



The State of Mississippi
Governor Tate Reeves
Commissioner Andrea A. Sanders
www.mdcps.ms.gov

2024 Legislative Update – Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services

HB 1376 enables MDCPS to utilize Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) to provide an opportunity for a child or youth in MDCPS custody to be in a placement where his or her psychological or behavioral needs can be stabilized. A QRTP placement is “time-limited, trauma-informed, judicially reviewed, and focused on engaging the child’s family during and after treatment, with the goal to prepare the child for a swift return to family and community life.” (See *Strategy Brief: Transforming Child Welfare Systems, Case Family Programs*, February 2022). HB 1376 defines QRTPs, establishes a requirement for a qualified assessment, and establishes a procedure for required court review of QRTP placements.

SB 2244 provides benefits to both foster children and foster parents. First, it requires public universities and community colleges to provide free transcripts to former foster children. Second, it establishes that foster parents shall be allowed free admission to any state park or museum in the state upon showing their foster care license/certificate.

SB 2792 includes statutory changes recommended by the Foster Care and Adoption Task Force. This bill contains several provisions which impact the work of MDCPS, including among others:

- Amends the definition of neglected child to exclude failure to provide food, clothing or shelter caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused and the child is in imminent risk of harm.
- Attorneys for all parties in youth court proceedings owe their party client the duties prescribed by the Mississippi Rules of Professional Conduct.
- MDCPS shall have the right to hire agency counsel to represent it at all stages of proceedings involving a child for whom it has custody.
- A petition for termination of parental rights must be heard within 90 days of filing absent extraordinary circumstances.
- All parents have the right to appointed counsel in a termination of parental rights proceeding.
- Modifies the time requirements for conducting permanency hearings.
- Clarifies what youth court orders are appealable.
- Requires annual training for youth court intake officers.