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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5888**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Human Services, Mental Health & Housing (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban and Miloscia)

AN ACT Relating to near fatality incidents of children who have received services from the department of social and health services; amending RCW 74.13.640; adding a new section to chapter 26.44 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 74.13.640 and 2013 c 23 s 209 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) The department shall conduct a child fatality review in the event of a fatality suspected to be caused by child abuse or neglect of any minor who is in the care of the department or a supervising agency or receiving services described in this chapter or who has been in the care of the department or a supervising agency or received services described in this chapter within one year preceding the minor's death.

(b) The department shall consult with the office of the family and children's ombuds to determine if a child fatality review should be conducted in any case in which it cannot be determined whether the child's death is the result of suspected child abuse or neglect.

(c) The department shall ensure that the fatality review team is made up of individuals who had no previous involvement in the case, including individuals whose professional expertise is pertinent to the dynamics of the case.

(d) Upon conclusion of a child fatality review required pursuant to this section, the department shall within one hundred eighty days following the fatality issue a report on the results of the review, unless an extension has been granted by the governor. Reports must be distributed to the appropriate committees of the legislature, and the department shall create a public web site where all child fatality review reports required under this section must be posted and maintained. A child fatality review report completed pursuant to this section is subject to public disclosure and must be posted on the public web site, except that confidential information may be redacted by the department consistent with the requirements of RCW 13.50.100, 68.50.105, 74.13.500 through 74.13.525, chapter 42.56 RCW, and other applicable state and federal laws.

(e) The department shall develop and implement procedures to carry out the requirements of this section.

(2)(a) In the event of a near fatality of a child who is in the care of or receiving services described in this chapter from the department or a supervising agency or who has been in the care of or received services described in this chapter from the department or a supervising agency within one year preceding the near fatality, the department shall promptly notify the office of the family and children's ombuds. The department may conduct a review of the near fatality at its discretion or at the request of the office of the family and children's ombuds.

(b) In the event of a near fatality of a child who is in the care of or receiving services described in this chapter from the department or a supervising agency or who has been in the care of or received services described in this chapter from the department or a supervising agency within three months preceding the near fatality, or was the subject of an investigation by the department for possible abuse or neglect, the department shall promptly notify the office of the family and children's ombuds and the department shall conduct a review of the near fatality.

(c) "Near fatality" means an act that, as certified by a physician, places the child in serious or critical condition.

(3) In any review of a child fatality or near fatality in which the child was placed with or received services from a supervising agency pursuant to a contract with the department, the department and the fatality review team shall have access to all records and files regarding the child or otherwise relevant to the review that have been produced or retained by the supervising agency.

(4)(a) A child fatality or near fatality review completed pursuant to this section is subject to discovery in a civil or administrative proceeding, but may not be admitted into evidence or otherwise used in a civil or administrative proceeding except pursuant to this section.

(b) A department employee responsible for conducting a child fatality or near fatality review, or member of a child fatality or near fatality review team, may not be examined in a civil or administrative proceeding regarding (i) the work of the child fatality or near fatality review team, (ii) the incident under review, (iii) his or her statements, deliberations, thoughts, analyses, or impressions relating to the work of the child fatality or near fatality review team or the incident under review, or (iv) the statements, deliberations, thoughts, analyses, or impressions of any other member of the child fatality or near fatality review team, or any person who provided information to the child fatality or near fatality review team, relating to the work of the child fatality or near fatality review team or the incident under review.

(c) Documents prepared by or for a child fatality or near fatality review team are inadmissible and may not be used in a civil or administrative proceeding, except that any document that exists before its use or consideration in a child fatality or near fatality review, or that is created independently of such review, does not become inadmissible merely because it is reviewed or used by a child fatality or near fatality review team. A person is not unavailable as a witness merely because the person has been interviewed by or has provided a statement for a child fatality or near fatality review, but if called as a witness, a person may not be examined regarding the person's interactions with the child fatality or near fatality review including, without limitation, whether the person was interviewed during such review, the questions that were asked during such review, and the answers that the person provided during such review. This section may not be construed as restricting the person from testifying fully in any proceeding regarding his or her knowledge of the incident under review.

(d) The restrictions set forth in this section do not apply in a licensing or disciplinary proceeding arising from an agency's effort to revoke or suspend the license of any licensed professional based in whole or in part upon allegations of wrongdoing in connection with a minor's death or near fatality reviewed by a child fatality or near fatality review team.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 26.44 RCW to read as follows:

(1) When a social worker or other employee of the department responds to an allegation of child abuse or neglect and there is a subsequent allegation of abuse or neglect resulting in a near fatality within one year of the initial allegation that is screened in and open for investigation, the department is to immediately conduct a review of the social worker's and social worker's supervisor's files and actions taken during the initial report of alleged child abuse or neglect. The purpose of the review is to determine if there were any errors by the employees under department policy, rule, or state statute. If any violations of policy, rule, or statute are found, the department is to conduct a formal employee investigation.

(2) "Near fatality" has the same meaning as in RCW 74.13.640.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act may be known and cited as Aiden's act.

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