

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1997 SESSION

S.L. 1997-390
HOUSE BILL 896

AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW PERTAINING TO THE CUSTODY AND PLACEMENT OF JUVENILES TO ENHANCE THE STATE'S ABILITY TO ENSURE THAT JUVENILES ARE PLACED IN A SAFE, PERMANENT HOME WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME, TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES TO ASSUME CONTROL OF DELIVERY OF COUNTY CHILD WELFARE SERVICES UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, AND TO ESTABLISH THE LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 7A-289.32(3) reads as rewritten:

"(3) The parent has willfully left the child in foster care for more than 12 months without showing to the satisfaction of the court that reasonable progress under the circumstances has been made within 12 months in correcting those conditions which led to the removal of the child. ~~child or without showing positive response within 12 months to the diligent efforts of a county Department of Social Services, a child-caring institution or licensed child-placing agency to encourage the parent to strengthen the parental relationship to the child or to make and follow through with constructive planning for the future of the child.~~ Provided, however, that no parental rights shall be terminated for the sole reason that the parents are unable to care for the child on account of their poverty."

Section 2. G.S. 7A-289.32(7) reads as rewritten:

"(7) That the parent is incapable ~~as a result of mental retardation, mental illness, organic brain syndrome, or any other degenerative mental condition~~ of providing for the proper care and supervision of the child, such that the child is a dependent child within the meaning of G.S. 7A-517(13), and that there is a reasonable probability that such incapability will continue ~~throughout the minority of the child.~~ for the foreseeable future. Incapability under this subdivision may be the result of substance abuse, mental retardation, mental illness, organic brain syndrome, or any other similar cause or condition."

Section 3. G.S. 7A-517 is amended by adding the following new subdivisions to read:

"(25a) 'Reasonable efforts'. – The diligent use of preventive or reunification services by a department of social services when a juvenile's remaining at home or returning home is consistent with achieving a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time.

(25b) 'Safe home'. – A home in which the child is not at substantial risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect."

Section 3.1. G.S. 7A-544 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7A-544. Investigation by Director; access to confidential information; notification of person making the report.

When a report of abuse, neglect, or dependency is received, the Director of the Department of Social Services shall make a prompt and thorough investigation in order to ascertain the facts of the case, the extent of the abuse or neglect, and the risk of harm to the juvenile, in order to determine whether protective services should be provided or the complaint filed as a petition. When the report alleges abuse, the Director shall immediately, but no later than 24 hours after receipt of the report, initiate the investigation. When the report alleges neglect or dependency, the Director shall initiate the investigation within 72 hours following receipt of the report. The investigation and evaluation shall include a visit to the place where the juvenile resides. All information received by the Department of Social Services, including the identity of the reporter, shall be held in strictest confidence by the Department.

~~When a report of a juvenile's death as a result of suspected maltreatment abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile~~ is received, the Director of the Department of Social Services shall immediately ascertain if other juveniles remain in the home, and, if so, initiate an investigation in order to determine whether they require protective services or whether immediate removal of the juveniles from the home is necessary for their protection.

If the investigation indicates that abuse, neglect, or dependency has occurred, the Director shall decide whether immediate removal of the juvenile or any other juveniles in the home is necessary for their protection. If immediate removal does not seem necessary, the Director shall immediately provide or arrange for protective services. If the parent or other caretaker refuses to accept the protective services provided or arranged by the Director, the Director shall sign a complaint seeking to invoke the jurisdiction of the court for the protection of the juvenile or juveniles.

If immediate removal seems necessary for the protection of the juvenile or other juveniles in the home, the Director shall sign a complaint which alleges the applicable facts to invoke the jurisdiction of the court. Where the investigation shows that it is warranted, a protective services worker may assume temporary custody of the juvenile for the juvenile's protection pursuant to Article 46 of this Chapter.

