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**WEST VIRGINIA CODE CHAPTER 49**  
**ARTICLE 4**

WV Legislature

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**Part I. General Provisions**

**§49-4-101. Exercise of powers and jurisdiction by judge in vacation.**

The powers and jurisdiction of the court, under the provisions of this chapter, may be exercised by the judge in vacation.

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**§49-4-102. Procedure for appealing decisions.**

Cases under this chapter, if tried in any inferior court, may be reviewed by writ of error or appeal to the circuit court, and if tried or reviewed in a circuit court, by writ of error or appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

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**§49-4-103. Proceedings may not be evidence against child, or be published; adjudication is not a conviction and not a bar to civil service eligibility.**

Any evidence given in any cause or proceeding under this chapter, or any order, judgment or finding therein, or any adjudication upon the status of juvenile delinquent heretofore made or rendered, may not in any civil, criminal or other cause or proceeding whatever in any court, be lawful or proper evidence against the child for any purpose whatsoever except in subsequent cases under this chapter involving the same child; nor may the name of any child, in connection with any proceedings under this chapter, be published in any newspaper without a written order of the court; nor may any adjudication upon the status of any child by a juvenile court operate to impose any of the civil disabilities ordinarily imposed by conviction, nor may any child be deemed a criminal by reason of the adjudication, nor may the adjudication be deemed a conviction, nor may any adjudication operate to disqualify a child in any future civil service examination, appointment, or application.

**§49-4-104. General provisions relating to court orders regarding custody; rules.**

(a) The Supreme Court of Appeals, in consultation with the Department of Human Services and the Division of Juvenile Services in order to eliminate unnecessary state funding of out-of-home placements where federal funding is available, shall develop and disseminate form court orders to effectuate chapter forty-nine of this code which authorize disclosure and transfer of juvenile records between agencies while requiring maintenance of confidentiality, Child Welfare Services, 42 U.S.C. §620, *et seq.*, and 42 U.S.C. §670, *et seq.*, relating to the promulgation of uniform court orders for placement of minor children and the rules promulgated thereunder, for use in the courts of the state.

(b) Judges and magistrates, upon being supplied the form orders required by subsection (a) of this section, shall act to ensure the proper form order is entered in the case so as to allow federal funding of eligible out-of-home placements.

**§49-4-105. Hearing required to determine "reasonable efforts."**

A hearing by a circuit court of competent jurisdiction is required to determine whether or not "reasonable efforts" have been made to stabilize and maintain the family situation before any child may be placed outside the home, except that in the event any child appears in imminent danger of serious bodily or emotional injury or death in any home, a post-removal hearing shall be substituted for the pre-removal hearing.

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**§49-4-106. Limitation on out-of-home placements.**

Before any child may be directed for placement in a particular facility or for services of a child welfare agency licensed by the department, a court shall make inquiry into the bed space of the facility available to accommodate additional children and the ability of the child welfare agency to meet the particular needs of the child. A court may not order the placement of a child in a particular facility, including status offender facilities operated by the Division of Juvenile Services, if it has reached its licensed capacity or order conditions on the placement of the child which conflict with licensure regulations applicable to the facility promulgated pursuant to article two of this chapter and articles one-a, nine and seventeen, chapter twenty-seven of this code. Further, a child welfare agency is not required to accept placement of a child at a particular facility if the facility remains at licensed capacity or is unable to meet the particular needs of the child. A child welfare agency is not required to make special dispensation or accommodation, reorganize existing child placement, or initiate early release of children in placement to reduce actual occupancy at the facility.

**§49-4-107. Penalties.**

A person who violates an order, rule, or regulation made under the authority of this chapter, or who violates this chapter for which punishment has not been specifically provided, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction shall be fined not less than \$10 nor more than \$100, or confined in jail not less than five days nor more than six months, or both fined and confined.

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**§49-4-108. Payment of services.**

(a) At any time during any proceedings brought pursuant to this chapter, the court may upon its own motion, or upon a motion of any party, order the Department of Human Services to pay the Medicaid rates for professional services rendered by a health care professional to a child or other party to the proceedings. Professional services include, but are not limited to, treatment, therapy, counseling, evaluation, report preparation, consultation, and preparation of expert testimony. A health care professional shall be paid by the Department of Human Services upon completion of services and submission of a final report or other information and documentation as required by the policies implemented by the Department of Human Services: *Provided*, That if the service is covered by Medicaid, being rendered to a child, and is not provided within 30 days, the court may order the service to be provided to the child by a provider at a rate higher than the Medicaid rate. The department may object and request to be heard, after which the court shall issue findings of fact and conclusions of law supporting its decision.

(b) At any time during any proceeding brought pursuant to this chapter, the court may upon its own motion, or upon a motion of any party, order the Department of Human Services to pay for socially necessary services rendered by an entity who has agreed to comply with §9-2-6(20) of this code. The Department of Human Services shall set the reimbursement rates for the socially necessary services: *Provided*, That if services being rendered to a child are not provided within 30 days, the court may order a service to be provided to the child by a provider at a rate higher than the department established rate. The department may object and request to be heard, after which the court shall issue findings of fact and conclusions of law supporting its decision.

**§49-4-109. Guardianship of estate of child unaffected.**

This chapter may not be construed to give the guardian appointed hereunder the guardianship of the estate of the child, or to change the age of minority for any other purpose except the custody of the child.

The guardian of the estate of a child committed to guardianship hereunder shall furnish, when and in the form as may be required, full information concerning the property of the child to the state department or to the court or judge before whom the case of the child is heard.

**§49-4-110. Foster care; quarterly status review; transitioning adults; annual permanency hearings.**

(a) For each child who remains in foster care as a result of a juvenile proceeding or as a result of a child abuse and neglect proceeding, the circuit court with the assistance of the multidisciplinary treatment team shall conduct quarterly status reviews in order to determine the safety of the child, the continuing necessity for and appropriateness of the placement, the extent of compliance with the case plan, and the extent of progress which has been made toward alleviating or mitigating the causes necessitating placement in foster care, and to project a likely date by which the child may be returned to and safety maintained in the home or placed for adoption or legal guardianship. Quarterly status reviews shall commence three months after the entry of the placement order. The permanency hearing provided in subsection (c) of this section may be considered a quarterly status review.

(b) For each transitioning adult as that term is defined in section two hundred two, article one of this chapter who remains in foster care, the circuit court shall conduct status review hearings as described in subsection (a) of this section once every three months until permanency is achieved.

(c) For each child or transitioning adult who continues to remain in foster care, the circuit court shall conduct a permanency hearing no later than twelve months after the date the child or transitioning adult is considered to have entered foster care, and at least once every twelve months thereafter until permanency is achieved. For purposes of permanency planning for transitioning adults, the circuit court shall make factual findings and conclusions of law as to whether the department made reasonable efforts to finalize a permanency plan to prepare a transitioning adult for emancipation or independence or another approved permanency option such as, but not limited to, adoption or legal guardianship pursuant to the West Virginia Guardianship and Conservatorship Act.

(d) Nothing in this section may be construed to abrogate the responsibilities of the circuit court from conducting required hearings as provided in other provisions of this code, procedural court rules, or setting required hearings at the same time.

**§49-4-111. Criteria and procedure for temporary removal of child from foster home; foster care arrangement termination; notice of child's availability for placement; adoption; sibling placements; limitations.**

(a) The department may temporarily remove a child from a foster home based on an allegation of abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, that occurred while the child resided in the home. If the department determines that reasonable cause exists to support the allegation, the department shall remove all foster children from the arrangement, preclude contact between the children and the foster parents, provide written notice to the multidisciplinary treatment team members and schedule an emergency team meeting to address placement options. If, after investigation, the allegation is determined to be true by the department or after a judicial proceeding a court finds the allegation to be true or if the foster parents fail to contest the allegation in writing within twenty calendar days of receiving written notice of the allegations, the department shall permanently terminate all foster care arrangements with the foster parents. If the department determines that the abuse occurred due to no act or failure to act on the part of the foster parents and that continuation of the foster care arrangement is in the best interests of the child, the department may, in its discretion, elect not to terminate the foster care arrangement or arrangements.

(b) When a child has been placed in a foster care arrangement for a period in excess of eighteen consecutive months, and the department determines that the placement is a fit and proper place for the child to reside, the foster care arrangement may not be terminated unless the termination is in the best interest of the child and:

- (1) The foster care arrangement is terminated pursuant to subsection (a) of this section;
- (2) The foster care arrangement is terminated due to the child being returned to his or her parent or parents;
- (3) The foster care arrangement is terminated due to the child being united or reunited with a sibling or siblings;
- (4) The foster parent or parents agree to the termination in writing;
- (5) The foster care arrangement is terminated at the written request of a foster child who has attained the age of fourteen; or
- (6) A court orders the termination upon a finding that the department has developed a more suitable long-term placement for the child upon hearing evidence in a proceeding brought by the department seeking removal and transfer.

(c) When a child has been residing in a foster home for a period in excess of six consecutive months in total and for a period in excess of thirty days after the parental rights of the child's biological parents have been terminated and the foster parents have not made an

application to the department to establish an intent to adopt the child within thirty days of parental rights being terminated, the department may terminate the foster care arrangement if another, more beneficial, long-term placement of the child is developed. If the child is twelve years of age or older, the child shall be provided the option of remaining in the existing foster care arrangement if the child so desires and if continuation of the existing arrangement is in the best interest of the child.

(d)(1) When a child is placed into foster care or becomes eligible for adoption and a sibling or siblings have previously been placed in foster care or have been adopted, the department shall notify the foster parents or adoptive parents of the previously placed or adopted sibling or siblings of the child's availability for foster care placement or adoption to determine if the foster parents or adoptive parents are desirous of seeking a foster care arrangement or adoption of the child.

(2) Where a sibling or siblings have previously been adopted, the department shall also notify the adoptive parents of a sibling of the child's availability for foster care placement in that home and a foster care arrangement entered into to place the child in the home if the adoptive parents of the sibling are otherwise qualified or can become qualified to enter into a foster care arrangement with the department and if the arrangement is in the best interests of the child.

(3) The department may petition the court to waive notification to the foster parents or adoptive parents of the child's siblings. This waiver may be granted, *ex parte*, upon a showing of compelling circumstances.

(e)(1) When a child is in a foster care arrangement and is residing separately from a sibling or siblings who are in another foster home or who have been adopted by another family and the parents with whom the placed or adopted sibling or siblings reside have made application to the department to establish an intent to adopt or to enter into a foster care arrangement regarding a child so that the child may be united or reunited with a sibling or siblings, the department shall, upon a determination of the fitness of the persons and household seeking to enter into a foster care arrangement or seek an adoption which would unite or reunite siblings, and if termination and new placement are in the best interests of the children, terminate the foster care arrangement and place the child in the household with the sibling or siblings.

(2) If the department is of the opinion based upon available evidence that residing in the same home would have a harmful physical, mental or psychological effect on one or more of the sibling children or if the child has a physical or mental disability which the existing foster home can better accommodate, or if the department can document that the reunification of the siblings would not be in the best interest of one or all of the children, the department may petition the circuit court for an order allowing the separation of the siblings to continue.

(3) If the child is twelve years of age or older, the department shall provide the child the

option of remaining in the existing foster care arrangement if remaining is in the best interests of the child. In any proceeding brought by the department to maintain separation of siblings, the separation may be ordered only if the court determines that clear and convincing evidence supports the department's determination.

(4) In any proceeding brought by the department seeking to maintain separation of siblings, notice afforded, in addition to any other persons required by any provision of this code to receive notice, to the persons seeking to adopt a sibling or siblings of a previously placed or adopted child and the persons may be parties to the action.

(f) Where two or more siblings have been placed in separate foster care arrangements and the foster parents of the siblings have made application to the department to enter into a foster care arrangement regarding the sibling or siblings not in their home or where two or more adoptive parents seek to adopt a sibling or siblings of a child they have previously adopted, the department's determination as to placing the child in a foster care arrangement or in an adoptive home shall be based solely upon the best interests of the siblings.

**§49-4-112. Subsidized adoption and legal guardianship; conditions.**

(a) From funds appropriated to the Department of Human Services, the secretary shall establish a system of assistance for facilitating the adoption or legal guardianship of children. An adoption subsidy shall be available for children who are legally free for adoption and who are dependents of the department. A legal guardianship subsidy may not require the surrender or termination of parental rights. For either subsidy, the children must be in special circumstances because one or more of the following conditions inhibit their adoption or legal guardianship placement:

- (1) They have a physical or mental disability;
- (2) They are emotionally disturbed;
- (3) They are older children;
- (4) They are a part of a sibling group; or
- (5) They are a member of a racial or ethnic minority.

(b)(1) The department shall provide assistance in the form of subsidies or services to parents who are found and approved for adoption or legal guardianship of a child certified as eligible for subsidy by the department, but before the final decree of adoption or order of legal guardianship is entered, there shall be a written agreement between the family entering into the subsidized adoption or legal guardianship and the department.

(2) Adoption or legal guardianship subsidies in individual cases may commence with the adoption or legal guardianship placement and will vary with the needs of the child as well as the availability of other resources to meet the child's needs. The subsidy may be for services, money payments, for a limited period, or for a long term, or for any combination of the foregoing.

(3) The specific financial terms of the subsidy shall be included in the agreement between the department and the adoptive parents or legal guardians. The agreement may recognize and provide for direct payment by the department of attorney's fees to an attorney representing the adoptive parent or legal guardian. Any such payment for attorney's fees shall be made directly to the attorney representing the adoptive parent or legal guardian.

(4) The amount of the subsidy may in no case exceed that which would be allowable for the child under foster family care or, in the case of a service, the reasonable fee for the service rendered.

(5) The department shall provide either Medicaid or other health insurance coverage for any special needs child for whom there is an adoption or legal guardianship assistance agreement, and who the department determines cannot be placed without medical assistance.

(c) The department shall certify the child as eligible for a subsidy to obtain adoption or a legal guardianship if it is in the best interest of the child.

(d) All records regarding subsidized adoptions or legal guardianships are to be held in confidence; however, records regarding the payment of public funds for subsidized adoptions or legal guardianships shall be available for public inspection provided they do not directly or indirectly identify any child or person receiving funds for the child.

(e) A payment may not be made to adoptive parents or legal guardians of child:

(1) Who has attained 18 years of age, unless the department determines that the child has a special need which warrants the continuation of assistance or the child is continuing his or her education or actively engaging in employment;

(2) Who has obtained 21 years of age;

(3) Who has not attained 18 years of age, if the department determines that the adoptive parent or legal guardian is no longer supporting the child by performing actions to maintain a familial bond with the child.

(f) Adoptive parents and legal guardians who receive subsidy payments pursuant to this section shall keep the department informed of circumstances which would, pursuant to §49-4-112(e) of this code, make them ineligible for the payment.

**§49-4-113. Duration of custody or guardianship of children committed to department.**

- (a) A child committed to the department for guardianship, after termination of parental rights, shall remain in the care of the department until he or she attains the age of eighteen years, or is married, or is adopted, or guardianship is relinquished through the court.
- (b) A child committed to the department for custody shall remain in the care of the department until he or she attains the age of eighteen years, or until he or she is discharged because he or she is no longer in need of care.

**§49-4-114. Consent by agency or department to adoption of child; statement of relinquishment by parent; counseling services; petition to terminate parental rights; notice; hearing; court orders.**

(a)(1) Whenever a child welfare agency licensed to place children for adoption or the Department of Human Services has been given the permanent legal and physical custody of any child and the rights of the mother and the rights of the legal, determined, putative, outside or unknown father of the child have been terminated by order of a court of competent jurisdiction or by a legally executed relinquishment of parental rights, the child welfare agency or the department may consent to the adoption of the child, pursuant to article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight of this code.

(2) Relinquishment for an adoption to an agency or to the department is required of the same persons whose consent or relinquishment is required, under section three hundred one, article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight of this code. The form of any relinquishment so required shall conform as nearly as practicable to the requirements established in section three hundred three, article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight, and all other provisions of that article providing for relinquishment for adoption shall govern the proceedings herein.

(3) For purposes of any placement of a child for adoption by the department, the department shall first consider the suitability and willingness of any known grandparent or grandparents to adopt the child. Once grandparents who are interested in adopting the child have been identified, the department shall conduct a home study evaluation, including home visits and individual interviews by a licensed social worker. If the department determines, based on the home study evaluation, that the grandparents would be suitable adoptive parents, it shall assure that the grandparents are offered the placement of the child prior to the consideration of any other prospective adoptive parents. A circuit judge may determine the placement of a child for adoption by a grandparent or grandparents is in the best interest of the child without the grandparent or grandparents completing or passing a home study evaluation.

(4) The department shall make available, upon request, for purposes of any private or agency adoption proceeding, preplacement and post-placement counseling services by persons experienced in adoption counseling, at no cost, to any person whose consent or relinquishment is required pursuant to article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight of this code.

(b)(1) Whenever the mother has executed a relinquishment, pursuant to this section, and the legal, determined, putative, outsider father, or unknown father, as those terms are defined pursuant to part one, article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight of this code, has not executed a relinquishment, the child welfare agency or the department may, by verified petition, seek to have the father's rights terminated based upon the grounds of abandonment or neglect of the child. Abandonment may be established in accordance with section three hundred six, article twenty-two, chapter forty-eight of this code.

(2) Unless waived by a writing acknowledged as in the case of deeds or by other proper

means, notice of the petition shall be served on any person entitled to parental rights of a child prior to its adoption who has not signed a relinquishment of custody of the child.

(3) In addition, notice shall be given to any putative, outsider father, or unknown father who has asserted or exercised parental rights and duties to and with the child and who has not relinquished any parental rights, and the rights have not otherwise been terminated, or who has not had reasonable opportunity before or after the birth of the child to assert or exercise those rights, except that if the child is more than six months old at the time the notice would be required and the father has not asserted or exercised his or her parental rights and he or she knew the whereabouts of the child, then the father shall be presumed to have had reasonable opportunity to assert or exercise any rights.

(c)(1) Upon the filing of the verified petition seeking to have the parental rights terminated, the court shall set a hearing on the petition. A copy of the petition and notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing on the petition shall be personally served on any respondent at least twenty days prior to the date set for the hearing.

(2) The notice shall inform the person that his or her parental rights, if any, may be terminated in the proceeding and that the person may appear and defend any rights within twenty days of the service. In the case of a person who is a nonresident or whose whereabouts are unknown, service shall be achieved: (A) By personal service; (B) by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, postage prepaid, to the person's last known address, with instructions to forward; or (C) by publication. If personal service is not acquired, then if the person giving notice has any knowledge of the whereabouts of the person to be served, including a last known address, service by mail shall be first attempted as herein provided. Service achieved by mail shall be complete upon mailing and is sufficient service without the need for notice by publication. In the event that no return receipt is received giving adequate evidence of receipt of the notice by the addressee or of receipt of the notice at the address to which the notice was mailed or forwarded, or if the whereabouts of the person are unknown, then the person required to give notice shall file with the court an affidavit setting forth the circumstances of any attempt to serve the notice by mail, and the diligent efforts to ascertain the whereabouts of the person to be served. If the court determines that the whereabouts of the person to be served cannot be ascertained and that due diligence has been exercised to ascertain the person's whereabouts, then the court shall order service of the notice by publication as a Class II publication in compliance with article three, chapter fifty-nine of this code, and the publication area shall be the county where the proceedings are had, and in the county where the person to be served was last known to reside. In the case of a person under disability, service shall be made on the person and his or her personal representative, or if there be none, a guardian ad litem.

(3) In the case of service by publication or mail or service on a personal representative or a guardian ad litem, the person is allowed thirty days from the date of the first publication or mailing of the service on a personal representative or guardian ad litem in which to appear and defend the parental rights.

(d) A petition under this section may be instituted in the county where the child resides or where the child is living.

(e) If the court finds that the person certified to parental rights is guilty of the allegations set forth in the petition, the court shall enter an order terminating his or her parental rights and shall award the legal and physical custody and control of the child to the petitioner.

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**§49-4-115. Emancipation.**

(a) A child over the age of sixteen may petition a court to be declared emancipated. The parents or custodians shall be made respondents and, in addition to personal service thereon, there shall be publication as a Class II legal advertisement in compliance with article three, chapter fifty-nine of this code.

(b) Upon a showing that the child can provide for his or her physical and financial well-being and has the ability to make decisions for himself or herself, the court may for good cause shown declare the child emancipated. The child shall thereafter have full capacity to contract in his or her own right and the parents or custodians have no right to the custody and control of the child or duty to provide the child with care and financial support.

(c) A child over the age of sixteen years who marries is emancipated by operation of law. An emancipated child has all of the privileges, rights and duties of an adult, including the right of contract, except that the child remains a child as defined for the purposes of part ten, article two, or part seven, article four of this chapter.

**§49-4-116. Voluntary placement; petition; requirements; attorney appointed; court hearing; orders.**

(a) Within ninety days of the date of the signatures to a voluntary placement agreement, after receipt of physical custody, the department shall file with the court a petition for review of the placement. The petition shall include:

- (1) A statement regarding the child's situation; and,
- (2) The circumstance that gives rise to the voluntary placement.

(b) If the department intends to extend the voluntary placement agreement, the department shall file with the court a copy of the child's case plan.

(c) The court shall appoint an attorney for the child, who shall receive a copy of the case plan as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(d) The court shall schedule a hearing and give notice of the time and place and right to be present at the hearing to:

- (1) The child's attorney;
- (2) The child, if twelve years of age or older;
- (3) The child's parents or guardians;
- (4) The child's foster parents;
- (5) Any preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child; and
- (6) Any other persons as the court may in its discretion direct.

The child's presence at the hearing may be waived by the child's attorney at the request of the child or if the child would suffer emotional harm.

(e) At the conclusion of the proceedings, but no later than ninety days after the date of the signatures to the voluntary placement agreement, the court shall enter an order:

- (1) Determining whether or not continuation of the voluntary placement is in the best interests of the child;
- (2) Specifying under what conditions the child's placement will continue;
- (3) Specifying whether or not the department is required to and has made reasonable efforts to preserve and to reunify the family; and
- (4) Providing a plan for the permanent placement of the child.

**§49-4-117. Information provided in certain adoptions.**

In any case where parental rights have been terminated under chapter 49 of this code, the Department of Human Services shall provide a certificate containing the information required by §48-22-502(a)(5) of this code to any person, or the attorney of any person, petitioning to adopt the child or children.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-201. Accepting possession of certain relinquished children.**

(a) A hospital or health care facility operating in this state, or a fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment that has been designated a safe-surrender site under §49-4-206 of this code, shall, without a court order, take possession of a child if the child is voluntarily delivered to the hospital, health care facility, fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment by the child's parent within 30 days of the child's birth, and the parent did not express an intent to return for the child.

(b) A hospital, health care facility, fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment that takes possession of a child under this article shall perform any act necessary to protect the physical health or safety of the child. In accepting possession of the child, the hospital, health care facility, fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment may not require the person to identify himself or herself and shall otherwise respect the person's desire to remain anonymous.

(c) Hospitals, health care facilities, fire departments, emergency medical service facilities, police departments, 911 call center, and sheriff's detachments designated as safe-surrender sites under §49-4-206 of this code may install and operate newborn safety devices as defined in this section.

(d) "Newborn safety device" means a device:

(1) Designed to permit a person to anonymously place a child under 30 days of age in the device with the intent to leave the child, and for a licensed emergency medical services provider to remove the child from the device and take custody of him or her;

(2) Equipped with an adequate dual alarm system connected to the physical location where the device is physically installed. The dual alarm system shall:

(A) Be tested at least one time per week to ensure the alarm system is in working order;

(B) Be visually checked at least two times per day to ensure the alarm system is in working order;

(C) Notify a centralized location in the facility within 30 seconds of a child being placed in the device; and

(D) Trigger a 911 call if staff at the facility do not respond within 15 minutes after a child is placed in the device.

