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**HOUSE BILL 1295**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Ortiz-Self, Eslick, Lekanoff, Reeves, and Reed

AN ACT Relating to providing legal counsel for parents before the filing of a dependency petition, including when the department of children, youth, and families proposes a voluntary placement agreement; amending RCW 2.70.020; reenacting and amending RCW 13.34.030 and 13.34.090; and providing an effective date.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 2.70.020 and 2021 c 328 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

((~~The director shall:~~

~~(1) Administer~~)) The director shall administer all state-funded services in the following program areas:

((~~(a)~~)) (1) Trial court criminal indigent defense, as provided in chapter 10.101 RCW;

((~~(b)~~)) (2) Appellate indigent defense, as provided in this chapter;

((~~(c)~~)) (3) Representation of indigent parents qualified for appointed counsel in dependency and termination cases, as provided in RCW 13.34.090 and 13.34.092;

((~~(d)~~)) (4) Extraordinary criminal justice cost petitions, as provided in RCW 43.330.190;

((~~(e)~~)) (5) Compilation of copies of DNA test requests by persons convicted of felonies, as provided in RCW 10.73.170;

((~~(f)~~)) (6) Representation of indigent respondents qualified for appointed counsel in sexually violent predator civil commitment cases, as provided in chapter 71.09 RCW; ((~~and~~

~~(g)~~)) (7) Provide access to attorneys for juveniles contacted by a law enforcement officer for whom a legal consultation is required under RCW 13.40.740;

((~~(2)~~)) (8) Submit a biennial budget for all costs related to the office's program areas;

((~~(3)~~)) (9) Establish administrative procedures, standards, and guidelines for the office's program areas, including cost-efficient systems that provide for authorized recovery of costs;

((~~(4)~~)) (10) Provide oversight and technical assistance to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services in the office's program areas;

((~~(5)~~)) (11) Recommend criteria and standards for determining and verifying indigency. In recommending criteria for determining indigency, the director shall compile and review the indigency standards used by other state agencies and shall periodically submit the compilation and report to the legislature on the appropriateness and consistency of such standards;

((~~(6)~~)) (12) Collect information regarding indigent defense services funded by the state and report annually to the advisory committee, the legislature, and the supreme court;

((~~(7)~~)) (13) Coordinate with the supreme court and the judges of each division of the court of appeals to determine how appellate attorney services should be provided;

(14) Within available resources, provide legal counsel for parents under investigation by the department of children, youth, and families, including when the department of children, youth, and families proposes a voluntary placement agreement when there is no pending dependency proceeding under chapter 13.34 RCW pursuant to RCW 13.34.090(4).

The office of public defense shall not provide direct representation of clients.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.030 and 2021 c 304 s 1 and 2021 c 67 s 2 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(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," "juvenile," and "youth" mean:

(a) Any individual under the age of eighteen years; or

(b) Any individual age eighteen to twenty-one years who is eligible to receive and who elects to receive the extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031. A youth who remains dependent and who receives extended foster care services under RCW 74.13.031 shall not be considered a "child" under any other statute or for any other purpose.

(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) "Department" means the department of children, youth, and families.

(5) "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.

(6) "Dependent child" means any child who:

(a) Has been abandoned;

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

(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; or

(d) Is receiving extended foster care services, as authorized by RCW 74.13.031.

(7) "Developmental disability" means a disability attributable to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or another neurological or other condition of an individual found by the secretary of the department of social and health services to be closely related to an intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with intellectual disabilities, which disability originates before the individual attains age eighteen, which has continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and which constitutes a substantial limitation to the individual.

(8) "Educational liaison" means a person who has been appointed by the court to fulfill responsibilities outlined in RCW 13.34.046.

(9) "Experiencing homelessness" means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including circumstances such as sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, fleeing domestic violence, or a similar reason as described in the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act (Title 42 U.S.C., chapter 119, subchapter I) as it existed on January 1, 2021.

(10) "Extended foster care services" means residential and other support services the department is authorized to provide under RCW 74.13.031. These services may include placement in licensed, relative, or otherwise approved care, or supervised independent living settings; assistance in meeting basic needs; independent living services; medical assistance; and counseling or treatment.

(11) "Guardian" means the person or agency that: (a) Has been appointed as the guardian of a child in a legal proceeding, including a guardian appointed pursuant to chapter 13.36 RCW; and (b) has the legal right to custody of the child pursuant to such appointment. The term "guardian" does not include a "dependency guardian" appointed pursuant to a proceeding under this chapter.

(12) "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.

(13) "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.

(14) "Guardianship" means a guardianship pursuant to chapter 13.36 RCW or a limited guardianship of a minor pursuant to RCW 11.130.215 or equivalent laws of another state or a federally recognized Indian tribe.

(15) "Housing assistance" means appropriate referrals by the department or other agencies to federal, state, local, or private agencies or organizations, assistance with forms, applications, or financial subsidies or other monetary assistance for housing. For purposes of this chapter, "housing assistance" is not a remedial service or family reunification service as described in RCW 13.34.025(2).

(16) "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, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, medical care services under RCW 74.09.035, pregnant women assistance benefits, 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.

(17) "Nonminor dependent" means any individual age eighteen to twenty-one years who is participating in extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031.

(18) "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.

