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HOUSE BILL NO. 1897

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice
on February 19, 2007)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Albo)

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 63.2-1208 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the exchange of medical and psychological information.*

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 63.2-1208 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 63.2-1208. Investigations; report to circuit court.

A. Upon consideration of the petition, the circuit court shall, upon being satisfied as to proper jurisdiction and venue, immediately enter an order referring the case to a child-placing agency to conduct an investigation and prepare a report unless no investigation is required pursuant to this chapter. The court shall enter the order of reference prior to or concurrently with the entering of an order of publication, if such is necessary. Upon entry of the order of reference, the clerk shall forward a copy of the order of reference, the petition, and all exhibits thereto to the Commissioner and the child-placing agency retained to provide investigative, reporting, and supervisory services. If no Virginia agency was retained to provide such services, the order of reference, petition, and all exhibits shall be forwarded to the local director of social services of the locality where the petitioners reside or resided at the time of filing the petition or had legal residence at the time the petition was filed.

B. Upon receiving a petition and order of reference from the circuit court, the applicable agency shall make a thorough investigation of the matter and report thereon in writing, in such form as the Commissioner may prescribe, to the circuit court within 60 days after the copy of the petition and all exhibits thereto are forwarded. A copy of the report to the circuit court shall be served on the Commissioner by delivering or mailing a copy to him on or before the day of filing the report with the circuit court. On the report to the circuit court there shall be appended either acceptance of service or certificate of the local director, or the representative of the child-placing agency, that copies were served as this section requires, showing the date of delivery or mailing. The circuit court shall expeditiously consider the merits of the petition upon receipt of the report.

C. If the report is not made to the circuit court within the periods specified, the circuit court may proceed to hear and determine the merits of the petition and enter such order or orders as the circuit court may deem appropriate.

D. The investigation requested by the circuit court shall include, in addition to other inquiries that the circuit court may require the child-placing agency or local director to make, inquiries as to (i) whether the petitioner is financially able, except as provided in Chapter 13 (§ 63.2-1300 et seq.) of this title, morally suitable, in satisfactory physical and mental health and a proper person to care for and to train the child; (ii) what the physical and mental condition of the child is; (iii) why the parents, if living, desire to be relieved of the responsibility for the custody, care, and maintenance of the child, and what their attitude is toward the proposed adoption; (iv) whether the parents have abandoned the child or are morally unfit to have custody over him; (v) the circumstances under which the child came to live, and is living, in the physical custody of the petitioner; (vi) whether the child is a suitable child for adoption by the petitioner; ~~and~~ (vii) what fees have been paid by the petitioners or on their behalf to persons or agencies that have assisted them in obtaining the child; *and (viii) whether the requirements of subsections E and F have been met.* Any report made to the circuit court shall include a recommendation as to the action to be taken by the circuit court on the petition. A copy of any report made to the circuit court shall be furnished to counsel of record representing the adopting parent or parents. When the investigation reveals that there may have been a violation of § 63.2-1200 or § 63.2-1218, the local director or child-placing agency shall so inform the circuit court and the Commissioner.

E. The report shall include the relevant physical and mental history of the birth parents if known to the person making the report. The child-placing agency or local director shall document in the report all efforts they made to encourage birth parents to share information related to their physical and mental history. However, nothing in this subsection shall require that an investigation of the physical and mental history of the birth parents be made.

F. The report shall include a statement by the child-placing agency or local director that all reasonably ascertainable background, medical, and psychological records of the child have been provided to the prospective adoptive parent(s). The report also shall include a list of such records provided.

FG. If the specific provisions set out in §§ 63.2-1228, 63.2-1238, 63.2-1242 and 63.2-1244 do not

60 apply, the petition and all exhibits shall be forwarded to the local director where the petitioners reside or
61 to a licensed child-placing agency.