

RCW 74.13.031 Duties of department—Child welfare services—Children's services advisory committee. (1) The department shall develop, administer, supervise, and monitor a coordinated and comprehensive plan that establishes, aids, and strengthens services for the protection and care of runaway, dependent, or neglected children.

(2) Within available resources, the department shall recruit an adequate number of prospective adoptive and foster homes, both regular and specialized, i.e. homes for children of ethnic minority, including Indian homes for Indian children, sibling groups, children with disabilities or behavioral health conditions, teens, pregnant and parenting teens, and the department shall annually provide data and information to the governor and the legislature concerning the department's success in: (a) Placing children with relatives; (b) providing supports to kinship caregivers including guardianship assistance payments; (c) supporting relatives to pass home studies and become licensed caregivers; and (d) meeting the need for nonrelative family foster homes when children cannot be placed with relatives.

(3) The department shall investigate complaints of any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, or sexual abuse or exploitation, or that presents an imminent risk of serious harm, and on the basis of the findings of such investigation, offer child welfare services in relation to the problem to such parents, legal custodians, or persons serving in loco parentis, and/or bring the situation to the attention of an appropriate court, or another community agency. An investigation is not required of nonaccidental injuries which are clearly not the result of a lack of care or supervision by the child's parents, legal custodians, or persons serving in loco parentis. If the investigation reveals that a crime against a child may have been committed, the department shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.

(4) As provided in RCW 26.44.030, the department may respond to a report of child abuse or neglect by using the family assessment response.

(5) The department shall offer, on a voluntary basis, family reconciliation services to families who are in conflict.

(6) The department shall monitor placements of children in out-of-home care and in-home dependencies to assure the safety, well-being, and quality of care being provided is within the scope of the intent of the legislature as defined in RCW 74.13.010 and 74.15.010. Under this section children in out-of-home care and in-home dependencies and their caregivers shall receive a private and individual face-to-face visit each month. The department shall randomly select no less than ten percent of the caregivers currently providing care to receive one unannounced face-to-face visit in the caregiver's home per year. No caregiver will receive an unannounced visit through the random selection process for two consecutive years. If the caseworker makes a good faith effort to conduct the unannounced visit to a caregiver and is unable to do so, that month's visit to that caregiver need not be unannounced. The department is encouraged to group monthly visits to caregivers by geographic area so that in the event an unannounced visit cannot be completed, the caseworker may complete other required monthly visits. The department shall use a method of random selection that does not cause a fiscal impact to the department.

The department shall conduct the monthly visits with children and caregivers to whom it is providing child welfare services.

(7) The department shall have authority to accept custody of children from parents and to accept custody of children from juvenile courts, where authorized to do so under law, to provide child welfare services including placement for adoption, to provide for the routine and necessary medical, dental, and mental health care, or necessary emergency care of the children, and to provide for the physical care of such children and make payment of maintenance costs if needed. Except where required by Public Law 95-608 (25 U.S.C. Sec. 1915), no private adoption agency which receives children for adoption from the department shall discriminate on the basis of race, creed, or color when considering applications in their placement for adoption.

(8) The department may accept custody of children from parents through a voluntary placement agreement to provide child welfare services. The department may place children with a relative, a suitable person, or a licensed foster home under a voluntary placement agreement. In seeking a placement for a voluntary placement agreement, the department should consider the preferences of the parents and attempt to place with relatives or suitable persons over licensed foster care.

(9) The department shall have authority to provide temporary shelter to children who have run away from home and who are admitted to crisis residential centers.

(10) The department shall have authority to purchase care for children.

(11) The department shall establish a children's services advisory committee which shall assist the secretary in the development of a partnership plan for utilizing resources of the public and private sectors, and advise on all matters pertaining to child welfare, licensing of child care agencies, adoption, and services related thereto. At least one member shall represent the adoption community.

(12)(a) The department shall provide continued extended foster care services to nonminor dependents who are:

(i) Enrolled in a secondary education program or a secondary education equivalency program;

(ii) Enrolled and participating in a postsecondary academic or postsecondary vocational education program;

(iii) Participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment;

(iv) Engaged in employment for eighty hours or more per month; or

(v) Not able to engage in any of the activities described in (a)(i) through (iv) of this subsection due to a documented medical condition.

