



January 22, 2026

HOUSE BILL No. 1257

DIGEST OF HB 1257 (Updated January 21, 2026 1:08 pm - DI 119)

Citations Affected: IC 16-49; IC 31-9; IC 31-19; IC 31-25; IC 31-33; IC 31-34; IC 31-39.

Synopsis: Child services matters. Adds four members to the statewide child fatality review committee, one of whom is appointed by each of the following: (1) The speaker of the house of representatives. (2) The president pro tempore of the senate. (3) The minority leader of the house of representatives. (4) The minority leader of the senate. Provides that a court may grant postadoption contact privileges to the birth parent of a child if the child is at least one year of age (rather than two years of age, under current law). Adds information that must be included in the annual report of the department of child services (department) concerning child fatalities in Indiana that are the result of child abuse or neglect. Provides that the obligation of the department to conduct a detailed assessment of a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect does not apply if the report is screened out and referred to a law enforcement agency. Provides that the department: (1) shall disclose information regarding reported child abuse or neglect to a member of the United States Congress representing Indiana or a member of the Indiana general assembly (state legislator) upon request

(Continued next page)

Effective: July 1, 2026.

McGuire, Jackson C, Morris, Goss-Reaves

January 5, 2026, read first time and referred to Committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs.
January 22, 2026, amended, reported — Do Pass.

HB 1257—LS 6776/DI 119



Digest Continued

of the state legislator; (2) may release information to the news media to confirm, clarify, correct, or supplement information concerning reported child abuse or neglect that has been made public by a source other than the department; and (3) shall, upon request by the news media, report to the news media specified information regarding the death of a child whose death is suspected to be the result of child abuse or neglect. Provides that if the information disclosed or released by the department includes a record that is redacted to exclude specified information, the record is not confidential. Provides that the department may provide unredacted reports or material to: (1) a service provider that requires access to the unredacted reports or material to assess whether the service provider's services are suitable for the child; and (2) the attorney general or a prosecutor for purposes of a criminal investigation by the attorney general or prosecutor. Provides that the statutory limit on the department's provision of services to a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child who is the subject of a petition alleging the child to be a child in need of services (CHINS) applies: (1) regardless of whether the child has been removed from the home of the parent, guardian, or custodian; (2) regardless of whether the services are provided at the direction of a court or at the direction of the department; and (3) beginning on the date on which the CHINS petition is filed.

HB 1257—LS 6776/DI 119



January 22, 2026

Second Regular Session of the 124th General Assembly (2026)

PRINTING CODE. Amendments: Whenever an existing statute (or a section of the Indiana Constitution) is being amended, the text of the existing provision will appear in this style type, additions will appear in **this style type**, and deletions will appear in ~~this style type~~.

Additions: Whenever a new statutory provision is being enacted (or a new constitutional provision adopted), the text of the new provision will appear in **this style type**. Also, the word **NEW** will appear in that style type in the introductory clause of each SECTION that adds a new provision to the Indiana Code or the Indiana Constitution.

Conflict reconciliation: Text in a statute in *this style type* or ~~this style type~~ reconciles conflicts between statutes enacted by the 2025 Regular Session of the General Assembly.

HOUSE BILL No. 1257

A BILL FOR AN ACT to amend the Indiana Code concerning family law and juvenile law.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

1 SECTION 1. IC 16-49-4-2, AS AMENDED BY P.L.171-2025,
2 SECTION 16, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
3 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 2. The statewide child fatality review committee
4 consists of the following members:

5 **(1) The following members** appointed by the governor:
6 **(+) (A)** A coroner or deputy coroner.
7 **(2) (B)** A representative from the state department who:
8 **(A) (i)** is a licensed physician; or
9 **(B) (ii)** specializes in injury prevention.
10 **(3) (C)** A representative of a:
11 **(A) (i)** local health department established under
12 IC 16-20-2; or
13 **(B) (ii)** multiple county health department established under
14 IC 16-20-3.
15 **(4) (D)** A pediatrician.

HB 1257—LS 6776/DI 119



(5) (E) A representative of law enforcement who has experience in investigating child deaths.

(6) (F) A representative from an emergency medical services provider.

(7) (G) The director or a representative of the department of child services.

(8) (H) A representative of a prosecuting attorney who has experience in prosecuting child abuse.

(9) (I) A pathologist who is:

- (A) (i) certified by the American Board of Pathology in forensic pathology; and
- (B) (ii) licensed to practice medicine in Indiana.

(10) (J) A mental health provider.

(11) (K) A representative of a child abuse prevention program.

