

REFERENCE TITLE: **third-party rights; blood relatives**

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-sixth Legislature
Second Regular Session
2024

SB 1434

Introduced by
Senators Epstein; Farnsworth, Kavanagh

AN ACT

**AMENDING SECTION 25-409, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING TO LEGAL
DECISION-MAKING AND PARENTING TIME.**

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 25-409, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:

4 25-409. Third party rights

5 A. Pursuant to section 25-402, subsection B, paragraph 2, a person
6 other than a legal parent may petition the superior court for legal
7 decision-making authority or placement of the child. The court shall
8 summarily deny a petition unless it finds that the petitioner's initial
9 pleading establishes that all of the following are true:

10 1. The person filing the petition stands in loco parentis to the
11 child.

12 2. It would be significantly detrimental to the child to remain or
13 be placed in the care of either legal parent who wishes to keep or acquire
14 legal decision-making.

15 3. A court of competent jurisdiction has not entered or approved an
16 order concerning legal decision-making or parenting time within one year
17 before the person filed a petition pursuant to this section, unless there
18 is reason to believe the child's present environment may seriously
19 endanger the child's physical, mental, moral or emotional health.

20 4. One of the following applies:

21 (a) One of the legal parents is deceased.

22 (b) The child's legal parents are not married to each other at the
23 time the petition is filed.

24 (c) A proceeding for dissolution of marriage or for legal
25 separation of the legal parents is pending at the time the petition is
26 filed.

27 B. Notwithstanding subsection A of this section, it is a rebuttable
28 presumption that awarding legal decision-making to a legal parent serves
29 the child's best interests because of the physical, psychological and
30 emotional needs of the child to be reared by a legal parent. A third
31 party may rebut this presumption only with proof showing by clear and
32 convincing evidence that awarding legal decision-making to a legal parent
33 is not consistent with the child's best interests.

34 C. Pursuant to section 25-402, subsection B, paragraph 2, a person
35 other than a legal parent may petition the superior court for visitation
36 with a child. The superior court may grant visitation rights during the
37 child's minority on a finding that the visitation is in the child's best
38 interests and that any of the following is true:

39 1. One of the legal parents is deceased or has been missing at
40 least three months. For the purposes of this paragraph, a parent is
41 considered to be missing if the parent's location has not been determined
42 and the parent has been reported as missing to a law enforcement agency.

43 2. The child was born out of wedlock and the child's legal parents
44 are not married to each other at the time the petition is filed.

1 3. For grandparent or great-grandparent visitation, the marriage of
2 the parents of the child has been dissolved for at least three months.

3 4. For in loco parentis visitation, a proceeding for dissolution of
4 marriage or for legal separation of the legal parents is pending at the
5 time the petition is filed.

6 5. FOR BLOOD RELATIVES OF A LEGAL PARENT OF THE CHILD, THE MARRIAGE
7 OF THE PARENTS OF THE CHILD HAS BEEN DISSOLVED FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS
8 OR A BIOLOGICAL PARENT OF THE CHILD IS DECEASED AND THE BLOOD RELATIVE OF
9 A LEGAL PARENT OF THE CHILD HAS ACTED IN LOCO PARENTIS TO THE CHILD OR HAS
10 DEVELOPED A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD. THIS PARAGRAPH APPLIES
11 REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY LEGAL PARENTS THE CHILD HAS AT THE TIME THE
12 PETITION IS FILED.

13 D. A petition filed under subsection A or C of this section must be
14 verified or supported by affidavit and must include detailed facts
15 supporting the petitioner's claim. The petitioner must also provide
16 notice of this proceeding, including a copy of the petition and any
17 affidavits or other attachments, and serve the notice pursuant to the
18 Arizona rules of family law procedure to all of the following:

- 19 1. The child's legal parents.
- 20 2. A third party who possesses legal decision-making authority over
21 the child or visitation rights.
- 22 3. The child's guardian or guardian ad litem.
- 23 4. A person or agency that possesses physical custody of the child
24 or claims legal decision-making authority or visitation rights concerning
25 the child.
- 26 5. Any other person or agency that has previously appeared in the
27 action.

28 E. In deciding whether to grant visitation to a third party, the
29 court shall give special weight to the legal parents' opinion of what
30 serves their child's best interests and consider all relevant factors,
31 including:

- 32 1. The historical relationship, if any, between the child and the
33 person seeking visitation.
- 34 2. The motivation of the requesting party seeking visitation.
- 35 3. The motivation of the person objecting to visitation.
- 36 4. The quantity of visitation time requested and the potential
37 adverse impact that visitation will have on the child's customary
38 activities.
- 39 5. If one or both of the child's parents are deceased, the benefit
40 in maintaining an extended family relationship.

41 F. If logistically possible and appropriate, the court shall order
42 visitation by a grandparent or great-grandparent if the child is residing
43 or spending time with the parent through whom the grandparent or
44 great-grandparent claims a right of access to the child.

1 G. A grandparent or great-grandparent seeking visitation rights
2 under this section shall petition in the same action in which the family
3 court previously decided legal decision-making and parenting time or, if
4 no such case existed, by separate petition in the county of the child's
5 home state, as defined in section 25-1002.

6 H. All visitation rights granted under this section automatically
7 terminate if the child is adopted or placed for adoption. If the child is
8 removed from an adoptive placement, the court may reinstate the visitation
9 rights. This subsection does not apply if the child is adopted by the
10 spouse of a natural parent after the natural parent remarries.

11 I. For the purposes of this section, a child who is adopted may be
12 treated as if born in lawful wedlock only if the child is adopted jointly
13 by parents who are married to one another as provided in section 8-103,
14 subsection A.