

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESSB 6702

---

---

C 52 L 02  
Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Protecting sibling relationships.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Long, Costa, Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Carlson, Hewitt, Kastama, Johnson, Shin, Swecker, Hale, Rossi, Oke, Zarelli, McCaslin, Horn, Thibaudeau, West, Deccio, Rasmussen, Parlette, Sheahan, Benton, McDonald, Roach, T. Sheldon, Hochstatter, Honeyford, Morton, Finkbeiner and Winsley).

**Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections**  
**House Committee on Children & Family Services**

**Background:** Although the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to consider children's and families' multiple needs when assessing dependency cases, there is no requirement that DSHS or the courts take into consideration the need for siblings to maintain contact when a child is placed out of the home.

**Summary:** It is the Legislature's intent to presume that nurturing sibling relationships is in the best interests of the child. DSHS must ensure that siblings are provided the opportunity to maintain their relationship through visits, as appropriate. DSHS must take into consideration the need to maintain regular sibling contact when conducting a social study for purposes of out of home care. The courts must consider ordering appropriate visitation between siblings who are separated as a result of a dependency determination within certain conditions.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	46	1
House	97	0

**Effective:** June 13, 2002