(b) To be eligible for extended foster care services, the nonminor dependent must have been dependent at the time that he or she reached age eighteen years. If the dependency case of the nonminor dependent was dismissed pursuant to RCW 13.34.267, he or she may receive extended foster care services pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement under RCW 74.13.336 or pursuant to an order of dependency issued by the court under RCW 13.34.268. A nonminor dependent whose dependency case was dismissed by the court may request extended foster care services before reaching age twenty-one years. Eligible nonminor dependents may unenroll and reenroll in extended foster care through a voluntary placement agreement an unlimited number of times between ages eighteen and twenty-one.

(c) The department shall develop and implement rules regarding youth eligibility requirements.

(d) The department shall make efforts to ensure that extended foster care services maximize medicaid reimbursements. This must include the department ensuring that health and mental health extended foster care providers participate in medicaid, unless the condition of the extended foster care youth requires specialty care that is not available among participating medicaid providers or there are no participating medicaid providers in the area. The department shall coordinate other services to maximize federal resources and the most cost-efficient delivery of services to extended foster care youth.

(e) The department shall allow a youth who has received extended foster care services, but lost his or her eligibility, to reenter the extended foster care program an unlimited number of times through a voluntary placement agreement when he or she meets the eligibility criteria again.

(13) The department shall have authority to provide adoption support benefits on behalf of youth ages 18 to 21 years who achieved permanency through adoption at age 16 or older and who meet the criteria described in subsection (12) of this section.

(14) The department shall have the authority to provide guardianship subsidies on behalf of youth ages 18 to 21 who achieved permanency through guardianship and who meet the criteria described in subsection (12) of this section.

(15) The department shall refer cases to the division of child support whenever state or federal funds are expended for the care and maintenance of a child, including a child with a developmental disability who is placed as a result of an action under chapter 13.34 RCW, unless the department finds that there is good cause not to pursue collection of child support against the parent or parents of the child. Cases involving individuals age eighteen through twenty shall not be referred to the division of child support unless required by federal law.

(16) The department shall have authority within funds appropriated for foster care services to purchase care for Indian children who are in the custody of a federally recognized Indian tribe or tribally licensed child-placing agency pursuant to parental consent, tribal court order, or state juvenile court order. The purchase of such care is exempt from the requirements of chapter 74.13B RCW and may be purchased from the federally recognized Indian tribe or tribally licensed child-placing agency, and shall be subject to the same eligibility standards and rates of support applicable to other children for whom the department purchases care.

Notwithstanding any other provision of RCW 13.32A.170 through 13.32A.200, 43.185C.295, 74.13.035, and 74.13.036, or of this section all services to be provided by the department under subsections (4), (7), and (9) of this section, subject to the limitations of these subsections, may be provided by any program offering such services funded pursuant to Titles II and III of the federal juvenile justice and delinquency prevention act of 1974.

(17) The department may, within funds appropriated for guardianship subsidies, provide subsidies for eligible guardians who are appointed as guardian of an Indian child by the tribal court of a federally recognized tribe located in Washington state, as defined in RCW 13.38.040. The provision of subsidies shall be subject to the same eligibility standards and rates of support applicable to other children for whom the department provides subsidies. To be eligible,

the guardian must either be certified by a department-licensed child-placing agency or licensed by a federally recognized tribe located in Washington state that is a Title IV-E agency, as defined in 45 C.F.R. 1355.20.

(18) Within amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall provide preventive services to families with children that prevent or shorten the duration of an out-of-home placement.

(19) The department shall have authority to provide independent living services to youths, including individuals who have attained eighteen years of age, and have not attained twenty-three years of age, who are or have been in the department's care and custody, or who are or were nonminor dependents.

(20) The department shall consult at least quarterly with foster parents, including members of the foster parent association of Washington state, for the purpose of receiving information and comment regarding how the department is performing the duties and meeting the obligations specified in this section and RCW 74.13.250 regarding the recruitment of foster homes, reducing foster parent turnover rates, providing effective training for foster parents, and administering a coordinated and comprehensive plan that strengthens services for the protection of children. Consultation shall occur at the regional and statewide levels.

(21)(a) The department shall, within current funding levels, place on its public website a document listing the duties and responsibilities the department has to a child subject to a dependency petition including, but not limited to, the following:

(i) Reasonable efforts, including the provision of services, toward reunification of the child with his or her family;

(ii) Sibling visits subject to the restrictions in RCW 13.34.136(2)(b)(ii);

(iii) Parent-child visits;

(iv) Statutory preference for placement with a relative or other suitable person, if appropriate; and

(v) Statutory preference for an out-of-home placement that allows the child to remain in the same school or school district, if practical and in the child's best interests.

