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**HOUSE BILL 2383**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Eslick, Taylor, and Jacobsen

AN ACT Relating to reporting on dependency outcomes; amending RCW 13.34.820 and 13.34.035; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Dependency courts should work to ensure the well-being of dependent children and to ensure that every young person who leaves foster care has relational permanency – meaning they have various long-term relationships that help them feel loved and connected. This includes relationships with siblings, parents, family members, extended family, family friends, mentors, and where appropriate, former foster family members.

Legal permanency, achieved through reunification, guardianship, or adoption is important, but it is not the only way to provide a sense of belonging and meaningful connections for young people. The federal children's bureau has cautioned that, legal permanence alone does not guarantee secure attachments and lifelong relationships. The relational aspects of permanency are critically important and fundamental to overall well-being, administration on children, youth and families, information memorandum ACYF-CB-IM-20-09, January 5, 2021. Relational permanency is one component of a child's overall well-being. Washington state's data collection should reflect the importance of both relational and legal permanency as well as child well-being.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.820 and 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 309 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The administrative office of the courts, in consultation with the attorney general's office and the department, shall compile an annual report, providing information about ((~~cases that fail to meet statutory guidelines to achieve permanency for dependent children~~)) dependency cases including available data about whether children in Washington state dependency cases are achieving relational permanency, whether cases meet statutory guidelines, and reasons why timelines are not met.

(2) ((~~The~~)) In compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the administrative office of the courts shall submit the annual report required by this section to appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1st of each year, beginning on December 1, 2007. The administrative office of the courts shall also submit the annual report to a representative of the foster parent association of Washington state, the office of civil legal aid, and the Washington state office of public defense.

(3) The annual report shall include information regarding whether foster parents received timely notification of dependency hearings as required by RCW 13.34.096 and 13.34.145 and whether caregivers submitted reports to the court.

(4) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the administrative office of the courts shall, in consultation with others, identify measures of relational permanency and child well-being and shall report to the legislature by July 1, 2025, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the following information:

(a) A plan for reporting on child well-being and relational permanency;

(b) How to make such information publicly available;

(c) What can be reported using existing data;

(d) What additional information should be collected; and

(e) What data-sharing agreements are necessary to ensure an accurate picture of the needs of families in the dependency system.

(5) In making these determinations the administrative office of the courts must consult with representatives who have knowledge of data collection systems from the office of the superintendent of public instruction; the health care authority; the department of children, youth, and families; the department of social and health services; and any other entity holding relevant data or expertise.

(6) Consistent with RCW 13.50.280, to collect data necessary to evaluate the relational permanency and well-being of dependent children, the administrative office of the courts may execute data-sharing agreements with the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the health care authority, the department of children, youth, and families, and the department of social and health services.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.035 and 2009 c 491 s 6 are each amended 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 production and distribution of the forms. Private vendors also may distribute the forms. Distribution of forms may be in printed or electronic form.

(5) In order to effectuate the purposes of RCW 13.34.820, court forms may indicate whether an order or portion of an order was agreed or contested, and if contested, by which party or parties.

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