(12) (L) A representative of the department of education.

(13) (M) An epidemiologist.

(14) (N) The state child fatality review coordinator.

(15) (O) At the discretion of the department of child services ombudsman, a representative of the office of the department of child services ombudsman established by IC 4-13-19-3.

(2) **One (1) member appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives.**

(3) **One (1) member appointed by the president pro tempore of the senate.**

(4) **One (1) member appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives.**

(5) **One (1) member appointed by the minority leader of the senate.**

SECTION 2. IC 31-9-2-19.3, AS ADDED BY P.L.138-2007, SECTION 11, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 19.3. "Child welfare agency", for purposes of IC 31-25-2-20.4 **and IC 31-33-18-1.6**, means:

- (1) the department of child services; and
- (2) a person (as defined in IC 24-4-14-5) that, directly or indirectly, provides:
 - (A) services to a child or family of a child, for which payment is made, in whole or in part, by the department of child services or a local office of the department of child services;
 - (B) services to:
 - (i) a child who is; or
 - (ii) a family with;
 - a child at imminent risk of placement (as defined in



1 IC 31-26-5-1) who is referred by the department of child
2 services or a local office of the department of child services to
3 the person for family support or family preservation services;
4 or
5 (C) assistance to or works in cooperation with the department
6 of child services in the investigations of allegations of possible
7 child abuse or neglect in accordance with IC 31-33.

8 SECTION 3. IC 31-9-2-112.4 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA
9 CODE AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS
10 [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: **Sec. 112.4.** **(a)** "Reunification
11 services" means all services that are provided:

12 **(1) to a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child who is the
13 subject of petition alleging that the child is a child in need of
14 services; and**

15 **(2) with the intent of rehabilitating the relationship between
16 the child and the parent, guardian or custodian.**

17 **(b) The term includes services such as:**

18 **(1) individual, group, and family counseling;**

19 **(2) inpatient, residential, or outpatient substance abuse
20 treatment services;**

21 **(3) mental health services;**

22 **(4) assistance to address domestic violence;**

23 **(5) services designed to provide temporary child care and
24 therapeutic services for families;**

25 **(6) peer-to-peer mentoring and support groups for parents
26 and primary caregivers;**

27 **(7) services and activities designed to facilitate access to and
28 visitation of children by parents and siblings;**

29 **(8) substance abuse treatment and screening; and**

30 **(9) transportation to or from any of the services and activities
31 described in this subsection.**

32 **(c) The term does not include services provided to a parent,
33 guardian, or custodian of a child while the child is residing in a:**

34 **(1) child caring institution;**

35 **(2) group home; or**

36 **(3) private secure facility;**

37 **licensed by the department.**

38 SECTION 4. IC 31-9-2-113.6 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA
39 CODE AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS
40 [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: **Sec. 113.6.** "Screened out", with
41 **regard to a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect
42 under IC 31-33, means that the department:**



(1) received the report under IC 31-33-7; and
(2) did not refer the report for investigation under IC 31-33-9
based on the department's determination that the report:

(A) lacked sufficient information;

(B) did not contain allegations of child abuse or neglect;

(C) contained duplicative allegations that were previously assessed by the department; or

(D) did not contain information indicating a current risk to a child.

SECTION 5. IC 31-19-16-2, AS AMENDED BY P.L.128-2012, SECTION 57, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 2. A court may grant postadoption contact privileges if:

- (1) the court determines that the best interests of the child would be served by granting postadoption contact privileges;
- (2) the child is at least **two (2) years one (1) year** of age and the court finds that there is a significant emotional attachment between the child and the birth parent;
- (3) each adoptive parent consents to the granting of postadoption contact privileges;
- (4) the adoptive parents and the birth parents;

- (A) execute a postadoption contact agreement; and
- (B) file the agreement with the court;

(5) the licensed child placing agency sponsoring the adoption and the child's court appointed special advocate or guardian ad litem appointed under IC 31-32-3 recommends to the court the postadoption contact agreement, or if there is no licensed child placing agency sponsoring the adoption, the local office or other agency that prepared an adoption report under IC 31-19-8-5 is informed of the contents of the postadoption contact agreement and comments on the agreement in the agency's report to the court;

(6) consent to postadoption contact is obtained from the child if the child is at least twelve (12) years of age; and
(7) the postadoption contact agreement is approved by the court

(7) the postadoption contact agreement is approved by the court.

