

**RCW 26.44.010 Declaration of purpose.** The Washington state legislature finds and declares: The bond between a child and his or her parent, custodian, or guardian is of paramount importance, and any intervention into the life of a child is also an intervention into the life of the parent, custodian, or guardian; however, instances of nonaccidental injury, neglect, death, sexual abuse and cruelty to children by their parents, custodians or guardians have occurred, and in the instance where a child is deprived of his or her right to conditions of minimal nurture, health, and safety, the state is justified in emergency intervention based upon verified information; and therefore the Washington state legislature hereby provides for the reporting of such cases to the appropriate public authorities. It is the intent of the legislature that, as a result of such reports, protective services shall be made available in an effort to prevent further abuses, and to safeguard the general welfare of such children. When the child's physical or mental health is jeopardized, or the safety of the child conflicts with the legal rights of a parent, custodian, or guardian, the health and safety interests of the child should prevail. When determining whether a child and a parent, custodian, or guardian should be separated during or immediately following an investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect, the safety of the child shall be the department's paramount concern. Reports of child abuse and neglect shall be maintained and disseminated with strictest regard for the privacy of the subjects of such reports and so as to safeguard against arbitrary, malicious or erroneous information or actions. This chapter shall not be construed to authorize interference with child-raising practices, including reasonable parental discipline, which are not proved to be injurious to the child's health, welfare and safety. [2012 c 259 s 12; 1999 c 176 s 27; 1987 c 206 s 1; 1984 c 97 s 1; 1977 ex.s. c 80 s 24; 1975 1st ex.s. c 217 s 1; 1969 ex.s. c 35 s 1; 1965 c 13 s 1.]

**Findings—Purpose—Severability—Conflict with federal requirements—1999 c 176:** See notes following RCW 74.34.005.

**Purpose—Intent—Severability—1977 ex.s. c 80:** See notes following RCW 4.16.190.