

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 59th Legislature (2023)

3 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
4 FOR ENGROSSED  
5 HOUSE BILL NO. 1017

By: Lawson, Munson, and Ranson  
of the House

and

Rosino of the Senate

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9 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

10 [ children - Family Representation and Advocacy Act -  
11 Family Representation and Advocacy Program -  
12 Administrative Office of the Courts - executive  
13 director - training for contractors - Family  
Representation and Advocacy Program Revolving Fund -  
annual audit - annual report - codification -  
effective date ]

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15  
16 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

17 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
18 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 801 of Title 10, unless there is  
19 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

20 A. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Family  
21 Representation and Advocacy Act".

22 B. As used in this act, "eligible organization" means an entity  
23 that:  
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1 1. Is organized as a not-for-profit corporation that is tax  
2 exempt pursuant to the provisions of paragraph (3) of subsection (c)  
3 of Section 501 of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986,  
4 as amended;

5 2. Has as its primary purpose the furnishing of legal  
6 assistance to eligible clients in civil matters;

7 3. Renders legal services to eligible clients in pre- and post-  
8 petition deprived child proceedings; and

9 4. Is incorporated pursuant to any applicable laws in this  
10 state.

11 C. There is hereby created within the Administrative Office of  
12 the Courts the Family Representation and Advocacy Program. The  
13 purpose of the Family Representation and Advocacy Program shall be  
14 to ensure uniform and high quality legal representation for children  
15 and indigent parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians in  
16 deprived child actions brought by the state pursuant to the  
17 provisions of Section 1-1-101 et seq. of Title 10A of the Oklahoma  
18 Statutes.

19 D. From funds appropriated or otherwise available for the  
20 purpose of implementing the Family Representation and Advocacy Act,  
21 the Administrative Office of the Court shall issue a request for  
22 proposals and contract with an eligible organization to administer  
23 the Family Representation and Advocacy Program through the  
24 establishment of a central office for the state. The contract shall

1 be the result of the request for proposals issued by the  
2 Administrative Office of the Courts and submission of competitive  
3 bids by eligible organizations pursuant to the Oklahoma Central  
4 Purchasing Act.

5 E. Through the activities of the central office, the Family  
6 Representation and Advocacy Program shall work cooperatively  
7 statewide with judicial districts and attorneys by contracting with,  
8 training, compensating, and supporting legal counsel for the  
9 children, indigent parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians  
10 appointed by the court pursuant to Section 1-4-306 of Title 10A of  
11 the Oklahoma Statutes. The Family Representation and Advocacy  
12 Program shall have the responsibility to ensure that all parents,  
13 legal guardians, and Indian custodians who are entitled to court-  
14 appointed counsel and all children are appointed counsel who have  
15 the training, support, and access to resources to provide uniform  
16 and high quality legal representation. The central office shall not  
17 provide direct legal representation to clients except in selected  
18 appeals. Nothing in this subsection shall preclude the appointment  
19 of a guardian ad litem pursuant to Section 1-8-108 of Title 10A of  
20 the Oklahoma Statutes.

21 F. An executive director for the Family Representation and  
22 Advocacy Program shall be employed by the eligible organization and  
23 approved by the Administrative Office of the Courts or any board  
24 established pursuant to subsection K of this section. The executive

1 director shall have at least ten (10) years of experience as a  
2 licensed attorney prior to appointment, be licensed to practice law  
3 in this state at the time of appointment and be familiar with the  
4 unique demands of representing children, parents, legal guardians,  
5 Indian custodians in deprived child cases in this state. The  
6 executive director shall serve full time and shall not engage in  
7 private practice of law outside of the Program. The executive  
8 director shall hire all staff including employees of the central  
9 office, contract attorneys or other legal providers eligible for  
10 appointment pursuant to Section 1-4-306 of Title 10A of the Oklahoma  
11 Statutes, and interdisciplinary contractors required to implement  
12 the Family Representation and Advocacy Act. The executive director  
13 shall submit budget requests and shall report quarterly to the  
14 Administrative Office of the Courts or any board established  
15 pursuant to subsection K of this section.

16 G. The Family Representation and Advocacy Program shall have  
17 authority to contract with any type of legal entity including but  
18 not limited to law firms, legal services programs, Office of Public  
19 Defender, law school clinics, and individual attorneys as needed.  
20 The Program shall have authority to contract with and compensate  
21 social workers, parent and youth advocates, and peer mentors to  
22 provide interdisciplinary assistance to the attorneys representing  
23 children, indigent parents, legal guardians, Indian custodians in  
24 the deprived child proceedings. The existing Offices of Public

1 Defender shall continue to provide representation for children in  
2 deprived child proceedings and continue to be funded as set forth in  
3 Section 138.4 of Title 19 of the Oklahoma Statutes. The Offices of  
4 the Public Defender may elect to contract with the Family  
5 Representation and Advocacy Program for additional funds to provide  
6 additional staff and resources in the representation of the  
7 children.