(3) Be approved by and physically located, with outside access, at a participating hospital or medical facility, or a fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment that has been designated a safe-surrender site under

§49-4-206 of this code that:

- (A) Is licensed or otherwise legally operating in this state; and
- (B) Is staffed continuously on a 24-hour basis every day by a licensed emergency medical services provider; and
- (4) Is located in an area that is conspicuous and visible to a hospital, a medical facility, or a fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment.
- (e) A person who relinquishes a child in a newborn safety device may remain anonymous and shall not be pursued, and the relinquishment of a child pursuant to the provisions of this section shall not, in and of itself, be considered child abuse and neglect as that term is defined in §49-1-201 of this code.
- (f) Any emergency medical services provider who physically retrieves a child from a newborn safety device shall immediately arrange for the child to be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room and shall have implied consent to any and all appropriate medical treatment.
- (g) By placing a child in a newborn safety device, the person:
  - (1) Waives the right to notification required by subsequent court proceedings; and
  - (2) Waives legal standing to make a claim of action against any person who accepts physical custody of the child.
- (h) An emergency medical services provider with the duty granted in this article whose actions are taken in good faith is immune from criminal or civil liability, unless his or her actions were the result of gross negligence or willful misconduct. The grant of immunity in this section extends to all employees and administrators of the emergency medical services provider.
- (i) The provisions of subsection (e) of this section shall not apply when indicators of child physical abuse or child neglect are present.

**§49-4-202. Notification of possession of relinquished child; department responsibilities.**

(a) (1) Not later than the close of the first business day after the date on which a hospital or health care facility takes possession of a child pursuant to §49-4-201 of this code, the hospital or health care facility shall notify the Child Protective Services Division that it has taken possession of the child and shall provide the division any information provided by the parent delivering the child. The hospital or health care facility shall refer any inquiries about the child to the Child Protective Services Division.

(2) Upon taking possession of a child pursuant to §49-4-201 of this code, a fire department shall:

(A) Deliver the child to the nearest hospital or health care facility as soon as possible, but transport may begin no later than 30 minutes upon taking possession of a child; and

(B) Notify the Child Protective Services Division within two hours of taking possession of a child:

(i) That it has delivered the child and identify the hospital or health care facility to which it delivered the child; and

(ii) Provide the division any information provided by the parent delivering the child.

(3) The fire department shall refer any inquiries about the child to the Child Protective Services Division.

(b) The Department of Human Services shall assume the care, control, and custody of the child as of the time of delivery of the child to the hospital, health care facility, or fire department, and may contract with a private child care agency for the care and placement of the child after the child leaves the hospital, health care facility, or fire department.

**§49-4-203. Filing petition after accepting possession of relinquished child.**

A child of whom the Department of Human Services assumes care, control and custody under this article is a relinquished child and to be treated in all respects as a child taken into custody pursuant to §49-4-303. Upon taking custody of a child under this article, the department, with the cooperation of the county prosecuting attorney, shall cause a petition to be presented pursuant to §49-4-602. The department and county prosecuting attorney may not identify in the petition the parent(s) who utilized this article to relinquish his or her child. Thereafter, the department shall proceed in compliance with part six, of this article.

**§49-4-204. Immunity from certain prosecutions.**

A parent who relinquishes his or her child in good faith within thirty days of the child's birth under this article is immune from prosecution under subsection (a), section four, article eight-d, chapter sixty-one of this code.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-205. Adoption eligibility.**

The child is eligible for adoption as an abandoned child under chapter forty-eight of the code.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-206. Designation of local fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment as a safe-surrender site; posting requirement.**

The governing entity of a local fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment that is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, may designate the premises of its fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment as a safe-surrender site to accept physical custody of a child who is 30 days old or younger from a parent of the child and who surrenders the child pursuant to §49-4-201 of this code. A local fire department, emergency medical service facility, police department, 911 call center, or sheriff's detachment that is designated a safe-surrender site shall post a sign that notifies the public that it is a location where a child 30 days old or younger may be safely surrendered pursuant to this article.

### Part III. Emergency Custody of Children Prior To Petition

#### **§49-4-301. Custody of a neglected child by law enforcement in emergency situations; protective custody; requirements; notices; petition for appointment of special guardian; discharge; immunity.**

(a) A child believed to be a neglected child or an abused child may be taken into custody without the court order otherwise required by section six hundred two of this article by a law-enforcement officer if:

(1) The child is without supervision or shelter for an unreasonable period of time in light of the child's age and the ability to care for himself or herself in circumstances presenting an immediate threat of serious harm to that child; or

(2) That officer determines that the child is in a condition requiring emergency medical treatment by a physician and the child's parents, parent, guardian or custodian refuses to permit the treatment, or is unavailable for consent. A child who suffers from a condition requiring emergency medical treatment, whose parents, parent, guardian or custodian refuses to permit the providing of the emergency medical treatment, may be retained in a hospital by a physician against the will of the parents, parent, guardian or custodian, as provided in subsection (c) of this section.

(b) A child taken into protective custody pursuant to subsection (a) of this section may be housed by the department or in any authorized child shelter facility. The authority to hold the child in protective custody, absent a petition and proper order granting temporary custody pursuant to section six hundred two of this article, terminates by operation of law upon the happening of either of the following events, whichever occurs first:

(1) The expiration of ninety-six hours from the time the child is initially taken into protective custody; or

(2) The expiration of the circumstances which initially warranted the determination of an emergency situation.

No child may be considered in an emergency situation and custody withheld from the child's parents, parent, guardian or custodian presenting themselves, himself or herself in a fit and proper condition and requesting physical custody of the child. No child may be removed from a place of residence as in an emergency under this section until after:

(1) All reasonable efforts to make inquiries and arrangements with neighbors, relatives and friends have been exhausted; or if no arrangements can be made; and

(2) The state department may place in the residence a home services worker with the child for a period of not less than twelve hours to await the return of the child's parents, parent, guardian or custodian.

Prior to taking a child into protective custody as abandoned at a place at or near the residence of the child, the law-enforcement officer shall post a typed or legibly handwritten notice at the place the child is found, informing the parents, parent, guardian or custodian that the child was taken by a law-enforcement officer, the name, address and office telephone number of the officer, the place and telephone number where information can continuously be obtained as to the child's whereabouts, and if known, the worker for the state department having responsibility for the child.

(c) A child taken into protective custody pursuant to this section for emergency medical treatment may be held in a hospital under the care of a physician against the will of the child's parents, parent, guardian or custodian for a period not to exceed ninety-six hours. The parents, parent, guardian or custodian may not be denied the right to see or visit with the child in a hospital. The authority to retain a child in protective custody in a hospital as requiring emergency medical treatment terminates by operation of law upon the happening of either of the following events, whichever occurs first:

(1) When the condition, in the opinion of the physician, no longer required emergency hospitalization, or;

(2) Upon the expiration of ninety-six hours from the initiation of custody, unless within that time, a petition is presented and a proper order obtained from the circuit court.

(d) Prior to assuming custody of a child from a law-enforcement officer, pursuant to this section, a physician or worker from the department shall require a typed or legibly handwritten statement from the officer identifying the officer's name, address and office telephone number and specifying all the facts upon which the decision to take the child into protective custody was based, and the date, time and place of the taking.

(e) Any worker for the department assuming custody of a child pursuant to this section shall immediately notify the parents, parent, guardian or custodian of the child of the taking of the custody and the reasons therefor, if the whereabouts of the parents, parent, guardian or custodian are known or can be discovered with due diligence; and if not, notice and explanation shall be given to the child's closest relative, if his or her whereabouts are known or can be discovered with due diligence within a reasonable time. An inquiry shall be made of relatives and neighbors, and if a relative or appropriate neighbor is willing to assume custody of the child, the child will temporarily be placed in custody.

(f) No child may be taken into custody under circumstances not justified by this section or pursuant to section six hundred two of this article without appropriate process. Any retention of a child or order for retention of a child not complying with the time limits and other requirements specified in this article shall be void by operation of law.

(g) Petition for appointment of special guardian. -- Upon the verified petition of any person showing:

(1) That any person under the age of eighteen years is threatened with or there is a substantial possibility that the person will suffer death, serious or permanent physical or emotional disability, disfigurement or suffering; and

(2) That disability, disfigurement or suffering is the result of the failure or refusal of any parent, guardian or custodian to procure, consent to or authorize necessary medical treatment, the circuit court of the county in which the person is located may direct the appointment of a special guardian for the purposes of procuring, consenting to and giving authorization for the administration of necessary medical treatment. The circuit court may not consider any petition filed in accordance with this section unless it is accompanied by a supporting affidavit of a licensed physician.

(h) Notice of petition. -- So far as practicable, the parents, guardian or custodian of any person for whose benefit medical treatment is sought shall be given notice of the petition for the appointment of a special guardian under this section. Notice is not necessary if it would cause a delay that would result in the death or irreparable harm to the person for whose benefit medical treatment is sought. Notice may be given in a form and manner as may be necessary under the circumstances.

(i) Discharge of special guardian. - Upon the termination of necessary medical treatment to any person under this section, the circuit court order the discharge of the special guardian from any further authority, responsibility or duty.

(j) Immunity from civil liability. -- No person appointed special guardian in accordance with this article is civilly liable for any act done by virtue of the authority vested in him or her by order of the circuit court.

**§49-4-302. Authorizing a family court judge to order custody of a child in emergency situations; requirements; orders; investigative reports; notification required.**

(a) Notwithstanding the jurisdictional limitations contained in section two, article two-a, chapter fifty-one of this code, family court judges are authorized to order the department to take emergency custody of a child who is in the physical custody of a party to an action or proceeding before the family court, if the family court judge finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that:

(1) There exists an imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child as defined in section two hundred one, article one of this chapter;

(2) The child is not the subject of a pending action before the circuit court alleging abuse and neglect of the child; and

(3) There are no reasonable available alternatives to the emergency custody order.

(b) An order entered pursuant to subsection (a) of this section must include specific written findings.

(c) A copy of the order issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall be transmitted forthwith to the department, the circuit court and the prosecuting attorney.

(d) Upon receipt of an order issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the department shall immediately respond and assist the family court judge in emergency placement of the child.

(e)(1) Upon receipt of an order issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, the circuit court shall cause to be entered and served, an administrative order in the name of and regarding the affected child, directing the department to submit, within ninety-six hours from the time the child was taken into custody, an investigative report to both the circuit and family court.

(2) The investigative report shall include a statement of whether the department intends to file a petition pursuant to section six hundred two of this article.

(f)(1) An order issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section terminates by operation of law upon expiration of ninety-six hours from the time the child is initially taken into protective custody unless a petition is filed with the circuit court under section six hundred two of this article within ninety-six hours from the time the child is initially taken into protective custody.

(2) The filing of a petition within ninety-six hours from the time the child is initially taken into protective custody extends the emergency custody order issued pursuant to subsection (a) of this section until a preliminary hearing is held before the circuit court, unless the

circuit court orders otherwise.

(g)(1) Any worker for the department assuming custody of a child pursuant to this section shall immediately notify the parents, parent, grandparents, grandparent, guardian or custodian of the child of the taking of the custody and the reasons therefor if the whereabouts of the parents, parent, grandparents, grandparent, guardian or custodian are known or can be discovered with due diligence and, if not, a notice and explanation shall be given to the child's closest relative if his or her whereabouts are known or can be discovered with due diligence within a reasonable time. An inquiry shall be made of relatives and neighbors and, if an appropriate relative or neighbor is willing to assume custody of the child, the child will temporarily be placed in that person's custody.

(2) In the event no other reasonable alternative is available for temporary placement of a child pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, the child may be housed by the department in an authorized child shelter facility.

**§49-4-303. Emergency removal by department before filing of petition; conditions; referee; application for emergency custody; order.**

Prior to the filing of a petition, a child protective service worker may take the child or children into his or her custody (also known as removing the child) without a court order when:

- (1) In the presence of a child protective service worker a child or children are in an emergency situation which constitutes an imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child or children, as that phrase is defined in section two hundred one, article one of this chapter; and
- (2) The worker has probable cause to believe that the child or children will suffer additional child abuse or neglect or will be removed from the county before a petition can be filed and temporary custody can be ordered.

After taking custody of the child or children prior to the filing of a petition, the worker shall forthwith appear before a circuit judge or referee of the county where custody was taken and immediately apply for an order. If no judge or referee is available, the worker shall appear before a circuit judge or referee of an adjoining county, and immediately apply for an order. This order shall ratify the emergency custody of the child pending the filing of a petition.

The circuit court of every county in the state shall appoint at least one of the magistrates of the county to act as a referee. He or she serves at the will and pleasure of the appointing court, and shall perform the functions prescribed for the position by this subsection.

The parents, guardians or custodians of the child or children may be present at the time and place of application for an order ratifying custody. If at the time the child or children are taken into custody by the worker he or she knows which judge or referee is to receive the application, the worker shall so inform the parents, guardians or custodians.

The application for emergency custody may be on forms prescribed by the Supreme Court of Appeals or prepared by the prosecuting attorney or the applicant, and shall set forth facts from which it may be determined that the probable cause described above in this subsection exists. Upon the sworn testimony or other evidence as the judge or referee deems sufficient, the judge or referee may order the emergency taking by the worker to be ratified. If appropriate under the circumstances, the order may include authorization for an examination as provided in subsection (b), section six hundred three of this article.

If a referee issues an order, the referee shall by telephonic communication have that order orally confirmed by a circuit judge of the circuit or an adjoining circuit who shall, on the next judicial day, enter an order of confirmation. If the emergency taking is ratified by the judge or referee, emergency custody of the child or children is vested in the department until the expiration of the next two judicial days, at which time any child taken into emergency

custody shall be returned to the custody of his or her parent or guardian or custodian unless a petition has been filed and custody of the child has been transferred under section six hundred two of this article.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-401. Purpose; system to be a complement to existing programs.**

**(a) This article:**

(1) Provides a system for evaluation of and coordinated service delivery for children who may be victims of abuse or neglect and children undergoing certain status offense and delinquency proceedings;

(2) Establishes, as a complement to other programs of the Department of Human Services, a multidisciplinary screening, advisory and planning system to assist courts in facilitating permanency planning, following the initiation of judicial proceedings, to recommend alternatives and to coordinate evaluations and in-community services; and

(3) Ensures that children are safe from abuse and neglect and to coordinate investigation of alleged child abuse offenses and competent criminal prosecution of offenders to ensure that safety, as determined appropriate by the prosecuting attorney.

(b) Nothing in this article precludes any multidisciplinary team from considering any case upon the consent of the members of the team.

**§49-4-402. Multidisciplinary investigative teams; establishment; membership; procedures; coordination among agencies; confidentiality.**

(a) The prosecuting attorney of each county shall establish a multidisciplinary investigative team in that county. The multidisciplinary team shall be headed and directed by the prosecuting attorney, or his or her designee, and includes as permanent members:

- (1) The prosecuting attorney, or his or her designee;
- (2) A local child protective services caseworker from the Department of Human Services;
- (3) A local law-enforcement officer employed by a law-enforcement agency in the county;
- (4) A child advocacy center representative, where available;
- (5) A health care provider with pediatric and child abuse expertise, where available;
- (6) A mental health professional with pediatric and child abuse expertise, where available;
- (7) An educator; and
- (8) A representative from a licensed domestic violence program serving the county.

The Department of Human Services and any local law-enforcement agency or agencies selected by the prosecuting attorney shall appoint their representatives to the team by submitting a written designation of the team to the prosecuting attorney of each county within thirty days of the prosecutor's request that the appointment be made. Within fifteen days of the appointment, the prosecuting attorney shall notify the chief judge of each circuit within which the county is situated of the names of the representatives so appointed. Any other person or any other appointee of an agency who may contribute to the team's efforts to assist a minor child as may be determined by the permanent members of the team may also be appointed as a member of the team by the prosecutor with notification to the chief judge.

(b) Any permanent member of the multidisciplinary investigative team shall refer all cases of accidental death of any child reported to their agency and all cases when a child dies while in the custody of the state for investigation and review by the team. The multidisciplinary investigative team shall meet at regular intervals at least once every calendar month.

(c) The investigative team shall be responsible for coordinating or cooperating in the initial and ongoing investigation of all civil and criminal allegations pertinent to cases involving child sexual assault, child sexual abuse, child abuse and neglect and shall make a recommendation to the county prosecuting attorney as to the initiation or commencement of a civil petition and/or criminal prosecution.

(d) State, county and local agencies shall provide the multidisciplinary investigative team with any information requested in writing by the team as allowable by law or upon receipt of

a certified copy of the circuit court's order directing the agencies to release information in its possession relating to the child. The team shall assure that all information received and developed in connection with this article remains confidential. For purposes of this section, the term "confidential" shall be construed in accordance with article five of this chapter.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-403. Multidisciplinary treatment planning process; coordination; access to information.**

(a)(1) A multidisciplinary treatment planning process for cases initiated pursuant to part six and part seven of article four of this chapter shall be established within each county of the state, either separately or in conjunction with a contiguous county, by the secretary of the department with advice and assistance from the prosecutor's advisory council as set forth in section four, article four, chapter seven of this code. In each circuit, the department shall coordinate with the prosecutor's office, the public defender's office or other counsel representing juveniles to designate, with the approval of the court, at least one day per month on which multidisciplinary team meetings for that circuit shall be held: *Provided*, That multidisciplinary team meetings may be held on days other than the designated day or days when necessary. The Division of Juvenile Services shall establish a similar treatment planning process for delinquency cases in which the juvenile has been committed to its custody, including those cases in which the juvenile has been committed for examination and diagnosis.

(2) This section does not require a multidisciplinary team meeting to be held prior to temporarily placing a child or juvenile out-of-home under exigent circumstances or upon a court order placing a juvenile in a facility operated by the Division of Juvenile Services.

(b) The case manager in the Department of Human Services for the child, family or juvenile or the case manager in the Division of Juvenile Services for a juvenile shall convene a treatment team in each case when it is required pursuant to this article.

(1) Prior to disposition, in each case in which a treatment planning team has been convened, the team shall advise the court as to the types of services the team has determined are needed and the type of placement, if any, which will best serve the needs of the child. If the team determines that an out-of-home placement will best serve the needs of the child, the team shall first consider placement with appropriate relatives then with foster care homes, facilities or programs located within the state. The team may only recommend placement in an out-of-state facility if it concludes, after considering the best interests and overall needs of the child, that there are no available and suitable in-state facilities which can satisfactorily meet the specific needs of the child.

(2) Any person authorized by the provisions of this chapter to convene a multidisciplinary team meeting may seek and receive an order of the circuit court setting such meeting and directing attendance. Members of the multidisciplinary team may participate in team meetings by telephone or video conferencing. This subsection does not prevent the respective agencies from designating a person other than the case manager as a facilitator for treatment team meetings. Written notice shall be provided to all team members of the availability to participate by videoconferencing.

(c) The treatment team shall coordinate its activities and membership with local family resource networks and coordinate with other local and regional child and family service

planning committees to assure the efficient planning and delivery of child and family services on a local and regional level.

(d) The multidisciplinary treatment team shall be afforded access to information in the possession of the Department of Human Services, Division of Juvenile Services, law-enforcement agencies and other state, county and local agencies. Those agencies shall cooperate in the sharing of information as may be provided in article five of this chapter or any other relevant provision of law. Any multidisciplinary team member who acquires confidential information may not disclose the information except as permitted by the provisions of this code or court rules.

**§49-4-404. Court review of service plan; hearing; required findings; order; team member's objections.**

(a) In any case in which a multidisciplinary treatment team develops an individualized service plan for a child or family pursuant to this article, the court shall review the proposed service plan to determine if implementation of the plan is in the child's best interests. If the multidisciplinary team cannot agree on a plan or if the court determines not to adopt the team's recommendations, it shall, upon motion or sua sponte, schedule and hold within ten days of the determination, and prior to the entry of an order placing the child in the custody of the department or in an out-of-home setting, a hearing to consider evidence from the team as to its rationale for the proposed service plan. If, after a hearing held pursuant to this section, the court does not adopt the teams's recommended service plan, it shall make specific written findings as to why the team's recommended service plan was not adopted.

(b) In any case in which the court decides to order the child placed in an out-of-state facility or program it shall set forth in the order directing the placement the reasons why the child was not placed in an in-state facility or program.

(c) Any member of the multidisciplinary treatment team who disagrees with recommendations of the team may inform the court of his or her own recommendations and objections to the team's recommendations. The recommendations and objections of the dissenting team member may be made in a hearing on the record, made in writing and served upon each team member and filed with the court and indicated in the case plan, or both made in writing and indicated in the case plan. Upon receiving objections, the court will conduct a hearing pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section.

**§49-4-405. Multidisciplinary treatment planning process involving child abuse and neglect; team membership; duties; reports; admissions.**

(a) Within 30 days of the initiation of a judicial proceeding pursuant to part six of this article, the department shall convene a multidisciplinary treatment team to assess, plan, and implement a comprehensive, individualized service plan for children who are victims of abuse or neglect and their families. The multidisciplinary team shall obtain and utilize any assessments for the children or the adult respondents that it deems necessary to assist in the development of that plan.

(b) In a case initiated pursuant to part six of this article, the treatment team consists of:

- (1) The child or family's case manager in the department;
- (2) The adult respondent or respondents;
- (3) The child's parent or parents, guardians, any copetitioners, custodial relatives of the child, foster or preadoptive parents;
- (4) Any attorney representing an adult respondent or other member of the treatment team;
- (5) The child's counsel or the guardian ad litem;
- (6) The prosecuting attorney or his or her designee;
- (7) A member of a child advocacy center when the child has been processed through the child advocacy center program or programs or it is otherwise appropriate that a member of the child advocacy center participate;
- (8) Any court-appointed special advocate assigned to a case;
- (9) Any other person entitled to notice and the right to be heard;
- (10) An appropriate school official;
- (11) A parent resource navigator;
- (12) The managed care case coordinator; and
- (13) Any other person or agency representative who may assist in providing recommendations for the particular needs of the child and family, including domestic violence service providers.

The child may participate in multidisciplinary treatment team meetings if the child's participation is deemed appropriate by the multidisciplinary treatment team. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, a party whose parental rights have been terminated and his or her attorney may not be given notice of a multidisciplinary treatment team meeting and

do not have the right to participate in any treatment team meeting.

(c) Prior to disposition in each case in which a treatment planning team has been convened, the team shall advise the court as to the types of services the team has determined are needed and the type of placement, if any, which will best serve the needs of the child. If the team determines that an out-of-home placement will best serve the needs of the child, the team shall first consider placement with appropriate relatives then with foster care homes, facilities, or programs located within the state. The team may only recommend placement in an out-of-state facility if it concludes, after considering the best interests and overall needs of the child, that there are no available and suitable in-state facilities which can satisfactorily meet the specific needs of the child.

(d) The multidisciplinary treatment team shall submit written reports to the court as required by the rules governing this type of proceeding or by the court and shall meet as often as deemed necessary but at least every three months until the case is dismissed from the docket of the court. The multidisciplinary treatment team shall be available for status conferences and hearings as required by the court.

(e) If a respondent or copetitioner admits the underlying allegations of child abuse or neglect, or both abuse and neglect, in the multidisciplinary treatment planning process, his or her statements may not be used in any subsequent criminal proceeding against him or her, except for perjury or false swearing.

**§49-4-406. Multidisciplinary treatment process for status offenders or delinquents; requirements; custody; procedure; reports; cooperation; inadmissibility of certain statements.**

(a) When a juvenile is adjudicated as a status offender pursuant to §49-4-711 of this code, the department shall promptly convene a multidisciplinary treatment team and conduct an assessment, utilizing a standard uniform comprehensive assessment instrument or protocol, including a needs assessment, to determine the juvenile's mental and physical condition, maturity and education level, home and family environment, rehabilitative needs and recommended service plan, which shall be provided in writing to the court and team members. Upon completion of the assessment, the treatment team shall prepare and implement a comprehensive, individualized service plan for the juvenile.

(b) When a juvenile is adjudicated as a delinquent or has been granted a pre-adjudicatory community supervision period pursuant to §49-4-708 of this code, the court, either upon its own motion or motion of a party, may require the department to convene a multidisciplinary treatment team and conduct an assessment, utilizing a standard uniform comprehensive assessment instrument or protocol, including a needs assessment, to determine the juvenile's mental and physical condition, maturity and education level, home and family environment, rehabilitative needs and recommended service plan, which shall be provided in writing to the court and team members. A referral to the department to convene a multidisciplinary treatment team and to conduct such an assessment shall be made when the court is considering placing the juvenile in the department's custody or placing the juvenile out-of-home at the department's expense pursuant to §49-4-714 of this code. In any delinquency proceeding in which the court requires the department to convene a multidisciplinary treatment team, the probation officer shall notify the department at least 15 working days before the court proceeding in order to allow the department sufficient time to convene and develop an individualized service plan for the juvenile.

