

CHAPTER 600A

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

Referred to in [§144.13A](#), [232.6](#), [232B.3](#), [238.32](#), [321.180B](#), [321.184](#), [600.8](#), [600.14](#), [600.16A](#), [600.25](#), [600B.41A](#), [814.11](#), [815.10](#), [815.11](#)

Proceedings prior to January 1, 1977; see [§600.25](#)

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600A.1 Construction.

1. [This chapter](#) shall be construed liberally. The best interest of the child subject to the proceedings of [this chapter](#) shall be the paramount consideration in interpreting [this chapter](#). However, the interests of the parents of this child or any natural person standing in the place of the parents to this child shall be given due consideration in this interpretation.

2. The best interest of a child requires that each biological parent affirmatively assume the duties encompassed by the role of being a parent. In determining whether a parent has affirmatively assumed the duties of a parent, the court shall consider, but is not limited to consideration of, the fulfillment of financial obligations, demonstration of continued interest in the child, demonstration of a genuine effort to maintain communication with the child, and demonstration of the establishment and maintenance of a place of importance in the child's life. Application of [this chapter](#) is limited to termination of parental rights proceedings and shall not apply to actions to establish paternity or to overcome established paternity.

[C77, 79, 81, §600A.1]

[94 Acts, ch 1174, §12, 22](#); [2018 Acts, ch 1041, §127](#)

600A.2 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#):

1. "Adoption service provider" means an agency or a licensed attorney.
2. "Adult" means a person who is married or eighteen years of age or older.
3. "Agency" means a child-placing agency as defined in [section 238.1](#).
4. "Biological parent" means a parent who has been a biological party to the procreation of the child.
5. "Certified adoption investigator" means a person who is certified and approved by the department, after inspection by the department of inspections, appeals, and licensing, as being capable of conducting an investigation under [section 600.8](#).
6. "Child" means a son or daughter of a parent, whether by birth or adoption.
7. "Court" means a district court.
8. "Custodian" means a stepparent or a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity to a minor child who has assumed responsibility for that child, a person who has accepted a release of custody, or a person appointed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over a child. A custodian has the rights and duties provided in [section 600A.2A](#).
9. "Department" means the department of health and human services.
10. "Guardian" means a person who is not the parent of a minor child, but who has been appointed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over the minor child to make important decisions which have permanent effect on the life and development of that child and to promote the general welfare of that child. A guardian has the rights and duties provided in [section 600A.2B](#). A guardian may be a court or a juvenile court. "Guardian" does

not mean “conservator”, as defined in [section 633.3](#), although a person who is appointed to be a guardian may also be appointed to be a conservator.

11. “Guardian ad litem” means a person appointed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over the minor child to represent that child in a legal action. A guardian ad litem appointed under [this chapter](#) shall be a practicing attorney.

12. a. “Indigent” means any of the following:

(1) A person has an income level at or below one hundred twenty-five percent of the United States poverty level as defined by the most recently revised poverty income guidelines published by the United States department of health and human services.

(2) A person has an income level greater than one hundred twenty-five percent but at or below two hundred percent of the United States poverty level as defined by the most recently revised poverty income guidelines published by the United States department of health and human services, and the court makes a written finding that not appointing an attorney would create a substantial hardship.

b. In making the determination of a person’s ability to pay for the cost of an attorney or a guardian ad litem, the court shall consider the person’s income and the availability of any assets subject to execution, including but not limited to cash, stocks, bonds, and any other property which may be applied to the satisfaction of judgments, and the nature and complexity of the case.

13. “Juvenile court” means the juvenile court established by [section 602.7101](#).

14. “Minor” means an unmarried person who is under the age of eighteen years.

15. “Parent” means a father or mother of a child, whether by birth or adoption.

16. “Parent-child relationship” means the relationship between a parent and a child recognized by the law as conferring certain rights and privileges and imposing certain duties. The term extends equally to every child and every parent, regardless of the marital status of the parents of the child. The rights, duties, and privileges recognized in the parent-child relationship include those which are maintained by a guardian, custodian, and guardian ad litem.

17. “Putative father” means a man who is alleged to be or who claims to be the biological father of a child born to a woman to whom the man is not married at the time of birth of the child.

18. “Stepparent” means a person who is the spouse of a parent in a parent-child relationship, but who is not a parent in that parent-child relationship.

19. “Termination of parental rights” means a complete severance and extinguishment of a parent-child relationship between one or both living parents and the child.

20. “To abandon a minor child” means that a parent, putative father, custodian, or guardian rejects the duties imposed by the parent-child relationship, guardianship, or custodianship, which may be evinced by the person, while being able to do so, making no provision or making only a marginal effort to provide for the support of the child or to communicate with the child.

