

RCW 26.09.160 Failure to comply with decree or temporary injunction—Obligation to make support or maintenance payments or permit contact with children not suspended—Penalties.

(1) The performance of parental functions and the duty to provide child support are distinct responsibilities in the care of a child. If a party fails to comply with a provision of a decree or temporary order of injunction, the obligation of the other party to make payments for support or maintenance or to permit contact with children is not suspended. An attempt by a parent, in either the negotiation or the performance of a parenting plan, to condition one aspect of the parenting plan upon another, to condition payment of child support upon an aspect of the parenting plan, to refuse to pay ordered child support, to refuse to perform the duties provided in the parenting plan, or to hinder the performance by the other parent of duties provided in the parenting plan, shall be deemed bad faith and shall be punished by the court by holding the party in contempt of court and by awarding to the aggrieved party reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incidental in bringing a motion for contempt of court.

(2) (a) A motion may be filed to initiate a contempt action to coerce a parent to comply with an order establishing residential provisions for a child. If the court finds there is reasonable cause to believe the parent has not complied with the order, the court may issue an order to show cause why the relief requested should not be granted.

(b) If, based on all the facts and circumstances, the court finds after hearing that the parent, in bad faith, has not complied with the order establishing residential provisions for the child, the court shall find the parent in contempt of court. Upon a finding of contempt, the court shall order:

(i) The noncomplying parent to provide the moving party additional time with the child. The additional time shall be equal to the time missed with the child, due to the parent's noncompliance;

(ii) The parent to pay, to the moving party, all court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred as a result of the noncompliance, and any reasonable expenses incurred in locating or returning a child; and

(iii) The parent to pay, to the moving party, a civil penalty, not less than the sum of one hundred dollars.

The court may also order the parent to be imprisoned in the county jail, if the parent is presently able to comply with the provisions of the court-ordered parenting plan and is presently unwilling to comply. The parent may be imprisoned until he or she agrees to comply with the order, but in no event for more than one hundred eighty days.

(3) On a second failure within three years to comply with a residential provision of a court-ordered parenting plan, a motion may be filed to initiate contempt of court proceedings according to the procedure set forth in subsection (2) (a) and (b) of this section. On a finding of contempt under this subsection, the court shall order:

(a) The noncomplying parent to provide the other parent or party additional time with the child. The additional time shall be twice the amount of the time missed with the child, due to the parent's noncompliance;

(b) The noncomplying parent to pay, to the other parent or party, all court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred as a result of

the noncompliance, and any reasonable expenses incurred in locating or returning a child; and

(c) The noncomplying parent to pay, to the moving party, a civil penalty of not less than two hundred fifty dollars.

The court may also order the parent to be imprisoned in the county jail, if the parent is presently able to comply with the provisions of the court-ordered parenting plan and is presently unwilling to comply. The parent may be imprisoned until he or she agrees to comply with the order but in no event for more than one hundred eighty days.

(4) For purposes of subsections (1), (2), and (3) of this section, the parent shall be deemed to have the present ability to comply with the order establishing residential provisions unless he or she establishes otherwise by a preponderance of the evidence. The parent shall establish a reasonable excuse for failure to comply with the residential provision of a court-ordered parenting plan by a preponderance of the evidence.

(5) Any monetary award ordered under subsections (1), (2), and (3) of this section may be enforced, by the party to whom it is awarded, in the same manner as a civil judgment.

(6) Subsections (1), (2), and (3) of this section authorize the exercise of the court's power to impose remedial sanctions for contempt of court and is in addition to any other contempt power the court may possess.

(7) Upon motion for contempt of court under subsections (1) through (3) of this section, if the court finds the motion was brought without reasonable basis, the court shall order the moving party to pay to the nonmoving party, all costs, reasonable attorneys' fees, and a civil penalty of not less than one hundred dollars. [1991 c 367 § 4; 1989 c 318 § 1; 1987 c 460 § 12; 1973 1st ex.s. c 157 § 16.]

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

Severability—1989 c 318: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1989 c 318 § 6.]