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SENATE BILL 6792

State of Washington 60th Legis

By Senators Hargrove and Stevens

60th Legislature 2008 Regular Session

Read first time 01/24/08. Referred to Committee on Human Services &

Corrections.

- 1 AN ACT Relating to dependency matters; and amending RCW 13.34.215,
- 2 13.34.065, 13.34.136, and 26.44.063.
- 3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:
- 4 Sec. 1. RCW 13.34.215 and 2007 c 413 s 1 are each amended to read 5 as follows:
- 6 (1) A child may petition the juvenile court to reinstate the 7 previously terminated parental rights of his or her parent under the 8 following circumstances:
- 9 (a) The child was previously found to be a dependent child under 10 this chapter;
- 11 (b) The child's parent's rights were terminated in a proceeding 12 under this chapter;
- 13 (c) The child has not achieved his or her permanency plan within 14 three years of a final order of termination, or if the final order was 15 appealed, within three years of exhaustion of any right to appeal the 16 order terminating parental rights; and
- 17 (d) ((Absent good cause,)) The child must be at least twelve years
 18 old at the time the petition is filed. Upon the child's motion for

p. 1 SB 6792

1 good cause shown, or on its own motion, the court may hear a petition 2 filed by a child younger than twelve years old.

- (2) A child seeking to petition under this section shall be provided counsel at no cost to the child.
- (3) The petition must be signed by the child in the absence of a showing of good cause as to why the child could not do so.
- (4) If, after a threshold hearing to consider the parent's apparent fitness and interest in reinstatement of parental rights, ((it appears)) the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the best interests of the child may be served by reinstatement of parental rights, the juvenile court shall order that a hearing on the merits of the petition be held.
- (5) The court shall give prior notice for any proceeding under this section, or cause prior notice to be given, to the department, the child's attorney, and the child. The court shall also order the department to give prior notice of any hearing to the child's former parent whose parental rights are the subject of the petition, any parent whose rights have not been terminated, the child's current foster parent, relative caregiver, guardian or custodian, and the child's tribe, if applicable.
- (6) The juvenile court shall conditionally grant the petition if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that the child has not achieved his or her permanency plan and is not likely to imminently achieve his or her permanency plan and that reinstatement of parental rights is in the child's best interest. In determining whether reinstatement is in the child's best interest the court shall consider, but is not limited to, the following:
- (a) Whether the parent whose rights are to be reinstated is a fit parent and has remedied his or her deficits as provided in the record of the prior termination proceedings and prior termination order;
- (b) The age and maturity of the child, and the ability of the child to express his or her preference;
- (c) Whether the reinstatement of parental rights will present a risk to the child's health, welfare, or safety; and
- 35 (d) Other material changes in circumstances, if any, that may have occurred which warrant the granting of the petition.
- 37 (7) In determining whether the child has or has not achieved his or 38 her permanency plan or whether the child is likely to achieve his or

her permanency plan, the department shall provide the court, and the court shall review, information related to any efforts to achieve the permanency plan including efforts to achieve adoption or a permanent quardianship.

- (8)(a) If the court conditionally grants the petition under subsection (6) of this section, the case will be continued for six months and a temporary order of reinstatement entered. During this period, the child shall be placed in the custody of the parent. The department shall develop a permanency plan for the child reflecting the plan to be reunification and shall provide transition services to the family as appropriate.
- (b) If the child must be removed from the parent due to abuse or neglect allegations prior to the expiration of the conditional sixmonth period, the court shall dismiss the petition for reinstatement of parental rights if the court finds the allegations have been proven by a preponderance of the evidence.
- (c) If the child has been successfully placed with the parent for six months, the court order reinstating parental rights remains in effect and the court shall dismiss the dependency.
- (9) After the child has been placed with the parent for six months, the court shall hold a hearing. If the placement with the parent has been successful, the court shall enter a final order of reinstatement of parental rights, which shall restore all rights, powers, privileges, immunities, duties, and obligations of the parent as to the child, including those relating to custody, control, and support of the child. The court shall dismiss the dependency and direct the clerk's office to provide a certified copy of the final order of reinstatement of parental rights to the parent at no cost.
- (10) The granting of the petition under this section does not vacate or otherwise affect the validity of the original termination order.
- $((\frac{10}{10}))$ (11) Any parent whose rights are reinstated under this section shall not be liable for any child support owed to the department pursuant to RCW 13.34.160 or Title 26 RCW for the time period from the date of termination of parental rights to the date parental rights are reinstated.
- $((\frac{11}{11}))$ <u>(12)</u> A proceeding to reinstate parental rights is a separate action from the termination of parental rights proceeding and

p. 3 SB 6792

does not vacate the original termination of parental rights. An order granted under this section reinstates the parental rights to the child. This reinstatement is a recognition that the situation of the parent and child have changed since the time of the termination of parental rights and reunification is now appropriate.

