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**HOUSE BILL NO. 359**

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

*A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 16.1-283, 63.2-903, 63.2-1202, 63.2-1222, and 63.2-1233 of the Code of Virginia, relating to termination of parental rights; sexual abuse; clear and convincing evidence standard.*

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 Patron—Watts
 

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Committee Referral Pending

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That §§ 16.1-283, 63.2-903, 63.2-1202, 63.2-1222, and 63.2-1233 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

**§ 16.1-283. Termination of residual parental rights.**

A. The residual parental rights of a parent or parents may be terminated by the court as hereinafter provided in a separate proceeding if the petition specifically requests such relief. No petition seeking termination of residual parental rights shall be accepted by the court prior to the filing of a foster care plan, pursuant to § 16.1-281, which documents termination of residual parental rights as being in the best interests of the child. The court may hear and adjudicate a petition for termination of parental rights in the same proceeding in which the court has approved a foster care plan which documents that termination is in the best interests of the child. The court may terminate the residual parental rights of one parent without affecting the rights of the other parent. The local board of social services or a licensed child-placing agency need not have identified an available and eligible family to adopt a child for whom termination of parental rights is being sought prior to the entry of an order terminating parental rights.

Any order terminating residual parental rights shall be accompanied by an order continuing or granting custody to a local board of social services or to a licensed child-placing agency or transferring custody to a person with a legitimate interest. However, in such cases, the court shall give a consideration to granting custody to a person with a legitimate interest, and if custody is not granted to a person with a legitimate interest, the judge shall communicate to the parties the basis for such decision either orally or in writing. An order continuing or granting custody to a local board of social services or to a licensed child-placing agency shall indicate whether that board or agency shall have the authority to place the child for adoption and consent thereto.

The summons shall be served upon the parent or parents and the other parties specified in § 16.1-263. Written notice of the hearing shall also be provided to the foster parents of the child, a relative providing care for the child, and any preadoptive parents for the child informing them that they may appear as witnesses at the hearing to give testimony and otherwise participate in the proceeding. The persons entitled to notice and an opportunity to be heard need not be made parties to the proceedings. The summons or notice of hearing shall clearly state the consequences of a termination of residual parental rights. Service shall be made pursuant to § 16.1-264.

A1. Any order transferring custody of the child to a person with a legitimate interest pursuant to subsection A shall be entered only upon a finding, based upon a preponderance of the evidence, that such person is one who, after an investigation as directed by the court, (i) is found by the court to be willing and qualified to receive and care for the child; (ii) is willing to have a positive, continuous relationship with the child; (iii) is committed to providing a permanent, suitable home for the child; and (iv) is willing and has the ability to protect the child from abuse and neglect; and the order shall so state. The court's order transferring custody to a person with a legitimate interest should further provide, as appropriate, for any terms and conditions that would promote the child's interest and welfare.

B. The residual parental rights of a parent or parents of a child found by the court to be neglected or abused and placed in foster care as a result of (i) court commitment; (ii) an entrustment agreement entered into by the parent or parents; or (iii) other voluntary relinquishment by the parent or parents may be terminated if the court finds, based upon clear and convincing evidence, that it is in the best interests of the child and that:

1. The neglect or abuse suffered by such child presented a serious and substantial threat to his life, health or development; and

2. It is not reasonably likely that the conditions which resulted in such neglect or abuse can be substantially corrected or eliminated so as to allow the child's safe return to his parent or parents within a reasonable period of time. In making this determination, the court shall take into consideration the

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59 efforts made to rehabilitate the parent or parents by any public or private social, medical, mental health  
60 or other rehabilitative agencies prior to the child's initial placement in foster care.

61 Proof of any of the following shall constitute prima facie evidence of the conditions set forth in  
62 subdivision B 2:

63 a. The parent or parents have a mental or emotional illness or intellectual disability of such severity  
64 that there is no reasonable expectation that such parent will be able to undertake responsibility for the  
65 care needed by the child in accordance with his age and stage of development;

66 b. The parent or parents have habitually abused or are addicted to intoxicating liquors, narcotics or  
67 other dangerous drugs to the extent that proper parental ability has been seriously impaired and the  
68 parent, without good cause, has not responded to or followed through with recommended and available  
69 treatment which could have improved the capacity for adequate parental functioning; or

70 c. The parent or parents, without good cause, have not responded to or followed through with  
71 appropriate, available and reasonable rehabilitative efforts on the part of social, medical, mental health or  
72 other rehabilitative agencies designed to reduce, eliminate or prevent the neglect or abuse of the child.