In performing any duties related to the investigation of the complaint or the provision or arrangement for protective services, the Director may consult with any public or private agencies or individuals, including the available State or local law-enforcement officers who shall assist in the investigation and evaluation of the seriousness of any report of abuse, neglect, or dependency when requested by the Director. The Director or the Director's representative may make a written demand for

any information or reports, whether or not confidential, that may in the Director's opinion be relevant to the investigation of or the provision for protective services. Upon the Director's or the Director's representative's request and unless protected by the attorney-client privilege, any public or private agency or individual shall provide access to and copies of this confidential information and these records to the extent permitted by federal law and regulations. If a custodian of criminal investigative information or records believes that release of the information will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek an order from a court of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information. In such an action, the custodian of the records shall have the burden of showing by a preponderance of the evidence that disclosure of the information in question will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought pursuant to this paragraph shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in the actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

Within five working days after receipt of the report of abuse, neglect, or dependency, the Director shall give written notice to the person making the report, unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether the report was accepted for investigation and whether the report was referred to the appropriate State or local law enforcement agency.

Within five working days after completion of the protective services investigation, the Director shall give subsequent written notice to the person making the report, unless requested by that person not to give notice, as to whether there is a finding of abuse, neglect, or dependency, whether the county Department of Social Services is taking action to protect the juvenile, and what action it is taking, including whether or not a petition was filed. The person making the report shall be informed of procedures necessary to request a review by the prosecutor of the Director's decision not to file a petition. A request for review by the prosecutor shall be made within five working days of receipt of the second notification. The second notification shall include notice that, if the person making the report is not satisfied with the Director's decision, he may request review of the decision by the prosecutor within five working days of receipt. The person making the report may waive the person's right to this notification and no notification is required if the person making the report does not identify himself to the Director."

Section 3.2. G.S. 7A-517(21) reads as rewritten:

"(21) Neglected Juvenile. – A juvenile who does not receive proper care, supervision, or discipline from the juvenile's parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker; or who has been abandoned; or who is not provided necessary medical care; or who is not provided necessary remedial care; or who lives in an environment injurious to the juvenile's welfare; or who has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law. In determining whether a juvenile is a neglected juvenile, it is relevant whether that juvenile lives in a home where another juvenile has ~~died as a result of abuse or neglect or lives in a~~

~~home where another juvenile has been subjected to sexual abuse or severe physical abuse or neglect by an adult who regularly lives in the home."~~

Section 4. G.S. 7A-576 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7A-576. Place of secure or nonsecure custody.

(a) A juvenile meeting the criteria set out in G.S. 7A-574, subsection (a), may be placed in nonsecure custody with the Department of Social Services or a person designated in the order for temporary residential placement in:

- (1) A licensed foster home or a home otherwise authorized by law to provide such care or
- (2) A facility operated by the Department of Social Services or
- (3) Any other home or facility approved by the court and designated in the order.

In placing a juvenile in nonsecure custody under this section and under G.S. 7A-629 and G.S. 7A-651, the court shall first consider whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision in a safe home, then the court shall order placement of the juvenile with the relative. Prior to placement of a juvenile with a relative outside of this State, the placement must be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

(b) A juvenile meeting the criteria set out in G.S. 7A-574(b) may be temporarily detained in an approved county detention home or a regional detention facility which shall be separate from any jail, lockup, prison, or other adult penal institution. It shall be unlawful for a county or any unit of government to operate a juvenile detention home unless the facility meets the standards promulgated by the Department of Human Resources."

Section 5. G.S. 7A-577(h) reads as rewritten:

"(h) Any order authorizing the continued nonsecure custody of a juvenile who is alleged to be abused, neglected, or dependent shall include findings as to whether reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for placement of the juvenile in custody and may provide for services or other efforts aimed at returning the juvenile ~~home promptly. promptly to a safe home.~~ A finding that reasonable efforts have not been made to prevent or eliminate the need for placement shall not preclude the entry of an order authorizing continued nonsecure custody when the court finds that continued nonsecure custody is necessary for the protection of the juvenile. Where efforts to prevent the need for the juvenile's placement were precluded by an immediate threat of harm to the juvenile, the court may find that the placement of the juvenile in the absence of such efforts was reasonable. If the court finds through written findings of fact that efforts to eliminate the need for placement of the juvenile in custody clearly would be futile or would be inconsistent with the juvenile's safety and need for a safe, permanent home within a reasonable period of time, then the court shall specify in its order that reunification efforts are not required or order that reunification efforts cease."

