agency or private child placing agency determines that an Indian child is in a

dependent or other condition that could lead to an out-of-home placement and requires the continued involvement of the agency with the child for a period in excess of 30 days, the agency shall send notice of the condition and of the initial steps taken to remedy it to the Indian child's tribal social service agency within seven days of the determination. At this and any subsequent stage of its involvement with an Indian child, the agency shall, upon request, give the tribal social service agency full cooperation including access to all files concerning the child. If the files contain confidential or private data, the agency may require execution of an agreement with the tribal social service agency that the tribal social service agency shall maintain the data according to statutory provisions applicable to the data. This subdivision applies whenever the court transfers legal custody of an Indian child under section 260.185, subdivision 1, paragraph (c), clause (1), (2), or (3) following an adjudication for a misdemeanor-level delinquent act.

[For text of subs 3 and 4, see M.S.1990]

History: 1991 c 292 art 3 s 31

257.57 DETERMINATION OF FATHER AND CHILD RELATIONSHIP; WHO MAY BRING ACTION; WHEN ACTION MAY BE BROUGHT.

[For text of subd 1, see M.S.1990]

Subd. 2. The child, the mother, or personal representative of the child, the public authority chargeable by law with the support of the child, the personal representative or a parent of the mother if the mother has died or is a minor, a man alleged or alleging himself to be the father, or the personal representative or a parent of the alleged father if the alleged father has died or is a minor may bring an action:

(1) at any time for the purpose of declaring the existence of the father and child relationship presumed under section 257.55, subdivision 1, clause (d), (e), or (f), or the nonexistence of the father and child relationship presumed under clause (d) of that subdivision;

(2) for the purpose of declaring the nonexistence of the father and child relationship presumed under section 257.55, subdivision 1, clause (e) only if the action is brought within three years after the date of the execution of the declaration; or

(3) for the purpose of declaring the nonexistence of the father and child relationship presumed under section 257.55, subdivision 1, paragraph (f), only if the action is brought within three years after the party bringing the action, or the party's attorney of record, has been provided the blood test results.

[For text of subs 3 to 6, see M.S.1990]

History: 1991 c 292 art 5 s 69