

Insurance should cover adoptees

Health insurers should be required to treat adopted children just like birth children — cover them the day they enter the home, Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld's panel on adoption says.

"That will take legislation," said Binsfeld. "We have children with special needs. They're not covered by insurance companies in the first year until the adoption is final. It will add an expense to insurance."

Children with pre-existing conditions would also be covered under the proposal.

State Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield, has sponsored bills to require health insurance coverage of adoptive children. They have been resisted by some insurers. Endorsements by Gov. John Engler and Binsfeld should help move the bills.

ONLY A FEW of the 67 recommendations by the Binsfeld Commission

will require changes in state law. Here are some:

- Adding computers to avoid paperwork in the children's services systems.
- Prohibiting for-profit adoption agencies "I have a problem with people placing children for financial gain," said panel member Don Marengere.
- Making DSS rules to regulate adoption "facilitators" — doctors, attorneys, clergy, etc.
- Expanding efforts by placing agencies to recruit relatives and family members for adoption placement.
- Encouraging colleges to train counselors, social workers and psychologists in child welfare issues, particularly the need for adoption.
- Training of all adoption workers in "homestudy" — the assessing of potential adoptive parents.

• Training caseworkers about adoption subsidies. Oakland Probate Judge Joan E. Young called ignorance of such subsidies "a barrier to completion" of adoptions.

• Recruiting families for foster care and adoption to reflect the ethnicity of the children. But it urged that "placement practices assure that children bonded with a family not be removed based on race. We strongly oppose children waiting unnecessarily for a family of like race."

• Supporting present law protecting the confidentiality of the birth parents by not disclosing identifying information until the adoptee has

reached age 18.

• Allowing placing agencies to provide prospective families with non-identifying medical, genetic and health history information about the child and the biological parents.

MARENGERE said the commission wasn't unanimous, but there was no minority report.

"When you have 10 people in a room to decide, you're gonna come up with different ideas. I agree with a majority of the recommendations but not all."

"I thought she (Binsfeld) did a marvelous job, considering all the personalities involved."

Speedier adoptions urged

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STATE SEN. Jack Weiborn, R-Kalamazoo, said finding families for children now can avoid crime problems later.

"I was proud to see three department heads involved — Mental Health, Public Health and Social Services," Weiborn said. "The fourth

human services department — Corrections — was not involved.

"If we don't do something now, they (unwanted children) will be into another human services department down the road — Corrections," said Weiborn, pledging to start hearings soon on the legislative changes recommended by Binsfeld's panel.

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