Section 6. G.S. 7A-577 is amended by adding the following new subsection to read:

"(i) At each hearing to determine the need for continued nonsecure custody, the court shall:

- (1) Inquire as to the identity and location of any missing parent. The court shall include findings as to the efforts undertaken to locate the missing parent and to serve that parent. The order may provide for specific efforts aimed at determining the identity and location of any missing parent;
- (2) Inquire as to whether a relative of the juvenile is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision of the juvenile in a safe home. If the court finds that the relative is willing and able to provide proper care and supervision in a safe home, then the court shall order temporary placement of the juvenile with the relative. Prior to placement of a juvenile with a relative outside of this State, the placement must be in accordance with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children; and
- (3) Inquire as to whether there are other juveniles remaining in the home from which the juvenile was removed and, if there are, inquire as to the specific findings of the investigation conducted under G.S. 7A-544 and any actions taken or services provided by the Director for the protection of the other juveniles."

Section 7. G.S. 7A-585 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7A-585. Appointment of guardian.

In any case when no parent appears in a hearing with the juvenile or when the judge finds it would be in the best interest of the juvenile, the judge may appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile. The guardian shall operate under the supervision of the court with or without bond and shall file only such reports as the court shall require. The guardian shall have the care, custody, and control of the juvenile or may arrange a suitable placement for ~~him~~ the juvenile and may represent the juvenile in legal actions before any court. ~~The guardian shall also have authority to~~ may consent to certain actions on the part of the juvenile in place of the parent including (i) marriage, (ii) enlisting in the armed forces, and (iii) ~~undergoing major surgery.~~ enrollment in school. The guardian may also consent to any necessary remedial, psychological, medical, or surgical treatment for the juvenile. The authority of the guardian shall continue until the guardianship is terminated by court order, until the juvenile is emancipated pursuant to Article ~~56, 56~~ of this Chapter, or until the juvenile reaches the age of majority."

Section 8. G.S. 7A-651(c) reads as rewritten:

- "(c) Any order directing placement of a juvenile in foster care shall also contain:
- (1) A finding that the juvenile's continuation in or return to his own home would be contrary to the juvenile's best interest; and
 - (2) Findings as to whether reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for placement of the juvenile in foster care. A finding that reasonable efforts were not made ~~to prevent or eliminate~~

~~the need for placement~~ shall not preclude entry of a dispositional order authorizing placement in foster care when the court finds that such placement is needed for protection of the juvenile. When efforts to prevent the need for the juvenile's placement are precluded by an immediate threat of harm to the juvenile, the court may find that placement of the juvenile in the absence of such efforts is reasonable.

The order may provide for services or other efforts aimed at returning the juvenile promptly to a safe home. If the court finds through written findings of fact that efforts to eliminate the need for placement of the juvenile in custody clearly would be futile or would be inconsistent with the juvenile's safety and need for a safe, permanent home within a reasonable period of time, the court shall specify in its order that reunification efforts are not required or order that reunification efforts cease."

Section 9. G.S. 7A-657 reads as rewritten:

"§ 7A-657. Review of custody order.

(a) ~~In any case where the judge removes custody from a parent or person standing in loco parentis because of dependency, neglect or abuse, the juvenile shall not be returned to the parent or person standing in loco parentis unless the judge finds sufficient facts to show that the juvenile will receive proper care and supervision.~~ In any case where custody is removed from a parent, the judge shall conduct a review within six months of the date the order was entered, shall conduct a second review within six months after the first review, and shall conduct subsequent reviews at least every year thereafter. The Director of Social Services shall make timely requests to the clerk to calendar the case at a session of court scheduled for the hearing of juvenile matters within six months of the date the order was entered. The Director shall make timely requests for calendaring ~~of the yearly reviews thereafter.~~ subsequent reviews. The clerk shall give 15 days' notice of the review to the parent or the person standing in loco parentis, the juvenile if 12 years of age or more, the guardian, foster parent, custodian or agency with custody, the guardian ad litem, and any other person the court may specify, indicating the court's impending review.