SECTION 6. IC 31-25-2-24, AS AMENDED BY P.L.11-2023, SECTION 99, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 24. (a) Before December 31 of each year, the department shall annually prepare a report concerning all child fatalities in Indiana that are the result of child abuse or neglect in the preceding calendar year. The report must include the following information:



(1) A summary of the information gathered concerning child fatalities resulting from abuse or neglect.

(2) Demographic information regarding victims, perpetrators, and households involved in child fatalities resulting from abuse or neglect.

(3) An analysis of the primary risk factors involved in child fatalities resulting from abuse or neglect.

(4) A summary of the most frequent causes of child fatalities resulting from abuse or neglect.

(5) A description of the manner in which the information was assembled.

The department shall post the report prepared under this section on the department's website.

(b) As part of the summary of information described in subsection (a)(1), the report must include **the following information for each child fatality:**

(1) Whether, **at the time of the child's death or at any time before the child's death**, the child was alleged or adjudicated to be a child in need of services under IC 31-34-1 ~~in a child in need of services proceeding that had not been closed at the time of the event that led to the child's death; and or was the subject of a program of informal adjustment.~~

(2) Whether, at the time of the event that led to the child's death, the child:

(A) had been ordered to remain in the child's home;

(B) was on a trial home visit;

(C) was placed in foster care; **or**

(D) was residing in a residential treatment facility. **or**

(E) ~~was the subject of a program of informal adjustment.~~

(3) The following information regarding each report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect that the department received regarding the child and screened out:

(A) **The date on which the report was received.**

(B) **The documented reason or reasons for:**

(i) **the recommendation of the department's intake personnel that the report be screened out; and**

(ii) **the approval of the recommendation under item (i) by each department supervisor, director, or other official that reviewed the recommendation.**

Names or other identifying information of department employees may be omitted or redacted from the information reported under this subdivision.



(4) A detailed description of the actions taken by the department concerning the child, including the following:

(A) A summary of any investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect concerning the child, including any relevant risk and safety assessment concerning the child, that was conducted by the department before the child's death or that was ongoing at the time of the child's death.

(B) With regard to an investigation reported under clause (A) that resulted in a determination that the allegation of child abuse or neglect was unsubstantiated:

- (i) a narrative, chronological summary of the investigation; and
- (ii) the department's reasoning for determining that the allegation was unsubstantiated.

(5) The name of the judge who presided over any detention hearing concerning the child under IC 31-34-5 the result of which was release of the child to the child's parent, guardian, or custodian.

(6) If the child was the subject of one (1) or more petitions alleging that the child was a child in need of services:

(A) for each child in need of services petition:

(i) the allegations that prompted the filing of the child in need of services petition;

(ii) a narrative, chronological summary of the child in need of services proceeding;

- (iii) any judicial findings that were issued by the court in the child in need of services proceeding; and
- (iv) a description of the disposition of the petition, including a description of the dispositional decree, if any, entered by the court; and

(B) the name of the judge who presided over the most recent child in need of services proceeding concerning the child.

(7) A summary of any child abuse and neglect investigation conducted concerning the child after the child's death, including:

(A) the nature and extent of the child's present and past injuries;

(B) medical information pertaining to the child's death; and

(C) information regarding any criminal charges brought in connection with the investigation, including the name of



any individual convicted of criminal charges brought in connection with the investigation.

(c) As part of the annual report required by subsection (a), before December 31 of each year, the department shall report the following:

(1) The number of children who died in Indiana in the preceding calendar year for whom abuse or neglect was suspected to be a factor in the child's death.

(2) The:

(A) number of children described in subdivision (1) whose cause of death was determined to be related to abuse or neglect; and

(B) number of children described in subdivision (1) whose cause of death was determined to be unrelated to abuse or neglect.

(3) The number of children described in subdivision (2)(A) who were the subject of a department assessment based on an allegation of abuse or neglect

(4) The number of children described in subdivision (3) who were the subject of a department assessment based on an allegation of abuse or neglect that was determined to be substantiated

(5) The number of children described in subdivision (3) who were the subject of a department assessment based on an allegation of abuse or neglect that was determined to be unsubstantiated

(6) For each child described in subdivision (3), the following information:

(A) The cause and manner of the child's death

(A) The
(B) The

(i) number of department assessments of the child that were based on an allegation of abuse or neglect that was determined to be substantiated; and

determined to be substantiated; and
(ii) number of department assessments of the child that were based on an allegation of abuse or neglect that was determined to be unsubstantiated.

(C) The child's relationship to the perpetrator or perpetrators of the abuse or neglect to which the child's death was determined to be related.

