## LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA ONE HUNDRED THIRD LEGISLATURE SECOND SESSION

## **LEGISLATIVE BILL 908**

Introduced by Coash, 27; McGill, 26. Read first time January 15, 2014 Committee: Judiciary

## A BILL

1	FOR	AN	ACT relating to children; to amend sections 30-2608,
2			43-104.02, 43-284.02, and 71-824, Reissue Revised
3			Statutes of Nebraska, section 43-1318, Revised Statutes
4			Cumulative Supplement, 2012, and sections 43-245, 43-285,
5			and 43-905, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2013; to clarify
6			certain adoption filings for children born out of
7			wedlock; to provide for guardianships for certain
8			adjudicated children as prescribed; to define a term; to
9			change provisions relating to wards and guardianships; to
10			harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original
11			sections.

12 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

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Section 1. Section 30-2608, Reissue Revised Statutes of
 Nebraska, is amended to read:

3 30-2608 (a) The father and mother are the natural 4 guardians of their minor children and are duly entitled to their 5 custody and to direct their education, being themselves competent to 6 transact their own business and not otherwise unsuitable. If either 7 dies or is disqualified for acting, or has abandoned his or her 8 family, the guardianship devolves upon the other except as otherwise 9 provided in this section.

10 (b) In the appointment of a parent as a guardian when the other parent has died and the child was born out of wedlock, the 11 12 court shall consider the wishes of the deceased parent as expressed 13 in a valid will executed by the deceased parent. If in such valid will the deceased parent designates someone other than the other 14 15 natural parent as guardian for the minor children, the court shall 16 take into consideration the designation by the deceased parent. In determining whether or not the natural parent should be given 17 priority in awarding custody, the court shall also consider the 18 natural parent's acknowledgment of paternity, payment of child 19 20 support, and whether the natural parent is a fit, proper, and suitable custodial parent for the child. 21

(c) The court may appoint a standby guardian for a minor whose parent is chronically ill or near death. The appointment of a guardian under this subsection does not suspend or terminate the parent's parental rights of custody to the minor. The standby

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1 guardian's authority would take effect, if the minor is left without 2 a remaining parent, upon (1) the death of the parent, (2) the mental 3 incapacity of the parent, or (3) the physical debilitation and 4 consent of the parent.

5 (d) The court may appoint a guardian for a minor if all 6 parental rights of custody have been terminated or suspended by prior 7 or current circumstances or prior court order. The juvenile court may 8 appoint a guardian for a child adjudicated to be under subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247 as provided in section 8 of this act. A 9 guardian appointed by will as provided in section 30-2606 whose 10 11 appointment has not been prevented or nullified under section 30-2607 12 has priority over any guardian who may be appointed by the court but 13 the court may proceed with an appointment upon a finding that the 14 testamentary guardian has failed to accept the testamentary appointment within thirty days after notice of the guardianship 15 16 proceeding.

17 (e) The petition and all other court filings for a guardianship proceeding shall be filed with the clerk of the county 18 court. The party shall state in the petition whether such party 19 20 requests that the proceeding be heard by the county court or, in cases in which a separate juvenile court already has jurisdiction 21 over the child in need of a guardian under the Nebraska Juvenile 22 23 Code, such separate juvenile court. Such proceeding is considered a county court proceeding even if heard by a separate juvenile court 24 25 judge and an order of the separate juvenile court in such

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guardianship proceeding has the force and effect of a county court 1 2 order. The testimony in a guardianship proceeding heard before a 3 separate juvenile court judge shall be preserved as in any other 4 separate juvenile court proceeding. The clerks of the district courts 5 shall transfer all guardianship petitions and other guardianship filings which were filed with such clerks prior to August 28, 1999, 6 7 to the clerk of the county court where the separate juvenile court 8 which heard the proceeding is situated. The clerk of such county 9 court shall file and docket such petitions and other filings.