(b) Notwithstanding other provisions of this Article, the court may waive the holding of review hearings required by subsection (a), may require written reports to the court by the agency or person holding custody in lieu of review hearings, or order that review hearings be held less often than every 12 months, if the court finds by clear, cogent and convincing evidence that:

- (1) The juvenile has ~~been placed~~ resided with a relative or has been in the custody of another suitable person for a ~~continuous~~ period of at least one year; and
- (2) The placement is stable and continuation of the placement is in the juvenile's best interest; and
- (3) Neither the juvenile's best interests nor the rights of any party require that review hearings be held every 12 months; and
- (4) All parties are aware that the matter may be brought before the court for review at any time by the filing of a motion for review or on the court's own motion; and

- (5) The court order has designated the relative or other suitable person as the juvenile's permanent caretaker or guardian of the person. at the review at which these findings are made.

The court may not waive or refuse to conduct a review hearing if a party files a motion seeking the review.

(c) At every review hearing, the court shall consider information from the Department of Social Services, the court counselor, the juvenile, the parent or person standing in loco parentis, the custodian, the foster parent, the guardian ad litem, and any public or private agency which will aid it in its review.

In each case the court shall consider the following ~~criteria:~~ criteria and make written findings regarding those that are relevant:

- (1) Services which have been offered to reunite the ~~family;~~ family, or whether efforts to reunite the family clearly would be futile or inconsistent with the juvenile's safety and need for a safe, permanent home within a reasonable period of time;
- (2) Where the juvenile's return home is unlikely, the efforts which have been made to evaluate or plan for other methods of care;
- (3) Goals of the foster care placement and the appropriateness of the foster care plan;
- (4) A new foster care plan, if continuation of care is sought, that addresses the role the current foster parent will play in the planning for the juvenile;
- (5) Reports on the placements the juvenile has had and any services offered to the juvenile and the parent;
- (6) When and if termination of parental rights should be considered;
- (7) Any other criteria the court deems necessary.

(d) The judge, after making findings of fact, ~~shall have authority to~~ may appoint a guardian of the person for the juvenile pursuant to G.S. 7A-585 or may make any disposition authorized by G.S. 7A-647, including the authority to place the child in the custody of either parent or any relative found by the court to be suitable and found by the court to be in the best interest of the juvenile. If the juvenile is placed in or remains in the custody of the department of social services, the court may authorize the department to arrange and supervise a visitation plan. Except for such visitation, the juvenile shall not be returned to the parent or person standing in loco parentis without a hearing at which the court finds sufficient facts to show that the juvenile will receive proper care and supervision. The court may enter an order continuing the placement under review or providing for a different placement as is deemed to be in the best interest of the juvenile. If at any time custody is restored to a parent, the court shall be relieved of the duty to conduct periodic judicial reviews of the placement.

(d1) At a hearing designated by the court, but at least within 12 months after the juvenile's placement, a review hearing shall be held under this section and designated as a permanency planning hearing. The purpose of the hearing shall be to develop a plan to achieve a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time. Notice of the hearing shall inform the parties of the purpose of the hearing. At the

conclusion of the hearing, if the juvenile is not returned home, the judge shall make specific findings as to the best plan of care to achieve a safe, permanent home for the juvenile within a reasonable period of time and shall enter an order consistent with those findings.

(e) The provisions of subsections (b), (c), and (d) of G.S. 7A-651 shall apply to any order entered under this section which continues the foster care placement of a juvenile."

Section 10. Article 3 of Chapter 108A of the General Statutes is amended by adding the following new section to read:

"§ 108A-74. County department failure to provide services; State intervention in or control of service delivery.

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the Secretary of Human Resources may take action in accordance with this section to ensure the delivery of child welfare services in accordance with State laws and applicable rules. As used in this section, the terms:

- (1) 'County department of social services' also means the consolidated human services agency, whichever applies;
- (2) 'County director of social services' also means the human services director, whichever applies; and
- (3) 'County board of social services' also means the consolidated human services board, whichever applies.

(b) If the Secretary of Human Resources determines that a county department of social services is not providing child protective services, foster care services, or adoption services in accordance with State law and with applicable rules adopted by the Social Services Commission, or fails to demonstrate reasonable efforts to do so, then the Secretary, after providing written notification of intent to the county director of social services, to the chair of the county board of commissioners, and to the chair of the county board of social services, and after providing them with an opportunity to be heard, may intervene in the particular service or services in question. Intervention includes, but is not limited to, the following activities:

- (1) Sending staff of the Department of Human Resources to the county department of social services to provide technical assistance and to monitor the services being provided;
- (2) Establishing a corrective plan of action to correct inappropriate policies and procedures; and
- (3) Advising county personnel as to appropriate policies and procedures.