(D) For each perpetrator described in clause (C):

D) For each perpetrator described in clause (C):

(i) whether, prior to the allegation of abuse or neglect to which the death of the child described in subdivision (3) was related, a substantiated allegation of abuse or neglect resulted in the perpetrator being determined to have abused or neglected the child or another child; **and**



(ii) the number of substantiated reports of abuse or neglect described in item (i);

- (iii) whether, prior to the allegation of abuse or neglect to which the death of the child described in subdivision (3) was related, an investigation of an allegation of abuse or neglect of the child or of another child resulted in the allegation being determined to be unsubstantiated; and
- (iv) the number of unsubstantiated reports of abuse or neglect described in item (iii).

10 (d) Not later than January 31 of each year, the department shall
11 provide to the executive director of the legislative services agency, for
12 distribution to the interim study committee on child services, a copy of
13 the most recent annual report prepared by the department under this
14 section. The report provided to the executive director of the legislative
15 services agency under this subsection must be in an electronic format
16 under JC 5-14-6.

17 SECTION 7. IC 31-33-8-1, AS AMENDED BY P.L.198-2019,
18 SECTION 7, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
19 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 1. (a) The department shall initiate an
20 appropriately thorough child protection assessment of every report of
21 known or suspected child abuse or neglect the department receives,
22 whether in accordance with this article or otherwise, **unless the report**
23 **is screened out and referred to a law enforcement agency.**

(b) If a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect is received from a judge or prosecutor requesting the department to initiate a child protection assessment, the department shall initiate an assessment in accordance with this section.

28 (c) If a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect is
29 received from:

- (1) medical personnel;
- (2) school personnel;
- (3) a social worker;
- (4) law enforcement officials or personnel;
- (5) judiciary personnel; or
- (6) prosecuting attorney personnel;

36 the department shall forward the report to the local office to determine
37 if the department will initiate an assessment in accordance with this
38 section.

39 (d) If the department believes that a child is in imminent danger of
40 serious bodily harm, the department shall initiate an onsite assessment
41 immediately, but not later than two (2) hours, after receiving the report.

(e) If the report alleges a child may be a victim of child abuse, the



1 assessment shall be initiated immediately, but not later than
2 twenty-four (24) hours after receipt of the report.

3 (f) If reports of child neglect are received, the assessment shall be
4 initiated within a reasonably prompt time, but not later than five (5)
5 days, with the primary consideration being the well-being of the child
6 who is the subject of the report.

7 (g) If the report alleges that a child lives with a parent, guardian, or
8 custodian who is married to or lives with a person who:

9 (1) has been convicted of:
10 (A) neglect of a dependent under IC 35-46-1-4; or
11 (B) a battery offense under IC 35-42-4; or

12 (2) is required to register as a sex or violent offender under
13 IC 11-8-8;

14 the department shall initiate an assessment within a reasonably prompt
15 time, but not later than five (5) days after the department receives the
16 report, with the primary consideration being the well-being of the child
17 who is the subject of the report.

18 (h) If the safety or well-being of a child appears to be endangered or
19 the facts otherwise warrant, the assessment shall be initiated regardless
20 of the time of day.

21 (i) If a report alleges abuse or neglect and involves a child care
22 ministry that is exempt from licensure under IC 12-17.2-6, the
23 department and the appropriate law enforcement agency shall jointly
24 conduct an investigation. The investigation shall be conducted under
25 the requirements of this section and section 2(b) of this chapter.

26 SECTION 8. IC 31-33-18-1, AS AMENDED BY P.L.77-2023,
27 SECTION 8, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
28 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 1. (a) Except as provided in ~~section~~ **sections 1.5**
29 **and 1.6** of this chapter, the following are confidential:

30 (1) Reports made under this article (or IC 31-6-11 before its
31 repeal).

32 (2) Any other information, documents, reports, pictures, videos,
33 images, or recordings obtained, possessed, produced, or created
34 by:

35 (A) the division of family resources;
36 (B) the local office;
37 (C) the department; or
38 (D) the department of child services ombudsman established
39 by IC 4-13-19-3;

40 concerning a child or family with whom the department has
41 received a report or referral or has been involved with during any
42 stage of the department's investigation, including post-assessment



or post-adoption activity.

(b) Except as provided in ~~section~~ **sections 1.5 and 1.6** of this chapter, all records held by:

- (1) the division of family resources;
- (2) a local office;
- (3) the department;
- (4) a local child fatality review team established under IC 16-49-2;
- (5) the statewide child fatality review committee established under IC 16-49-4; or
- (6) the department of child services ombudsman established by IC 4-13-19-3;

regarding the death of a child determined to be a result of abuse, abandonment, or neglect are confidential and may not be disclosed.