[C77, 79, 81, §600A.2]

83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 83 Acts, ch 186, §10111, 10201; 90 Acts, ch 1271, §1510; 94 Acts, ch 1046, §19; 94 Acts, ch 1174, §13, 22; 97 Acts, ch 161, §1; 97 Acts, ch 209, §27, 30; 2005 Acts, ch 107, §2, 14; 2008 Acts, ch 1031, §63; 2009 Acts, ch 133, §248; 2017 Acts, ch 113, §15 – 17; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1257, 2033; 2024 Acts, ch 1112, §1

Referred to in §233.1, 422.12A, 600.2, 600B.41A, 714L.4

600A.2A Rights and duties of custodian.

1. The rights and duties of a custodian with respect to a child shall be as follows:
 - a. To maintain or transfer to another the physical possession of that child.
 - b. To protect, train, and discipline that child.
 - c. To provide food, clothing, housing, and ordinary medical care for that child.
 - d. To consent to emergency medical care, including surgery.
 - e. To sign a release of medical information to a health professional.

2. All rights and duties of a custodian shall be subject to any residual rights and duties remaining in a parent or guardian.

[2008 Acts, ch 1031, §64](#)

Referred to in [§600A.2](#)

600A.2B Rights and duties of guardian.

Unless otherwise enlarged or circumscribed by a court or juvenile court having jurisdiction over the minor child or by operation of law, the rights and duties of a guardian with respect to a minor child shall be as follows:

1. To consent to marriage, enlistment in the armed forces of the United States, or medical, psychiatric, or surgical treatment.

2. To serve as custodian, unless another person has been appointed custodian.

3. To make reasonable visitations if the guardian does not have physical possession or custody of the minor child.

4. To consent to adoption and to make any other decision that the parents could have made when the parent-child relationship existed.

[2008 Acts, ch 1031, §65](#)

Referred to in [§600A.2](#)

600A.3 Exclusivity.

1. Termination of parental rights shall be accomplished only according to the provisions of [this chapter](#). However, termination of parental rights between an adult child and the child's parents may be accomplished by a decree of adoption establishing a new parent-child relationship.

2. If a proceeding held under [this chapter](#) involves an Indian child as defined in [section 232B.3](#) and the proceeding is subject to the Iowa Indian child welfare Act under [chapter 232B](#), the proceeding and other actions taken in connection with the proceeding or [this chapter](#) shall comply with [chapter 232B](#). In any proceeding held or action taken under [this chapter](#) involving an Indian child, the applicable requirements of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89, shall be applied to the proceeding or action in a manner that complies with [chapter 232B](#) and the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, Pub. L. No. 95-608.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.40; C77, 79, 81, §600A.3]

[2003 Acts, ch 153, §17](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1026, §126](#); [2018 Acts, ch 1041, §127](#)

600A.4 Relationship unaltered — release of custody — voluntariness of release.

1. A parent shall not permanently alter the parent-child relationship, except as ordered by a juvenile court or court. However, custody of a minor child may be assumed by a stepparent or a relative of that child within the fourth degree of consanguinity or transferred by an acceptance of a release of custody. A person who assumes custody or an adoption service provider which accepts a release of custody under [this section](#) becomes, upon assumption or acceptance, the custodian of the minor child.

2. A release of custody:

a. Shall be accepted only by an adoption service provider.

b. Shall not be accepted by a person who in any way intends to adopt the child who is the subject of the release.

c. Shall be in writing.

d. (1) Shall contain written acknowledgment of the biological parents that after the birth of the child three hours of counseling regarding the decision to release custody and the alternatives available have been offered to the biological parents by the department or an adoption service provider. The release of custody shall also contain written acknowledgment of the acceptance or refusal of the counseling by the biological parent.

(2) If accepted, the counseling shall be provided after the birth of the child and prior to the signing of a release of custody or the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights as applicable. Counseling shall be provided only by a person who is qualified under rules adopted by the department which shall include a requirement that the person complete a minimum number of hours of training in the area of adoption-related counseling approved

by the department. If counseling is accepted, the counselor shall provide an affidavit, which shall be attached to the release of custody, when practicable, certifying that the counselor has provided the biological parent with the requested counseling and documentation that the person is qualified to provide the requested counseling as prescribed by this paragraph “d”. The requirements of this paragraph “d” do not apply to a release of custody which is executed for the purposes of a stepparent adoption.

e. Shall contain a notice to the biological parent that if the biological parent chooses to identify the other biological parent and knowingly and intentionally identifies a person who is not the other biological parent in the written release of custody or in any other document related to the termination of parental rights proceedings, the biological parent who provides the incorrect identifying information is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

f. Shall be accompanied by a contact preference form or medical history form completed by the biological parent of the person to be adopted and attached to the original certificate of birth as provided in [section 144.24A](#). The contact preference form or medical history form shall be attached to any termination of parental rights order issued pursuant to [section 600A.9](#).