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Sec. 2. Section 43-104.02, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

12 43-104.02 A Notice of Objection to Adoption and Intent to 13 Obtain Custody shall be filed with the biological father registry under section 43-104.01 on forms provided by the Department of Health 14 15 and Human Services (1) within at any time during the pregnancy and no 16 later than five business days after the birth of the child or (2) if the notice required by section 43-104.13 is provided after the birth 17 of the child (a) within at any time during the pregnancy and no later 18 19 than five business days after receipt of the notice provided under 20 section 43-104.12 or (b) within no later than five business days 21 after the last date of any published notice provided under section 43-104.14, whichever notice is earlier. Such notice shall be 22 23 considered to have been filed if it is received by the department or postmarked prior to the end of the fifth business day as provided in 24 25 this section.

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1 Sec. 3. Section 43-245, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2 2013, is amended to read: 3 43-245 For purposes of the Nebraska Juvenile Code, unless 4 the context otherwise requires: 5 (1) Abandonment means a parent's intentionally б withholding from a child, without just cause or excuse, the parent's 7 presence, care, love, protection, and maintenance and the opportunity 8 for the display of parental affection for the child; 9 (1) (2) Age of majority means nineteen years of age; (2) Approved center means a center that has applied 10 for and received approval from the Director of the Office of Dispute 11 12 Resolution under section 25-2909; 13 (3) (4) Civil citation means a noncriminal notice which cannot result in a criminal record and is described in section 14 43-248.02; 15 (4) Cost or costs means (a) the sum or equivalent 16 expended, paid, or charged for goods or services, or expenses 17 incurred, or (b) the contracted or negotiated price; 18 19 (5) (6) Criminal street gang means a group of three or 20 more people with a common identifying name, sign, or symbol whose 21 group identity or purposes include engaging in illegal activities; (6) (7) Criminal street gang member means a person who 22 23 willingly or voluntarily becomes and remains a member of a criminal 24 street gang; 25 (7) (8) Custodian means a nonparental caretaker having

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physical custody of the juvenile and includes an appointee described in section 43-294;

3 (8)-(9) Guardian means a person, other than a parent, who 4 has qualified by law as the guardian of a juvenile pursuant to 5 testamentary or court appointment, but excludes a person who is 6 merely a guardian ad litem;

7 (9) (10) Juvenile means any person under the age of 8 eighteen;

(10) (11) Juvenile court means the separate juvenile 9 court where it has been established pursuant to sections 43-2,111 to 10 43-2,127 and the county court sitting as a juvenile court in all 11 12 other counties. Nothing in the Nebraska Juvenile Code shall be 13 construed to deprive the district courts of their habeas corpus, common-law, or chancery jurisdiction or the county courts and 14 district courts of jurisdiction of domestic relations matters as 15 defined in section 25-2740; 16

17 (11) (12) Juvenile detention facility has the same 18 meaning as in section 83-4,125;

19 (12) (13) Legal custody has the same meaning as in 20 section 43-2922;

21 (13) (14) Mediator for juvenile offender and victim 22 mediation means a person who (a) has completed at least thirty hours 23 of training in conflict resolution techniques, neutrality, agreement 24 writing, and ethics set forth in section 25-2913, (b) has an 25 additional eight hours of juvenile offender and victim mediation

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1 training, and (c) meets the apprenticeship requirements set forth in 2 section 25-2913;

3 (14) (15) Mental health facility means a treatment 4 facility as defined in section 71-914 or a government, private, or 5 state hospital which treats mental illness;

6 (15) (16) Nonoffender means a juvenile who is subject to
7 the jurisdiction of the juvenile court for reasons other than legally
8 prohibited conduct, including, but not limited to, juveniles
9 described in subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247;

(16) (17) Nonsecure 10 detention means detention characterized by the absence of restrictive hardware, construction, 11 12 and procedure. Nonsecure detention services may include a range of 13 placement and supervision options, such as home detention, electronic monitoring, day reporting, drug court, tracking and monitoring 14 15 supervision, staff secure and temporary holdover facilities, and 16 group homes;

17 (17) (18) Parent means one or both parents or stepparents 18 when the stepparent is married to a parent who has physical custody 19 of the juvenile as of the filing of the petition;

