STATE OF MONTANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 06-2016

AMENDED EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE PROTECT MONTANA KIDS COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the health and safety of Montana children who have been abused or neglected or are at substantial risk of child abuse or neglect is of the highest priority to our state;

WHEREAS, Montana has seen a significant increase in the number of children who have been victims of child abuse or neglect coming into foster care;

WHEREAS, the impacts of this increase in the number of children and families being served by the child protection system has resulted in delays and capacity issues;

WHEREAS, the state has statutory and moral obligations to provide services that result in improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families in these cases; and,

WHEREAS, the public perception and understanding of the child protection system is critical to effective intervention on behalf of vulnerable children and is ultimately necessary to prevent future cases of child abuse and neglect.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, STEVE BULLOCK, Governor of the State of Montana, by the authority vested in me under the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, do hereby issue Executive Order No. 06-2016 amending Executive Order No. 14-2015 and providing for the creation of the Protect Montana Kids Commission as follows:

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Protect Montana Kids Commission shall be to advise the Governor on an evidence-based, comprehensive set of recommendations to align the Montana Child Protection System with national standards and best practices in the field of child welfare.

DUTIES:

The Protect Montana Kids Commission's responsibilities shall be:

1. To foster cooperation, communication, and coordinated approaches to support improved outcomes in child abuse and neglect cases;

2. To report to the Governor's Office on the status of abused and neglected children and their families receiving services from the child protection system;

3. To work toward establishing permanent funding for child protection system improvement priorities;

4. To provide recommendations to the governor by May 31, 2016 regarding:

    a. Changes in Montana child abuse and neglect statutes necessary to align them with best practices and scientific evidence regarding what is necessary to protect the best interests of children;

    b. Structural changes and enhancements to the system that may result in improved outcomes for children and families who are served by the child protection system and lead to a decrease in the number of children in Montana being abused or neglected;

    c. Increasing transparency in the child protection system;

    d. The need for additional resources in the different agencies engaged in the work of protecting children, such as the Child and Family Services Division, the County Attorney's Offices, the Office of the Public Defender, the Attorney General's Office, and the Judicial Branch.

COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION:

The Committee will consist of up to thirteen (13) members, appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor, from the following categories. One of the voting members will be appointed by the Governor as Chair, and the Governor will work to ensure geographic, gender and racial diversity amongst the membership.

- Nine (9) Voting Members, one of whom will be appointed by the Governor as Chair:
    - Member of the public, who can fit any of the categories below or who generally represents the public-at-large;
    - Montana tribal member, preferably someone with background or experience in child abuse prevention or the public service system;
    - CASA volunteer or foster parent;
    - Person with experience or background on scientific evidence and research regarding what is necessary to protect the best interests of children;
    - Representative of an organization involved in child abuse prevention;
    - District Court Judge or representative of the Judicial Branch;
    - Private attorney with experience in child abuse and neglect cases;
    - County Attorney;
    - A representative of the Governor's Office.

- Four (4) Non-Voting, Ex-Officio Members:
  - A representative of DPHHS, the Director or Designee;
  - A representative of the Office of the Public Defender;
  - A representative of the Department of Justice; and
  - A state Legislator.

The Committee will be administratively attached to the Office of the Governor.

COMPENSATION:

Committee members are eligible for compensation under Section 2-15-122(5) MCA, and shall be compensated in the amount to be determined by the Office of the Governor not to exceed $50 for each day in which the member is actually and necessarily engaged in the performance of Committee duties. All eligible members shall be reimbursed for travel expenses pursuant to the same section.

DURATION:

This Order is effective immediately, and the Committee shall expire or be renewed by September 1, 2017.

GIVEN under my hand and the GREAT SEAL of the State of Montana this 12th day of February, 2016.

STEVE BULLOCK, Governor

ATTEST:

LINDA MCCULLOCH, Secretary of State