73 C. The residual parental rights of a parent or parents of a child placed in foster care as a result of  
74 court commitment, an entrustment agreement entered into by the parent or parents or other voluntary  
75 relinquishment by the parent or parents may be terminated if the court finds, based upon clear and  
76 convincing evidence, that it is in the best interests of the child and that:

77 1. The parent or parents have, without good cause, failed to maintain continuing contact with and to  
78 provide or substantially plan for the future of the child for a period of six months after the child's  
79 placement in foster care notwithstanding the reasonable and appropriate efforts of social, medical, mental  
80 health or other rehabilitative agencies to communicate with the parent or parents and to strengthen the  
81 parent-child relationship. Proof that the parent or parents have failed without good cause to communicate  
82 on a continuing and planned basis with the child for a period of six months shall constitute prima facie  
83 evidence of this condition; or

84 2. The parent or parents, without good cause, have been unwilling or unable within a reasonable  
85 period of time not to exceed 12 months from the date the child was placed in foster care to remedy  
86 substantially the conditions which led to or required continuation of the child's foster care placement,  
87 notwithstanding the reasonable and appropriate efforts of social, medical, mental health or other  
88 rehabilitative agencies to such end. Proof that the parent or parents, without good cause, have failed or  
89 been unable to make substantial progress towards elimination of the conditions which led to or required  
90 continuation of the child's foster care placement in accordance with their obligations under and within  
91 the time limits or goals set forth in a foster care plan filed with the court or any other plan jointly  
92 designed and agreed to by the parent or parents and a public or private social, medical, mental health or  
93 other rehabilitative agency shall constitute prima facie evidence of this condition. The court shall take  
94 into consideration the prior efforts of such agencies to rehabilitate the parent or parents prior to the  
95 placement of the child in foster care.

96 D. The residual parental rights of a parent or parents of a child found by the court to be neglected or  
97 abused upon the ground of abandonment may be terminated if the court finds, based upon clear and  
98 convincing evidence, that it is in the best interests of the child and that:

99 1. The child was abandoned under such circumstances that either the identity or the whereabouts of  
100 the parent or parents cannot be determined; and

101 2. The child's parent or parents, guardian, or relatives have not come forward to identify such child  
102 and claim a relationship to the child within three months following the issuance of an order by the court  
103 placing the child in foster care; and

104 3. Diligent efforts have been made to locate the child's parent or parents, guardian, or relatives  
105 without avail.

106 E. The residual parental rights of a parent or parents of a child who is in the custody of a local  
107 board or licensed child-placing agency may be terminated by the court if the court finds, based upon  
108 clear and convincing evidence, that it is in the best interests of the child and that (i) the residual  
109 parental rights of the parent regarding a sibling of the child have previously been involuntarily  
110 terminated; (ii) the parent has been convicted of an offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or a  
111 substantially similar law of any other state, the United States or any foreign jurisdiction that constitutes  
112 murder or voluntary manslaughter, or a felony attempt, conspiracy or solicitation to commit any such  
113 offense, if the victim of the offense was a child of the parent, a child with whom the parent resided at  
114 the time such offense occurred or the other parent of the child; (iii) the parent has been convicted of an  
115 offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or a substantially similar law of any other state, the  
116 United States or any foreign jurisdiction that constitutes felony assault resulting in serious bodily injury  
117 or felony bodily wounding resulting in serious bodily injury or felony sexual assault, if the victim of the  
118 offense was a child of the parent or a child with whom the parent resided at the time of such offense; or  
119 (iv) the parent has subjected any child to aggravated circumstances; or (v) *or the parent has been found*  
120 *by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in the conduct prohibited by subsection A of*

§ 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, or subsection B of § 18.2-366, whether or not the person has been charged with or convicted for the alleged violation, and the child was conceived as a result of such conduct.

As used in this section:

"Aggravated circumstances" means torture, chronic or severe abuse, or chronic or severe sexual abuse, if the victim of such conduct was a child of the parent or a child with whom the parent resided at the time such conduct occurred, including the failure to protect such a child from such conduct, which conduct or failure to protect: (i) evinces a wanton or depraved indifference to human life, or (ii) has resulted in the death of such a child or in serious bodily injury to such a child.

