

APPENDIX

The Appendix contains the following as a convenience to the user of these rules:

- A. Statutes referenced within the Uniform Rules of Youth Court Practice.
- B. Mississippi's Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children.
- C. Amended Special Order No. 46 (Miss. Dec. 12, 1997) (Uniform Youth Court Case Identification and Docket Numbering System) and Special Order No. 47 (Miss. Dec. 16, 1996) (Uniform Youth Court Case Tracking System and Form).

A. STATUTES REFERENCED WITHIN THE UNIFORM RULES OF YOUTH COURT PRACTICE

§ 37-13-91. Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law

(1) This section shall be referred to as the "Mississippi Compulsory School Attendance Law."

(2) The following terms as used in this section are defined as follows:

(a) "Parent" means the father or mother to whom a child has been born, or the father or mother by whom a child has been legally adopted.

(b) "Guardian" means a guardian of the person of a child, other than a parent, who is legally appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(c) "Custodian" means any person having the present care or custody of a child, other than a parent or guardian of the child.

(d) "School day" means not less than five (5) and not more than eight (8) hours of actual teaching in which both teachers and pupils are in regular attendance for scheduled schoolwork.

(e) "School" means any public school in this state or any nonpublic school in this state which is in session each school year for at least one hundred eighty (180) school days, except that the "nonpublic" school term shall be the number of days that each school shall require for promotion from grade to grade.

(f) "Compulsory-school-age child" means a child who has attained or will attain the age of six (6) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year and who has not attained the age of seventeen (17) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year; and shall include any child who has attained or will attain the age of five (5) years on or before September 1 and has enrolled in a full-day public school kindergarten program. Provided, however, that the parent or guardian of any child enrolled in a full-day public school kindergarten program shall be allowed to disenroll the child from the program on a one-time basis, and such child shall not be deemed a compulsory-school-age child until the child attains the age of six (6) years.

(g) "School attendance officer" means a person employed by the State Department of Education pursuant to Section 37-13-89.

(h) "Appropriate school official" means the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, or, in the case of a nonpublic school, the principal or the headmaster.

(i) "Nonpublic school" means an institution for the teaching of children, consisting of a physical plant, whether owned or leased, including a home, instructional staff members and students, and which is in session each school year. This definition shall include, but not be limited to, private, church, parochial and home instruction programs.

(3) A parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child in this state shall cause the child to enroll in and attend a public school or legitimate nonpublic school for the period of time that the child is of compulsory school age, except under the following circumstances:

(a) When a compulsory-school-age child is physically, mentally or emotionally incapable of attending school as determined by the appropriate school official based upon sufficient medical documentation.

(b) When a compulsory-school-age child is enrolled in and pursuing a course of special education,

remedial education or education for handicapped or physically or mentally disadvantaged children.

(c) When a compulsory-school-age child is being educated in a legitimate home instruction program.

The parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child described in this subsection, or the parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child attending any nonpublic school, or the appropriate school official for any or all children attending a nonpublic school shall complete a "certificate of enrollment" in order to facilitate the administration of this section.

The form of the certificate of enrollment shall be prepared by the Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement of the State Department of Education and shall be designed to obtain the following information only:

(i) The name, address, telephone number and date of birth of the compulsory-school-age child;

(ii) The name, address and telephone number of the parent, guardian or custodian of the compulsory-school-age child;

(iii) A simple description of the type of education the compulsory-school-age child is receiving and, if the child is enrolled in a nonpublic school, the name and address of the school; and

(iv) The signature of the parent, guardian or custodian of the compulsory-school-age child or, for any or all compulsory-school-age child or children attending a nonpublic school, the signature of the appropriate school official and the date signed.

The certificate of enrollment shall be returned to the school attendance officer where the child resides on or before September 15 of each year. Any parent, guardian or custodian found by the school attendance officer to be in noncompliance with this section shall comply, after written notice of the noncompliance by the school attendance officer, with this subsection within ten (10) days after the notice or be in violation of this section. However, in the event the child has been enrolled in a public school within fifteen (15) calendar days after the first day of the school year as required in subsection (6), the parent or custodian may, at a later date, enroll the child in a legitimate nonpublic school or legitimate home instruction program and send the certificate of enrollment to the school attendance officer and be in compliance with this subsection.

For the purposes of this subsection, a legitimate nonpublic school or legitimate home instruction program shall be those not operated or instituted for the purpose of avoiding or circumventing the compulsory attendance law.

(4) An "unlawful absence" is an absence during a school day by a compulsory-school-age child, which absence is not due to a valid excuse for temporary nonattendance. Days missed from school due to disciplinary suspension shall not be considered an "excused" absence under this section. This subsection shall not apply to children enrolled in a nonpublic school.

Each of the following shall constitute a valid excuse for temporary nonattendance of a compulsory-school-age child enrolled in a public school, provided satisfactory evidence of the excuse is provided to the superintendent of the school district, or his designee:

(a) An absence is excused when the absence results from the compulsory-school-age child's attendance at an authorized school activity with the prior approval of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee. These activities may include field trips, athletic contests, student conventions, musical festivals and any similar activity.

(b) An absence is excused when the absence results from illness or injury which prevents the compulsory-school-age child from being physically able to attend school.

(c) An absence is excused when isolation of a compulsory-school-age child is ordered by the county health officer, by the State Board of Health or appropriate school official.

(d) An absence is excused when it results from the death or serious illness of a member of the immediate family of a compulsory-school-age child. The immediate family members of a compulsory-school-age child shall include children, spouse, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters.

- (e) An absence is excused when it results from a medical or dental appointment of a compulsory-school-age child where an approval of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, is gained before the absence, except in the case of emergency.
- (f) An absence is excused when it results from the attendance of a compulsory-school-age child at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the child is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
- (g) An absence may be excused if the religion to which the compulsory-school-age child or the child's parents adheres, requires or suggests the observance of a religious event. The approval of the absence is within the discretion of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, but approval should be granted unless the religion's observance is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the child.
- (h) An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity such as travel, including vacations or other family travel. Approval of the absence must be gained from the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, before the absence, but the approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- (i) An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, that conditions are sufficient to warrant the compulsory-school-age child's nonattendance. However, no absences shall be excused by the school district superintendent, or his designee, when any student suspensions or expulsions circumvent the intent and spirit of the compulsory attendance law.
- (5) Any parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child subject to this section who refuses or willfully fails to perform any of the duties imposed upon him or her under this section or who intentionally falsifies any information required to be contained in a certificate of enrollment, shall be guilty of contributing to the neglect of a child and, upon conviction, shall be punished in accordance with Section 97-5-39.

Upon prosecution of a parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child for violation of this section, the presentation of evidence by the prosecutor that shows that the child has not been enrolled in school within eighteen (18) calendar days after the first day of the school year of the public school which the child is eligible to attend, or that the child has accumulated twelve (12) unlawful absences during the school year at the public school in which the child has been enrolled, shall establish a prima facie case that the child's parent, guardian or custodian is responsible for the absences and has refused or willfully failed to perform the duties imposed upon him or her under this section. However, no proceedings under this section shall be brought against a parent, guardian or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child unless the school attendance officer has contacted promptly the home of the child and has provided written notice to the parent, guardian or custodian of the requirement for the child's enrollment or attendance.

- (6) If a compulsory-school-age child has not been enrolled in a school within fifteen (15) calendar days after the first day of the school year of the school which the child is eligible to attend or the child has accumulated five (5) unlawful absences during the school year of the public school in which the child is enrolled, the school district superintendent shall report, within two (2) school days or within five (5) calendar days, whichever is less, the absences to the school attendance officer. The State Department of Education shall prescribe a uniform method for schools to utilize in reporting the unlawful absences to the school attendance officer. The superintendent, or his designee, also shall report any student suspensions or student expulsions to the school attendance officer when they occur.
- (7) When a school attendance officer has made all attempts to secure enrollment and/or attendance of a compulsory-school-age child and is unable to effect the enrollment and/or attendance, the attendance officer shall file a petition with the youth court under Section 43-21-451 or shall file a petition in a court of competent jurisdiction as it pertains to parent or child. Sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and municipal law

enforcement officers shall be fully authorized to investigate all cases of nonattendance and unlawful absences by compulsory-school-age children, and shall be authorized to file a petition with the youth court under Section 43-21-451 or file a petition or information in the court of competent jurisdiction as it pertains to parent or child for violation of this section. The youth court shall expedite a hearing to make an appropriate adjudication and a disposition to ensure compliance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law, and may order the child to enroll or re-enroll in school. The superintendent of the school district to which the child is ordered may assign, in his discretion, the child to the alternative school program of the school established pursuant to Section 37-13-92.

(8) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations for the purpose of reprimanding any school superintendents who fail to timely report unexcused absences under the provisions of this section.

(9) Notwithstanding any provision or implication herein to the contrary, it is not the intention of this section to impair the primary right and the obligation of the parent or parents, or person or persons in loco parentis to a child, to choose the proper education and training for such child, and nothing in this section shall ever be construed to grant, by implication or otherwise, to the State of Mississippi, any of its officers, agencies or subdivisions any right or authority to control, manage, supervise or make any suggestion as to the control, management or supervision of any private or parochial school or institution for the education or training of children, of any kind whatsoever that is not a public school according to the laws of this state; and this section shall never be construed so as to grant, by implication or otherwise, any right or authority to any state agency or other entity to control, manage, supervise, provide for or affect the operation, management, program, curriculum, admissions policy or discipline of any such school or home instruction program.

§ 43-15-13. Individualized plans, reviews, training

(1) For purposes of this section, "children" means persons found within the state who are under the age of twenty-one (21) years, and who were placed in the custody of the Department of Human Services by the youth court of the appropriate county.

(2) The Department of Human Services shall establish a foster care placement program for children whose custody lies with the department, with the following objectives:

(a) Protecting and promoting the health, safety and welfare of children;

(b) Preventing the unnecessary separation of children from their families by identifying family problems, assisting families in resolving their problems and preventing the breakup of the family where the prevention of child removal is desirable and possible when the child can be cared for at home without endangering the child's health and safety;

(c) Remedying or assisting in the solution of problems that may result in the neglect, abuse, exploitation or delinquency of children;

(d) Restoring to their families children who have been removed, by the provision of services to the child and the families when the child can be cared for at home without endangering the child's health and safety;

(e) Placing children in suitable adoptive homes approved by a licensed adoption agency or family protection specialist, in cases where restoration to the biological family is not safe, possible or appropriate;

(f) Assuring safe and adequate care of children away from their homes, in cases where the child cannot be returned home or cannot be placed for adoption. At the time of placement, the department shall implement concurrent planning, as described in subsection (8) of this section, so that permanency may occur at the earliest opportunity. Consideration of possible failure or delay of reunification should be given, to the end that the placement made is the best available placement to provide permanency for the child; and

(g) Providing a family protection specialist or worker or team of such specialists or workers for a family

and child throughout the implementation of their permanent living arrangement plan. Wherever feasible, the same family protection specialist or worker or team shall remain on the case until the child is no longer under the jurisdiction of the youth court.

(3) The Department of Human Services shall administer a system of individualized plans and reviews once every six (6) months for each child under its custody within the State of Mississippi, each child who has been adjudged a neglected, abandoned or abused child and whose custody was changed by court order as a result of that adjudication, and each public or private facility licensed by the department. The Department of Human Services administrative review shall be completed on each child within the first three (3) months and a foster care review once every six (6) months after the child's initial forty-eight-hour shelter hearing. That system shall be for the purpose of enhancing potential family life for the child by the development of individual plans to return the child to its natural parent or parents, or to refer the child to the appropriate court for termination of parental rights and placement in a permanent relative's home, adoptive home or foster/adoptive home. The goal of the Department of Human Services shall be to return the child to its natural parent(s) or refer the child to the appropriate court for termination of parental rights and placement in a permanent relative's home, adoptive home or foster/adoptive home within the time periods specified in this subsection or in subsection (4) of this section. In furthering this goal, the department shall establish policy and procedures designed to appropriately place children in permanent homes, the policy to include a system of reviews for all children in foster care, as follows: foster care counselors in the department shall make all possible contact with the child's natural parent(s) and any interested relative for the first two (2) months following the child's entry into the foster care system. For any child who has been in foster care for fifteen (15) of the last twenty-two (22) months regardless of whether the foster care was continuous for all of those twenty-two (22) months, the department shall file a petition to terminate the parental rights of the child's parents. The time period starts to run from the date the court makes a finding of abuse and/or neglect or sixty (60) days from when the child was removed from his or her home, whichever is earlier. The department can choose not to file a termination of parental rights petition if the following apply:

(a) The child is being cared for by a relative; and/or

(b) The department has documented compelling and extraordinary reasons why termination of parental rights would not be in the best interests of the child. Before granting or denying a request by the department for an extension of time for filing a termination of parental rights action, the court shall receive a written report on the progress which a parent of the child has made in treatment, to be made to the court in writing by a mental health/substance abuse therapist or counselor.

(4) In the case of any child who is placed in foster care on or after July 1, 1998, except in cases of aggravated circumstances prescribed in Section 43-21- 603(7)(c) or (d), the child's natural parent(s) will have a reasonable time to be determined by the court, which shall not exceed a six-month period of time, in which to meet the service agreement with the department for the benefit of the child unless the department has documented extraordinary and compelling reasons for extending the time period in the best interest of the child. If this agreement has not been satisfactorily met, simultaneously the child will be referred to the appropriate court for termination of parental rights and placement in a permanent relative's home, adoptive home or a foster/adoptive home. For children under the age of three (3) years, termination of parental rights shall be initiated within six (6) months, unless the department has documented compelling and extraordinary circumstances, and placement in a permanent relative's home, adoptive home or foster/adoptive home within two (2) months. For children who have been abandoned under the provisions of Section 97-5-1, termination of parental rights shall be initiated within thirty (30) days and placement in an adoptive home shall be initiated without necessity for placement in a foster home. The department need not initiate termination of parental rights proceedings where the child has been placed in durable legal custody or long-term or formalized foster care by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(5) The foster care review once every six (6) months shall be conducted by the youth court or its designee(s), and/or by personnel within the Department of Human Services or by a designee or designees of the department and may include others appointed by the department, and the review shall include at a minimum an evaluation of the child based on the following:

(a) The extent of the care and support provided by the parents or parent, while the child is in temporary custody;

(b) The extent of communication with the child by parents, parent or guardian;

(c) The degree of compliance by the agency and the parents with the social service plan established;

(d) The methods of achieving the goal and the plan establishing a permanent home for the child;

(e) Social services offered and/or utilized to facilitate plans for establishing a permanent home for the child; and

(f) Relevant testimony and recommendations from the foster parent of the child, the grandparents of the child, the guardian ad litem of the child, representatives of any private care agency that has cared for the child, the family protection worker or family protection specialist assigned to the case, and any other relevant testimony pertaining to the case.

