

Human Services and Children and Domestic Matters

“The General Assembly addressed a number of bills related to human services and various children and domestic matters, including the establishment and preservation of “family time” and improving services offered to children and youth.”

Family Time for System Involved Children and Youth

[House Bill 23-1027](#) changes the term “visitation” to “family time” and defines “family time” as any contact with relatives, legal custodians, or guardians that preserves and strengthens family ties. The bill also establishes new requirements for dependency and neglect cases including:

- requiring county departments of human services to encourage maximum family time;
- creating a presumption that supervised family time is supervised by relatives, kin, foster parents, or other supports from the community; and
- limiting the court’s ability to restrict or deny family time.

It also extends the Task Force on High-Quality Parenting Time, and instructs the task force to conduct and evaluate a statewide study on the strengths and needs for family time.

Under previous law, grandparents and great-grandparents could seek a court order for visitation rights in child custody cases or in cases that concern the allocation of parental responsibilities. Like House Bill 23-1027, [House Bill 23-1026](#) changes the term “visitation” to “family time” and allows courts to appoint a legal representative to the children involved in these cases. It also instructs the court to presume that what parents decide is appropriate family time for grandparents or great-grandparents is in the best interests of the child. A grandparent or great-grandparent can seek to overturn this presumption with clear and convincing evidence.

[House Bill 23-1024](#) enacts several measures related to children or youth who have been temporarily placed outside the home. The bill does this by:

- requiring county departments to assist relatives in obtaining resources to care for a child or youth placed with them;
- updating the notification process for relatives or kin when a child or youth is removed from a child or youth’s home;



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requiring caseworkers to document their efforts to place a child or youth with a relative;

- instructing the courts to prioritize placements with relative or kin;
- provide reasoning when placement with relative or kin is denied;
- allowing the courts to provide a prospective relative or kin with information on the child's needs; and
- allowing foster parents who have had a child or youth in their care for 12 or more months to provide information about the care and protection of the child or youth.

[House Bill 23-1043](#) further emphasizes kin or relative placements by modifying the criminal offenses that may result in a denial of placement with relatives or kin and allows a county department of human services to make an exception and place the child or youth with a disqualified relative or kin. It also defines what criminal offenses are grounds for disqualifying a relative or kin placement.

Improving Services Offered to Children and Youth

[Senate Bill 23-082](#) establishes the Colorado Fostering Success Voucher Program. This program provides housing vouchers and case management services to youth between ages 18 and 26 who have experiences in foster or kinship care and are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

[House Bill 23-1269](#) enacts several measures to better understand and provide for the behavioral health needs of children and youth, including:

- requiring Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to analyze the use of directed payment authority and fee schedules to ensure adequate services are available for children and youth with behavioral health needs;
- requiring Department of Human Services (DHS) to convene a working group to develop an incentive funding pool pilot program to encourage residential providers to treat children and youth with behavioral health needs;
- requiring the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) to develop a framework that measures the effectiveness of the behavioral health system for children and youth;
- requiring hospitals and county departments to report certain data on children and youth quarterly to the BHA;
- requiring DHS to develop a plan for when residential treatment facilities for children and youth close or change their operations; and
- creating the High-Acuity Treatment and Services Cash Fund to provide additional resources to licensed providers serving children and youth with behavioral and mental health needs.

[House Bill 23-1249](#) requires local collaborative management programs (CMPs) to create one or more individualized services and support teams and allows those teams to refer a child to services. A CMP coordinates with the



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necessary agencies to provide supportive services to children. Support services can include educational assistance, mental and physical health care, and food assistance. Under the bill, DHS must create a model information form to allow other entities to refer a child to a CMP. The bill also removes incentive funding for CMPs and requires the General Assembly to appropriate money to the Collaborative Management Cash Fund to serve children who are in need of services.