20 (18) (19) Parties means the juvenile as described in 21 section 43-247 and his or her parent, guardian, or custodian;

22 (19) (20) Physical custody has the same meaning as in 23 section 43-2922;

24 (20) (21) Except in proceedings under the Nebraska Indian
 25 Child Welfare Act, relative means father, mother, grandfather,

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grandmother, brother, sister, stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, stepsister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, or niece;

3 (21) (22) Seal a record means that a record shall not be
4 available to the public except upon the order of a court upon good
5 cause shown;

6 (22) (23) Secure detention means detention in a highly
7 structured, residential, hardware-secured facility designed to
8 restrict a juvenile's movement;

(23) (24) Staff secure juvenile facility means a juvenile 9 residential facility operated by a political subdivision (a) which 10 does not include construction designed to physically restrict the 11 12 movements and activities of juveniles who are in custody in the 13 facility, (b) in which physical restriction of movement or activity of juveniles is provided solely through staff, (c) which may 14 15 establish reasonable rules restricting ingress to and egress from the 16 facility, and (d) in which the movements and activities of individual juvenile residents may, for treatment purposes, be restricted or 17 18 subject to control through the use of intensive staff supervision. Staff secure juvenile facility does not include any institution 19 20 operated by the department;

21 (24) (25) Status offender means a juvenile who has been 22 charged with or adjudicated for conduct which would not be a crime if 23 committed by an adult, including, but not limited to, juveniles 24 charged under subdivision (3)(b) of section 43-247 and sections 25 53-180.01 and 53-180.02; and

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 $\frac{(25)-(26)}{(26)}$  Traffic offense means any nonfelonious act in violation of a law or ordinance regulating vehicular or pedestrian travel, whether designated a misdemeanor or a traffic infraction.

Sec. 4. Section 43-284.02, Reissue Revised Statutes of
Nebraska, is amended to read:

6 43-284.02 The Department of Health and Human Services may 7 make payments as needed on behalf of a child who has been a ward of 8 the department after the appointment of a guardian for the child. 9 Such payments to the guardian may include maintenance costs, medical and surgical expenses, and other costs incidental to the care of the 10 11 child. All such payments shall terminate on or before the child's 12 nineteenth birthday except as otherwise provided in section 43-4511 13 or 43-4514. The child under guardianship shall be a child for whom 14 the guardianship would not be possible without the financial aid 15 provided under this section.

16 The Department of Health and Human Services shall adopt 17 and promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of this 18 section.

Sec. 5. Section 43-285, Revised Statutes Supplement,
20 2013, is amended to read:

43-285 (1) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the Department of Health and Human Services, an association, or an individual in accordance with the Nebraska Juvenile Code, the juvenile shall, unless otherwise ordered, become a ward and be subject to the <u>guardianship-legal custody and care</u> of the department,

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1 association, or individual to whose care he or she is committed. Any 2 such association and the department shall have authority, by and with 3 the assent of the court, to determine the care, placement, medical 4 services, psychiatric services, training, and expenditures on behalf 5 of each juvenile committed to it. Any such association and the 6 department shall be responsible for applying for any health insurance 7 available to the juvenile, including, but not limited to, medical 8 assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. Such guardianship 9 custody and care shall not include the guardianship of any estate of 10 the juvenile.

(2)(a) This subdivision applies until October 1, 2013. 11 12 Following an adjudication hearing at which a juvenile is adjudged to 13 be under subdivision (3) of section 43-247, the court may order the 14 department to prepare and file with the court a proposed plan for the 15 care, placement, services, and permanency which are to be provided to 16 such juvenile and his or her family. The plan shall include a 17 statement regarding the eligibility of the juvenile for any health 18 insurance, including, but not limited to, medical assistance under 19 the Medical Assistance Act. The health and safety of the juvenile 20 shall be the paramount concern in the proposed plan. When the plan 21 includes the provision of services in order that the juvenile can 22 remain in his or her home and such services are to prevent out-ofhome placement, the plan shall be prepared and shall clearly state 23 24 that the services described in the plan are to prevent placement and 25 that, absent preventive services, foster care is the planned