If within 60 days of completion of the intervention activities, the Secretary finds that the county department of social services is not providing in accordance with State laws and applicable rules the particular service or services for which intervention was initiated, or has not demonstrated reasonable efforts to do so, the Secretary shall withhold State and federal child welfare services administrative funds until the particular service or services are provided in accordance with State laws and applicable rules.

(c) If the Secretary determines that a county department of social services is not providing child protective, foster care, or adoption services in accordance with State law and with applicable rules adopted by the Social Services Commission, or fails to demonstrate reasonable efforts to do so, and the failure to provide the services poses a substantial threat to the safety and welfare of children in the county who receive or are eligible to receive the services, then the Secretary, after providing written notification of intent to the chair of the county board of commissioners, to the chair of the county board of social services, and to the county director of social services, and after providing them with an opportunity to be heard, shall withhold funding for the particular service or services in question and shall ensure the provision of these services through contracts with public or private agencies or by direct operation by the Department of Human Resources.

(d) In the event that the Secretary assumes control of service delivery pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, the county director of social services shall be divested of all service delivery powers conferred upon the director by G.S. 108A-14 and other applicable State law as the powers pertain to the services in question. Upon assumption of control of service delivery, the Secretary may assign any of the powers and duties of the county director of social services to the Director of the Division of Social Services of the Department of Human Resources or to a contractor as the Secretary deems necessary and appropriate to continue the provision of the services in the county.

(e) In the event the Secretary takes action under this section, the Department of Human Resources shall, in conjunction with the county board of commissioners, the county board of social services, and the county director of social services develop and implement a corrective plan of action. The Department of Human Resources shall also keep the chair of the county board of commissioners, the chair of the county board of social services, and the county director of social services informed of any ongoing concerns or problems with the delivery of the services in question.

(f) Upon the Secretary taking action pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, county funding of the services in question shall continue and at no time during the period of time that the Secretary is taking action shall a county withdraw funds previously obligated or appropriated for the services. Upon the Secretary's assumption of the control of service delivery, the county shall also pay the nonfederal share of any additional cost that may be incurred to operate the services in question at the level necessary to comply fully with State law and Social Services Commission rules.

(g) During the period of time that the Secretary is taking action pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, the Department of Human Resources shall work with the county board of commissioners, the county board of social services, and the county director of social services, to enable service delivery to be returned to the county if and when the Secretary has determined that services can be provided by the county in accordance with State law and applicable rules."

Section 11. Chapter 120 of the General Statutes is amended by adding the following new Article to read:

"ARTICLE 24.

"The Legislative Study Commission on Children and Youth.

"§ 120-208. Commission created; purpose.

There is created the Legislative Study Commission on Children and Youth. The purpose of the Commission is to study and evaluate the system of delivery of services to children and youth and to make recommendations to improve service delivery to meet present and future needs of the children and youth of this State. This study shall be a continuing one and the evaluation ongoing.

"§ 120-209. Commission duties.

The Commission shall have the following duties:

- (1) Study the needs of children and youth. This study shall include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Determining the adequacy and appropriateness of services:
 1. To children and youth receiving child welfare services;
 2. To children and youth in the juvenile court system; and
 3. Provided by the Division of Social Services and the Division of Youth Services of the Department of Human Resources.
 - b. Developing methods for identifying and providing services to children and youth not receiving but in need of child welfare services, children and youth at risk of entering the juvenile court system, and children and youth exposed to domestic violence situations.
 - c. Developing strategies for addressing the issues of school dropout, teen suicide, and adolescent pregnancy.
 - d. Identifying and evaluating the impact on children and youth of other economic and environmental issues.
 - e. Identifying obstacles to ensuring that children who are in secure or nonsecure custody are placed in safe and permanent homes within a reasonable period of time and recommending strategies for overcoming those obstacles. The Commission shall consider what, if anything, can be done to expedite the adjudication and appeal of abuse and neglect charges against parents so that decisions may be made about the safe and permanent placement of their children as quickly as possible.
- (2) Evaluate problems associated with juveniles who are beyond the disciplinary control of their parents, including juveniles who are runaways, and develop solutions for addressing the problems of those juveniles.
- (3) Identify strategies for the development and funding of a comprehensive statewide database relating to children and youth to facilitate State agency planning for delivery of services to children and youth.
- (4) Conduct any other studies, evaluations, or assessments necessary for the Commission to carry out its purpose.

