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HOUSE BILL 2449

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives Senn, Kagi, Kilduff, Dent, and Goodman

Read first time 01/09/18. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to extending the timeline for completing a family  
2 assessment response; reenacting and amending RCW 26.44.030; and  
3 providing an effective date.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 26.44.030 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 20 s 24 and 2017 3rd  
6 sp.s. c 6 s 322 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

7 (1)(a) When any practitioner, county coroner or medical examiner,  
8 law enforcement officer, professional school personnel, registered or  
9 licensed nurse, social service counselor, psychologist, pharmacist,  
10 employee of the department of children, youth, and families, licensed  
11 or certified child care providers or their employees, employee of the  
12 department of social and health services, juvenile probation officer,  
13 placement and liaison specialist, responsible living skills program  
14 staff, HOPE center staff, state family and children's ombuds or any  
15 volunteer in the ombuds's office, or host home program has reasonable  
16 cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect, he or  
17 she shall report such incident, or cause a report to be made, to the  
18 proper law enforcement agency or to the department as provided in RCW  
19 26.44.040.

20 (b) When any person, in his or her official supervisory capacity  
21 with a nonprofit or for-profit organization, has reasonable cause to

1 believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect caused by a person  
2 over whom he or she regularly exercises supervisory authority, he or  
3 she shall report such incident, or cause a report to be made, to the  
4 proper law enforcement agency, provided that the person alleged to  
5 have caused the abuse or neglect is employed by, contracted by, or  
6 volunteers with the organization and coaches, trains, educates, or  
7 counsels a child or children or regularly has unsupervised access to  
8 a child or children as part of the employment, contract, or voluntary  
9 service. No one shall be required to report under this section when  
10 he or she obtains the information solely as a result of a privileged  
11 communication as provided in RCW 5.60.060.

12 Nothing in this subsection (1)(b) shall limit a person's duty to  
13 report under (a) of this subsection.

14 For the purposes of this subsection, the following definitions  
15 apply:

16 (i) "Official supervisory capacity" means a position, status, or  
17 role created, recognized, or designated by any nonprofit or for-  
18 profit organization, either for financial gain or without financial  
19 gain, whose scope includes, but is not limited to, overseeing,  
20 directing, or managing another person who is employed by, contracted  
21 by, or volunteers with the nonprofit or for-profit organization.

22 (ii) "Organization" includes a sole proprietor, partnership,  
23 corporation, limited liability company, trust, association, financial  
24 institution, governmental entity, other than the federal government,  
25 and any other individual or group engaged in a trade, occupation,  
26 enterprise, governmental function, charitable function, or similar  
27 activity in this state whether or not the entity is operated as a  
28 nonprofit or for-profit entity.

29 (iii) "Reasonable cause" means a person witnesses or receives a  
30 credible written or oral report alleging abuse, including sexual  
31 contact, or neglect of a child.

32 (iv) "Regularly exercises supervisory authority" means to act in  
33 his or her official supervisory capacity on an ongoing or continuing  
34 basis with regards to a particular person.

35 (v) "Sexual contact" has the same meaning as in RCW 9A.44.010.

36 (c) The reporting requirement also applies to department of  
37 corrections personnel who, in the course of their employment, observe  
38 offenders or the children with whom the offenders are in contact. If,  
39 as a result of observations or information received in the course of  
40 his or her employment, any department of corrections personnel has

1 reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or  
2 neglect, he or she shall report the incident, or cause a report to be  
3 made, to the proper law enforcement agency or to the department as  
4 provided in RCW 26.44.040.

5 (d) The reporting requirement shall also apply to any adult who  
6 has reasonable cause to believe that a child who resides with them,  
7 has suffered severe abuse, and is able or capable of making a report.  
8 For the purposes of this subsection, "severe abuse" means any of the  
9 following: Any single act of abuse that causes physical trauma of  
10 sufficient severity that, if left untreated, could cause death; any  
11 single act of sexual abuse that causes significant bleeding, deep  
12 bruising, or significant external or internal swelling; or more than  
13 one act of physical abuse, each of which causes bleeding, deep  
14 bruising, significant external or internal swelling, bone fracture,  
15 or unconsciousness.

16 (e) The reporting requirement also applies to guardians ad litem,  
17 including court-appointed special advocates, appointed under Titles  
18 11 and 13 RCW and this title, who in the course of their  
19 representation of children in these actions have reasonable cause to  
20 believe a child has been abused or neglected.

21 (f) The reporting requirement in (a) of this subsection also  
22 applies to administrative and academic or athletic department  
23 employees, including student employees, of institutions of higher  
24 education, as defined in RCW 28B.10.016, and of private institutions  
25 of higher education.