(c) When a juvenile has been adjudicated and committed to the custody of the Director of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, including those cases in which the juvenile has been committed for examination and diagnosis, or the court considers commitment for examination and diagnosis, the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall promptly convene a multidisciplinary treatment team and conduct an assessment, utilizing a standard uniform comprehensive assessment instrument or protocol, including a needs assessment, to determine the juvenile's mental and physical condition, maturity and education level, home and family environment, rehabilitative needs and recommended service plan. Upon completion of the assessment, the treatment team shall prepare and implement a comprehensive, individualized service plan for the juvenile, which shall be provided in writing to the court and team members. In cases where the juvenile is committed as a post-sentence disposition to the custody of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the plan shall be reviewed quarterly by the multidisciplinary treatment team. Where a juvenile has been detained in a facility operated by the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation without an active service plan for more than 60 days, the director of the facility may call a

multidisciplinary team meeting to review the case and discuss the status of the service plan.

(d)(1) The rules of juvenile procedure shall govern the procedure for obtaining any assessment of a juvenile, preparing an individualized service plan and submitting the plan and any assessment to the court.

(2) In juvenile proceedings conducted pursuant to §49-4-701 et seq. of this code, the following representatives shall serve as members and attend each meeting of the multidisciplinary treatment team, so long as they receive notice at least seven days prior to the meeting:

(A) The juvenile;

(B) The juvenile's case manager in the department or the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation;

(C) The juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian;

(D) The juvenile's attorney;

(E) Any attorney representing a member of the multidisciplinary treatment team;

(F) The prosecuting attorney or his or her designee;

(G) The county school superintendent or the superintendent's designee;

(H) A treatment or service provider with training and clinical experience coordinating behavioral or mental health treatment;

(I) The managed care case coordinator; and

(J) Any other person or agency representative who may assist in providing recommendations for the particular needs of the juvenile and family, including domestic violence service providers. In delinquency proceedings, the probation officer shall be a member of a multidisciplinary treatment team. When appropriate, the juvenile case manager in the department and the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall cooperate in conducting multidisciplinary treatment team meetings when it is in the juvenile's best interest.

(3) Prior to disposition, in each case in which a treatment planning team has been convened, the team shall advise the court as to the types of services the team has determined are needed and type of placement, if any, which will best serve the needs of the child. If the team determines that an out-of-home placement will best serve the needs of the child, the team shall first consider placement at facilities or programs located within the state. The team may only recommend placement in an out-of-state facility if it concludes, after considering the best interests and overall needs of the child, that there are no available and suitable in-state facilities which can satisfactorily meet the specific needs of the child. The

multidisciplinary treatment team shall also determine and advise the court as to the individual treatment and rehabilitation plan recommended for the child for either out-of-home placement or community supervision. The plan may focus on reducing the likelihood of reoffending, requirements for the child to take responsibility for his or her actions, completion of evidence-based services or programs or any other relevant goal for the child. The plan may also include opportunities to incorporate the family, custodian or guardian into the treatment and rehabilitation process.

(4) The multidisciplinary treatment team shall submit written reports to the court as required by applicable law or by the court, shall meet with the court at least every three months, as long as the juvenile remains in the legal or physical custody of the state, and shall be available for status conferences and hearings as required by the court. The multidisciplinary treatment team shall monitor progress of the plan identified in subdivision (3) of this subsection and review progress of the plan at the regular meetings held at least every three months pursuant to this section, or at shorter intervals, as ordered by the court, and shall report to the court on the progress of the plan or if additional modification is necessary.

(5) In any case in which a juvenile has been placed out of his or her home except for a temporary placement in a shelter or detention center, the multidisciplinary treatment team shall cooperate with the state agency in whose custody the juvenile is placed to develop an after-care plan. The rules of juvenile procedure and §49-4-409 of this code govern the development of an after-care plan for a juvenile, the submission of the plan to the court and any objection to the after-care plan.

(6) If a juvenile respondent admits the underlying allegations of the case initiated pursuant to §49-4-701 through §49-4-725 of this code, in the multidisciplinary treatment planning process, his or her statements may not be used in any juvenile or criminal proceedings against the juvenile, except for perjury or false swearing.

**§49-4-407. Team directors; records; case logs.**

All persons directing any team created pursuant to this article shall maintain records of each meeting indicating the name and position of persons attending each meeting and the number of cases discussed at the meeting, including a designation of whether or not that case was previously discussed by any multidisciplinary team. Further, all investigative teams shall maintain a log of all cases to indicate the number of referrals to that team, whether or not a police report was filed with the prosecuting attorney's office, whether or not a petition was sought pursuant to part six of this article or whether or not a criminal complaint was issued and a case was criminally prosecuted. All treatment teams shall maintain a log of all cases to indicate the basis for failure to review a case for a period in excess of six months.

**§49-4-408. Unified child and family case plans; treatment teams; programs; agency requirements.**

(a) The Department of Human Services shall develop a unified child and family case plan for every family wherein a person has been referred to the department after being allowed an improvement period or where the child is placed in foster care. The case plan must be filed within sixty days of the child coming into foster care or within thirty days of the inception of the improvement period, whichever occurs first. The department may also prepare a case plan for any person who voluntarily seeks child abuse and neglect services from the department, or who is referred to the department by another public agency or private organization. The case plan provisions shall comply with federal law and the rules of procedure for child abuse and neglect proceedings.

(b) The department shall convene a multidisciplinary treatment team, which shall develop the case plan. Parents, guardians or custodians shall participate fully in the development of the case plan, and the child shall also fully participate if sufficiently mature and the child's participation is otherwise appropriate. The case plan may be modified from time to time to allow for flexibility in goal development, and in each case the modifications shall be submitted to the court in writing. Reasonable efforts to place a child for adoption or with a legal guardian may be made at the same time as reasonable efforts are being made to prevent removal or to make it possible for a child to return safely home. The court shall examine the proposed case plan or any modification thereof, and upon a finding by the court that the plan or modified plan can be easily communicated, explained and discussed so as to make the participants accountable and able to understand the reasons for any success or failure under the plan, the court shall inform the participants of the probable action of the court if goals are met or not met.

(c) In furtherance of the provisions of this article, the department shall, within the limits of available funds, establish programs and services for the following purposes:

(1) For the development and establishment of training programs for professional and paraprofessional personnel in the fields of medicine, law, education, social work and other relevant fields who are engaged in, or intend to work in, the field of the prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect; and training programs for children, and for persons responsible for the welfare of children, in methods of protecting children from child abuse and neglect;

(2) For the establishment and maintenance of centers, serving defined geographic areas, staffed by multidisciplinary teams and community teams of personnel trained in the prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect cases, to provide a broad range of services related to child abuse and neglect, including direct support as well as providing advice and consultation to individuals, agencies and organizations which request the services;

(3) For furnishing services of multidisciplinary teams and community teams, trained in the

prevention, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect cases, on a consulting basis to small communities where the services are not available;

(4) For other innovative programs and projects that show promise of successfully identifying, preventing or remedying the causes of child abuse and neglect, including, but not limited to, programs and services designed to improve and maintain parenting skills, programs and projects for parent self help, and for prevention and treatment of drug-related child abuse and neglect; and

(5) Assisting public agencies or nonprofit private organizations or combinations thereof in making applications for grants from, or in entering into contracts with, the federal Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for demonstration programs and projects designed to identify, prevent and treat child abuse and neglect.

(d) Agencies, organizations and programs funded to carry out the purposes of this section shall be structured so as to comply with any applicable federal law, any regulation of the federal Department of Health and Human Services or its secretary, and any final comprehensive plan of the federal advisory board on child abuse and neglect. In funding organizations, the department shall, to the extent feasible, ensure that parental organizations combating child abuse and neglect receive preferential treatment.

**§49-4-409. After-care plans; contents; written comments; contacts; objections; courts.**

(a) Prior to the discharge of a child from any out-of-home placement to which the juvenile was committed pursuant to this chapter, the department or the Division of Juvenile Services shall convene a meeting of the multidisciplinary treatment team to which the child has been referred or, if no referral has been made, convene a multidisciplinary treatment team for any child for which a multidisciplinary treatment plan is required by this article and forward a copy of the juvenile's proposed after-care plan to the court which committed the juvenile. A copy of the plan shall also be sent to: (1) The child's parent, guardian or custodian; (2) the child's lawyer; (3) the child's probation officer or community mental health center professional; (4) the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the original commitment proceedings were held; and (5) the principal of the school which the child will attend. The plan shall have a list of the names and addresses of these persons attached to it.

(b) The after-care plan shall contain a detailed description of the education, counseling and treatment which the child received at the out-of-home placement and it shall also propose a plan for education, counseling and treatment for the child upon the child's discharge. The plan shall also contain a description of any problems the child has, including the source of those problems, and it shall propose a manner for addressing those problems upon discharge.

(c) Within twenty-one days of receiving the plan, the child's probation officer or community mental health center professional shall submit written comments upon the plan to the court which committed the child. Any other person who received a copy of the plan pursuant to subsection (a) of this section may submit written comments upon the plan to the court which committed the child. Any person who submits comments upon the plan shall send a copy of those comments to every other person who received a copy of the plan.

(d) Within twenty-one days of receiving the plan, the child's probation officer or community mental health center professional shall contact all persons, organizations and agencies which are to be involved in executing the plan to determine whether they are capable of executing their responsibilities under the plan and to further determine whether they are willing to execute their responsibilities under the plan.

(e) If adverse comments or objections regarding the plan are submitted to the circuit court, it shall, within forty-five days of receiving the plan, hold a hearing to consider the plan and the adverse comments or objections. Any person, organization or agency which has responsibilities in executing the plan, or their representatives, may be required to appear at the hearing unless they are excused by the circuit court. Within five days of the hearing, the circuit court shall issue an order which adopts the plan as submitted or as modified in response to any comments or objections.

(f) If no adverse comments or objections are submitted, a hearing need not be held. In that case, the circuit court shall consider the plan as submitted and shall, within forty-five days of

receiving the plan, issue an order which adopts the plan as submitted.

(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (e) and (f) of this section, the plan which is adopted by the circuit court shall be in the best interests of the child and shall also be in conformity with West Virginia's interest in youths as embodied in this chapter.

(h) The court which committed the child shall appoint the child's probation officer or community mental health center professional to act as supervisor of the plan. The supervisor shall report the child's progress under the plan to the court every sixty days or until the court determines that no report or no further care is necessary.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-410. Other agencies of government required to cooperate.**

State, county and local agencies shall provide the multidisciplinary teams with any information requested in writing by the team as allowable by law or upon receipt of a certified copy of the circuit court's order directing the agencies to release information in its possession relating to the child. The team shall assure that all information received and developed in connection with this article remain confidential. For purposes of this section, the term "confidential" shall be construed in accordance with article five of this chapter.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-411. Law enforcement; prosecution; interference with performance of duties.**

No multidisciplinary team may take any action which, in the determination of the prosecuting attorney or his or her assistant, impairs the ability of the prosecuting attorney, his or her assistant, or any law-enforcement officer to perform his or her statutory duties.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-412. Exemption from multidisciplinary team review before emergency out-of-home placements.**

Notwithstanding any provision of this article to the contrary, a multidisciplinary team meeting may not be required before temporary out-of-home placement of a child in an emergency circumstance or for purposes of assessment as provided by this article. As soon as practicable after the emergency circumstance, the multidisciplinary treatment team shall convene to explore placement options.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-413. Individualized case planning.**

(a) For any juvenile ordered to probation supervision pursuant to §49-4-714 of this code, the probation officer assigned to the juvenile shall develop and implement an individualized case plan in consultation with the juvenile's parents, guardian or custodian, and other appropriate parties, and based upon the results of a needs assessment conducted within 90 days prior to the disposition to probation. The probation officer shall work with the juvenile and his or her family, guardian or custodian to implement the case plan following disposition. At a minimum, the case plan shall:

(1) Identify the actions to be taken by the juvenile and, if appropriate, the juvenile's parents, guardian or custodian to ensure future lawful conduct and compliance with the court's disposition order; and

(2) Identify the services to be offered and provided to the juvenile and, if appropriate, the juvenile's parents, guardian or custodian and may include services to address: Mental health and substance abuse issues; education; individual, group and family counseling services; community restoration; or other relevant concerns identified by the probation officer.

(b) For any juvenile disposed to an out-of-home placement with the department, the department shall ensure that the residential service provider develops and implements an individualized case plan based upon the recommendations of the multidisciplinary team pursuant to §49-4-406 of this code and the results of a needs assessment. At a minimum, the case plan shall include:

(1) Specific treatment goals and the actions to be taken by the juvenile in order to demonstrate satisfactory attainment of each goal;

(2) The services to be offered and provided by the residential service providers; and

(3) A detailed plan designed to assure appropriate reintegration of the juvenile to his or her family, guardian, school and community following the satisfactory completion of the case plan treatment goals, including a protocol and timeline for engaging the parents, guardians or custodians prior to the release of the juvenile.

(c) For any juvenile committed to the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall develop and implement an individualized case plan based upon the recommendations made to the court by the multidisciplinary team pursuant to §49-4-406(c) of this code and the results of a risk and needs assessment. At a minimum, the case plan shall include:

(1) Specific correctional goals and the actions to be taken by the juvenile to demonstrate satisfactory attainment of each goal;

(2) The services to be offered and provided by the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation

and any contracted service providers; and

(3) A detailed plan designed to assure appropriate reintegration of the juvenile to his or her family, guardian, school and community following the satisfactory completion of the case plan treatment goals, including a protocol and timeline for engaging the parents, guardians or custodians prior to the release of the juvenile.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-501. Prosecuting attorney representation of the Department of Human Services; conflict resolution.**

(a) The prosecuting attorney shall render to the Department of Human Services, without additional compensation, the legal services as the department may require. This section shall not be construed to prohibit the department from developing plans for cooperation with courts, prosecuting attorneys, and other law-enforcement officials in a manner as to permit the state and its citizens to obtain maximum fiscal benefits under federal laws, rules and regulations.

(b) Nothing in this code may be construed to limit the authority of a prosecuting attorney to file an abuse or neglect petition, including the duties and responsibilities owed to its client the Department of Human Services, in his or her fulfillment of the provisions of this article.

(c) Whenever, pursuant to this chapter, a prosecuting attorney acts as counsel for the Department of Human Services, and a dispute arises between the prosecuting attorney and the department's representative because an action proposed by the other is believed to place the child at imminent risk of abuse or serious neglect, either the prosecuting attorney or the department's representative may contact the secretary of the department and the executive director of the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute for prompt mediation and resolution. The secretary may designate either his or her general counsel or the director of social services to act as his or her designee and the executive director may designate an objective prosecuting attorney as his or her designee.

**§49-4-502. Prosecuting attorney to cooperate with persons other than the department in child abuse and neglect matters; duties.**

It is the duty of every prosecuting attorney to cooperate fully and promptly with persons seeking to apply for relief, including copetitioners with the department, under this article in all cases of suspected child abuse and neglect; to promptly prepare applications and petitions for relief requested by those persons, to investigate reported cases of suspected child abuse and neglect for possible criminal activity; and to report at least annually to the grand jury regarding the discharge of his or her duties with respect thereto.

**§49-4-503. Prosecuting attorney to represent petitioner in juvenile cases.**

The prosecuting attorney shall represent the petitioner in all proceedings under this article before the court judge or magistrate having juvenile jurisdiction.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-504. Prosecuting attorney duty to establish multidisciplinary investigative teams.**

The prosecuting attorney of each county shall establish a multidisciplinary investigative team in that county, pursuant to section four hundred two of this article, and section five, article four of chapter seven.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-601. Petition to court when child believed neglected or abused; venue; notice; right to counsel; continuing legal education; findings; proceedings; procedure.**

(a) Petitioner and venue. — If the department or a reputable person believes that a child is neglected or abused, the department or the person may present a petition setting forth the facts to the circuit court in the county in which the child resides, or if the petition is being brought by the department, in the county in which the custodial respondent or other named party abuser resides, or in which the abuse or neglect occurred, or to the judge of the court in vacation. Under no circumstance may a party file a petition in more than one county based on the same set of facts.

(b) Contents of Petition. — The petition shall be verified by the oath of some credible person having knowledge of the facts. The petition shall allege specific conduct including time and place, how the conduct comes within the statutory definition of neglect or abuse with references thereto, any supportive services provided by the department to remedy the alleged circumstances and the relief sought.

(c) Court action upon filing of petition. — Upon filing of the petition, the court shall set a time and place for a hearing and shall appoint counsel for the child. When there is an order for temporary custody pursuant to this article, the preliminary hearing shall be held within ten days of the order continuing or transferring custody, unless a continuance for a reasonable time is granted to a date certain, for good cause shown.

(d) Department action upon filing of the petition. — At the time of the institution of any proceeding under this article, the department shall provide supportive services in an effort to remedy circumstances detrimental to a child.

(e) Notice of hearing. —

(1) The petition and notice of the hearing shall be served upon both parents and any other custodian, giving to the parents or custodian at least five days' actual notice of a preliminary hearing and at least ten days' notice of any other hearing.

(2) Notice shall be given to the department, any foster or preadoptive parent, and any relative providing care for the child.

(3) In cases where personal service within West Virginia cannot be obtained after due diligence upon any parent or other custodian, a copy of the petition and notice of the hearing shall be mailed to the person by certified mail, addressee only, return receipt requested, to the last known address of the person. If the person signs the certificate, service shall be complete and the certificate shall be filed as proof of the service with the clerk of the circuit court.

(4) If service cannot be obtained by personal service or by certified mail, notice shall be by publication as a Class II legal advertisement in compliance with article three, chapter fifty-

nine of this code.

(5) A notice of hearing shall specify the time and place of the hearing, the right to counsel of the child and parents or other custodians at every stage of the proceedings and the fact that the proceedings can result in the permanent termination of the parental rights.

(6) Failure to object to defects in the petition and notice may not be construed as a waiver.

(f) Right to counsel. —

(1) In any proceeding under this article, the child, his or her parents and his or her legally established custodian or other persons standing in loco parentis to him or her has the right to be represented by counsel at every stage of the proceedings and shall be informed by the court of their right to be so represented and that if they cannot pay for the services of counsel, that counsel will be appointed.

(2) Counsel shall be appointed in the initial order. For parents, legal guardians, and other persons standing in loco parentis, the representation may only continue after the first appearance if the parent or other persons standing in loco parentis cannot pay for the services of counsel.

(3) Counsel for other parties shall only be appointed upon request for appointment of counsel. If the requesting parties have not retained counsel and cannot pay for the services of counsel, the court shall, by order entered of record, appoint an attorney or attorneys to represent the other party or parties and so inform the parties.

(4) Under no circumstances may the same attorney represent both the child and the other party or parties, nor may the same attorney represent both parents or custodians. However, one attorney may represent both parents or custodians where both parents or guardians consent to this representation after the attorney fully discloses to the client the possible conflict and where the attorney assures the court that she or he is able to represent each client without impairing her or his professional judgment; however, if more than one child from a family is involved in the proceeding, one attorney may represent all the children.

(5) A parent who is a copetitioner is entitled to his or her own attorney. The court may allow to each attorney so appointed a fee in the same amount which appointed counsel can receive in felony cases.

(g) Continuing education for counsel. — Any attorney representing a party under this article shall receive a minimum of eight hours of continuing legal education training per reporting period on child abuse and neglect procedure and practice. In addition to this requirement, any attorney appointed to represent a child must first complete training on representation of children that is approved by the administrative office of the Supreme Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court of Appeals shall develop procedures for approval and certification of training required under this section. Where no attorney has completed the training required by this

subsection, the court shall appoint a competent attorney with demonstrated knowledge of child welfare law to represent the parent or child. Any attorney appointed pursuant to this section shall perform all duties required of an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of West Virginia.

(h) Right to be heard. — In any proceeding pursuant to this article, the party or parties having custodial or other parental rights or responsibilities to the child shall be afforded a meaningful opportunity to be heard, including the opportunity to testify and to present and cross-examine witnesses. Foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers shall also have a meaningful opportunity to be heard.

(i) Findings of the court. — Where relevant, the court shall consider the efforts of the department to remedy the alleged circumstances. At the conclusion of the adjudicatory hearing, the court shall make a determination based upon the evidence and shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law as to whether the child is abused or neglected and whether the respondent is abusing, neglecting, or, if applicable, a battered parent, all of which shall be incorporated into the order of the court. The findings must be based upon conditions existing at the time of the filing of the petition and proven by clear and convincing evidence.

(j) Priority of proceedings. — Any petition filed and any proceeding held under this article shall, to the extent practicable, be given priority over any other civil action before the court, except proceedings under section three hundred nine, article twenty-seven, chapter forty-eight of this code and actions in which trial is in progress. Any petition filed under this article shall be docketed immediately upon filing. Any hearing to be held at the end of an improvement period and any other hearing to be held during any proceedings under this article shall be held as nearly as practicable on successive days and, with respect to the hearing to be held at the end of an improvement period, shall be held as close in time as possible after the end of the improvement period and shall be held within thirty days of the termination of the improvement period.

(k) Procedural safeguards. — The petition may not be taken as confessed. A transcript or recording shall be made of all proceedings unless waived by all parties to the proceeding. The rules of evidence shall apply. Following the court's determination, it shall be inquired of the parents or custodians whether or not appeal is desired and the response transcribed. A negative response may not be construed as a waiver. The evidence shall be transcribed and made available to the parties or their counsel as soon as practicable, if the same is required for purposes of further proceedings. If an indigent person intends to pursue further proceedings, the court reporter shall furnish a transcript of the hearing without cost to the indigent person if an affidavit is filed stating that he or she cannot pay therefor.

(l) CASA. — The department, guardian ad litem, or any parent as defined in §49-1-204 of this code who is a party to a proceeding instituted pursuant to the provisions of this section, may, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings, request the appointment of a court appointed special advocate, which the circuit court may appoint

if a court appointed special advocate provides services to the circuit court with jurisdiction over the proceedings instituted pursuant to this section.

WV Legislature

**§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.

**§49-4-601b. Substantiation by the department of abuse and neglect; file purging; expungement; exceptions.**

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary, when the department substantiates an allegation of abuse and/or neglect against a person, but there is no judicial finding of abuse and/or neglect as a result of the allegation, the department shall provide written notice of the substantiation to the person by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(b) The person against whom an abuse and/or neglect allegation has been substantiated, as described in subsection (a) of this section, has the right to contest the substantiation by filing a grievance with the board of review of the department and has the right to appeal the decision of the board of review to the court, in accordance with the provisions of §29A-5-1 *et seq.* of this code regarding administrative appeals.

(c) The secretary of the department shall propose legislative rules for promulgation in accordance with §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code, within the applicable time limit to be considered by the Legislature during its regular session in the year 2021, which rules shall include, at a minimum:

(1) Provisions for ensuring that an individual against whom the department has substantiated an allegation of abuse and/or neglect, but against whom there is no judicial finding of abuse and/or neglect, receives written notice of the substantiation in a timely manner. The written notice shall at a minimum, state the following:

(A) The name of the child the person is alleged to have abused and/or neglected, the place or places where the abuse and/or neglect allegedly occurred, and the date or dates on which the abuse and/or neglect is alleged to have occurred;

(B) That the person has a right to file a grievance protesting the substantiation of abuse and/or neglect with the board of review of the department and clear instructions regarding how to file a grievance with the board of review, including a description of any applicable time limits;

(C) That the person has a right to appeal an adverse decision of the board of review of the department to the courts and notice of any applicable time limits; and

(D) A description of any public or nonpublic registry on which the person's name will be included as a result of a substantiated allegation of abuse and/or neglect and a statement that the inclusion of the person's name on the registry may prevent the person from holding jobs from which child abusers are disqualified, or from providing foster or kinship care to a child in the future;

(2) Provisions for ensuring that a person against whom an allegation of abuse and/or neglect has been substantiated, but against whom there is no judicial finding of abuse and/or neglect, may file a grievance with the department and provisions guaranteeing that he or

she will have a full and fair opportunity to be heard; and

(3) Provisions requiring the department to remove a person's name from an abuse and/or neglect registry maintained by the department if a substantiated allegation is successfully challenged in the board of review or in a court.