Each child's review plan once every six (6) months shall be filed with the court which awarded custody and shall be made available to natural parents or foster parents upon approval of the court. The court shall make a finding as to the degree of compliance by the agency and the parent(s) with the child's social service plan. The court also shall find that the child's health and safety are the paramount concern. In the interest of the child, the court shall, where appropriate, initiate proceedings on its own motion. The * * * Department of Human Services shall report to the Legislature as to the number of those children, the findings of the foster care review board and relevant statistical information in foster care in a semiannual report to the Legislature to be submitted to the Joint Oversight Committee of the Department of Human Services. The report shall not refer to the specific name of any child in foster care.

(6) The Department of Human Services, with the cooperation and assistance of the State Department of Health, shall develop and implement a training program for foster care parents to indoctrinate them as to their proper responsibilities upon a child's entry into their foster care. The program shall provide a minimum of twelve (12) clock hours of training. The foster care training program shall be satisfactorily completed by such foster care parents before or within ninety (90) days after child placement with the parent. Record of the foster care parent's training program participation shall be filed with the court as part of a foster care child's review plan once every six (6) months.

(7) When the Department of Human Services is considering placement of a child in a foster home and when the department deems it to be in the best interest of the child, the department shall give first priority to placing the child in the home of one (1) of the child's relatives within the third degree, as computed by the civil law rule. In placing the child in a relative's home, the department may waive any rule, regulation or policy applicable to placement in foster care that would otherwise require the child to have a separate bed or bedroom or have a bedroom of a certain size, if placing the child in a relative's home would be in the best interest of the child and those requirements cannot be met in the relative's home.

(8) The Legislature recognizes that the best interests of the child require that the child be placed in the most permanent living arrangement as soon as is practicably possible. To achieve this goal, the Department of Human Services is directed to conduct concurrent planning so that a permanent living arrangement may occur at the earliest opportunity. Permanent living arrangements may include prevention of placement of a child outside the home of the family when the child can be cared for at home without endangering the child's health or safety; reunification with the family, when safe and appropriate, if temporary placement is necessary; or movement of the child toward the most permanent living arrangement and permanent legal status. When a child is placed in foster care or relative care, the department shall first ensure and document that reasonable efforts were made to prevent or eliminate the

need to remove the child from the child's home. The department's first priority shall be to make reasonable efforts to reunify the family when temporary placement of the child occurs or shall request a finding from the court that reasonable efforts are not appropriate or have been unsuccessful. A decision to place a child in foster care or relative care shall be made with consideration of the child's health, safety and best interests. At the time of placement, consideration should also be given so that if reunification fails or is delayed, the placement made is the best available placement to provide a permanent living arrangement for the child. The department shall adopt rules addressing concurrent planning for reunification and a permanent living arrangement. The department shall consider the following factors when determining appropriateness of concurrent planning:

- (a) The likelihood of prompt reunification;
- (b) The past history of the family;
- (c) The barriers to reunification being addressed by the family;
- (d) The level of cooperation of the family;
- (e) The foster parents' willingness to work with the family to reunite;
- (f) The willingness and ability of the foster family or relative placement to provide an adoptive home or long-term placement;
- (g) The age of the child; and
- (h) Placement of siblings.

(9) If the department has placed a child in foster care or relative care under a court order, the department may not change the child's placement unless the department specifically documents to the court that the current placement is unsafe or unsuitable or that another placement is in the child's best interests unless the new placement is in an adoptive home or other permanent placement. Except in emergency circumstances as determined by the department or where the court orders placement of the child under Section 43-21-303, the foster parents, grandparents or other relatives of the child shall be given an opportunity to contest the specific reasons documented by the department at least seventy-two (72) hours before any such departure, and the court may conduct a review of that placement unless the new placement is in an adoptive home or other permanent placement. When a child is returned to foster care or relative care, the former foster parents or relative placement shall be given the prior right of return placement in order to eliminate additional trauma to the child.

(10) The Department of Human Services shall provide the foster parents, grandparents or other relatives with at least a seventy-two-hour notice of departure for any child placed in their foster care or relative care, except in emergency circumstances as determined by the department or where the court orders placement of the child under Section 43-21-303. The parent/legal guardian, grandparents of the child, guardian ad litem and the court exercising jurisdiction shall be notified in writing when the child leaves foster care or relative care placement, regardless of whether the child's departure was planned or unplanned. The only exceptions to giving a written notice to the parent(s) are when a parent has voluntarily released the child for adoption or the parent's legal rights to the child have been terminated through the appropriate court with jurisdiction.

(11) The Department of Human Services shall extend the following rights to persons who provide foster care and relative care:

- (a) A clear understanding of their role while providing care and the roles of the birth parent(s) and the placement agency in respect to the child in care;
- (b) Respect, consideration, trust and value as a family who is making an important contribution to the agency's objectives;
- (c) Involvement in all the agency's crucial decisions regarding the child as team members who have pertinent information based on their day-to-day knowledge of the child in care;
- (d) Support from the family protection worker or the family protection specialist in efforts to do a better day-to-day job in caring for the child and in working to achieve the agency's objectives for the child and

the birth family through provision of:

- (i) Pertinent information about the child and the birth family;
 - (ii) Help in using appropriate resources to meet the child's needs;
 - (iii) Direct interviews between the family protection worker or specialist and the child, previously discussed and understood by the foster parents;
 - (e) The opportunity to develop confidence in making day-to-day decisions in regard to the child;
 - (f) The opportunity to learn and grow in their vocation through planned * * * education in caring for the child;
 - (g) The opportunity to be heard regarding agency practices that they may question;
 - (h) Reimbursement for costs of the child's care in the form of a board payment based on the age of the child as prescribed in Section 43-15-17; and
 - (i) Reimbursement for property damages caused by children in the custody of the Department of Human Services in an amount not to exceed Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00), as evidenced by written documentation. The Department of Human Services shall not incur liability for any damages as a result of providing this reimbursement.
- (12) The Department of Human Services shall require the following responsibilities from participating persons who provide foster care and relative care:
- (a) Understanding the department's function in regard to the foster care and relative care program and related social service programs;
 - (b) Sharing with the department any information which may contribute to the care of children;
 - (c) Functioning within the established goals and objectives to improve the general welfare of the child;
 - (d) Recognizing the problems in home placement that will require professional advice and assistance and that such help should be utilized to its full potential;
 - (e) Recognizing that the family who cares for the child will be one of the primary resources for preparing a child for any future plans that are made, including return to birth parent(s), termination of parental rights or reinstitutionalization;
 - (f) Expressing their view of agency practices which relate to the child with the appropriate staff member;
 - (g) Understanding that all information shared with the persons who provide foster care or relative care about the child and his/her birth parent(s) must be held in the strictest of confidence;
 - (h) Cooperating with any plan to reunite the child with his birth family and work with the birth family to achieve this goal; and
 - (i) Attending dispositional review hearings and termination of parental rights hearings conducted by a court of competent jurisdiction, or providing their recommendations to the court in writing.

§ 43-21-103. Construction; statement of policy

This chapter shall be liberally construed to the end that each child coming within the jurisdiction of the youth court shall become a responsible, accountable and productive citizen, and that each such child shall receive such care, guidance and control, preferably in such child's own home as is conducive toward that end and is in the state's and the child's best interest. It is the public policy of this state that the parents of each child shall be primarily responsible for the care, support, education and welfare of such children; however, when it is necessary that a child be removed from the control of such child's parents, the youth court shall secure proper care for such child.

§ 43-21-105. Definitions

The following words and phrases, for purposes of this chapter, shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context clearly otherwise requires:

- (a) "Youth court" means the Youth Court Division.
- (b) "Judge" means the judge of the Youth Court Division.

(c) "Designee" means any person that the judge appoints to perform a duty which this chapter requires to be done by the judge or his designee. The judge may not appoint a person who is involved in law enforcement to be his designee.

(d) "Child" and "youth" are synonymous, and each means a person who has not reached his eighteenth birthday. A child who has not reached his eighteenth birthday and is on active duty for a branch of the armed services or is married is not considered a "child" or "youth" for the purposes of this chapter.

(e) "Parent" means the father or mother to whom the child has been born, or the father or mother by whom the child has been legally adopted.

(f) "Guardian" means a court-appointed guardian of the person of a child.

(g) "Custodian" means any person having the present care or custody of a child whether such person be a parent or otherwise.

(h) "Legal custodian" means a court-appointed custodian of the child.

(i) "Delinquent child" means a child who has reached his tenth birthday and who has committed a delinquent act.

(j) "Delinquent act" is any act, which if committed by an adult, is designated as a crime under state or federal law, or municipal or county ordinance other than offenses punishable by life imprisonment or death. A delinquent act includes escape from lawful detention and violations of the Uniform Controlled Substances Law and violent behavior.

(k) "Child in need of supervision" means a child who has reached his seventh birthday and is in need of treatment or rehabilitation because the child:

(i) Is habitually disobedient of reasonable and lawful commands of his parent, guardian or custodian and is ungovernable; or

(ii) While being required to attend school, willfully and habitually violates the rules thereof or willfully and habitually absents himself therefrom; or

(iii) Runs away from home without good cause; or

(iv) Has committed a delinquent act or acts.

(l) "Neglected child" means a child:

(i) Whose parent, guardian or custodian or any person responsible for his care or support, neglects or refuses, when able so to do, to provide for him proper and necessary care or support, or education as required by law, or medical, surgical, or other care necessary for his well-being; provided, however, a parent who withholds medical treatment from any child who in good faith is under treatment by spiritual means alone through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof shall not, for that reason alone, be considered to be neglectful under any provision of this chapter; or

(ii) Who is otherwise without proper care, custody, supervision or support; or

(iii) Who, for any reason, lacks the special care made necessary for him by reason of his mental condition, whether said mental condition be mentally retarded or mentally ill; or

(iv) Who, for any reason, lacks the care necessary for his health, morals or well-being.

(m) "Abused child" means a child whose parent, guardian or custodian or any person responsible for his care or support, whether legally obligated to do so or not, has caused or allowed to be caused upon said child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, mental injury, nonaccidental physical injury or other maltreatment. Provided, however, that physical discipline, including spanking, performed on a child by a parent, guardian or custodian in a reasonable manner shall not be deemed abuse under this section.

(n) "Sexual abuse" means obscene or pornographic photographing, filming or depiction of children for commercial purposes, or the rape, molestation, incest, prostitution or other such forms of sexual exploitation of children under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened.

(o) "A child in need of special care" means a child with any mental or physical illness that cannot be treated with the dispositional alternatives ordinarily available to the youth court.

(p) A "dependent child" means any child who is not a child in need of supervision, a delinquent child, an abused child or a neglected child, and which child has been voluntarily placed in the custody of the Department of Human Services by his parent, guardian or custodian.

(q) "Custody" means the physical possession of the child by any person.

(r) "Legal custody" means the legal status created by a court order which gives the legal custodian the responsibilities of physical possession of the child and the duty to provide him with food, shelter, education and reasonable medical care, all subject to residual rights and responsibilities of the parent or guardian of the person.

(s) "Detention" means the care of children in physically restrictive facilities.

(t) "Shelter" means care of children in physically nonrestrictive facilities.

(u) "Records involving children" means any of the following from which the child can be identified:

(i) All youth court records as defined in Section 43-21-251;

(ii) All social records as defined in Section 43-21-253;

(iii) All law enforcement records as defined in Section 43-21-255;

(iv) All agency records as defined in Section 43-21-257; and

(v) All other documents maintained by any representative of the state, county, municipality or other public agency insofar as they relate to the apprehension, custody, adjudication or disposition of a child who is the subject of a youth court cause.

(v) "Any person responsible for care or support" means the person who is providing for the child at a given time. This term shall include, but is not limited to, stepparents, foster parents, relatives, nonlicensed babysitters or other similar persons responsible for a child and staff of residential care facilities and group homes that are licensed by the Department of Human Services.

(w) The singular includes the plural, the plural the singular and the masculine the feminine when consistent with the intent of this chapter.

(x) "Out-of-home" setting means the temporary supervision or care of children by the staff of licensed day care centers, the staff of public, private and state schools, the staff of juvenile detention facilities, the staff of unlicensed residential care facilities and group homes and the staff of, or individuals representing, churches, civic or social organizations.

(y) "Durable legal custody" means the legal status created by a court order which gives the durable legal custodian the responsibilities of physical possession of the child and the duty to provide him with care, nurture, welfare, food, shelter, education and reasonable medical care. All these duties as enumerated are subject to the residual rights and responsibilities of the natural parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child or children.

(z) "Status offense" means conduct subject to adjudication by the youth court that would not be a crime if committed by an adult.

§ 43-21-107. Creation in various counties

(1) A youth court division is hereby created as a division of the county court of each county now or hereafter having a county court, and the county judge shall be the judge of the youth court unless another judge is named by the county judge as provided by this chapter.

(2) A youth court division is hereby created as a division of the chancery court of each county in which no county court is maintained and any chancellor within a chancery court district shall be the judge of the youth court of that county within such chancery court district unless another judge is named by the senior chancellor of the county or chancery court district as provided by this chapter.

(3) In any county where there is no county court or family court on July 1, 1979, there may be created a youth court division as a division of the municipal court in any city if the governing authorities of such

city adopt a resolution to that effect. The cost of the youth court division of the municipal court shall be paid from any funds available to the municipality excluding county funds. No additional municipal youth court shall be formed after January 1, 2007.

§ 43-21-111. Regular and special referees

(1) In any county not having a county court or family court the judge may appoint as provided in Section 43-21-123 regular or special referees who shall be attorneys at law and members of the bar in good standing to act in cases concerning children within the jurisdiction of the youth court, and a regular referee shall hold office until removed by the judge. The requirement that regular or special referees appointed pursuant to this subsection be attorneys shall apply only to regular or special referees who were not first appointed regular or special referees prior to July 1, 1991.