g. Shall be accompanied by a report which includes, to the extent available, the complete family medical and social history of the person to be adopted including any known genetic, metabolic, or familial disorders and the complete medical and developmental history of the person to be adopted, and a social history of the minor child and the minor child’s family but which does not disclose the identity of the biological parents of the person to be adopted. The social history may include but is not limited to the minor child’s racial, ethnic, and religious background and a general description of the minor child’s biological parents and an account of the minor child’s prior and existing relationship with any relative, foster parent, or other individual with whom the minor child regularly lives or whom the child regularly visits.

(1) A biological parent may also provide ongoing information to the adoptive parents, as additional medical or social history information becomes known, by providing information to the clerk of court, the department, or the adoption service provider that made the placement, and may provide the current address of the biological parent. The clerk of court, the department, or the adoption service provider that made the placement shall transmit the information to the adoptive parents if the address of the adoptive parents is known.

(2) A person who furnishes a report required under this paragraph “g” and the court shall not disclose any information upon which the report is based except as otherwise provided in [this section](#) and such a person is subject to the penalties provided in [section 600.16](#), as applicable. A person who is the subject of any report may bring a civil action against a person who discloses the information in violation of [this section](#).

(3) Information provided under this paragraph “g” shall not be used as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding against a person who is the subject of the information.

(4) The department shall prescribe forms designed to obtain the family medical and social history and shall provide the forms at no charge to any adoption service provider or person who executes a release of custody of the minor child or who files a petition for termination of parental rights. The existence of this report does not limit a person’s ability to petition the court for release of records in accordance with other provisions of law.

h. Shall be signed, not less than seventy-two hours after the birth of the child to be released, by all living parents. The seventy-two-hour minimum time period requirement shall not be waived.

i. Shall be witnessed by two persons familiar with the parent-child relationship.

j. Shall name the person who is accepting the release.

k. Shall be followed, within a reasonable time, by the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights under [section 600A.5](#).

l. Shall state the purpose of the release, shall indicate that if it is not revoked it may be grounds for termination, and shall fully inform the signing parent of the manner in which a revocation of the release may be sought.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of [subsection 2](#), the department or an adoption service provider may assume custody of a minor child upon the signature of the one living parent who has possession of the minor child if the department or an adoption service provider

immediately petitions the juvenile court designated in [section 600A.5](#) to be appointed custodian and otherwise petitions, either in the same petition or within a reasonable time in a separate petition, for termination of parental rights under [section 600A.5](#). Upon the custody petition, the juvenile court may appoint a guardian as well as a custodian.

4. Either a parent who has signed a release of custody, or a nonsigning parent, may, at any time prior to the entry of an order terminating parental rights, request the juvenile court designated in [section 600A.5](#) to order the revocation of any release of custody previously executed by either parent. If such request is by a signing parent, and is within ninety-six hours of the time such parent signed a release of custody, the juvenile court shall order the release revoked. Otherwise, the juvenile court shall order the release or releases revoked only upon clear and convincing evidence that good cause exists for revocation. Good cause for revocation includes but is not limited to a showing that the release was obtained by fraud, coercion, or misrepresentation of law or fact which was material to its execution. In determining whether good cause exists for revocation, the juvenile court shall give paramount consideration to the best interests of the child including avoidance of a disruption of an existing relationship between a parent and child. The juvenile court shall also give due consideration to the interests of the parents of the child and of any person standing in the place of the parents.

[S13, §3260-c; C24, §3665; C27, 31, 35, §3661-a82, -a83, -a86; C39, §3661.096, 3661.097, 3661.100; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, §238.25, 238.26, 238.29; C77, 79, 81, §600A.4]

92 Acts, ch 1192, §1, 5; 94 Acts, ch 1174, §14, 15, 22; 99 Acts, ch 138, §6; 2013 Acts, ch 30, §161; 2017 Acts, ch 113, §18 – 21; 2021 Acts, ch 113, §5; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1258

Referred to in §144.24A, 232B.7, 600.8, 600.16, 600A.8, 600A.10

600A.5 Petition for termination — venue — safety or security concerns.

1. The following persons may petition a juvenile court for termination of parental rights under [this chapter](#) if the child of the parent-child relationship is born or expected to be born within one hundred eighty days of the date of petition filing:

- a. A parent or prospective parent of the parent-child relationship.
- b. A custodian or guardian of the child.