(d) Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary:

(1) Where any allegation of abuse and/or neglect is substantiated and a petition for abuse and/or neglect could be filed and the department does not file a petition, all department records related to the allegation shall be sealed one year after the substantiation determination, unless during the one-year period another allegation of child abuse and/or neglect against the person is substantiated: *Provided*, That the provisions of this subdivision do not apply to a person against whom an allegation is substantiated but the circumstances do not allow for the filing of a petition for abuse and/or neglect;

(2) Where an allegation of child abuse and/or neglect is substantiated and a petition is filed with the circuit court which does not end in an adjudication that abuse and/or neglect occurred, the allegation shall be considered to have been unsubstantiated.

(3)(A) Where an allegation of child abuse and/or neglect is substantiated and a judicial determination of child abuse and/or neglect is found, a person may petition the circuit court which found the person to be an abusing parent to have his or her department record sealed after no less than five years have elapsed since the finding of abuse and/or neglect is rendered: *Provided*, That a petition may not be filed if the person had been the subject of a substantiated allegation of abuse and/or neglect during the period of time after the finding and prior to the filing of the petition; and

(B) In its consideration of a petition filed under this subdivision, the court, in its discretion, may look at all relevant factors related to the petition, including, but not limited to, efforts at rehabilitation and family reunification.

(e) The sealing of a record pursuant to subsection (d) of this section means that any inquiry of the department about a person having a record of child abuse and/or neglect for purposes of possible employment shall be answered in the negative.

(f) The secretary is directed to propose legislative rules pursuant to §29A-1-1 *et seq.* of this code to effectuate the amendments to this section enacted during the regular session of the Legislature, 2023.

**§49-4-602. Petition to court when child believed neglected or abused; temporary care, custody, and control of child at different stages of proceeding; temporary care; orders; emergency removal; when reasonable efforts to preserve family are unnecessary.**

(a)(1) Temporary care, custody, and control upon filing of the petition. -- Upon the filing of a petition, the court may order that the child alleged to be an abused or neglected child be delivered for not more than ten days into the care, custody, and control of the department or a responsible person who is not the custodial parent or guardian of the child, if it finds that:

(A) There exists imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child; and

(B) There are no reasonably available alternatives to removal of the child, including, but not limited to, the provision of medical, psychiatric, psychological or homemaking services in the child's present custody.

(2) Where the alleged abusing person, if known, is a member of a household, the court shall not allow placement pursuant to this section of the child or children in the home unless the alleged abusing person is or has been precluded from visiting or residing in the home by judicial order.

(3) In a case where there is more than one child in the home, or in the temporary care, custody or control of the alleged offending parent, the petition shall so state. Notwithstanding the fact that the allegations of abuse or neglect may pertain to less than all of those children, each child in the home for whom relief is sought shall be made a party to the proceeding. Even though the acts of abuse or neglect alleged in the petition were not directed against a specific child who is named in the petition, the court shall order the removal of the child, pending final disposition, if it finds that there exists imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child and a lack of reasonable available alternatives to removal.

(4) The initial order directing custody shall contain an order appointing counsel and scheduling the preliminary hearing, and upon its service shall require the immediate transfer of care, custody, and control of the child or children to the department or a responsible relative, which may include any parent, guardian, or other custodian. The court order shall state:

(A) That continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the child and why; and

(B) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to preserve the family and prevent the placement or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible. The order may also direct any party or the department to initiate or become involved in services to facilitate reunification of the family.

(b) Temporary care, custody and control at preliminary hearing. -- Whether or not the court

orders immediate transfer of custody as provided in subsection (a) of this section, if the facts alleged in the petition demonstrate to the court that there exists imminent danger to the child, the court may schedule a preliminary hearing giving the respondents at least five days' actual notice. If the court finds at the preliminary hearing that there are no alternatives less drastic than removal of the child and that a hearing on the petition cannot be scheduled in the interim period, the court may order that the child be delivered into the temporary care, custody, and control of the department or a responsible person or agency found by the court to be a fit and proper person for the temporary care of the child for a period not exceeding sixty days. The court order shall state:

(1) That continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the child and set forth the reasons therefor;

(2) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to preserve the family and to prevent the child's removal from his or her home;

(3) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to preserve the family and to prevent the placement or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible;

(4) Whether or not the department made reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §12101, et seq., to parents with disabilities in order to allow them meaningful access to reunification and family preservation services; and

(5) What efforts should be made by the department, if any, to facilitate the child's return home. If the court grants an improvement period as provided in section six hundred ten of this article, the sixty-day limit upon temporary custody is waived.

(c) Emergency removal by department during pendency of case. -- Regardless of whether the court has previously granted the department care and custody of a child, if the department takes physical custody of a child during the pendency of a child abuse and neglect case (also known as removing the child) due to a change in circumstances and without a court order issued at the time of the removal, the department must immediately notify the court and a hearing shall take place within ten days to determine if there is imminent danger to the physical well-being of the child, and there is no reasonably available alternative to removal of the child. The court findings and order shall be consistent with subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

(d) Situations when reasonable efforts to preserve the family are not required. -- For purposes of the court's consideration of temporary custody pursuant to subsection (a), (b), or (c) of this section, the department is not required to make reasonable efforts to preserve the family if the court determines:

(1) The parent has subjected the child, another child of the parent or any other child residing

in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent to aggravated circumstances which include, but are not limited to, abandonment, torture, chronic abuse and sexual abuse;

(2) The parent has:

(A) Committed murder of the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(B) Committed voluntary manslaughter of the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(C) Attempted or conspired to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter or been an accessory before or after the fact to either crime;

(D) Committed unlawful or malicious wounding that results in serious bodily injury to the child, the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, to another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(E) Committed sexual assault or sexual abuse of the child, the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent; or

(F) Has been required by state or federal law to register with a sex offender registry, and the court has determined in consideration of the nature and circumstances surrounding the prior charges against that parent, that the child's interests would not be promoted by a preservation of the family; or

(3) The parental rights of the parent to another child have been terminated involuntarily.

**§49-4-603. Medical and mental examinations; limitation of evidence; probable cause; testimony; judge or referee.**

(a)(1) At any time during proceedings under this article the court may, upon its own motion or upon motion of the child or other parties, order the child or other parties to be examined by a physician, psychologist or psychiatrist, and may require testimony from the expert, subject to cross-examination and the rules of evidence.

(2) The court may not terminate parental or custodial rights of a party solely because the party refuses to submit to the examination, nor may the court hold a party in contempt for refusing to submit to an examination.

(3) The physician, psychologist or psychiatrist shall be allowed to testify as to the conclusions reached from hospital, medical, psychological or laboratory records provided the same are produced at the hearing.

(4) If the child, parent or custodian is indigent, the witnesses shall be compensated out of the Treasury of the State, upon certificate of the court wherein the case is pending.

(5) No evidence acquired as a result of an examination of the parent or any other person having custody of the child may be used against the person in any subsequent criminal proceedings against the person.

(b) (1) If a person with authority to file a petition under this article shall have probable cause to believe that evidence exists that a child has been abused or neglected and that the evidence may be found by a medical examination, the person may apply to a judge or juvenile referee for an order to take the child into custody for delivery to a physician or hospital for examination.

(2) The application may be on forms prescribed by the Supreme Court of Appeals or prepared by the prosecuting attorney or the applicant, and shall set forth facts from which it may be determined that probable cause exists for the belief.

(3) Upon sworn testimony or other evidence as the judge or referee deems sufficient, the judge or referee may order any law-enforcement officer to take the child into custody and deliver the child to a physician or hospital for examination.

(4) If a referee issues an order the referee shall by telephonic communication have such order orally confirmed by a circuit judge of the circuit or an adjoining circuit who shall, on the next judicial day, enter an order of confirmation.

(5) Any child protection worker and the child's parents, guardians or custodians may accompany the officer for examination.

(6) After the examination the officer may return the child to the custody of his or her parent, guardian or custodian, retain custody of the child or deliver custody to the state department

until the end of the next judicial day, at which time the child shall be returned to the custody of his or her parent, guardian or custodian unless a petition has been filed and custody of the child has been transferred to the department under section six hundred two of this article.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-604. Disposition of neglected or abused children; case plans; dispositions; factors to be considered; reunification; orders; alternative dispositions.**

(a) *Child and family case plans.* — Following a determination pursuant to §49-4-602 of this code wherein the court finds a child to be abused or neglected, the department shall file with the court a copy of the child's case plan, including the permanency plan for the child. The term "case plan" means a written document that includes, where applicable, the requirements of the family case plan as provided in §49-4-408 of this code and that also includes, at a minimum, the following:

(1) A description of the type of home or institution in which the child is to be placed, including a discussion of the appropriateness of the placement and how the agency which is responsible for the child plans to assure that the child receives proper care and that services are provided to the parents, child, and foster or kinship parents in order to improve the conditions that made the child unsafe in the care of his or her parent(s), including any reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U. S. C. §12101 *et seq.*, to parents with disabilities in order to allow them meaningful access to reunification and family preservation services;

(2) A plan to facilitate the return of the child to his or her own home or the concurrent permanent placement of the child; and address the needs of the child while in kinship or foster care, including a discussion of the appropriateness of the services that have been provided to the child.

The term "permanency plan" refers to that part of the case plan which is designed to achieve a permanent home for the child in the least restrictive setting available. The plan must document efforts to ensure that the child is returned home within approximate time lines for reunification as set out in the plan. Reasonable efforts to place a child for adoption or with a legal guardian should be made at the same time, or concurrent with, reasonable efforts to prevent removal or to make it possible for a child to return to the care of his or her parent(s) safely. If reunification is not the permanency plan for the child, the plan must state why reunification is not appropriate and detail the alternative, concurrent permanent placement plans for the child to include approximate time lines for when the placement is expected to become a permanent placement. This case plan shall serve as the family case plan for parents of abused or neglected children. Copies of the child's case plan shall be sent to the child's attorney and parent, guardian or custodian or their counsel at least five days prior to the dispositional hearing. The court shall forthwith proceed to disposition giving both the petitioner and respondents an opportunity to be heard.

(b) *Requirements for a Guardian ad litem.* —

A guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to §49-4-601(f)(1) of this code, shall, in the performance of his or her duties, adhere to the requirements of the Rules of Procedure for Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings and the Rules of Professional Conduct and such other rules as the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals may promulgate, and any appendices

thereto, and must meet all educational requirements for the guardian ad litem. A guardian ad litem may not be paid for his or her services without meeting the certification and educational requirements of the court. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals is requested to provide guidance to the judges of the circuit courts regarding supervision of said guardians ad litem. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals is requested to review the Rules of Procedure for Child Abuse and Neglect Proceedings and the Rules of Professional Conduct specific to guardians ad litem.

(c) *Disposition decisions.* — The court shall give precedence to dispositions in the following sequence:

- (1) Dismiss the petition;
- (2) Refer the child, the abusing parent, the battered parent or other family members to a community agency for needed assistance and dismiss the petition;
- (3) Return the child to his or her own home under supervision of the department;
- (4) Order terms of supervision calculated to assist the child and any abusing parent or battered parent or parents or custodian which prescribe the manner of supervision and care of the child and which are within the ability of any parent or parents or custodian to perform;
- (5) Upon a finding that the abusing parent or battered parent or parents are presently unwilling or unable to provide adequately for the child's needs, commit the child temporarily to the care, custody, and control of the department, a licensed private child welfare agency, or a suitable person who may be appointed guardian by the court. The court order shall state:
  - (A) That continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the child and why;
  - (B) Whether or not the department has made reasonable efforts, with the child's health and safety being the paramount concern, to preserve the family, or some portion thereof, and to prevent or eliminate the need for removing the child from the child's home and to make it possible for the child to safely return home;
  - (C) Whether the department has made reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U. S. C. § 12101 *et seq.*, to parents with disabilities in order to allow them meaningful access to reunification and family preservation services;
  - (D) What efforts were made or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible; and
  - (E) The specific circumstances of the situation which made those efforts unreasonable if services were not offered by the department. The court order shall also determine under

what circumstances the child's commitment to the department are to continue. Considerations pertinent to the determination include whether the child should:

(i) Be considered for legal guardianship;

(ii) Be considered for permanent placement with a fit and willing relative; or

(iii) Be placed in another planned permanent living arrangement, but only in cases where the child has attained 16 years of age and the department has documented to the circuit court a compelling reason for determining that it would not be in the best interests of the child to follow one of the options set forth in subparagraphs (i) or (ii) of this paragraph. The court may order services to meet the special needs of the child. Whenever the court transfers custody of a youth to the department, an appropriate order of financial support by the parents or guardians shall be entered in accordance with §49-4-801 through §49-4-803 of this code;

(6) Upon a finding that there is no reasonable likelihood that the conditions of neglect or abuse can be substantially corrected in the near future and, when necessary for the welfare of the child, terminate the parental, custodial and guardianship rights and responsibilities of the abusing parent and commit the child to the permanent sole custody of the nonabusing parent, if there be one, or, if not, to either the permanent guardianship of the department or a licensed child welfare agency. The court may award sole custody of the child to a nonabusing battered parent. If the court shall so find, then in fixing its dispositional order the court shall consider the following factors:

(A) The child's need for continuity of care and caretakers;

(B) The amount of time required for the child to be integrated into a stable and permanent home environment; and

(C) Other factors as the court considers necessary and proper. Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, the court shall give consideration to the wishes of a child 14 years of age or older or otherwise of an age of discretion as determined by the court regarding the permanent termination of parental rights. No adoption of a child shall take place until all proceedings for termination of parental rights under this article and appeals thereof are final. In determining whether or not parental rights should be terminated, the court shall consider the efforts made by the department to provide remedial and reunification services to the parent. The court order shall state:

(i) That continuation in the home is not in the best interest of the child and why;

(ii) Why reunification is not in the best interests of the child;

(iii) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts, with the child's health and safety being the paramount concern, to preserve the family, or some portion thereof, and to prevent the placement or to eliminate the need for removing the child from the child's home

and to make it possible for the child to safely return home, or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible; and

(iv) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family, or some portion thereof, including a description of what efforts were made or that those efforts were unreasonable due to specific circumstances.

(7) For purposes of the court's consideration of the disposition custody of a child pursuant to this subsection, the department is not required to make reasonable efforts to preserve the family if the court determines:

(A) The parent has subjected the child, another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent to aggravated circumstances which include, but are not limited to, abandonment, torture, chronic abuse, and sexual abuse;

(B) The parent has:

(i) Committed murder of the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, another child of the parent, or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(ii) Committed voluntary manslaughter of the child's other parent, guardian, or custodian, another child of the parent, or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(iii) Attempted or conspired to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter, or been an accessory before or after the fact to either crime;

(iv) Committed a malicious assault that results in serious bodily injury to the child, the child's other parent, guardian, or custodian, to another child of the parent, or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent;

(v) Attempted or conspired to commit malicious assault, as outlined in subparagraph (iv), or been an accessory before or after the fact to the same;

(vi) Committed sexual assault or sexual abuse of the child, the child's other parent, guardian, or custodian, another child of the parent, or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent; or

(vii) Attempted or conspired to commit sexual assault or sexual abuse, as outlined in subparagraph (vi), or been an accessory before or after the fact to the same.

(C) The parental rights of the parent to another child have been terminated involuntarily;

(D) A parent has been required by state or federal law to register with a sex offender

registry, and the court has determined in consideration of the nature and circumstances surrounding the prior charges against that parent, that the child's interests would not be promoted by a preservation of the family.

(d) As used in this section, "No reasonable likelihood that conditions of neglect or abuse can be substantially corrected" means that, based upon the evidence before the court, the abusing adult or adults have demonstrated an inadequate capacity to solve the problems of abuse or neglect on their own or with help. Those conditions exist in the following circumstances, which are not exclusive:

(1) The abusing parent or parents have habitually abused or are addicted to alcohol, controlled substances or drugs, to the extent that proper parenting skills have been seriously impaired and the person or persons have not responded to or followed through the recommended and appropriate treatment which could have improved the capacity for adequate parental functioning;

(2) The abusing parent or parents have willfully refused or are presently unwilling to cooperate in the development of a reasonable family case plan designed to lead to the child's return to their care, custody and control;

(3) The abusing parent or parents have not responded to or followed through with a reasonable family case plan or other rehabilitative efforts of social, medical, mental health, or other rehabilitative agencies designed to reduce or prevent the abuse or neglect of the child, as evidenced by the continuation or insubstantial diminution of conditions which threatened the health, welfare, or life of the child;

(4) The abusing parent or parents have abandoned the child;

(5) The abusing parent or parents have repeatedly or seriously injured the child physically or emotionally, or have sexually abused or sexually exploited the child, and the degree of family stress and the potential for further abuse and neglect are so great as to preclude the use of resources to mitigate or resolve family problems, or assist the abusing parent or parents in fulfilling their responsibilities to the child; and

(6) The battered parent's parenting skills have been seriously impaired and the person has willfully refused or is presently unwilling or unable to cooperate in the development of a reasonable treatment plan, or has not adequately responded to or followed through with the recommended and appropriate treatment plan.

(e) The court may, as an alternative disposition, allow the parents or custodians an improvement period not to exceed six months. During this period the court shall require the parent to rectify the conditions upon which the determination was based. The court may order the child to be placed with the parents, or any person found to be a fit and proper person, for the temporary care of the child during the period. At the end of the period, the court shall hold a hearing to determine whether the conditions have been adequately

improved and at the conclusion of the hearing shall make a further dispositional order in accordance with this section.

(f) The court may not terminate the parental rights of a parent on the sole basis that the parent is participating in a medication-assisted treatment program, as regulated in §16-5Y-1 *et seq.*, for substance use disorder, as long as the parent is successfully fulfilling his or her treatment obligations in the medication-assisted treatment program.

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**§49-4-605. When department efforts to terminate parental rights are required.**

(a) Except as provided in §49-4-605(b) of this code, the department shall file or join in a petition or otherwise seek a ruling in any pending proceeding to terminate parental rights:

(1) If a child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months as determined by the earlier of the date of the first judicial finding that the child is subjected to abuse or neglect or the date which is 60 days after the child is removed from the home;

(2) If a court has determined the child is abandoned, tortured, sexually abused, or chronically abused;

(3) If a court has determined the parent has committed murder or voluntary manslaughter of another of his or her children, another child in the household, or the other parent of his or her children; has attempted or conspired to commit murder or voluntary manslaughter or has been an accessory before or after the fact of either crime; has committed unlawful or malicious wounding resulting in serious bodily injury to the child or to another of his or her children, another child in the household or to the other parent of his or her children; has committed sexual assault or sexual abuse of the child, the child's other parent, guardian or custodian, another child of the parent or any other child residing in the same household or under the temporary or permanent custody of the parent; or the parental rights of the parent to another child have been terminated involuntarily; or

(4) If a parent whose child has been removed from the parent's care, custody, and control by an order of removal voluntarily fails to have contact or attempt to have contact with the child for a period of 18 consecutive months: Provided, That failure to have, or attempt to have, contact due to being incarcerated, being in a medical or drug treatment or recovery facility, or being on active military duty shall not be considered voluntary behavior.

(b) The department may determine not to file a petition to terminate parental rights when:

(1) At the option of the department, the child has been placed permanently with a relative by court order;

(2) The department has documented in the case plan made available for court review a compelling reason, including, but not limited to, the child's age and preference regarding termination or the child's placement in custody of the department based on any proceedings initiated under part seven of this article, that filing the petition would not be in the best interests of the child; or

(3) The department has not provided, when reasonable efforts to return a child to the family are required, the services to the child's family as the department deems necessary for the safe return of the child to the home.

**§49-4-606. Modification of dispositional orders; hearings; treatment team; unadopted children.**

(a) Upon motion of a child, a child's parent or custodian or the department alleging a change of circumstances requiring a different disposition, the court shall conduct a hearing pursuant to section six hundred four of this article and may modify a dispositional order if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence a material change of circumstances and that the modification is in the child's best interests. A dispositional order may not be modified after the child has been adopted, except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section. Adequate and timely notice of any motion for modification shall be given to the child's counsel, counsel for the child's parent or custodian, the department and any person entitled to notice and the right to be heard. The circuit court of origin has exclusive jurisdiction over placement of the child, and the placement may not be disrupted or delayed by any administrative process of the department.

(b) If the child is removed or relinquished from an adoptive home or other permanent placement after the case has been dismissed, any party with notice thereof and the receiving agency shall promptly report the matter to the circuit court of origin, the department and the child's counsel, and the court shall schedule a permanency hearing within sixty days of the report to the circuit court, with notice given to any appropriate parties and persons entitled to notice and the right to be heard. The department shall convene a multidisciplinary treatment team meeting within thirty days of the receipt of notice of permanent placement disruption.

(c) If a child has not been adopted, the child or department may move the court to place the child with a parent or custodian whose rights have been terminated and/or restore the parent's or guardian's rights. Under these circumstances, the court may order the placement and/or restoration of a parent's or guardian's rights if it finds by clear and convincing evidence a material change of circumstances and that the placement and/or restoration is in the child's best interests.

**§49-4-607. Consensual termination of parental rights.**

An agreement of a natural parent in termination of parental rights is valid if made by a duly acknowledged writing, and entered into under circumstances free from duress and fraud. Where during the pendency of an abuse and neglect proceeding, a parent offers voluntarily to relinquish of his or her parental rights, and the relinquishment is accepted by the circuit court, the relinquishment may, without further evidence, be used as the basis of an order of adjudication of abuse and neglect by that parent of his or her children.

**§49-4-608. Permanency hearing; frequency; transitional planning; out-of-state placement; findings; notice; permanent placement review.**

(a) Permanency hearing when reasonable efforts are not required. — If the court finds pursuant to this article that the department is not required to make reasonable efforts to preserve the family, then notwithstanding any other provision a permanency hearing must be held within 30 days following the entry of the court order so finding, and a permanent placement review hearing must be conducted at least once every 90 days thereafter until a permanent placement is achieved.

(b) Permanency hearing every 12 months until permanency is achieved. — If 12 months after receipt by the department or its authorized agent of physical care, custody, and control of a child either by a court-ordered placement or by a voluntary agreement the department has not placed a child in an adoptive home, placed the child with a natural parent, placed the child in legal guardianship, or permanently placed the child with a fit and willing relative, the court shall hold a permanency hearing. The department shall file a progress report with the court detailing the efforts that have been made to place the child in a permanent home and copies of the child's case plan, which shall include the permanency plan as defined in §49-1-201 and §49-4-604 of this code. Copies of the report shall be sent to the parties and all persons entitled to notice and the right to be heard. The court shall schedule a hearing giving notice and the right to be present to the child's attorney; the child; the child's parents; the child's guardians; the child's foster parents; any preadoptive parent, or any relative providing care for the child; any person entitled to notice and the right to be heard; and other persons as the court may, in its discretion, direct. The child's presence may be waived by the child's attorney at the request of the child or if the child is younger than 12 years-of-age and would suffer emotional harm. The purpose of the hearing is to review the child's case, to determine whether and under what conditions the child's commitment to the department shall continue, to determine what efforts are necessary to provide the child with a permanent home, and to determine if the department has made reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan. The court shall conduct another permanency hearing within 12 months thereafter for each child who remains in the care, custody, and control of the department until the child is placed in an adoptive home, returned to his or her parents, placed in legal guardianship, or permanently placed with a fit and willing relative.

(c) Transitional planning for older children. — In the case of a child who has attained 16 years of age, the court shall determine the services needed to assist the child to make the transition from foster care to independent living. The child's case plan should specify services aimed at transitioning the child into adulthood. When a child turns 17, or as soon as a child aged 17 comes into a case, the department must immediately provide the child with assistance and support in developing a transition plan that is personalized at the direction of the child. The plan must include specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors, continuing support services, work force support, and employment services, and the plan should be as detailed as the child may elect. In addition to these requirements, when a child with special needs turns 17, or as soon as a child aged

17 with special needs comes into a case, he or she is entitled to the appointment of a department adult services worker to the multidisciplinary treatment team, and coordination between the multidisciplinary treatment team and other transition planning teams, such as special education individualized education planning (IEP) teams.

(d) Out-of-state placements. — A court may not order a child to be placed in an out-of-state facility unless the child is diagnosed with a health issue that no in-state facility or program serves unless a placement out of state is in closer proximity to the child's family for the necessary care or the services are able to be provided more timely. If the child is to be placed with a relative or other responsible person out of state, the court shall use judicial leadership to help expedite the process under the Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children provided in §49-7-101 and §49-7-102 of this code and the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act provided in §48-20-101 *et seq.* of this code.

