SSB 5811 - S AMD **91**

By Senators Hargrove, Regala, Stevens

ADOPTED 03/09/2009

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the 2 following:

3 "Sec. 1. RCW 13.34.030 and 2003 c 227 s 2 are each amended to read 4 as follows:

For purposes of this chapter:

- (1) "Abandoned" means when the child's parent, guardian, or other custodian has expressed, either by statement or conduct, an intent to forego, for an extended period, parental rights or responsibilities despite an ability to exercise such rights and responsibilities. If the court finds that the petitioner has exercised due diligence in attempting to locate the parent, no contact between the child and the child's parent, guardian, or other custodian for a period of three months creates a rebuttable presumption of abandonment, even if there is no expressed intent to abandon.
- (2) "Child" and "juvenile" means any individual under the age of eighteen years.
- (3) "Current placement episode" means the period of time that begins with the most recent date that the child was removed from the home of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian for purposes of placement in out-of-home care and continues until: (a) The child returns home; (b) an adoption decree, a permanent custody order, or guardianship order is entered; or (c) the dependency is dismissed, whichever occurs first.
- (4) "Dependency guardian" means the person, nonprofit corporation, or Indian tribe appointed by the court pursuant to this chapter for the limited purpose of assisting the court in the supervision of the dependency.
 - (5) "Dependent child" means any child who:
- 29 (a) Has been abandoned;

1 (b) Is abused or neglected as defined in chapter 26.44 RCW by a 2 person legally responsible for the care of the child; or

- (c) Has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child, such that the child is in circumstances which constitute a danger of substantial damage to the child's psychological or physical development.
- (6) "Developmental disability" means a disability attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or another neurological or other condition of an individual found by the secretary to be closely related to mental retardation or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with mental retardation, which disability originates before the individual attains age eighteen, which has continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and which constitutes a substantial handicap to the individual.
- (7) "Guardian" means the person or agency that: (a) Has been appointed as the guardian of a child in a legal proceeding other than a proceeding under this chapter; and (b) has the legal right to custody of the child pursuant to such appointment. The term "guardian" shall not include a "dependency guardian" appointed pursuant to a proceeding under this chapter.
- (8) "Guardian ad litem" means a person, appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in a proceeding under this chapter, or in any matter which may be consolidated with a proceeding under this chapter. A "court-appointed special advocate" appointed by the court to be the guardian ad litem for the child, or to perform substantially the same duties and functions as a guardian ad litem, shall be deemed to be guardian ad litem for all purposes and uses of this chapter.
- (9) "Guardian ad litem program" means a court-authorized volunteer program, which is or may be established by the superior court of the county in which such proceeding is filed, to manage all aspects of volunteer guardian ad litem representation for children alleged or found to be dependent. Such management shall include but is not limited to: Recruitment, screening, training, supervision, assignment, and discharge of volunteers.
- (10) "Housing services or assistance" means at least effective referrals to federal, state, local, or private agencies or

organizations, assistance with forms, or financial subsidies or other monetary assistance for housing.

3

4

5

6

7

9

10 11

12

13

14

15

16 17

18

19

2021

22

2324

2526

27

2829

- (11) "Indigent" means a person who, at any stage of a court proceeding, is:
- (a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, general assistance, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, medicaid, or supplemental security income; or
 - (b) Involuntarily committed to a public mental health facility; or
- (c) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of one hundred twenty-five percent or less of the federally established poverty level; or
- (d) Unable to pay the anticipated cost of counsel for the matter before the court because his or her available funds are insufficient to pay any amount for the retention of counsel.
- $((\frac{11}{11}))$ (12) "Out-of-home care" means placement in a foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW or placement in a home, other than that of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, not required to be licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW.
- ((\(\frac{(12)}{12}\))) (13) "Preventive services" means preservation services, as defined in chapter 74.14C RCW, and other reasonably available services, including housing services or assistance, capable of preventing the need for out-of-home placement while protecting the child. ((\(\text{Housing services may include, but are not limited to, referrals to federal, state, local, or private agencies or organizations, assistance with forms and applications, or financial subsidies for housing.
- (13)) (14) "Shelter care" means temporary physical care in a facility licensed pursuant to RCW 74.15.030 or in a home not required to be licensed pursuant to RCW 74.15.030.
- 31 (((14))) <u>(15)</u> "Sibling" means a child's birth brother, birth 32 sister, adoptive brother, adoptive sister, half-brother, or half-33 sister, or as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe 34 for an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903(4).
- $((\frac{(15)}{)})$ $(\underline{16})$ "Social study" means a written evaluation of matters relevant to the disposition of the case and shall contain the following information:

1 (a) A statement of the specific harm or harms to the child that 2 intervention is designed to alleviate;

- (b) A description of the specific services and activities, for both the parents and child, that are needed in order to prevent serious harm to the child; the reasons why such services and activities are likely to be useful; the availability of any proposed services; and the agency's overall plan for ensuring that the services will be delivered. The description shall identify the services chosen and approved by the parent;
- (c) If removal is recommended, a full description of the reasons why the child cannot be protected adequately in the home, including a description of any previous efforts to work with the parents and the child in the home; the in-home treatment programs that have been considered and rejected; the preventive services, including housing services and assistance, that have been offered or provided and have failed to prevent the need for out-of-home placement, unless the health, safety, and welfare of the child cannot be protected adequately in the home; and the parents' attitude toward placement of the child;
- (d) A statement of the likely harms the child will suffer as a result of removal;
- (e) A description of the steps that will be taken to minimize the harm to the child that may result if separation occurs including an assessment of the child's relationship and emotional bond with any siblings, and the agency's plan to provide ongoing contact between the child and the child's siblings if appropriate; and
- (f) Behavior that will be expected before determination that supervision of the family or placement is no longer necessary.
- **Sec. 2.** RCW 13.34.065 and 2008 c 267 s 2 are each amended to read 29 as follows:
 - (1)(a) When a child is taken into custody, the court shall hold a shelter care hearing within seventy-two hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The primary purpose of the shelter care hearing is to determine whether the child can be immediately and safely returned home while the adjudication of the dependency is pending.
 - (b) Any parent, guardian, or legal custodian who for good cause is unable to attend the shelter care hearing may request that a subsequent shelter care hearing be scheduled. The request shall be made to the

clerk of the court where the petition is filed prior to the initial shelter care hearing. Upon the request of the parent, the court shall schedule the hearing within seventy-two hours of the request, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The clerk shall notify all other parties of the hearing by any reasonable means.