"Chronic abuse" or "chronic sexual abuse" means recurring acts of physical abuse which place the child's health, safety and well-being at risk.

"Serious bodily injury" means bodily injury that involves substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or mental faculty.

"Severe abuse" or "severe sexual abuse" may include an act or omission that occurred only once, but otherwise meets the definition of "aggravated circumstances."

The local board or other child welfare agency having custody of the child shall not be required by the court to make reasonable efforts to reunite the child with a parent who has been convicted of one of the felonies specified in this subsection or who has been found by the court to have subjected any child to aggravated circumstances.

F. The local board or licensed child-placing agency to which authority is given to place the child for adoption and consent thereto after an order terminating parental rights is entered shall file a written Adoption Progress Report with the juvenile court on the progress being made to place the child in an adoptive home. The report shall be filed with the court every six months from the date of the final order terminating parental rights until a final order of adoption is entered on behalf of the child in the circuit court. At the conclusion of the hearing at which termination of parental rights is ordered and authority is given to the local board or licensed child-placing agency to place the child for adoption, the juvenile court shall schedule a date by which the board or agency shall file the first written Adoption Progress Report required by this section. A copy of the Adoption Progress Report shall be sent by the court to the guardian ad litem for the child. The court may schedule a hearing on the report with or without the request of a party.

G. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, residual parental rights shall not be terminated if it is established that the child, if he is 14 years of age or older or otherwise of an age of discretion as determined by the court, objects to such termination. However, residual parental rights of a child 14 years of age or older may be terminated over the objection of the child, if the court finds that any disability of the child reduces the child's developmental age and that the child is not otherwise of an age of discretion.

#### § 63.2-903. Entrustment agreements; adoption.

A. Whenever a local board accepts custody of a child pursuant to an entrustment agreement entered into under the authority of § 63.2-900, or a licensed child-placing agency accepts custody of a child pursuant to an entrustment agreement entered into under the authority of § 63.2-1817, in the city or county juvenile and domestic relations district court a petition for approval of the entrustment agreement (i) shall be filed within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 89 days after the execution of an entrustment agreement for less than 90 days, if the child is not returned to his home within that period; (ii) shall be filed within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 30 days after the execution of an entrustment agreement for 90 days or longer or for an unspecified period of time, if such entrustment agreement does not provide for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child; and (iii) may be filed in the case of a permanent entrustment agreement which provides for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child.

B. For purposes of §§ 63.2-900, 63.2-1817 and this section, a parent who is less than 18 years of age shall be deemed fully competent and shall have legal capacity to execute a valid entrustment agreement, including an agreement that provides for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities, and shall be as fully bound thereby as if such parent had attained the age of 18 years. An entrustment agreement for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities shall be executed in writing and notarized. An entrustment agreement for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child shall be valid notwithstanding that it is not signed by the father of a child born out of wedlock if the identity of the father is not reasonably ascertainable, or if such father is given notice of the entrustment by registered or certified mail to his last known address and fails to object to the entrustment within 15 days of mailing of such notice. An affidavit of the mother that the identity of the father is not reasonably ascertainable shall be sufficient evidence of this fact, provided there is no other evidence that would refute such an affidavit. The absence of such an affidavit shall not be deemed evidence that the identity of the father is reasonably ascertainable. For purposes of determining whether

the identity of the father is reasonably ascertainable, the standard of what is reasonable under the circumstances shall control, taking into account the relative interests of the child, the mother and the father.

C. An entrustment agreement for the termination of parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child shall be valid notwithstanding that it is not signed by the birth father of a child when such father has been convicted of a violation of subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, subsection B of § 18.2-366, or an equivalent offense of another state, the United States, or any foreign jurisdiction, *or has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in the conduct prohibited by subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, or subsection B of § 18.2-366, whether or not the person has been charged with or convicted for the alleged violation*, and the child was conceived as a result of such violation or conduct.

D. A child may be placed for adoption by a licensed child-placing agency or a local board, in accordance with the provisions of § 63.2-1221.