SECTION 9. IC 31-33-18-1.6 IS ADDED TO THE INDIANA CODE AS A NEW SECTION TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: **Sec. 1.6. (a) As used in this section, "state legislator" means:**

(1) a member of the United States Congress representing Indiana; or

(2) a member of the general assembly;
ing in the member's official capacity.

b) The department shall disclose information that:

- (1) concerns alleged or actual child abuse or neglect; and
- (2) is requested by a state legislator;

to the state legislator not later than twenty (20) business days after receiving the state legislator's request for the information.

(c) If requested by a state legislator under subsection (b), or as necessary to provide information responsive to the request of a state legislator under subsection (b), the department shall disclose to the state legislator:

(1) unredacted department records regarding the alleged or actual child abuse or neglect, including the safe system review regarding the child abuse or neglect investigation; and
(2) information regarding actions taken by other entities, including:

(A) child welfare agencies;

(B) guardians ad litem;

(C) court appointed special advocates; and

(D) court officers;

with regard to the alleged or actual child abuse or neglect; including records or information that predate July 1, 2026.



- (1) The child's age.
- (2) The child's gender.
- (3) A summary of:
 - (A) the actions taken by the department concerning the child, including any investigation of alleged child abuse and neglect concerning the child that was conducted by the department before the child's death or that was ongoing at the time of the child's death; and
 - (B) any petition that was filed alleging that the child was a child in need of services, including the disposition of the petition.

29 (g) A record released under this section that has been redacted
30 to exclude the information described in section 1.5(g) of this
31 chapter is not confidential.

SECTION 10. IC 31-33-18-2, AS AMENDED BY P.L.54-2024, SECTION 4, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 2. Except as otherwise prohibited by federal law, the reports and other material described in section 1(a) of this chapter and the unredacted reports and other material described in section 1(b) of this chapter shall be made available only to the following:

40 (1) Persons authorized by this article.
41 (2) A legally mandated public or private child protective agency
42 investigating a report of child abuse or neglect or treating a child



1 or family that is the subject of a report or record.
2 (3) Any of the following who are investigating a report of a child
3 who may be a victim of child abuse or neglect:
4 (A) A police officer or other law enforcement agency.
5 (B) A prosecuting attorney.
6 (C) A coroner, in the case of the death of a child.
7 (4) A physician who has before the physician a child whom the
8 physician reasonably suspects may be a victim of child abuse or
9 neglect.
10 (5) An individual legally authorized to place a child in protective
11 custody if:
12 (A) the individual has before the individual a child whom the
13 individual reasonably suspects may be a victim of abuse or
14 neglect; and
15 (B) the individual requires the information in the report or
16 record to determine whether to place the child in protective
17 custody.
18 (6) **An agency A person** having the legal responsibility or
19 authorization to care for, treat, or supervise a child who is the
20 subject of a report or record, **or a including a service provider**
21 **that requires access to the unredacted reports or material to**
22 **assess:**
23 (A) **the suitability of the provider or the provider's services**
24 **for the child; or**
25 (B) **the suitability of the child for the provider or for the**
26 **provider's services;**
27 **before providing care, treatment, or supervision for the child.**
28 (7) A parent, guardian, custodian, or other person who is
29 responsible for the child's welfare.
30 (7) (8) An individual named in the report or record who is alleged
31 to be abused or neglected or, if the individual named in the report
32 is a child or is otherwise incompetent, the individual's guardian ad
33 litem or the individual's court appointed special advocate, or both.
34 (8) (9) Each parent, guardian, custodian, or other person
35 responsible for the welfare of a child named in a report or record
36 and an attorney of the person described under this subdivision,
37 with protection for the identity of reporters and other appropriate
38 individuals.
39 (9) (10) A court, for redaction of the record in accordance with
40 section 1.5 of this chapter, or upon the court's finding that access
41 to the records may be necessary for determination of an issue
42 before the court. However, except for disclosure of a redacted



1 record in accordance with section 1.5 of this chapter, access is
2 limited to in camera inspection unless the court determines that
3 public disclosure of the information contained in the records is
4 necessary for the resolution of an issue then pending before the
5 court.

6 **(11)** A grand jury upon the grand jury's determination that
7 access to the records is necessary in the conduct of the grand
8 jury's official business.

9 **(12)** An appropriate state or local official responsible for
10 child protection services or legislation, **including a member of**
11 **the general assembly**, carrying out the official's official
12 functions.

