
HOUSE BILL 2798

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2018 Regular Session

By Representatives Kagi and Jenkins

Read first time 01/16/18. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to the baby court initiative; adding a new
2 section to chapter 2.56 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that a critical
5 need exists for child and family services programs to prevent the
6 incidence of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment. These programs
7 also need to minimize the incidence of childhood trauma on small
8 children and provide stability to parents and children within the
9 state. It is the intent of the legislature to create an initiative to
10 support early interventions with substance abusing parents through
11 county treatment courts.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2.56 RCW
13 to read as follows:

14 (1) As used in this section, "baby court" means an intensive
15 court process for families with a child under age six who has been
16 found dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW. A baby court must:

17 (a) Establish a process for parents with a documented need for
18 substance use disorder treatment to voluntarily participate in baby
19 court;

1 (b) Review at least every thirty days whether the parent or
2 parents are actively engaged and adequately progressing toward
3 achieving the case plan;

4 (c) Provide access to the appropriate substance use disorder
5 treatment;

6 (d) Aim to reduce the removal of young children from parents and
7 reunify young children with parents by surrounding at-risk families
8 with support services;

9 (e) Aim to reduce incidences of abuse and neglect among young
10 children;

11 (f) Reduce the long-term and short-term effects of traumatic
12 experiences on the brain development of children under age six; and

13 (g) Promote effective interaction and the use of resources among
14 the court and public and private child and family services providers.

15 (2) The family and juvenile court improvement grant program
16 established in RCW 2.56.220 shall:

17 (a) Develop standards for baby courts;

18 (b) Develop a process where any superior court, and not just
19 those receiving grant funds under RCW 2.56.230, may apply for grant
20 funds from the family and juvenile court improvement grant program
21 created in RCW 2.56.220 to establish a baby court;

22 (c) By January 1, 2019, distribute grant funds to support baby
23 courts in five superior courts that serve both rural and urban
24 populations in all three of the regions established by the children's
25 administration of the department of social and health services as of
26 the effective date of this section;

27 (d) Develop and define the outcome measures for baby courts;

28 (e) Collect outcome measure data that is included in an annual
29 report that must be submitted to fiscal committees of the legislature
30 beginning December 1, 2020. This annual report must summarize the
31 results of baby courts during the previous year, including data on
32 the outcomes achieved in baby courts compared to the outcomes
33 achieved by general dependency courts, and any cost savings
34 associated with achieving the goals established for baby courts in
35 subsection (1) of this section; and

36 (f) Sponsor and coordinate training for judicial officers and
37 other professionals that participate in baby courts receiving grant
38 funding pursuant to this section.

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