

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, February 20, 2008

House Bill No. 2468

HOUSE BILL NO. 2468 - By: ROUSSELOT, BIGHORSE, PITTMAN AND SHUMATE of the House and GARRISON of the Senate.

An Act relating to children; amending 10 O.S. 2001, Section 5, as last amended by Section 1, Chapter 102, O.S.L. 2007 (10 O.S. Supp. 2007, Section 5), which relates to grandparent visitation; requiring mediation upon the filing of a petition; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

- 1 SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 10 O.S. 2001, Section 5, as last amended by
2 Section 1, Chapter 102, O.S.L. 2007 (10 O.S. Supp. 2007, Section 5), is amended to read
3 as follows:
- 4 Section 5. A. 1. Pursuant to the provisions of this section, any grandparent of an
5 unmarried minor child may seek and be granted reasonable visitation rights to the child
6 which visitation rights may be independent of either parent of the child if:
- 7 a. the district court deems it to be in the best interest of the child
 - 8 pursuant to subsection E of this section, and
 - 9 b. there is a showing of parental unfitness, or the grandparent has
 - 10 rebutted, by clear and convincing evidence, the presumption that the
 - 11 fit parent is acting in the best interests of the child by showing that the

1 child would suffer harm or potential harm without the granting of
2 visitation rights to the grandparent of the child, and
3 c. the intact nuclear family has been disrupted in that one or more of the
4 following conditions has occurred:
5 (1) an action for divorce, separate maintenance or annulment
6 involving the grandchild's parents is pending before the court,
7 and the grandparent had a preexisting relationship with the
8 child that predates the filing of the action for divorce, separate
9 maintenance or annulment,
10 (2) the grandchild's parents are divorced, separated under a
11 judgment of separate maintenance, or have had their marriage
12 annulled,
13 (3) the grandchild's parent who is a child of the grandparent is
14 deceased, and the grandparent had a preexisting relationship
15 with the child that predates the death of the deceased parent,
16 (4) except as otherwise provided in subsection C or D of this section,
17 legal custody of the grandchild has been given to a person other
18 than the grandchild's parent, or the grandchild does not reside
19 in the home of a parent of the child,
20 (5) grandparent had custody of the grandchild pursuant to Section
21 21.3 of this title, whether or not the grandparent had custody
22 under a court order, and there exists a strong, continuous

- 1 grandparental relationship between the grandparent and the
2 child,
- 3 (6) the grandchild's parent has deserted the other parent for more
4 than one (1) year and there exists a strong, continuous
5 grandparental relationship between the grandparent and the
6 child,
- 7 (7) except as otherwise provided in subsection D of this section, the
8 grandchild's parents have never been married, are not residing
9 in the same household and there exists a strong, continuous
10 grandparental relationship between the grandparent and the
11 child, or
- 12 (8) except as otherwise provided by subsection D of this section, the
13 parental rights of one or both parents of the child have been
14 terminated, and the court determines that there is a strong,
15 continuous relationship between the child and the parent of the
16 person whose parental rights have been terminated.

17 2. The right of visitation to any grandparent of an unmarried minor child shall be
18 granted only so far as that right is authorized and provided by order of the district court.

19 B. Under no circumstances shall any judge grant the right of visitation to any
20 grandparent if the child is a member of an intact nuclear family and both parents of the
21 child object to the granting of visitation.

1 C. If one natural parent is deceased and the surviving natural parent remarries,
2 any subsequent adoption proceedings shall not terminate any preexisting court-granted
3 grandparental rights belonging to the parents of the deceased natural parent unless the
4 termination of visitation rights is ordered by the court having jurisdiction over the
5 adoption after opportunity to be heard, and the court determines it to be in the best
6 interest of the child.

7 D. 1. If the child has been born out of wedlock and the parental rights of the father
8 of the child have been terminated, the parents of the father of ~~such~~ the child shall not
9 have a right of visitation authorized by this section to ~~such~~ the child unless:

10 a. the father of ~~such~~ the child has been judicially determined to be the
11 father of the child, and

12 b. the court determines that a previous grandparental relationship
13 existed between the grandparent and the child.

14 2. If the child is born out of wedlock and the parental rights of the mother of the
15 child have been terminated, the parents of the mother of ~~such~~ the child shall not have a
16 right of visitation authorized by this section to ~~such~~ the child unless the court determines
17 that a previous grandparental relationship existed between the grandparent and the
18 child.

19 3. Except as otherwise provided by this section, the district court shall not grant to
20 any grandparent of an unmarried minor child, visitation rights to that child:

21 a. subsequent to the final order of adoption of the child; provided
22 however, any subsequent adoption proceedings shall not terminate any

1 prior court-granted grandparental visitation rights unless the
2 termination of visitation rights is ordered by the court after
3 opportunity to be heard and the district court determines it to be in the
4 best interest of the child, or

5 b. if the child had been placed for adoption prior to attaining six (6)
6 months of age.

7 E. 1. In determining the best interest of the minor child, the court shall consider
8 and, if requested, shall make specific findings of fact related to the following factors:

9 a. the needs of and importance to the child for a continuing preexisting
10 relationship with the grandparent and the age and reasonable
11 preference of the child pursuant to Section 113 of Title 43 of the
12 Oklahoma Statutes,

13 b. the willingness of the grandparent or grandparents to encourage a
14 close relationship between the child and the parent or parents,

15 c. the length, quality and intimacy of the preexisting relationship
16 between the child and the grandparent,

17 d. the love, affection and emotional ties existing between the parent and
18 child,

19 e. the motivation and efforts of the grandparent to continue the
20 preexisting relationship with the grandchild,

21 f. the motivation of parent or parents denying visitation,

22 g. the mental and physical health of the grandparent or grandparents,

- 1 h. the mental and physical health of the child,
2 i. the mental and physical health of the parent or parents,
3 j. whether the child is in a permanent, stable, satisfactory family unit
4 and environment,
5 k. the moral fitness of the parties,
6 l. the character and behavior of any other person who resides in or
7 frequents the homes of the parties and such person's interactions with
8 the child,
9 m. the quantity of visitation time requested and the potential adverse
10 impact the visitation will have on the customary activities of the child,
11 and
12 n. if both parents are dead, the benefit in maintaining the preexisting
13 relationship.