(2) Any referee appointed pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall be required to receive judicial training approved by the Mississippi Judicial College and shall be required to receive regular annual continuing education in the field of juvenile justice. The amount of judicial training and annual continuing education which shall be satisfactory to fulfill the requirements of this section shall conform with the amount prescribed by the Rules and Regulations for Mandatory Continuing Judicial Education promulgated by the Supreme Court. The Administrative Office of Courts shall maintain a roll of referees appointed under this section, shall enforce the provisions of this subsection and shall maintain records on all such referees regarding such training. Should a referee miss two (2) consecutive training sessions sponsored or approved by the Mississippi Judicial College as required by this subsection or fail to attend one (1) such training session within six (6) months of their initial appointment as a referee, the referee shall be disqualified to serve and be immediately removed as a referee and another member of the bar shall be appointed as provided in this section.

(3) The judge may direct that hearings in any case or class of cases be conducted in the first instance by the referee. The judge may also delegate his own administrative responsibilities to the referee.

(4) All hearings authorized to be heard by a referee shall proceed in the same manner as hearings before the youth court judge. A referee shall possess all powers and perform all the duties of the youth court judge in the hearings authorized to be heard by the referee.

(5) An order entered by the referee shall be mailed immediately to all parties and their counsel. A rehearing by the judge shall be allowed if any party files a written motion for a rehearing or on the court's own motion within three (3) days after notice of referee's order. The youth court may enlarge the time for filing a motion for a rehearing for good cause shown. Any rehearing shall be upon the record of the hearing before the referee, but additional evidence may be admitted in the discretion of the judge. A motion for a rehearing shall not act as a supersedeas of the referee's order, unless the judge shall so order.

(6) The salary for the referee shall be fixed on order of the judge as provided in Section 43-21-123 and shall be paid by the county out of any available funds budgeted for the youth court by the board of supervisors.

(7) Upon request of the boards of supervisors of two (2) or more counties, the judge of the chancery court may appoint a suitable person as referee to two (2) or more counties within his district, and the payment of salary may be divided in such ratio as may be agreed upon by the boards of supervisors.

§ 43-21-115. Establishment of intake unit

In every youth court division the judge shall appoint as provided in Section 43-21-123 one or more persons to function as the intake unit for the youth court division. The youth court intake unit shall perform all duties specified by this chapter. If the person serving as the youth court intake unit is not already a salaried public employee, the salary for such person shall be fixed on order of the judge as provided in Section 43-21-123 and shall be paid by the county or municipality, as the case may be, out of any available funds budgeted for the youth court by the board of supervisors.

§ 43-21-121. Appointment of guardian ad litem

- (1) The youth court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the child:
- (a) When a child has no parent, guardian or custodian;
 - (b) When the youth court cannot acquire personal jurisdiction over a parent, a guardian or a custodian;
 - (c) When the parent is a minor or a person of unsound mind;
 - (d) When the parent is indifferent to the interest of the child or if the interests of the child and the parent, considered in the context of the cause, appear to conflict;
 - (e) In every case involving an abused or neglected child which results in a judicial proceeding; or
 - (f) In any other instance where the youth court finds appointment of a guardian ad litem to be in the best interest of the child.
- (2) The guardian ad litem shall be appointed by the court when custody is ordered or at the first judicial hearing regarding the case, whichever occurs first.
- (3) In addition to all other duties required by law, a guardian ad litem shall have the duty to protect the interest of a child for whom he has been appointed guardian ad litem. The guardian ad litem shall investigate, make recommendations to the court or enter reports as necessary to hold paramount the child's best interest. The guardian ad litem is not an adversary party and the court shall insure that guardians ad litem perform their duties properly and in the best interest of their wards. The guardian ad litem shall be a competent person who has no adverse interest to the minor. The court shall insure that the guardian ad litem is adequately instructed on the proper performance of his duties.
- (4) The court may appoint either a suitable attorney or a suitable layman as guardian ad litem. In cases where the court appoints a layman as guardian ad litem, the court shall also appoint an attorney to represent the child. From and after January 1, 1999, in order to be eligible for an appointment as a guardian ad litem, such attorney or lay person must have received child protection and juvenile justice training provided by or approved by the Mississippi Judicial College within the year immediately preceding such appointment. The Mississippi Judicial College shall determine the amount of child protection and juvenile justice training which shall be satisfactory to fulfill the requirements of this section. The Administrative Office of Courts shall maintain a roll of all attorneys and laymen eligible to be appointed as a guardian ad litem under this section and shall enforce the provisions of this subsection.
- (5) Upon appointment of a guardian ad litem, the youth court shall continue any pending proceedings for a reasonable time to allow the guardian ad litem to familiarize himself with the matter, consult with counsel and prepare his participation in the cause.
- (6) Upon order of the youth court, the guardian ad litem shall be paid a reasonable fee as determined by the youth court judge or referee out of the county general fund as provided under Section 43-21-123. To be eligible for such fee, the guardian ad litem shall submit an accounting of the time spent in performance of his duties to the court.
- (7) The court, in its sound discretion, may appoint a volunteer trained layperson to assist children subject to the provisions of this section in addition to the appointment of a guardian ad litem.

§ 43-21-123. Funding of court

Except for expenses provided by state funds and/or other monies, the board of supervisors, or the municipal governing board where there is a municipal youth court, shall adequately provide funds for the operation of the youth court division of the chancery court in conjunction with the regular chancery court budget, or the county or family courts where said courts are constituted. In preparation for said funding, on an annual basis at the time requested, the youth court judge or administrator shall prepare and submit to the board of supervisors, or the municipal governing board of the youth court wherever the youth court is a municipal court, an annual budget which will identify the number, staff position, title and amount of annual or monthly compensation of each position as well as provide for other expenditures necessary to the functioning and operation of the youth court. When the budget of the

youth court or youth court judge is approved by the board of supervisors or the governing authority of the municipality, then the youth court or youth court judge may employ such persons as provided in the budget from time to time.

The board of supervisors of any county in which there is located a youth court, and the governing authority of any municipality in which there is located a municipal youth court, are each authorized to reimburse the youth court judges and other youth court employees or personnel for reasonable travel and expenses incurred in the performance of their duties and in attending educational meetings offering professional training to such persons as budgeted.

§ 43-21-151. Exclusive original jurisdiction; exceptions; children under 13

(1) The youth court shall have exclusive original jurisdiction in all proceedings concerning a delinquent child, a child in need of supervision, a neglected child, an abused child or a dependent child except in the following circumstances:

(a) Any act attempted or committed by a child, which if committed by an adult would be punishable under state or federal law by life imprisonment or death, will be in the original jurisdiction of the circuit court;

(b) Any act attempted or committed by a child with the use of a deadly weapon, the carrying of which concealed is prohibited by Section 97-37-1, or a shotgun or a rifle, which would be a felony if committed by an adult, will be in the original jurisdiction of the circuit court; and

(c) When a charge of abuse of a child first arises in the course of a custody action between the parents of the child already pending in the chancery court and no notice of such abuse was provided prior to such chancery proceedings, the chancery court may proceed with the investigation, hearing and determination of such abuse charge as a part of its hearing and determination of the custody issue as between the parents, notwithstanding the other provisions of the Youth Court Law. The proceedings in chancery court on the abuse charge shall be confidential in the same manner as provided in youth court proceedings. When a child is expelled from the public schools, the youth court shall be notified of the act of expulsion and the act or acts constituting the basis for expulsion.

(2) Jurisdiction of the child in the cause shall attach at the time of the offense and shall continue thereafter for that offense until the child's twentieth birthday, unless sooner terminated by order of the youth court. The youth court shall not have jurisdiction over offenses committed by a child on or after his eighteenth birthday, or over offenses committed by a child on or after his seventeenth birthday where such offenses would be a felony if committed by an adult.

(3) No child who has not reached his thirteenth birthday shall be held criminally responsible or criminally prosecuted for a misdemeanor or felony; however, the parent, guardian or custodian of such child may be civilly liable for any criminal acts of such child. No child under the jurisdiction of the youth court shall be held criminally responsible or criminally prosecuted by any court for any act designated as a delinquent act, unless jurisdiction is transferred to another court under Section 43-21-157.

(4) The youth court shall also have jurisdiction of offenses committed by a child which have been transferred to the youth court by an order of a circuit court of this state having original jurisdiction of the offense, as provided by Section 43-21-159.

(5) The youth court shall regulate and approve the use of teen court as provided in Section 43-21-753.

§ 43-21-157. Transfer to other courts; prospects of rehabilitation

(1) If a child who has reached his thirteenth birthday is charged by petition to be a delinquent child, the youth court, either on motion of the youth court prosecutor or on the youth court's own motion, after a hearing as hereinafter provided, may, in its discretion, transfer jurisdiction of the alleged offense described in the petition or a lesser included offense to the criminal court which would have trial jurisdiction of such offense if committed by an adult. The child shall be represented by counsel in transfer

proceedings.

(2) A motion to transfer shall be filed on a day prior to the date set for the adjudicatory hearing but not more than ten (10) days after the filing of the petition. The youth court may order a transfer study at any time after the motion to transfer is filed. The transfer study and any other social record which the youth court will consider at the transfer hearing shall be made available to the child's counsel prior to the hearing. Summons shall be served in the same manner as other summons under this chapter with a copy of the motion to transfer and the petition attached thereto.

(3) The transfer hearing shall be bifurcated. At the transfer hearing, the youth court shall first determine whether probable cause exists to believe that the child committed the alleged offense. For the purpose of the transfer hearing only, the child may, with the assistance of counsel, waive the determination of probable cause.

(4) Upon such a finding of probable cause, the youth court may transfer jurisdiction of the alleged offense and the youth if the youth court finds by clear and convincing evidence that there are no reasonable prospects of rehabilitation within the juvenile justice system.

(5) The factors which shall be considered by the youth court in determining the reasonable prospects of rehabilitation within the juvenile justice system are:

- (a) Whether or not the alleged offense constituted a substantial danger to the public;
- (b) The seriousness of the alleged offense;
- (c) Whether or not the transfer is required to protect the community;
- (d) Whether or not the alleged offense was committed in an aggressive, violent, premeditated or willful manner;
- (e) Whether the alleged offense was against persons or against property, greater weight being given to the offense against persons, especially if personal injury resulted;
- (f) The sophistication, maturity and educational background of the child;
- (g) The child's home situation, emotional condition and life-style;
- (h) The history of the child, including experience with the juvenile justice system, other courts, probation, commitments to juvenile institutions or other placements;
- (i) Whether or not the child can be retained in the juvenile justice system long enough for effective treatment or rehabilitation;
- (j) The dispositional resources available to the juvenile justice system;
- (k) Dispositional resources available to the adult correctional system for the child if treated as an adult;
- (l) Whether the alleged offense was committed on school property, public or private, or at any school-sponsored event, and constituted a substantial danger to other students;
- (m) Any other factors deemed relevant by the youth court; and
- (n) Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the transfer of jurisdiction of an alleged offense and a child if that child, at the time of the transfer hearing, previously has not been placed in a juvenile institution.

(6) If the youth court transfers jurisdiction of the alleged offense to a criminal court, the youth court shall enter a transfer order containing:

- (a) Facts showing that the youth court had jurisdiction of the cause and of the parties;
- (b) Facts showing that the child was represented by counsel;
- (c) Facts showing that the hearing was held in the presence of the child and his counsel;
- (d) A recital of the findings of probable cause and the facts and reasons underlying the youth court's decision to transfer jurisdiction of the alleged offense;
- (e) The conditions of custody or release of the child pending criminal court proceedings, including bail or recognizance as the case may justify, as well as a designation of the custodian for the time being; and
- (f) A designation of the alleged offense transferred and of the court to which the transfer is made and a direction to the clerk to forward for filing in such court a certified copy of the transfer order of the youth court.

(7) The testimony of the child respondent at a transfer hearing conducted pursuant to this chapter shall not be admissible against the child in any proceeding other than the transfer hearing.

(8) When jurisdiction of an offense is transferred to the circuit court, or when a youth has committed an act which is in original circuit court jurisdiction pursuant to Section 43-21-151, the jurisdiction of the youth court over the youth is forever terminated, except that such jurisdiction is not forever terminated if the circuit court transfers or remands the transferred case to the youth court or if a child who has been transferred to the circuit court or is in the original jurisdiction of the circuit court is not convicted. However, when jurisdiction of an offense is transferred to the circuit court pursuant to this section or when an offense committed by a youth is in original circuit court jurisdiction pursuant to Section 43-21-151, the circuit court shall thereafter assume and retain jurisdiction of any felony offenses committed by such youth without any additional transfer proceedings. Any misdemeanor offenses committed by youth who are in circuit court jurisdiction pursuant to this section or Section 43-21-151 shall be prosecuted in the court which would have jurisdiction over that offense if committed by an adult without any additional transfer proceedings. The circuit court may review the transfer proceedings on motion of the transferred child. Such review shall be on the record of the hearing in the youth court. The circuit court shall remand the offense to the youth court if there is no substantial evidence to support the order of the youth court. The circuit court may also review the conditions of custody or release pending criminal court proceedings.

(9) When any youth has been the subject of a transfer to circuit court for an offense committed in any county of the state or has committed any act which is in the original jurisdiction of the circuit court pursuant to Section 43-21-151, that transfer or original jurisdiction shall be recognized by all other courts of the state and no subsequent offense committed by such youth in any county of the state shall be in the jurisdiction of the youth court unless transferred to the youth court pursuant to Section 43-21-159(3). Transfers from youth courts of other states shall be recognized by the courts of this state and no youth who has a pending charge or a conviction in the adult court system of any other state shall be in the jurisdiction of the youth courts of this state, but such youths shall be in the jurisdiction of the circuit court for any felony committed in this state or in the jurisdiction of the court of competent jurisdiction for any misdemeanor committed in this state.

