

5-525.

(a) The Administration shall establish a program of [foster care] OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT for minor children:

(1) who are placed in the custody of a local department, for a period of not more than 6 months, by a parent or legal guardian under a written agreement voluntarily entered into with the local department; or

(2) who are abused, abandoned, neglected, or dependent, if a juvenile court:

(i) has determined that continued residence in the child's home is contrary to the child's welfare; and

(ii) has committed the child to the custody or guardianship of a local department.

(B) IN ESTABLISHING THE OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT PROGRAM THE ADMINISTRATION SHALL:

(1) PROVIDE TIME-LIMITED FAMILY REUNIFICATION SERVICES TO A CHILD PLACED IN AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT AND TO THE PARENTS OR GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD, IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE CHILD'S SAFE AND APPROPRIATE REUNIFICATION WITHIN A TIMELY MANNER; AND

(2) CONCURRENTLY DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PERMANENCY PLAN THAT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD.

[(b)](C) (1) The local department shall provide 24-hour a day care and supportive services for a child who is committed to its custody or guardianship in [a licensed or approved foster family home, group home, or child care institution] AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT on a short-term basis[, while the local department develops and implements a permanency plan that is in the best interests of the child].

(2) (i) A child may not be committed to the custody or guardianship of a local department and placed in [foster care] AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT solely because the child's parent or guardian lacks shelter.

(ii) The local department shall make appropriate referrals to emergency shelter services and other services for the homeless family with a child which lacks shelter.

(D) (1) UNLESS A COURT ORDERS THAT REASONABLE EFFORTS ARE NOT REQUIRED UNDER § 3-812.1 OF THE COURTS ARTICLE OR § 5-313 OF THIS TITLE, REASONABLE EFFORTS SHALL BE MADE TO PRESERVE AND REUNIFY FAMILIES:

(I) PRIOR TO THE PLACEMENT OF A CHILD IN AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT, TO PREVENT OR ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR REMOVING THE CHILD FROM THE CHILD'S HOME; AND

(II) TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR A CHILD TO SAFELY RETURN TO THE CHILD'S HOME.