26 (g) The report must be made at the first opportunity, but in no  
27 case longer than forty-eight hours after there is reasonable cause to  
28 believe that the child has suffered abuse or neglect. The report must  
29 include the identity of the accused if known.

30 (2) The reporting requirement of subsection (1) of this section  
31 does not apply to the discovery of abuse or neglect that occurred  
32 during childhood if it is discovered after the child has become an  
33 adult. However, if there is reasonable cause to believe other  
34 children are or may be at risk of abuse or neglect by the accused,  
35 the reporting requirement of subsection (1) of this section does  
36 apply.

37 (3) Any other person who has reasonable cause to believe that a  
38 child has suffered abuse or neglect may report such incident to the  
39 proper law enforcement agency or to the department as provided in RCW  
40 26.44.040.

1           (4) The department, upon receiving a report of an incident of  
2 alleged abuse or neglect pursuant to this chapter, involving a child  
3 who has died or has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon  
4 him or her other than by accidental means or who has been subjected  
5 to alleged sexual abuse, shall report such incident to the proper law  
6 enforcement agency, including military law enforcement, if  
7 appropriate. In emergency cases, where the child's welfare is  
8 endangered, the department shall notify the proper law enforcement  
9 agency within twenty-four hours after a report is received by the  
10 department. In all other cases, the department shall notify the law  
11 enforcement agency within seventy-two hours after a report is  
12 received by the department. If the department makes an oral report, a  
13 written report must also be made to the proper law enforcement agency  
14 within five days thereafter.

15           (5) Any law enforcement agency receiving a report of an incident  
16 of alleged abuse or neglect pursuant to this chapter, involving a  
17 child who has died or has had physical injury or injuries inflicted  
18 upon him or her other than by accidental means, or who has been  
19 subjected to alleged sexual abuse, shall report such incident in  
20 writing as provided in RCW 26.44.040 to the proper county prosecutor  
21 or city attorney for appropriate action whenever the law enforcement  
22 agency's investigation reveals that a crime may have been committed.  
23 The law enforcement agency shall also notify the department of all  
24 reports received and the law enforcement agency's disposition of  
25 them. In emergency cases, where the child's welfare is endangered,  
26 the law enforcement agency shall notify the department within twenty-  
27 four hours. In all other cases, the law enforcement agency shall  
28 notify the department within seventy-two hours after a report is  
29 received by the law enforcement agency.

30           (6) Any county prosecutor or city attorney receiving a report  
31 under subsection (5) of this section shall notify the victim, any  
32 persons the victim requests, and the local office of the department,  
33 of the decision to charge or decline to charge a crime, within five  
34 days of making the decision.

35           (7) The department may conduct ongoing case planning and  
36 consultation with those persons or agencies required to report under  
37 this section, with consultants designated by the department, and with  
38 designated representatives of Washington Indian tribes if the client  
39 information exchanged is pertinent to cases currently receiving child  
40 protective services. Upon request, the department shall conduct such

1 planning and consultation with those persons required to report under  
2 this section if the department determines it is in the best interests  
3 of the child. Information considered privileged by statute and not  
4 directly related to reports required by this section must not be  
5 divulged without a valid written waiver of the privilege.

6 (8) Any case referred to the department by a physician licensed  
7 under chapter 18.57 or 18.71 RCW on the basis of an expert medical  
8 opinion that child abuse, neglect, or sexual assault has occurred and  
9 that the child's safety will be seriously endangered if returned  
10 home, the department shall file a dependency petition unless a second  
11 licensed physician of the parents' choice believes that such expert  
12 medical opinion is incorrect. If the parents fail to designate a  
13 second physician, the department may make the selection. If a  
14 physician finds that a child has suffered abuse or neglect but that  
15 such abuse or neglect does not constitute imminent danger to the  
16 child's health or safety, and the department agrees with the  
17 physician's assessment, the child may be left in the parents' home  
18 while the department proceeds with reasonable efforts to remedy  
19 parenting deficiencies.

20 (9) Persons or agencies exchanging information under subsection  
21 (7) of this section shall not further disseminate or release the  
22 information except as authorized by state or federal statute.  
23 Violation of this subsection is a misdemeanor.