2. A petition for termination of parental rights shall be filed, and venue shall lie, with the juvenile court in the county in which the guardian or custodian of the child resides or the child, the biological mother, or the pregnant woman is domiciled. If a juvenile court has made an order pertaining to a minor child under [chapter 232, subchapter III](#), and that order is still in force, the termination proceedings shall be conducted pursuant to the provisions of [chapter 232, subchapter IV](#).

3. A petition for termination of parental rights shall include the following:

- a. The legal name, age, and domicile, if any, of the child.
- b. The names, residences, and domicile of any:
 - (1) Living parents of the child.
 - (2) Guardian of the child.
 - (3) Custodian of the child.
 - (4) Guardian ad litem of the child.
 - (5) Petitioner.
 - (6) Person standing in the place of the parents of the child.

c. A plain statement of the facts and grounds in [section 600A.8](#) which indicate that the parent-child relationship should be terminated.

d. A plain statement explaining why the petitioner does not know any of the information required under paragraphs “a” and “b” of [this subsection](#).

e. The signature and verification of the petitioner.

f. If the petitioner intends to access public funds for the fees of the guardian ad litem or the respondent’s attorney fees, an attached financial affidavit, signed under penalty of perjury, reflecting the household income and family size of the petitioner.

4. If the petitioner alleges and affirms in the verified petition that the petitioner has a legitimate concern for the safety or security of the child or petitioner, all of the following shall apply:

a. Notwithstanding [subsection 2](#), the petitioner may file the petition in a county within the same judicial district but other than those counties specified, and venue shall be in the county in which the petition is filed.

b. The court shall keep confidential the residence and domicile of the child and the petitioner disclosed in the petition.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.42, 232.43; C77, 79, 81, §600A.5]

[94 Acts, ch 1046, §20](#); [95 Acts, ch 49, §21](#); [95 Acts, ch 182, §25](#); [2017 Acts, ch 87, §1](#); [2020 Acts, ch 1062, §94](#); [2024 Acts, ch 1112, §2](#)

Referred to in [§600A.4](#), [600A.6](#), [600A.8](#)

600A.6 Notice of termination hearing.

1. A termination of parental rights under [this chapter](#) shall, unless provided otherwise in [this section](#), be ordered only after notice has been served on all necessary parties and these parties have been given an opportunity to be heard before the juvenile court except that notice need not be served on the petitioner or on any necessary party who is the spouse of the petitioner. “Necessary party” means any person whose name, residence, and domicile are required to be included on the petition under [section 600A.5, subsection 3](#), paragraphs “a” and “b”, and any putative father who files a declaration of paternity in accordance with [section 144.12A](#), or any unknown putative father, if any, except a biological parent who has been convicted of having sexually abused the other biological parent while not cohabiting with that parent as husband and wife, thereby producing the birth of the child who is the subject of the termination proceedings.

2. a. Prior to the service of notice on the necessary parties, the juvenile court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for a minor child if the child does not have a guardian or if the interests of the guardian conflict with the interests of the child. Such guardian ad litem shall be a necessary party under [subsection 1](#) of [this section](#).

b. A person who is appointed as a guardian ad litem for a minor child shall not also be the attorney for any party other than the minor child in any proceeding involving the minor child. The guardian ad litem may make an independent investigation of the interest of the child and may cause witnesses to appear before the court to provide testimony relevant to the best interest of the minor child.

3. Notice under [this section](#) may be served personally or constructively, as specified under [subsections 4 and 5](#). This notice shall state:

a. The time and place of the hearing on termination of parental rights.

b. A clear statement of the purpose of the action and hearing.

c. A statement that the person against whom a proceeding for termination of parental rights is brought shall have the right to counsel pursuant to [section 600A.6A](#).

4. A necessary party whose identity and location or address is known shall be served in accordance with [rule of civil procedure 1.305](#) or sent by certified mail restricted delivery, whichever is determined to be the most effective means of notification. Such notice shall be served according to the rules of civil procedure relating to an original notice where not inconsistent with the provisions of [this section](#). Notice pursuant to [rule of civil procedure 1.305](#) shall be served not less than seven days prior to the hearing on termination of parental rights. Notice by certified mail restricted delivery shall be sent not less than fourteen days prior to the hearing on termination of parental rights. A notice by certified mail restricted delivery which is refused by the necessary party being noticed shall be sufficient notice to that party under [this section](#). Acceptance of notice by the necessary party shall satisfy the requirements of [this subsection](#).