- (2)(a) The department of social and health services shall submit a recommendation to the court as to the further need for shelter care in all cases in which it is the petitioner. In all other cases, the recommendation shall be submitted by the juvenile court probation counselor.
- (b) All parties have the right to present testimony to the court regarding the need or lack of need for shelter care.
- (c) Hearsay evidence before the court regarding the need or lack of need for shelter care must be supported by sworn testimony, affidavit, or declaration of the person offering such evidence.
- 16 (3)(a) At the commencement of the hearing, the court shall notify 17 the parent, guardian, or custodian of the following:
 - (i) The parent, guardian, or custodian has the right to a shelter care hearing;
 - (ii) The nature of the shelter care hearing, the rights of the parents, and the proceedings that will follow; and
 - (iii) If the parent, guardian, or custodian is not represented by counsel, the right to be represented. If the parent, guardian, or custodian is indigent, the court shall appoint counsel as provided in RCW 13.34.090; and
 - (b) If a parent, guardian, or legal custodian desires to waive the shelter care hearing, the court shall determine, on the record and with the parties present, whether such waiver is knowing and voluntary. A parent may not waive his or her right to the shelter care hearing unless he or she appears in court and the court determines that the waiver is knowing and voluntary. Regardless of whether the court accepts the parental waiver of the shelter care hearing, the court must provide notice to the parents of their rights required under (a) of this subsection and make the finding required under subsection (4) of this section.
- 36 (4) At the shelter care hearing the court shall examine the need 37 for shelter care and inquire into the status of the case. The

paramount consideration for the court shall be the health, welfare, and safety of the child. At a minimum, the court shall inquire into the following:

- (a) Whether the notice required under RCW 13.34.062 was given to all known parents, guardians, or legal custodians of the child. The court shall make an express finding as to whether the notice required under RCW 13.34.062 was given to the parent, guardian, or legal custodian. If actual notice was not given to the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and the whereabouts of such person is known or can be ascertained, the court shall order the supervising agency or the department of social and health services to make reasonable efforts to advise the parent, guardian, or legal custodian of the status of the case, including the date and time of any subsequent hearings, and their rights under RCW 13.34.090;
- (b) Whether the child can be safely returned home while the adjudication of the dependency is pending;
 - (c) What efforts have been made to place the child with a relative. The court shall ask the parents whether the department discussed with them the placement of the child with a relative and shall make an express finding that the department's efforts have been made by the department in this regard;
 - (d) What services, including housing services or assistance if appropriate, were provided to the family to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the child's home;
 - (e) Is the placement proposed by the agency the least disruptive and most family-like setting that meets the needs of the child;
 - (f) Whether it is in the best interest of the child to remain enrolled in the school, developmental program, or child care the child was in prior to placement and what efforts have been made to maintain the child in the school, program, or child care if it would be in the best interest of the child to remain in the same school, program, or child care;
 - (g) Appointment of a guardian ad litem or attorney;
- (h) Whether the child is or may be an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903, whether the provisions of the Indian child welfare act apply, and whether there is compliance with the Indian child welfare act, including notice to the child's tribe;

(i) Whether, as provided in RCW 26.44.063, restraining orders, or orders expelling an allegedly abusive household member from the home of a nonabusive parent, guardian, or legal custodian, will allow the child to safely remain in the home;

1

3

4

5

6 7

8

15

16 17

18

19

2021

22

2324

25

26

27

28

29

30

- (j) Whether any orders for examinations, evaluations, or immediate services are needed. The court may not order a parent to undergo examinations, evaluation, or services at the shelter care hearing unless the parent agrees to the examination, evaluation, or service;
- 9 (k) The terms and conditions for parental, sibling, and family 10 visitation.
- 11 (5)(a) The court shall release a child alleged to be dependent to 12 the care, custody, and control of the child's parent, guardian, or 13 legal custodian unless the court finds there is reasonable cause to 14 believe that:
 - (i) After consideration of the specific services that have been provided, reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the child's home and to make it possible for the child to return home; and
 - (ii)(A) The child has no parent, guardian, or legal custodian to provide supervision and care for such child; or
 - (B) The release of such child would present a serious threat of substantial harm to such child, notwithstanding an order entered pursuant to RCW 26.44.063; or
 - (C) The parent, guardian, or custodian to whom the child could be released has been charged with violating RCW 9A.40.060 or 9A.40.070.
 - (b) If the court does not release the child to his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, the court shall order placement with a relative, unless there is reasonable cause to believe the health, safety, or welfare of the child would be jeopardized or that the efforts to reunite the parent and child will be hindered. The relative must be willing and available to:
- 32 (i) Care for the child and be able to meet any special needs of the 33 child;
- (ii) Facilitate the child's visitation with siblings, if such visitation is part of the supervising agency's plan or is ordered by the court; and
- 37 (iii) Cooperate with the department in providing necessary 38 background checks and home studies.

(c) If the child was not initially placed with a relative, and the court does not release the child to his or her parent, guardian, or legal custodian, the supervising agency shall make reasonable efforts to locate a relative pursuant to RCW 13.34.060(1).

