

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

1 State of Arkansas
2 93rd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2021
4

As Engrossed: H2/25/21 H4/5/21

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1388

5 By: Representative Penzo
6 By: Senator B. Ballinger
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR VOLUNTARY POST-ADOPTION CONTACT
10 AGREEMENTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
11

Subtitle

14 TO PROVIDE FOR VOLUNTARY POST-ADOPTION
15 CONTACT AGREEMENTS.
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18 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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20 *SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 9, Chapter 9, Subchapter 2, is amended*
21 *to add an additional section to read as follows:*

22 *9-9-225. Voluntary post-adoption contact agreement.*

23 *(a) In an adoption proceeding concerning a minor who is not in the*
24 *custody of the Department of Human Services, a prospective adoptive parent*
25 *may voluntarily enter into a written agreement with a birth parent of the*
26 *minor concerning post-adoption exchange of information, communication, or*
27 *other contact between the birth parent and the minor if:*

28 *(1) The birth parent has executed either a consent to adoption*
29 *or relinquishment of parental rights;*

30 *(2) An order terminating the parental rights of the birth parent*
31 *has not been entered by the court; and*

32 *(3) A final decree of adoption has not been entered by the*
33 *court.*

34 *(b)(1) A post-adoption contact agreement may address one (1) or more*
35 *of the following:*

36 *(A) The post-adoption sharing of information concerning*



1 the minor, birth parent, or adoptive parent;

2 (B) Post-adoption communication between the minor and the
3 birth parent; or

4 (C) Post-adoption visitation between the minor and the
5 birth parent.

6 (2) A post-adoption contact agreement shall not address custody
7 of the minor.

8 (3) A post-adoption contact agreement shall:

9 (A) Be in writing;

10 (B) Be signed by all prospective adoptive parents and the
11 birth parent entering into the agreement;

12 (C) Be verified by a notary public who certifies that each
13 acknowledging party entered into the agreement knowingly and voluntarily, and
14 without duress or coercion;

15 (D) State that the agreement complies with the
16 requirements of this section;

17 (E) Be an independent contract;

18 (F) Describe the:

19 (i) Form and frequency of the information to be
20 exchanged or the communication or contact to occur as agreed to by the
21 parties to the agreement;

22 (ii) Degree of supervision, if any, that is
23 required; and

24 (iii) Grounds, if any, for terminating the agreement
25 in whole or in part;

26 (G) Include a statement acknowledging that:

27 (i) The post-adoption contact agreement does not
28 impair the ability of a party to the agreement to change his or her place or
29 state of residence;

30 (ii) The adoptive parent's judgment concerning the
31 minor is in the best interest of the minor;

32 (iii) One (1) of the adoptive parents may terminate
33 the contact with the birth parent in whole or in part at any time if an
34 adoptive parent determines that the contact is not in the best interest of
35 the minor; and

36 (iv) The parties to the post-adoption contact

1 agreement have not relied on any representations other than those contained
2 in the agreement;

3 (H) Not be deemed a condition precedent to a consent to
4 adoption, relinquishment of parental rights, or entry of an adoption decree;
5 and

6 (I) Include the following statements in bold type:

7 "1. This agreement shall only enter into force upon the entry of
8 the final decree of adoption.

9 2. After the entry of a final decree of adoption, an adoption
10 cannot be set aside due to the failure of an adoptive parent, a birth parent,
11 or the minor to follow the terms of this agreement or a later modification to
12 this agreement.

13 3. Each party acknowledges that he or she has entered into this
14 agreement knowingly, voluntarily, and without duress or coercion.

15 4. A separate post-adoption contact agreement shall be executed
16 for each birth parent who opts to enter into the agreement with the
17 prospective adoptive parents."

18 (c)(1) A court shall make a finding approving a post-adoption contact
19 agreement before finalizing the adoption if the court finds that the
20 agreement:

21 (A)(i) Is in the best interest of the minor to be adopted.

22 (ii) In determining the best interests of the minor,
23 the court may consider the preferences of the minor if the minor's consent to
24 the adoption is required;

25 (B) Contains terms that are fair and reasonable;

26 (C) Meets the requirements of this section; and

27 (D) Has been entered into knowingly and voluntarily by all
28 parties to the agreement, and without duress or coercion.

29 (2) The court shall not require execution of a post-adoption
30 contact agreement under this section as a condition for granting an adoption.

31 (d) A modification of a post-adoption contact agreement shall be:

32 (1) In writing;

33 (2) Signed by each party to the post-adoption contact agreement;

34 and

35 (3) Verified by a notary public.

36 (e)(1) A post-adoption contact agreement does not give any party any

1 rights enforceable in the courts of this state.

2 (2)(A) The parties may seek to resolve a dispute arising from a
3 post-adoption contact agreement through a mediator certified by the Arkansas
4 Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission.

5 (B) In resolving the dispute, the mediator certified by
6 the commission:

7 (i) Shall resolve the issue in a manner that is in
8 the best interests of the minor and does not undermine the parental authority
9 of the adoptive parent; and

10 (ii) May consider the preferences of the minor in
11 determining the best interest of the minor if the minor is at least twelve
12 (12) years of age.

13 (C) If mediation fails, the adoptive parents shall have
14 the final decision as to what they deem is in the best interest of the minor.

15 (3) A post-adoption contact agreement under this section
16 concerning a minor to be adopted shall not be binding when the minor attains
17 eighteen (18) years of age.

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20 /s/Penzo
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