

**3SSB 5494 - S AMD 1044**

By Senator Zeiger

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

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that a  
4 critical need exists for child and family services programs to  
5 prevent the incidence of child abuse, neglect, and endangerment.  
6 These programs also need to minimize the incidence of childhood  
7 trauma on small children and provide stability to parents and  
8 children within the state. It is the intent of the legislature to  
9 create an initiative to support early interventions with parents of  
10 young children who are found to be dependent.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 2.30 RCW  
12 to read as follows:

13 (1) As used in this section, "infant-toddler court" means a  
14 therapeutic court as defined in this chapter that provides an  
15 intensive court process for families with a child under age three who  
16 has been found dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW. To be  
17 eligible for infant-toddler court, a parent must have a child under  
18 age three that is dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW at the time  
19 the case enters the infant-toddler court process. The case may remain  
20 in infant-toddler court after the child is age three or older if the  
21 child is still dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW. An infant-  
22 toddler court must:

23 (a) Establish a process for parents to voluntarily participate in  
24 infant-toddler court;

25 (b) Review at least every sixty days through either status or  
26 review hearing whether the parent or parents are actively engaged and  
27 adequately progressing toward achieving the case plan, unless the  
28 court finds good cause;

29 (c) Order the department of children, youth, and families to  
30 provide access to reasonably available and appropriate remedial  
31 services designed to remedy identified parental deficiencies;

1 (d) Aim to reduce the length of removal of young children from  
2 parents and reunify young children with parents according to the  
3 child's best interests;

4 (e) Make decisions aimed to reduce incidences of abuse and  
5 neglect among young children;

6 (f) Make decisions aimed to reduce the long-term and short-term  
7 effects of traumatic experiences on the brain development of young  
8 children; and

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

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

13 (a) Develop standards for infant-toddler courts based on national  
14 best practices and guidelines for infant-toddler court programs;

15 (b) Develop a process where any superior court, and not just  
16 those receiving grant funds under RCW 2.56.230, may apply for grant  
17 funds from the family and juvenile court improvement grant program  
18 created in RCW 2.56.220 to establish an infant-toddler court;

19 (c) By January 1, 2021, distribute grant funds to support infant-  
20 toddler courts in two superior courts that serve both rural and urban  
21 populations;

22 (d) Give priority to superior courts that will commit additional  
23 funding from public or private sources to its infant-toddler court;

24 (e) Prohibit using grant funds to supplant any existing funds  
25 used to support an infant-toddler court, including existing family  
26 and juvenile court improvement grants;

27 (f) Develop and define the outcome measures for infant-toddler  
28 courts;

29 (g) Collect outcome measure data that is included in an annual  
30 report that must be submitted to fiscal committees of the legislature  
31 beginning December 1, 2022. This annual report must summarize the  
32 results of infant-toddler courts during the previous year, including  
33 data on the outcomes achieved in infant-toddler courts compared to  
34 the outcomes achieved by general dependency courts, and any cost  
35 savings associated with achieving the goals established for infant-  
36 toddler courts in subsection (1) of this section; and

37 (h) Sponsor and coordinate training for judicial officers and  
38 other professionals that participate in infant-toddler courts  
39 receiving grant funding pursuant to this section."

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1        On page 1, line 1 of the title, after "the" strike the remainder  
2 of the title and insert "infant-toddler court initiative; adding a  
3 new section to chapter 2.30 RCW; and creating a new section."

EFFECT: Changes references from baby court to infant-toddler court; requires an infant-toddler court to review parents' progress every 60 days; and requires the grant program to develop infant-toddler court standards based on national best practices and guidelines.

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