

HB 1912-S - DIGEST

(DIGEST OF PROPOSED 1ST SUBSTITUTE)

Recognizes that the 2005 Washington state court improvement project re-assessment found that Washington statutes fail to consistently address the health and safety of children in care. Statutory language does not stress the safety and welfare of the child as the paramount concerns. Additionally, the lack of clarity in the statutes undermines the effectiveness of the hearings and, ultimately, the safety and welfare of the child. The legislature intends to clarify the purpose of the court hearings and the roles and responsibilities of the parties.

Finds that an investment of time into quality court hearings results in better decisions for children and their families and preserves the resources of the court and the child welfare system. The legislature intends to clearly state that court hearings should always strive to be independent, thorough, and timely inquiries into the status of the case to ensure the department of social and health services is responding to the needs of the family and child in a prompt manner and that the case is progressing appropriately.

Encourages the courts to develop clearer, stronger oversight and leadership roles within the courts to achieve safe, timely permanency for children. The court is encouraged to engage all parties to question whether the case is progressing and, if not, to assist in problem-solving to ensure progress is made towards permanency for the child.