88R1928 MM-D

By:  J. Johnson of Harris H.B. No. 347

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to law enforcement agency policies regarding the placement of a child taken into possession by a peace officer during the arrest of a person.

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

SECTION 1.  Chapter 2, Code of Criminal Procedure, is amended by adding Article 2.274 to read as follows:

Art. 2.274.  POLICY REGARDING SAFE PLACEMENT OF CHILD. (a) In this article, "law enforcement agency" has the meaning assigned by Article 2.1386.

(b)  Each law enforcement agency shall adopt a written policy regarding the safe placement of a child who is in the care, custody, or control of a person at the time the person is arrested. The policy must require that:

(1)  the arresting peace officer attempt to locate a competent adult identified by the arrested person to whom the officer may release the child;

(2)  before releasing the child to an adult located under Subdivision (1), the officer:

(A)  search the relevant databases of the National Crime Information Center system, including those pertaining to protection orders, historical protection orders, warrants, sex offender registries, and persons on supervised release to verify that the person to whom the child is being released:

(i)  does not have an outstanding warrant;

(ii)  does not have a protective order issued against the person;

(iii)  is not registered as a sex offender; and

(iv)  has not previously been finally convicted of any felony under Section 20A.03 or 21.02, Penal Code, or listed in Article 42A.054(a);

(B)  verify that the person to whom the child is being released is at least 18 years of age; and

(C)  collect information about the child's placement to provide to the person who is arrested on the person's release, including:

(i)  identifying information about the child, including the child's name and pseudonyms; and

(ii)  the name and address of the person to whom the child is being released;

(3)  if after a reasonable period of time and a good faith effort the officer does not locate a person described by Subdivision (1), the officer may release the child to a safe living arrangement determined under Subsection (c); and

(4)  if after a reasonable period of time and a good faith effort, the officer does not locate a safe living arrangement determined under Subsection (c), the officer may release the child to a representative of the victim services division or other similar division within the law enforcement agency to arrange the release of the child to the Department of Family and Protective Services.

(c)  Each law enforcement agency shall coordinate with child-care providers, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based entities in the agency's region to develop options for safe living arrangements for a child who is in the care, custody, or control of a person at the time the person is arrested and develop an agreement that provides the procedures for the law enforcement agency to release a child to the care of those entities.

SECTION 2.  Not later than June 1, 2024, each law enforcement agency in this state shall adopt the policy required by Article 2.274, Code of Criminal Procedure, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.