1 arrangement for the child. The department shall include in the plan 2 for a juvenile who is sixteen years of age or older and subject to 3 the guardianship of the department a written independent living 4 transition proposal which meets the requirements of section 5 43-1311.03 and, for eligible juveniles, the Young Adult Voluntary 6 Services and Support Act. The court may approve the plan, modify the 7 plan, order that an alternative plan be developed, or implement 8 another plan that is in the juvenile's best interests. In its order 9 the court shall include a finding regarding the appropriateness of 10 the programs and services described in the proposal designed to assist the juvenile in acquiring independent living skills. Rules of 11 12 evidence shall not apply at the dispositional hearing when the court 13 considers the plan that has been presented.

14 (b) This subdivision applies beginning October 1, 2013. 15 (2) Following an adjudication hearing at which a juvenile is adjudged to be under subdivision (3)(a) or (c) of section 43-247, the court 16 may order the department to prepare and file with the court a 17 18 proposed plan for the care, placement, services, and permanency which 19 are to be provided to such juvenile and his or her family. The health 20 and safety of the juvenile shall be the paramount concern in the 21 proposed plan. The department shall include in the plan for a juvenile who is sixteen years of age or older and subject to the 22 23 guardianship legal care and custody of the department a written independent living transition proposal which meets the requirements 24 of section 43-1311.03 and, for eligible juveniles, the Young Adult 25

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Voluntary Services and Support Act. The court may approve the plan, 1 2 modify the plan, order that an alternative plan be developed, or implement another plan that is in the juvenile's best interests. In 3 the court 4 its order shall include a finding regarding the 5 appropriateness of the programs and services described in the proposal designed to assist the juvenile in acquiring independent 6 7 living skills. Rules of evidence shall not apply at the dispositional 8 hearing when the court considers the plan that has been presented.

9 (3) Within thirty days after an order awarding a juvenile to the care of the department, an association, or an individual and 10 until the juvenile reaches the age of majority, the department, 11 12 association, or individual shall file with the court a report stating 13 the location of the juvenile's placement and the needs of the juvenile in order to effectuate the purposes of subdivision (1) of 14 section 43-246. The department, association, or individual shall file 15 16 a report with the court once every six months or at shorter intervals if ordered by the court or deemed appropriate by the department, 17 association, or individual. Every six months, the report shall 18 provide an updated statement regarding the eligibility of the 19 20 juvenile for health insurance, including, but not limited to, medical assistance under the Medical Assistance Act. 21 The department, association, or individual shall file a report and notice of 22 23 placement change with the court and shall send copies of the notice to all interested parties at least seven days before the placement of 24 25 the juvenile is changed from what the court originally considered to

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be a suitable family home or institution to some other custodial 1 2 situation in order to effectuate the purposes of subdivision (1) of 3 section 43-246. The court, on its own motion or upon the filing of an objection to the change by an interested party, may order a hearing 4 5 to review such a change in placement and may order that the change be stayed until the completion of the hearing. Nothing in this section 6 shall prevent the court on an ex parte basis from approving an 7 8 immediate change in placement upon good cause shown. The department 9 may make an immediate change in placement without court approval only if the juvenile is in a harmful or dangerous situation or when the 10 11 foster parents request that the juvenile be removed from their home. 12 Approval of the court shall be sought within twenty-four hours after 13 making the change in placement or as soon thereafter as possible. The 14 department shall provide the juvenile's guardian ad litem with a copy of any report filed with the court by the department pursuant to this 15 16 subsection.

17 (4) The court shall also hold a permanency hearing if18 required under section 43-1312.

19 (5) When the court awards a juvenile to the care of the 20 department, an association, or an individual, then the department, 21 association, or individual shall have standing as a party to file any 22 pleading or motion, to be heard by the court with regard to such 23 filings, and to be granted any review or relief requested in such 24 filings consistent with the Nebraska Juvenile Code.

25 (6) Whenever a juvenile is in a foster care placement as

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1 defined in section 43-1301, the Foster Care Review Office or the 2 designated local foster care review board may participate in 3 proceedings concerning the juvenile as provided in section 43-1313 4 and notice shall be given as provided in section 43-1314.