"§ 120-210. Commission membership; terms; compensation.

(a) The Commission shall consist of 23 members, as follows:

(1) Ten members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, as follows:

- a. Four shall be members of the House of Representatives at the time of their appointment,
- b. One shall be the director of a local health department,
- c. One shall be the director of a county department of social services,
- d. One shall be a representative of the general public who has knowledge of issues relating to children and youth,
- e. One shall be a licensed physician who is knowledgeable about the health needs of children and youth, and
- f. One shall be a chief district court judge recommended by the Council of Chief District Judges.
- g. One shall be a representative from the Covenant with North Carolina Children.

(2) Ten members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, as follows:

- a. Four shall be members of the Senate at the time of their appointment,
- b. One shall be the director of a mental health area authority,
- c. One shall be a representative of the Association of County Commissioners,
- d. One shall be a representative of the general public who has knowledge of issues relating to children and youth,
- e. One shall be a licensed attorney whose practice includes the representation of parents accused of criminal or civil abuse or neglect, and
- f. One shall be a chief district court judge recommended by the Council of Chief District Judges.
- g. One shall be a representative from the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute.

(3) The following shall serve ex officio as nonvoting members of the Commission:

- a. The Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary's designee,
- b. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Superintendent's designee, and
- c. The Secretary of Administration, or the Secretary's designee.

(b) Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority who made the initial appointment and by a person having the same qualification. Members' terms shall last for two years. Members may be reappointed for two consecutive terms and may be appointed again after having been off the Commission for two years.

(c) Commission members shall receive no salary as a result of serving on the Commission but shall receive necessary subsistence and travel expenses in accordance with G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, and 138-6, as applicable.

"§ 120-211. Commission meetings; public hearings; staff.

(a) The Commission shall hold its initial meeting at the call of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Subsequent meetings shall be held upon the call of the Commission cochairs. The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint a cochair each from the membership of the Commission.

(b) The Commission may hold public hearings across the State to solicit public input with respect to issues relating to children and youth.

(c) The Commission may contract for clerical or professional staff or for any other services it may require in the course of its ongoing study. At the request of the Commission, the Legislative Services Commission may supply members of the staff of the Legislative Services Office and clerical assistance to the Commission as the Legislative Services Commission considers appropriate. The Commission may, with the approval of the Legislative Services Commission, meet in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building.

"§ 120-212. Commission reports.

The Commission shall report to the General Assembly and to the Governor the results of its study and recommendations. A written report shall be submitted to each biennial session of the General Assembly at its convening.

"§ 120-213. Commission authority.

The Commission has the authority to obtain information and data from all State officers, agents, agencies, and departments, while in discharge of its duties, pursuant to G.S. 120-19, as if it were a committee of the General Assembly."

Section 11.1. G.S. 131D-10.6A reads as rewritten:

"§ 131D-10.6A. Training by the Division of Social Services required.

The Division of Social Services, Department of Human Resources, shall continue the in-house training component that provides a mandated minimum of 30 hours of preservice training for foster care parents either prior to licensure or within six months from the date a provisional license is issued pursuant to G.S. 131D-10.3, and 84 hours for foster care workers and adoption ~~care~~ social workers and a mandated minimum of 10 hours of continuing education for all foster care parents and 18 hours for foster care workers and adoption ~~care~~ social workers."

Section 12. Sections 1 through 9 of this act become effective October 1, 1997, and apply to actions commenced on and after that date. Section 10 of this act becomes effective January 1, 1998. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 6th day of August, 1997.

s/ Dennis A. Wicker
President of the Senate

s/ Harold J. Brubaker
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ James B. Hunt, Jr.
Governor

Approved 1:10 p.m. this 13th day of August, 1997