

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: Standing Committee on Judiciary

Currently, persons who are granted with the authority to place minor children for adoption are required to comply with rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of Social Services and the Department of Health and Senior Services for placement. This bill specifies that such persons are required to comply with the rules and regulations promulgated by the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services. Under current law, the Department of Social Services promulgates rules and regulations related to assessments of petitioners for adoption. This bill changes that to the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services (Sections 453.014 and 453.070, RSMo).

The bill changes the age threshold for abandoned infant or abandoned child from one year or under to under three years old and sets a time frame of 60 days prior to a petition of termination of parental rights to be considered for willful, substantial, and continual neglect by the parent clarifying current language. This bill adds felonies in Chapters 567 and 568, RSMo, to the current felony chapters for which a parent, if guilty and the victim is a child, shall lose parental rights, along with if the child has been in foster care for 15 months out of the previous 22 months (Section 211.447).

The bill repeals payment for adoption legal fees by the prospective adoptive parents for a birth parent and allows the court to determine if representation is needed for the birth parent in an adoption proceedings (Section 453.030).

Currently, consent to the adoption of a child is required by a parent unless the child is under the age of one and the parent, for at least six months, has neglected to provide the child with necessary care and protection. This bill changes the age from over one year old to three years of age or older (Section 453.040).