By:  Minjarez, Miller (Senate Sponsor - Alvarado) H.B. No. 1884

(In the Senate - Received from the House May 6, 2019; May 7, 2019, read first time and referred to Committee on Health & Human Services; May 17, 2019, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 9, Nays 0; May 17, 2019, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

                 Yea Nay Absent  PNV

Kolkhorst         X

Perry             X

Buckingham        X

Campbell          X

Flores            X

Johnson           X

Miles             X

Powell            X

Seliger           X

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the information provided to relative and other designated caregivers of children in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 261.3071(c), Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  Information provided in the manuals must be in both English and Spanish and must include, as appropriate:

(1)  useful indexes of information such as telephone numbers;

(2)  the information required to be provided under Section 261.307(a)(1);

(3)  information describing the rights and duties of a relative or designated caregiver;

(4)  information regarding:

(A)  the relative and other designated caregiver program under Subchapter I, Chapter 264, and the option for the relative or other designated caregiver to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(B)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K, Chapter 264; and

(5)  information regarding the role of a voluntary caregiver, including information on how to obtain any documentation necessary to provide for a child's needs.

SECTION 2.  Section 262.201, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (n-1) to read as follows:

(n-1)  For a child placed with a relative of the child, the court shall inform the relative of:

(1)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K, Chapter 264.

SECTION 3.  Section 263.202, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (i) to read as follows:

(i)  For a child placed with a relative of the child, the court shall inform the relative of:

(1)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K, Chapter 264.

SECTION 4.  Section 263.306(c), Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c)  In addition to the requirements of Subsection (a-1), at each permanency hearing before a final order is rendered the court shall review the department's efforts to:

(1)  ensure that the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age-appropriate normalcy activities, including activities not listed in the child's service plan; and

(2)  for a child placed with a relative of the child or other designated caregiver, inform the caregiver of:

(A)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(B)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K, Chapter 264.

SECTION 5.  Section 263.5031, Family Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 263.5031.  PERMANENCY HEARINGS FOLLOWING FINAL ORDER.  At each permanency hearing after the court renders a final order, the court shall:

(1)  identify all persons and parties present at the hearing;

(2)  review the efforts of the department or other agency in notifying persons entitled to notice under Section 263.0021; [~~and~~]

(3)  for a child placed with a relative of the child or other designated caregiver, review the efforts of the department to inform the caregiver of:

(A)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(B)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K, Chapter 264; and

(4)  review the permanency progress report to determine:

(A)  the safety and well-being of the child and whether the child's needs, including any medical or special needs, are being adequately addressed;

(B)  whether the department placed the child with a relative or other designated caregiver and the continuing necessity and appropriateness of the placement of the child, including with respect to a child who has been placed outside of this state, whether the placement continues to be in the best interest of the child;

(C)  if the child is placed in institutional care, whether efforts have been made to ensure that the child is placed in the least restrictive environment consistent with the child's best interest and special needs;

(D)  the appropriateness of the primary and alternative permanency goals for the child, whether the department has made reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan, including the concurrent permanency goals, in effect for the child, and whether:

(i)  the department has exercised due diligence in attempting to place the child for adoption if parental rights to the child have been terminated and the child is eligible for adoption; or

(ii)  another permanent placement, including appointing a relative as permanent managing conservator or returning the child to a parent, is appropriate for the child;

(E)  for a child whose permanency goal is another planned permanent living arrangement:

(i)  the desired permanency outcome for the child, by asking the child;

(ii)  whether, as of the date of the hearing, another planned permanent living arrangement is the best permanency plan for the child and, if so, provide compelling reasons why it continues to not be in the best interest of the child to:

(a)  return home;

(b)  be placed for adoption;

(c)  be placed with a legal guardian; or

(d)  be placed with a fit and willing relative;

(iii)  whether the department has conducted an independent living skills assessment under Section 264.121(a-3);

(iv)  whether the department has addressed the goals identified in the child's permanency plan, including the child's housing plan, and the results of the independent living skills assessment;

(v)  if the youth is 16 years of age or older, whether there is evidence that the department has provided the youth with the documents and information listed in Section 264.121(e); and

(vi)  if the youth is 18 years of age or older or has had the disabilities of minority removed, whether there is evidence that the department has provided the youth with the documents and information listed in Section 264.121(e-1);

(F)  if the child is 14 years of age or older, whether services that are needed to assist the child in transitioning from substitute care to independent living are available in the child's community;

(G)  whether the child is receiving appropriate medical care and has been provided the opportunity, in a developmentally appropriate manner, to express the child's opinion on any medical care provided;

(H)  for a child receiving psychotropic medication, whether the child:

(i)  has been provided appropriate nonpharmacological interventions, therapies, or strategies to meet the child's needs; or

(ii)  has been seen by the prescribing physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice nurse at least once every 90 days;

(I)  whether an education decision-maker for the child has been identified, the child's education needs and goals have been identified and addressed, and there are major changes in the child's school performance or there have been serious disciplinary events;

(J)  for a child for whom the department has been named managing conservator in a final order that does not include termination of parental rights, whether to order the department to provide services to a parent for not more than six months after the date of the permanency hearing if:

(i)  the child has not been placed with a relative or other individual, including a foster parent, who is seeking permanent managing conservatorship of the child; and

(ii)  the court determines that further efforts at reunification with a parent are:

(a)  in the best interest of the child; and

(b)  likely to result in the child's safe return to the child's parent; and

(K)  whether the department has identified a family or other caring adult who has made a permanent commitment to the child.

SECTION 6.  Section 264.7541, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(c)  Once a child is placed with a relative or other designated caregiver, the department shall inform the caregiver of:

(1)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K.

SECTION 7.  Section 264.755, Family Code, is amended by adding Subsection (a-1) to read as follows:

(a-1)  When a relative or other designated caregiver enters into a caregiver assistance agreement under Subsection (a), the department shall inform the caregiver of:

(1)  the option to become verified by a licensed child-placing agency to operate an agency foster home, if applicable; and

(2)  the permanency care assistance program under Subchapter K.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.

\* \* \* \* \*