- (d) If a relative is not available, the court shall order continued shelter care or order placement with another suitable person, and the court shall set forth its reasons for the order, including why placement with a relative is not appropriate at this time. If the court orders placement of the child with a person not related to the child and not licensed to provide foster care, the placement is subject to all terms and conditions of this section that apply to relative placements.
- (e) Any placement with a relative, or other person approved by the court pursuant to this section, shall be contingent upon cooperation with the agency case plan and compliance with court orders related to the care and supervision of the child including, but not limited to, court orders regarding parent-child contacts, sibling contacts, and any other conditions imposed by the court. Noncompliance with the case plan or court order is grounds for removal of the child from the home of the relative or other person, subject to review by the court.
- (f) Uncertainty by a parent, guardian, legal custodian, relative, or other suitable person that the alleged abuser has in fact abused the child shall not, alone, be the basis upon which a child is removed from the care of a parent, guardian, or legal custodian under (a) of this subsection, nor shall it be a basis, alone, to preclude placement with a relative under (b) of this subsection or with another suitable person under (d) of this subsection.
- (6)(a) A shelter care order issued pursuant to this section shall include the requirement for a case conference as provided in RCW 13.34.067. However, if the parent is not present at the shelter care hearing, or does not agree to the case conference, the court shall not include the requirement for the case conference in the shelter care order.
- (b) If the court orders a case conference, the shelter care order shall include notice to all parties and establish the date, time, and location of the case conference which shall be no later than thirty days before the fact-finding hearing.

(c) The court may order another conference, case staffing, or hearing as an alternative to the case conference required under RCW 13.34.067 so long as the conference, case staffing, or hearing ordered by the court meets all requirements under RCW 13.34.067, including the requirement of a written agreement specifying the services to be provided to the parent.

- (7)(a) A shelter care order issued pursuant to this section may be amended at any time with notice and hearing thereon. The shelter care decision of placement shall be modified only upon a showing of change in circumstances. No child may be placed in shelter care for longer than thirty days without an order, signed by the judge, authorizing continued shelter care.
- (b)(i) An order releasing the child on any conditions specified in this section may at any time be amended, with notice and hearing thereon, so as to return the child to shelter care for failure of the parties to conform to the conditions originally imposed.
 - (ii) The court shall consider whether nonconformance with any conditions resulted from circumstances beyond the control of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian and give weight to that fact before ordering return of the child to shelter care.
- (8)(a) If a child is returned home from shelter care a second time in the case, or if the supervisor of the caseworker deems it necessary, the multidisciplinary team may be reconvened.
- (b) If a child is returned home from shelter care a second time in the case a law enforcement officer must be present and file a report to the department.
- **Sec. 3.** RCW 13.34.130 and 2007 c 413 s 6 and 2007 c 412 s 2 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:
 - If, after a fact-finding hearing pursuant to RCW 13.34.110, it has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is dependent within the meaning of RCW 13.34.030 after consideration of the social study prepared pursuant to RCW 13.34.110 and after a disposition hearing has been held pursuant to RCW 13.34.110, the court shall enter an order of disposition pursuant to this section.
- 35 (1) The court shall order one of the following dispositions of the 36 case:

(a) Order a disposition other than removal of the child from his or her home, which shall provide a program designed to alleviate the immediate danger to the child, to mitigate or cure any damage the child has already suffered, and to aid the parents so that the child will not be endangered in the future. In determining the disposition, the court should choose those services, including housing services and assistance, that least interfere with family autonomy and are adequate to protect the child.

1 2

3 4

5 6

7

8

33

3435

36

37

- 9 (b) Order the child to be removed from his or her home and into the 10 custody, control, and care of a relative or the department or a licensed child placing agency for supervision of the child's placement. 11 12 The department or agency supervising the child's placement has the 13 authority to place the child, subject to review and approval by the court (i) with a relative as defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a), (ii) in a 14 foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 15 74.15 RCW, or (iii) in the home of another suitable person if the child 16 17 or family has a preexisting relationship with that person, and the 18 person has completed all required criminal history background checks and otherwise appears to the department or supervising agency to be 19 suitable and competent to provide care for the child. Absent good 20 21 cause, the department or supervising agency shall follow the wishes of 22 the natural parent regarding the placement of the child in accordance 23 with RCW 13.34.260. The department or supervising agency may only 24 place a child with a person not related to the child as defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a) when the court finds that such placement is in the best 25 26 interest of the child. Unless there is reasonable cause to believe 27 that the health, safety, or welfare of the child would be jeopardized 28 or that efforts to reunite the parent and child will be hindered, such 29 child shall be placed with a person who is: (A) Related to the child 30 defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a) with whom the child has a relationship and is comfortable; and (B) willing and available to care 31 32 for the child.
 - (2) Placement of the child with a relative under this subsection shall be given preference by the court. If the court does not place the child with a relative, the court shall make an express finding why placement with a relative did not occur. An order for out-of-home placement may be made only if the court finds that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the

- child from the child's home and to make it possible for the child to return home, specifying the services, including housing services and assistance if appropriate, that have been provided to the child and the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, and that preventive services have been offered or provided and have failed to prevent the need for out-of-home placement, unless the health, safety, and welfare of the child cannot be protected adequately in the home, and that:
 - (a) There is no parent or guardian available to care for such child;

