AN ACT Relating to elder justice centers; adding a new section to chapter 74.34 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that the number of Washingtonians age sixty-five and older is projected to exceed one and one-half million by 2030. The number of residents age eighty-five and older is increasing at an even faster rate, and is expected to more than double over the next two decades. The legislature also finds that the number of seniors who are abused, exploited, or neglected every year is on the rise, with some research indicating that one in ten seniors has suffered some form of abuse or neglect at least once. The legislature finds that the number of reports to adult protective services in Washington has increased twenty-five percent since 2008, and the number of cases investigated has increased thirty percent, with twenty-one thousand cases forwarded for investigation in 2013. Complex and time-intensive financial exploitation cases now represent nearly one-third of all investigations. The legislature further finds that national researchers believe the majority of cases go unreported out of embarrassment, confusion about what happened, or fear of being cut off from family or loved ones. The legislature also finds that recognition of and mechanisms for dealing with elder abuse
and exploitation lag many years behind the strides that have been made in child abuse awareness and protection. The legislature therefore intends to advance the elder justice center multidisciplinary model to demonstrate that it is an effective and efficient means of coordinating state and local resources in order to increase community capacity to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of Washington's growing population of elders and vulnerable adults.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 74.34 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department shall coordinate the implementation of an elder justice demonstration program which must include establishing an elder justice center in Spokane county and expanding the elder justice center located in Clark county. The department and the counties shall enter into memoranda of understanding or working agreements necessary for the demonstration program. The memoranda and agreements must support a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to creating local partnerships, pooling of state and local resources, and establishing local protocols to achieve shared goals aimed at the prevention and investigation of vulnerable adult abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. The department shall provide technical assistance to the counties by assisting in the drafting of working agreements and memoranda and the development of protocols necessary for operation of the elder justice centers.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "elder justice center" means a senior-focused program that coordinates a locally tailored, collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment of abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. To the greatest extent feasible, the memoranda of understanding under this section should assure coordinated access to services including, but not limited to, advocacy and case review by multidisciplinary teams that include, but are not limited to, adult protective services, law enforcement officers, a prosecuting attorney, a victim advocate, representation from a local guardianship program, if available, and a program coordinator. Multidisciplinary teams also may include additional community-based agencies and systems that are involved with the prevention and response to elder abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.
The department shall submit, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the following reports to the governor and the legislature:

(a) By January 10, 2017, a brief progress report describing the status of implementation at both elder justice centers;

(b) By January 10, 2018, an interim report outlining the structure and operation of both elder justice centers; and

(c) By December 1, 2019, a final report discussing the effectiveness of the elder justice center model in increasing community capacity to prevent and respond to abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. The final report also must contain recommendations for modifying or expanding additional demonstration programs.