

**SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
JUVENILE COURT PROCEDURAL RULES COMMITTEE**

**NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

**Proposed Amendment of Pa.R.J.C.P. 1601 and 1608**

The Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee is considering proposing to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania the amendment of Pennsylvania Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure 1601 and 1608 governing “potential kinship care resource” for the reasons set forth in the accompanying publication report. Pursuant to Pa.R.J.A. 103(a)(1), the proposal is being published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* for comments, suggestions, or objections prior to submission to the Supreme Court.

Any report accompanying this proposal was prepared by the Committee to indicate the rationale for the proposed rulemaking. It will neither constitute a part of the rules nor be adopted by the Supreme Court.

The Committee invites all interested persons to submit comments, suggestions, or objections in writing to:

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All communications in reference to the proposal should be received by **May 31, 2024**. E-mail is the preferred method for submitting comments, suggestions, or objections; any e-mailed submission need not be reproduced and resubmitted via mail. The Committee will acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

By the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee,

Judge Andrea Marceca Strong, Chair

**SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA  
JUVENILE COURT PROCEDURAL RULES COMMITTEE**

**PUBLICATION REPORT**

**Proposed Amendment of Pa.R.J.C.P. 1601 and 1608**

The Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee (“Committee”) is considering proposing the amendment of Pennsylvania Rules of Juvenile Court Procedure 1601 and 1608 to implement the Act of December 14, 2023, P.L. 412, No. 48, concerning “potential kinship care resource.”

Effective February 12, 2024, the Act added the definition of “potential kinship care resource” to the Juvenile Act, 42 Pa.C.S. § 6302. The Act also amended 42 Pa.C.S. § 6336.1(a) to require the county agency to provide notice of permanency hearings to potential kinship care resources. The potential resource then has the right to be heard at the hearing as to the resource’s qualifications to provide kinship care. Thereafter, the court must decide whether the resource may receive notice of, or participate in, future hearings.

To reflect the Act, Pa.R.J.C.P. 1601(a)(5) is proposed to be amended to include “potential kinship care resource” as a person to receive notice of the permanency hearing. Additionally, a new subdivision (d)(1)(xviii) is proposed to be added to Pa.R.J.C.P. 1608 to require a finding on whether the potential kinship care resource should receive notices of future hearings.

The Committee invites all comments, concerns, and suggestions regarding this rulemaking proposal.

**Rule 1601. Permanency Hearing Notice.**

**[A.](a)** At least **[fifteen] 15** days prior to the hearing, the court or its designee shall give notice of the permanency hearing to:

- (1) all parties;
- (2) the attorney for the county agency;
- (3) the child's attorney;
- (4) the guardian's attorney;
- (5) the parents, child's foster parent, preadoptive parent, **[or] relative providing care for the child, or a potential kinship care resource**;
- (6) the court appointed special advocate, if assigned;
- (7) the educational decision maker, if applicable; and
- (8) any other persons as directed by the court.

**[B.](b)** If a party intends to request a goal change from reunification, then either the notice shall state this purpose or the party shall give separate notice of the intended goal change in accordance with **[paragraph (A)] subdivision (a)**.

**Comment: Regarding subdivision (a)(5), see 42 Pa.C.S. § 6302 for the definition of "potential kinship care resource." Once a potential kinship care resource has addressed the court as to the individual's qualifications, the court is to decide whether the potential kinship care resource may receive notice of, or participate in, future hearings. See Pa.R.J.C.P. 1608(d)(1)(xviii). If the court decides that the potential kinship care resource is not to receive notice of future hearings, notice to that individual pursuant to subdivision (a)(5) is no longer required.**

Given the significance of discontinuing the goal of reunification, the requirement of **[paragraph (B)] subdivision (b)** is to ensure that parties, counsel, and interested persons have notice of the purpose of the hearing and are able to prepare for and attend the hearing.

**[Official Note: Rule 1601 adopted August 21, 2006, effective February 1, 2007. Amended April 29, 2011, effective July 1, 2011. Amended May 17, 2018, effective October 1, 2018.**

***Committee Explanatory Reports:***

Final Report explaining the provisions of Rule 1601 published with the Court's Order at 36 Pa.B. 5571 (September 2, 2006). Final Report explaining the

**amendments to Rule 1601 published with the Court's Order at 41 Pa.B. 2413 (May 14, 2011). Final Report explaining the amendments to Rule 1601 published with the Court's Order at 48 Pa.B. 3321 (June 2, 2018).]**

**Rule 1608. Permanency Hearing.**

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**(d) Court's Findings.**

- (1) Findings at all Six-Month Hearings.** At each permanency hearing, the court shall enter its findings and conclusions of law into the record and enter an order pursuant to Rule 1609. On the record in open court, the court shall state:

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- (xvi) whether sufficient steps have been taken by the county agency to ensure the child has been provided regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate activities, including:

(A) consulting the child in an age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate manner about the opportunities to participate in activities; and

(B) identifying and addressing any barriers to participation;  
**[and]**

- (xvii) whether the visitation schedule for the child with the child's guardian is adequate, unless a finding is made that visitation is contrary to the safety or well-being of the child[.]; **and**

- (xviii) **if a potential kinship care resource has addressed the court as to the individual's qualifications, then whether the potential kinship care resource may receive notice of, or participate in, future hearings.**

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**Comment:** See 42 Pa.C.S. §§ 6341, 6351.

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Pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(xv), the county agency is to testify and enter evidence into the record on how it took sufficient steps to ensure the caregiver is

exercising the reasonable and prudent parent standard. For the definition of “caregiver” and the “reasonable and prudent parent standard,” see Rule 1120. Pursuant to subdivision (d)(1)(xvi), when documenting its steps taken, the county agency is to include how it consulted with the child in an age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate manner about the opportunities of the child to participate in activities. For the definition of “age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate,” see Rule 1120. These additions have been made to help dependent children have a sense of normalcy in their lives. These children should be able to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities without having to consult caseworkers and ask the court’s permission many days prior to the event. See *also* Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183), 42 U.S.C. §§ 675 and 675a (2014).

**Regarding subdivision (d)(1)(xviii), see 67 Pa.C.S. § 7507(c) for Kinship Care Program.**

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