**§ 63.2-1202. Parental, or agency, consent required; exceptions.**

A. No petition for adoption shall be granted, except as hereinafter provided in this section, unless written consent to the proposed adoption is filed with the petition. Such consent shall be in writing, signed under oath and acknowledged before an officer authorized by law to take acknowledgments. The consent of a birth parent for the adoption of his child placed directly by the birth parent shall be executed as provided in § 63.2-1233, and the circuit court may accept a certified copy of an order entered pursuant to § 63.2-1233 in satisfaction of all requirements of this section, provided the order clearly evidences compliance with the applicable notice and consent requirements of § 63.2-1233.

B. A birth parent who has not reached the age of 18 shall have legal capacity to give consent to adoption and perform all acts related to adoption, and shall be as fully bound thereby as if the birth parent had attained the age of 18 years.

C. Consent shall be executed:

1. By the birth mother and by any man who:

a. Is an acknowledged father under § 20-49.1;

b. Is an adjudicated father under § 20-49.8;

c. Is a presumed father under subsection D; or

d. Has registered with the Virginia Birth Father Registry pursuant to Article 7 (§ 63.2-1249 et seq.).

Verification of compliance with the notice provisions of the Virginia Birth Father Registry shall be provided to the court.

2. By the child-placing agency or the local board having custody of the child, with right to place him for adoption, through court commitment or parental agreement as provided in § 63.2-900, 63.2-903, or 63.2-1221; or an agency outside the Commonwealth that is licensed or otherwise duly authorized to place children for adoption by virtue of the laws under which it operates; and

3. By the child if he is 14 years of age or older, unless the circuit court finds that the best interests of the child will be served by not requiring such consent.

D. A man shall be presumed to be the father of a child if:

1. He and the mother of the child are married to each other and the child is born during the marriage;

2. He and the mother of the child were married to each other and the child is born within 300 days of their date of separation, as evidenced by a written agreement or decree of separation, or within 300 days after the marriage is terminated by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity, or divorce; or

3. Before the birth of the child, he and the mother of the child married each other in apparent compliance with the law, even if the attempted marriage is or could be declared invalid, and the child is born during the invalid marriage or within 300 days of their date of separation, as evidenced by a written agreement or decree of separation, or within 300 days after its termination by death, annulment, declaration of invalidity, or divorce.

Such presumption may be rebutted by sufficient evidence that would establish by a preponderance of the evidence the paternity of another man or the impossibility or improbability of cohabitation with the birth mother for a period of at least 300 days prior to the birth of the child.

E. No consent shall be required of a birth father if he denies under oath and in writing the paternity of the child. Such denial of paternity may be withdrawn no more than 10 days after it is executed. Once the child is 10 days old, any executed denial of paternity is final and constitutes a waiver of all rights with respect to the adoption of the child and cannot be withdrawn.

F. No consent shall be required of the birth father of a child when the birth father is convicted of a violation of subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, subsection B of § 18.2-366, or an equivalent offense of another state, the United States, or any foreign jurisdiction, *or has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in the conduct prohibited by subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, or subsection B of § 18.2-366, whether or not the person has been charged with or convicted for the alleged violation*, and the child was conceived as a result of such violation or conduct.

G. No notice or consent shall be required of any person whose parental rights have been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction, including foreign courts that have competent jurisdiction. No notice or consent is required of any birth parent of a child for whom a guardianship order was granted when the child was approved by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services for purposes of adoption.

H. No consent shall be required of a birth parent who, without just cause, has neither visited nor contacted the child for a period of six months immediately prior to the filing of the petition for adoption or the filing of a petition to accept consent to an adoption. The prospective adoptive parent(s) shall establish by clear and convincing evidence that the birth parent(s), without just cause, has neither visited nor contacted the child for a period of six months immediately prior to the filing of the petition for adoption or the filing of a petition to accept consent to an adoption. This provision shall not infringe upon the birth parent's right to be noticed and heard on the allegation of abandonment. For purposes of this section, the payment of child support, in the absence of other contact with the child, shall not be considered contact.

I. A birth father of the child may consent to the termination of all of his parental rights prior to the birth of the child.

J. The failure of the nonconsenting party to appear at any scheduled hearing, either in person or by counsel, after proper notice has been given to said party, shall constitute a waiver of any objection and right to consent to the adoption.

K. If a birth parent, legal guardian, or prospective adoptee, executing a consent, entrustment, or other documents related to the adoption, cannot provide the identification required pursuant to § 47.1-14, the birth parent, legal guardian, or prospective adoptee may execute a self-authenticating affidavit as to his identity subject to the penalties contained in § 63.2-1217.