13 **(13)** The community child protection team appointed under
14 IC 31-33-3 (or IC 31-6-11-14 before its repeal), upon request, to
15 enable the team to carry out the team's purpose under IC 31-33-3.

16 **(14)** A person about whom a report has been made, with
17 protection for the identity of:

18 (A) any person reporting known or suspected child abuse or
19 neglect; and

20 (B) any other person if the person or agency making the
21 information available finds that disclosure of the information
22 would be likely to endanger the life or safety of the person.

23 **(15)** An employee of the department, a caseworker, or a
24 juvenile probation officer conducting a criminal history check
25 under IC 31-26-5, IC 31-34, or IC 31-37 to determine the
26 appropriateness of an out-of-home placement for a:

27 (A) child at imminent risk of placement;

28 (B) child in need of services; or

29 (C) delinquent child.

30 The results of a criminal history check conducted under this
31 subdivision must be disclosed to a court determining the
32 placement of a child described in clauses (A) through (C).

33 **(16)** A local child fatality review team established under
34 IC 16-49-2.

35 **(17)** The statewide child fatality review committee
36 established by IC 16-49-4.

37 **(18)** The department.

38 **(19)** The division of family resources, if the investigation
39 report:

40 (A) is classified as substantiated; and

41 (B) concerns:

42 (i) an applicant for a license to operate;



- (ii) a person licensed to operate;
- (iii) an employee of; or
- (iv) a volunteer providing services at;

a child care center licensed under IC 12-17.2-4 or a child care home licensed under IC 12-17.2-5.

(19) (20) A citizen review panel established under IC 31-25-2-20.4.

(20) (21) The department of child services ombudsman established by IC 4-13-19-3.

(21) (22) The secretary of education with protection for the identity of:

- (A) any person reporting known or suspected child abuse or neglect; and
- (B) any other person if the person or agency making the information available finds that disclosure of the information would be likely to endanger the life or safety of the person.

(22) (23) The state child fatality review coordinator employed by the Indiana department of health under IC 16-49-5-1.

(23) (24) A person who operates a child caring institution, group home, or secure private facility if all the following apply:

- (A) The child caring institution, group home, or secure private facility is licensed under IC 31-27.
- (B) The report or other materials concern:
 - (i) an employee of;
 - (ii) a volunteer providing services at; or
 - (iii) a child placed at;the child caring institution, group home, or secure private facility.
- (C) The allegation in the report occurred at the child caring institution, group home, or secure private facility.

(24) (25) A person who operates a child placing agency if all the following apply:

- (A) The child placing agency is licensed under IC 31-27.
- (B) The report or other materials concern:
 - (i) a child placed in a foster home licensed by the child placing agency;
 - (ii) a person licensed by the child placing agency to operate a foster family home;
 - (iii) an employee of the child placing agency or a foster family home licensed by the child placing agency; or
 - (iv) a volunteer providing services at the child placing agency or a foster family home licensed by the child placing agency.



1 agency.

2 (C) The allegations in the report occurred in the foster family
3 home or in the course of employment or volunteering at the
4 child placing agency or foster family home.

5 (25) (26) The National Center for Missing and Exploited
6 Children.

7 (26) (27) A local domestic violence fatality review team
8 established under IC 12-18-8, as determined by the department to
9 be relevant to the death or near fatality that the local domestic
10 violence fatality review team is reviewing.

11 (27) (28) The statewide domestic violence fatality review
12 committee established under IC 12-18-9-3, as determined by the
13 department to be relevant to the death or near fatality that the
14 statewide domestic violence fatality review committee is
15 reviewing.

16 (28) (29) The statewide maternal mortality review committee
17 established under IC 16-50-1-3, as determined by the department
18 to be relevant to the case of maternal morbidity or maternal
19 mortality that the statewide maternal mortality review committee
20 is reviewing.

21 (29) (30) A local fetal-infant mortality review team established
22 under IC 16-49-6, as determined by the department to be relevant
23 to the case of fetal or infant fatality that the local fetal-infant
24 mortality review team is reviewing.

25 (30) (31) A suicide and overdose fatality review team established
26 under IC 16-49.5-2, as determined by the department to be relevant
27 to the case of a suicide or overdose fatality that the
28 suicide and overdose fatality review team is reviewing.

29 (31) (32) The office of administrative law proceedings for a
30 matter that is the subject of an administrative proceeding before
31 the office of administrative law proceedings.

