

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1565

C 213 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to public access to child in need of services and at-risk youth hearings.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Dickerson and Kenney).

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services
Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Background:

There are several different types of hearings that pertain to the welfare of children including child in need of services (CHINS), at-risk youth (ARY), dependency, and termination hearings.

A CHINS proceeding may be initiated by a parent or child to request that the court approve or continue an out-of-home placement. An ARY proceeding may be initiated by a parent who seeks assistance from the court in maintaining parental control over his or her child.

Dependency and termination proceedings are generally initiated by the state in cases where the state is alleging that the parent is not providing sufficiently appropriate care for his or her child, and the state is seeking to intervene in the relationship.

The CHINS, ARY, dependency, and termination hearings have traditionally been closed to the public largely due to the sensitive nature of matters that are often discussed about the children and families involved in the cases. However, states have been increasingly moving towards opening these hearings to the public. In 2003 the Washington Legislature required that the public not be excluded from any dependency or termination hearings unless the judge finds that excluding the public is in the best interests of the child.

The CHINS and ARY hearings remain closed to the public.

Summary:

A CHINS hearing must be open to the public unless the court determines that it is in the best interest of the child to close the hearing to the public.

An ARY hearing is open to the public unless the court determines that it is in the best interest of the child to close the hearing or if either parent requests that the hearing be closed to the public.

At the beginning of the at-risk youth hearing, the judicial officer is required to notify the parents that either parent has the right to request that the public be excluded from the ARY hearing.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 94 0

Senate 45 0

Effective: July 22, 2007