- $((\frac{12}{12}))$ (13) This section is retroactive and applies to any child who is under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court at the time of the hearing regardless of the date parental rights were terminated.
- 9 (14) The state, the department, and its employees are not liable
 10 for civil damages resulting from any act or omission in the provision
 11 of services under this section, unless the act or omission constitutes
 12 gross negligence. This section does not create any duty and shall not
 13 be construed to create a duty where none exists. This section does not
 14 create a cause of action against the state, the department, or its
 15 employees concerning the original termination.
- **Sec. 2.** RCW 13.34.065 and 2007 c 413 s 5 are each amended to read 17 as follows:
 - (1)(a) When a child is taken into custody, the court shall hold a shelter care hearing within seventy-two hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The primary purpose of the shelter care hearing is to determine whether the child can be immediately and safely returned home while the adjudication of the dependency is pending.
 - (b) Any parent, guardian, or legal custodian who for good cause is unable to attend the shelter care hearing may request that a subsequent shelter care hearing be scheduled. The request shall be made to the clerk of the court where the petition is filed prior to the initial shelter care hearing. Upon the request of the parent, the court shall schedule the hearing within seventy-two hours of the request, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The clerk shall notify all other parties of the hearing by any reasonable means.
 - (2)(a) The department of social and health services shall submit a recommendation to the court as to the further need for shelter care in all cases in which it is the petitioner. In all other cases, the recommendation shall be submitted by the juvenile court probation counselor.
- 36 (b) All parties have the right to present testimony to the court 37 regarding the need or lack of need for shelter care.

(c) Hearsay evidence before the court regarding the need or lack of need for shelter care must be supported by sworn testimony, affidavit, or declaration of the person offering such evidence.

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- (3)(a) At the commencement of the hearing, the court shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of the following:
- (i) The parent, guardian, or custodian has the right to a shelter care hearing;
- (ii) The nature of the shelter care hearing, the rights of the parents, and the proceedings that will follow; and
- (iii) If the parent, guardian, or custodian is not represented by counsel, the right to be represented. If the parent, guardian, or custodian is indigent, the court shall appoint counsel as provided in RCW 13.34.090; and
- (b) If a parent, guardian, or legal custodian desires to waive the shelter care hearing, the court shall determine, on the record and with the parties present, whether such waiver is knowing and voluntary. A parent may not waive his or her right to the shelter care hearing unless he or she appears in court and the court determines that the waiver is knowing and voluntary. Regardless of whether the court accepts the parental waiver of the shelter care hearing, the court must provide notice to the parents of their rights required under (a) of this subsection and make the finding required under subsection (4) of this section.
- (4) At the shelter care hearing the court shall examine the need for shelter care and inquire into the status of the case. The paramount consideration for the court shall be the health, welfare, and safety of the child. At a minimum, the court shall inquire into the following:
- (a) Whether the notice required under RCW 13.34.062 was given to all known parents, guardians, or legal custodians of the child. The court shall make an express finding as to whether the notice required under RCW 13.34.062 was given to the parent, guardian, or legal custodian. If actual notice was not given to the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and the whereabouts of such person is known or can be ascertained, the court shall order the supervising agency or the department of social and health services to make reasonable efforts to advise the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the status of the

p. 5 SB 6792

case, including the date and time of any subsequent hearings, and their rights under RCW 13.34.090;

- (b) Whether the child can be safely returned home while the adjudication of the dependency is pending;
 - (c) What efforts have been made to place the child with a relative;
- (d) What services were provided to the family to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the child's home;
- (e) Is the placement proposed by the agency the least disruptive and most family-like setting that meets the needs of the child;
- (f) Whether it is in the best interest of the child to remain enrolled in the school, developmental program, or child care the child was in prior to placement and what efforts have been made to maintain the child in the school, program, or child care if it would be in the best interest of the child to remain in the same school, program, or child care;
 - (g) Appointment of a guardian ad litem or attorney;
- (h) Whether the child is or may be an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903, whether the provisions of the Indian child welfare act apply, and whether there is compliance with the Indian child welfare act, including notice to the child's tribe;
- (i) Whether, as provided in RCW 26.44.063, restraining orders, or orders expelling an allegedly abusive ((parent)) household member from the home of a nonabusive parent, guardian, or legal custodian, will allow the child to safely remain in the home;
- (j) Whether any orders for examinations, evaluations, or immediate services are needed. ((However,)) The court may not order a parent to undergo examinations, evaluation, or services at the shelter care hearing unless the parent agrees to the examination, evaluation, or service, except that if the court determines there is reasonable cause to believe the abuse of alcohol or controlled substances is a contributing factor to the alleged abuse or neglect or inability to properly provide care for the child, the court may order the parent to participate in a comprehensive chemical dependency evaluation as arranged by the department;
- 35 (k) The terms and conditions for parental, sibling, and family 36 visitation.
 - (5)(a) The court shall release a child alleged to be dependent to