9

1112

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

2021

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

3435

3637

- (b) The parent, guardian, or legal custodian is not willing to take custody of the child; or
- (c) The court finds, by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence, a manifest danger exists that the child will suffer serious abuse or neglect if the child is not removed from the home and an order under RCW 26.44.063 would not protect the child from danger.
- (3) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section, the court shall consider whether it is in a child's best interest to be placed with, have contact with, or have visits with siblings.
- (a) There shall be a presumption that such placement, contact, or visits are in the best interests of the child provided that:
- (i) The court has jurisdiction over all siblings subject to the order of placement, contact, or visitation pursuant to petitions filed under this chapter or the parents of a child for whom there is no jurisdiction are willing to agree; and
- (ii) There is no reasonable cause to believe that the health, safety, or welfare of any child subject to the order of placement, contact, or visitation would be jeopardized or that efforts to reunite the parent and child would be hindered by such placement, contact, or visitation. In no event shall parental visitation time be reduced in order to provide sibling visitation.
- (b) The court may also order placement, contact, or visitation of a child with a step-brother or step-sister provided that in addition to the factors in (a) of this subsection, the child has a relationship and is comfortable with the step-sibling.
- (4) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section and placed into nonparental or nonrelative care, the court shall order a placement that

allows the child to remain in the same school he or she attended prior to the initiation of the dependency proceeding when such a placement is practical and in the child's best interest.

1 2

3

5

6 7

25

26

27

2829

30

3132

3334

35

- (5) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section, the court may order that a petition seeking termination of the parent and child relationship be filed if the requirements of RCW 13.34.132 are met.
- 8 (6) If there is insufficient information at the time of the disposition hearing upon which to base a determination regarding the 9 10 suitability of a proposed placement with a relative, the child shall 11 remain in foster care and the court shall direct the supervising agency 12 to conduct necessary background investigations as provided in chapter 13 74.15 RCW and report the results of such investigation to the court 14 within thirty days. However, if such relative appears otherwise suitable and competent to provide care and treatment, the criminal 15 history background check need not be completed before placement, but as 16 soon as possible after placement. Any placements with relatives, 17 pursuant to this section, shall be contingent upon cooperation by the 18 19 relative with the agency case plan and compliance with court orders related to the care and supervision of the child including, but not 20 21 limited to, court orders regarding parent-child contacts, sibling 22 contacts, and any other conditions imposed by the court. Noncompliance 23 with the case plan or court order shall be grounds for removal of the 24 child from the relative's home, subject to review by the court.
 - **Sec. 4.** RCW 13.34.138 and 2007 c 413 s 8 and 2007 c 410 s 1 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:
 - (1) Except for children whose cases are reviewed by a citizen review board under chapter 13.70 RCW, the status of all children found to be dependent shall be reviewed by the court at least every six months from the beginning date of the placement episode or the date dependency is established, whichever is first. The purpose of the hearing shall be to review the progress of the parties and determine whether court supervision should continue.
 - (a) The initial review hearing shall be an in-court review and shall be set six months from the beginning date of the placement episode or no more than ninety days from the entry of the disposition

order, whichever comes first. The requirements for the initial review hearing, including the in-court review requirement, shall be accomplished within existing resources.

- (b) The initial review hearing may be a permanency planning hearing when necessary to meet the time frames set forth in RCW 13.34.145 (1)(a) or 13.34.134.
- (2)(a) A child shall not be returned home at the review hearing unless the court finds that a reason for removal as set forth in RCW 13.34.130 no longer exists. The parents, guardian, or legal custodian shall report to the court the efforts they have made to correct the conditions which led to removal. If a child is returned, casework supervision shall continue for a period of six months, at which time there shall be a hearing on the need for continued intervention.
- 14 (b) Prior to the child returning home, the department must complete 15 the following:
 - (i) Identify all adults residing in the home and conduct background checks on those persons;
 - (ii) Identify any persons who may act as a caregiver for the child in addition to the parent with whom the child is being placed and determine whether such persons are in need of any services in order to ensure the safety of the child, regardless of whether such persons are a party to the dependency. The department or supervising agency may recommend to the court and the court may order that placement of the child in the parent's home be contingent on or delayed based on the need for such persons to engage in or complete services to ensure the safety of the child prior to placement. If services are recommended for the caregiver, and the caregiver fails to engage in or follow through with the recommended services, the department or supervising agency must promptly notify the court; and
 - (iii) Notify the parent with whom the child is being placed that he or she has an ongoing duty to notify the department or supervising agency of all persons who reside in the home or who may act as a caregiver for the child both prior to the placement of the child in the home and subsequent to the placement of the child in the home as long as the court retains jurisdiction of the dependency proceeding or the department is providing or monitoring either remedial services to the parent or services to ensure the safety of the child to any caregivers.

Caregivers may be required to engage in services under this subsection solely for the purpose of ensuring the present and future safety of a child who is a ward of the court. This subsection does not grant party status to any individual not already a party to the dependency proceeding, create an entitlement to services or a duty on the part of the department or supervising agency to provide services, or create judicial authority to order the provision of services to any person other than for the express purposes of this section or RCW 13.34.025 or if the services are unavailable or unsuitable or the person is not eligible for such services.

- (c) If the child is not returned home, the court shall establish in writing:
- (i) Whether the agency is making reasonable efforts to provide services to the family and eliminate the need for placement of the child. If additional services, including housing services and assistance, are needed to facilitate the return of the child to the child's parents, the court shall order that reasonable services be offered specifying such services;
- (ii) Whether there has been compliance with the case plan by the child, the child's parents, and the agency supervising the placement;
- (iii) Whether progress has been made toward correcting the problems that necessitated the child's placement in out-of-home care;
- (iv) Whether the services set forth in the case plan and the responsibilities of the parties need to be clarified or modified due to the availability of additional information or changed circumstances;
 - (v) Whether there is a continuing need for placement;
- (vi) Whether the child is in an appropriate placement which adequately meets all physical, emotional, and educational needs;
 - (vii) Whether preference has been given to placement with the child's relatives and if not, the court shall make specific findings detailing the reasons why the child is not in a relative placement;
- (viii) Whether both in-state and, where appropriate, out-of-state placements have been considered;
- (ix) Whether the parents have visited the child and any reasons why visitation has not occurred or has been infrequent;
 - (x) Whether terms of visitation need to be modified;
- 37 (xi) Whether the court-approved long-term permanent plan for the 38 child remains the best plan for the child;