8 H. The Family Representation and Advocacy Program shall ensure  
9 that all counsel are members of the Oklahoma Bar Association in good  
10 standing and are adequately trained. The Program shall provide  
11 uniform and high quality training in collaboration with the State of  
12 Oklahoma Children's Court Improvement Program, the Oklahoma Bar  
13 Association, local bar associations, and other relevant state and  
14 national organizations to all attorneys who are appointed to  
15 represent children, parents, legal guardians, and Indian custodians  
16 in deprived child proceedings. The Program shall contractually  
17 require and verify that the attorneys providing legal representation  
18 to children, indigent parents, legal guardians, and Indian  
19 custodians comply with the Oklahoma Standards of Practice for  
20 Attorneys Representing Parents in Deprived Child Proceedings, the  
21 Oklahoma Standards of Practice for Attorneys Representing Children  
22 in Deprived Child Proceedings, and caseload limits as developed and  
23 approved by the Uniform Representation of Children and Parents in  
24 Cases Involving Abuse and Neglect Oversight Committee created by the

1 Oklahoma Supreme Court. The Family Representation and Advocacy  
2 Program shall ensure that all interdisciplinary contractors are  
3 provided with uniform and evidence-based training, resources, and  
4 support.

5 I. The Family Representation and Advocacy Program shall ensure  
6 that all areas of the state are equitably served and, based on the  
7 appropriations available, shall prioritize judicial districts where  
8 attorneys are unavailable for court appointments or are minimally  
9 compensated. The Program shall determine where additional attorneys  
10 are needed within the state's judicial districts and shall develop  
11 additional resources.

12 J. The Family Representation and Advocacy Program shall ensure  
13 that counsel and interdisciplinary contractors are adequately  
14 compensated based on available appropriations and other funding  
15 received and are provided access to resources in order to deliver  
16 high quality legal representation. The Program is authorized to  
17 annually review the performance of the attorneys, interdisciplinary  
18 contractors, and entities with which the eligible organization  
19 contracts, with the goal of helping them achieve and maintain high-  
20 quality performance. The Program shall ensure that review measures  
21 preserve client confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest.

22 K. The Oklahoma Supreme Court may direct the Administrative  
23 Office of the Courts to establish an advisory board to exercise  
24 oversight over the Family Representation and Advocacy Program and

1 the selected eligible organization, and to make recommendations and  
2 take such actions as deemed necessary to ensure proper  
3 administration of the Program.

4 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified  
5 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 802 of Title 10, unless there is  
6 created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

7 A. There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving  
8 fund for the Administrative Office of the Courts to be designated  
9 the "Family Representation and Advocacy Program Revolving Fund".  
10 The fund shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year  
11 limitations, and shall consist of all monies received by the  
12 Administrative Office of the Courts for child and indigent parent,  
13 legal guardian, and Indian custodian legal and interdisciplinary  
14 representation services to be provided by the Family Representation  
15 and Advocacy Program. The revolving fund shall include funds  
16 appropriated to the fund, federal funds, gifts, donations, and  
17 grants. All monies accruing to the credit of the fund are hereby  
18 appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the Administrative  
19 Office of the Courts for the purpose of administering the Family  
20 Representation and Advocacy Program and for the provision of legal  
21 and interdisciplinary services to indigent parents and children by  
22 and through the Family Representation and Advocacy Program. By  
23 January 31, 2024, and by January 31 of each year thereafter, the  
24 Administrative Office of the Courts shall disburse funds from the

1 Family Representation and Advocacy Program Revolving Fund to the  
2 contracted eligible organization.

3 B. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall allocate and  
4 expend funds from the Family Representation and Advocacy Program  
5 Revolving Fund to provide for the necessary operating costs of the  
6 Family Representation and Advocacy Program including court-appointed  
7 legal and interdisciplinary representation to children, indigent  
8 parents, legal guardians, or Indian custodians in proceedings  
9 governed by the Oklahoma Children's Code, to the extent that funds  
10 are available from the Family Representation and Advocacy Program  
11 Revolving Fund. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall  
12 allocate and expend these funds pursuant to the contract with the  
13 eligible organization. The Administrative Office of the Courts may  
14 charge an administrative fee as provided in subsection D of this  
15 section for administering the contract.

16 C. The eligible organization that contracts to operate and  
17 manage the Family Representation and Advocacy Program to provide  
18 legal and interdisciplinary services shall maintain books and  
19 records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.  
20 The books and records shall account for the receipt and expenditure  
21 of all funds paid pursuant to contract. Books and records shall be  
22 maintained for a period of five (5) years from the close of the  
23 fiscal year of the contract period. The State Auditor and Inspector  
24 may audit each organization annually. The necessary expense of each



1 audit including but not limited to the cost of typing, printing, and  
2 binding shall be paid from funds of the organization.

3 D. The Administrative Office of the Courts may use up to two  
4 and one-half percent (2.5%) of the funds deposited in the Family  
5 Representation and Advocacy Program Revolving Fund in any given  
6 fiscal year to provide financial support staff, financial data entry  
7 staff and facilities, and operating assistance for the Family  
8 Representation Program Advisory Board.

9 E. An annual report issued by the Administrative Office of the  
10 Courts outlining performance measures for the Family Representation  
11 and Advocacy Program and recommendations for ongoing appropriations  
12 shall be transmitted to the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of  
13 the Oklahoma Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
14 no later than December 31 of each year.

15 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective November 1, 2023.

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