the care, custody, and control of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian unless the court finds there is reasonable cause to believe that:

- (i) After consideration of the specific services that have been provided, reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the child's home and to make it possible for the child to return home; and
- (ii)(A) The child has no parent, guardian, or legal custodian to provide supervision and care for such child; or
- (B) The release of such child would present a serious threat of substantial harm to such child, notwithstanding an order entered pursuant to RCW 26.44.063; or
- (C) The parent, guardian, or custodian to whom the child could be released has been charged with violating RCW 9A.40.060 or 9A.40.070.
- (b) If the court does not release the child to his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, and the child was initially placed with a relative pursuant to RCW 13.34.060(1), the court shall order continued placement with a relative, unless there is reasonable cause to believe the health, safety, or welfare of the child would be jeopardized or that the efforts to reunite the parent and child will be hindered. The relative must be willing and available to:
- (i) Care for the child and be able to meet any special needs of the child;
 - (ii) Facilitate the child's visitation with siblings, if such visitation is part of the supervising agency's plan or is ordered by the court; and
 - (iii) Cooperate with the department in providing necessary background checks and home studies.
 - (c) If the child was not initially placed with a relative, and the court does not release the child to his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, the supervising agency shall make reasonable efforts to locate a relative pursuant to RCW 13.34.060(1).
 - (d) If a relative is not available, the court shall order continued shelter care or order placement with another suitable person, and the court shall set forth its reasons for the order. If the court orders placement of the child with a person not related to the child and not licensed to provide foster care, the placement is subject to all terms and conditions of this section that apply to relative placements.

p. 7 SB 6792

(e) Any placement with a relative, or other person approved by the court pursuant to this section, shall be contingent upon cooperation with the agency case plan and compliance with court orders related to the care and supervision of the child including, but not limited to, court orders regarding parent-child contacts, sibling contacts, and any other conditions imposed by the court. Noncompliance with the case plan or court order is grounds for removal of the child from the home of the relative or other person, subject to review by the court.

- (f) Uncertainty by a parent, quardian, legal custodian, relative, or other suitable person that the alleged abuser has in fact abused the child shall not, alone, be the basis upon which a child is removed from the care of a parent, guardian, or legal custodian under (a) of this subsection, nor shall it be a basis, alone, to preclude placement with a relative under (b) of this subsection or with another suitable person under (d) of this subsection.
- (6)(a) A shelter care order issued pursuant to this section shall include the requirement for a case conference as provided in RCW 13.34.067. However, if the parent is not present at the shelter care hearing, or does not agree to the case conference, the court shall not include the requirement for the case conference in the shelter care order.
- (b) If the court orders a case conference, the shelter care order shall include notice to all parties and establish the date, time, and location of the case conference which shall be no later than thirty days before the fact-finding hearing.
- (c) The court may order another conference, case staffing, or hearing as an alternative to the case conference required under RCW 13.34.067 so long as the conference, case staffing, or hearing ordered by the court meets all requirements under RCW 13.34.067, including the requirement of a written agreement specifying the services to be provided to the parent.
- (7)(a) A shelter care order issued pursuant to this section may be amended at any time with notice and hearing thereon. The shelter care decision of placement shall be modified only upon a showing of change in circumstances. No child may be placed in shelter care for longer than thirty days without an order, signed by the judge, authorizing continued shelter care.

