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S T A T E O F R H O D E I S L A N D

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

**RELATING TO DELINQUENT AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN -- PROCEEDINGS IN
FAMILY COURT**

Introduced By: Senators Acosta, Gallo, Mack, DiMario, Quezada, Valverde, Vargas, and Murray

Date Introduced: January 09, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** Sections 14-1-27 and 14-1-36 of the General Laws in Chapter 14-1 entitled

2 "Proceedings in Family Court" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **14-1-27. Temporary detention in public or private institutions.**

4 (a) Subject to § 14-1-11, provision may be made by the family court for the temporary
5 detention of children at the training school for youth or in the custody of the director of the
6 department of children, youth and families. Provided, the family court shall not detain any youth
7 age twelve (12) years or younger at the training school for any offense unless the child is charged
8 with murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses. The court may
9 authorize the temporary placement of children in private homes licensed and approved by the
10 department of children, youth and families and subject to the supervision of the court, or may
11 arrange with any incorporated institution or agency licensed for child care, to receive for temporary
12 care children ordered detained by the court. Unless good cause is shown to delay the
13 commencement of the adjudicatory hearing, if a child is in detention, the family court shall
14 commence the adjudicatory hearing within thirty (30) calendar days from whichever of the
15 following events occurs latest: the date the petition is served on the child; or the date the child is
16 placed in detention. In all such cases, the family court shall conclude the adjudicatory hearing
17 within fifteen (15) calendar days of the commencement of the hearing unless good cause is shown
18 to extend an adjudicatory hearing beyond fifteen (15) calendar days.

7 (c) When DCYF makes application to the court to take a child into temporary custody due
8 to allegations of abuse and/or neglect or dependency, DCYF shall have the duty to investigate the
9 possibility of placing the child or children with a fit and willing relative not residing with the
10 parents. DCYF shall conduct an assessment into the appropriateness of placement of the child or
11 children with the relative within thirty (30) days of the child's placement in the temporary custody
12 of DCYF. If the department determines that the relative is a fit and proper person to have placement
13 of the child, the child shall be placed with that relative, unless the particular needs of the child make
14 the placement contrary to the child's best interests. All placements with relatives shall be subject
15 to criminal records checks in accordance with § 14-1-34, foster care regulations promulgated by
16 DCYF, and interstate compact approval, if necessary.

17 (d) If DCYF proposes to place the child with a relative outside the state of Rhode Island,
18 DCYF shall notify the parent who shall have an opportunity to file an objection to the placement
19 with the family court within ten (10) days of receipt of the notice. A hearing shall be held before
20 the child is placed outside the state of Rhode Island.

21 (e) If the request of a relative for placement of a child or children is denied by DCYF, that
22 relative shall have the right to petition the court for review. The court shall within five (5) days of
23 the request conduct a hearing as to the suitability of temporary placement with the relative and shall
24 make any orders incident to placement that it deems meet and just.

25 (f) Whenever the court determines that permanent placement or adoption is in the best
26 interest of a child, a fit and willing relative who has been awarded placement of the child shall be
27 given priority over a non-relative, provided that the placement or adoption is in the best interest of
28 the child.

14-1-36. Commitment of delinquent and wayward children.

30 (a) In all proceedings under this chapter, the court may order a delinquent or wayward child
31 to be committed to the training school for youth for a sentence no longer than the youth's nineteenth
32 birthday. Provided, the family court shall not commit any youth age twelve (12) years or younger
33 at the training school for any offense other than murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt
34 to commit such offenses. Should a youth age twelve (12) years or younger be sentenced for such

1 an offense, the family court shall not commit the youth to the training school unless the court
2 determines, in the court's judgment, that there are no other reasonable placement locations and/or
3 conditions that will ensure the safety of the youth or any other person or persons. However, nothing
4 contained in this section shall be construed to prohibit the placing of any child in the custody of the
5 department of children, youth and families or any other agency, society, or institution, pursuant to
6 § 14-1-32. The commitment of delinquent or wayward children shall be by an order and all
7 assignments of the custody of dependent, neglected, delinquent, or wayward children to the state
8 training school for youth or to the custody of the department of children, youth and families or to
9 any of the private institutions, agencies, or societies mentioned in this chapter shall be by a decree
10 signed by the justice of the court by whom the order or decree is issued, and that order or decree
11 shall be directed to any person that the court may designate, and shall require that person to take
12 the child and deliver him or her to the officer in charge of the training school for youth or to the
13 custody of the director of children, youth and families or of the public or private institution, agency,
14 or society, and the order or decree shall constitute the person charged with it, while he or she has
15 the order in his or her possession for service, an officer for all purposes under this chapter, in any
16 county of the state in which it may be necessary for him or her to go. The person charged with
17 carrying out the order or decree shall also deliver to the officer of the public or private institution,
18 agency, or society or to the training school for youth or the director of children, youth and families
19 a copy of the order or the decree signed by the justice of the court issuing it, and subject to the
20 provisions of this chapter, the officer and other authorities in charge of the training school for youth
21 or the director of children, youth and families or any public or private institution, agency, or society
22 shall hold the child according to the terms of any other order or decree that may from time to time
23 thereafter be issued by the court in relation to the child.

24 (b) Whenever the court shall commit a child to the training school for youth or to the
25 director of children, youth and families or any other institution or agency, it shall transmit with the
26 order of commitment a summary of its information concerning the child.

27 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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- 1 This act would prohibit the family court from detaining any youth or committing any youth, twelve (12) years or younger, to the training school, for any offense other than murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses, and the court determines that there is no other reasonable placement to ensure the safety of the youth and the general public.
- 5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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