

RCW 13.34.155 Concurrent jurisdiction over nonparental actions for child custody—Establishment or modification of parenting plan.

(1) The court hearing the dependency petition may hear and determine issues related to a guardianship of a minor under RCW 11.130.215 in a dependency proceeding as necessary to facilitate a permanency plan for the child or children as part of the dependency disposition order or a dependency review order or as otherwise necessary to implement a permanency plan of care for a child. Any modification or establishment of a guardianship of a minor must be made in conformity with the standards in chapter 11.130 RCW. The parents, guardians, or legal custodian of the child must agree, subject to court approval, to establish or modify a guardianship of a minor, but the court may decide any contested issues implementing the guardianship. This agreed guardianship of a minor may have the concurrence of the other parties to the dependency, the guardian ad litem of the child, and the child if age twelve or older, and must also be in the best interests of the child. If the petitioner for a guardianship of a minor order under RCW 11.130.215 is not a party to the dependency proceeding, he or she must agree on the record or by the filing of a declaration to the entry of a guardianship of a minor. Once a guardianship of a minor order is entered under RCW 11.130.215, and the dependency petition dismissed, the department shall not continue to supervise the placement.

(2) (a) The court hearing the dependency petition may establish or modify a parenting plan under chapter 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW as part of a disposition order or at a review hearing when doing so will implement a permanent plan of care for the child and result in dismissal of the dependency.

(b) The dependency court shall adhere to procedural requirements under chapter 26.09 RCW and must make a written finding that the parenting plan established or modified by the dependency court under this section is in the child's best interests.

(c) Unless the whereabouts of one of the parents is unknown to either the department or the court, the parents must agree, subject to court approval, to establish the parenting plan or modify an existing parenting plan.

(d) Whenever the court is asked to establish or modify a parenting plan, the child's residential schedule, the allocation of decision-making authority, and dispute resolution under this section, the dependency court may:

(i) Appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the interests of the child when the court believes the appointment is necessary to protect the best interests of the child; and

(ii) Appoint an attorney to represent the interests of the child with respect to provisions for the parenting plan.

(e) The dependency court must make a written finding that the parenting plan established or modified by the dependency court under this section is in the child's best interests.

(f) The dependency court may interview the child in chambers to ascertain the child's wishes as to the child's residential schedule in a proceeding for the entry or modification of a parenting plan under this section. The court may permit counsel to be present at the interview. The court shall cause a record of the interview to be made and to become part of the court record of the dependency case and the case under chapter 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW.

(g) In the absence of agreement by a parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the child to allow the juvenile court to hear and

determine issues related to the establishment or modification of a parenting plan under chapter 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW, a party may move the court to transfer such issues to the family law department of the superior court for further resolution. The court may only grant the motion upon entry of a written finding that it is in the best interests of the child.

(h) In any parenting plan agreed to by the parents and entered or modified in juvenile court under this section, all issues pertaining to child support and the division of marital property shall be referred to or retained by the family law department of the superior court.

(3) Any order entered in the dependency court establishing or modifying a guardianship of a minor under RCW 11.130.215, parenting plan, or residential schedule under chapter 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW shall also be filed in the chapter 11.130, 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW action by the moving or prevailing party. If the petitioning or moving party has been found indigent and appointed counsel at public expense in the dependency proceeding, no filing fees shall be imposed by the clerk. Once filed, any guardianship of a minor order, parenting plan, or residential schedule establishing or modifying permanent legal custody of a child shall survive dismissal of the dependency proceeding. [2020 c 312 § 119; 2019 c 46 § 5017; 2018 c 284 § 16. Prior: 2009 c 526 § 2; 2009 c 520 § 31; 2000 c 135 § 1.]

Effective date—2020 c 312: See note following RCW 11.130.915.