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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1728**

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**State of Washington**

**64th Legislature**

**2015 Regular Session**

**By** House Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Ormsby, Walsh, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Kagi, S. Hunt, Farrell, Dent, Zeiger, and Gregerson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/12/15.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the parents for parents program;  
2 adding new sections to chapter 13.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** Early outreach and education helps shift  
5 the attitudes of parents involved in the dependency court system from  
6 anger and resentment to acknowledgment and acceptance, enhances  
7 parents' engagement in court-ordered plans in the dependency system,  
8 and increases the likelihood of family reunification. The parents for  
9 parents program has been shown to increase the number of family  
10 reunifications, where appropriate, while decreasing the length of  
11 time needed to establish permanence. The program currently exists in  
12 nine counties: Grays Harbor/Pacific, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish,  
13 Spokane, and Thurston/Mason. It is the legislature's goal to continue  
14 to support the program in these counties, standardize the parents for  
15 parents curriculum among counties in which it is currently utilized,  
16 and replicate the program statewide by the end of the 2019-2021  
17 biennium.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 13.04  
19 RCW to read as follows:

1 For the purposes of sections 3 through 6 of this act, "child  
2 welfare parent mentor" means a parent who has successfully resolved  
3 the issues that led the parent's child into the care of the juvenile  
4 dependency court system, resulting in family reunification or another  
5 permanency outcome, and who has an interest in working  
6 collaboratively to improve the lives of children and families.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 13.04  
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) The goal of the parents for parents program is to increase  
10 the permanency and well-being of children in foster care through peer  
11 mentoring that increases parental engagement and contributes to  
12 family reunification.

13 (2) The parents for parents program may provide structured peer  
14 mentoring for families entering the dependency court system,  
15 administered by child welfare parent mentors.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 13.04  
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 Subject to the availability of funds, components of the parents  
19 for parents program, provided by child welfare parent mentors, may  
20 include:

21 (1) Outreach and support to parents at dependency-related  
22 hearings, beginning with the shelter care hearing;

23 (2) A class that educates parents about the dependency system  
24 they must navigate in order to have their children returned, empowers  
25 them with tools and resources they need to be successful with their  
26 case plan, and provides information that helps them understand and  
27 support the needs of their children;

28 (3) Ongoing individual peer support to help parents involved with  
29 the child welfare system;

30 (4) Structured, curriculum-based peer support groups.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 13.04  
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) Subject to the availability of funds, the parents for parents  
34 program shall be funded through the office of public defense and  
35 centrally administered through a pass-through to a Washington state  
36 nonprofit-lead organization that has extensive experience supporting  
37 child welfare parent mentors.

1 (2) Through the contract with the lead organization, each local  
2 program must be locally administered by the county superior court or  
3 a nonprofit organization that shall serve as the host organization.

4 (3) Local stakeholders representing key child welfare systems  
5 shall serve as parents for parents program advisors. Examples of  
6 local stakeholders include the children's administration, the  
7 superior court, attorneys for the parents, assistant attorneys  
8 general, and court-appointed special advocates or guardians ad litem.

9 (4) A child welfare parent mentor lead shall provide program  
10 coordination and maintain local program information.

11 (5) The lead organization shall provide ongoing training to the  
12 host organizations, statewide program oversight and coordination, and  
13 maintain statewide program information.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 13.04  
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 (1) Subject to the availability of funds, a research entity with  
17 experience in child welfare research shall conduct an evaluation of  
18 the parents for parents program. The evaluation design must meet the  
19 standards necessary to determine whether parents for parents can be  
20 considered a research-based program.

21 (2) A preliminary report to the legislature must be provided by  
22 December 1, 2016. At a minimum, the preliminary report must include  
23 statistics showing rates of attendance at court hearings and  
24 compliance with court-ordered services and visitation. The report  
25 must also address whether participation in the program affected  
26 participants' overall understanding of the dependency court process.

27 (3) A subsequent report must be delivered to the legislature by  
28 December 1, 2019. In addition to the information required under  
29 subsection (2) of this section, this report must include statistics  
30 demonstrating the effect of the program on reunification rates and  
31 lengths of time families were engaged in the dependency court system  
32 before achieving permanency.

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