

HOUSE BILL NO. 1036

Introduced by

Legislative Council

(Family Law Committee)

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact subsection 4 of section 14-15.1-03, and sections  
2 14-15.1-04, 14-15.1-06, and 14-15.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to child  
3 relinquishment to identified adoptive parents.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Subsection 4 of section 14-15.1-03 of the North Dakota  
6 Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 7 4. If the court approves the petition and determines, based upon the ~~preplacement~~  
8 study report of the child-placing agency and other evidence presented at the  
9 hearing, that placement with the identified adoptive parent is in the best interests of  
10 the child, the court shall ~~order that the child be placed with the identified adoptive~~  
11 ~~parent pending adoption. The identified adoptive parent is financially responsible~~  
12 ~~for the support of the child until further order of the court. The court shall also enter~~  
13 ~~an order terminating the relationship of the birth parent and the child;~~  
14 a. Enter an order terminating the relationship of the birth parent and the child;  
15 b. Order that the child be placed with the identified adoptive parent pending adoption;  
16 c. Order supervision by a child-placing agency until the adoption is finalized;  
17 d. Order the identified adoptive parent financially responsible for the support of the  
18 child until further order of the court; and  
19 e. Make a finding regarding the reasonableness of expenses reported under section  
20 14-15.1-05.

21 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 14-15.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
22 amended and reenacted as follows:

23 **14-15.1-04. Report of child-placing agency.** ~~Prior to~~ Before a hearing under this  
24 chapter, the ~~preplacement adoptive home study~~ report of a child-placing agency must be filed

with the court. The child-placing agency shall serve a copy of the report upon the birth parent, the identified adoptive parent, the guardian ad litem, and the department at least seven days ~~prior to~~ before the hearing. The report must include the following:

1. A recommendation as to whether the home of the identified adoptive parent is a suitable home for the placement of the child.
2. ~~An A~~ A preplacement adoption assessment ~~of~~ indicating how the identified adoptive parent's emotional maturity, finances, health, relationships, criminal history record, and any other relevant factors may affect the identified adoptive parent's ability to accept, care for, and provide the child with an adequate environment in which to mature.
3. The medical and social history of the birth parent, including an assessment regarding the birth parent's understanding and acceptance of the ~~proceedings~~ action.
4. If the child has been born ~~prior to~~ before the filing of the report, a medical and developmental history of the child.

**SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 14-15.1-06 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**14-15.1-06. Fees and charges.** Reasonable fees may be charged for professional services ~~relating to the petition for relinquishment, placement of the child, and other pre-adoption services, medical care or services, prenatal costs, foster care, or other reasonable items of cost or expense if reflected in a report of agreements and disbursements filed under this chapter and approved by the court~~ and living expenses if reflected in a report of agreements and disbursements filed under this chapter and approved by the court. The fees may not be contingent upon placement of the child for adoption, consent to adoption, or cooperation in the completion of adoption. "Reasonable fees" may include:

1. Preplacement counseling, adoption assessment, placement of the child, foster care, or other preadoption services, which must be paid directly to the provider of the services;
2. Legal fees relating to the petition for relinquishment or adoption, which must be paid directly to the provider of the services;

- 1           3.   Medical expenses relating to prenatal care and the birth of the child, which are not  
2               already covered by health insurance;
- 3           4.   Expenses for transportation, meals, and lodging incurred for placement of the child  
4               or in order to receive counseling, legal, or medical services related to the  
5               pregnancy, birth, or placement; and
- 6           5.   Living expenses of the birth mother which are needed to maintain an adequate  
7               standard of living, which the birth mother is unable to otherwise maintain because  
8               of loss of income or other support resulting from pregnancy. Payments may cover  
9               expenses incurred during the pregnancy related incapacity but not for a period  
10              longer than six weeks following the delivery unless the court determines within the  
11              six-week period that the birth mother is unable to be employed due to physical  
12              limitations relating to the birth of the child. Living expenses do not include  
13              expenses for lost wages, gifts, educational expenses, vacations, or other similar  
14              expenses of a birth mother.

15           **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 14-15.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
16 amended and reenacted as follows:

17           **14-15.1-07. Adoption petition - Time limit for filing.**

- 18           1.   Within ~~ninety~~ one hundred eighty days after entry of an order for relinquishment  
19               under this chapter, the identified adoptive parent shall file a petition for adoption  
20               under chapter 14-15 or the statutes of the adopting parent's state of residence. A  
21               copy of the petition to adopt must be filed with the department. Reports relating to  
22               postplacement supervision must be filed with the court hearing the adoption. The  
23               resulting decree of adoption, if so ordered by the court, must be filed with the  
24               department.
- 25           2.   If no petition for adoption is filed within ~~ninety~~ one hundred eighty days, the  
26               department shall notify the court. The court shall then set a hearing to determine  
27               whether the child's placement should be changed.