32 (32) (33) A tribal representative, agency, or organization
33 authorized by the Indian child's tribe to care for, diagnose, treat,
34 review, evaluate, or monitor active efforts regarding an Indian
35 child, and the Indian child's parent, guardian, or custodian.

36 (33) (34) The United States Department of State and foreign
37 governments to comply with federal law and treaties.

38 (34) (35) A child advocacy center when the child advocacy center
39 has before it an investigation of child abuse or neglect in which
40 it is facilitating a forensic interview or facilitating a case
41 discussion or case review.

42 (36) **The office of the attorney general or a prosecutor for**



1 **purposes of a criminal investigation by the office of the**
 2 **attorney general or prosecutor.**

3 SECTION 11. IC 31-34-7-4, AS AMENDED BY P.L.46-2016,
 4 SECTION 9, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
 5 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 4. A person who is accused of committing child
 6 abuse or neglect is entitled under ~~IC 31-33-18-2(13)~~ **IC 31-33-18-2(14)**
 7 to access to a report relevant to an alleged accusation.

8 SECTION 12. IC 31-34-20-1.6, AS ADDED BY P.L.179-2025,
 9 SECTION 17, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
 10 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 1.6. (a) This section applies to **a parent, guardian, or custodian** of a child:

12 (1) who ~~(A)~~ is the subject of a **proceeding regarding a petition alleging that the child is a child in need of services, petition that is filed after the child is removed from the care or custody of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian under IC 31-34-2-3**, regardless of whether:

17 (A) the child is removed from the care or custody of the parent, guardian, or custodian; or

19 (B) the child, if removed, is returned to the care or custody of the parent, guardian, or custodian;

21 at any time before **or after** the entry of **the a** dispositional decree **or in the proceeding; and**

23 (B) is removed from the care or custody of the child's parent, guardian, or custodian under the child's dispositional decree under section 1(a)(3) of this chapter; and

26 (2) whose dispositional decree includes an order under section 1(a)(6) of this chapter requiring a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child who has been:

29 (A) ordered by the court in the proceeding; or

30 (B) directed by the department;

31 to complete reunification services.

32 (b) Except as provided in subsections (c) and (d), **a the court in a proceeding regarding a petition alleging that a child is a child in need of services** may not provide for a child's parent, guardian, or custodian to receive reunification services for more than:

36 (1) if the child is removed from the parent, guardian, or custodian **in need of services petition is filed** after June 30, 2025, and before July 1, 2026, fifteen (15) months; or

39 (2) if the child is removed from the parent, guardian, or custodian **in need of services petition is filed** after June 30, 2026, twelve (12) months;

42 after the date of the child's removal under ~~IC 31-34-2-3~~ or under the



1 **child's dispositional decree, whichever is earlier, on which the petition
2 is filed.**

3 (c) A court may extend the provision of reunification services to a
4 child's parent, guardian, or custodian for:

5 (1) a period of not more than ninety (90) days if the court finds
6 after an evidentiary hearing that:

7 (A) the parent, guardian, or custodian has substantially
8 complied with the child's dispositional decree; and

9 (B) the extension is in the child's best interests; and

10 (2) an additional period of not more than ninety (90) days
11 following an extension under subdivision (1) if the court:

12 (A) finds after an evidentiary hearing, by clear and convincing
13 evidence, that:

14 (i) the parent, guardian, or custodian has substantially
15 complied with the child's dispositional decree; and

16 (ii) the extension is in the child's best interests; and

17 (B) includes in the order for the extension:

18 (i) the facts upon which the court based the court's findings
19 under clause (A); and

20 (ii) the time period within which it is likely that reunification
21 of the child with the parent will occur.

22 (d) A court may extend the provision of reunification services to a
23 child's parent, guardian, or custodian if the court finds after an
24 evidentiary hearing that the child's parent, guardian, or custodian, by
25 no fault of the parent, guardian, or custodian, was not afforded an
26 adequate opportunity to substantially participate in the reunification
27 services.

28 (e) The following are not a basis for an extension under subsection
29 (c) or (d):

30 (1) Delay or failure by the parent, guardian, or custodian to
31 establish paternity or seek custody of the child.

32 (2) Failure of the parent, guardian, or custodian to substantially
33 participate in the reunification services due to the conduct of the
34 parent, guardian, or custodian.

35 (f) In determining whether to extend the provision of reunification
36 services to a child's parent under subsection (c) or (d), a court shall take
37 into consideration the status of any minor siblings of the child.