L. A legal custodian of a child being placed for adoption, and any other named parties in pending cases in which the custody or visitation of such child is at issue, whether such case is in a circuit or district court, shall be entitled to proper notice of any adoption proceeding and an opportunity to be heard.

**§ 63.2-1222. Execution of entrustment agreement by birth parent(s); exceptions; notice and objection to entrustment; copy required to be furnished; requirement for agencies outside the Commonwealth.**

A. For the purposes of this section, a birth parent who is less than 18 years of age shall be deemed fully competent and shall have legal capacity to execute a valid entrustment agreement, including an agreement that provides for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities, and perform all acts related to adoption and shall be as fully bound thereby as if such birth parent had attained the age of 18 years.

B. An entrustment agreement for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities with respect to the child shall be valid notwithstanding that it is not signed by the birth father of a child born out of wedlock if the identity of the birth father is not reasonably ascertainable or such birth father did not register with the Virginia Birth Father Registry pursuant to Article 7 (§ 63.2-1249 et seq.) or the birth father named by the birth mother denies under oath and in writing the paternity of the child. An affidavit signed by the birth mother stating that the identity of the birth father is unknown may be filed with the court alleging that the identity of the birth father is not known or reasonably ascertainable. A birth father shall be given notice of the entrustment if he is an acknowledged father pursuant to § 20-49.1, an adjudicated father pursuant to § 20-49.8, a presumed father pursuant to § 63.2-1202, or a putative father who has registered with the Virginia Birth Father Registry pursuant to Article 7 (§ 63.2-1249 et seq.). If the putative father's identity is reasonably ascertainable, he shall be given notice pursuant to the requirements of § 63.2-1250.

C. When a birth father is required to be given notice, he may be given notice of the entrustment by registered or certified mail to his last known address. If he fails to object to the entrustment within 15 days of the mailing of such notice, his entrustment shall not be required. An objection to an entrustment agreement shall be in writing, signed by the objecting party or counsel of record for the objecting party and filed with the agency that mailed the notice of entrustment within the time period specified in § 63.2-1223.

D. The execution of an entrustment agreement shall be required of a presumed father except under the following circumstances: (i) if he denies paternity under oath and in writing in accordance with § 63.2-1202; (ii) if the presumption is rebutted by sufficient evidence, satisfactory to the circuit court, which would establish by a preponderance of the evidence the paternity of another man or the impossibility or improbability of cohabitation of the birth mother and her husband for a period of at least 300 days preceding the birth of the child; (iii) if another man admits, in writing and under oath, that he is the biological father; or (iv) if an adoptive placement has been determined to be in the best interests of the child pursuant to § 63.2-1205.

305 E. When none of the provisions of subsections C and D apply, notice of the entrustment shall be  
306 given to the presumed father pursuant to the requirements of § 16.1-277.01.

307 F. An entrustment agreement for the termination of all parental rights and responsibilities with  
308 respect to the child shall be valid notwithstanding that it is not signed by the birth father of a child  
309 when the birth father has been convicted of a violation of subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63,  
310 subsection B of § 18.2-366, or an equivalent offense of another state, the United States, or any foreign  
311 jurisdiction, *or has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in the conduct*  
312 *prohibited by subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, or subsection B of § 18.2-366, whether or not the*  
313 *person has been charged with or convicted for the alleged violation*, and the child was conceived as a  
314 result of such violation *or conduct*.

315 G. A birth father may execute an entrustment agreement for the termination of all of his parental  
316 rights prior to the birth of the child. Such entrustment shall be subject to the revocation provisions of  
317 § 63.2-1223.

318 H. No entrustment shall be required of a birth father if he denies under oath and in writing the  
319 paternity of the child. Such denial of paternity may be withdrawn no more than 10 days after it is  
320 executed. Once the child is 10 days old, any executed denial of paternity is final and constitutes a  
321 waiver of all rights with respect to the adoption of the child and cannot be withdrawn.

