

---

**Human Services, Youth, & Early  
Learning Committee**

---

**HB 1204**

**Brief Description:** Implementing the family connections program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Callan, Eslick, Leavitt, Bateman, Kloba, Reed, Simmons, Doglio, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, McEntire, Davis and Pollet; by request of Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the Family Connections Program as a permanent program, instead of one that expires on June 30, 2023.

**Hearing Date:** 1/17/23

**Staff:** Luke Wickham

**Background:**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) contracts with Amara to operate the Family Connections Program (program), which currently operates in King, Pierce, Mason, Clark, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Kitsap, and Skamania counties. The program facilitates interaction between a parent of a child who is dependent and in out-of-home care and the person with whom the child is placed.

Families may be referred to the program by:

- a DCYF caseworker;
- an attorney;
- a guardian ad litem;
- a parent ally;

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

- an office of public defense social worker; or
- the court.

After receiving a referral, the program must determine whether an in-person meeting between the parent and the individual with whom the child is placed is appropriate. If the program determines that this meeting is appropriate, the program then determines whether:

- the parent and the individual with whom the child is placed are willing to participate in an in-person meeting; and
- safety concerns exist such that an in-person meeting should not occur.

If the program determines that an in-person meeting should occur, the program provides a referral to the program team. The program team includes a parent ally and an experienced caregiver.

Once the program team receives a referral, the program team must:

- ensure that the parent ally contact the parent to prepare for a meeting with the caregiver;
- ensure that the experienced caregiver contact the caregiver to prepare for a meeting with the parent;
- convene a meeting between the parent and the caregiver; and
- provide ongoing support to the parent and caregiver.

If the program determines that an in-person meeting should not occur, the program team must facilitate the exchange of information between the parent and the caregiver in a manner that does not include an in-person meeting.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The requirement that the Department of Children, Youth, and Families contract with an external organization or organizations to implement and operate the Family Connections Program (program) is made a permanent requirement instead of one that ends June 30, 2023. The bill will allow the program to operate in one or more locations on either side of the Cascade mountain range.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 16, 2023.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 30, 2023.