

HCS HB 154 -- PLACEMENT OF GRANDCHILDREN

SPONSOR: Nance (Ruestman)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Committee on Senior Citizen Advocacy by a vote of 12 to 0.

When an emergency placement of a child is deemed necessary, this substitute requires the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services to make documented diligent efforts to locate, contact, and place the child with a grandparent unless the division determines that the placement is not in the best interest of the child. The division must have documented just cause for the non-placement with a grandparent. Prior to contacting the grandparent, the division must care for any physical health needs of the child; and the grandparent must comply with the emergency background check requirements. If contact with a grandparent cannot be made within three hours of the division determining an emergency placement is necessary, the child may be placed in a foster home; and during that three-hour period, the child can be placed in foster care. The provisions of the substitute are not to interfere with the laws relating to parental rights or judicial authority.

When a court determines that a child must be placed in a foster home, the division must make diligent efforts to locate the grandparents of the child and determine if they wish to be considered for placement of the child.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2010, FY 2011, and FY 2012.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that it is important that the Children's Division make a diligent effort to contact a grandparent when a child is in an emergency situation. A grandparent will not be required to have the necessary training for placing a child with them in an emergency. The intent is to prevent a child from becoming a ward of the state and instead be placed with a member of his or her immediate family which reduces the stress level of all parties involved during an emergency situation.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives Ruestman and Emery; Patrick and Jeanne Scholes; Missouri Family Network; Missouri Eagle Forum; and Jean Campbell.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.