322 I. A copy of the entrustment agreement shall be furnished to all parties signing such agreement.

323 J. When any agency outside the Commonwealth, or its agent, that is licensed or otherwise duly  
324 authorized to place children for adoption by virtue of the laws under which it operates executes an  
325 entrustment agreement in the Commonwealth with a birth parent for the termination of all parental rights  
326 and responsibilities with respect to the child, the requirements of §§ 63.2-1221 through 63.2-1224 shall  
327 apply. The birth parent may expressly waive, under oath and in writing, the execution of the entrustment  
328 under the requirements of §§ 63.2-1221 through 63.2-1224 in favor of the execution of an entrustment  
329 or relinquishment under the laws of another state if the birth parent is represented by independent legal  
330 counsel. Such written waiver shall expressly state that the birth parent has received independent legal  
331 counsel advising of the laws of Virginia and of the other state and that Virginia law is expressly being  
332 waived. The waiver also shall include the name, address, and telephone number of such legal counsel.  
333 Any entrustment agreement that fails to comply with such requirements shall be void.

334 **§ 63.2-1233. Consent to be executed in juvenile and domestic relations district court; exceptions.**

335 When the juvenile and domestic relations district court is satisfied that all requirements of  
336 § 63.2-1232 have been met with respect to at least one birth parent and the adoptive child is at least in  
337 the third calendar day of life, that birth parent or both birth parents, as the case may be, shall execute  
338 consent to the proposed adoption in compliance with the provisions of § 63.2-1202 while before the  
339 juvenile and domestic relations district court in person and in the presence of the prospective adoptive  
340 parents. The juvenile and domestic relations district court shall accept the consent of the birth parent(s)  
341 and transfer custody of the child to the prospective adoptive parents, pending notification to any  
342 nonconsenting birth parent, as described hereinafter.

343 1. a. The execution of consent before the juvenile and domestic relations district court shall not be  
344 required of a birth father if the birth father consents under oath and in writing to the adoption.

345 b. The consent of a birth father who is not married to the mother of the child at the time of the  
346 child's conception or birth shall not be required if the putative father named by the birth mother denies  
347 under oath and in writing the paternity of the child or if the putative father did not register with the  
348 Virginia Birth Father Registry pursuant to Article 7 (§ 63.2-1249 et seq.) of this chapter. If the identity  
349 of the birth father is reasonably ascertainable, but the whereabouts of the birth father are not reasonably  
350 ascertainable, verification of compliance with the Virginia Birth Father Registry shall be provided to the  
351 court.

352 c. When a birth father is required to be given notice, he may be given notice of the adoption by  
353 registered or certified mail to his last known address and if he fails to object to the adoption within 15  
354 days of the mailing of such notice, his consent shall not be required. An objection shall be in writing,  
355 signed by the objecting party or counsel of record for the objecting party and shall be filed with the  
356 clerk of the juvenile and domestic relations district court in which the petition was filed during the  
357 business day of the court, within the time period specified in this section. When no timely objection is  
358 filed, no hearing on this issue is required. Failure of the objecting party to appear at any scheduled  
359 hearing, either in person or by counsel, shall constitute a waiver of such objection.

360 d. The juvenile and domestic relations district court may accept the written consent of the birth father  
361 at the time of the child's conception or birth, provided that his identifying information required in §  
362 63.2-1232 is filed in writing with the juvenile and domestic relations district court of jurisdiction. Such  
363 consent shall advise the birth father of his opportunity for legal representation, shall identify the court in  
364 which the case was or is intended to be filed, and shall be presented to the juvenile and domestic  
365 relations district court for acceptance. The consent may waive further notice of the adoption proceedings  
366 and shall contain the name, address and telephone number of the birth father's legal counsel or an

acknowledgment that he was informed of his opportunity to be represented by legal counsel and declined such representation. For good cause shown, the court may dispense with the requirements regarding the filing of the birth father's identifying information pursuant to this subdivision 1. d.

e. In the event that the birth mother's consent is not executed in the juvenile and domestic relations district court, the consent of the birth father shall be executed in the juvenile and domestic relations district court.

f. A child born to a married birth mother shall be presumed to be the child of her husband and his consent shall be required, unless the court finds that the father's consent is withheld contrary to the best interests of the child as provided in § 63.2-1205 or if his consent is unobtainable. The consent of such presumed father shall be under oath and in writing and may be executed in or out of court. The presumption that the husband is the father of the child may be rebutted by sufficient evidence, satisfactory to the juvenile and domestic relations district court, which would establish by a preponderance of the evidence the paternity of another man or the impossibility or improbability of cohabitation of the birth mother and her husband for a period of at least 300 days preceding the birth of the child, in which case the husband's consent shall not be required. The executed denial of paternity by the putative father shall be sufficient to rebut the presumption that he is the father of the child. If the court is satisfied that the presumption has been rebutted, notice of the adoption shall not be required to be given to the presumed father.