5 (7) Any written findings or recommendations of the Foster 6 Care Review Office or the designated local foster care review board 7 with regard to a juvenile in a foster care placement submitted to a 8 court having jurisdiction over such juvenile shall be admissible in 9 any proceeding concerning such juvenile if such findings or 10 recommendations have been provided to all other parties of record.

(8) The executive director and any agent or employee of the Foster Care Review Office or any member of any local foster care review board participating in an investigation or making any report pursuant to the Foster Care Review Act or participating in a judicial proceeding pursuant to this section shall be immune from any civil liability that would otherwise be incurred except for false statements negligently made.

18 Sec. 6. Section 43-905, Revised Statutes Supplement,
19 2013, is amended to read:

43-905 (1) The Department of Health and Human Services shall be the legal guardian have legal custody of all children committed to it. The department shall afford temporary care and shall use special diligence to provide suitable homes for such children. The department shall make reasonable efforts to accomplish jointsibling placement or sibling visitation or ongoing interaction

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between siblings as provided in section 43-1311.02. The department is authorized to place such children in suitable families for adoption, foster care, or guardianship or, in the discretion of the department, on a written contract.

5 (2) The contract shall provide (a) for the children's 6 education in the public schools or otherwise, (b) for teaching them 7 some useful occupation, and (c) for kind and proper treatment as 8 members of the family in which they are placed.

9 (3) Whenever any child who has been committed to the department becomes self-supporting, the department shall declare that 10 fact and the guardianship legal custody and care of the department 11 12 shall cease. Thereafter the child shall be entitled to his or her own 13 earnings. Guardianship Legal custody and care of and services by the department shall never extend beyond the age of majority, except that 14 15 (a) services by the department to a child shall continue until the child reaches the age of twenty-one if the child is a student 16 regularly attending a school, college, or university or regularly 17 attending a course of vocational or technical training designed to 18 prepare such child for gainful employment or the child receives 19 20 extended services and support as provided in the Young Adult Voluntary Services and Support Act and (b) beginning January 1, 2014, 21 coverage for health care and related services under medical 22 23 assistance in accordance with section 68-911 may be extended as provided under the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care 24 Act, 42 U.S.C. 1396a(a)(10)(A)(i)(IX), as such act and section 25

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existed on January 1, 2013, for medicaid coverage for individuals
 under twenty-six years of age as allowed pursuant to such act.

3 (4) Whenever the parents of any ward, whose parental 4 rights have not been terminated, have become able to support and 5 educate their child, the department shall restore the child to his or 6 her parents if the home of such parents would be a suitable home. The 7 guardianship\_legal custody and care\_of the department shall then 8 cease.

9 (5) Whenever permanent free homes for the children cannot 10 be obtained, the department shall have the authority to may provide 11 subsidies to adoptive and guardianship families subject to a hearing 12 and court approval. The department may also provide and pay for the 13 maintenance of the children in private families, in foster care, in 14 guardianship, in boarding homes, or in institutions for care of 15 children.

Sec. 7. Section 71-824, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

71-824 No later than January 1, 2010, the department 18 shall provide post-adoption and post-guardianship case management 19 20 services for adoptive and guardianship families of former state wards 21 on a voluntary basis. The department shall notify adoptive parents and guardians of the availability of such services and the process to 22 23 access such services and that such services are provided on a voluntary basis. Notification shall be in writing and shall be 24 provided at the time of finalization of the adoption agreement or 25

