

232.116 Grounds for termination.

1. Except as provided in [subsection 3](#), the court may order the termination of both the parental rights with respect to a child and the relationship between the parent and the child on any of the following grounds:

a. The parents voluntarily and intelligently consent to the termination of parental rights and the parent-child relationship and for good cause desire the termination.

b. The court finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that the child has been abandoned or deserted.

c. The court finds that there is clear and convincing evidence that the child is a newborn infant whose parent has voluntarily released custody of the child in accordance with [chapter 233](#).

d. The court finds that both of the following have occurred:

(1) The court has previously adjudicated the child to be a child in need of assistance after finding the child to have been physically or sexually abused or neglected as the result of the acts or omissions of one or both parents, or the court has previously adjudicated a child who is a member of the same family to be a child in need of assistance after such a finding. This paragraph shall not be construed to require that a finding of sexual abuse or neglect requires a finding of a nonaccidental physical injury.

(2) Subsequent to the child in need of assistance adjudication, the parents were offered or received services to correct the circumstance which led to the adjudication, and the circumstance continues to exist despite the offer or receipt of services.

e. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:

(1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#).

(2) The child has been removed from the physical custody of the child's parents for a period of at least six consecutive months.

(3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the parents have not maintained significant and meaningful contact with the child during the previous six consecutive months and have made no reasonable efforts to resume care of the child despite being given the opportunity to do so. For the purposes of this subparagraph, "*significant and meaningful contact*" includes but is not limited to the affirmative assumption by the parents of the duties encompassed by the role of being a parent. This affirmative duty, in addition to financial obligations, requires continued interest in the child, a genuine effort to complete the responsibilities prescribed in the case permanency plan, a genuine effort to maintain communication with the child, and requires that the parents establish and maintain a place of importance in the child's life.

f. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:

(1) The child is four years of age or older.

(2) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#).

(3) The child has been removed from the physical custody of the child's parents for at least twelve of the last eighteen months, or for the last twelve consecutive months and any trial period at home has been less than thirty days.

(4) There is clear and convincing evidence that at the present time the child cannot be returned to the custody of the child's parents as provided in [section 232.102](#).

g. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:

(1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#).

(2) The court has terminated parental rights pursuant to [section 232.117](#) with respect to another child who is a member of the same family or a court of competent jurisdiction in another state has entered an order involuntarily terminating parental rights with respect to another child who is a member of the same family.

(3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the parent continues to lack the ability or willingness to respond to services which would correct the situation.

(4) There is clear and convincing evidence that an additional period of rehabilitation would not correct the situation.

h. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:

(1) The child is three years of age or younger.

- (2) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#).
- (3) The child has been removed from the physical custody of the child's parents for at least six months of the last twelve months, or for the last six consecutive months and any trial period at home has been less than thirty days.
- (4) There is clear and convincing evidence that the child cannot be returned to the custody of the child's parents as provided in [section 232.102](#) at the present time.
 - i. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child meets the definition of child in need of assistance based on a finding of physical or sexual abuse or neglect as a result of the acts or omissions of one or both parents. This paragraph shall not be construed to require that a finding of sexual abuse or neglect requires a finding of a nonaccidental physical injury.
 - (2) There is clear and convincing evidence that the abuse or neglect posed a significant risk to the life of the child or constituted imminent danger to the child.
 - (3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the offer or receipt of services would not correct the conditions which led to the abuse or neglect of the child within a reasonable period of time.
 - j. The court finds that both of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#) and custody has been transferred from the child's parents for placement pursuant to [section 232.102](#).
 - (2) The parent has been imprisoned for a crime against the child, the child's sibling, or another child in the household, or the parent has been imprisoned and it is unlikely that the parent will be released from prison for a period of five or more years.
 - k. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#) and custody has been transferred from the child's parents for placement pursuant to [section 232.102](#).
 - (2) The parent has a chronic mental illness and has been repeatedly institutionalized for mental illness, and presents a danger to self or others as evidenced by prior acts.
 - (3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the parent's prognosis indicates that the child will not be able to be returned to the custody of the parent within a reasonable period of time considering the child's age and need for a permanent home.
 - l. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#) and custody has been transferred from the child's parents for placement pursuant to [section 232.102](#).
 - (2) The parent has a severe substance use disorder as described by either of the following:
 - (a) The severe substance use disorder meets the definition for that term as defined in the most current edition of the diagnostic and statistical manual prepared by the American psychiatric association, and the parent presents a danger to self or others as evidenced by prior acts.
 - (b) The disorder is evidenced by continued and repeated use through the case, the parent's refusal to obtain a substance use disorder evaluation or treatment after given the opportunity to do so, and the parent presents a danger to self or others as evidenced by prior acts.
 - (3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the parent's prognosis indicates that the child will not be able to be returned to the custody of the parent within a reasonable period of time considering the child's age and need for a permanent home.
 - m. The court finds that both of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#) after finding that the child has been physically or sexually abused or neglected as a result of the acts or omissions of a parent.
 - (2) The parent found to have physically or sexually abused or neglected the child has been convicted of a felony and imprisoned for physically or sexually abusing or neglecting the child, the child's sibling, or any other child in the household.
 - n. The court finds that all of the following have occurred:
 - (1) The child has been adjudicated a child in need of assistance pursuant to [section 232.96](#).