1 (xii) Whether any additional court orders need to be made to move 2 the case toward permanency; and

3 4

5

6 7

8

9

1112

19 20

21

22

2324

25

26

27

28

29

30

3132

33

- (xiii) The projected date by which the child will be returned home or other permanent plan of care will be implemented.
- (d) The court at the review hearing may order that a petition seeking termination of the parent and child relationship be filed.
- (3)(a) In any case in which the court orders that a dependent child may be returned to or remain in the child's home, the in-home placement shall be contingent upon the following:
- (i) The compliance of the parents with court orders related to the care and supervision of the child, including compliance with an agency case plan; and
- (ii) The continued participation of the parents, if applicable, in available substance abuse or mental health treatment if substance abuse or mental illness was a contributing factor to the removal of the child.
- 17 (b) The following may be grounds for removal of the child from the 18 home, subject to review by the court:
 - (i) Noncompliance by the parents with the agency case plan or court order;
 - (ii) The parent's inability, unwillingness, or failure to participate in available services or treatment for themselves or the child, including substance abuse treatment if a parent's substance abuse was a contributing factor to the abuse or neglect; or
 - (iii) The failure of the parents to successfully and substantially complete available services or treatment for themselves or the child, including substance abuse treatment if a parent's substance abuse was a contributing factor to the abuse or neglect.
 - (c) In a pending dependency case in which the court orders that a dependent child may be returned home and that child is later removed from the home, the court shall hold a review hearing within thirty days from the date of removal to determine whether the permanency plan should be changed, a termination petition should be filed, or other action is warranted. The best interests of the child shall be the court's primary consideration in the review hearing.
- 36 (4) The court's ability to order housing <u>services and</u> assistance 37 under ((RCW 13.34.130 and this section)) <u>this chapter</u> is: (a) Limited 38 to cases in which homelessness or the lack of adequate and safe housing

- 1 is the primary reason for an out-of-home placement; and (b) subject to
- 2 the availability of funds appropriated for this specific purpose. For
- 3 purposes of this section, "homelessness or the lack of adequate and
- 4 safe housing" constitutes the primary reason for out-of-home placement
- 5 when the provision of housing services or assistance would likely
- 6 prevent the need for out-of-home placement or shorten the length of
- 7 stay in out-of-home placement. Nothing in this section shall be
- 8 construed to create an entitlement to housing assistance and services,
- 9 nor create judicial authority to order the provision of services to any
- 10 person or family if the services or funding are unavailable or the
- 11 child or family is not eligible for such services.
- 12 (5) The court shall consider the child's relationship with siblings
- in accordance with RCW 13.34.130(3).

17

18

19 20

21

2223

24

25

26

27

2829

3031

32

3334

- 14 **Sec. 5.** RCW 13.34.145 and 2008 c 152 s 3 are each amended to read 15 as follows:
 - (1) The purpose of a permanency planning hearing is to review the permanency plan for the child, inquire into the welfare of the child and progress of the case, and reach decisions regarding the permanent placement of the child.
 - (a) A permanency planning hearing shall be held in all cases where the child has remained in out-of-home care for at least nine months and an adoption decree, guardianship order, or permanent custody order has not previously been entered. The hearing shall take place no later than twelve months following commencement of the current placement episode.
 - (b) Whenever a child is removed from the home of a dependency guardian or long-term relative or foster care provider, and the child is not returned to the home of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian but is placed in out-of-home care, a permanency planning hearing shall take place no later than twelve months, as provided in this section, following the date of removal unless, prior to the hearing, the child returns to the home of the dependency guardian or long-term care provider, the child is placed in the home of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian, an adoption decree, guardianship order, or a permanent custody order is entered, or the dependency is dismissed.
- 36 (c) Permanency planning goals should be achieved at the earliest 37 possible date, preferably before the child has been in out-of-home care

for fifteen months. In cases where parental rights have been terminated, the child is legally free for adoption, and adoption has been identified as the primary permanency planning goal, it shall be a goal to complete the adoption within six months following entry of the termination order.

6 7

8

9

12

13 14

15

16 17

18

1920

21

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

3132

33

34

35

- (2) No later than ten working days prior to the permanency planning hearing, the agency having custody of the child shall submit a written permanency plan to the court and shall mail a copy of the plan to all parties and their legal counsel, if any.
- 10 (3) At the permanency planning hearing, the court shall conduct the following inquiry:
 - (a) If a goal of long-term foster or relative care has been achieved prior to the permanency planning hearing, the court shall review the child's status to determine whether the placement and the plan for the child's care remain appropriate.
 - (b) In cases where the primary permanency planning goal has not been achieved, the court shall inquire regarding the reasons why the primary goal has not been achieved and determine what needs to be done to make it possible to achieve the primary goal. The court shall review the permanency plan prepared by the agency and make explicit findings regarding each of the following:
- 22 (i) The continuing necessity for, and the safety and 23 appropriateness of, the placement;
 - (ii) The extent of compliance with the permanency plan by the agency and any other service providers, the child's parents, the child, and the child's guardian, if any;
 - (iii) The extent of any efforts to involve appropriate service providers in addition to agency staff in planning to meet the special needs of the child and the child's parents;
 - (iv) The progress toward eliminating the causes for the child's placement outside of his or her home and toward returning the child safely to his or her home or obtaining a permanent placement for the child;
 - (v) The date by which it is likely that the child will be returned to his or her home or placed for adoption, with a guardian or in some other alternative permanent placement; and
- (vi) If the child has been placed outside of his or her home for fifteen of the most recent twenty-two months, not including any period

- during which the child was a runaway from the out-of-home placement or the first six months of any period during which the child was returned to his or her home for a trial home visit, the appropriateness of the permanency plan, whether reasonable efforts were made by the agency to achieve the goal of the permanency plan, and the circumstances which prevent the child from any of the following:
 - (A) Being returned safely to his or her home;
- 8 (B) Having a petition for the involuntary termination of parental 9 rights filed on behalf of the child;
 - (C) Being placed for adoption;

10

11

16 17

18

19

2021

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

2930

3132

33

3435

36

37

38

- (D) Being placed with a guardian;
- 12 (E) Being placed in the home of a fit and willing relative of the 13 child; or
- 14 (F) Being placed in some other alternative permanent placement, 15 including independent living or long-term foster care.