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1	completion of the guardianship and each six months thereafter until
2	dissolution of the adoption, until termination of the guardianship,
3	$\overline{\text{or}}$ -until the former state ward attains nineteen years of age, $\overline{\text{or}}$
4	until extended guardianship assistance payments are terminated
5	pursuant to section 43-4511 or 43-4514, whichever is earlier. Post-
6	adoption and post-guardianship case management services under this
7	section shall be administered by the Division of Children and Family
8	Services and shall be evaluated. The evaluation shall include, but
9	not be limited to, the number and percentage of persons receiving
10	such services and the degree of problem resolution reported by
11	families receiving such services.
12	Sec. 8. <u>(1) If the permanency plan for a child</u>
13	established pursuant to section 43-1312 does not recommend return of
14	the child to his or her parent or that the child be placed for
15	adoption, the juvenile court may place the child in a guardianship in
16	<u>a relative home as defined in section 71-1901, a kinship home as</u>
17	defined in section 71-1901, or with an individual as provided in
18	<u>section 43-285 if:</u>
19	<u>(a) The child is a juvenile who has been adjudged to be</u>
20	under subdivision (3)(a) of section 43-247;
21	(b) The child has been in the placement for at least six
22	months;
23	(c) The child consents to the guardianship, if the child
24	is ten years of age or older; and
25	(d) The guardian:

1	(i) Is suitable and able to provide a safe and permanent
2	home for the child;
3	(ii) Has made a commitment to provide for the financial,
4	medical, physical, and emotional needs of the child until the child
5	reaches the age of majority or until the termination of extended
6	guardianship assistance payments pursuant to section 43-4511 or
7	<u>43-4514;</u>
8	(iii) Has made a commitment to prepare the child for
9	adulthood and independence; and
10	(iv) Agrees to give notice of any changes in his or her
11	residential address or the residence of the child by filing a written
12	document in the juvenile court file of the child.
13	(2) In the order granting guardianship, the juvenile
14	<u>court:</u>
15	(a) Shall grant to the guardian such powers, rights, and
16	duties with respect to the care, maintenance, and treatment of the
17	child as the biological or adoptive parent of the child would have;
18	(b) May specify the frequency and nature of family time
19	or contact between the child and his or her parents, if appropriate;
20	(c) May specify the frequency and nature of family time
21	or contact between the child and his or her siblings, if appropriate;
22	and
23	(d) Shall require that the guardian not return the child
24	to the physical care and custody of the person from whom the child
25	was removed without prior approval of the court.

1	(3) The juvenile court shall retain jurisdiction over the
2	child for modification or termination of the guardianship order. The
3	court shall discontinue permanency reviews and case reviews and shall
4	relieve the Department of Health and Human Services of the
5	responsibility of supervising the placement of the child.
6	Notwithstanding the retention of juvenile court jurisdiction, the
7	guardianship placement shall be considered permanent for the child.
8	(4) The child shall remain in the custody of the guardian
9	unless the order creating the guardianship is modified by the court.
10	(5) Guardianships established under this section shall
11	terminate on the child's nineteenth birthday unless the child is
12	eligible for continued guardianship assistance payments under section
13	43-4511 or 43-4514 and an agreement is signed by the Department of
14	Health and Human Services and the guardian to continue the
15	guardianship assistance.
16	(6) Upon the child's nineteenth birthday regardless of
17	the existence of an agreement to extend the guardianship until the
18	child's twenty-first birthday, the guardian shall no longer have the
19	legal authority to make decisions on behalf of the child and shall
20	have no more authority over the person or property of the child than
21	a biological or adoptive parent would have over his or her child,
22	absent consent from the child.
23	(7) A guardianship established under this section does
24	not terminate the parent-child relationship, including:
25	(a) The right of the child to inherit from his or her

1	parents;
2	(b) The right of the biological parents' to consent to
3	the child's adoption; and
4	(c) The responsibility of the parents to provide
5	financial, medical, or other support as ordered by the court.
6	(8) The Department of Health and Human Services shall
7	adopt and promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of
8	this section.
9	Sec. 9. Section 43-1318, Revised Statutes Cumulative
10	Supplement, 2012, is amended to read:
11	43-1318 Sections 43-1301 to 43-1318 43-1321 and section 8
12	of this act shall be known and may be cited as the Foster Care Review
13	Act.
14	Sec. 10. Original sections 30-2608, 43-104.02, 43-284.02,
15	and 71-824, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, section 43-1318,
16	Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2012, and sections 43-245,
17	43-285, and 43-905, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2013, are repealed.