(2) The parent has been convicted of child endangerment resulting in the death of the child's sibling, has been convicted of three or more acts of child endangerment involving the child, the child's sibling, or another child in the household, or has been convicted of child endangerment resulting in a serious injury to the child, the child's sibling, or another child in the household.

(3) There is clear and convincing evidence that the circumstances surrounding the parent's conviction for child endangerment would result in a finding of imminent danger to the child.

o. The parent has been convicted of a felony offense that is a sex offense against a minor as defined in [section 692A.101](#), the parent is divorced from or was never married to the minor's other parent, and the parent is serving a minimum sentence of confinement of at least five years for that offense.

p. The court finds there is clear and convincing evidence that the child was conceived as the result of sexual abuse as defined in [section 709.1](#), and the biological parent against whom the sexual abuse was perpetrated requests termination of the parental rights of the biological parent who perpetrated the sexual abuse.

2. In considering whether to terminate the rights of a parent under [this section](#), the court shall give primary consideration to the child's safety, to the best placement for furthering the long-term nurturing and growth of the child, and to the physical, mental, and emotional condition and needs of the child. This consideration may include any of the following:

a. Whether the parent's ability to provide the needs of the child is affected by the parent's mental capacity or mental condition or the parent's imprisonment for a felony.

b. For a child who has been placed in foster family care by a court or has been voluntarily placed in foster family care by a parent or by another person, whether the child has become integrated into the foster family to the extent that the child's familial identity is with the foster family, and whether the foster family is able and willing to permanently integrate the child into the foster family. In considering integration into a foster family, the court shall review the following:

(1) The length of time the child has lived in a stable, satisfactory environment and the desirability of maintaining that environment and continuity for the child.

(2) The reasonable preference of the child, if the court determines that the child has sufficient capacity to express a reasonable preference.

c. The relevant testimony or written statement that a foster parent, relative, or other individual with whom the child has been placed for preadoptive care or other care has a right to provide to the court.

3. The court need not terminate the relationship between the parent and child if the court finds any of the following:

a. A relative has legal custody of the child.

b. The child is over ten years of age and objects to the termination.

c. There is clear and convincing evidence that the termination would be detrimental to the child at the time due to the closeness of the parent-child relationship.

d. It is necessary to place the child in a hospital, facility, or institution for care and treatment and the continuation of the parent-child relationship is not preventing a permanent family placement for the child.

e. The absence of a parent is due to the parent's admission or commitment to any institution, hospital, or health facility or due to active service in the state or federal armed forces.

[C79, §232.114; C81, §232.116]

[84 Acts, ch 1279, §19, 20; 86 Acts, ch 1186, §11; 87 Acts, ch 159, §6; 89 Acts, ch 229, §7 – 12; 90 Acts, ch 1251, §28; 92 Acts, ch 1231, §27 – 29; 93 Acts, ch 76, §2; 94 Acts, ch 1174, §3, 22; 95 Acts, ch 182, §10, 11; 98 Acts, ch 1190, §23; 2001 Acts, ch 67, §9, 13; 2006 Acts, ch 1182, §59; 2007 Acts, ch 172, §14; 2008 Acts, ch 1098, §2; 2009 Acts, ch 119, §38; 2011 Acts, ch 121, §58, 62; 2016 Acts, ch 1046, §1; 2022 Acts, ch 1098, §57 – 59; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §625](#)

Referred to in [§232.57, 232.102A, 232.111, 232.117](#)