At this hearing, the court shall order the department to file a petition seeking termination of parental rights if the child has been in out-of-home care for fifteen of the last twenty-two months since the date the dependency petition was filed unless the court makes a good cause exception as to why the filing of a termination of parental rights petition is not appropriate. Any good cause finding shall be reviewed at all subsequent hearings pertaining to the child. For purposes of this section, "good cause exception" includes but is not limited to the following: The child is being cared for by a relative; the department has not provided to the child's family such services as the court and the department have deemed necessary for the child's safe return home; or the department has documented in the case plan a compelling reason for determining that filing a petition to terminate parental rights would not be in the child's best interests.

- (c)(i) If the permanency plan identifies independent living as a goal, the court shall make a finding that the provision of services to assist the child in making a transition from foster care to independent living will allow the child to manage his or her financial, personal, social, educational, and nonfinancial affairs prior to approving independent living as a permanency plan of care.
- (ii) The permanency plan shall also specifically identify the services that will be provided to assist the child to make a successful transition from foster care to independent living.

1 (iii) The department shall not discharge a child to an independent 2 living situation before the child is eighteen years of age unless the 3 child becomes emancipated pursuant to chapter 13.64 RCW.

4

5

6 7

8

9

2021

22

2324

25

2627

28

29

33

34

- (d) If the child has resided in the home of a foster parent or relative for more than six months prior to the permanency planning hearing, the court shall ((also)):
- (i) Enter a finding regarding whether the foster parent or relative was informed of the hearing as required in RCW 74.13.280, 13.34.215(5), and 13.34.096; and
- (ii) In the situation in which the department or supervising agency is recommending a placement other than the current foster parent or relative, make an express finding of the reasons the department or agency is recommending that the child be moved.
- 14 (4) In all cases, at the permanency planning hearing, the court 15 shall:
- 16 (a)(i) Order the permanency plan prepared by the agency to be 17 implemented; or
- 18 (ii) Modify the permanency plan, and order implementation of the 19 modified plan; and
 - (b)(i) Order the child returned home only if the court finds that a reason for removal as set forth in RCW 13.34.130 no longer exists; or
 - (ii) Order the child to remain in out-of-home care for a limited specified time period while efforts are made to implement the permanency plan.
 - (5) Following the first permanency planning hearing, the court shall hold a further permanency planning hearing in accordance with this section at least once every twelve months until a permanency planning goal is achieved or the dependency is dismissed, whichever occurs first.
- 30 (6) Prior to the second permanency planning hearing, the agency 31 that has custody of the child shall consider whether to file a petition 32 for termination of parental rights.
 - (7) If the court orders the child returned home, casework supervision shall continue for at least six months, at which time a review hearing shall be held pursuant to RCW 13.34.138, and the court shall determine the need for continued intervention.
- 37 (8) The juvenile court may hear a petition for permanent legal 38 custody when: (a) The court has ordered implementation of a permanency

- plan that includes permanent legal custody; and (b) the party pursuing 1 2 the permanent legal custody is the party identified in the permanency plan as the prospective legal custodian. During the pendency of such 3 4 proceeding, the court shall conduct review hearings and further permanency planning hearings as provided in this chapter. 5 At the 6 conclusion of the legal guardianship or permanent legal custody proceeding, a juvenile court hearing shall be held for the purpose of 7 8 determining whether dependency should be dismissed. If a guardianship or permanent custody order has been entered, the dependency shall be 9 dismissed. 10
 - (9) Continued juvenile court jurisdiction under this chapter shall not be a barrier to the entry of an order establishing a legal guardianship or permanent legal custody when the requirements of subsection (8) of this section are met.

13

14

15

16

1718

19

2021

22

23

24

2526

27

28

29

- (10) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to limit the ability of the agency that has custody of the child to file a petition for termination of parental rights or a guardianship petition at any time following the establishment of dependency. Upon the filing of such a petition, a fact-finding hearing shall be scheduled and held in accordance with this chapter unless the agency requests dismissal of the petition prior to the hearing or unless the parties enter an agreed order terminating parental rights, establishing guardianship, or otherwise resolving the matter.
- (11) The approval of a permanency plan that does not contemplate return of the child to the parent does not relieve the supervising agency of its obligation to provide reasonable services, under this chapter, intended to effectuate the return of the child to the parent, including but not limited to, visitation rights. The court shall consider the child's relationships with siblings in accordance with RCW 13.34.130.
- 31 (12) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to limit the 32 procedural due process rights of any party in a termination or 33 guardianship proceeding filed under this chapter.
- NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 13.34 RCW to read as follows:
- 36 (1) At a disposition, review, or any other hearing that occurs 37 after a dependency is established under this chapter, the court shall

- ensure that a dependent child over the age of twelve, who is otherwise present in the courtroom, is aware of and understands the duties and responsibilities the department has to a child subject to a dependency including, but not limited to, the following:
 - (a) Reasonable efforts, including the provision of services, toward reunification of the child with his or her family;
- 7 (b) Sibling visits subject to the restrictions in RCW 8 13.34.136(2)(b)(ii);
 - (c) Parent-child visits;