§ 43-21-159. Transfer of cases

(1) When a person appears before a court other than the youth court, and it is determined that the person is a child under jurisdiction of the youth court, such court shall, unless the jurisdiction of the offense has been transferred to such court as provided in this chapter, or unless the child has previously been the subject of a transfer from the youth court to the circuit court for trial as an adult and was convicted, immediately dismiss the proceeding without prejudice and forward all documents pertaining to the cause to the youth court; and all entries in permanent records shall be expunged. The youth court shall have the power to order and supervise the expunction or the destruction of such records in accordance with Section 43-21-265. Upon petition therefor, the youth court shall expunge the record of any case within its jurisdiction in which an arrest was made, the person arrested was released and the case was dismissed or the charges were dropped or there was no disposition of such case. In cases where the child is charged with a hunting or fishing violation or a traffic violation whether it be any state or federal law, a violation of the Mississippi Implied Consent Law, or municipal ordinance or county resolution or where the child is charged with a violation of Section 67-3-70, the appropriate criminal court shall proceed to dispose of the same in the same manner as for other adult offenders and it shall not be necessary to transfer the case to the youth court of the county. Unless the cause has been transferred, or unless the child has previously been the subject of a transfer from the youth court to the circuit court for trial as an adult, except for violations under the Implied Consent Law, and was convicted, the youth court shall have power on its own motion to remove jurisdiction from any criminal court of any offense including a hunting or fishing

violation, a traffic violation, or a violation of Section 67-3-70, committed by a child in a matter under the jurisdiction of the youth court and proceed therewith in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

(2) After conviction and sentence of any child by any other court having original jurisdiction on a misdemeanor charge, and within the time allowed for an appeal of such conviction and sentence, the youth court of the county shall have the full power to stay the execution of the sentence and to release the child on good behavior or on other order as the youth court may see fit to make unless the child has previously been the subject of a transfer from the youth court to the circuit court for trial as an adult and was convicted. When a child is convicted of a misdemeanor and is committed to, incarcerated in or imprisoned in a jail or other place of detention by a criminal court having proper jurisdiction of such charge, such court shall notify the youth court judge or the judge's designee of the conviction and sentence prior to the commencement of such incarceration. The youth court shall have the power to order and supervise the destruction of any records involving children maintained by the criminal court in accordance with Section 43-21-265. However, the youth court shall have the power to set aside a judgment of any other court rendered in any matter over which the youth court has exclusive original jurisdiction, to expunge or destroy the records thereof in accordance with Section 43-21-265, and to order a refund of fines and costs.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) or (2) shall apply to a youth who has a pending charge or a conviction for any crime over which circuit court has original jurisdiction.

(4) In any case wherein the defendant is a child as defined in this chapter and of which the circuit court has original jurisdiction, the circuit judge, upon a finding that it would be in the best interest of such child and in the interest of justice, may at any stage of the proceedings prior to the attachment of jeopardy transfer such proceedings to the youth court for further proceedings unless the child has previously been the subject of a transfer from the youth court to the circuit court for trial as an adult and was convicted or has previously been convicted of a crime which was in original circuit court jurisdiction, and the youth court shall, upon acquiring jurisdiction, proceed as provided in this chapter for the adjudication and disposition of delinquent child proceeding proceedings. If the case is not transferred to the youth court and the youth is convicted of a crime by any circuit court, the trial judge shall sentence the youth as though such youth was an adult. The circuit court shall not have the authority to commit such child to the custody of the Department of Youth Services for placement in a state-supported training school.

(5) In no event shall a court sentence an offender over the age of eighteen (18) to the custody of the Division of Youth Services for placement in a state-supported training school.

(6) When a child's driver's license is suspended by the youth court for any reason, the clerk of the youth court shall report the suspension, without a court order under Section 43-21-261, to the Commissioner of Public Safety in the same manner as such suspensions are reported in cases involving adults.

(7) No offense involving the use or possession of a firearm by a child who has reached his fifteenth birthday and which, if committed by an adult would be a felony, shall be transferred to the youth court.

§ 43-21-201. Right to counsel

(1) Each party shall have the right to be represented by counsel at all stages of the proceedings including, but not limited to, detention, adjudicatory and disposition hearings and parole or probation revocation proceedings. In delinquency matters the court shall appoint legal defense counsel who is not also a guardian ad litem for the same child. If the party is a child, the child shall be represented by counsel at all critical stages. If indigent, the child shall have the right to have counsel appointed for him by the youth court.

(2) When a party first appears before the youth court, the judge shall ascertain whether he is represented by counsel and, if not, inform him of his rights including his right to counsel.

(3) An attorney appointed to represent a delinquent child shall be required to complete annual juvenile justice training that is approved by the Mississippi Judicial College or the Mississippi Commission on

Continuing Legal Education. The Mississippi Judicial College and the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education shall determine the amount of juvenile justice training and continuing education required to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. The Administrative Office of Courts shall maintain a roll of attorneys who have complied with the training requirements and shall enforce the provisions of this subsection. Should an attorney fail to complete the annual training requirement or fail to attend the required training within six (6) months of being appointed to a youth court case, the attorney shall be disqualified to serve and the youth court shall immediately terminate the representation and appoint another attorney. Attorneys appointed by a youth court to five (5) or fewer cases a year are exempt from the requirements of this subsection.

(4) An attorney shall enter his appearance on behalf of a party in the proceeding by filing a written notice of appearance with the youth court, by filing a pleading, notice or motion signed by counsel or by appearing in open court and advising the youth court that he is representing a party. After counsel has entered his appearance, he shall be served with copies of all subsequent pleadings, motions and notices required to be served on the party he represents. An attorney who has entered his appearance shall not be permitted to withdraw from the case until a timely appeal if any has been decided, except by leave of the court then exercising jurisdiction of the cause after notice of his intended withdrawal is served by him on the party he represents.

(5) Each designee appointed by a youth court judge shall be subject to the Code of Judicial Conduct and shall govern himself or herself accordingly.

§ 43-21-259. Other confidential records

All other records involving children and the contents thereof shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed except as provided in section 43-21- 261.

§ 43-21-261. Disclosure of records in general

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, records involving children shall not be disclosed, other than to necessary staff of the youth court, except pursuant to an order of the youth court specifying the person or persons to whom the records may be disclosed, the extent of the records which may be disclosed and the purpose of the disclosure. Such court orders for disclosure shall be limited to those instances in which the youth court concludes, in its discretion, that disclosure is required for the best interests of the child, the public safety or the functioning of the youth court and then only to the following persons:

(a) The judge of another youth court or member of another youth court staff;

(b) The court of the parties in a child custody or adoption cause in another court;

(c) A judge of any other court or members of another court staff;

(d) Representatives of a public or private agency providing supervision or having custody of the child under order of the youth court;

(e) Any person engaged in a bona fide research purpose, provided that no information identifying the subject of the records shall be made available to the researcher unless it is absolutely essential to the research purpose and the judge gives prior written approval, and the child, through his or her representative, gives permission to release the information;

(f) The Mississippi Department of Employment Security, or its duly authorized representatives, for the purpose of a child's enrollment into the Job Corps Training Program as authorized by Title IV of the Comprehensive Employment Training Act of 1973 (29 USCS Section 923 et seq.). However, no records, reports, investigations or information derived therefrom pertaining to child abuse or neglect shall be disclosed; and

(g) To any person pursuant to a finding by a judge of the youth court of compelling circumstances affecting the health or safety of a child and that such disclosure is in the best interests of the child.

Law enforcement agencies may disclose information to the public concerning the taking of a child into custody for the commission of a delinquent act without the necessity of an order from the youth court. The information released shall not identify the child or his address unless the information involves a child convicted as an adult.

(2) Any records involving children which are disclosed under an order of the youth court or pursuant to the terms of this section and the contents thereof shall be kept confidential by the person or agency to whom the record is disclosed unless otherwise provided in the order. Any further disclosure of any records involving children shall be made only under an order of the youth court as provided in this section.

(3) Upon request, the parent, guardian or custodian of the child who is the subject of a youth court cause or any attorney for such parent, guardian or custodian, shall have the right to inspect any record, report or investigation which is to be considered by the youth court at a hearing, except that the identity of the reporter shall not be released, nor the name of any other person where the person or agency making the information available finds that disclosure of the information would be likely to endanger the life or safety of such person.

(4) Upon request, the child who is the subject of a youth court cause shall have the right to have his counsel inspect and copy any record, report or investigation which is filed with the youth court or which is to be considered by the youth court at a hearing.

(5)(a) The youth court prosecutor or prosecutors, the county attorney, the district attorney, the youth court defender or defenders, or any attorney representing a child shall have the right to inspect and copy any law enforcement record involving children.

(b) The Department of Human Services shall disclose to a county prosecuting attorney or district attorney any and all records resulting from an investigation into suspected child abuse or neglect when the case has been referred by the Department of Human Services to the county prosecuting attorney or district attorney for criminal prosecution.

(c) Agency records made confidential under the provisions of this section may be disclosed to a court of competent jurisdiction.

(d) Records involving children shall be disclosed to the Division of Victim Compensation of the Office of the Attorney General upon the division's request without order of the youth court for purposes of determination of eligibility for victim compensation benefits.

(6) Information concerning an investigation into a report of child abuse or child neglect may be disclosed by the Department of Human Services without order of the youth court to any attorney, physician, dentist, intern, resident, nurse, psychologist, social worker, family protection worker, family protection specialist, child caregiver, minister, law enforcement officer, public or private school employee making that report pursuant to Section 43-21-353(1) if the reporter has a continuing professional relationship with the child and a need for such information in order to protect or treat the child.

(7) Information concerning an investigation into a report of child abuse or child neglect may be disclosed without further order of the youth court to any interagency child abuse task force established in any county or municipality by order of the youth court of that county or municipality.

(8) Names and addresses of juveniles twice adjudicated as delinquent for an act which would be a felony if committed by an adult or for the unlawful possession of a firearm shall not be held confidential and shall be made available to the public.

(9) Names and addresses of juveniles adjudicated as delinquent for murder, manslaughter, burglary, arson, armed robbery, aggravated assault, any sex offense as defined in Section 45-33-23, for any violation of Section 41-29-139(a)(1) or for any violation of Section 63-11-30, shall not be held confidential and shall be made available to the public.

(10) The judges of the circuit and county courts, and presentence investigators for the circuit courts, as provided in Section 47-7-9, shall have the right to inspect any youth court records of a person convicted

of a crime for sentencing purposes only.

(11) The victim of an offense committed by a child who is the subject of a youth court cause shall have the right to be informed of the child's disposition by the youth court.

(12) A classification hearing officer of the State Department of Corrections, as provided in Section 47-5-103, shall have the right to inspect any youth court records, excluding abuse and neglect records, of any offender in the custody of the department who as a child or minor was a juvenile offender or was the subject of a youth court cause of action, and the State Parole Board, as provided in Section 47-7-17, shall have the right to inspect such records when the offender becomes eligible for parole.

(13) The youth court shall notify the Department of Public Safety of the name, and any other identifying information such department may require, of any child who is adjudicated delinquent as a result of a violation of the Uniform Controlled Substances Law.

(14) The Administrative Office of Courts shall have the right to inspect any youth court records in order that the number of youthful offenders, abused, neglected, truant and dependent children, as well as children in need of special care and children in need of supervision, may be tracked with specificity through the youth court and adult justice system, and to utilize tracking forms for such purpose.

(15) Upon a request by a youth court, the Administrative Office of Courts shall disclose all information at its disposal concerning any previous youth court intakes alleging that a child was a delinquent child, child in need of supervision, child in need of special care, truant child, abused child or neglected child, as well as any previous youth court adjudications for the same and all dispositional information concerning a child who at the time of such request comes under the jurisdiction of the youth court making such request.

(16) In every case where an abuse or neglect allegation has been made, the confidentiality provisions of this section shall not apply to prohibit access to a child's records by any state regulatory agency, any state or local prosecutorial agency or law enforcement agency; however, no identifying information concerning the child in question may be released to the public by such agency except as otherwise provided herein.

(17) In every case where there is any indication or suggestion of either abuse or neglect and a child's physical condition is medically labeled as medically "serious" or "critical" or a child dies, the confidentiality provisions of this section shall not apply. In cases of child deaths, the following information may be released by the Mississippi Department of Human Services: (a) child's name; (b) address or location; (c) verification from the Department of Human Services of case status (no case or involvement, case exists, open or active case, case closed); (d) if a case exists, the type of report or case (physical abuse, neglect, etc.), date of intake(s) and investigation(s), and case disposition (substantiated or unsubstantiated). Notwithstanding the aforesaid, the confidentiality provisions of this section shall continue if there is a pending or planned investigation by any local, state or federal governmental agency or institution.

(18) Any member of a foster care review board designated by the Department of Human Services shall have the right to inspect youth court records relating to the abuse, neglect or child in need of supervision cases assigned to such member for review.

(19) Information concerning an investigation into a report of child abuse or child neglect may be disclosed without further order of the youth court in any administrative or due process hearing held, pursuant to Section 43-21-257, by the Department of Human Services for individuals whose names will be placed on the central registry as substantiated perpetrators.

§ 43-21-265. Destruction authorized

The youth court, in its discretion, may order the destruction of any records involving children except medical or mental health examinations as defined in section 43-21-253. This order shall be directed to all persons maintaining the records, shall order their physical destruction by an appropriate means specified by the youth court and shall require the persons to file with the youth court a written report of

compliance with the order. No records, however, may be destroyed without the approval of the director of the department of archives and history.

§ 43-21-267. Sanctions

(1) Any person who shall disclose or encourage the disclosure of any records involving children or the contents thereof without the proper authorization under this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and punished, upon conviction, by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or by imprisonment in the county jail of not more than one (1) year or by both such fine and imprisonment.

(2) Nothing herein shall prevent the youth court from finding in civil contempt, as provided in section 43-21-153, any person who shall disclose any records involving children or the contents thereof without the proper authorization under this chapter.

§ 43-21-301. Arrest warrants and custody orders

(1) No court other than the youth court shall issue an arrest warrant or custody order for a child in a matter in which the youth court has exclusive original jurisdiction but shall refer the matter to the youth court.

(2) Except as otherwise provided, no child in a matter in which the youth court has exclusive original jurisdiction shall be taken into custody by a law enforcement officer, the Department of Human Services, or any other person unless the judge or his designee has issued a custody order to take the child into custody.

(3) The judge or his designee may issue an order to a law enforcement officer, the Department of Human Services, or any suitable person to take a child into custody for a period not longer than forty-eight (48) hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and statutory state holidays if it appears that there is probable cause to believe that:

(a) The child is within the jurisdiction of the court; and

(b) Custody is necessary; custody shall be deemed necessary:

(i) When a child is endangered or any person would be endangered by the child; or

(ii) To insure the child's attendance in court at such time as required; or

(iii) When a parent, guardian or custodian is not available to provide for the care and supervision of the child; and

(c) There is no reasonable alternative to custody.

