WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §49-4-601A

§49-4-601a. Preference of child placement.

When a child is removed from his or her home, placement preference is to be given to relatives or fictive kin of the child. If a child requires out-of-home care, placement of a child with a relative is the least restrictive alternative living arrangement. The department must diligently search for relatives of the child and fictive kin within the first days of a child's removal and must identify and provide notice of the child's need for a placement to relatives and fictive kin who are willing to act as a foster or kinship parent.

(1) After a petition alleging abuse and neglect of a child is filed, the department shall commence a search for every relative and fictive kin of the child.

(2) No later than seven calendar days after the petition for removal has been filed, the department shall file, with the court, a list of all of the relatives and fictive kin of the child known to the department at the time of the filing, whether or not those persons have expressed a willingness to take custody of the child.

(3) Within seven days after the department files the list described in subdivision (2) of this subsection, any party to the case may file, with the court, his or her own list containing names and addresses of relatives and fictive kin of the child.

(4) The department shall investigate and determine whether any of the persons identified in the lists filed pursuant to this section are willing and able to act as foster or kinship parents to the child. The department shall file its determinations with the court within 45 days from the filing of the petition alleging abuse or neglect of a child.

WV Legislature