6

9

19 20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

2829

3031

32

3334

35

36

- 10 (d) Statutory preference for placement with a relative, if 11 appropriate; and
- 12 (e) Statutory preference that an out-of-home placement be found 13 that would allow the child to remain in the same school district, if 14 practical.
- 15 (2) If the dependent child is already represented by counsel, the court need not comply with subsection (1) of this section.
- NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. A new section is added to chapter 13.34 RCW to read as follows:
 - (1) The administrative office of the courts shall develop standard court forms and format rules for mandatory use by parties in dependency matters commenced under this chapter or chapter 26.44 RCW. Forms shall be developed not later than November 1, 2009, and the mandatory use requirement shall be effective January 1, 2010. The administrative office of the courts has continuing responsibility to develop and revise mandatory forms and format rules as appropriate.
 - (2) According to rules established by the administrative office of the courts, a party may delete unnecessary portions of the forms and may supplement the mandatory forms with additional material.
 - (3) Failure by a party to use the mandatory forms or follow the format rules shall not be a reason to dismiss a case, refuse a filing, or strike a pleading. The court may, however, require the party to submit a corrected pleading and may impose terms payable to the opposing party or payable to the court, or both.
 - (4) The administrative office of the courts shall distribute a master copy of the mandatory forms to all county court clerks. Upon request, the administrative office of the courts and county clerks must distribute the forms to the public and may charge for the cost of

- 1 production and distribution of the forms. Private vendors also may
- 2 distribute the forms. Distribution of forms may be in printed or
- 3 electronic form.

Sec. 8. RCW 74.13.031 and 2008 c 267 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

The department shall have the duty to provide child welfare services and shall:

- (1) Develop, administer, supervise, and monitor a coordinated and comprehensive plan that establishes, aids, and strengthens services for the protection and care of runaway, dependent, or neglected children.
- (2) Within available resources, recruit an adequate number of prospective adoptive and foster homes, both regular and specialized, i.e. homes for children of ethnic minority, including Indian homes for Indian children, sibling groups, handicapped and emotionally disturbed, teens, pregnant and parenting teens, and annually report to the governor and the legislature concerning the department's success in:

 (a) Meeting the need for adoptive and foster home placements; (b) reducing the foster parent turnover rate; (c) completing home studies for legally free children; and (d) implementing and operating the passport program required by RCW 74.13.285. The report shall include a section entitled "Foster Home Turn-Over, Causes and Recommendations."
- (3) Investigate complaints of any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, or sexual abuse or exploitation, or that presents an imminent risk of serious harm, and on the basis of the findings of such investigation, offer child welfare services in relation to the problem to such parents, legal custodians, or persons serving in loco parentis, and/or bring the situation to the attention of an appropriate court, or another community agency. An investigation is not required of nonaccidental injuries which are clearly not the result of a lack of care or supervision by the child's parents, legal custodians, or persons serving in loco parentis. If the investigation reveals that a crime against a child may have been committed, the department shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- 35 (4) Offer, on a voluntary basis, family reconciliation services to 36 families who are in conflict.

(5) Monitor placements of children in out-of-home care and in-home dependencies to assure the safety, well-being, and quality of care being provided is within the scope of the intent of the legislature as defined in RCW 74.13.010 and 74.15.010. The policy for monitoring placements under this section shall require that children in out-of-home care and in-home dependencies and their caregivers receive a private and individual face-to-face visit each month.

- (a) The department shall conduct the monthly visits with children and caregivers required under this section unless the child's placement is being supervised under a contract between the department and a private agency accredited by a national child welfare accrediting entity, in which case the private agency shall, within existing resources, conduct the monthly visits with the child and with the child's caregiver according to the standards described in this subsection and shall provide the department with a written report of the visits within fifteen days of completing the visits.
- (b) In cases where the monthly visits required under this subsection are being conducted by a private agency, the department shall conduct a face-to-face health and safety visit with the child at least once every ninety days.
- (6) Have authority to accept custody of children from parents and to accept custody of children from juvenile courts, where authorized to do so under law, to provide child welfare services including placement for adoption, to provide for the routine and necessary medical, dental, and mental health care, or necessary emergency care of the children, and to provide for the physical care of such children and make payment of maintenance costs if needed. Except where required by Public Law 95-608 (25 U.S.C. Sec. 1915), no private adoption agency which receives children for adoption from the department shall discriminate on the basis of race, creed, or color when considering applications in their placement for adoption.
- (7) Have authority to provide temporary shelter to children who have run away from home and who are admitted to crisis residential centers.
- (8) Have authority to purchase care for children; and shall follow in general the policy of using properly approved private agency services for the actual care and supervision of such children insofar

as they are available, paying for care of such children as are accepted by the department as eligible for support at reasonable rates established by the department.

- (9) Establish a children's services advisory committee which shall assist the secretary in the development of a partnership plan for utilizing resources of the public and private sectors, and advise on all matters pertaining to child welfare, licensing of child care agencies, adoption, and services related thereto. At least one member shall represent the adoption community.
- (10)(a) Have authority to provide continued foster care or group care as needed to participate in or complete a high school or vocational school program.
- (b)(i) Beginning in 2006, the department has the authority to allow up to fifty youth reaching age eighteen to continue in foster care or group care as needed to participate in or complete a posthigh school academic or vocational program, and to receive necessary support and transition services.
- (ii) In 2007 and 2008, the department has the authority to allow up to fifty additional youth per year reaching age eighteen to remain in foster care or group care as provided in (b)(i) of this subsection.
- (iii) A youth who remains eligible for such placement and services pursuant to department rules may continue in foster care or group care until the youth reaches his or her twenty-first birthday. Eligibility requirements shall include active enrollment in a posthigh school academic or vocational program and maintenance of a 2.0 grade point average.
- (11) Refer cases to the division of child support whenever state or federal funds are expended for the care and maintenance of a child, including a child with a developmental disability who is placed as a result of an action under chapter 13.34 RCW, unless the department finds that there is good cause not to pursue collection of child support against the parent or parents of the child. Cases involving individuals age eighteen through twenty shall not be referred to the division of child support unless required by federal law.
- (12) Have authority within funds appropriated for foster care services to purchase care for Indian children who are in the custody of a federally recognized Indian tribe or tribally licensed child-placing agency pursuant to parental consent, tribal court order, or state

juvenile court order; and the purchase of such care shall be subject to the same eligibility standards and rates of support applicable to other children for whom the department purchases care.