24 (10) Upon receiving a report of alleged abuse or neglect, the  
25 department shall make reasonable efforts to learn the name, address,  
26 and telephone number of each person making a report of abuse or  
27 neglect under this section. The department shall provide assurances  
28 of appropriate confidentiality of the identification of persons  
29 reporting under this section. If the department is unable to learn  
30 the information required under this subsection, the department shall  
31 only investigate cases in which:

32 (a) The department believes there is a serious threat of  
33 substantial harm to the child;

34 (b) The report indicates conduct involving a criminal offense  
35 that has, or is about to occur, in which the child is the victim; or

36 (c) The department has a prior founded report of abuse or neglect  
37 with regard to a member of the household that is within three years  
38 of receipt of the referral.

39 (11)(a) Upon receiving a report of alleged abuse or neglect, the  
40 department shall use one of the following discrete responses to

1 reports of child abuse or neglect that are screened in and accepted  
2 for departmental response:

- 3 (i) Investigation; or
- 4 (ii) Family assessment.

5 (b) In making the response in (a) of this subsection the  
6 department shall:

7 (i) Use a method by which to assign cases to investigation or  
8 family assessment which are based on an array of factors that may  
9 include the presence of: Imminent danger, level of risk, number of  
10 previous child abuse or neglect reports, or other presenting case  
11 characteristics, such as the type of alleged maltreatment and the age  
12 of the alleged victim. Age of the alleged victim shall not be used as  
13 the sole criterion for determining case assignment;

14 (ii) Allow for a change in response assignment based on new  
15 information that alters risk or safety level;

16 (iii) Allow families assigned to family assessment to choose to  
17 receive an investigation rather than a family assessment;

18 (iv) Provide a full investigation if a family refuses the initial  
19 family assessment;

20 (v) Provide voluntary services to families based on the results  
21 of the initial family assessment. If a family refuses voluntary  
22 services, and the department cannot identify specific facts related  
23 to risk or safety that warrant assignment to investigation under this  
24 chapter, and there is not a history of reports of child abuse or  
25 neglect related to the family, then the department must close the  
26 family assessment response case. However, if at any time the  
27 department identifies risk or safety factors that warrant an  
28 investigation under this chapter, then the family assessment response  
29 case must be reassigned to investigation;

30 (vi) Conduct an investigation, and not a family assessment, in  
31 response to an allegation that, the department determines based on  
32 the intake assessment:

33 (A) Poses a risk of "imminent harm" consistent with the  
34 definition provided in RCW 13.34.050, which includes, but is not  
35 limited to, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation as defined in this  
36 chapter;

37 (B) Poses a serious threat of substantial harm to a child;

38 (C) Constitutes conduct involving a criminal offense that has, or  
39 is about to occur, in which the child is the victim;

40 (D) The child is an abandoned child as defined in RCW 13.34.030;

1 (E) The child is an adjudicated dependent child as defined in RCW  
2 13.34.030, or the child is in a facility that is licensed, operated,  
3 or certified for care of children by the department under chapter  
4 74.15 RCW.

5 (c) The department may not be held civilly liable for the  
6 decision to respond to an allegation of child abuse or neglect by  
7 using the family assessment response under this section unless the  
8 state or its officers, agents, or employees acted with reckless  
9 disregard.

10 (12)(a) For reports of alleged abuse or neglect that are accepted  
11 for investigation by the department, the investigation shall be  
12 conducted within time frames established by the department in rule.  
13 In no case shall the investigation extend longer than ninety days  
14 from the date the report is received, unless the investigation is  
15 being conducted under a written protocol pursuant to RCW 26.44.180  
16 and a law enforcement agency or prosecuting attorney has determined  
17 that a longer investigation period is necessary. At the completion of  
18 the investigation, the department shall make a finding that the  
19 report of child abuse or neglect is founded or unfounded.

20 (b) If a court in a civil or criminal proceeding, considering the  
21 same facts or circumstances as are contained in the report being  
22 investigated by the department, makes a judicial finding by a  
23 preponderance of the evidence or higher that the subject of the  
24 pending investigation has abused or neglected the child, the  
25 department shall adopt the finding in its investigation.

26 (13) For reports of alleged abuse or neglect that are responded  
27 to through family assessment response, the department shall:

28 (a) Provide the family with a written explanation of the  
29 procedure for assessment of the child and the family and its  
30 purposes;

31 (b) Collaborate with the family to identify family strengths,  
32 resources, and service needs, and develop a service plan with the  
33 goal of reducing risk of harm to the child and improving or restoring  
34 family well-being;

35 (c) Complete the family assessment response within forty-five  
36 days of receiving the report; however, upon parental agreement, the  
37 family assessment response period may be extended up to (~~ninety~~)  
38 one hundred twenty days;

39 (d) Offer services to the family in a manner that makes it clear  
40 that acceptance of the services is voluntary;

1 (e) Implement the family assessment response in a consistent and  
2 cooperative manner;

3 (f) Have the parent or guardian agree to participate in services  
4 before services are initiated. The department shall inform the  
5 parents of their rights under family assessment response, all of  
6 their options, and the options the department has if the parents do  
7 not agree to participate in services.