(4) The judge or his designee may order, orally or in writing, the immediate release of any child in the custody of any person or agency. Custody orders as provided by this chapter and authorizations of temporary custody may be written or oral, but, if oral, reduced to writing as soon as practicable. The written order shall:

(a) Specify the name and address of the child, or, if unknown, designate him or her by any name or description by which he or she can be identified with reasonable certainty;

(b) Specify the age of the child, or, if unknown, that he or she is believed to be of an age subject to the jurisdiction of the youth court;

(c) Except in cases where the child is alleged to be a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision, state that the effect of the continuation of the child's residing within his or her own home would be contrary to the welfare of the child, that the placement of the child in foster care is in the best interests of the child, and unless the reasonable efforts requirement is bypassed under Section 43-21-603(7)(c), also state that (i) reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his or her own home, but that the circumstances warrant his removal and there is no reasonable alternative to custody; or (ii) the circumstances are of such an emergency nature that no reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, and that there is no reasonable alternative to custody. If the court makes a finding in accordance with (ii) of this paragraph, the court shall order that reasonable efforts be made

towards the reunification of the child with his or her family.

(d) State that the child shall be brought immediately before the youth court or be taken to a place designated by the order to be held pending review of the order;

(e) State the date issued and the youth court by which the order is issued; and

(f) Be signed by the judge or his designee with the title of his office.

(5) The taking of a child into custody shall not be considered an arrest except for evidentiary purposes.

(6)(a) No child who has been accused or adjudicated of any offense that would not be a crime if committed by an adult shall be placed in an adult jail or lockup. An accused status offender shall not be held in secure detention longer than twenty-four (24) hours prior to and twenty-four (24) hours after an initial court appearance, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and statutory state holidays, except under the following circumstances: a status offender may be held in secure detention for violating a valid court order pursuant to the criteria as established by the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002, and any subsequent amendments thereto, and out-of-state runaways may be detained pending return to their home state.

(b) No accused or adjudicated juvenile offender, except for an accused or adjudicated juvenile offender in cases where jurisdiction is waived to the adult criminal court, shall be detained or placed into custody of any adult jail or lockup for a period in excess of six (6) hours.

(c) If any county violates the provisions of paragraph (a) or (b) of this subsection, the state agency authorized to allocate federal funds received pursuant to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, 88 Stat. 2750 (codified in scattered Sections of 5, 18, 42 USCS), shall withhold the county's share of such funds.

(d) Any county that does not have a facility in which to detain its juvenile offenders in compliance with the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this subsection may enter into a contractual agreement with any county or municipality that does have such a facility, or with the State of Mississippi, or with any private entity that maintains a juvenile correctional facility, or with the State of Mississippi, to detain or place into custody the juvenile offenders of the county not having such a facility.

(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of this subsection, all counties shall be allowed a one-year grace period from March 27, 1993, to comply with the provisions of this subsection.

§ 43-21-303. Taking without custody order

(1) No child in a matter in which the youth court has original exclusive jurisdiction shall be taken in custody by any person without a custody order except that:

(a) a law enforcement officer may take a child in custody if:

(i) grounds exist for the arrest of an adult in identical circumstances; and

(ii) such law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that custody is necessary as defined in section 43-21-301(3)(b); and

(iii) such law enforcement officer can find no reasonable alternative to custody; or

(b) a law enforcement officer or an agent of the department of public welfare may take a child into custody if:

(i) there is probable cause to believe that the child is in immediate danger of personal harm; and

(ii) such law enforcement officer or agent has probable cause to believe that immediate custody is necessary as defined in section 43-21-301(3)(b); and

(iii) such law enforcement officer or agent can find no reasonable alternative to custody.

(c) Any other person may take a child in custody if grounds exist for the arrest of an adult in identical circumstances. Such other person shall immediately surrender custody of the child to the proper law enforcement officer who shall thereupon continue custody only as provided in section 43-21-303(1)(a).

(2) When it is necessary to take a child into custody, the least restrictive custody should be selected.

(3) Unless the child is immediately released, the person taking the child into custody shall immediately

notify the judge or his designee. A person taking a child into custody shall also make continuing reasonable efforts to notify the child's parent, guardian or custodian and invite the parent, guardian or custodian to be present during any questioning.

(4) A child taken into custody shall not be held in custody for a period longer than reasonably necessary, but not to exceed twenty-four (24) hours, and shall be released to his parent, guardian or custodian unless the judge or his designee authorizes temporary custody.

§ 43-21-307. Authorizing temporary custody

The judge or his designee may authorize the temporary custody of a child taken into custody for a period of not longer than forty-eight (48) hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and statutory state holidays if the judge or his designee finds there are grounds to issue a custody order as defined in Section 43-21-301 and such custody order complies with the detention requirements provided in Section 43-21-301(6).

§ 43-21-309. Detention and shelter hearings

(1) A child who has been ordered or taken into custody may be held in custody for longer than temporary custody if:

(a) A written complaint or petition has been filed; and

(b) A court order has been entered for continued custody following a review of that custody at a detention hearing in delinquency and child in need of supervision cases and at a shelter hearing in abuse and neglect cases.

(2) Reasonable oral or written notice of the time, place and purpose of the hearing shall be given to the child; to his or her parent, guardian or custodian; to his or her guardian ad litem, if any; and to his or her counsel. If the parent, guardian or custodian cannot be found, the youth court may hold the hearing in the absence of the child's parent, guardian or custodian.

(3) At the detention or shelter hearing, all parties present shall have the right to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses produced by others. The youth court may, in its discretion, limit the extent but not the right or presentation of evidence and cross-examination of witnesses. The youth court may receive any testimony and other evidence relevant to the necessity for the continued custody of the child without regard to the formal rules of evidence, including hearsay and opinion evidence. All testimony shall be made under oath and may be in narrative form.

(4)(a) At the conclusion of the detention or shelter hearing, the youth court shall order that the child be released to the custody of the child's parent, guardian or custodian unless the youth court finds and the detention or shelter hearing order recites that:

(i) There is probable cause that the youth court has jurisdiction; and

(ii) Custody is necessary as defined in Section 43-21-301(3)(b).

(b) In the case of a shelter hearing, the shelter hearing order shall further recite that the effect of the continuation of the child's residing within his or her own home would be contrary to the welfare of the child, that the placement of the child in foster care is in the best interest of the child, and, unless the reasonable efforts requirement is bypassed under Section 43-21-603(7)(c), the order also must state:

(i) Reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, but that the circumstances warrant his removal and there is no reasonable alternative to custody; or

(ii) The circumstances are of such an emergency nature that no reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, and there is no reasonable alternative to custody.

(c) In the event that the court makes a finding in accordance with subparagraph (ii), the court shall order that reasonable efforts be made towards the reunification of the child with his or her family.

(5) The child with advice of counsel may waive in writing the time of the detention hearing or the detention hearing itself. The child's guardian ad litem, and parent, guardian or custodian, and child may waive in writing the time of the shelter hearing or the shelter hearing itself. If the child has not reached

his tenth birthday, the child's consent shall not be required.

(6) Any order placing a child into custody shall comply with the requirements provided in Section 43-21-301.

§ 43-21-311. Rights of child in custody

(1) When a child is taken into custody, he shall immediately be informed of:

- (a) The reason for his custody;
- (b) The time within which review of the custody shall be held;
- (c) His rights during custody including his right to counsel;
- (d) All rules and regulations of the place at which he is held;
- (e) The time and place of the detention hearing when the time and place is set; and
- (f) The conditions of his custody which shall be in compliance with the detention requirements provided in Section 43-21-301(6).

These rights shall be posted where the child may read them, and such rights must be read to the child when he or she is taken into custody.

(2) When a child is taken into custody, the child may immediately telephone his parent, guardian or custodian; his counsel; and personnel of the youth court. Thereafter, he shall be allowed to telephone his counsel or any personnel of the youth court at reasonable intervals. Unless the judge or his designee finds that it is against the best interest of the child, he may telephone his parent, guardian or custodian at reasonable intervals.

(3) When a child is taken into custody, the child may be visited by his counsel and authorized personnel of the youth court at any time. Unless the judge or his designee finds it to be against the best interest of the child, he may be visited by his parent, guardian or custodian during visiting hours which shall be regularly scheduled at least three (3) days per week. The youth court may establish rules permitting visits by other persons.

(4) Except for the child's counsel, guardian ad litem and authorized personnel of the youth court, no person shall interview or interrogate a child held in a detention or shelter facility unless approval therefor has first been obtained from the judge or his designee. When a child in a detention or shelter facility is represented by counsel or has a guardian ad litem, no person may interview or interrogate the child concerning the violation of a state or federal law, or municipal or county ordinance by the child unless in the presence of his counsel or guardian ad litem or with their consent.

§ 43-21-313. Release from custody

(1) A child held in custody under order of the youth court shall be released upon a finding that a change of circumstances makes continued custody unnecessary.

(2) A written request for the release of the child from custody, setting forth the changed circumstances, may be filed by the child; by the child's parent, guardian or custodian; by the child's counsel; or by the child's guardian ad litem, if any.

(3) Based upon the facts stated in the request, the judge may direct that a hearing be held at a date, time and place as fixed by the youth court. Reasonable notice of the hearing shall be given to the child; his parent, guardian or custodian; his counsel; and his guardian ad litem, if any, prior to the hearing. At the hearing, upon receiving evidence, the youth court may grant or deny the request.

(4) A child held in custody in violation of Section 43-21-301(6) shall be immediately transferred to a proper juvenile facility.

§ 43-21-315. Proper facilities

(1) The youth court shall, by general order or rule of court, designate the available detention or shelter facilities to which children shall be delivered when taken into custody. Copies of the order or rule shall

be made available to the Department of Human Services and all law enforcement agencies within the territorial jurisdiction of the youth court.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, unless jurisdiction is transferred, no child shall be placed in any jail or place of detention of adults by any person or court unless the child shall be physically segregated from other persons not subject to the jurisdiction of the youth court and the physical arrangement of such jail or place of detention of adults prevents such child from having substantial contact with and substantial view of such other persons; but in any event, the child shall not be confined anywhere in the same cell with persons not subject to the jurisdiction of the youth court. Any order placing a child into custody shall comply with the detention requirements provided in Section 43-21-301(6). This subsection shall not be construed to apply to commitments to the training school under Section 43-21-605(1)(g)(iii).

(3) Any child who is charged with a hunting or fishing violation, a traffic violation, or any other criminal offense for which the youth court shall have power on its own motion to remove jurisdiction from any criminal court, may be detained only in the same facilities designated by the youth court for children within the jurisdiction of the youth court.

(4) After a child is ordered into custody, the youth court may arrange for the custody of the child with any private institution or agency caring for children, may commit the child to the Department of Mental Health pursuant to Section 41-21-61 et seq., or may order the Department of Human Services or any other public agency to provide for the custody, care and maintenance of such child. Provided, however, that the care, custody and maintenance of such child shall be within the statutory authorization and the budgetary means of such institution or facility.

§ 43-21-357. Preliminary inquiry

(1) After receiving a report, the youth court intake unit shall promptly make a preliminary inquiry to determine whether the interest of the child, other children in the same environment or the public requires the youth court to take further action. As part of the preliminary inquiry, the youth court intake unit may request or the youth court may order the Department of Human Services, the Department of Youth Services, any successor agency or any other qualified public employee to make an investigation or report concerning the child and any other children in the same environment, and present the findings thereof to the youth court intake unit. If the youth court intake unit receives a neglect or abuse report, the youth court intake unit shall immediately forward the complaint to the Department of Human Services to promptly make an investigation or report concerning the child and any other children in the same environment and promptly present the findings thereof to the youth court intake unit. If it appears from the preliminary inquiry that the child or other children in the same environment are within the jurisdiction of the court, the youth court intake unit shall recommend to the youth court:

- (a) That the youth court take no action;
- (b) That an informal adjustment be made;
- (c) The Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, monitor the child, family and other children in the same environment;
- (d) That the child is warned or counseled informally; or
- (e) That a petition be filed.

(2) The youth court shall then, without a hearing:

- (a) Order that no action be taken;
- (b) Order that an informal adjustment be made;
- (c) Order that the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, monitor the child, family and other children in the same environment;
- (d) Order that the child is warned or counseled informally; or
- (e) Order that a petition be filed.

(3) If the preliminary inquiry discloses that a child needs emergency medical treatment, the judge may order the necessary treatment.

§ 43-21-401. Adjustment

(1) Informal adjustment pursuant to the informal adjustment agreement provided in section 43-21-405 shall include:

- (a) the giving of counsel and advice to the child and his parent, guardian or custodian;
- (b) referrals to public and private agencies which may provide benefits, guidance or services to the child and his parent, guardian or custodian;
- (c) temporary placement of the child or supervision by the youth court counselor with the consent of the child and his parent, guardian or custodian, subject to youth court review.

(2) If authorized by the youth court, informal adjustment may be commenced after the filing of a petition.

(3) If the child and his parent, guardian or custodian agree to participate in an informal adjustment process, the defense of a failure to provide a speedy trial is waived and a petition may be filed if the informal adjustment process is unsuccessfully terminated under section 43-21-407.

§ 43-21-403. Notice

When it is determined to make an informal adjustment, the child and his parent, guardian or custodian shall be requested by letter, telephone or otherwise to attend a conference at a designated date, time and place. At the time the request to attend the conference is made, the child and his parent, guardian or custodian shall be informed that attendance at the conference is voluntary and that they may be represented by counsel or other person of their choice at the conference.

§ 43-21-405. Informal adjustment conference and agreement

(1) The informal adjustment process shall be initiated with an informal adjustment conference conducted by an informal adjustment counselor appointed by the judge or his designee.

(2) If the child and his parent, guardian or custodian appear at the informal adjustment conference without counsel, the informal adjustment counselor shall, at the commencement of the conference, inform them of their right to counsel, the child's right to appointment of counsel and the right of the child to remain silent. If either the child or his parent, guardian or custodian indicates a desire to be represented by counsel, the informal adjustment counselor shall adjourn the conference to afford an opportunity to secure counsel.

(3) At the beginning of the informal adjustment conference, the informal adjustment counselor shall inform the child and his parent, guardian or custodian:

- (a) That information has been received concerning the child which appears to establish jurisdiction of the youth court;
- (b) The purpose of the informal adjustment conference;
- (c) That during the informal adjustment process no petition will be filed;
- (d) That the informal adjustment process is voluntary with the child and his parent, guardian or custodian and that they may withdraw from the informal adjustment at any time; and
- (e) The circumstances under which the informal adjustment process can be terminated under Section 43-21-407.