(e) Findings in order. — At the conclusion of the hearing the court shall, in accordance with the best interests of the child, enter an order containing all the appropriate findings. The court order shall state:

(1) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to preserve the family and to prevent out-of-home placement or that the specific situation made the effort unreasonable;

(2) Whether or not the department made reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan and concurrent plan for the child;

(3) The appropriateness of the child's current placement, including its distance from the child's home and whether or not it is the least restrictive one (or most family-like one) available;

(4) The appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement;

(5) Services required to meet the child's needs and achieve permanency; and

(6) In addition, in the case of any child for whom another planned permanent living arrangement is the permanency plan the court shall: (A) Inquire of the child about the desired permanency outcome for the child; (B) make a judicial determination explaining why, as of the date of the hearing, another planned permanent living arrangement is the best permanency plan for the child; and (C) provide in the court order compelling reasons why it continues to not be in the best interest of the child to: (i) return home, (ii) be placed for adoption, (iii) be placed with a legal guardian, or (iv) be placed with a fit and willing relative.

(f) The department shall annually report to the court the current status of the placements of children in the care, custody, and control of the state department who have not been adopted.

(g) The department shall file a report with the court in any case where any child in the

custody of the state receives more than three placements in one year no later than 30 days after the third placement. This report shall be provided to all parties and persons entitled to notice and the right to be heard. Upon motion by any party, the court shall review these placements and determine what efforts are necessary to provide the child with a permanent home. No report may be provided to any parent or parent's attorney whose parental rights have been terminated pursuant to this article.

(h) The department shall give actual notice, in writing, to the court, the child, the child's attorney, the parents, and the parents' attorney at least 48 hours prior to the move if this is a planned move, or within 48 hours of the next business day after the move if the child is in imminent danger in the child's current placement, except where the notification would endanger the child or the foster family. A multidisciplinary treatment team shall convene as soon as practicable after notice to explore placement options. This requirement is not waived by placement of the child in a home or other residence maintained by a private provider. No notice may be provided pursuant to this provision to any parent or parent's attorney whose parental rights have been terminated pursuant to this article.

(i) Nothing in this article precludes any party from petitioning the court for review of the child's case at any time. The court shall grant the petition upon a showing that there is a change in circumstance or needs of the child that warrants court review.

(j) Any foster parent, preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child shall be given notice of and the right to be heard at the permanency hearing provided in this section.

(k) Once an adoption case is assigned to a child placing agency, all related court hearing notices shall be sent to the child placing agency as an interested party.

**§49-4-609. Conviction for offenses against children.**

In any case where a person is convicted of an offense against a child described in section twelve, article eight, chapter sixty-one of this code or articles eight-b or eight-d of that chapter and the person has custodial, visitation or other parental rights to the child who is the victim of the offense or to any child who resides in the same household as the victim, the court shall, at the time of sentencing, find that the person is an abusing parent within the meaning of this chapter as to the child victim, and may find that the person is an abusing parent as to any child who resides in the same household as the victim, and the court shall take further steps as are required by this article.

**§49-4-610. Improvement periods in cases of child neglect or abuse; findings; orders; extensions; hearings; time limits.**

In any proceeding brought pursuant to this article, the court may grant any respondent an improvement period in accord with this article. During the period, the court may require temporary custody with a responsible person which has been found to be a fit and proper person for the temporary custody of the child or children or the state department or other agency during the improvement period. An order granting an improvement period shall require the department to prepare and submit to the court a family case plan in accordance with section four hundred eight, of this article. The types of improvement periods are as follows:

(1) Preadjudicatory improvement period. -- A court may grant a respondent an improvement period of a period not to exceed three months prior to making a finding that a child is abused or neglected pursuant to section six hundred one of this article only when:

(A) The respondent files a written motion requesting the improvement period;

(B) The respondent demonstrates, by clear and convincing evidence, that the respondent is likely to fully participate in the improvement period and the court further makes a finding, on the record, of the terms of the improvement period;

(C) In the order granting the improvement period, the court:

(i) Orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within sixty days of the granting of the improvement period; or

(ii) Orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within ninety days of the granting of the improvement period and that the department submit a report as to the respondents progress in the improvement period within sixty days of the order granting the improvement period; and

(D) The order granting the improvement period requires the department to prepare and submit to the court an individualized family case plan in accordance with section four hundred eight of this article;

(2) Post-adjudicatory improvement period. -- After finding that a child is an abused or neglected child pursuant to section six hundred one of this article, a court may grant a respondent an improvement period of a period not to exceed six months when:

(A) The respondent files a written motion requesting the improvement period;

(B) The respondent demonstrates, by clear and convincing evidence, that the respondent is likely to fully participate in the improvement period and the court further makes a finding, on the record, of the terms of the improvement period;

(C) In the order granting the improvement period, the court:

(i) orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within thirty days of the granting of the improvement period; or

(ii) orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within ninety days of the granting of the improvement period and that the department submit a report as to the respondent's progress in the improvement period within sixty days of the order granting the improvement period;

(D) Since the initiation of the proceeding, the respondent has not previously been granted any improvement period or the respondent demonstrates that since the initial improvement period, the respondent has experienced a substantial change in circumstances. Further, the respondent shall demonstrate that due to that change in circumstances the respondent is likely to fully participate in a further improvement period; and

(E) The order granting the improvement period requires the department to prepare and submit to the court an individualized family case plan in accordance with section four hundred eight of this article.

(3) Post-dispositional improvement period. - The court may grant an improvement period not to exceed six months as a disposition pursuant to section six hundred four of this article when:

(A) The respondent moves in writing for the improvement period;

(B) The respondent demonstrates, by clear and convincing evidence, that the respondent is likely to fully participate in the improvement period and the court further makes a finding, on the record, of the terms of the improvement period;

(C) In the order granting the improvement period, the court:

(i) Orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within sixty days of the granting of the improvement period; or

(ii) Orders that a hearing be held to review the matter within ninety days of the granting of the improvement period and that the department submit a report as to the respondent's progress in the improvement period within sixty days of the order granting the improvement period;

(D) Since the initiation of the proceeding, the respondent has not previously been granted any improvement period or the respondent demonstrates that since the initial improvement period, the respondent has experienced a substantial change in circumstances. Further, the respondent shall demonstrate that due to that change in circumstances, the respondent is likely to fully participate in the improvement period; and

(E) The order granting the improvement period shall require the department to prepare and submit to the court an individualized family case plan in accordance with section four hundred eight of this article.

(4) Responsibilities of the respondent receiving improvement period. --

(A) When any improvement period is granted to a respondent pursuant to this section, the respondent shall be responsible for the initiation and completion of all terms of the improvement period. The court may order the state department to pay expenses associated with the services provided during the improvement period when the respondent has demonstrated that he or she is unable to bear the expenses.

(B) When any improvement period is granted to a respondent pursuant to this section, the respondent shall execute a release of all medical information regarding that respondent, including, but not limited to, information provided by mental health and substance abuse professionals and facilities. The release shall be accepted by a professional or facility regardless of whether the release conforms to any standard required by that facility.

(5) Responsibilities of the department during improvement period. -- When any respondent is granted an improvement period pursuant to this article, the department shall monitor the progress of the person in the improvement period. This section may not be construed to prohibit a court from ordering a respondent to participate in services designed to reunify a family or to relieve the department of any duty to make reasonable efforts to reunify a family required by state or federal law.

(6) Extension of improvement period. -- A court may extend any improvement period granted pursuant to subdivision (2) or (3) of this section for a period not to exceed three months when the court finds that the respondent has substantially complied with the terms of the improvement period; that the continuation of the improvement period will not substantially impair the ability of the department to permanently place the child; and that the extension is otherwise consistent with the best interest of the child.

(7) Termination of improvement period. -- Upon the motion by any party, the court shall terminate any improvement period granted pursuant to this section when the court finds that respondent has failed to fully participate in the terms of the improvement period or has satisfied the terms of the improvement period to correct any behavior alleged in the petition or amended petition to make his or her child unsafe.

(8) Hearings on improvement period. --

(A) Any hearing scheduled pursuant to this section may be continued only for good cause upon a written motion properly served on all parties. When a court grants a continuance, the court shall enter an order granting the continuance specifying a future date when the hearing will be held.

(B) Any hearing to be held at the end of an improvement period shall be held as nearly as practicable on successive days and shall be held as close in time as possible after the end of the improvement period and shall be held no later than thirty days of the termination of the improvement period.

(9) Time limit for improvement periods. -- Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, no combination of any improvement periods or extensions thereto may cause a child to be in foster care more than fifteen months of the most recent twenty-two months, unless the court finds compelling circumstances by clear and convincing evidence that it is in the child's best interests to extend the time limits contained in this paragraph.

## Part VII. Juvenile Proceedings

### **§49-4-701. Juvenile jurisdiction of circuit courts, magistrate courts and municipal courts; Constitutional guarantees; requirements; hearings; right to counsel; opportunity to be heard; evidence and transcripts.**

(a) The circuit court has original jurisdiction of proceedings brought under this article. A person under the age of eighteen years who appears before the circuit court in proceedings under this article is a ward of the court and protected accordingly.

(b) If during a criminal proceeding in any court it is ascertained or appears that the defendant is under the age of nineteen years and was under the age of eighteen years at the time of the alleged offense, the matter shall be immediately certified to the juvenile jurisdiction of the circuit court. The circuit court shall assume jurisdiction of the case in the same manner as cases which are originally instituted in the circuit court by petition.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, magistrate courts have concurrent juvenile jurisdiction with the circuit court for a violation of a traffic law of West Virginia, for a violation of section nine, article six, chapter sixty, section three or section four, article nine-a, chapter sixteen, or section nineteen, article sixteen, chapter eleven of this code, or for any violation of chapter twenty of this code. Juveniles are liable for punishment for violations of these laws in the same manner as adults except that magistrate courts have no jurisdiction to impose a sentence of incarceration for the violation of these laws.

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, municipal courts have concurrent juvenile jurisdiction with the circuit court for a violation of any municipal ordinance regulating traffic, for any municipal curfew ordinance which is enforceable or for any municipal ordinance regulating or prohibiting public intoxication, drinking or possessing alcoholic liquor or nonintoxicating beer in public places, any other act prohibited by section nine, article six, chapter sixty or section nineteen, article sixteen, chapter eleven of this code or underage possession or use of tobacco or tobacco products, as provided in article nine-a, chapter sixteen of this code. Municipal courts may impose the same punishment for these violations as a circuit court exercising its juvenile jurisdiction could properly impose, except that municipal courts have no jurisdiction to impose a sentence of incarceration for the violation of these laws.

(e) A juvenile may be brought before the circuit court for proceedings under this article only by the following means:

(1) By a juvenile petition requesting that the juvenile be adjudicated as a status offender or a juvenile delinquent; or

(2) By certification or transfer to the juvenile jurisdiction of the circuit court from the criminal jurisdiction of the circuit court, from any foreign court, or from any magistrate court or municipal court in West Virginia.

(f)(1) If a juvenile commits an act which would be a crime if committed by an adult, and the juvenile is adjudicated delinquent for that act, the jurisdiction of the court which adjudged the juvenile delinquent continues until the juvenile becomes twenty-one years of age. The court has the same power over that person that it had before he or she became an adult, and has the power to sentence that person to a term of incarceration: Provided, That any term of incarceration may not exceed six months. This authority does not preclude the court from exercising criminal jurisdiction over that person if he or she violates the law after becoming an adult or if the proceedings have been transferred to the court's criminal jurisdiction pursuant to section seven hundred four of this article.

(2) If a juvenile is adjudicated as a status offender because he or she is habitually absent from school without good cause, the jurisdiction of the court which adjudged the juvenile a status offender continues until either the juvenile becomes twenty-one years of age, completes high school, completes a high school equivalent or other education plan approved by the court, or the court otherwise voluntarily relinquishes jurisdiction, whichever occurs first. If the jurisdiction of the court is extended pursuant to this subdivision, the court has the same power over that person that it had before he or she became an adult. No person so adjudicated who has attained the age of nineteen may be ordered to attend school in a regular, nonalternative setting.

(g) A juvenile is entitled to be admitted to bail or recognizance in the same manner as an adult and be afforded the protection guaranteed by Article III of the West Virginia Constitution.

(h) A juvenile has the right to be effectively represented by counsel at all stages of proceedings under this article, including participation in multidisciplinary team meetings, until the child is no longer under the jurisdiction of the court. If the juvenile or the juvenile's parent or custodian executes an affidavit showing that the juvenile cannot afford an attorney, the court shall appoint an attorney, who shall be paid in accordance with article twenty-one, chapter twenty-nine of this code.

(i)(1) In all proceedings under this article, the juvenile will be afforded a meaningful opportunity to be heard. This includes the opportunity to testify and to present and cross-examine witnesses. The general public shall be excluded from all proceedings under this article except that persons whose presence is requested by the parties and other persons whom the circuit court determines have a legitimate interest in the proceedings may attend.

(2) In cases in which a juvenile is accused of committing what would be a felony if the juvenile were an adult, an alleged victim or his or her representative may attend any related juvenile proceedings, at the discretion of the presiding judicial officer.

(3) In any case in which the alleged victim is a juvenile, he or she may be accompanied by his or her parents or representative, at the discretion of the presiding judicial officer.

(j) At all adjudicatory hearings held under this article, all procedural rights afforded to

adults in criminal proceedings shall be afforded the juvenile unless specifically provided otherwise in this chapter.

(k) At all adjudicatory hearings held under this article, the rules of evidence applicable in criminal cases apply, including the rule against written reports based upon hearsay.

(l) Except for res gestae, extrajudicial statements made by a juvenile who has not attained fourteen years of age to law-enforcement officials or while in custody are not admissible unless those statements were made in the presence of the juvenile's counsel. Except for res gestae, extrajudicial statements made by a juvenile who has not attained sixteen years of age but who is at least fourteen years of age to law-enforcement officers or while in custody, are not admissible unless made in the presence of the juvenile's counsel or made in the presence of, and with the consent of, the juvenile's parent or custodian, and the parent or custodian has been fully informed regarding the juvenile's right to a prompt detention hearing, the juvenile's right to counsel, including appointed counsel if the juvenile cannot afford counsel, and the juvenile's privilege against self-incrimination.

(m) A transcript or recording shall be made of all transfer, adjudicatory and dispositional hearings held in circuit court. At the conclusion of each of these hearings, the circuit court shall make findings of fact and conclusions of law, both of which shall appear on the record. The court reporter shall furnish a transcript of the proceedings at no charge to any indigent juvenile who seeks review of any proceeding under this article if an affidavit is filed stating that neither the juvenile nor the juvenile's parents or custodian have the ability to pay for the transcript.

**§49-4-702. Prepetition diversion to informal resolution; mandatory prepetition diversion program for status offenses and misdemeanor offenses; prepetition review team.**

(a) Before a juvenile petition is formally filed with the court, the court may refer the matter to a case worker, probation officer or truancy diversion specialist for preliminary inquiry to determine whether the matter can be resolved informally without the formal filing of a petition with the court.

(b)(1) If the matter is for a truancy offense, the prosecutor may refer the matter to a state department worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist who shall develop a diversion program pursuant to subsection (d) of this section. If the prosecutor does not refer the matter to a state department worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist pursuant to this subdivision, he or she may proceed to file a petition with the court.

(2) If the matter is for a status offense other than truancy, the prosecutor shall refer the juvenile to a case worker or probation officer who shall develop a diversion program pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

(3) The prosecutor is not required to refer the juvenile for development of a diversion program pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection and may proceed to file a petition with the court if he or she determines:

(A) The juvenile has a prior adjudication for a status or delinquency offense; or

(B) There exists a significant and likely risk of harm to the juvenile, a family member, or the public.

(c) If the matter is for a nonviolent misdemeanor offense, the prosecutor shall determine whether the case can be resolved informally through a diversion program without the filing of a petition. If the prosecutor determines that a diversion program is appropriate, he or she shall refer the matter to a case worker or probation officer who shall develop a diversion program pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

(d)(1) When developing a diversion program, the case worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist shall:

(A) Conduct an assessment of the juvenile to develop a diversion agreement;

(B) Create a diversion agreement;

(C) Obtain consent from the juvenile and his or her parent, guardian, or custodian to the terms of the diversion agreement;

(D) Refer the juvenile and, if necessary, his or her parent, guardian, or custodian to services in the community pursuant to the diversion agreement.

(2) A diversion agreement may include:

(A) Referral to community services as defined in §49-1-206 of this code for the juvenile to address the assessed need;

(B) Referral to services for the parent, guardian, or custodian of the juvenile;

(C) Referral to one or more community work service programs for the juvenile;

(D) A requirement that the juvenile regularly attend school;

(E) Community-based sanctions to address noncompliance; or

(F) Any other efforts which may reasonably benefit the community, the juvenile, and his or her parent, guardian, or custodian.

(3) When a referral to a service provider occurs, the service provider shall make reasonable efforts to contact the juvenile and his or her parent, custodian, or guardian within 72 hours of the referral.

(4) Upon request by the case worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist, the court may enter reasonable and relevant orders to the parent, custodian, or guardian of the juvenile who have consented to the diversion agreement as is necessary and proper to carry out the agreement.

(5) If the juvenile and his or her parent, custodian, or guardian do not consent to the terms of the diversion agreement created by the case worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist, the petition may be filed with the court.

(6) Referral to a prepetition diversion program shall toll the statute of limitations for status and delinquency offenses.

(7) Probation officers may be authorized by the court to participate in a diversion program.

(e) The case worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist shall monitor the juvenile's compliance with any diversion agreement.

(1) If the juvenile successfully completes the terms of the diversion agreement, a petition shall not be filed with the court and no further action shall be taken.

(2) If the juvenile is unsuccessful in or noncompliant with the diversion agreement, the diversion agreement shall be referred to a prepetition review team convened by the case worker, probation officer or the truancy diversion specialist: *Provided*, That if a new delinquency offense occurs, a petition may be filed with the court.

(f)(1) The prepetition review team may be a subset of a multidisciplinary team established

pursuant to §49-4-406 of this code.

(2) The prepetition review team may consist of:

(A) A case worker knowledgeable about community services available and authorized to facilitate access to services;

(B) A service provider;

(C) A school superintendent or his or her designee; or

(D) Any other person, agency representative, member of the juvenile's family, or a custodian or guardian who may assist in providing recommendations on community services for the particular needs of the juvenile and his or her family.

(3) The prepetition review team shall review the diversion agreement and the service referrals completed and determine whether other appropriate services are available to address the needs of the juvenile and his or her family.

(4) The prepetition review shall occur within 14 days of referral from the state department worker, probation officer, or truancy diversion specialist.

(5) After the prepetition review, the prepetition review team may:

(A) Refer a modified diversion agreement back to the case worker, probation officer or truancy diversion specialist;

(B) Advise the case worker, probation officer or truancy diversion specialist to file a petition with the court; or

(C) Advise the case worker to open an investigation for child abuse or neglect.

(g) The requirements of this section are not mandatory until July 1, 2024: *Provided*, That nothing in this section prohibits a judicial circuit from continuing to operate a truancy or other juvenile treatment program that existed as of January 1, 2023: *Provided, however*, That any judicial circuit desiring to create a diversion program after the effective date of this section, may only do so pursuant to this section.

**§49-4-702a. Noncustodial counseling or community services provided to a juvenile; prepetition counsel and advice.**

(a) The court at any time, or the department or other official upon a request from a parent, guardian or custodian, may, before a petition is filed under this article, refer a juvenile alleged to be a delinquent or a status offender to a counselor at the department or a community mental health center, other professional counselor in the community or to a truancy diversion specialist. In the event the juvenile refuses to respond to this referral, the department may serve a notice by first class mail or personal service of process upon the juvenile, setting forth the facts and stating that a noncustodial order will be sought from the court directing the juvenile to submit to counseling or community services. The notice shall set forth the time and place for the hearing on the matter. The court or referee after a hearing may direct the juvenile to participate in a noncustodial period of counseling or community services that may not exceed six months. Upon recommendation of the department or request by the juvenile's parent, custodian or guardian, the court or referee may allow or require the parent, custodian or guardian to participate in this noncustodial counseling or community services. No information obtained as the result of counseling or community services is admissible in a subsequent proceeding under this article.

(b) Before a petition is formally filed with the court, the probation officer or other officer of the court designated by it, subject to its direction, may give counsel and advice to the parties with a view to an informal adjustment period if it appears:

- (1) The admitted facts bring the case within the jurisdiction of the court;
- (2) Counsel and advice without an adjudication would be in the best interest of the public and the juvenile; and
- (3) The juvenile and his or her parents, guardian or other custodian consent thereto with knowledge that consent is not obligatory.

(c) The giving of counsel and advice pursuant to this section may not continue longer than six months from the day it is commenced unless extended by the court for an additional period not to exceed six months.

**§49-4-703. Juvenile drug courts; hearing officers.**

Juvenile drug courts shall be designed and operated consistent with the developmental and rehabilitative needs of juveniles as defined in this article. The Supreme Court shall provide uniform referral, procedure and order forms that shall be used in juvenile drug courts. The Supreme Court is further authorized to appoint appropriate hearing officers in those jurisdictions which choose to operate a juvenile drug court. Hearing officers for juvenile drug courts shall be limited to current or senior status circuit court judges or family court judges.

**§49-4-704. Institution of proceedings by petition; notice to juvenile and parents; preliminary hearings; subpoena.**

(a)(1) A petition alleging that a juvenile is a status offender or a juvenile delinquent may be filed by a person who has knowledge of or information concerning the facts alleged. The petition shall be verified by the petitioner, shall set forth the name and address of the juvenile's parents, guardians or custodians, if known to the petitioner, and shall be filed in the circuit court in the county where the alleged status offense or act of delinquency occurred. However, a proceeding under this chapter may be removed, for good cause shown, in accordance with section one, article nine, chapter fifty-six of this code. The petition shall contain specific allegations of the conduct and facts upon which the petition is based, including the approximate time and place of the alleged conduct; a statement of the right to have counsel appointed and consult with counsel at every stage of the proceedings; and the relief sought.

(2) Upon the filing of the petition, the court shall set a time and place for a preliminary hearing and may appoint counsel. A copy of the petition and summons may be served upon the respondent juvenile by first class mail or personal service of process. If a juvenile does not appear in response to a summons served by mail, no further proceeding may be held until the juvenile is served a copy of the petition and summons by personal service of process. If a juvenile fails to appear in response to a summons served in person upon him or her, an order of arrest may be issued by the court for that reason alone.

(b) The parents, guardians or custodians shall be named in the petition as respondents and shall be served with notice of the proceedings in the same manner as provided in subsection (a) of this section for service upon the juvenile and required to appear with the juvenile at the time and place set for the proceedings unless the respondent cannot be found after diligent search. If a respondent cannot be found after diligent search, the court may proceed without further requirement of notice. However, the court may order service by first class mail to the last known address of the respondent. The respondent shall be afforded fifteen days after the date of mailing to appear or answer.

(c) The court or referee may order the issuance of a subpoena against the person having custody and control of the juvenile ordering him or her to bring the juvenile before the court.

(d) When any case of a juvenile charged with the commission of a crime is certified or transferred to the circuit court, the court shall forthwith cause the juvenile and his or her parents, guardians or custodians to be served with a petition as provided in subsections (a) and (b) of this section. In the event the juvenile is in custody, the petition shall be served upon the juvenile within ninety-six hours of the time custody began and if the petition is not served within that time, the juvenile shall be released forthwith.

(e) The clerk of the court shall notify, within two judicial days, the local office of the Department of Human Services of all proceedings under this article, which is responsible for convening and directing the multidisciplinary treatment planning process in accordance with

section four hundred six of this article. In status offense or delinquency cases where a case manager has not been assigned, the juvenile probation officer is responsible for notifying the local office of the Department of Human Services which will assign a case manager who will initiate assessment and be responsible for convening and directing the multidisciplinary treatment planning process.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the contrary, a petition filed pursuant to §48-27-403 of this code in which the petition for the emergency protective order is filed by or on behalf of the juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian or other person with whom the juvenile resides and that results in the issuance of an emergency protective order naming a juvenile as the respondent, shall be treated as a petition authorized by this section, alleging the juvenile is a juvenile delinquent. However, the magistrate court shall notify the prosecuting attorney in the county where the emergency protective order is issued within twenty-four hours of the issuance of the emergency protective order and the prosecuting attorney may file an amended verified petition to comply with subsection (a) of this section within two judicial days.