8 (14)(a) In conducting an investigation or family assessment of  
9 alleged abuse or neglect, the department or law enforcement agency:

10 (i) May interview children. If the department determines that the  
11 response to the allegation will be family assessment response, the  
12 preferred practice is to request a parent's, guardian's, or  
13 custodian's permission to interview the child before conducting the  
14 child interview unless doing so would compromise the safety of the  
15 child or the integrity of the assessment. The interviews may be  
16 conducted on school premises, at day-care facilities, at the child's  
17 home, or at other suitable locations outside of the presence of  
18 parents. If the allegation is investigated, parental notification of  
19 the interview must occur at the earliest possible point in the  
20 investigation that will not jeopardize the safety or protection of  
21 the child or the course of the investigation. Prior to commencing the  
22 interview the department or law enforcement agency shall determine  
23 whether the child wishes a third party to be present for the  
24 interview and, if so, shall make reasonable efforts to accommodate  
25 the child's wishes. Unless the child objects, the department or law  
26 enforcement agency shall make reasonable efforts to include a third  
27 party in any interview so long as the presence of the third party  
28 will not jeopardize the course of the investigation; and

29 (ii) Shall have access to all relevant records of the child in  
30 the possession of mandated reporters and their employees.

31 (b) The Washington state school directors' association shall  
32 adopt a model policy addressing protocols when an interview, as  
33 authorized by this subsection, is conducted on school premises. In  
34 formulating its policy, the association shall consult with the  
35 department and the Washington association of sheriffs and police  
36 chiefs.

37 (15) If a report of alleged abuse or neglect is founded and  
38 constitutes the third founded report received by the department  
39 within the last twelve months involving the same child or family, the  
40 department shall promptly notify the office of the family and

1 children's ombuds of the contents of the report. The department shall  
2 also notify the ombuds of the disposition of the report.

3 (16) In investigating and responding to allegations of child  
4 abuse and neglect, the department may conduct background checks as  
5 authorized by state and federal law.

6 (17)(a) The department shall maintain investigation records and  
7 conduct timely and periodic reviews of all founded cases of abuse and  
8 neglect. The department shall maintain a log of screened-out  
9 nonabusive cases.

10 (b) In the family assessment response, the department shall not  
11 make a finding as to whether child abuse or neglect occurred. No one  
12 shall be named as a perpetrator and no investigative finding shall be  
13 entered in the department's child abuse or neglect database.

14 (18) The department shall use a risk assessment process when  
15 investigating alleged child abuse and neglect referrals. The  
16 department shall present the risk factors at all hearings in which  
17 the placement of a dependent child is an issue. Substance abuse must  
18 be a risk factor.

19 (19) Upon receipt of a report of alleged abuse or neglect the law  
20 enforcement agency may arrange to interview the person making the  
21 report and any collateral sources to determine if any malice is  
22 involved in the reporting.

23 (20) Upon receiving a report of alleged abuse or neglect  
24 involving a child under the court's jurisdiction under chapter 13.34  
25 RCW, the department shall promptly notify the child's guardian ad  
26 litem of the report's contents. The department shall also notify the  
27 guardian ad litem of the disposition of the report. For purposes of  
28 this subsection, "guardian ad litem" has the meaning provided in RCW  
29 13.34.030.

30 (21) The department shall make efforts as soon as practicable to  
31 determine the military status of parents whose children are subject  
32 to abuse or neglect allegations. If the department determines that a  
33 parent or guardian is in the military, the department shall notify a  
34 department of defense family advocacy program that there is an  
35 allegation of abuse and neglect that is screened in and open for  
36 investigation that relates to that military parent or guardian.

37 (22) The department shall make available on its public web site a  
38 downloadable and printable poster that includes the reporting  
39 requirements included in this section. The poster must be no smaller  
40 than eight and one-half by eleven inches with all information on one

1 side. The poster must be made available in both the English and  
2 Spanish languages. Organizations that include employees or volunteers  
3 subject to the reporting requirements of this section must clearly  
4 display this poster in a common area. At a minimum, this poster must  
5 include the following:

- 6 (a) Who is required to report child abuse and neglect;
- 7 (b) The standard of knowledge to justify a report;
- 8 (c) The definition of reportable crimes;
- 9 (d) Where to report suspected child abuse and neglect; and
- 10 (e) What should be included in a report and the appropriate  
11 timing.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act takes effect July 1, 2018.

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