5. A necessary party whose identity is known but whose location or address is unknown or all unknown putative fathers, if any, shall be served by published notice in the form provided in [this subsection](#). If the identity of a necessary party is known but the location of the necessary party is unknown, notice by publication shall also include the name of the necessary party. The child’s actual or expected date of birth and place of birth shall also be stated in the notice. Notice by publication shall be served according to the rules of civil procedure relating to an original notice where not inconsistent with the provisions of [this section](#). Notice by publication shall be published once a week for two consecutive weeks in

a medium which is reasonably expected to provide notice to the necessary party, the last publication to be not less than three days prior to the hearing on termination of parental rights. The notice shall be substantially in the following form:

TO: (OR) ALL PUTATIVE FATHERS OF A CHILD (EXPECTED TO BE) BORN ON THE DAY OF, IN, IOWA.

You are notified that there is now on file in the office of the clerk of court for county, a petition in case number, which prays for a termination of your parent-child relationship to a child (expected to be) born on the day of, For further details contact the clerk’s office. The petitioner’s attorney is

You are notified that there will be a hearing on the petition to terminate parental rights before the Iowa District Court for County, at the Courthouse in, Iowa, atM. on the day of, CLERK OF THE ABOVE COURT

6. Proof of service of notice in the manner prescribed shall be filed with the juvenile court prior to the hearing on termination of parental rights.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.44, 232.45; C77, 79, 81, §600A.6] 94 Acts, ch 1046, §21; 94 Acts, ch 1174, §16 – 18, 22; 96 Acts, ch 1174, §8; 97 Acts, ch 173, §15; 2005 Acts, ch 107, §3, 14; 2013 Acts, ch 30, §261 Referred to in §233.2, 600A.6C, 600A.8

600A.6A Right to and appointment of counsel.

1. Upon the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights under this chapter, the parent identified in the petition shall have the right to counsel in connection with all subsequent hearings and proceedings.

2. If the parent against whom the petition is filed desires but is financially unable to employ counsel, the court shall appoint counsel for the person if the person requests appointment of counsel and the court determines that the person is indigent.

2005 Acts, ch 107, §4, 14; 2014 Acts, ch 1038, §3, 5 Referred to in §600A.6, 600A.6B, 602.1302

600A.6B Payment of attorney fees.

1. A person filing a petition for termination of parental rights under this chapter shall be responsible for the payment of reasonable attorney fees for services provided by counsel appointed pursuant to section 600A.6A in juvenile court or in an appellate proceeding initiated by the person filing the petition unless the person filing the petition is a private child-placing agency licensed under chapter 238 or the court determines that the person filing the petition is indigent.

2. If the person filing the petition is a private child-placing agency licensed under chapter 238 or if the person filing the petition is indigent, the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed shall be responsible for the payment of reasonable attorney fees for services provided in juvenile court or an appellate proceeding for counsel appointed pursuant to section 600A.6A unless the court determines that the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed is indigent.

3. If the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed is indigent, and if the person filing the petition is indigent or a private child-placing agency licensed under chapter 238, the appointed counsel shall be paid reasonable attorney fees as determined by the state public defender from the indigent defense fund established in section 815.11.

4. If the parent against whom the petition is filed appeals a termination order under section 600A.9, subsection 1, paragraph “b”, the person who filed the petition or the person on whose behalf the petition is filed shall not be responsible for the payment of attorney fees for services provided by counsel appointed pursuant to section 600A.6A in the appellate proceeding. Instead, the appointed attorney shall be paid reasonable attorney fees as

determined by the state public defender from the indigent defense fund established pursuant to [section 815.11](#).

5. The state public defender shall review all the claims submitted under [subsection 3](#) or [4](#) and shall have the same authority with regard to the payment of these claims as the state public defender has with regard to claims submitted under [chapters 13B](#) and [815](#), including the authority to adopt rules concerning the review and payment of claims submitted.

[2005 Acts, ch 107, §5, 14](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1071, §1, 2](#); [2009 Acts, ch 133, §249](#); [2013 Acts, ch 105, §2](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1038, §4](#)

Referred to in [§602.1302, 815.11](#)

600A.6C Payment of services of guardian ad litem.

1. A person filing a petition for termination of parental rights under [this chapter](#) shall be responsible for the payment of reasonable fees for services provided by a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to [section 600A.6](#) in juvenile court or in an appellate proceeding initiated by the person filing the petition unless the person filing the petition is a private child-placing agency licensed under [chapter 238](#) or the court determines that the person filing the petition is indigent.

2. If the person filing the petition is a private child-placing agency licensed under [chapter 238](#) or if the person filing the petition is indigent, the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed shall be responsible for the payment of reasonable fees for services provided in juvenile court or an appellate proceeding for a guardian ad litem appointed pursuant to [section 600A.6](#) unless the court determines that the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed is indigent.

3. If the prospective parent on whose behalf the petition is filed is indigent, and if the person filing the petition is indigent or a private child-placing agency licensed under [chapter 238](#), the appointed guardian ad litem shall be paid reasonable fees as determined by the state public defender from the indigent defense fund established in [section 815.11](#).

