WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §49-8-3

§49-8-3. Delegation of care and custody of a child

(a) The following shall apply only to situations where a parent, guardian or legal custodian of a child provides for the temporary care and custody of a child with the assistance of a qualified nonprofit organization. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to restrict the rights of parents, guardians or legal custodians providing for the care of children by power of attorney in other contexts.

(b) A parent, guardian or legal custodian of a child may, by a properly executed power of attorney, delegate to a person, for a period not to exceed one year, the care and custody of the child.

(c) A parent, guardian or legal custodian may not delegate:

(1) The power to consent to marriage or adoption of the child;

(2) The performance or inducement of an abortion on or for the child; or

(3) The termination of parental rights to the child.

(d) A delegation of care and custody of a child, under this article, does not change or modify any parental or legal rights, obligations, or authority established by an existing court order, or deprive the parent, guardian or legal custodian of any parental or legal rights, obligations, or authority regarding the custody, visitation, or support of the child.

(e) The parent, guardian or legal custodian of the child may revoke or withdraw this power of attorney at any time. Upon the termination, expiration, or revocation of the power of attorney the child shall be returned to the custody of the parent, guardian or legal custodian within forty-eight hours.

(f) Unless the authority is revoked or withdrawn by the parent, guardian or legal custodian, the designee shall exercise parental or legal authority on a continuous basis without compensation for the duration of the power of attorney.

(g) The care and custody of a child may only be delegated to the extent, and so long as, the parent, guardian or legal custodian retains care and custody. If the rights of the parent, guardian or custodian of the child are terminated, the power of attorney shall be deemed to be revoked. A court that revokes the care and custody rights of a parent, guardian or legal custodian shall notify the person to whom those parental rights has been delegated, and the child may remain with that person until the court shall finalize the subsequent placement of the child: *Provided*, That no period of placement with a person pursuant to the provisions of this article shall be considered as a factor in a custody hearing in which a family member seeks to be awarded custody of the child.

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(h) The execution of a power of attorney by a parent, guardian or legal custodian does not, without other evidence, constitute abandonment, abuse or neglect unless the parent, guardian or legal custodian fails to either take custody of the child or execute a new power of attorney after the one year time limit has elapsed: Provided, That nothing in this article may be interpreted to prevent the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families or law enforcement from investigating allegations of abuse, abandonment, neglect or other mistreatment of a child.

(i) If a parent, guardian or legal custodian of a child wishes to utilize the power of attorney authorized by this section to delegate any powers regarding the care and custody of the child to another person, the qualified nonprofit organization shall conduct a criminal history and federal and state background check on the person to whom powers are delegated prior to the execution of the power of attorney. The criminal history and federal and state background check shall be paid for by the qualified nonprofit organization, the parent, guardian or legal custodian, or the parent's designee. Additionally, the qualified nonprofit organization shall train the designee in the rights, duties, and limitations associated with providing care for a child under this section, including the prevention and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.

(j) The designee may not move from the address listed on the parental rights form without written approval of the parent, guardian or legal custodian.

(k) Any person who accepts care and custody of a child pursuant to the provisions of this article shall be deemed a person mandated to report suspected abuse and neglect pursuant to the provisions of section eight hundred three, article two, chapter forty-nine of this code.

(l) If a parent, guardian or legal custodian dies or becomes incapacitated, then the provisions of article ten, chapter forty-four of this code shall apply.

(m) Nothing in this section is intended, nor shall anything herein be interpreted, to otherwise restrict the rights of custodial parents or non-custodial parents to temporarily delegate or provide for the care and custody of a child, or to assert their right to request custody, in accordance with other provisions of West Virginia law.

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