**§49-4-705. Taking a juvenile into custody; requirements; existing conditions; detention centers; medical aid.**

(a) In proceedings formally instituted by the filing of a juvenile petition, the circuit court or a magistrate may issue an order directing that a juvenile be taken into custody before adjudication only upon a showing of probable cause to believe that one of the following conditions exists: (1) The petition shows that grounds exist for the arrest of an adult in identical circumstances; (2) the health, safety and welfare of the juvenile demand custody; (3) the juvenile is a fugitive from a lawful custody or commitment order of a juvenile court; or (4) the juvenile is alleged to be a juvenile delinquent with a record of willful failure to appear at juvenile proceedings and custody is necessary to assure his or her presence before the court. A detention hearing pursuant to section seven hundred six of this article shall be held by the judge or magistrate authorized to conduct the hearings without unnecessary delay and in no event may any delay exceed the next day.

(b) Absent a court order, a juvenile may be taken into custody by a law-enforcement official only if one of the following conditions exists:

(1) Grounds exist for the arrest of an adult in identical circumstances;

(2) Emergency conditions exist which, in the judgment of the officer, pose imminent danger to the health, safety and welfare of the juvenile;

(3) The official has reasonable grounds to believe that the juvenile has left the care of his or her parents, guardian or custodian without the consent of the person and the health, safety and welfare of the juvenile is endangered;

(4) The juvenile is a fugitive from a lawful custody or commitment order of a juvenile court;

(5) The official has reasonable grounds to believe the juvenile to have been driving a motor vehicle with any amount of alcohol in his or her blood; or

(6) The juvenile is the named respondent in an emergency domestic violence protective order issued pursuant to section four hundred three, article twenty-seven, chapter forty-eight of this code and the individual filing the petition for the emergency protective order is the juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian or other person with whom the juvenile resides.

(c) Upon taking a juvenile into custody, with or without a court order, the official shall:

(1) Immediately notify the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian or, if the parent, guardian or custodian cannot be located, a close relative;

(2) Release the juvenile into the custody of his or her parent, guardian or custodian unless:

(A) Circumstances present an immediate threat of serious bodily harm to the juvenile if released;

(B) No responsible adult can be found into whose custody the juvenile can be delivered. Each day the juvenile is detained, a written record must be made of all attempts to locate a responsible adult; or

(C) The juvenile has been taken into custody for an alleged act of delinquency for which secure detention is permissible.

(3) If the juvenile is an alleged status offender or has been taken into custody pursuant to subdivision (6), subsection (b) of this section, immediately notify the Department of Human Services and, if the circumstances of either paragraph (A) or (B), subdivision (2) of this subsection exist and the requirements therein are met, the official may detain the juvenile, but only in a nonsecure or staff-secure facility;

(4) Take the juvenile without unnecessary delay before a judge of the circuit court for a detention hearing pursuant to section seven hundred six of this article. If a circuit court judge is not available in the county, the official shall take the juvenile without unnecessary delay before any magistrate available in the county for the sole purpose of conducting the detention hearing. In no event may any delay in presenting the juvenile for a detention hearing exceed the next day after he or she is taken into custody.

(d) In the event that a juvenile is delivered into the custody of a sheriff or director of a detention facility, the sheriff or director shall immediately notify the sheriff or director shall immediately provide to every juvenile who is delivered into his or her custody a written statement explaining the juvenile's right to a prompt detention hearing, his or her right to counsel, including appointed counsel if he or she cannot afford counsel, and his or her privilege against self-incrimination. In all cases when a juvenile is delivered into a sheriff's or detention center director's custody, that official shall release the juvenile to his or her parent, guardian or custodian by the end of the next day unless the juvenile has been placed in detention after a hearing conducted pursuant to section seven hundred six of this article.

(e) The law-enforcement agency that takes a juvenile into custody or places a juvenile under arrest is responsible for the juvenile's initial transportation to a juvenile detention center or other Division of Juvenile Services' residential facility.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code, a juvenile detention center, or other Division of Juvenile Services' residential facility, is not required to accept a juvenile if the juvenile appears to be in need of medical attention of a degree necessitating treatment by a physician. If a juvenile is refused pursuant to this subsection, the juvenile detention center, or other Division of Juvenile Services' residential facility, may not subsequently accept the juvenile for detention until the arresting or transporting officer provides the juvenile detention center, or other Division of Juvenile Services' residential facility, with a written clearance from a licensed physician reflecting that the juvenile has been examined and, if necessary, treated and which states that in the physician's medical opinion the juvenile can be safely confined in the juvenile detention center or other Division of Juvenile Services' residential facility.

**§49-4-706. Detention hearing; rights of juvenile; notification; counsel; hearings.**

(a) The circuit court judge or magistrate shall inform the juvenile of his or her right to remain silent, that any statement may be used against him or her and of his or her right to counsel, and no interrogation may be made without the presence of a parent or counsel. If the juvenile or his or her parent, guardian or custodian has not retained counsel, counsel shall be appointed as soon as practicable. The circuit court judge or magistrate shall hear testimony concerning the circumstances for taking the juvenile into custody and the possible need for detention. The sole mandatory issue at the detention hearing is whether the juvenile should be detained pending further court proceedings. The court shall, if the health, safety and welfare of the juvenile will not be endangered thereby, release the juvenile on recognizance to his or her parents, custodians or an appropriate agency; however, if warranted, the court may require bail, except that bail may be denied in any case where bail could be denied if the accused were an adult. The court shall:

(1) Immediately notify the juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian or, if the parent, guardian or custodian cannot be located, a close relative;

(2) Release the juvenile into the custody of his or her parent, guardian or custodian unless:

(A) Circumstances present an immediate threat of serious bodily harm to the juvenile if released;

(B) No responsible adult can be found into whose custody the juvenile can be delivered. However, each day the juvenile is detained, a written record must be made of all attempts to locate a responsible adult; or

(C) The juvenile is charged with an act of delinquency for which secure detention is permissible; and

(3) If the juvenile is an alleged status offender, immediately notify the Department of Human Services, and, if the circumstances of either paragraph (A) or (B), subdivision (2) of this subsection exist and the requirements therein are met, the court may order the juvenile detained, but only in a nonsecure or staff-secure facility. Any juvenile detained pursuant to this subdivision shall be placed in the legal custody of the Department of Human Services pending further proceedings by the court.

(b) The circuit court judge or magistrate may, in conjunction with the detention hearing, conduct a preliminary hearing pursuant to section seven hundred and four of this article if all the parties are prepared to proceed and the juvenile has counsel during the hearing.

**§49-4-707. Review of order following detention hearing.**

Upon the application of any person in interest or on his or her own motion, a circuit court judge may modify or vacate any order entered in his or her court after a detention hearing and enter the order as to detention, or release from detention, as he or she deems just and proper.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-708. Preliminary hearing; counsel; custody; court requirements; preadjudicatory community supervision period.**

(a) Following the filing of a juvenile petition, unless a preliminary hearing has previously been held in conjunction with a detention hearing with respect to the same charge contained in the petition, the circuit court judge or magistrate shall hold a preliminary hearing. In the event that the juvenile is being detained, the hearing shall be held within ten days of the time the juvenile is placed in detention unless good cause is shown for a continuance. If no preliminary hearing is held within ten days of the time the juvenile is placed in detention, the juvenile shall be released on recognizance unless the hearing has been continued for good cause. If the judge is in another county in the circuit, the hearing may be conducted in that other county or by video conferencing. Written notice shall be provided to all parties of the availability to participate by videoconferencing. The preliminary hearing may be waived by the juvenile, upon advice of counsel. At the hearing, the circuit court judge or magistrate shall:

(1) If the juvenile is not represented by counsel, inform the juvenile and his or her parents, guardian or custodian or any other person standing in loco parentis to him or her of the juvenile's right to be represented at all stages of proceedings under this article and the right to have counsel appointed;

(2) Appoint counsel by order entered of record, if counsel has not already been retained, or appointed. Counsel must represent the child until he or she is no longer under the jurisdiction of the court;

(3) Determine after hearing if there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile is a status offender or a juvenile delinquent. If probable cause is not found, the juvenile, if in detention, shall be released and the proceedings dismissed. If probable cause is found, the case shall proceed to adjudication. At this hearing or as soon thereafter as is practicable, the date for the adjudicatory hearing shall be set to give the juvenile and the juvenile's parents and attorney at least ten days' notice unless notice is waived by all parties;

(4) In lieu of placing the juvenile in a detention facility, the court may place the juvenile in the temporary legal and/or physical custody of the department. If the juvenile is detained, the detention may not continue longer than thirty days without commencement of the adjudicatory hearing unless good cause for a continuance is shown by either party or, if a jury trial is demanded, no longer than the next regular term of the court. A juvenile who is alleged to be a status offender may not be placed in a secure detention facility; and

(5) Inform the juvenile of the right to demand a jury trial.

(b) The juvenile may move to be allowed a preadjudicatory community supervision period not to exceed one year. If the court is satisfied that the best interest of the juvenile is likely to be served by a preadjudicatory community supervision period, the court may delay the adjudicatory hearing and allow a preadjudicatory community supervision period upon terms

calculated to serve the rehabilitative needs of the juvenile. At the conclusion of the preadjudicatory community supervision period, the court shall dismiss the proceeding if the terms have been fulfilled; otherwise, the court shall proceed to the adjudicatory stage. A motion for a pre-adjudicatory community supervision period, may not be construed as an admission or be used as evidence. Preadjudicatory community supervision periods authorized by this subsection may be, in the court's discretion, either custodial or noncustodial.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-709. Right to jury trial for juveniles; inapplicability.**

(a) In a proceeding under this article, the juvenile, the juvenile's counsel or the juvenile's parent or guardian may demand, or the judge on his or her own motion may order a jury trial on any question of fact, in which the juvenile is accused of any act or acts of delinquency which, if committed by an adult would expose the adult to incarceration.

(b) A juvenile who is charged with a status offense or other offense where incarceration is not a possibility due either to the statutory penalty or where the court rules pretrial that a sentence of incarceration will not be imposed upon adjudication is not entitled to a trial by jury.

(c) This section is inapplicable to proceedings held pursuant to section seven hundred sixteen of this article.

(d) Juries consist of twelve members.

**§49-4-710. Waiver and transfer of jurisdiction.**

(a) Upon written motion of the prosecuting attorney filed at least eight days prior to the adjudicatory hearing and with reasonable notice to the juvenile, his or her counsel, and his or her parents, guardians or custodians, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine if juvenile jurisdiction should or must be waived and the proceeding transferred to the criminal jurisdiction of the court. Any motion filed in accordance with this section is to state, with particularity, the grounds for the requested transfer, including the grounds relied upon as set forth in subsection (d), (e), (f) or (g) of this section, and the burden is upon the state to establish the grounds by clear and convincing evidence. Any hearing held under this section is to be held within seven days of the filing of the motion for transfer unless it is continued for good cause.

(b) No inquiry relative to admission or denial of the allegations of the charge or the demand for jury trial may be made by or before the court until the court has determined whether the proceeding is to be transferred to criminal jurisdiction.

(c) The court shall transfer a juvenile proceeding to criminal jurisdiction if a juvenile who has attained the age of fourteen years makes a demand on the record to be transferred to the criminal jurisdiction of the court. The case may then be referred to magistrate or circuit court for further proceedings, subject to the court's jurisdiction.

(d) The court shall transfer a juvenile proceeding to criminal jurisdiction if there is probable cause to believe that:

(1) The juvenile is at least fourteen years of age and has committed the crime of treason under section one, article one, chapter sixty-one of this code; the crime of murder under sections one, two and three, article two of that chapter; the crime of robbery involving the use or presenting of firearms or other deadly weapons under section twelve, article two of that chapter; the crime of kidnapping under section fourteen-a of article two of that chapter; the crime of first degree arson under section one, article three of that chapter; or the crime of sexual assault in the first degree under section three, article eight-b of that chapter;

(2) The juvenile is at least fourteen years of age and has committed an offense of violence to the person which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult. However, the juvenile has been previously adjudged delinquent for the commission of an offense of violence to the person which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult; or

(3) The juvenile is at least fourteen years of age and has committed an offense which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult. However, the juvenile has been twice previously adjudged delinquent for the commission of an offense which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult.

(e) The court may transfer a juvenile proceeding to criminal jurisdiction if there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile would otherwise satisfy the provisions of subdivision (1),

subsection (d) of this section, but who is younger than fourteen years of age.

(f) The court may, upon consideration of the juvenile's mental and physical condition, maturity, emotional attitude, home or family environment, school experience and similar personal factors, transfer a juvenile proceeding to criminal jurisdiction if there is probable cause to believe that the juvenile would otherwise satisfy the provisions of subdivision (2) or (3), subsection (d) of this section, but who is younger than fourteen years of age.

(g) The court may, upon consideration of the juvenile's mental and physical condition, maturity, emotional attitude, home or family environment, school experience and similar personal factors, transfer a juvenile proceeding to criminal jurisdiction if there is probable cause to believe that:

(1) The juvenile, who is at least fourteen years of age, has committed an offense of violence to a person which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult;

(2) The juvenile, who is at least fourteen years of age, has committed an offense which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult. However, the juvenile has been previously adjudged delinquent for the commission of a crime which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult;

(3) The juvenile, who is at least fourteen years of age, used or presented a firearm or other deadly weapon during the commission of a felony; or

(4) The juvenile has committed a violation of section four hundred one, article four, chapter sixty-a of this code which would be a felony if the juvenile was an adult involving the manufacture, delivery or possession with the intent to deliver a narcotic drug. For purposes of this subdivision, the term narcotic drug has the same definition as that set forth in section one hundred one, article one of that chapter;

(5) The juvenile has committed the crime of second degree arson as defined in section two, article three, chapter sixty-one of this code involving setting fire to or burning a public building or church. For purposes of this subdivision, the term public building means a building or structure of any nature owned, leased or occupied by this state, a political subdivision of this state or a county board of education and used at the time of the alleged offense for public purposes. For purposes of this subdivision, the term church means a building or structure of any nature owned, leased or occupied by a church, religious sect, society or denomination and used at the time of the alleged offense for religious worship or other religious or benevolent purpose, or as a residence of a minister or other member of clergy.

(h) For purposes of this section, the term offense of violence means an offense which involves the use or threatened use of physical force against a person.

(i) If, after a hearing, the court directs the transfer of any juvenile proceeding to criminal

jurisdiction, it shall state on the record the findings of fact and conclusions of law upon which its decision is based or shall incorporate findings of fact and conclusions of law in its order directing transfer.

(j) A juvenile who has been transferred to criminal jurisdiction pursuant to subsection (e), (f) or (g) of this section, by an order of transfer, has the right to either directly appeal an order of transfer to the supreme court of appeals or to appeal the order of transfer following a conviction of the offense of transfer. If the juvenile exercises the right to a direct appeal from an order of transfer, the notice of intent to appeal and a request for transcript is to be filed within ten days from the date of the entry of any order of transfer, and the petition for appeal is to be presented to the Supreme Court of Appeals within forty-five days from the entry of the order of transfer. Article five, chapter fifty-eight of this code pertaining to the appeals of judgments in civil actions applies to appeals under this chapter except as modified in this section. The court may, within forty-five days of the entry of the order of transfer, by appropriate order, extend and reextend the period in which to file the petition for appeal for additional time, not to exceed a total extension of sixty days, as in the court's opinion may be necessary for preparation of the transcript. However, the request for a transcript was made by the party seeking appeal within ten days of entry of the order of transfer. In the event any notice of intent to appeal and request for transcript be timely filed, proceedings in criminal court are to be stayed upon motion of the defendant pending final action of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

**§49-4-711. Adjudication for alleged status offenders and delinquents; mandatory initial disposition of status offenders.**

At the outset of an adjudicatory hearing, the court shall inquire of the juvenile whether he or she wishes to admit or deny the allegations in the petition. The juvenile may elect to stand silent, in which event the court shall enter a general denial of all allegations in the petition.

(1) If the respondent juvenile admits the allegations of the petition, the court shall consider the admission to be proof of the allegations if the court finds: (A) The respondent fully understands all of his or her rights under this article; (B) the respondent voluntarily, intelligently and knowingly admits all facts requisite for an adjudication; and (C) the respondent in his or her admission has not set forth facts which constitute a defense to the allegations.

(2) If the respondent juvenile denies the allegations, the court shall dispose of all pretrial motions and the court or jury shall proceed to hear evidence.

(3) If the allegations in a petition alleging that the juvenile is delinquent are admitted or are sustained by proof beyond a reasonable doubt, the court shall schedule the matter for disposition pursuant to §49-4-704 of this code. The court shall receive and consider the results of the needs assessment, as defined in §49-1-206 of this code, prior to or at the disposition.

(4) If the allegations in a petition alleging that the juvenile is a status offender are admitted or sustained by clear and convincing evidence, the court shall consider the results of the needs assessment, as defined in §49-1-206 of this code, prior to or at the disposition and refer the juvenile to the Department of Human Services for services, pursuant to §49-4-712 of this code, and order the department to report back to the court with regard to the juvenile's progress at least every 90 days or until the court, upon motion or sua sponte, orders further disposition under §49-4-712 of this code or dismisses the case from its docket: *Provided*, That in a judicial circuit operating a truancy program, a circuit judge may, in lieu of referring truant juveniles to the department, order that the juveniles be supervised by his or her probation office: *Provided, however*, That a circuit judge may also refer a truant juvenile to a truancy diversion specialist.

(5) If the allegations in a petition are not sustained by evidence as provided in §49-4-711(c) and §49-4-711(d) of this code, the petition shall be dismissed and the juvenile shall be discharged if he or she is in custody.

(6) Findings of fact and conclusions of law addressed to all allegations in the petition shall be stated on the record or reduced to writing and filed with the record or incorporated into the order of the court. The record shall include the treatment and rehabilitation plan the court has adopted after recommendation by the multidisciplinary team as provided for in §49-4-406 of this code.

**§49-4-712. Intervention and services by the department pursuant to initial disposition for status offenders or juvenile found incompetent to stand trial; enforcement; further disposition; detention; out-of-home placement; department custody; least restrictive alternative; appeal; prohibiting placement of status offenders or a juvenile found incompetent to stand trial in a Bureau of Juvenile Services facility.**

(a) Services provided by the department to juveniles adjudicated as status offenders shall be consistent with §49-2-1001 *et seq.* of this code. Services provided by the department for juveniles adjudicated as status offenders pursuant to §49-4-711 of this code and juveniles found to be incompetent to proceed and in need of services pursuant to §49-4-734(b)(2) of this code shall be designed to develop skills and supports within families and to resolve problems related to the juveniles or conflicts within their families. Services may include, but are not limited to, referral of juveniles and parents, guardians, or custodians and other family members to services for psychiatric or other medical care, or psychological, welfare, legal, educational, or other social services, as appropriate to the needs of the juvenile and his or her family.

(b) If the juvenile, or his or her parent, guardian, or custodian, fails to comply with the services provided in subsection (a) of this section, the department may petition the circuit court:

(1) For a valid court order, as defined in §49-1-207 of this code, to enforce compliance with a service plan or to restrain actions that interfere with or defeat a service plan; or

(2) For a valid court order to place a juvenile out of home in a nonsecure or staff-secure setting, and/or to place a juvenile in custody of the department: *Provided*, That a juvenile adjudicated as a status offender may not be placed in an out-of-home placement, excluding placements made for abuse and neglect, if that juvenile has had no prior adjudications for a status or delinquency offense, or no prior disposition to a pre-adjudicatory improvement period or probation for the current matter: *Provided, however*, That if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence the existence of a significant and likely risk of harm to the juvenile, a family member, or the public and continued placement in the home is contrary to the best interests of the juvenile, the juvenile may be ordered to an out-of-home placement: *Provided further*, That the court finds the department has made all reasonable efforts to prevent removal of the juvenile from his or her home, or that such reasonable efforts are not required due to an emergent situation.

(c) In ordering any further disposition under this section, the court is not limited to the relief sought in the department's petition and shall make reasonable efforts to prevent removal of the juvenile from his or her home or, as an alternative, to place the juvenile in a community-based facility which is the least restrictive alternative appropriate to the needs of the juvenile and the community. The disposition may include reasonable and relevant orders to the parents, guardians, or custodians of the juvenile that are necessary and proper to effectuate the disposition.

(d) (1) If the court finds that placement in a residential facility is necessary to provide the services under subsection (a) of this section, except as prohibited by subdivision (2), subsection (b) of this section, the court shall make findings of fact as to the necessity of this placement, stated on the record or reduced to writing and filed with the record or incorporated into the order of the court.

(2) The findings of fact shall include the factors that indicate:

(A) The likely effectiveness of placement in a residential facility for the juvenile; and

(B) The community services which were previously attempted.

(e) The disposition of the juvenile may not be affected by the fact that the juvenile demanded a trial by jury or made a plea of not guilty. Any order providing disposition other than mandatory referral to the department for services is subject to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

(f) Following any further disposition by the court, the court shall inquire of the juvenile whether or not appeal is desired and the response shall be transcribed; a negative response may not be construed as a waiver. The evidence shall be transcribed as soon as practicable and made available to the juvenile or his or her counsel if it is requested for purposes of further proceedings. A judge may grant a stay of execution pending further proceedings.

(g) A juvenile adjudicated solely as a status offender or a juvenile found to be incompetent to proceed may not be placed in a Bureau of Juvenile Services facility.

**§49-4-713. Graduated penalties for juvenile alcohol consumption; fines; community service; revocation of driver's license.**

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of this article to the contrary, in addition to any other penalty available to the court, any child who is adjudicated to have consumed alcoholic liquor or nonintoxicating beer as defined in section five, article one, chapter sixty of this code, shall:

(1) Upon a first adjudication, he or she shall be ordered to perform community service for not more than eight hours or fined not more than \$25, or both performing community service and fined.

(2) Upon a second adjudication, he or she shall be ordered to perform community service for not more than sixteen hours or fined not more than \$50, or both performing community service and fined.

(3) Upon a third or subsequent adjudication, he or she shall be ordered to perform not more than twenty-four hours of community service or fined not more than \$100, or both performing community service and fined.

(b) In addition to the penalties set forth in subsection (a) of this section and notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (4), subsection (a), section seven hundred fifteen of this article, any child adjudicated a second time for consumption of alcoholic liquor or nonintoxicating beer shall have his or her license to operate a motor vehicle suspended for a definite term of not less than five nor more than ninety days. Any child adjudicated a third or subsequent time for consumption of an alcoholic liquor or nonintoxicating beer shall have his or her license to operate a motor vehicle suspended until he or she attains the age of eighteen years.

**§49-4-714. Disposition of juvenile delinquents; appeal.**

(a) In aid of disposition of juvenile delinquents, the juvenile probation officer assigned to the juvenile shall, upon request of the court, make an investigation of the environment of the juvenile and the alternative dispositions possible. The court, upon its own motion, or upon request of counsel, may order the use of a standardized screener, as defined in §49-1-206 of this code or, if additional information is necessary, a psychological examination of the juvenile. The report of an examination and other investigative and social reports shall not be relied upon the court in making a determination of adjudication. Unless waived, copies of the report shall be provided to counsel for the petitioner and counsel for the juvenile no later than 72 hours prior to the dispositional hearing.

