

## Chapter 86

(House Bill 178)

AN ACT concerning

### Family Law – Adoption, Search, Contact, and Reunion Services – Relatives of Minors in Out-of-Home Placement

FOR the purpose of altering the definition of “search, contact, and reunion services” to include contacting relatives of a certain minor in out-of-home placement for a certain purpose; authorizing a director of a local department of social services or the director’s designee to apply for search, contact, and reunion services for a certain minor in out-of-home placement under certain circumstances; altering a certain definition; and generally relating to adoption search, contact, and reunion services.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
Article – Family Law  
Section 5–4B–01(f) and (g) and 5–4B–02(a)  
Annotated Code of Maryland  
(2012 Replacement Volume and 2013 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

#### Article – Family Law

5–4B–01.

(f) (1) [“Relative”] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, “RELATIVE”** means a parent, brother, sister, child, aunt, or uncle of a biological parent.

(2) **IN THE CASE OF A MINOR IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT WHO WAS ADOPTED THROUGH A LOCAL DEPARTMENT, “RELATIVE” MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL AT LEAST 21 YEARS OLD WHO IS RELATED TO THE MINOR BY BLOOD OR MARRIAGE WITHIN FIVE DEGREES OF CONSANGUINITY OR AFFINITY UNDER THE CIVIL LAW RULE.**

(g) “Search, contact, and reunion services” means services:

(1) to locate adopted individuals, biological parents of adopted individuals, siblings of adopted individuals, and, as provided in § 5–4B–11 of this subtitle, relatives and members of the adoptive family;

(2) to assess the mutual desire for communication or disclosure of information:

(i) between adopted individuals and biological parents of adopted individuals;

(ii) between adopted individuals and siblings of adopted individuals; and

(iii) as provided in § 5-4B-11 of this subtitle, between:

1. adopted individuals and relatives; and

2. biological parents and members of the adoptive family;

(3) to provide, or provide referral to, counseling for adopted individuals, biological parents of adopted individuals, siblings of adopted individuals, relatives, and members of the adoptive family; [and]

(4) if siblings of a minor in out-of-home placement were adopted through a local department, to contact the siblings to develop a placement resource or facilitate a family connection with the siblings of the minor; AND

**(5) IF A MINOR IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT WAS ADOPTED THROUGH A LOCAL DEPARTMENT AND A LOCAL DEPARTMENT HAS DETERMINED THAT REUNIFICATION WITH THE MINOR'S ADOPTIVE PARENTS IS NOT IN THE MINOR'S BEST INTERESTS, TO CONTACT RELATIVES OF THE MINOR TO DEVELOP A PLACEMENT RESOURCE OR FACILITATE A FAMILY CONNECTION WITH THE RELATIVES.**

5-4B-02.

(a) (1) An adopted individual at least 21 years old may apply to the Director to receive search, contact, and reunion services.

(2) If an adopted individual is at least 21 years old, the following individuals may apply to the Director to receive search, contact, and reunion services:

(i) a biological parent of the adopted individual;

(ii) a sibling of the adopted individual; and

(iii) a director of a local department acting on behalf of a minor in out-of-home placement.

**(3) A DIRECTOR OF A LOCAL DEPARTMENT OR A LOCAL DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR'S DESIGNEE MAY APPLY TO THE DIRECTOR TO RECEIVE SEARCH, CONTACT, AND REUNION SERVICES TO DEVELOP A PLACEMENT RESOURCE OR FACILITATE A FAMILY CONNECTION WITH RELATIVES OF A MINOR IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT WHO WAS ADOPTED THROUGH A LOCAL DEPARTMENT IF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT HAS DETERMINED THAT REUNIFICATION WITH THE MINOR'S ADOPTIVE PARENTS IS NOT IN THE MINOR'S BEST INTERESTS.**

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2014.

**Approved by the Governor, April 8, 2014.**