4. The state public defender shall review all the claims submitted under [subsection 2](#) or [3](#) and shall have the same authority with regard to the payment of these claims as the state public defender has with regard to claims submitted under [chapters 13B](#) and [815](#), including the authority to adopt rules concerning the review and payment of claims submitted.

[2024 Acts, ch 1112, §3](#)

Referred to in [§815.11](#)

Former [§600A.6C](#) transferred to [§600A.6D](#); [2024 Acts, ch 1112, §5](#)

600A.6D Report of expenditures — penalty.

1. *a.* A biological parent shall not receive any thing of value as a result of the biological parent terminating the parent's parental rights, unless that thing of value is an allowable expense under [subsection 2](#).

b. Any person assisting in any way with the termination of parental rights shall not charge a fee which is more than usual, necessary, and commensurate with the services rendered.

c. If the biological parent receives any prohibited thing of value, or if a person charges a prohibited fee under [this subsection](#), the person is guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

2. *a.* The petitioner shall file with the juvenile court or court, prior to the termination hearing, a full accounting of all disbursements of any thing of value paid or agreed to be paid by or on behalf of the petitioner or intended adoptive parent in connection with the petitioned termination. This accounting shall be made by a report prescribed by the juvenile court or court and shall be signed and verified by the petitioner. The report shall be accompanied by documentation of all disbursements made prior to the date of filing of the report. Only expenses incurred in connection with the following and any other expenses approved by the juvenile court or court are allowable:

- (1) The birth of the minor person to be adopted.
- (2) Placement of the minor person by the adoption service provider.
- (3) Legal expenses related to the termination of parental rights and adoption processes.
- (4) Pregnancy-related medical care received by the biological parents or the minor person

during the pregnancy or delivery of the minor person and for medically necessary postpartum care for the biological parent and the minor person.

(5) Ordinary and necessary living expenses of the mother including but not limited to the costs of housing, food, utilities, and transportation for medical purposes related to the pregnancy and birth of the child, in an amount not to exceed two thousand dollars and for no longer than thirty days after the birth of the minor person.

(6) Costs of the counseling provided to the biological parents prior to the birth of the child, prior to the release of custody, and any counseling provided to the biological parents for not more than sixty days after the birth of the child.

(7) Living expenses or care of the minor person during the pendency of the termination of parental rights proceedings.

b. All payments for allowable expenses shall be made through the adoption service provider. An adoption service provider shall deposit all funds received from prospective adoptive parents as payments for allowable expenses for a designated biological parent into an escrow account established with a financial institution located in this state whose accounts are insured by the federal deposit insurance corporation, the national credit union administration, or the federal savings and loan insurance corporation. Such escrow funds shall not be commingled with other revenues or expense accounts of the adoption service provider and separate accounting shall be maintained for each prospective adoptive parent whose funds are deposited in the escrow account. Any escrow funds not disbursed by the adoption service provider for the benefit of the designated biological parent shall be returned to the prospective adoptive parents with a full accounting of all deposits and disbursements. If the adoption service provider is a licensed attorney, use of the attorney's state-sanctioned trust account shall satisfy the requirements relative to the escrow account under this paragraph.

c. Any payments for allowable expenses shall not be made to a biological parent, but instead shall be made directly to the provider of the service, product, or other activity to which the allowable expense is attributable, if applicable.

d. The provisions of [this subsection](#) do not apply in a stepparent adoption.

3. The juvenile court or court shall review the report prior to the termination hearing and shall include findings regarding the allowance or disallowance of any disbursements or projected disbursements in the termination order.

[2017 Acts, ch 113, §22](#)

[C2018, §600A.6C](#)

[2024 Acts, ch 1112, §5](#)

[C2025, §600A.6D](#)

Referred to in [§600A.10](#)

600A.7 Termination hearing — forum non conveniens.

1. The hearing on termination of parental rights shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of [sections 232.91 through 232.96](#) and otherwise in accordance with the rules of civil procedure. Such hearing shall be held no earlier than one week after the child is born.

2. Relevant information, including that contained in reports, studies or examinations and testified to by interested persons, may be admitted into evidence at the hearing and relied upon to the extent of its probative value. When such information is so admitted, the person submitting it or testifying shall be subject to both direct and cross-examination by a necessary party.

3. If a putative father files a declaration of paternity pursuant to [section 144.12A](#), the putative father or the mother of the child may request that paternity be established pursuant to [section 600B.41](#) prior to the granting of a dismissal of the petition to terminate parental rights.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.42, 232.46; C77, 79, 81, §600A.7]

[94 Acts, ch 1174, §19, 22; 2021 Acts, ch 80, §353](#)

600A.8 Grounds for termination.