14 2. For purposes of this subsection:

- 15 a. "harm or potential harm" means a showing that without court-ordered
16 visitation by the grandparent, the child's emotional, mental or physical
17 well-being could reasonably or would be jeopardized,
18 b. "intact nuclear family" means a family consisting of the married father
19 and mother of the child,
20 c. "parental unfitness" includes, but is not limited to, a showing that a
21 parent of the child or a person residing with the parent:

- 1 (1) has a chemical or alcohol dependency, for which treatment has
2 not been sought or for which treatment has been unsuccessful,
3 (2) has a history of violent behavior or domestic abuse,
4 (3) has an emotional or mental illness that demonstrably impairs
5 judgment or capacity to recognize reality or to control behavior,
6 (4) has been shown to have failed to provide the child with proper
7 care, guidance and support to the actual detriment of the child.
8 The provisions of this division include, but are not limited to,
9 parental indifference and parental influence on his or her child
10 or lack thereof that exposes such child to unreasonable risk, or
11 (5) demonstrates conduct or condition which renders him or her
12 unable or unwilling to give a child reasonable parental care.
13 Reasonable parental care requires, at a minimum, that the
14 parent provides nurturing and protection adequate to meet the
15 child's physical, emotional and mental health.

16 The determination of parental unfitness pursuant to this
17 subparagraph shall not be that which is equivalent for the termination
18 of parental rights, and

19 d. "preexisting relationship" means occurring or existing prior to the
20 filing of the petition for grandparental visitation.

21 F. 1. The district courts are vested with jurisdiction to issue orders granting
22 grandparental visitation rights and to enforce visitation rights, upon the filing of a

1 verified petition for visitation rights or enforcement thereof. Notice as ordered by the
2 court shall be given to the person or parent having custody of the child. The venue of
3 such action shall be in the court where there is an ongoing proceeding that involves the
4 child, or if there is no ongoing proceeding, in the county of the residence of the child or
5 parent.

6 2. Upon the filing of a verified petition for visitation rights the court shall order an
7 initial mediation.

8 3. When a grandparent of a child has been granted visitation rights pursuant to
9 this section and those rights are unreasonably denied or otherwise unreasonably
10 interfered with by any parent of the child, the grandparent may file with the court a
11 motion for enforcement of visitation rights. Upon filing of the motion, the court shall set
12 an initial hearing on the motion. At the initial hearing, the court shall direct mediation
13 and set a hearing on the merits of the motion.

14 ~~3.~~ 4. After completion of any mediation pursuant to paragraph 2 or 3 of this
15 subsection, the mediator shall submit the record of mediation termination and a
16 summary of the parties' agreement, if any, to the court. Upon receipt of the record of
17 mediation termination, the court shall enter an order in accordance with the parties'
18 agreement, if any.

19 4. 5. Notice of a hearing pursuant to paragraph 2 3 or ~~3~~ 4 of this subsection shall be
20 given to the parties at their last-known address or as otherwise ordered by the court, at
21 least ten (10) days prior to the date set by the court for hearing on the motion. Provided,

1 the court may direct a shorter notice period if the court deems such shorter notice period
2 to be appropriate under the circumstances.

3 ~~5.~~ 6. Appearance at any court hearing pursuant to this subsection shall be a waiver
4 of the notice requirements prior to ~~such~~ the hearing.

5 ~~6.~~ 7. If the court finds that visitation rights of the grandparent have been
6 unreasonably denied or otherwise unreasonably interfered with by the parent, the court
7 shall enter an order providing for one or more of the following:

- 8 a. a specific visitation schedule,
- 9 b. compensating visitation time for the visitation denied or otherwise
10 interfered with, which time may be of the same type as the visitation
11 denied or otherwise interfered with, including but not limited to
12 holiday, weekday, weekend, summer, and may be at the convenience of
13 the grandparent,
- 14 c. posting of a bond, either cash or with sufficient sureties, conditioned
15 upon compliance with the order granting visitation rights, or
- 16 d. assessment of reasonable attorney fees, mediation costs, and court
17 costs to enforce visitation rights against the parent.

18 ~~7.~~ 8. If the court finds that the motion for enforcement of visitation rights has been
19 unreasonably filed or pursued by the grandparent, the court may assess reasonable
20 attorney fees, mediation costs, and court costs against the grandparent.

1 G. In addition to any other remedy authorized by this section or otherwise provided
2 by law, any party violating an order of the court made pursuant to this section, upon
3 conviction thereof, shall be guilty of contempt of court.

4 H. Any transportation costs or other costs arising from any visitation ordered
5 pursuant to this section shall be paid by the grandparent or grandparents requesting
6 such visitation.

7 I. In any action for grandparental visitation pursuant to this section, the court may
8 award attorney fees and costs, as the court deems equitable.

9 J. For the purposes of this section, the term "grandparent" shall include "great-
10 grandparent".

11 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2008.

12 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, dated 02-19-08 -
13 DO PASS, As Coauthored.