



Children and Domestic Matters

During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly considered measures related to parental rights, marriage and adoption, and child welfare.

Parental Rights

Several bills related to parental rights and legal parentage were introduced. *House Bill 20-1063* would have defined parental rights in statute as a fundamental right to direct the upbringing, education, and care of a parent's child. *House Bill 20-1144* would have established a parent's bill of rights related to directing the upbringing, education, and health care of a minor child. Both bills were postponed indefinitely by the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee.

Current law allows a parent whose parental rights have been terminated to petition the court to reinstate the parent-child relationship, if the child has not been adopted and certain conditions are met. *House Bill 20-1104* extends the same right to parents who voluntarily relinquished their parental rights.

The Colorado Uniform Parentage Act governs the establishment of parentage of children for married and unmarried couples. *House Bill 20-1292* would have updated Colorado's Uniform Parentage Act to:

- clarify establishment of the parent-child relationship, including the voluntary acknowledgment of parentage and the rules for acknowledgment or denial of parentage;

- establish a state paternity registry;
- establish procedures for genetic testing;
- include provisions for assisted reproduction; and
- create requirements for surrogacy agreements.

The bill was postponed indefinitely by the House Judiciary Committee. *House Bill 20-1316* would have repealed a section of the Uniform Parentage Act concerning assisted reproduction and created the Colorado Surrogacy Agreement Act to set requirements regarding surrogacy agreements. The bill was deemed lost in the House.

House Bill 20-1147 would have amended the definition of child neglect to state that a child is not neglected when allowed to participate in independent activities that a reasonable parent would consider safe given the child's maturity, condition, and abilities. The bill was postponed indefinitely by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Marriage and Adoption

House Bill 20-1272 would have required that marriage licenses be issued only for marriage that is between one man and one woman. The bill also would have authorized the adoptive placement of a child only with prospective parents whose marriage consists of one man and one woman. The bill was postponed indefinitely by the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee.

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Child Welfare and Foster Care

Senate Bill 20-162 makes several changes to Colorado's child welfare system to align state law with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, which became law in 2018. The bill:

- limits the out-of-home placement of young children;
- requires a placement assessment to be completed before a child is placed in a qualified residential treatment program;
- allows counties to provide child welfare and foster care prevention services to families, kin, and children; and
- requires the Child Welfare Services Task Force to make recommendations on methods to incentivize counties to provide services and make placements based on a child's needs.

House Bill 20-1012 would have expanded eligibility for a Department of Human Service (DHS) program for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are placed in out-of-home residential care. The bill would have expanded eligibility to include children with co-occurring disorders, and children who are at-risk of out-of-home placement. Currently, DHS only places children who are in the custody of a county department of human services into the program. The bill would have allowed parents or legal guardians to submit a child's application to the program directly. The bill was deemed lost in the House.