The juvenile court shall base its findings and order under [section 600A.9](#) on clear and convincing proof. The following shall be, either separately or jointly, grounds for ordering termination of parental rights:

1. A parent has signed a release of custody pursuant to [section 600A.4](#) and the release has not been revoked.

2. A parent has petitioned for the parent's termination of parental rights pursuant to [section 600A.5](#).

3. The parent has abandoned the child. For the purposes of [this subsection](#), a parent is deemed to have abandoned a child as follows:

a. (1) If the child is less than six months of age when the termination hearing is held, a parent is deemed to have abandoned the child unless the parent does all of the following:

(a) Demonstrates a willingness to assume custody of the child rather than merely objecting to the termination of parental rights.

(b) Takes prompt action to establish a parental relationship with the child.

(c) Demonstrates, through actions, a commitment to the child.

(2) In determining whether the requirements of this paragraph are met, the court may consider all of the following:

(a) The fitness and ability of the parent in personally assuming custody of the child, including a personal and financial commitment which is timely demonstrated.

(b) Whether efforts made by the parent in personally assuming custody of the child are substantial enough to evince a settled purpose to personally assume all parental duties.

(c) With regard to a putative father, whether the putative father publicly acknowledged paternity or held himself out to be the father of the child during the six continuing months immediately prior to the termination proceeding.

(d) With regard to a putative father, whether the putative father paid a fair and reasonable sum, in accordance with the putative father's means, for medical, hospital, and nursing expenses incurred in connection with the mother's pregnancy or with the birth of the child, or whether the putative father demonstrated emotional support as evidenced by the putative father's conduct toward the mother.

(e) Any measures taken by the parent to establish legal responsibility for the child.

(f) Any other factors evincing a commitment to the child.

b. If the child is six months of age or older when the termination hearing is held, a parent is deemed to have abandoned the child unless the parent maintains substantial and continuous or repeated contact with the child as demonstrated by contribution toward support of the child of a reasonable amount, according to the parent's means, and as demonstrated by any of the following:

(1) Visiting the child at least monthly when physically and financially able to do so and when not prevented from doing so by the person having lawful custody of the child.

(2) Regular communication with the child or with the person having the care or custody of the child, when physically and financially unable to visit the child or when prevented from visiting the child by the person having lawful custody of the child.

(3) Openly living with the child for a period of six months within the one-year period immediately preceding the termination of parental rights hearing and during that period openly holding himself or herself out to be the parent of the child.

c. The subjective intent of the parent, whether expressed or otherwise, unsupported by evidence of acts specified in paragraph "a" or "b" manifesting such intent, does not preclude a determination that the parent has abandoned the child. In making a determination, the court shall not require a showing of diligent efforts by any person to encourage the parent to perform the acts specified in paragraph "a" or "b". In making a determination regarding a putative father, the court may consider the conduct of the putative father toward the child's mother during the pregnancy. Demonstration of a commitment to the child is not met by the putative father marrying the mother of the child after adoption of the child.

4. A parent has been ordered to contribute to the support of the child or financially aid in the child's birth and has failed to do so without good cause.

5. A parent does not object to the termination after having been given proper notice and the opportunity to object.

6. A parent does not object to the termination although every reasonable effort has been made to identify, locate and give notice to that parent as required in [section 600A.6](#).

7. An adoptive parent requests termination of parental rights and the parent-child relationship based upon a showing that the adoption was fraudulently induced in accordance with the procedures set out in [section 600A.9, subsection 3](#).

8. Both of the following circumstances apply to a parent:

a. The parent has been determined to be a person with a substance use disorder as defined in [section 125.2](#) and the parent has committed a second or subsequent domestic abuse assault pursuant to [section 708.2A](#).

b. The parent has abducted the child, has improperly removed the child from the physical custody of the person entitled to custody without the consent of that person, or has improperly retained the child after a visit or other temporary relinquishment of physical custody.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.41; C77, 79, 81, §600A.8]

92 Acts, ch 1192, §2, 5; 95 Acts, ch 182, §26; 97 Acts, ch 161, §2; 97 Acts, ch 209, §27, 30; 2004 Acts, ch 1010, §1, 2; 2005 Acts, ch 69, §55; 2006 Acts, ch 1182, §63; 2009 Acts, ch 119, §43; 2011 Acts, ch 121, §59, 62; 2016 Acts, ch 1046, §2; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1259

Referred to in [§600A.5](#), [600A.9](#)

600A.9 Termination findings and order — vacation of order.

