

E AND R AMENDMENTS TO LB 243

Introduced by Hansen, 26, Chairman Enrollment and Review

1           1. Strike the original sections and all amendments thereto and  
2 insert the following new sections:

3           Section 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to:

4           (1) Promote kinship care and lifelong connections through the  
5 process of family finding when a child has been removed from the legal  
6 custody of the child's parents;

7           (2) Prevent recurrence of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other  
8 maltreatment of children;

9           (3) Reduce the length of time children spend in foster care;

10          (4) Reduce multiple placements of children in foster care;

11          (5) Remain in compliance with the federal Fostering Connections to  
12 Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, Public Law 110-351; and

13          (6) Create a pilot project for the process of locating and engaging  
14 family members in the life of a child who is a ward of the state or is  
15 participating in the bridge to independence program as defined in section  
16 43-4503, or both and in need of permanency through a lifelong network of  
17 support.

18          Sec. 2. For purposes of sections 1 to 9 of this act:

19          (1) Department means the Department of Health and Human Services;

20          (2) Family finding means the process described in section 3 of this  
21 act;

22          (3) Family member means:

23          (a) A person related to a child by blood, adoption, or affinity  
24 within the fifth degree of kinship;

25          (b) A stepparent;

26          (c) A stepsibling;

27          (d) The spouse, widow, widower, former spouse, or domestic partner

1 of any of the persons described in subdivisions (a) through (c) of this  
2 subdivision; and

3 (e) Fictive kin;

4 (4) Fictive kin means an individual, unrelated by birth or marriage  
5 to a child, who has an emotionally significant relationship with the  
6 child that takes on the characteristics of a family relationship;

7 (5) Provider means an organization providing services as a child-  
8 placing agency; and

9 (6) Service area means a geographic area administered by the  
10 department and designated pursuant to section 81-3116.

11 Sec. 3. The department, its contracted providers of family finding  
12 services, and family members of children involved in cases which are part  
13 of the pilot project created in section 4 of this act shall participate  
14 in family finding. Family finding is the process of engagement,  
15 searching, preparation, planning, decisionmaking, lifetime network  
16 creation, healing, and permanency in order to:

17 (1) Search for and identify family members and engage them in  
18 planning and decisionmaking;

19 (2) Gain commitments from family members to support a child through  
20 nurturing relationships and to support the parent or parents, when  
21 appropriate; and

22 (3) Achieve a safe, permanent legal home or lifelong connection for  
23 the child, either through reunification or through permanent placement  
24 through legal guardianship or adoption.

25 Sec. 4. A pilot project is created to provide family finding  
26 services within at least two service areas. The department shall contract  
27 with providers of family finding services or the case management lead  
28 agency pilot project authorized under section 68-1212 to carry out the  
29 family finding services pilot project. A provider may contract within  
30 multiple service areas. Each contracting provider shall be trained in and  
31 implement the steps described in section 3 of this act. The family

1 finding services pilot project shall terminate on June 30, 2019.

2       Sec. 5. (1) Under the pilot project created under section 4 of this  
3 act, the department shall refer a portion of all cases involving children  
4 who are wards of the state in foster care or participating in the bridge  
5 to independence program as defined in section 43-4503, or both to  
6 providers of family finding services who or which shall (a) locate family  
7 members of the children, (b) engage and empower family members, and (c)  
8 create an individualized plan to achieve a safe, permanent legal home for  
9 the children when possible.

10       (2) The department shall provide administrative oversight of the  
11 contracts entered into pursuant to the pilot program created under  
12 section 4 of this act.

13       (3) A child's departmental case manager, the child's foster parents,  
14 and the provider of family finding services shall collaborate together to  
15 maximize success throughout the family finding process.

16       (4) The department shall carry out the requirements of the  
17 Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children when achieving out-of-  
18 state placement of a ward of the court, including prompt submission of  
19 required paperwork to ensure that the family finding process moves  
20 forward in a timely manner.

21       Sec. 6. It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate one  
22 million five hundred thousand dollars from the General Fund for each of  
23 fiscal years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, to the department  
24 which shall pursue federal matching funds as applicable and allocate such  
25 funds to contracting providers of family finding services who or which  
26 shall use such funds to (1) provide family finding services pursuant to  
27 contracts with the department, (2) create and coordinate training  
28 initiatives for departmental case managers assigned to cases referred for  
29 family finding services to promote provider and family engagement and to  
30 train case managers on the principles of family finding services for  
31 successful outcomes, and (3) provide contract monitoring and oversight of

1 the pilot project and pay evaluation costs.

2       Sec. 7. The department shall establish a data collection system and  
3 collect data from participating providers annually. Such data shall be  
4 divided by service area and shall include (1) the number of participating  
5 children and youth, (2) the ages of the participating children and youth,  
6 (3) the duration of each case, and (4) case outcomes, including  
7 permanency, guardianship, and family support. Data involving incomplete  
8 cases shall be included and identified as such.

9       Sec. 8. The department shall contract with an academic institution  
10 to complete an independent evaluation of the pilot project created under  
11 section 4 of this act. The evaluation shall assess the effectiveness of  
12 the pilot project in achieving the purposes described in section 1 of  
13 this act and the overall fiscal impact. The evaluation shall begin after  
14 completion of the second year of the pilot project and shall be completed  
15 in the third year of the pilot project. The department shall  
16 electronically transmit the evaluation to the Health and Human Services  
17 Committee of the Legislature.

18       Sec. 9. The department may adopt and promulgate rules and  
19 regulations to carry out sections 1 to 8 of this act.