(19) "Parent" means the biological or adoptive parents of a child, or an individual who has established a parent-child relationship under RCW 26.26A.100, unless the legal rights of that person have been terminated by a judicial proceeding pursuant to this chapter, chapter 26.33 RCW, or the equivalent laws of another state or a federally recognized Indian tribe.

(20) "Prevention and family services and programs" means specific mental health prevention and treatment services, substance abuse prevention and treatment services, and in-home parent skill-based programs that qualify for federal funding under the federal family first prevention services act, P.L. 115-123. For purposes of this chapter, prevention and family services and programs are not remedial services or family reunification services as described in RCW 13.34.025(2).

(21) "Prevention services" means preservation services, as defined in chapter 74.14C RCW, and other reasonably available services, including housing assistance, capable of preventing the need for out-of-home placement while protecting the child. Prevention services include, but are not limited to, prevention and family services and programs as defined in this section.

(22) "Qualified residential treatment program" means a program that meets the requirements provided in RCW 13.34.420, qualifies for funding under the family first prevention services act under 42 U.S.C. Sec. 672(k), and, if located within Washington state, is licensed as a group care facility under chapter 74.15 RCW.

(23) "Relative" includes persons related to a child in the following ways:

(a) Any blood relative, including those of half-blood, and including first cousins, second cousins, nephews or nieces, and persons of preceding generations as denoted by prefixes of grand, great, or great-great;

(b) Stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister;

(c) A person who legally adopts a child or the child's parent as well as the natural and other legally adopted children of such persons, and other relatives of the adoptive parents in accordance with state law;

(d) Spouses of any persons named in (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection, even after the marriage is terminated;

(e) Relatives, as named in (a), (b), (c), or (d) of this subsection, of any half sibling of the child; or

(f) Extended family members, as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, a person who has reached the age of eighteen and who is the Indian child's grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece or nephew, first or second cousin, or stepparent who provides care in the family abode on a twenty-four hour basis to an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903(4).

(24) "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.

(25) "Sibling" means a child's birth brother, birth sister, adoptive brother, adoptive sister, half-brother, or half-sister, or as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe for an Indian child as defined in RCW 13.38.040.

(26) "Social study" means a written evaluation of matters relevant to the disposition of the case that contains the information required by RCW 13.34.430.

(27) "Supervised independent living" includes, but is not limited to, apartment living, room and board arrangements, college or university dormitories, and shared roommate settings. Supervised independent living settings must be approved by the department or the court.

(28) "Voluntary placement agreement" means, for the purposes of extended foster care services, a written voluntary agreement between a nonminor dependent who agrees to submit to the care and authority of the department for the purposes of participating in the extended foster care program. For the purposes of placing youth in out-of-home care when a dependency petition under this chapter has not been filed, "voluntary placement agreement" means a voluntary agreement between the department and the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian approving the child's placement in the care and temporary legal custody of the department.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.090 and 2021 c 211 s 10 and 2021 c 210 s 2 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) Any party has a right to be represented by an attorney in all proceedings under this chapter, to introduce evidence, to be heard in his or her own behalf, to examine witnesses, to receive a decision based solely on the evidence adduced at the hearing, and to an unbiased fact finder.

(2) At all stages of a proceeding in which a child is alleged to be dependent, the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian has the right to be represented by counsel, and if indigent, to have counsel appointed for him or her by the court. Unless waived in court, counsel shall be provided to the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, if such person (a) has appeared in the proceeding or requested the court to appoint counsel and (b) is financially unable to obtain counsel because of indigency.

(3) At all stages of a proceeding in which a child is alleged to be dependent, the child has the right to be represented by counsel. Counsel shall be provided at public expense subject to the phase-in schedule as provided in RCW 13.34.212.

(4) When the department proposes a voluntary placement agreement when there is no pending dependency proceeding, the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian has the right to:

(a) Consult with counsel by telephone or video conference, provided through contract with the office of public defense; and

(b) If after consulting with counsel, the child's parent, legal guardian, or legal custodian requests to have an attorney assigned, they shall receive representation by counsel, provided through contract with the office of public defense and according to the implementation schedule included in this subsection. The office of public defense shall develop and administer an implementation schedule that provides assignment of counsel for:

(i) At least one-third of anticipated requests for attorneys under this subsection by July 1, 2024;

(ii) At least two-thirds of anticipated requests for attorneys under this subsection by July 1, 2025; and

(iii) Full statewide implementation by July 1, 2026.

(5) If a party to an action under this chapter is represented by counsel, no order shall be provided to that party for his or her signature without prior notice and provision of the order to counsel.

((~~(5)~~)) (6) Copies of department records to which the child and the child's parents have legal access pursuant to chapter 13.50 RCW shall be given to the child or child's counsel, and the parents, guardian, legal custodian, or his or her legal counsel, prior to any shelter care hearing and within 15 days after the department receives a written request for such records from the child or child's counsel, and the parents, guardian, legal custodian, or his or her legal counsel. These records shall be provided to the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian, or legal counsel a reasonable period of time prior to the shelter care hearing in order to allow an opportunity to review the records prior to the hearing. These records shall be legible and shall be provided at no expense to the child or child's counsel, and the parents, guardian, legal custodian, or his or her counsel. When the records are served on legal counsel, legal counsel shall have the opportunity to review the records with the client and shall review the records with the client prior to the shelter care hearing. The department shall make every effort to provide all other discoverable material to the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or his or her legal counsel prior to any shelter care hearing.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Section 3 of this act takes effect July 1, 2024.

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