(4) The informal adjustment counselor shall then discuss with the child and his parent, guardian or custodian:

- (a) Recommendations for actions or conduct in the interest of the child to correct the conditions of behavior or environment which may exist;
- (b) Continuing conferences and contacts with the child and his parent, guardian or custodian by the informal adjustment counselor or other authorized persons; and

(c) The child's general behavior, his home and school environment and other factors bearing upon the proposed informal adjustment.

(5) After the parties have agreed upon the appropriate terms and conditions of informal adjustment, the informal adjustment counselor and the child and his parent, guardian or custodian shall sign a written informal adjustment agreement setting forth the terms and conditions of the informal adjustment. The informal adjustment agreement may be modified at any time upon the consent of all parties to the informal adjustment conference.

(6) The informal adjustment process shall not continue beyond a period of six (6) months from its commencement unless extended by the youth court for an additional period not to exceed six (6) months by court authorization prior to the expiration of the original six-month period. In no event shall the custody or supervision of a child which has been placed with the Department of Public Welfare be continued or extended except upon a written finding by the youth court judge or referee that reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, but that the circumstances warrant his removal and there is no reasonable alternative to custody, and that reasonable efforts will continue to be made towards reunification of the family.

§ 43-21-407. Termination

(1) If it appears to the informal adjustment counselor that the child and his parent, guardian or custodian:

- (a) have complied with the terms and conditions of the informal adjustment agreement; and
- (b) have received the maximum benefit from the informal adjustment process, the informal adjustment counselor shall terminate the informal adjustment process and dismiss the child without further proceedings. The informal adjustment counselor shall notify the child and his parent, guardian or custodian in writing of the satisfactory completion of the informal adjustment and report such action to the youth court.

(2) If it appears to the informal adjustment counselor that further efforts at informal adjustment would not be in the best interests of the child or the community, or that the child or his parent, guardian or custodian:

- (a) denies the jurisdiction of the youth court;
- (b) declines to participate in the informal adjustment process;
- (c) expresses a desire that the facts be determined by the youth court;
- (d) fails without reasonable excuse to attend scheduled meetings;
- (e) appears unable or unwilling to benefit from the informal adjustment process, the informal adjustment counselor shall terminate the informal adjustment process. If the informal adjustment process is so terminated, the intake unit shall reinitiate the intake procedure under section 43-21-357. Even if the informal adjustment process has been so terminated, the intake unit shall not be precluded from reinitiating the informal adjustment process.

§ 43-21-451. Petition; filing

All proceedings seeking an adjudication that a child is a delinquent child, a child in need of supervision, a neglected child or an abused child shall be initiated by the filing of a petition. Upon authorization of the youth court, the petition shall be drafted and filed by the youth court prosecutor unless the youth court has designated some other person to draft and file the petition. The petition shall be filed within five (5) days from the date of a detention hearing or shelter hearing continuing custody. Unless another period of time is authorized by the youth court or its designee, in noncustody cases the petition shall be filed within ten (10) days of the court order authorizing the filing of a petition. The court may, in its discretion, dismiss the petition for failure to comply with the time schedule contained herein.

§ 43-21-507. Time; waiver

(1) Summons shall be served not less than three (3) days before the date set for the adjudicatory hearing of proceedings concerning the child.

(2) A party other than the child may waive service of summons on himself by written stipulation or by voluntary appearance at the hearing and in the case of written stipulation or voluntary appearance, the youth court may, in its discretion, proceed to a hearing regardless of the date set for the hearing if all other parties are properly before the youth court. At the time of the waiver, a copy of the petition shall be given to the party.

(3) If a child is served with process, the child may waive the three (3) days' time before the hearing, and the youth court may, in its discretion, proceed to a hearing regardless of the date set for the hearing if all other parties are properly before the youth court and the youth court finds all of the following:

(a) the child fully understands his rights and fully understands the potential consequences of the hearing;

(b) the child voluntarily, intelligently, and knowingly waives his rights to three (3) days' time before the hearing;

(c) the child is effectively represented by counsel; and

(d) the child has had in fact sufficient time to prepare.

§ 43-21-559. Evidence; admissions

(1) In arriving at its adjudicatory decision, the youth court shall consider only evidence which has been formally admitted at the adjudicatory hearing. All testimony shall be under oath and may be in narrative form. In proceedings to determine whether a child is a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision, the youth court shall admit any evidence that would be admissible in a criminal proceeding. In proceedings to determine whether a child is a neglected child or an abused child, the youth court shall admit any evidence that would be admissible in a civil proceeding.

(2) An out-of-court admission by the child, even if otherwise admissible, shall be insufficient to support an adjudication that the child is a delinquent child unless the admission is corroborated in whole or in part by other competent evidence.

(3) Members of the youth court staff may appear as witnesses except that no member of the youth court staff may testify as to an admission or confession made to him.

(4) At the conclusion of the evidence, the youth court shall give the parties an opportunity to present oral argument.

§ 43-21-561. Standard of proof; order; confidentiality

(1) If the youth court finds on proof beyond a reasonable doubt that a child is a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision, the youth court shall enter an order adjudicating the child to be a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision.

(2) Where the petition alleges that the child is a delinquent child, the youth court may enter an order that the child is a child in need of supervision on proof beyond a reasonable doubt that the child is a child in need of supervision.

(3) If the court finds from a preponderance of the evidence that the child is a neglected child or an abused child, the youth court shall enter an order adjudicating the child to be a neglected child or an abused child.

(4) No decree or order of adjudication concerning any child shall recite that a child has been found guilty; but it shall recite that a child is found to be a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision or a neglected child or an abused child or a sexually abused child or a dependent child. Upon a written motion by a party, the youth court shall make written findings of fact and conclusions of law upon which it relies for the adjudication that the child is a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision or a

neglected child or an abused child.

(5) No adjudication upon the status of any child shall operate to impose any of the civil disabilities ordinarily imposed on an adult because of a criminal conviction, nor shall any child be deemed a criminal by reason of adjudication, nor shall that adjudication be deemed a conviction. A person in whose interest proceedings have been brought in the youth court may deny, without any penalty, the existence of those proceedings and any adjudication made in those proceedings. Except for the right of a defendant or prosecutor in criminal proceedings and a respondent or a youth court prosecutor in youth court proceedings to cross-examine a witness, including a defendant or respondent, to show bias or interest, no adjudication shall be used for impeachment purposes in any court.

§ 43-21-603. Conduct of hearing; disposition order

(1) At the beginning of each disposition hearing, the judge shall inform the parties of the purpose of the hearing.

(2) All testimony shall be under oath unless waived by all parties and may be in narrative form. The court may consider any evidence that is material and relevant to the disposition of the cause, including hearsay and opinion evidence. At the conclusion of the evidence, the youth court shall give the parties an opportunity to present oral argument.

(3) If the child has been adjudicated a delinquent child, before entering a disposition order, the youth court should consider, among others, the following relevant factors:

- (a) The nature of the offense;
- (b) The manner in which the offense was committed;
- (c) The nature and number of a child's prior adjudicated offenses;
- (d) The child's need for care and assistance;
- (e) The child's current medical history, including medication and diagnosis;
- (f) The child's mental health history, which may include, but not be limited to, the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument version 2 (MAYSI-2);
- (g) Copies of the child's cumulative record from the last school of record, including special education records, if applicable;
- (h) Recommendation from the school of record based on areas of remediation needed;
- (i) Disciplinary records from the school of record; and
- (j) Records of disciplinary actions outside of the school setting.

(4) If the child has been adjudicated a child in need of supervision, before entering a disposition order, the youth court should consider, among others, the following relevant factors:

- (a) The nature and history of the child's conduct;
- (b) The family and home situation; and
- (c) The child's need of care and assistance.

(5) If the child has been adjudicated a neglected child or an abused child, before entering a disposition order, the youth court shall consider, among others, the following relevant factors:

- (a) The child's physical and mental conditions;
- (b) The child's need of assistance;
- (c) The manner in which the parent, guardian or custodian participated in, tolerated or condoned the abuse, neglect or abandonment of the child;
- (d) The ability of a child's parent, guardian or custodian to provide proper supervision and care of a child; and
- (e) Relevant testimony and recommendations, where available, from the foster parent of the child, the grandparents of the child, the guardian ad litem of the child, representatives of any private care agency that has cared for the child, the family protection worker or family protection specialist assigned to the case, and any other relevant testimony pertaining to the case.

(6) After consideration of all the evidence and the relevant factors, the youth court shall enter a disposition order that shall not recite any of the facts or circumstances upon which the disposition is based, nor shall it recite that a child has been found guilty; but it shall recite that a child is found to be a delinquent child, a child in need of supervision, a neglected child or an abused child.

(7) If the youth court orders that the custody or supervision of a child who has been adjudicated abused or neglected be placed with the Department of Human Services or any other person or public or private agency, other than the child's parent, guardian or custodian, the youth court shall find and the disposition order shall recite that:

(a)(i) Reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, but that the circumstances warrant his removal and there is no reasonable alternative to custody; or

(ii) The circumstances are of such an emergency nature that no reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his own home, and that there is no reasonable alternative to custody; and

(b) That the effect of the continuation of the child's residence within his own home would be contrary to the welfare of the child and that the placement of the child in foster care is in the best interests of the child; or

(c) Reasonable efforts to maintain the child within his home shall not be required if the court determines that:

(i) The parent has subjected the child to aggravated circumstances, including, but not limited to, abandonment, torture, chronic abuse and sexual abuse; or

(ii) The parent has been convicted of murder of another child of that parent, voluntary manslaughter of another child of that parent, aided or abetted, attempted, conspired or solicited to commit that murder or voluntary manslaughter, or a felony assault that results in the serious bodily injury to the surviving child or another child of that parent; or

(iii) The parental rights of the parent to a sibling have been terminated involuntarily; and

(iv) That the effect of the continuation of the child's residence within his own home would be contrary to the welfare of the child and that placement of the child in foster care is in the best interests of the child. Once the reasonable efforts requirement is bypassed, the court shall have a permanency hearing under Section 43-21-613 within thirty (30) days of the finding.

(8) Upon a written motion by a party, the youth court shall make written findings of fact and conclusions of law upon which it relies for the disposition order. If the disposition ordered by the youth court includes placing the child in the custody of a training school, an admission packet shall be prepared for the child that contains the following information:

(a) The child's current medical history, including medications and diagnosis;

(b) The child's mental health history;

(c) Copies of the child's cumulative record from the last school of record, including special education records, if reasonably available;

(d) Recommendation from the school of record based on areas of remediation needed;

(e) Disciplinary records from the school of record; and

(f) Records of disciplinary actions outside of the school setting, if reasonably available.

Only individuals who are permitted under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) shall have access to a child's medical records which are contained in an admission packet. The youth court shall provide the admission packet to the training school at or before the child's arrival at the training school. The admittance of any child to a training school shall take place between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on designated admission days.

(9) When a child in the jurisdiction of the Youth Court is committed to the custody of the Mississippi Department of Human Services and is believed to be in need of treatment for a mental or emotional disability or infirmity, the Department of Human Services shall file an affidavit alleging that the child is in need of mental health services with the Youth Court. The Youth Court shall refer the child to the appropriate community mental health center for evaluation pursuant to Section 41-21-67. If the

prescreening evaluation recommends residential care, the Youth Court shall proceed with civil commitment pursuant to Sections 41-21-61 et seq., 43-21-315 and 43-21-611, and the Department of Mental Health, once commitment is ordered, shall provide appropriate care, treatment and services for at least as many adolescents as were provided services in fiscal year 2004 in its facilities.

§ 43-21-605. Authorized dispositions; delinquency; standards for programs at training schools

(1) In delinquency cases, the disposition order may include any of the following alternatives:

- (a) Release the child without further action;
- (b) Place the child in the custody of the parents, a relative or other persons subject to any conditions and limitations, including restitution, as the youth court may prescribe;
- (c) Place the child on probation subject to any reasonable and appropriate conditions and limitations, including restitution, as the youth court may prescribe;
- (d) Order terms of treatment calculated to assist the child and the child's parents or guardian which are within the ability of the parent or guardian to perform;
- (e) Order terms of supervision which may include participation in a constructive program of service or education or civil fines not in excess of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00), or restitution not in excess of actual damages caused by the child to be paid out of his own assets or by performance of services acceptable to the victims and approved by the youth court and reasonably capable of performance within one (1) year;
- (f) Suspend the child's driver's license by taking and keeping it in custody of the court for not more than one (1) year;
- (g) Give legal custody of the child to any of the following:
 - (i) The Department of Human Services for appropriate placement; or
 - (ii) Any public or private organization, preferably community-based, able to assume the education, care and maintenance of the child, which has been found suitable by the court; or
 - (iii) The Department of Human Services for placement in a wilderness training program or the Division of Youth Services for placement in a state-supported training school, except that no child under the age of ten (10) years shall be committed to a state training school, and no first-time nonviolent youth offenders shall be committed to a state training school until all other options provided for in this section have been considered and the court makes a specific finding of fact that commitment is appropriate.