(b) Following the adjudication, the court shall receive and consider the results of a needs assessment, as defined in §49-1-206 of this code, and shall conduct the disposition, giving all parties an opportunity to be heard. The disposition may include reasonable and relevant orders to the parents, custodians or guardians of the juvenile as is necessary and proper to effectuate the disposition. At disposition the court shall not be limited to the relief sought in the petition and shall, in electing from the following alternatives, consider the best interests of the juvenile and the welfare of the public:

(1) Dismiss the petition;

(2) Refer the juvenile and the juvenile's parent or custodian to a community agency for needed assistance and dismiss the petition;

(3) Upon a finding that the juvenile is in need of extra-parental supervision: (A) Place the juvenile under the supervision of a probation officer of the court or of the court of the county where the juvenile has his or her usual place of abode or other person while leaving the juvenile in custody of his or her parent or custodian; and (B) prescribe a program of treatment or therapy or limit the juvenile's activities under terms which are reasonable and within the child's ability to perform, including participation in the litter control program established pursuant to §22-15A-3 of this code or other appropriate programs of community service;

(4) Upon a finding that a parent or custodian is not willing or able to take custody of the juvenile, that a juvenile is not willing to reside in the custody of his or her parent or custodian or that a parent or custodian cannot provide the necessary supervision and care of the juvenile, the court may place the juvenile in temporary foster care or temporarily commit the juvenile to the department or a child welfare agency. The court order shall state that continuation in the home is contrary to the best interest of the juvenile and why; and whether or not the department made a reasonable effort to prevent the placement or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible. Whenever the court transfers custody of a youth to the department, an appropriate order of financial support by the parents or guardians shall be entered in accordance with §49-4-801 through §49-4-803 et

seq. of this code and guidelines promulgated by the Supreme Court of Appeals;

(5) (A) Upon a finding that the best interests of the juvenile or the welfare of the public require it, and upon an adjudication of delinquency, the court may commit the juvenile to the custody of the Director of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation for placement in a juvenile services facility for the treatment, instruction and rehabilitation of juveniles. The court maintains discretion to consider alternative sentencing arrangements.

(B) Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the contrary, in the event that the court determines that it is in the juvenile's best interests or required by the public welfare to place the juvenile in the custody of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the court shall provide the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation with access to all relevant court orders and records involving the underlying offense or offenses for which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent, including sentencing and presentencing reports and evaluations, and provide the division with access to school records, psychological reports and evaluations, needs assessment results, medical reports and evaluations or any other such records as may be in the court's possession as would enable the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to better assess and determine the appropriate counseling, education and placement needs for the juvenile offender.

(C) Commitments may not exceed the maximum term for which an adult could have been sentenced for the same offense and any such maximum allowable term of confinement to be served in a juvenile correctional facility shall take into account any time served by the juvenile in a detention center pending adjudication, disposition or transfer. The order shall state that continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the juvenile and why; and whether or not the state department made a reasonable effort to prevent the placement or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible; or

(6) After a hearing conducted under the procedures set out in §27-5-4(c) and §27-5-4(d) of this code, commit the juvenile to a mental health facility in accordance with the juvenile's treatment plan; the director of the mental health facility may release a juvenile and return him or her to the court for further disposition. The order shall state that continuation in the home is contrary to the best interests of the juvenile and why; and whether or not the state department made a reasonable effort to prevent the placement or that the emergency situation made those efforts unreasonable or impossible.

The court shall make all reasonable efforts to place the juvenile in the least restrictive alternative appropriate to the needs of the juvenile and the community: Provided, That a juvenile adjudicated delinquent for a nonviolent misdemeanor offense may not be placed in an out-of-home placement within the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation or the department if that juvenile has no prior adjudications as either a status offender or as a delinquent, or no prior dispositions to a pre-adjudicatory improvement period or probation for the current matter, excluding placements made for abuse or neglect: Provided, however, That if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that there is a significant and likely risk of harm, as determined by a needs assessment, to the juvenile, a family member or the

public and that continued placement in the home is contrary to the best interest of the juvenile, such juvenile may be ordered to an out-of-home placement: Provided further, That the department has made all reasonable efforts to prevent removal of the juvenile from his or her home, or that reasonable efforts are not required due to an emergent situation.

(c) In any case in which the court decides to order the juvenile placed in an out-of-state facility or program, it shall set forth in the order directing the placement the reasons the juvenile was not placed in an in-state facility or program.

(d) The disposition of the juvenile shall not be affected by the fact that the juvenile demanded a trial by jury or made a plea of not guilty. Any disposition is subject to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals.

(e) Following disposition, the court shall inquire whether the juvenile wishes to appeal and the response shall be transcribed; a negative response shall not be construed as a waiver. The evidence shall be transcribed as soon as practicable and made available to the juvenile or his or her counsel, if the same is requested for purposes of further proceedings. A judge may grant a stay of execution pending further proceedings.

(f) Following a disposition under §49-4-714(b)(4), §49-4-714(b)(5), or §49-4-714(b)(6) of this code, the court shall include in the findings of fact the treatment and rehabilitation plan the court has adopted upon recommendation of the multidisciplinary team under §49-4-406 of this code.

(g) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code to the contrary, if a juvenile charged with delinquency under this chapter is transferred to adult jurisdiction and there tried and convicted, the court may make its disposition in accordance with this section in lieu of sentencing the person as an adult.

**§49-4-715. Authority of the courts to impose additional penalties; public service projects; ineligible to operate a motor vehicle; restitution.**

(a) In addition to the methods of disposition provided in section seven hundred fourteen of this article, the court may enter an order imposing one or more of the following penalties, conditions and limitations:

- (1) Impose a fine not to exceed \$100 upon the child;
- (2) Require the child to make restitution or reparation to the aggrieved party or parties for actual damages or loss caused by the offense for which the child was found to be delinquent, or if the child does not make full restitution, require the custodial parent or parents, as defined in section two, article seven-a, chapter fifty-five, of the child to make partial or full restitution to the victim to the extent the child fails to make full restitution;
- (3) Require the child to participate in a public service project under the conditions as the court prescribes, including participation in the litter control program established pursuant to the authority of section three, article fifteen-a, chapter twenty-two of this code; and
- (4) When the child is fifteen years of age or younger and has been adjudged delinquent, the court may order that the child is not eligible to be issued a junior probationary operator's license or when the child is between the ages of sixteen and eighteen years and has been adjudged delinquent, the court may order that the child is not eligible to operate a motor vehicle in this state, and any junior or probationary operator's license shall be surrendered to the court. The child's driving privileges shall be suspended for a period not to exceed two years, and the clerk of the court shall notify the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles of the order.

(b) Nothing may limit the discretion of the court in disposing of a juvenile case. The juvenile may not be denied probation or any other disposition pursuant to this article because the juvenile is financially unable to pay a fine or make restitution or reparation. All penalties, conditions and limitations imposed under this section shall be based upon a consideration by the court of the seriousness of the offense, the child's ability to pay and a program of rehabilitation consistent with the best interests of the child.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this code to the contrary, in the event a child charged with delinquency under this chapter is transferred to adult jurisdiction and there convicted, the court may nevertheless, in lieu of sentencing the person as an adult, make its disposition in accordance with this section.

**§49-4-716. Teen court program; alternative; suitability; unsuccessful cooperation; requirements; fees.**

(a) Notwithstanding any provision of this article to the contrary, any county or municipality may choose to institute a teen court program in accordance with this section.

(b) A juvenile may be given the option of proceeding in a teen court program as an alternative to the filing of a formal proceeding pursuant to section seven hundred four or section seven hundred fourteen of this article if:

(1) The juvenile is alleged to have committed a status offense or an act of delinquency that would be a misdemeanor if committed by an adult;

(2) The juvenile is alleged to have violated a municipal ordinance over which municipal court and state court have concurrent jurisdiction; or

(3) The juvenile is otherwise subject to the provisions of this article.

(c) If the circuit court or municipal court finds that the offender is a suitable candidate for the teen court program, it may extend the option to enter the program as an alternative procedure. A juvenile may not enter the teen court program unless he or she and his or her parent or guardian consent to participating in the program.

(d) Any juvenile who does not successfully cooperate in, and complete, the teen court program and any disposition imposed during the juvenile's participation shall be returned to the circuit court for further disposition as provided by section seven hundred twelve or seven hundred fourteen of this article, as the case may be, or returned to the municipal court for further disposition for cases originating in municipal court consistent with any applicable ordinance.

(e) The following provisions apply to all teen court programs:

(1) The judge for each teen court proceeding shall be an acting or retired circuit court judge or an active member of the West Virginia State Bar, who serves on a voluntary basis.

(2) Any juvenile who selects the teen court program as an alternative disposition shall agree to serve thereafter on at least two occasions as a teen court juror.

(3) Volunteer students from grades seven through twelve of the schools within the county shall be selected to serve as defense attorney, prosecuting attorney, court clerk, bailiff and jurors for each proceeding.

(4) Disposition in a teen court proceeding shall consist of requiring the juvenile to perform sixteen to forty hours of community service, the duration and type of which shall be determined by the teen court jury from a standard list of available community service programs provided by the county juvenile probation system and a standard list of alternative

consequences that are consistent with the purposes of this article. The performance of the juvenile shall be monitored by the county juvenile probation system for cases originating in the circuit court's jurisdiction, or municipal teen court coordinator or other designee for cases originating in the municipal court's jurisdiction. The juvenile shall also perform at least two sessions of teen court jury service and, if considered appropriate by the circuit court judge or teen court judge, participate in an education program. Nothing in this section may be construed so as to deny availability of the services provided under section seven hundred twelve of this article to juveniles who are otherwise eligible for the service.

(f) The rules for administration, procedure and admission of evidence shall be determined by the chief circuit judge or teen court judge, but in no case may the court require a juvenile to admit the allegation against him or her as a prerequisite to participation in the teen court program. A copy of these rules shall be provided to every teen court participant.

(g) Each county or municipality that operates, or wishes to operate, a teen court program as provided in this section is hereby authorized to adopt a mandatory fee of up to \$5 to be assessed as provided in this subsection. Municipal courts may assess a fee pursuant to this section upon authorization by the city council of the municipality. The clerk of the court of conviction shall collect the fees established in this subsection. Assessments collected by the clerk of the court pursuant to this subsection shall be deposited into an account specifically for the operation and administration of the municipal teen court program. Assessments collected by the clerk of the circuit court or magistrate court pursuant to this subsection shall be remitted monthly to the sheriff for deposit into an account specifically for the operation and administration of the county teen court program.

(h) Any mandatory fee established by a county commission or city council in accordance with this subsection shall be paid by the defendant on a judgment of guilty or a plea of nolo contendere for each violation committed in the county or municipality of any felony, misdemeanor or any local ordinance, including traffic violations and moving violations but excluding municipal parking ordinances. Municipalities operating teen courts are authorized to use fees assessed in municipal court pursuant to this subsection for operation of a teen court in their municipality.

**§49-4-717. Sexting educational diversion program; requirements.**

(a) Before a juvenile petition is filed for activity proscribed by article eight-a or eight-c, chapter sixty-one of this code, or after probable cause has been found to believe a juvenile has committed a violation thereof, but before an adjudicatory hearing on the petition, the court or a prosecuting attorney may direct or allow a minor who engaged in the activity to participate in an educational diversion program which meets the requirements of subsection (b) of this section. The prosecutor or court may refer the minor to the educational diversion program, as part of a prepetition intervention pursuant to section seven hundred two of this article.

(b) The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals may develop an educational diversion program for minors who are accused of activity proscribed by article eight-a or eight-c, chapter sixty-one of this code. As a part of any specialized educational diversion program so developed, the following issues and topics should be included:

- (1) The legal consequences of and penalties for sharing sexually suggestive or explicit materials, including applicable federal and state statutes;
- (2) The nonlegal consequences of sharing sexually suggestive or explicit materials including, but not limited to, the effect on relationships, loss of educational and employment opportunities, and being barred or removed from school programs and extracurricular activities;
- (3) How the unique characteristics of cyberspace and the Internet, including searchability, replicability and an infinite audience, can produce long-term and unforeseen consequences for sharing sexually suggestive or explicit materials; and
- (4) The connection between bullying and cyber-bullying and minors sharing sexually suggestive or explicit materials.

(c) Once a specialized educational diversion program is established by the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals consistent with this section, the minor's successful completion of the educational diversion program shall be duly considered by the prosecutor or the court in their respective decisions to either abstain from filing the juvenile petition or to dismiss the juvenile petition, as follows:

- (1) If the minor has not previously been judicially determined to be delinquent, and the minor's activities represent a first offense for a violation of section three-b, article eight-c, chapter sixty-one of this code, the minor is not subject to the requirements of that section, as long as he or she successfully completes the educational diversion program; and
- (2) If the minor commits a second or subsequent violation of article eight-a or eight-c, chapter sixty-one of this code, the minor's successful completion of the educational diversion program may be considered as a factor to be considered by the prosecutor and court in

deciding to not file a petition or to dismiss a petition, upon successful completion of an improvement plan established by the court.

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**§49-4-718. Modification of dispositional orders; motions; hearings.**

(a) A dispositional order of the court may be modified:

(1) Upon the motion of the probation officer, a department official, the director of the Division of Juvenile Services or prosecuting attorney; or

(2) Upon the request of the juvenile or a juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian who alleges a change of circumstances relating to disposition of the juvenile.

(b) Upon such a motion or request, the court shall conduct a review hearing, except that if the last dispositional order was within the previous six months, the court may deny a request for review. Notice in writing of a review hearing shall be given to the juvenile, the juvenile's parent, guardian or custodian and all counsel not less than seventy-two hours prior to the proceeding. The court shall review the performance of the juvenile, the juvenile's parent or custodian, the juvenile's case worker and other persons providing assistance to the juvenile or juvenile's family. If the motion or request for review of disposition is based upon an alleged violation of a court order, the court may modify the disposition order and impose a more restrictive alternative if it finds clear and convincing proof of substantial violation. In the absence of such evidence, the court may decline to modify the dispositional order or may modify the order and impose one of the less restrictive alternatives set forth in section seven hundred twelve of this article. A juvenile may not be required to seek a modification order as provided in this section in order to exercise his or her right to seek relief by habeas corpus.

(c) In a hearing for modification of a dispositional order, or in any other dispositional hearing, the court shall consider the best interests of the child and the welfare of the public.

(d)(1) For dispositional orders that include probation, the juvenile's probation officer shall submit an overview to the court of the juvenile's compliance with the conditions of probation and goals of his or her case plan every ninety days.

(2) If the juvenile is compliant and no longer in need of probation supervision, the probation officer shall submit a recommendation for discharge from probation supervision. If the court determines that early termination of the probation term is warranted, it may issue an order discharging the juvenile from probation without conducting a review hearing.

(3) If the juvenile is not compliant with the conditions or has not met his or her goals, the probation officer shall include an accompanying recommendation to the court with additional or changed conditions or goals necessary to achieve compliance. If the court determines that changes to the conditions of probation are warranted, the court shall conduct a review hearing in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

**§49-4-719. Juvenile probation officers; appointment; salary; facilities; expenses; duties; powers.**

(a)(1) Each circuit court, subject to the approval of the Supreme Court of Appeals and in accordance with the rules of the Supreme Court of Appeals, shall appoint one or more juvenile probation officers and clerical assistants for the circuit. A probation officer or clerical assistant may not be related by blood or marriage to the appointing judge.

(2) The salary for juvenile probation officers and clerical assistants shall be determined and fixed by the Supreme Court of Appeals. All expenses and costs incurred by the juvenile probation officers and their staff shall be paid by the Supreme Court of Appeals in accordance with its rules. The county commission of each county shall provide adequate office facilities for juvenile probation officers and their staff. All equipment and supplies required by juvenile probation officers and their staff shall be provided by the Supreme Court of Appeals.

(b) In recognition of the duties of their employment supervising confinement and supervised release, and the inherent arrest powers for violation of the same which constitute law enforcement, state juvenile probation officers are determined to be qualified law-enforcement officers as that term is used in 18 U.S.C. § 926B.

(c) Any state juvenile probation officer may carry a concealed firearm for self-defense purposes pursuant to the provisions of 18 U.S.C. § 926B if the following criteria are met:

(1) The Supreme Court of Appeals has a written policy authorizing a state juvenile probation officer to carry a concealed firearm for self-defense purposes;

(2) There shall be in place in the Supreme Court of Appeals a requirement that state juvenile probation officers must annually qualify in the use of a firearm with standards which are equal to or exceed those required of sheriff's deputies by the Law-Enforcement Professional Standards Program; and

(3) The Supreme Court of Appeals issues a photographic identification and certification card which identify the state juvenile probation officers as law-enforcement employees as that term is contemplated by 18 U.S.C. § 926B.

(d) Any policy instituted pursuant to this subsection includes provisions which:

(1) Preclude or remove a person from participation in the concealed firearm program;

(2) Preclude from participation persons prohibited by federal or state law from possessing or receiving a firearm and;

(3) Prohibit persons from carrying a firearm pursuant to the provisions of this subsection while in an impaired state as defined in §17C-5-2 of this code.

(e) Any state juvenile probation officer who participates in a program authorized by the provisions of this subsection is responsible, at his or her expense, for obtaining and maintaining a suitable firearm and ammunition.

(f) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting the amendments to this section during the 2022, regular session of the Legislature to authorize state juvenile probation officers wishing to do so to meet the requirements of the federal Law-Enforcement Officer's Safety Act, 18 U.S.C. § 926B.

(g) The privileges authorized by the amendments to this section enacted during the 2022, regular session of the Legislature are wholly within the discretion of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

(h) The clerk of a court shall notify, if practicable, the chief probation officer of the county, or his or her designee, when a juvenile is brought before the court or judge for proceedings under this article. When notified, or if the probation officer otherwise obtains knowledge of such fact, he or she or one of his or her assistants shall:

(1) Make investigation of the case; and

(2) Furnish information and assistance that the court or judge may require.

(i) (1) The Supreme Court of Appeals may develop a system of community-based juvenile probation sanctions and incentives to be used by probation officers in response to violations of terms and conditions of probation and to award incentives for positive behavior.

(2) The community-based juvenile probation sanctions and incentives may consist of a continuum of responses from the least restrictive to the most restrictive, designed to respond swiftly, proportionally, and consistently to violations of the terms and conditions of probation and to reward compliance therewith.

(3) The purpose of community-based juvenile probation sanctions and incentives is to reduce the amount of resources and time spent by the court addressing probation violations, to reduce the likelihood of a new status or delinquent act, and to encourage and reward positive behavior by the juvenile on probation prior to any attempt to place a juvenile in an out-of-home placement.

**§49-4-720. Prohibition on committing juveniles to adult facilities.**

(a) A juvenile, including one who has been transferred to criminal jurisdiction of the court, may not be detained or confined in any institution in which he or she has contact with or comes within sight or sound of any adult persons incarcerated because he or she has have been convicted of a crime or are awaiting trial on criminal charges or with the security staff (including management) or direct-care staff of a jail or locked facility for adults.

(b) A child who has been convicted or is awaiting trial of an offense under the adult jurisdiction of the circuit court may not be held in custody in an adult correctional facility of this state while under the age of 18 years. The Division of Juvenile Services shall notify the sentencing court and copy the county prosecuting attorney of the sentencing court within 180 days, or as soon as practicable, that the child will be turning 18 years of age. The court shall, upon receipt of the notice, set the matter for a hearing. Before the child reaches 18 years of age, the court shall hold a hearing and enter an order transferring the offender to an adult correctional facility, a facility for youthful offenders, if applicable: or any other disposition the court considers appropriate, which does not violate the provisions of subsection (a) of this section: Provided, however, That the court may not remand a person who reached the age of 18 years to a juvenile facility or place the person with other juveniles.

(c) The provisions of §61-11A-1 et seq. of this code, are applicable to proceedings under this section.

**§49-4-721. Rules governing juvenile facilities; rights of juveniles.**

(a) The Director of the Division of Juvenile Services within the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety shall propose legislative rules for promulgation in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, outlining policies and procedures governing the operation of those correctional, detention, predispositional detention centers and other facilities wherein juveniles may be housed. These policies and procedures shall include, but are not limited to, standards of cleanliness, temperature and lighting; availability of medical and dental care; provision of food, furnishings, clothing and toilet articles; supervision; procedures for enforcing rules of conduct consistent with due process of law; and visitation privileges. A juvenile in custody or detention has, at a minimum, the following rights, and the policies prescribed ensuring that:

- (1) A juvenile may not be punished by physical force, deprivation of nutritious meals, deprivation of family visits or imposition of solitary confinement;
  - (2) A juvenile shall be afforded an opportunity to participate in physical exercise each day;
  - (3) Except for sleeping hours, a juvenile in a state facility may not be locked alone in a room unless that juvenile is not amenable to reasonable direction and control;
  - (4) A juvenile shall be provided with his or her own clothing or individualized clothing which is clean and supplied by the facility, and shall also be afforded daily access to showers;
  - (5) A juvenile shall be afforded constant access to writing materials and may send mail without limitation, censorship or prior reading, and may receive mail without prior reading, except that mail may be opened in the juvenile's presence, without being read, to inspect for contraband;
  - (6) A juvenile may make and receive regular local phone calls without charge and long distance calls to his or her family without charge at least once a week, and receive visitors daily and on a regular basis;
  - (7) A juvenile shall be afforded immediate access to medical care as needed;
  - (8) A juvenile in a juvenile detention facility or juvenile corrections facility shall be provided access to education, including teaching, educational materials and books;
  - (9) A juvenile shall be afforded reasonable access to an attorney upon request; and
  - (10) A juvenile shall be afforded a grievance procedure, including an appeal mechanism.
- (b) Upon admission to a detention facility or juvenile corrections facility, a juvenile shall be furnished with a copy of the rights provided him or her by virtue of this section and as further prescribed by rules proposed and promulgated pursuant to this section.

**§49-4-722. Conviction for offense while in custody.**

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, any person who is 18 years of age or older who is convicted as an adult of an offense that he or she committed while in the custody of the Bureau of Juvenile Services and who is sentenced for the conviction to a regional jail or state correctional facility for the offense may not be returned to the custody of the Bureau upon the completion of his or her adult sentence.

(b) Whenever a person of 18 years of age or older is charged with an offense while in the custody of the Bureau of Juvenile Services, the Bureau shall provide notice of the person's custodial status to the court in which the charge is pending and provide notice of the pending charge to the circuit court having juvenile jurisdiction over the person.

(c) At least 10 days prior to the sentencing on a criminal charge referred to in subsection (b) of this section, the sentencing court shall provide written notice of the sentencing hearing to the Commissioner of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation and to the circuit court having juvenile jurisdiction over the person. The person may not be released from custody until the sentencing court has received notice from the circuit court having juvenile jurisdiction over the person that it has held the hearing required by subsection (d) of this section.

(d) Prior to completion of the adult sentence referenced in subsection (c) of this section, the circuit court having jurisdiction over the underlying juvenile matter shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the person who has turned 18 years of age shall remain in the regional jail during pendency of the underlying juvenile matter or if another disposition or pretrial placement is appropriate and available: Provided, That the court may not remand a child who reached the age of 18 years to a juvenile facility or placement during the pendency of the underlying juvenile matter.

(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of §15A-3-12(i) of this code, the Commissioner of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation is authorized to designate a unit in one or more institutions, either juvenile facilities, jails, or prisons, under his or her management to house adults remaining under the juvenile jurisdiction of the circuit court to ensure that such persons are not within sight or sound of adult inmates.

**§49-4-723. Discrimination prohibited; penalties; damages.**

(a) No individual, firm, corporation or other entity may discriminate against any person in any manner due to that person's prior involvement in a proceeding under this article if that person's records have been expunged pursuant to this article. This includes, but is not limited to, discrimination relating to employment, housing, education, obtaining credit, and contractual rights.

(b) Any person who willfully violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not more than \$1,000, or confined in jail for not more than six months, or both fined and confined. Additionally, a person who violates this section is liable to the person who has been discriminated against for damages in the amount of \$300 or the actual amount of damages, whichever is greater.

**§49-4-724. Standardized assessments.**

(a) The Supreme Court of Appeals is requested to adopt a risk and needs assessment to be used for adjudicated delinquents, detained and delivered to, or committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Corrections and Rehabilitation. A validation study of the risk and needs assessment may be conducted at least every three years to ensure that the risk and needs assessment is predictive of the risk of reoffending.

(b) Each juvenile adjudicated for a delinquency offense and committed or detained with the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation in accordance with §49-4-714(b)(5)(A) of this code shall undergo a risk and needs assessment prior to disposition to identify specific factors that predict a juvenile's likelihood of reoffending and, when appropriately addressed, may reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The risk and needs assessment may be conducted by a division worker trained to conduct the risk and needs assessment.

(c) Each multidisciplinary team convened pursuant to §49-4-406(c) of this code shall receive and consider the results of the risk and needs assessment of the juvenile.

(d) The results of the risk and needs assessment shall be provided to the court prior to disposition or at the time of the dispositional hearing.

