

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5718

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Establishing the child welfare housing assistance program that provides housing assistance to parents reunifying with a child and parents at risk of having a child removed.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Hasegawa, Nguyen, O'Ban, Das, Keiser, Kuderer and Zeiger).

**Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Human Services & Early Learning**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Child Welfare. If an individual suspects a child has been abused or neglected, it can be reported to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Protective Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. There are many individuals who are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect. CPS will determine whether the report of child abuse or neglect is credible and whether the report meets the sufficiency screening criteria. If the report meets the screening criteria, CPS will assign either a 24-hour response that includes an investigation, or a family assessment response for low to moderate risk allegations requiring a 72-hour response.

Dependency. DCYF, or anyone else, can file a court petition alleging the child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because no parent, guardian, or custodian is capable of adequately caring for the child. A court will hold a shelter care hearing following removal of a child from the home within seventy-two hours. At this hearing, the court will determine if the child can return home safely. After the initial shelter care hearing, if the child is not returned home, there are six-month dependency review hearings to determine the progress of the parties and decide whether the child is able to return home or if court supervision should continue. If a child is not returned home, the court must establish a number of factors. This includes whether a parent's homelessness or lack of suitable housing is a significant factor delaying permanency for the child by preventing them from returning to their parent's home or whether housing assistance should be provided by DCYF.

**Summary:** Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program. Beginning July 1, 2020, DCYF is required to establish a Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program (CWHAPP) to provide housing vouchers, rental assistance, navigation, and other support

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services to eligible families. The purpose of the program is to shorten the time children remain in out-of-home care. DCYF is to contract with outside entities to operate CWHAPP. However, if no outside entities are available to operate the program, DCYF may do so. This program is limited to two pilots, one county in Eastern Washington and one county in Western Washington. The CHWAPP is subject to the availability of funds appropriated for this purpose and expires on June 30, 2022.

Eligibility. A parent with a child who is dependent, whose primary remaining barrier to reunification is the lack of appropriate housing, is eligible for CWHAPP.

Families may be referred to CWHAPP by a caseworker, an attorney, a guardian ad litem, a child welfare parent mentor, an Office of Public Defense social worker, or the court.

Stakeholder Group. DCYF is to consult with a stakeholder group including, but not limited to:

- parent allies;
- parent attorneys and social workers managed by the Office of Public Defense parent representation program;
- the Department of Commerce;
- housing experts;
- community-based organizations;
- advocates; and
- behavioral health providers.

The stakeholder group meets to assist DCYF in the design of the CWHAPP in areas, including:

- equitable racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution of program support;
- eligibility criteria;
- creating a definition of homeless for purposes of eligibility for the program; and
- options for program design that include outside entities operating the entire program or specific parts of the program.

By December 1, 2021, DCYF shall report outcomes of CWHAPP to the DCYF Oversight Board and the report must include racial, geographic, ethnic, and gender distribution of program support.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0	
House	92	5	(House amended)
Senate	47	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 28, 2019