Notwithstanding any other provision of RCW 13.32A.170 through 13.32A.200 and 74.13.032 through 74.13.036, or of this section all services to be provided by the department of social and health services under subsections (4), (6), and (7) of this section, subject to the limitations of these subsections, may be provided by any program offering such services funded pursuant to Titles II and III of the federal juvenile justice and delinquency prevention act of 1974.

- (13) Within amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, provide preventive services to families with children that prevent or shorten the duration of an out-of-home placement.
- (14) Have authority to provide independent living services to youths, including individuals who have attained eighteen years of age, and have not attained twenty-one years of age who are or have been in foster care.
- (15) Consult at least quarterly with foster parents, including members of the foster parent association of Washington state, for the purpose of receiving information and comment regarding how the department is performing the duties and meeting the obligations specified in this section and RCW 74.13.250 and 74.13.320 regarding the recruitment of foster homes, reducing foster parent turnover rates, providing effective training for foster parents, and administering a coordinated and comprehensive plan that strengthens services for the protection of children. Consultation shall occur at the regional and statewide levels.
- (16)(a) Within current funding levels, place on the public web site maintained by the department a document listing the duties and responsibilities the department has to a child subject to a dependency petition including, but not limited to, the following:
- (i) Reasonable efforts, including the provision of services, toward
 reunification of the child with his or her family;
- 34 (ii) Sibling visits subject to the restrictions in RCW
 35 13.34.136(2)(b)(ii);
- 36 <u>(iii) Parent-child visits;</u>

37 <u>(iv) Statutory preference for placement with a relative, if</u>
38 appropriate; and

- 1 (v) Statutory preference that an out-of-home placement be found
- 2 that would allow the child to remain in the same school district, if
- 3 <u>practical</u>.
- 4 (b) The document must be prepared in conjunction with a community-
- 5 <u>based organization and must be updated as needed.</u>
- 6 <u>NEW SECTION.</u> **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW to read as follows:
- 8 Once a dependency is established under chapter 13.34 RCW, the
- 9 social worker assigned to the case shall provide the dependent child
- 10 with a document containing the information contained in RCW
- 11 74.13.031(16). The social worker shall also explain the content of the
- 12 document to the child and direct the child to the department's web site
- 13 for further information. The social worker shall document, in the
- 14 electronic data system, that this requirement was met.
- 15 **Sec. 10.** RCW 74.13.333 and 2004 c 181 s 1 are each amended to read 16 as follows:
- 17 <u>(1)</u> A foster parent who believes that a department employee has 18 retaliated against the foster parent or in any other manner
- 19 discriminated against the foster parent because:
- 20 $((\frac{1}{1}))$ <u>(a)</u> The foster parent made a complaint with the office of
- 21 the family and children's ombudsman, the attorney general, law
- 22 enforcement agencies, or the department, provided information, or
- otherwise cooperated with the investigation of such a complaint;
- 24 $((\frac{2}{2}))$ (b) The foster parent has caused to be instituted any
- 25 proceedings under or related to Title 13 RCW;
- 26 $((\frac{3}{}))$ (c) The foster parent has testified or is about to testify
- in any proceedings under or related to Title 13 RCW;
- 28 (((4))) (d) The foster parent has advocated for services on behalf 29 of the foster child;
- 30 $((\frac{(5)}{)})$ <u>(e)</u> The foster parent has sought to adopt a foster child in
- 31 the foster parent's care; or
- 32 $((\frac{(6)}{)})$ The foster parent has discussed or consulted with
- 33 anyone concerning the foster parent's rights under this chapter or
- 34 chapter 74.15 or 13.34 RCW, may file a complaint with the office of the
- 35 family and children's ombudsman.

- (2) The ombudsman may investigate the allegations of retaliation. 1 The ombudsman shall have access to all relevant information and 2 resources held by or within the department by which to conduct the 3 investigation. Upon the conclusion of its investigation, the ombudsman 4 shall provide its findings in written form to the department. The 5 department shall take immediate personnel action against any employee 6 based, in part, on findings by the ombudsman that the department 7 employee has more likely than not engaged in retaliation against a 8 foster parent under this section. 9
 - (3) The department shall notify the office of the family and children's ombudsman in writing, within thirty days of receiving the ombudsman's findings, of any personnel action taken or to be taken with regard to the department employee.
 - (4) The office of the family and children's ombudsman shall also include its recommendations regarding complaints filed under this section in its annual report pursuant to RCW 43.06A.030. The office of the family and children's ombudsman shall identify trends which may indicate a need to improve relations between the department and foster parents."

SSB 5811 - S AMD

10

11

1213

14

15

16

17

18 19

By Senators Hargrove, Regala, Stevens

ADOPTED 03/09/2009

On page 1, line 1 of the title, after "placements;" strike the remainder of the title and insert "amending RCW 13.34.030, 13.34.065, 13.34.145, 74.13.031, and 74.13.333; reenacting and amending RCW 13.34.130 and 13.34.138; adding new sections to chapter 13.34 RCW; and adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW."

--- END ---