

RCW 26.44.100 Information about rights—Legislative purpose—

Notification of investigation, report, and findings. (1) The legislature finds parents and children often are not aware of their due process rights when agencies are investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect. The legislature reaffirms that all citizens, including parents, shall be afforded due process, that protection of children remains the priority of the legislature, and that this protection includes protecting the family unit from unnecessary disruption. To facilitate this goal, the legislature wishes to ensure that parents and children be advised in writing and orally, if feasible, of their basic rights and other specific information as set forth in this chapter, provided that nothing contained in this chapter shall cause any delay in protective custody action.

(2) The department shall notify the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of a child of any allegations of child abuse or neglect made against such person at the initial point of contact with such person, in a manner consistent with the laws maintaining the confidentiality of the persons making the complaints or allegations. Investigations of child abuse and neglect should be conducted in a manner that will not jeopardize the safety or protection of the child or the integrity of the investigation process.

Whenever the department completes an investigation of a child abuse or neglect report under this chapter, the department shall notify the subject of the report of the department's investigative findings. The notice shall also advise the subject of the report that:

(a) A written response to the report may be provided to the department and that such response will be filed in the record following receipt by the department;

(b) Information in the department's record may be considered in subsequent investigations or proceedings related to child protection or child custody;

(c) Founded reports of child abuse and neglect may be considered in determining whether the person is disqualified from being licensed to provide child care, employed by a licensed child care agency, or authorized by the department to care for children; and

(d) A subject named in a founded report of child abuse or neglect has the right to seek review of the finding as provided in this chapter.

(3) The founded finding notification required by this section shall be made by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the person's last known address.

(4) The unfounded finding notification required by this section must be made by regular mail to the person's last known address or by email.

(5) The duty of notification created by this section is subject to the ability of the department to ascertain the location of the person to be notified. The department shall exercise reasonable, good faith efforts to ascertain the location of persons entitled to notification under this section.

(6) The department shall provide training to all department personnel who conduct investigations under this section that shall include, but is not limited to, training regarding the legal duties of the department from the initial time of contact during investigation through treatment in order to protect children and families. [2017 c 269 s 2; 2005 c 512 s 1; 1998 c 314 s 8; 1997 c 282 s 2; 1993 c 412 s 17; 1985 c 183 s 1.]

Finding—Intent—2005 c 512: "The legislature finds that whenever possible, children should remain in the home of their parents. It is only when the safety of the child is in jeopardy that the child should be removed from the home.

It is the intent of the legislature that the department of social and health services be permitted to intervene in cases of chronic neglect where the health, welfare, or safety of the child is at risk. One incident of neglect may not rise to the level requiring state intervention; however, a pattern of neglect has been shown to cause damage to the health and well-being of the child subject to the neglect.

It is the intent of the legislature that, when chronic neglect has been found to exist in a family, the legal system reinforce the need for the parent's early engagement in services that will decrease the likelihood of future neglect. However, if the parents fail to comply with the offered necessary and available services, the state has the authority to intervene to protect the children who are at risk. If a parent fails to engage in available substance abuse or mental health services necessary to maintain the safety of a child or a parent fails to correct substance abuse deficiencies that jeopardize the safety of a child, the state has the authority to intervene to protect a child." [2005 c 512 s 2.]

Effective date—2005 c 512: "This act takes effect January 1, 2007." [2005 c 512 s 10.]

Short title—2005 c 512: "This act may be known and cited as the Justice and Raiden Act." [2005 c 512 s 11.]