The training school may retain custody of the child until the child's twentieth birthday but for no longer. When the child is committed to a training school, the child shall remain in the legal custody of the training school until the child has made sufficient progress in treatment and rehabilitation and it is in the best interest of the child to release the child. However, the superintendent of a state training school, in consultation with the treatment team, may parole a child at any time he may deem it in the best interest and welfare of such child. Twenty (20) days prior to such parole, the training school shall notify the committing court of the pending release. The youth court may then arrange subsequent placement after a reconvened disposition hearing, except that the youth court may not recommit the child to the training school or any other secure facility without an adjudication of a new offense or probation or parole violation. The Department of Human Services shall ensure that staffs create transition planning for youth leaving the facilities. Plans shall include providing the youth and his or her parents or guardian with copies of the youth's training school education and health records, information regarding the youth's home community, referrals to mental and counseling services when appropriate, and providing assistance in making initial appointments with community service providers. Prior to assigning the custody of any child to any private institution or agency, the youth court through its designee shall first inspect the physical facilities to determine that they provide a reasonable standard of health and safety for the child. No child shall be placed in the custody of a state training school for a status offense or for contempt of or revocation of a status offense adjudication unless the child is contemporaneously adjudicated for having committed an act of delinquency that is not a status offense. A disposition order

rendered under this subparagraph shall meet the following requirements:

1. The disposition is the least restrictive alternative appropriate to the best interest of the child and the community;
2. The disposition allows the child to be in reasonable proximity to the family home community of each child given the dispositional alternatives available and the best interest of the child and the state; and
3. The disposition order provides that the court has considered the medical, educational, vocational, social and psychological guidance, training, social education, counseling, substance abuse treatment and other rehabilitative services required by that child as determined by the court;

(h) Recommend to the child and the child's parents or guardian that the child attend and participate in the Youth Challenge Program under the Mississippi National Guard, as created in Section 43-27-203, subject to the selection of the child for the program by the National Guard; however, the child must volunteer to participate in the program. The youth court shall not order any child to apply or attend the program;

(i)(i) Adjudicate the juvenile to the Statewide Juvenile Work Program if the program is established in the court's jurisdiction. The juvenile and his parents or guardians must sign a waiver of liability in order to participate in the work program. The judge will coordinate with the youth services counselors as to placing participants in the work program;

(ii) The severity of the crime, whether or not the juvenile is a repeat offender or is a felony offender will be taken into consideration by the judge when adjudicating a juvenile to the work program. The juveniles adjudicated to the work program will be supervised by police officers or reserve officers. The term of service will be from twenty-four (24) to one hundred twenty (120) hours of community service. A juvenile will work the hours to which he was adjudicated on the weekends during school and weekdays during the summer. Parents are responsible for a juvenile reporting for work. Noncompliance with an order to perform community service will result in a heavier adjudication. A juvenile may be adjudicated to the community service program only two (2) times;

(iii) The judge shall assess an additional fine on the juvenile which will be used to pay the costs of implementation of the program and to pay for supervision by police officers and reserve officers. The amount of the fine will be based on the number of hours to which the juvenile has been adjudicated;

(j) Order the child to participate in a youth court work program as provided in Section 43-21-627;

(k) Order the child into a juvenile detention center operated by the county or into a juvenile detention center operated by any county with which the county in which the court is located has entered into a contract for the purpose of housing delinquents. The time period for detention cannot exceed ninety (90) days, and any detention exceeding forty-five (45) days shall be administratively reviewed by the youth court no later than forty-five (45) days after the entry of the order. The youth court judge may order that the number of days specified in the detention order be served either throughout the week or on weekends only. No first-time nonviolent youth offender shall be committed to a detention center for a period of ninety (90) days until all other options provided for in this section have been considered and the court makes a specific finding of fact that commitment to a detention center is appropriate. However, if a child is committed to a detention center ninety (90) consecutive days, the disposition order shall meet the following requirements:

(i) The disposition order is the least restrictive alternative appropriate to the best interest of the child and the community;

(ii) The disposition order allows the child to be in reasonable proximity to the family home community of each child given the dispositional alternatives available and the best interest of the child and the state; and

(iii) The disposition order provides that the court has considered the medical, educational, vocational, social and psychological guidance, training, social education, counseling, substance abuse treatment and other rehabilitative services required by that child as determined by the court; or

(l) Referral to A-team provided system of care services.

- (2) If a disposition order requires that a child miss school due to other placement, the youth court shall notify a child's school while maintaining the confidentiality of the youth court process. If a disposition order requires placement of a child in a juvenile detention facility, the facility shall comply with the educational services requirements of Section 43-21-321.
- (3) In addition to any of the disposition alternatives authorized under subsection (1) of this section, the disposition order in any case in which the child is adjudicated delinquent for an offense under Section 63-11-30 shall include an order denying the driver's license and driving privileges of the child as required under Section 63-11-30(9).
- (4) If the youth court places a child in a state-supported training school, the court may order the parents or guardians of the child and other persons living in the child's household to receive counseling and parenting classes for rehabilitative purposes while the child is in the legal custody of the training school. A youth court entering an order under this subsection (4) shall utilize appropriate services offered either at no cost or for a fee calculated on a sliding scale according to income unless the person ordered to participate elects to receive other counseling and classes acceptable to the court at the person's sole expense.
- (5) Fines levied under this chapter shall be paid into the general fund of the county but, in those counties wherein the youth court is a branch of the municipal government, it shall be paid into the municipal treasury.
- (6) Any institution or agency to which a child has been committed shall give to the youth court any information concerning the child as the youth court may at any time require.
- (7) The youth court shall not place a child in another school district who has been expelled from a school district for the commission of a violent act. For the purpose of this subsection, "violent act" means any action which results in death or physical harm to another or an attempt to cause death or physical harm to another.
- (8) The youth court may require drug testing as part of a disposition order. If a child tests positive, the court may require treatment, counseling and random testing, as it deems appropriate. The costs of such tests shall be paid by the parent, guardian or custodian of the child unless the court specifically finds that the parent, guardian or custodian is unable to pay.
- (9) The Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services, shall operate and maintain services for youth adjudicated delinquent at Columbia and Oakley Training Schools. The program shall be designed for children committed to the training schools by the youth courts. The purpose of the program is to promote good citizenship, self-reliance, leadership and respect for constituted authority, teamwork, cognitive abilities and appreciation of our national heritage. The Division of Youth Services shall issue credit towards academic promotions and high school completion. The Division of Youth Services may award credits to each student who meets the requirements for a general education development certification. The Division of Youth Services must also provide to each special education eligible youth the services required by that youth's individualized education plan.

§ 43-21-607. Authorized dispositions, children in need of supervision

- (1) In children in need of supervision cases, the disposition order may include any of the following alternatives or combination of the following alternatives, giving precedence in the following sequence:
- (a) Release the child without further action;
 - (b) Place the child in the custody of the parent, a relative or other person subject to any conditions and limitations as the youth court may prescribe;
 - (c) Place the child under youth court supervision subject to any conditions and limitations the youth court may prescribe;
 - (d) Order terms of treatment calculated to assist the child and the child's parent, guardian or custodian which are within the ability of the parent, guardian or custodian to perform;
 - (e) Order terms of supervision which may include participation in a constructive program of service or

education or restitution not in excess of actual damages caused by the child to be paid out of his own assets or by performance of services acceptable to the parties and reasonably capable of performance within one (1) year;

(f) Give legal custody of the child to any of the following but in no event to any state training school;

(i) The Department of Human Services for appropriate placement which may include a wilderness training program; or

(ii) Any private or public organization, preferably community-based, able to assume the education, care and maintenance of the child, which has been found suitable by the court. Prior to assigning the custody of any child to any private institution or agency, the youth court through its designee shall first inspect the physical facilities to determine that they provide a reasonable standard of health and safety for the child; or

(g) Order the child to participate in a youth court work program as provided in Section 43-21-627.

(2) The court may order drug testing as provided in Section 43-21-605(6).

§ 43-21-609. Authorized dispositions, neglect or abuse

In neglect and abuse cases, the disposition order may include any of the following alternatives, giving precedence in the following sequence:

(a) Release the child without further action;

(b) Place the child in the custody of his parents, a relative or other person subject to any conditions and limitations as the court may prescribe. If the court finds that temporary relative placement, adoption or foster care placement is inappropriate, unavailable or otherwise not in the best interest of the child, durable legal custody may be granted by the court to any person subject to any limitations and conditions the court may prescribe; such durable legal custody will not take effect unless the child or children have been in the physical custody of the proposed durable custodians for at least one (1) year under the supervision of the Department of Human Services. The requirements of Section 43-21-613 as to disposition review hearings does not apply to those matters in which the court has granted durable legal custody. In such cases, the Department of Human Services shall be released from any oversight or monitoring responsibilities;

(c) Order terms of treatment calculated to assist the child and the child's parent, guardian or custodian which are within the ability of the parent, guardian or custodian to perform;

(d) Order youth court personnel, the Department of Human Services or child care agencies to assist the child and the child's parent, guardian or custodian to secure social or medical services to provide proper supervision and care of the child;

(e) Give legal custody of the child to any of the following but in no event to any state training school:

(i) The Department of Human Services for appropriate placement; or

(ii) Any private or public organization, preferably community-based, able to assume the education, care and maintenance of the child, which has been found suitable by the court. Prior to assigning the custody of any child to any private institution or agency, the youth court through its designee shall first inspect the physical facilities to determine that they provide a reasonable standard of health and safety for the child;

(f) If the court makes a finding that custody is necessary as defined in Section 43-21-301(3)(b), and that the child, in the action pending before the youth court had not previously been taken into custody, the disposition order shall recite that the effect of the continuation of the child's residing within his or her own home would be contrary to the welfare of the child, that the placement of the child in foster care is in the best interests of the child, and unless the reasonable efforts requirement is bypassed under Section 43-21-603(7)(c), the order also must state:

(i) That reasonable efforts have been made to maintain the child within his or her own home, but that the circumstances warrant his or her removal, and there is no reasonable alternative to custody; or

(ii) The circumstances are of such an emergency nature that no reasonable efforts have been made to

maintain the child within his or her own home, and there is no reasonable alternative to custody; or

(iii) If the court makes a finding in accordance with (ii) of this paragraph, the court shall order that reasonable efforts be made towards the reunification of the child with his or her family.

(g) If the court had, before the disposition hearing in the action pending before the court, taken the child into custody, the judge or referee shall determine, and the youth court order shall recite that reasonable efforts were made by the Department of Human Services to finalize the child's permanency plan that was in effect on the date of the disposition hearing.

§ 43-21-611. Authorized disposition, special care needed

If the youth court finds at the disposition hearing that a delinquent child, a child in need of supervision, a neglected child, an abused child or a dependent child is also a child in need of special care, the youth court may, in its discretion, make any appropriate additional disposition designed for the treatment of the disability or infirmity, which may include civil commitment to a state institution providing care for that disability or infirmity. Any commitment, including one to a Department of Mental Health facility, ordered pursuant to this section shall be in compliance with the requirements for civil commitment as set forth in Section 41-21-61 et seq. Discharge from a Department of Mental Health facility shall be made pursuant to the provisions of Section 41-21-87. Nothing contained in this section shall require any state institution, department or agency to provide any service, treatment or facility if said service, treatment or facility is not available, nor shall this section be construed to authorize the youth court to overrule an expulsion or suspension decision of appropriate school authorities.

§ 43-21-613. Modification of orders

(1) If the youth court finds, after a hearing which complies with the sections governing adjudicatory hearings, that the terms of a delinquency or child in need of supervision disposition order, probation or parole have been violated, the youth court may, in its discretion, revoke the original disposition and make any disposition which it could have originally ordered. The hearing shall be initiated by the filing of a petition that complies with the sections governing petitions in this chapter and that includes a statement of the youth court's original disposition order, probation or parole, the alleged violation of that order, probation or parole, and the facts which show the violation of that order, probation or parole. Summons shall be served in the same manner as summons for an adjudicatory hearing.

(2) On motion of a child or a child's parent, guardian or custodian, the youth court may, in its discretion, conduct an informal hearing to review the disposition order. If the youth court finds a material change of circumstances relating to the disposition of the child, the youth court may modify the disposition order to any appropriate disposition of equal or greater precedence which the youth court could have originally ordered.

(3)(a) Unless the youth court's jurisdiction has been terminated, all disposition orders for supervision, probation or placement of a child with an individual or an agency shall be reviewed by the youth court judge or referee at least annually to determine if continued placement, probation or supervision is in the best interest of the child or the public. For children who have been adjudicated abused or neglected, the youth court shall conduct a permanency hearing within twelve (12) months after the earlier of:

(i) An adjudication that the child has been abused or neglected; or

(ii) The date of the child's removal from the allegedly abusive or neglectful custodian/parent. Notice of such hearing shall be given in accordance with the provisions of Section 43-21-505(5). In conducting the hearing, the judge or referee shall require a written report and may require information or statements from the child's youth court counselor, parent, guardian or custodian, which includes, but is not limited to, an evaluation of the child's progress and recommendations for further supervision or treatment. The judge or referee shall, at the permanency hearing determine the future status of the child, including, but not limited to, whether the child should be returned to the parent(s) or placed with suitable relatives, placed for adoption, placed for the purpose of establishing durable legal custody or should, because of

the child's special needs or circumstances, be continued in foster care on a permanent or long-term basis. If the child is in an out-of-state placement, the hearing shall determine whether the out-of-state placement continues to be appropriate and in the best interest of the child. At the permanency hearing the judge or referee shall determine, and the youth court order shall recite that reasonable efforts were made by the Department of Human Services to finalize the child's permanency plan that was in effect on the date of the permanency hearing. The judge or referee may find that reasonable efforts to maintain the child within his home shall not be required in accordance with Section 43-21-603(7)(c), and that the youth court shall continue to conduct permanency hearings for a child who has been adjudicated abused or neglected, at least annually thereafter, for as long as the child remains in the custody of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

(b) The court may find that the filing of a termination of parental rights petition is not in the child's best interest if:

(i) The child is being cared for by a relative; and/or

(ii) The Department of Human Services has documented compelling and extraordinary reasons why termination of parental rights would not be in the best interests of the child.

(c) The provisions of this subsection shall also apply to review of cases involving a dependent child; however, such reviews shall take place not less frequently than once each one hundred eighty (180) days. A dependent child shall be ordered by the youth court judge or referee to be returned to the custody and home of the child's parent, guardian or custodian unless the judge or referee, upon such review, makes a written finding that the return of the child to the home would be contrary to the child's best interests.

(d) Reviews are not to be conducted unless explicitly ordered by the youth court concerning those cases in which the court has granted durable legal custody. In such cases, the Department of Human Services shall be released from any oversight or monitoring responsibilities, and relieved of physical and legal custody and supervision of the child.

§ 43-21-615. Transportation and treatment costs

(1) The costs of conveying any child committed to any institution or agency shall be paid by the county or municipality from which the child is committed out of the general treasury of the county or municipality upon approval of the court. No compensation shall be allowed beyond the actual and necessary expenses of the child and the person actually conveying the child. In the case of a female child, the youth court shall designate some suitable woman to accompany her to the institution or agency.

(2) Whenever a child is committed by the youth court to the custody of any person or agency other than the custody of a state training school, the youth court, after giving the responsible parent or guardian a reasonable opportunity to be heard, may order that the parent or guardian pay, upon such terms or conditions as the youth court may direct, such sum or sums as will cover, in whole or in part, the support of the child including any necessary medical treatment. If the parent or guardian shall wilfully fail or refuse to pay such sum, he may be proceeded against for contempt of court as provided in this chapter.

§ 43-21-617. Orders to persons besides child

In all cases where the child is found to be a delinquent child, a child in need of supervision, a neglected child or an abused child, the parent, guardian, custodian or any other person who, by any act or acts of wilful commission or omission, if found after notice and a hearing by the youth court to be encouraging, causing or contributing to the neglect or delinquency of such child, may be required by the youth court to do or to omit to do any act or acts that the judge may deem reasonable and necessary for the welfare of the child.

