
**Early Learning & Children's Services
Committee**

HB 1782

Brief Description: Concerning parent participation in dependency matters.

Sponsors: Representatives Goodman, Roberts, Walsh, Dickerson, Darneille, Kagi and Nelson.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires additional language be included in the standard notice to parents in dependency cases regarding their rights and shelter care hearings.
- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services to send an additional notice to parents in dependency cases whenever a parent has failed to have contact with a child in out-of-home care for a period of six months.

Hearing Date: 2/10/09

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120)

Background:

When a shelter care hearing is scheduled in a dependency matter, a standard notice must be provided to the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian. The notice must be understandable and take into consideration the parent's, guardian's, or custodian's primary language, level of education, and cultural issues. The shelter care notice must include specific information about:

- the date, time, and location of the hearing;
- legal rights, including the right to legal representation; and
- order the court may enter relating to the child if the child is placed in out-of-home care.

Summary of Bill:

The requirements for the shelter care notice to parents are expanded to include notice:

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- that a permanency plan of care for the child will be developed and include a primary plan and a secondary plan;
- that the parent must notify the Department of Social and Health Services, attend court hearings, and complete court services in order to be a placement option for the child;
- that shelter care hearings, fact-finding hearings, and dependency review hearings are legal processes with potentially serious consequences; and
- that failure to respond, participate, or comply with court orders may lead to the loss of parental rights.

An additional notice is required to be sent to parents in dependencies whenever a parent has failed to have contact with a child in out-of-home care for a period of six months. The standards for the additional notice are substantially similar to the shelter care notice, but do not include notice of the shelter care hearing held previously. The notice informs parents that case records indicate the parent has not had any contact for six months with their child who is in out-of-home care; instructs the parent about how to participate in services, visitation, and the child's case plan; and warns that continued failure to maintain contact or engage in services may lead to the filing of a petition to terminate parental rights.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.