- (b)(i) An order releasing the child on any conditions specified in this section may at any time be amended, with notice and hearing thereon, so as to return the child to shelter care for failure of the parties to conform to the conditions originally imposed.
 - (ii) The court shall consider whether nonconformance with any conditions resulted from circumstances beyond the control of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and give weight to that fact before ordering return of the child to shelter care.
- 9 (8)(a) If a child is returned home from shelter care a second time 10 in the case, or if the supervisor of the caseworker deems it necessary, 11 the multidisciplinary team may be reconvened.
- 12 (b) If a child is returned home from shelter care a second time in 13 the case a law enforcement officer must be present and file a report to 14 the department.
- 15 **Sec. 3.** RCW 13.34.136 and 2007 c 413 s 7 are each amended to read 16 as follows:
 - (1) Whenever a child is ordered removed from the home, a permanency plan shall be developed no later than sixty days from the time the supervising agency assumes responsibility for providing services, including placing the child, or at the time of a hearing under RCW 13.34.130, whichever occurs first. The permanency planning process continues until a permanency planning goal is achieved or dependency is dismissed. The planning process shall include reasonable efforts to return the child to the parent's home.
 - (2) The agency supervising the dependency shall submit a written permanency plan to all parties and the court not less than fourteen days prior to the scheduled hearing. Responsive reports of parties not in agreement with the supervising agency's proposed permanency plan must be provided to the supervising agency, all other parties, and the court at least seven days prior to the hearing.

The permanency plan shall include:

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(a) A permanency plan of care that shall identify one of the following outcomes as a primary goal and may identify additional outcomes as alternative goals: Return of the child to the home of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian; adoption; guardianship; permanent legal custody; long-term relative or foster care, until the child is age eighteen, with a written agreement between the parties and

p. 9 SB 6792

the care provider; successful completion of a responsible living skills program; or independent living, if appropriate and if the child is age sixteen or older. The department shall not discharge a child to an independent living situation before the child is eighteen years of age unless the child becomes emancipated pursuant to chapter 13.64 RCW;

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- (b) Unless the court has ordered, pursuant to RCW 13.34.130((4+))) (5), that a termination petition be filed, a specific plan as to where the child will be placed, what steps will be taken to return the child home, what steps the agency will take to promote existing appropriate sibling relationships and/or facilitate placement together or contact in accordance with the best interests of each child, and what actions the agency will take to maintain parent-child ties. All aspects of the plan shall include the goal of achieving permanence for the child.
- (i) The agency plan shall specify what services the parents will be offered to enable them to resume custody, what requirements the parents must meet to resume custody, and a time limit for each service plan and parental requirement.
- (ii) Visitation is the right of the family, including the child and the parent, in cases in which visitation is in the best interest of the Early, consistent, and frequent visitation is crucial for child. maintaining parent-child relationships and making it possible for parents and children to safely reunify. The agency shall encourage the maximum parent and child and sibling contact possible, when it is in the best interest of the child, including regular visitation and participation by the parents in the care of the child while the child is in placement. Visitation shall not be limited as a sanction for a parent's failure to comply with court orders or services where the health, safety, or welfare of the child is not at risk as a result of the visitation. Visitation may be limited or denied only if the court determines that such limitation or denial is necessary to protect the child's health, safety, or welfare. The court and the agency should rely upon community resources, relatives, foster parents, and other appropriate persons to provide transportation and supervision for visitation to the extent that such resources are available, and appropriate, and the child's safety would not be compromised.
- (iii) A child shall be placed as close to the child's home as possible, preferably in the child's own neighborhood, unless the court

finds that placement at a greater distance is necessary to promote the child's or parents' well-being.

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- (iv) The plan shall state whether both in-state and, where appropriate, out-of-state placement options have been considered by the department.
- (v) Unless it is not in the best interests of the child, whenever practical, the plan should ensure the child remains enrolled in the school the child was attending at the time the child entered foster care.
- (vi) The agency charged with supervising a child in placement shall provide all reasonable services that are available within the agency, or within the community, or those services which the department has existing contracts to purchase. It shall report to the court if it is unable to provide such services; and
- (c) If the court has ordered, pursuant to RCW 13.34.130((44)) (5), that a termination petition be filed, a specific plan as to where the child will be placed, what steps will be taken to achieve permanency for the child, services to be offered or provided to the child, and, if visitation would be in the best interests of the child, a recommendation to the court regarding visitation between parent and child pending a fact-finding hearing on the termination petition. The agency shall not be required to develop a plan of services for the parents or provide services to the parents if the court orders a termination petition be filed. However, reasonable efforts to ensure visitation and contact between siblings shall be made unless there is reasonable cause to believe the best interests of the child or siblings would be jeopardized.
- (3) Permanency planning goals should be achieved at the earliest possible date, preferably before the child has been in out-of-home care for fifteen months. In cases where parental rights have been terminated, the child is legally free for adoption, and adoption has been identified as the primary permanency planning goal, it shall be a goal to complete the adoption within six months following entry of the termination order.
- (4) If the court determines that the continuation of reasonable efforts to prevent or eliminate the need to remove the child from his or her home or to safely return the child home should not be part of

p. 11 SB 6792

- the permanency plan of care for the child, reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely manner and to complete whatever steps are necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.
 - (5) The identified outcomes and goals of the permanency plan may change over time based upon the circumstances of the particular case.
- 6 (6) The court shall consider the child's relationships with the 7 child's siblings in accordance with RCW 13.34.130(3).
 - (7) For purposes related to permanency planning:

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- 9 (a) "Guardianship" means a dependency guardianship or a legal 10 guardianship pursuant to chapter 11.88 RCW or equivalent laws of 11 another state or a federally recognized Indian tribe.
- 12 (b) "Permanent custody order" means a custody order entered 13 pursuant to chapter 26.10 RCW.
- 14 (c) "Permanent legal custody" means legal custody pursuant to 15 chapter 26.10 RCW or equivalent laws of another state or a federally 16 recognized Indian tribe.
- 17 **Sec. 4.** RCW 26.44.063 and 2000 c 119 s 12 are each amended to read 18 as follows:
 - (1) It is the intent of the legislature to minimize trauma to a child involved in an allegation of sexual or physical abuse. The legislature declares that removing the child from the home or the care of a parent, guardian, or legal custodian often has the effect of further traumatizing the child. It is, therefore, the legislature's intent that the alleged ((offender)) abuser, rather than the child, shall be removed or restrained from the ((home)) child's residence and that this should be done at the earliest possible point of intervention in accordance with RCW 10.31.100, ((13.34.130)) chapter 13.34 RCW, this section, and RCW 26.44.130.
 - (2) In any judicial proceeding in which it is alleged that a child has been subjected to sexual or physical abuse, if the court finds reasonable grounds to believe that an incident of sexual or physical abuse has occurred, the court may, on its own motion, or the motion of the guardian ad litem or other parties, issue a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction restraining or enjoining the person accused of committing the abuse from:
 - (a) Molesting or disturbing the peace of the alleged victim;

(b) Entering the family home of the alleged victim except as specifically authorized by the court;

- (c) Having any contact with the alleged victim, except as specifically authorized by the court;
- (d) Knowingly coming within, or knowingly remaining within, a specified distance of a specified location.
- (3) If the caretaker is willing, and does comply with the restraining order entered pursuant to this section, uncertainty that the alleged abuser has in fact abused the alleged victim shall not, alone, be a basis to remove the alleged victim from the caretaker, nor shall it be considered neglect.
- (4) In issuing a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction, the court may impose any additional restrictions that the court in its discretion determines are necessary to protect the child from further abuse or emotional trauma pending final resolution of the abuse allegations.
- ((4))) (5) The court shall issue a temporary restraining order prohibiting a person from entering the family home if the court finds that the order would eliminate the need for an out-of-home placement to protect the child's right to nurturance, health, and safety and is sufficient to protect the child from further sexual or physical abuse or coercion.
- (((5))) (6) The court may issue a temporary restraining order without requiring notice to the party to be restrained or other parties only if it finds on the basis of the moving affidavit or other evidence that irreparable injury could result if an order is not issued until the time for responding has elapsed.
- $((\frac{(6)}{(6)}))$ <u>(7)</u> A temporary restraining order or preliminary 29 injunction:
 - (a) Does not prejudice the rights of a party or any child which are to be adjudicated at subsequent hearings in the proceeding; and
 - (b) May be revoked or modified.
 - ((+7)) (8) The person having physical custody of the child shall have an affirmative duty to assist in the enforcement of the restraining order including but not limited to a duty to notify the court as soon as practicable of any violation of the order, a duty to request the assistance of law enforcement officers to enforce the order, and a duty to notify the department of social and health

p. 13 SB 6792

services of any violation of the order as soon as practicable if the department is a party to the action. Failure by the custodial party to discharge these affirmative duties shall be subject to contempt proceedings.

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((+8)) (9) Willful violation of a court order entered under this section is a misdemeanor. A written order shall contain the court's directive and shall bear the legend: "Violation of this order with actual notice of its terms is a criminal offense under chapter 26.44 RCW, is also subject to contempt proceedings, and will subject a violator to arrest."

((+9))) (10) If a restraining order issued under this section is modified or terminated, the clerk of the court shall notify the law enforcement agency specified in the order on or before the next judicial day. Upon receipt of notice that an order has been terminated, the law enforcement agency shall remove the order from any computer-based criminal intelligence system.

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