2. After the application of the provisions of subdivision 1, if a birth parent is entitled to a hearing, the birth parent shall be given notice of the date and location of the hearing and be given the opportunity to appear before the juvenile and domestic relations district court. Such hearing may occur subsequent to the proceeding wherein the consenting birth parent appeared but may not be held until 15 days after personal service of notice on the nonconsenting birth parent, or if personal service is unobtainable, 10 days after the completion of the execution of an order of publication against such birth parent. The juvenile and domestic relations district court may appoint counsel for the birth parent(s). If the juvenile and domestic relations district court finds that consent is withheld contrary to the best interests of the child, as set forth in § 63.2-1205, or is unobtainable, it may grant the petition without such consent and enter an order waiving the requirement of consent of the nonconsenting birth parent and transferring custody of the child to the prospective adoptive parents. No further consent or notice shall be required of a birth parent who fails to appear at any scheduled hearing, either in person or by counsel. If the juvenile and domestic relations district court denies the petition, the juvenile and domestic relations district court shall order that any consent given for the purpose of such placement shall be void and, if necessary, the court shall determine custody of the child as between the birth parents.

3. Except as provided in subdivisions 4 and 5, if consent cannot be obtained from at least one birth parent, the juvenile and domestic relations district court shall deny the petition and determine custody of the child pursuant to § 16.1-278.2.

4. If a child has been under the physical care and custody of the prospective adoptive parents and if both birth parents have failed, without good cause, to appear at a hearing to execute consent under this section for which they were given proper notice pursuant to § 16.1-264, the juvenile and domestic relations district court may grant the petition without the consent of either birth parent and enter an order waiving consent and transferring custody of the child to the prospective adoptive parents. Prior to the entry of such an order, the juvenile and domestic relations district court may appoint legal counsel for the birth parents and shall find by clear and convincing evidence (i) that the birth parents were given proper notice of the hearing(s) to execute consent and of the hearing to proceed without their consent; (ii) that the birth parents failed to show good cause for their failure to appear at such hearing(s); and (iii) that pursuant to § 63.2-1205, the consent of the birth parents is withheld contrary to the best interests of the child or is unobtainable. Under this subdivision, the court or the parties may waive the requirement of the simultaneous meeting under § 63.2-1231 and the requirements of subdivisions A 1, A 3, and A 7 of § 63.2-1232 where the opportunity for compliance is not reasonably available under the applicable circumstances.

5. If both birth parents are deceased, the juvenile and domestic relations district court, after hearing evidence to that effect, may grant the petition without the filing of any consent.

6. No consent shall be required from the birth father of a child placed pursuant to this section when such father is convicted of a violation of subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, subsection B of § 18.2-366, or an equivalent offense of another state, the United States, or any foreign jurisdiction, *or has been found by clear and convincing evidence to have engaged in the conduct prohibited by subsection A of § 18.2-61, § 18.2-63, or subsection B of § 18.2-366, whether or not the person has been charged with or convicted for the alleged violation*, and the child was conceived as a result of such violation *or conduct*, nor shall the birth father be entitled to notice of any of the proceedings under this section.

428 7. No consent shall be required of a birth father if he denies under oath and in writing the paternity  
429 of the child. Such denial of paternity may be withdrawn no more than 10 days after it is executed. Once  
430 the child is 10 days old, any executed denial of paternity is final and constitutes a waiver of all rights  
431 with the respect to the adoption of the child and cannot be withdrawn.

432 8. A birth father may consent to the adoption prior to the birth of the child.

433 9. The juvenile and domestic relations district court shall review each order entered under this section  
434 at least annually until such time as the final order of adoption is entered.

435 10. When there has been an interstate transfer of the child in a parental placement adoption in  
436 compliance with Chapter 10 (§ 63.2-1000 et seq.) of this title, all matters relating to the adoption of the  
437 child including, but not limited to, custody and parentage shall be determined in the court of appropriate  
438 jurisdiction in the state that was approved for finalization of the adoption by the interstate compact  
439 authorities.