**§49-4-725. Restorative justice programs.**

(a) The court or prosecuting attorney may offer a juvenile, against whom a petition has been filed alleging that the juvenile has committed any of the offenses set forth in subsection (b) of this section, the opportunity to participate in a voluntary restorative justice program, where available, at any time prior to disposition of the case.

(b) A juvenile is eligible to participate in a restorative justice program if the offense that the juvenile is alleged to have committed is:

(1) A status offense;

(2) An offense that would constitute a nonviolent offense if committed by an adult;

(3) An offense that would constitute misdemeanor assault pursuant to §61-2-9(b) of this code if committed by an adult; or

(4) An offense that would constitute misdemeanor battery pursuant to §61-2-9(c) of this code if committed by an adult.

(c) The juvenile or the victim or both may decline and shall not be required to participate in a restorative justice program: *Provided*, That any declination by the juvenile or the victim or both shall not preclude future participation in a restorative justice program during the current proceeding or any subsequent proceeding under this article.

(d) A restorative justice program shall implement measures agreed to by the victim and the juvenile which are designed to provide redress to the victim and community, including, but not limited to, restitution to the victim, restitution to the community, services for the victim, services for the community, or any other reasonable measure intended to provide restitution or services to the victim or the community.

(e) If a juvenile is referred to, and successfully completes, a restorative justice program, including all agreed-to measures pursuant to subsection (d) of this section, the petition against the juvenile shall be dismissed.

(f) No self-incriminating information obtained from the juvenile as the result of a restorative justice program is admissible as evidence against him or her in a subsequent proceeding under this article.

**§49-4-726. Study of juvenile competency issues; requiring and requesting report and proposed legislation; submission to Legislature.**

(a) The Secretary of the Department of Human Services and the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety are directed, and the Juvenile Justice Commission of the Supreme Court of Appeals is requested to undertake a collaborative investigation and evaluation of issues regarding juvenile competency. They shall:

(1) Develop appropriate procedures for determining what actions should be taken when a juvenile is determined to lack substantial capacity to understand the proceedings against him or her brought under §49-4-704 of this code;

(2) Recommend appropriate processes for juveniles to receive restorative services when found to be incompetent; and

(3) Recommend appropriate disposition alternatives for juveniles found to be incompetent and not restorable, including a recommendation as to the location and operation of an appropriate facility to house juveniles determined to be incompetent, nonrestorable, and in need of out-of-home placement.

(b) The secretaries shall issue a joint report of their findings and recommendations, together with draft legislation necessary to effectuate the recommendations, on or before July 31, 2020, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates.

(c) The report shall:

(1) Include models from other states considered to be best practices;

(2) Include an estimate of the number of juveniles that may be affected by this procedure and data of trends by other states;

(3) Include an estimate of the cost of providing restorative services and a recommendation of which agency should pay for the services; and

(4) Ensure that any recommended legislation provides that all services be provided in the least restrictive placement for the juvenile and recommend a facility for the housing and treatment of juveniles determined to be incompetent, nonrestorable, and in need of out-of-home placement which can appropriately provide the juvenile with necessary services.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this section to acknowledge the importance of ensuring the constitutionality of juvenile proceedings under §49-4-704 of this code.

**§49-4-727. Juvenile competency proceedings.**

(a) Subject to the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, a juvenile's attorney, the prosecuting attorney, or the court may raise the issue of his or her competency to participate in the proceeding any time during proceedings under this article.

(b) In any delinquency proceeding pursuant to this article, a juvenile 13 years of age or older is presumed to be competent. If a juvenile's attorney, the prosecuting attorney, or the court raise the issue of competency, all adjudication or disposition proceedings shall be stayed until the issue of competency is resolved: *Provided*, That the juvenile's attorney, guardian ad litem, or prosecuting attorney may seek, or the court may order, any pre-adjudicatory procedures or case specific alternatives permitted by the Rules of Juvenile Procedure while the issue of competency is pending. A juvenile has the burden of proof to rebut this presumption by showing incompetency by a preponderance of the evidence.

(c) In any delinquency proceeding pursuant to this article, if the juvenile is under 13 years of age, there exists a rebuttable presumption that he or she is incompetent to be adjudicated, unless judicially determined to be competent pursuant to the procedures set forth in §49-4-728 through §49-4-734 of this code: *Provided*, That the juvenile's attorney, guardian ad litem, or prosecuting attorney may seek, or the court may order, any pre-adjudicatory procedures or case specific alternatives permitted by the Rules of Juvenile Procedure or any disposition alternatives set forth in §49-4-734 of this code for a juvenile presumed incompetent. The state has the burden of proof to rebut this presumption by showing competency by a preponderance of the evidence.

(d) Regardless of the age of the juvenile, the court may dismiss the petition without ordering a competency evaluation or competency hearing if the prosecuting attorney, the juvenile's attorney, and the guardian ad litem, if previously appointed, agree that there is compelling evidence that the juvenile is not competent to participate in the proceedings: *Provided*, That a court may not order services authorized by §49-4-733 of this code without a competency evaluation.

(e) If and when the issue of a juvenile's competency is raised under subsection (b) of this section or, a rebuttable presumption of incompetency exists under subsection (c) of this section, the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the juvenile. The Supreme Court of Appeals is requested to establish a training program for persons acting as guardians ad litem in juvenile competency matters.

**§49-4-728. Definitions for juvenile competency proceedings.**

As used in §49-4-727 through §49-4-734 of this code:

“Competent” and “competency” refer to whether or not a juvenile has sufficient present ability to consult with his or her lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him or her. A juvenile is incompetent if, due to developmental disability, intellectual disability, or mental illness, the juvenile is presently incapable of understanding the nature and objective of proceedings against him or her or of assisting in his or her defense.

“Competency attainment services” means services provided to a juvenile to assist the juvenile in attaining competency.

“Department” means the Department of Health and Human Resources.

“Developmental disability” means a severe and chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment, including, but not limited to, neurological conditions that lead to impairment of general intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior.

“Developmental immaturity” means a condition based on a juvenile’s chronological age and significant lack of developmental skills when the juvenile has no significant mental illness or intellectual disability.

“Intellectual disability” means a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical domains.

“Mental illness” means a manifestation in a person of significantly impaired capacity to maintain acceptable levels of functioning in the areas of intellect, emotion, and physical well-being.

“Proceeding” means any delinquency proceeding under this article.

“Qualified forensic evaluator” means a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist with the necessary education, training, and experience to perform juvenile competency evaluations, and who has been approved to render opinions for the court pursuant to the requirements of §49-4-729 of this code.

**§49-4-729. Motion for determination of competency, time frames, order for evaluation.**

(a) When the prosecuting attorney, the juvenile's attorney, or the guardian ad litem has reasonable basis to believe that:

(1) A juvenile age 13 or older is incompetent to proceed in the delinquency action, that party shall file a motion for a determination of competency. The motion shall state any known facts to the movant of in support thereof. If the court raises the issue sua sponte, it shall, by written order, set forth the basis for ordering a competency evaluation.

(2) A juvenile under the age of 13 is competent to proceed in the delinquency action, the prosecuting attorney shall file a motion for determination of competency. The motion shall state the basis to believe the juvenile is competent to proceed despite the presumption of incompetency due to age and shall state any known facts to the prosecuting attorney in support of the motion. If the court raises the issue sua sponte, the court by written order shall set forth the factual basis supporting the finding that the juvenile is competent to proceed.

(b) Within 10 judicial days after a motion is made, the court shall make one of the following determinations regardless of which presumption applies:

(1) Find that there is compelling evidence that the juvenile is not competent to participate in the proceedings and dismiss the case pursuant to §49-4-727(d) of this code;

(2) Without conducting a hearing, find that there exists a reasonable basis to conduct a competency evaluation; or

(3) Schedule a hearing to determine whether there exists a reasonable basis to conduct a competency evaluation. The hearing shall be held within 30 judicial days. The court's determination shall be announced no later than three judicial days after the conclusion of the hearing.

(c) If the court determines there is a reasonable basis to order a competency evaluation pursuant to §49-4-731 of this code, or if the prosecutor and the juvenile's attorney agree to the evaluation, the court shall order a competency evaluation. If the court orders a competency evaluation, the court shall order that the competency evaluation be conducted in the least restrictive environment, taking into account the public safety and the best interests of the juvenile.

(1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this code, the court shall provide in its order that the qualified forensic evaluator shall have access to all relevant confidential and public records related to the juvenile, including competency evaluations and reports conducted in prior delinquent proceedings. The court shall provide to the qualified forensic evaluator a copy of the petition and the names and contact information for the judge, prosecutor,

juvenile's attorney, and parents or legal guardians.

(2) Within five judicial days after the court orders an evaluation, the prosecutor shall deliver to the evaluator copies of relevant police reports and other background information relevant to the juvenile that are in the prosecutor's possession.

(3) Within five judicial days after the court orders an evaluation, the juvenile's attorney shall deliver to the qualified forensic evaluator copies of police reports and other records including, but not limited to, educational, medical, psychological, and neurological records that are relevant to the evaluation and that are in the attorney's possession. Upon good cause shown, the court may extend the time frame to deliver these documents noting that time is of the essence.

**§49-4-730. Juvenile competency qualified forensic evaluator; qualifications.**

An evaluation ordered by the court shall be conducted by a qualified forensic evaluator.

(1) A qualified forensic evaluator shall have education and training in the following areas:

(A) Forensic evaluation procedures for juveniles, including accepted criteria used in evaluating competency;

(B) Evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of children and adolescents with developmental disability, developmental immaturity, intellectual disability, or mental illness;

(C) Clinical understanding of child and adolescent development; and

(D) Familiarity with competency standards in this state.

(2) The department shall establish procedures for ensuring the training and qualifications of qualified forensic evaluators. Annually, the department shall provide a list of qualified forensic evaluators to the Administrative Office of the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

**§49-4-731. Juvenile competency evaluation.**

(a) The qualified forensic evaluator shall file with the court a written competency evaluation report within 30 days after the date of entry of the order requiring the juvenile to be evaluated and appointing the qualified forensic evaluator. For good cause shown, the court may extend the time for filing for a period not to exceed an additional 30 days. The report shall include the evaluator's opinion as to whether or not a juvenile, due to developmental disability, intellectual disability, or mental illness, has sufficient present ability to consult with his or her lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and whether the juvenile has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him or her. The report shall not include the evaluator's opinion as to whether the juvenile committed the alleged offense or recite or reference any self-incriminating or inculpatory statements as reported by the juvenile. A self-incrimination or inculpatory statement made by a juvenile during an evaluation or hearing conducted pursuant to this article shall not be admissible on the issue of responsibility or guilt in subsequent court proceedings, including adjudication and disposition or transfer hearings.

(b) A competency evaluation report shall include:

(1) A statement of the procedures used, including psychometric tests administered, records reviewed, and the identity of persons interviewed;

(2) Pertinent background information, including a history of educational performance, psychiatric or psychological history, developmental and family history;

(3) Results of the mental status examination;

(4) A diagnosis, if one has been made, which shall address any psychological or psychiatric conditions or cognitive deficiencies determined to exist; and

(5) An opinion as to the juvenile's developmental maturity or developmental immaturity as it would affect his or her ability to proceed.

(c) If the qualified forensic evaluator determines that the juvenile is not competent to participate in the proceedings, the competency evaluation report shall address the following questions:

(1) Whether the juvenile has a developmental disability, intellectual disability, or mental illness;

(2) Whether the juvenile has sufficient present ability to consult with his or her lawyer with a reasonable degree of rational understanding;

(3) Whether a juvenile has a rational as well as factual understanding of the proceedings against him or her; and

(4) Whether the juvenile can attain competency in the foreseeable future if provided with a course of treatment, therapy, or training.

(d) If the qualified forensic evaluator determines that the juvenile is incompetent, but that there is a reasonable probability that he or she can attain competency within the periods set forth in §49-4-733(c)(3) of this code, the report shall include the following recommendations:

(1) A recommendation as to the treatment or therapy; and

(2) The least restrictive setting for juvenile competency attainment services consistent with the juvenile's ability to attain competency and the safety of both the juvenile and the public.

(e) The court shall provide a copy of each competency evaluation report it receives to the prosecutor, the juvenile's attorney, and guardian ad litem and may provide a copy upon request to the juvenile's parents or legal guardian.

(f) The department shall pay qualified forensic evaluators for all matters related to conducting a court-ordered competency evaluation. The department shall develop and implement a process for prompt payment of qualified forensic evaluators including a rate schedule. The amount of payment for court-ordered evaluations shall reasonably compensate qualified forensic evaluators for the work performed in a particular case.

**§49-4-732. Hearing to determine juvenile's competency to participate in the proceedings.**

(a) Not more than 15 judicial days after receiving the evaluator's report, the court shall conduct a hearing to determine the juvenile's competency to participate in the proceedings. The court may continue the hearing for good cause shown.

(b) The competency evaluation report is admissible as evidence in the competency proceedings. The qualified forensic evaluator may be called as a witness and is subject to cross examination by all parties. If authorized by the court, hearings held pursuant to this section may be conducted by or participated in using teleconference or video conference technology. If the court contacts the qualified forensic evaluator to obtain clarification of the report contents, the court shall promptly inform all parties and allow each party to participate in each contact.

(c) In determining the competency of the juvenile to participate in the proceedings, the court shall consider the content of all competency evaluation reports admitted as evidence. The court may consider additional evidence introduced at the hearing by the prosecuting attorney, the juvenile's attorney, or guardian ad litem.

(d) (1) Except as otherwise provided, the court shall make a written determination as to the juvenile's competency based on a preponderance of the evidence within 10 judicial days after completion of the hearing. The applicable burden of proof shall be as set forth in §49-4-727 of this code.

(2) The court shall not find a juvenile competent to proceed solely because the juvenile is receiving or has received in-patient treatment or is receiving or has received psychotropic or other medication, even if the juvenile might become incompetent to proceed without that medication.

**§49-4-733. Procedure after determination of juvenile's competency to participate in the proceedings.**

(a) After a hearing pursuant to §49-4-732 of this code, if the court determines by a preponderance of the evidence that the juvenile is competent to proceed despite any presumption that may have applied, the delinquency proceedings shall resume as provided by law.

(b) If the court determines by a preponderance of the evidence that a juvenile is incompetent to proceed, but is likely to attain competency within a reasonable time with services, the court shall stay the proceedings and order the juvenile to receive services designated to assist the juvenile in attaining competency, based upon the recommendations in the competency evaluation report, unless the court makes specific findings that the recommended services are not justified. The court shall order the juvenile's parent or legal guardian to contact a court-designated provider by a specified date to arrange for services.

(1) The competency attainment services provided to a juvenile shall be based on the recommendations contained in the qualified forensic evaluator's report described in §49-4-731(d) of this code, and are subject to the conditions and time periods required pursuant to this section measured from the date the court approves the plan.

(2) The court shall order that the competency attainment services ordered are provided in the least restrictive environment, taking into account the public safety and the best interests of the juvenile. If the juvenile has been released on temporary orders and refuses or fails to cooperate with the service provider, the court may modify the orders to require a more appropriate setting for further services. A juvenile may not be placed in a Bureau of Juvenile Services facility to receive competency attainment services. Additionally, a juvenile presumed incompetent under §49-4-727(c) of this code shall not be placed in a Bureau of Juvenile Services facility, except in compliance with §49-4-705 and §49-4-706 of this code, and corresponding Rules of Juvenile Procedure as adopted by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

(3) A juvenile shall not be required to participate in competency attainment services for longer than is necessary to attain competency or after the court determines that there is no reasonable likelihood that competency can be attained. The following maximum time limits apply to the participation of a juvenile:

(A) A juvenile charged with an act which would constitute a misdemeanor or nonviolent felony if committed by an adult shall not be required to participate in competency attainment services beyond his or her 19th birthday and there shall be a rebuttable presumption that competency is not attainable if the juvenile has not attained competency after 90 days of services.

(B) A juvenile charged with an act which would constitute a felony crime of violence if committed by an adult shall not be required to participate in competency attainment

services beyond his or her 21st birthday and there shall be a rebuttable presumption that competency is not attainable if the juvenile has not attained competency after 180 days of services.

(4) Not later than 10 judicial days after the court orders competency attainment services, the department shall identify the appropriate entity and location to provide those services.

(5) Within 10 judicial days after the department identifies the appropriate entity and location, the provider responsible for the juvenile's competency attainment services shall commence. The court shall deliver to that provider:

(A) The name and address of the juvenile's counsel;

(B) A copy of the juvenile's petition;

(C) A copy of the competency evaluation report;

(D) The name, address, and phone number of the juvenile's parents or legal guardian;

(E) The name of the department's caseworker, if any; and

(F) Any other relevant documents or reports concerning the juvenile's health that have come to the attention of the court.

(c) The court shall order and conduct review hearings no less often than every 90 days as determined appropriate by the court. The multidisciplinary team shall meet prior to any review hearing and provide a written status report to the court prior to the hearing. Unless sooner ordered by the court, the qualified forensic evaluator shall submit a report to the court prior to any review hearing, and upon completion or termination of services, and shall include the following:

(1) The services provided to the juvenile, including medication, education, and counseling;

(2) The likelihood that the competency of the juvenile to proceed will be restored within the applicable period of time set forth in subdivision (3), subsection (b) of this section; and

(3) The progress made toward the goals and objectives for the restoration of competency identified in the recommendations from the competency evaluation adopted by the court.

(d) The provider responsible for the juvenile's competency attainment services shall report to the court within three judicial days if he or she determines that:

(1) The juvenile is failing to cooperate, and the lack of cooperation is significantly impeding or precluding the attainment of competency; or

(2) The current setting is no longer the least restrictive setting that is consistent with the

juvenile's ability to attain competency taking into account public safety and the best interests of the juvenile. The provider shall include in the report an assessment of the danger the juvenile poses to himself, herself or others and an assessment of the appropriateness of the placement.

(e) The provider responsible for the juvenile's competency attainment services shall request a subsequent evaluation when the provider has reason to believe:

(1) The juvenile has achieved the goals of the plan and would be able to understand the nature and objectives of the proceedings against him or her, to assist in his or her defense, and to understand and appreciate the consequences that may be imposed or result from the proceedings with or without reasonable accommodations; and

(2) The juvenile will not achieve the goals of the plan within the applicable period of time pursuant to subdivision (3), subsection (b) of this section.

(f) The evaluator shall assess the observation of the provider and provide a written report to the court within 10 days of receiving a report from the provider pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

(g) The court shall provide copies of any report made by the provider to the prosecuting attorney, the juvenile's attorney, the juvenile's case worker, and the juvenile's guardian ad litem, if any. The court shall provide copies of any reports made by the provider to the juvenile's parents or legal guardians, unless the court finds that doing so is not in the best interest of the juvenile.

(h) Within 15 judicial days after receiving an evaluator's report, the court may hold a hearing to determine if new, additional, or further orders are necessary.

(i) If the court determines that the juvenile is not making progress toward competency or is so uncooperative that attainment services cannot be effective, the court may order a change in setting or services that would help the juvenile attain competency within the relevant period of time as set forth in subdivision (3), subsection (b) of this section.

**§49-4-734. Disposition alternatives for incompetent juveniles.**

(a) If the court determines that the juvenile has attained competency, the court shall proceed with the delinquent juvenile's proceeding in accordance with this article.

(b) After a hearing pursuant to §49-4-732 of this code, if the court determines by the preponderance of the evidence that the juvenile is incompetent to proceed and cannot attain competency within the period of time set forth in §49-4-733(b)(3) of this code, the court may dismiss the petition without prejudice, or may take the following actions or any combination thereof the court determines to be in the juvenile's best interest and the interest of protecting the public:

(1) Refer the matter to the department and request a determination on whether a child abuse or neglect petition, pursuant to §49-4-601 *et seq.* of this code, should be filed;

(2) Refer the juvenile to the department for services pursuant to §49-4-712 of this code. Services may include, but are not limited to, referral of the juvenile and his or her parents, guardians, or custodians and other family members to services for psychiatric or other medical care, or psychological, welfare, legal, education, or other social services, as appropriate to the needs of the juvenile and his or her family;

(3) Place the juvenile in the custody of his or her parents or other suitable person or private or public institution or agency under terms and conditions as determined to be in the best interests of the juvenile and the public, which conditions may include the provision of outpatient services by any suitable public or private agency; or

(4) Upon motion by the prosecuting attorney, stay the proceeding for no more than 20 days to allow the prosecuting attorney to initiate proceedings for civil commitment pursuant to §27-5-1 *et seq.* of this code if the juvenile has attained majority.

(c) A circuit court may, sua sponte or upon a motion by any party direct that a dangerous assessment be performed prior to directing the resolutions set forth in subsection (b) of this section.

**§49-4-735. Stay of transfer to criminal jurisdiction.**

If a juvenile is presumed incompetent under §49-4-727(c) of this code, or if the issue of the juvenile's competency to participate in the proceedings is raised at any time during the proceedings for a juvenile presumed competent under §49-4-727(b) of this code, the procedures outlined in §49-4-727 through §49-4-734 of this code shall be used to determine the juvenile's competency and if appropriate, restore the juvenile's competency regardless of whether the case is to proceed under the court's juvenile jurisdiction or transfer to adult criminal jurisdiction pursuant to §49-4-710 of this code and corresponding Rules of Juvenile Procedure adopted by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

**§49-4-801. Support of a child removed from home pursuant to this chapter; order requirements.**

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that to the extent practicable, this article should encourage and require a child's parents to meet the obligation of providing that child with adequate food, shelter, clothing, education, and health and child care.

(b) This article shall be construed to be consistent with articles one, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, eighteen, nineteen and twenty four of chapter forty-eight of this code, and those articles apply to actions pursuant to this chapter unless expressly stated otherwise.

(c) When a child is removed from his or her home pursuant to this chapter, the court shall issue a support order payable by the child's mother. If the child's legal father has been determined, the court shall issue a child support order payable by the legal father. If no legal father has been determined, the court shall issue an order establishing paternity prior to or simultaneously with establishing a support order payable by the child's legal father. Copies of the orders shall be provided to the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement.

(d) The order establishing a child support obligation must use the Guidelines for Child Support Awards that are set forth in article thirteen, chapter forty-eight of this code.

(e) In addition to the reasons for deviation listed in section seven hundred two, article thirteen, chapter forty-eight of this code, deviation from the child support guidelines is appropriate when the court finds that:

(1) It may assist the parent in successful completion of an improvement period;

(2) It may be in the best interest of the minor child to issue a zero child support order; and/or

(3) The parent temporarily or permanently has no gross income as defined §48-1-228 of this code.

**§49-4-802. General provisions for support orders; contempt.**

(a) Any pre-existing support order from any other court or administrative agency with authority to issue a support order shall remain in full force and effect until a superseding order is issued.

(b) If a child is returned to the physical custody of a parent, that parent is not responsible for paying child support for the duration of time that parent has physical custody of the child without the necessity of entry of another court order terminating that parent's child support obligation.

(c) If the action is dismissed for failure to prove the allegations of abuse or neglect, any support provision issued pursuant to this chapter are void ab initio. Any adjudication of paternity shall remain in full force and effect.

(d) The support obligation shall automatically continue beyond the termination of the payor's parental rights, unless the support obligation is explicitly ended in an order.

**§49-4-803. Enforcement of support orders.**

(a) Support orders may be enforced through any manner provided in chapters thirty-eight and forty-eight of this code.

(b) An action for contempt for nonpayment of support may be brought by the Bureau for Children and Families or Bureau for Child Support Enforcement; the child's physical custodian; the child's guardian ad litem; or the prosecuting attorney.

WV Legislature

§49-4-901

Repealed.

Acts, 2016 Reg. Sess., Ch. 32

WV Legislature

§49-4-902

Repealed.

Acts, 2016 Reg. Sess., Ch. 32

WV Legislature

**§49-4-903. Interference with disposition of child punishable as contempt of court.**

A person who interferes with the direction of disposition of a child in accordance with an order of the court or judge made in pursuance of this chapter, or with the department, or a probation or other officer of the court in carrying out the directions of the court or judge under an order, is subject to punishment as for contempt of court.

WV Legislature

**§49-4-904. Enticing child from custody; penalties.**

A person who personally or by agent entices or forcibly removes a child from a custody in which the child was placed under this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction shall be fined not more than \$100, or confined in jail not more than six months, or fined and confined.

WV Legislature