38 SECTION 13. IC 31-34-21-5, AS AMENDED BY P.L.179-2025,
39 SECTION 18, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE
40 JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 5. (a) Subject to subsection (c), the court shall
41 determine:

42 (1) whether the child's case plan, services, and placement meet



1 the special needs and best interests of the child;

2 (2) whether the department has made reasonable efforts to

3 provide family services, unless a finding has been made under

4 section 5.6 of this chapter that reasonable efforts for family

5 preservation or reunification are not required; **and**

6 (3) **if the child was removed from the care or custody of the**

7 **child's parent, guardian, or custodian**, a projected date for the

8 child's return home; **and**

9 (4) **a projected date for** the child's adoption placement, the

10 child's emancipation, or the appointment of a legal guardian for

11 the child under section 7.5(c)(1)(D) of this chapter.

12 (b) The determination of the court under subsection (a) must be

13 based on findings written after consideration of the following:

14 (1) Whether the department, the child, or the child's parent,

15 guardian, or custodian has complied with the child's case plan.

16 (2) Written documentation containing descriptions of:

17 (A) the family services that have been offered or provided to

18 the child or the child's parent, guardian, or custodian;

19 (B) the dates during which the family services were offered or

20 provided; and

21 (C) the outcome arising from offering or providing the family

22 services.

23 (3) The extent of the efforts made by the department to offer and

24 provide family services.

25 (4) The extent to which the parent, guardian, or custodian has

26 enhanced the ability to fulfill parental obligations.

27 (5) The extent to which the parent, guardian, or custodian has

28 visited the child, including the reasons for infrequent visitation.

29 (6) The extent to which the parent, guardian, or custodian has

30 cooperated with the department.

31 (7) The child's recovery from any injuries suffered before

32 removal.

33 (8) Whether any additional services are required for the child or

34 the child's parent, guardian, or custodian and, if so, the nature of

35 those services.

36 (9) The extent to which the child has been rehabilitated.

37 (10) If the child is placed out-of-home, whether the child is in the

38 least restrictive, most family-like setting, and whether the child is

39 placed close to the home of the child's parent, guardian, or

40 custodian.

41 (11) The extent to which the causes for the child's out-of-home

42 placement or supervision have been alleviated.



(12) Whether current placement or supervision by the department should be continued.

(13) The extent to which the child's parent, guardian, or custodian has participated or has been given the opportunity to participate in case planning, periodic case reviews, dispositional reviews, placement of the child, and visitation.

(14) Whether the department has made reasonable efforts to reunify or preserve a child's family unless reasonable efforts are not required under section 5.6 of this chapter.

(15) Subject to subsection (c), whether it is an appropriate time to prepare or implement a permanency plan for the child under section 7.5 of this chapter.

(16) If:

- (A) the child has been in an out-of-home placement at any time during the child in need of services proceeding; and
- (B) the child's dispositional decree includes an order under IC 31-34-20-1(a)(6) requiring the child's parent, guardian, or custodian to receive reunification services;

the amount of time remaining for the parent, guardian, or custodian to complete the reunification services under IC 31-34-20-1.6.

(c) The permanency plan for a child who has, at the time of a periodic case review or permanency hearing, been removed from the child's parent for at least twelve (12) months of the most recent twenty-two (22) months, must include at least one (1) intended permanent or long term arrangement for care and custody of the child under section 7.5(c) of this chapter other than reunification of the child with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian.

SECTION 14. IC 31-39-2-6, AS AMENDED BY P.L.128-2012, SECTION 176, IS AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS [EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026]: Sec. 6. The records of the juvenile court are available without a court order to:

(1) the attorney for the department of child services; or

(2) any authorized staff member of:

(A) the local office;

(B) the department of child services;

(C) the department of correction; or

(D) the department of child services ombudsman established by IC 4-13-19-3; or

(3) a state legislator (as defined in IC 31-33-18-1.6) as provided in IC 31-33-18-1.6.



COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Speaker: Your Committee on Family, Children and Human Affairs, to which was referred House Bill 1257, has had the same under consideration and begs leave to report the same back to the House with the recommendation that said bill be amended as follows:

Page 8, delete lines 17 through 33.

Page 11, line 8, delete "neglect;" and insert "**neglect, including the safe system review regarding the child abuse or neglect investigation;**".

Page 11, line 28, delete "days after" and insert "**business days, or ten (10) business days for complex cases, after receiving a request from the news media regarding**".

Renumber all SECTIONS consecutively.

and when so amended that said bill do pass.

(Reference is to HB 1257 as introduced.)

DEVON

Committee Vote: yeas 11, nays 0.

HB 1257—LS 6776/DI 119