§ 43-21-619. Parents' responsibility to pay

(1) The youth court may order financially able parents to pay for court ordered medical and other examinations and treatment of a child; for reasonable attorney's fees and court costs; and for other

expenses found necessary or appropriate in the best interest of the child as determined by the youth court. The youth court is authorized to enforce payments ordered under this subsection.

(2) The youth court may order the parents, guardians or custodians who exercise parental custody and control of a child who is under the jurisdiction of the youth court and who has willfully or maliciously caused personal injury or damaged or destroyed property, to pay such damages or restitution through the court to the victim in an amount not to exceed the actual loss and to enforce payment thereof.

Restitution ordered by the youth court under this section shall not preclude recovery of damages by the victim from such child or parent, guardian or custodian or other person who would otherwise be liable. The youth court also may order the parents, guardians or custodians of a child who is under the jurisdiction of the youth court and who willfully or maliciously has caused personal injury or damaged or destroyed property to participate in a counseling program or other suitable family treatment program for the purpose of preventing future occurrences of malicious destruction of property or personal injury.

(3) Such orders under this section shall constitute a civil judgment and may be enrolled on the judgment rolls in the office of the circuit clerk of the county where such order was entered, and further, such order may be enforced in any manner provided by law for civil judgments.

§ 43-21-621. School

(1) The youth court may, in compliance with the laws governing education of children, order any state-supported public school in its jurisdiction after notice and hearing to enroll or reenroll any compulsory-school-age child in school, and further order appropriate educational services. Provided, however, that the youth court shall not order the enrollment or reenrollment of a student that has been suspended or expelled by a public school pursuant to Section 37-9-71 or 37-7-301 for possession of a weapon on school grounds, for an offense involving a threat to the safety of other persons or for the commission of a violent act. For the purpose of this section "violent act" means any action which results in death or physical harm to another or an attempt to cause death or physical harm to another. The superintendent of the school district to which such child is ordered may, in his discretion, assign such child to the alternative school program of such school established pursuant to Section 37-13-92, Mississippi Code of 1972. The court shall have jurisdiction to enforce school and education laws. Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the attendance of a child in a legitimate home instruction program.

(2) The youth court may specify the following conditions of probation related to any juvenile ordered to enroll or reenroll in school: That the juvenile maintain passing grades in up to four (4) courses during each grading period and meet with the court counselor and a representative of the school to make a plan for how to maintain those passing grades.

(3) If the adjudication of delinquency was for an offense involving a threat to the safety of the juvenile or others and school attendance is a condition of probation, the youth court judge shall make a finding that the principal of the juvenile's school should be notified. If the judge orders that the principal be notified, the youth court counselor shall within five (5) days or before the juvenile begins to attend school, whichever occurs first, notify the principal of the juvenile's school in writing of the nature of the offense and the probation requirements related to school attendance. A principal notified by a juvenile court counselor shall handle the report according to the guidelines and rules adopted by the State Board of Education.

(4) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall report to the Legislature on the number of juveniles reported to principals in accordance with this section no later than January 1, 1996.

§ 43-21-623. HIV and AIDS testing required for certain offenders

Any juvenile who is adjudicated a delinquent on or after July 1, 1994, as a result of committing a sex offense as defined in Section 45-33-23 or any offense involving the crime of rape and placed in the custody of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office of Youth Services, shall be tested for

HIV and AIDS. Such tests shall be conducted by the State Department of Health in conjunction with the Office of Youth Services, Mississippi Department of Human Services at the request of the victim or the victim's parents or guardian if the victim is a juvenile. The results of any positive HIV or AIDS tests shall be reported to the victim or the victim's parents or guardian if the victim is a juvenile as well as to the adjudicated offender. The State Department of Health shall provide counseling and referral to appropriate treatment for victims of a sex offense when the adjudicated offender tested positive for HIV or AIDS if the victim so requests.

§ 43-27-25. Mentally ill or retarded

No person shall be committed to an institution under the control of the department of youth services who is seriously handicapped by mental illness or retardation. If after a person is referred to the training schools it shall be determined that he is mentally ill or mentally retarded to an extent that he could not be properly cared for in its custody, the director may institute necessary legal action to accomplish the transfer of such person to such other state institution as, in his judgment, is best qualified to care for him in accordance with the laws of this state. The department shall establish standards with regard to the physical and mental health of persons which it can accept for commitment.

§ 93-11-65. Enforcement of Support of Dependents

(4) When a charge of abuse or neglect of a child first arises in the course of a custody or maintenance action pending in the chancery court pursuant to this section, the chancery court may proceed with the investigation, hearing and determination of such abuse or neglect charge as a part of its hearing and determination of the custody or maintenance issue as between the parents, as provided in Section 43-21-151, notwithstanding the other provisions of the Youth Court Law. The proceedings in chancery court on the abuse or neglect charge shall be confidential in the same manner as provided in youth court proceedings, and the chancery court shall appoint a guardian ad litem in such cases, as provided under Section 43-21-121 for youth court proceedings, who shall be an attorney. In determining whether any portion of a guardian ad litem's fee shall be assessed against any party or parties as a cost of court for reimbursement to the county, the court shall consider each party's individual ability to pay. Unless the chancery court's jurisdiction has been terminated, all disposition orders in such cases for placement with the Department of Human Services shall be reviewed by the court or designated authority at least annually to determine if continued placement with the department is in the best interest of the child or the public.

B. MISSISSIPPI'S INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

§ 43-18-1. Execution of compact

The governor, on behalf of this state, is hereby authorized to execute a compact in substantially the following form with all other jurisdictions legally joining therein; and the legislature hereby signifies in advance its approval and ratification of such compact, which compact is as follows:

INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN

ARTICLE I.

It is the purpose and policy of the party states to cooperate with each other in the interstate placement of children to the end that:

- (a) Each child requiring placement shall receive the maximum opportunity to be placed in a suitable environment and with persons or institutions having appropriate qualifications and facilities to provide a necessary and desirable degree and type of care.
- (b) The appropriate authorities in a state where a child is to be placed may have full opportunity to

ascertain the circumstances of the proposed placement, thereby promoting full compliance with applicable requirements for the protection of the child.

(c) The proper authorities of the state from which the placement is made may obtain the most complete information on the basis on which to evaluate a projected placement before it is made.

(d) Appropriate jurisdictional arrangements for the care of children will be promoted.

ARTICLE II.

As used in this compact:

(a) "Child" means a person who, by reason of minority, is legally subject to parental, guardianship or similar control.

(b) "Sending agency" means a party state, officer or employee thereof; a subdivision of a party state, or officer or employee thereof; a court of a party state; a person, corporation, association, charitable agency or other entity which sends, brings or causes to be sent or brought any child to another party state.

(c) "Receiving state" means the state to which a child is sent, brought, or caused to be sent or brought, whether by public authorities or private persons or agencies and whether for placement with state or local public authorities or for placement with private agencies or persons.

(d) "Placement" means the arrangement for the care of a child in a family free or boarding home or in a child-caring agency or institution but does not include any institution caring for the mentally ill or mentally defective or any institution primarily educational in character, and any hospital or other medical facility.

ARTICLE III.

(a) No sending agency shall send, bring or cause to be sent or brought into any other party state any child for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption unless the sending agency shall comply with each and every requirement set forth in this article and with the applicable laws of the receiving state governing the placement of children therein.

(b) Prior to sending, bringing or causing any child to be sent or brought into a receiving state for placement in foster care or as a preliminary to a possible adoption, the sending agency shall furnish the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state written notice of the intention to send, bring or place the child in the receiving state. The notice shall contain:

(1) The name, date and place of birth of the child.

(2) The identity and address or addresses of the parents or legal guardian.

(3) The name and address of the person, agency or institution to or with which the sending agency proposes to send, bring or place the child.

(4) A full statement of the reasons for such proposed action and evidence of the authority pursuant to which the placement is proposed to be made.

(c) Any public officer or agency in a receiving state which is in receipt of a notice pursuant to paragraph (b) of this article may request of the sending agency, or any other appropriate officer or agency of or in the sending agency's state, and shall be entitled to receive therefrom, such supporting or additional information as it may deem necessary under the circumstances to carry out the purpose and policy of this compact.

(d) The child shall not be sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought into the receiving state until the appropriate public authorities in the receiving state shall notify the sending agency, in writing, to the effect that the proposed placement does not appear to be contrary to the interests of the child.

ARTICLE IV.

The sending, bringing or causing to be sent or brought into any receiving state of a child in violation of the terms of this compact shall constitute a violation of the laws respecting the placement of children of both in which the sending agency is located or from which it sends or brings the child and of the receiving state. Such violation may be punished or subjected to penalty in either jurisdiction in accordance with its laws. In addition to liability for any such punishment or penalty, any such violation shall constitute full and sufficient grounds for the suspension or revocation of any license, permit or other

legal authorization held by the sending agency which empowers or allows it to place or care for children.
ARTICLE V.

(a) The sending agency shall retain jurisdiction over the child sufficient to determine all matters in relation to the custody, supervision, care, treatment and disposition of the child which it would have had if the child had remained in the sending agency's state, until the child is adopted, reaches majority, becomes self-supporting or is discharged with the concurrence of the appropriate authority in the receiving state. Such jurisdiction shall also include the power to effect or cause the return of the child or its transfer to another location and custody pursuant to law. The sending agency shall continue to have financial responsibility for support and maintenance of the child during the period of the placement. Nothing contained herein shall defeat a claim of jurisdiction by a receiving state sufficient to deal with an act of delinquency or crime committed therein.

(b) When the sending agency is a public agency, it may enter into an agreement with an authorized public or private agency in the receiving state providing for the performance of one or more services in respect of such case by the latter as agent for the sending agency.

(c) Nothing in this compact shall be construed to prevent a private charitable agency authorized to place children in the receiving state from performing services or acting as agent in that state for a private charitable agency of the sending state; nor to prevent the agency in the receiving state from discharging financial responsibility for the support and maintenance of a child who has been placed on behalf of the sending agency without relieving the responsibility set forth in paragraph (a) hereof.

ARTICLE VI.

A child adjudicated delinquent may be placed in an institution in another party jurisdiction pursuant to this compact but no such placement shall be made unless the child is given a court hearing on notice to the parent or guardian with opportunity to be heard, prior to his being sent to such other party jurisdiction for institutional care and the court finds that:

- (1) Equivalent facilities for the child are not available in the sending agency's jurisdiction; and
- (2) Institutional care in the other jurisdiction is in the best interest of the child and will not produce undue hardship.

ARTICLE VII.

The executive head of each jurisdiction party to this compact shall designate an officer who shall be general coordinator of activities under this compact in his jurisdiction and who, acting jointly with like officers of other party jurisdictions, shall have power to promulgate rules and regulations to carry out more effectively the terms and provisions of this compact.

ARTICLE VIII.

This compact shall not apply to:

- (a) The sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state by his parent, stepparent, grandparent, adult brother or sister, adult uncle or aunt, or his guardian and leaving the child with any such relative or nonagency guardian in the receiving state.
- (b) Any placement, sending or bringing of a child into a receiving state pursuant to any other interstate compact to which both the state from which the child is sent or brought and the receiving state are party, or to any other agreement between said states which has the force of law.

ARTICLE IX.

This compact shall be open to joinder by any state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and, with the consent of Congress, the government of Canada or any province thereof. It shall become effective with respect to any such jurisdiction when such jurisdiction has enacted the same into law. Withdrawal from this compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing the same, but shall not take effect until written notice of the withdrawal has been given by the withdrawing state to the Governor of each other party jurisdiction. Withdrawal of a party state shall not affect the rights, duties and obligations under this compact of any sending agency therein with respect to a placement made prior to the effective date of withdrawal.

ARTICLE X.

The provisions of this compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate the purposes thereof. The provisions of this compact shall be severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence or provision of this compact is declared to be contrary to the constitution of any party state or of the United States or the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person or circumstance is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of this compact and the applicability thereof to any government, agency, person or circumstance shall not be affected thereby. If this compact shall be held contrary to the constitution of any state party thereto, the compact shall remain in full force and effect as to the remaining states and in full force and effect as to the state affected as to all severable matters.

§ 43-18-3. Authority under Article III

The "appropriate public authorities" as used in Article III of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children shall, with reference to this state, mean the state department of public welfare. Any county department of public welfare, likewise, when directed by the commissioner of the state department of public welfare shall be authorized to receive and act with reference to notices required by said Article III.

§ 43-18-5. Authority under Article V

As used in paragraph (a) of Article V of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, the phrase "appropriate authority in the receiving state" with reference to this state shall mean the state department of public welfare or, with the approval of the commissioner of the state department of public welfare, any county department of public welfare.

§ 43-18-7. Definition of "executive head"

As used in Article VII of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, the term "executive head" means the governor of the state of Mississippi. The governor of the state of Mississippi is hereby authorized to appoint a compact administrator in accordance with the terms of said Article VII.

§ 43-18-9. Determining financial responsibility

Financial responsibility for any child placed pursuant to the provisions of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Article V thereof in the first instance. However, in the event of partial or complete default of performance thereunder, the provisions of any other state laws fixing responsibility for the support of children also may be invoked.

§ 43-18-11. Agreements with other states

The officers and agencies of this state and its subdivisions having authority to place children are hereby empowered to enter into agreements with appropriate officers or agencies of or in other party states pursuant to paragraph (b) of Article V of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. Any such agreement which contains a financial commitment or imposes a financial obligation on this state, or subdivision or agency thereof, shall not be binding unless it has the approval in writing of the state department or agency with funds for that purpose or with the approval of the county department or agency with funds for that purpose.

§ 43-18-13. Meeting requirements in other state

Any requirements for visitation, inspection or supervision of children, homes, institutions or other agencies in another party state which may apply under any statutes or court decisions of this state shall be deemed to be met if performed pursuant to an agreement entered into by appropriate officers or agencies of this state or a subdivision thereof as contemplated by paragraph (b) of Article V of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

§ 43-18-15. State laws not applicable

The provisions of state laws restricting out-of-state placement of children shall not apply to placements made pursuant to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

§ 43-18-17. Retained jurisdiction

Any court having jurisdiction to place delinquent children may place such a child in an institution of or in another state pursuant to Article VI of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and shall retain jurisdiction as provided in Article V thereof.

C. AMENDED SPECIAL ORDER NO. 46 (MISS. DEC. 12, 1997) AND SPECIAL ORDER NO. 47 (MISS. DEC. 16, 1996)