1. Subsequent to the hearing on termination of parental rights under [this chapter](#), the juvenile court shall make a finding of facts and shall do one of the following:

a. Order the petition dismissed.

b. Order the petition granted. The juvenile court shall appoint a guardian and a custodian or a guardian only. An order issued under this paragraph shall include the finding of facts. Such finding shall specify the factual basis for terminating the parent-child relationship and shall specify the ground or grounds upon which the termination is ordered.

2. a. If an order is issued under [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", the juvenile court shall retain jurisdiction to change a guardian or custodian and to allow a terminated parent or any putative biological parent to request vacation or appeal of the termination order which request must be made within thirty days of issuance of the granting of the order. The period for request by a terminated parent or by a putative biological parent for vacation or appeal shall not be waived or extended and a vacation or appeal shall not be granted after the expiration of this period. The juvenile court shall grant the vacation request only if it is in the best interest of the child. The supreme court shall prescribe rules to establish a period of thirty days, which shall not be waived or extended, in which a terminated or putative biological parent may request a vacation or appeal of a termination order.

b. If an order is issued under [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", to terminate the parental rights of a biological parent who indicated in the parent's petition for termination of parental rights the grounds for termination specified in [section 600A.8, subsection 1](#), but an order to terminate the parental rights of any other putative biological parent is not issued by the court pursuant to [subsection 1](#), paragraph "b", nor has the other putative biological parent consented to the adoption in lieu of termination of the parent's parental rights, thereby prohibiting the filing of an adoption petition pursuant to [section 600.3, subsection 2](#), the

court shall allow the parent for whom the court issued an order terminating parental rights to request a vacation of the order within thirty days of issuance of the granting of the order. The period for request by a terminated parent for vacation shall not be waived or extended and a vacation shall not be granted after the expiration of this period. The juvenile court shall grant the vacation request only if it is in the best interest of the child. The supreme court shall prescribe rules to establish a period of thirty days, which shall not be waived or extended, in which a terminated parent may request a vacation of a termination order under this paragraph “b”.

3. If an order is issued under [subsection 1](#), paragraph “b”, the juvenile court shall have jurisdiction to allow an adoptive parent to request termination of the adoptive parent’s parental rights and of the parent-child relationship based upon a showing that the adoption was fraudulently induced and to request that the order issued under [subsection 1](#), paragraph “b”, be vacated. The juvenile court shall grant the termination and vacation requests only after the parent whose rights have been terminated is given an opportunity to contest the vacation of the termination order and only if the termination of the adoptive parent’s parental rights and the vacation of the termination order are in the best interest of the child.

4. A copy of any order made under [this section](#) shall be sent by the clerk of the juvenile court to:

- a. The department.
- b. The petitioner.
- c. The parents whose rights have been terminated if they request such copies.
- d. Any guardian, custodian, or guardian ad litem of the child.
- e. The state registrar for the purposes of [section 144.13A, subsection 2](#).

[S13, §254-a21; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §3638; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, §232.22; C66, 71, 73, 75, §232.47 – 232.50; C77, 79, 81, §600A.9]

[92 Acts, ch 1192, §3, 5; 94 Acts, ch 1174, §20, 22; 2004 Acts, ch 1156, §2; 2022 Acts, ch 1032, §100; 2023 Acts, ch 135, §1](#)

Referred to in [§232.119, 600.16A, 600A.4, 600A.6B, 600A.8, 600B.5](#)

600A.10 Termination procedures — prohibited practices — penalty for violation.

1. Any biological parent who chooses to identify the other biological parent and who knowingly and intentionally identifies a person who is not the other biological parent in the written release of custody or in any other document related to the termination of parental rights proceedings is guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

2. Any person who signs or accepts a release of custody under [section 600A.4](#) prior to the expiration of the seventy-two-hour period required is guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

3. a. All of the following are prohibited practices regarding a proceeding under [this chapter](#):

(1) The provision of termination of parental rights, child placement, or adoption services to any biological or adoptive parent by any person other than an adoption service provider or the department.

(2) The charging of a fee by an adoption service provider that is more than the usual and necessary fee commensurate with the services rendered.

(3) The facilitation, encouragement, or advisement of adoptive parents by an adoption service provider to provide any thing of value beyond those expenditures allowed pursuant to [section 600A.6D](#).

(4) The knowing encouragement or solicitation of payment of allowable expenses or provision of anything of value beyond those expenditures allowed pursuant to [section 600A.6D](#), by a person falsely representing that a child may be available for adoption with the intent to defraud the other person.

b. A person who commits a prohibited practice under [this subsection](#) is guilty of a serious misdemeanor for the first violation and a class “C” felony for any second or subsequent violation.

[94 Acts, ch 1174, §21, 22; 2017 Acts, ch 113, §23](#)

Similar provisions, see [§600.9A, 714.8\(21\)](#)