(b) The document must be prepared in conjunction with a community-based organization and must be updated as needed.

(22)(a) The department shall have the authority to purchase legal representation for parents or kinship caregivers, or both, of children who are at risk of being dependent, or who are dependent, to establish or modify a parenting plan under RCW 13.34.155 or chapter 26.09, 26.26A, or 26.26B RCW or secure orders establishing other relevant civil legal relationships authorized by law, when it is necessary for the child's safety, permanence, or well-being. The department's purchase of legal representation for kinship caregivers must be within the department's appropriations. This subsection does not create an entitlement to legal representation purchased by the department and does not create judicial authority to order the department to purchase legal representation for a parent or kinship caregiver. Such determinations are solely within the department's discretion. The term "kinship caregiver" as used in this section means a caregiver who meets the definition of "kin" in RCW 74.13.600(1), unless the child is an Indian child as defined in RCW 13.38.040 and 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903. For an Indian child as defined in RCW 13.38.040 and 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903, the term "kinship caregiver" as used in this section means a

caregiver who is an "extended family member" as defined in RCW 13.38.040(8).

(b) The department is encouraged to work with the office of public defense parent representation program and the office of civil legal aid to develop a cost-effective system for providing effective civil legal representation for parents and kinship caregivers if it exercises its authority under this subsection. [2023 c 221 § 3; 2020 c 274 § 61. Prior: 2019 c 172 § 8; 2019 c 46 § 5045; prior: 2018 c 284 § 37; 2018 c 80 § 1; 2018 c 34 § 5; prior: 2017 3rd sp.s. c 20 § 7; 2017 c 265 § 2; 2015 c 240 § 3; 2014 c 122 § 2; prior: 2013 c 332 § 10; (2013 c 332 § 9 expired December 1, 2013); 2013 c 32 § 2; (2013 c 32 § 1 expired December 1, 2013); prior: 2012 c 259 § 8; 2012 c 52 § 2; prior: 2011 c 330 § 5; 2011 c 160 § 2; prior: 2009 c 520 § 51; 2009 c 491 § 7; (2009 c 235 § 4 expired October 1, 2010); 2009 c 235 § 2; 2008 c 267 § 6; 2007 c 413 § 10; prior: 2006 c 266 § 1; 2006 c 221 § 3; 2004 c 183 § 3; 2001 c 192 § 1; 1999 c 267 § 8; 1998 c 314 § 10; prior: 1997 c 386 § 32; 1997 c 272 § 1; 1995 c 191 § 1; 1990 c 146 § 9; prior: 1987 c 505 § 69; 1987 c 170 § 10; 1983 c 246 § 4; 1982 c 118 § 3; 1981 c 298 § 16; 1979 ex.s. c 165 § 22; 1979 c 155 § 77; 1977 ex.s. c 291 § 22; 1975-'76 2nd ex.s. c 71 § 4; 1973 1st ex.s. c 101 § 2; 1967 c 172 § 17.]

Effective date—2018 c 34: See note following RCW 13.34.267.

Construction—Competitive procurement process and contract provisions—Conflict with federal requirements and Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978—2017 3rd sp.s. c 20: See notes following RCW 74.13.270.

Finding—Intent—2017 c 265: "The legislature finds that a large number of foster youth experience homelessness. The legislature intends that individuals who are eligible for extended foster care services are able to receive those services to help prevent them from experiencing homelessness. The 2016 office of homeless youth annual report identifies ensuring that youth exiting public systems are not released into homelessness as a goal and recommends expanding options for youth to enroll in extended foster care." [2017 c 265 § 1.]

Effective date—2015 c 240: See note following RCW 13.34.267.

Effective date—2014 c 122: See note following RCW 13.34.267.

Effective date—2013 c 332 §§ 8 and 10: See note following RCW 74.13.020.

Expiration date—2013 c 332 §§ 7 and 9: See note following RCW 74.13.020.

Findings—Recommendations—Application—2013 c 332: See notes following RCW 13.34.267.

Effective date—2013 c 32 § 2: "Section 2 of this act takes effect December 1, 2013." [2013 c 32 § 3.]

Expiration date—2013 c 32 § 1: "Section 1 of this act expires December 1, 2013." [2013 c 32 § 4.]

Effective date—2012 c 259 §§ 1 and 3-10: See note following RCW 26.44.020.

Intent—2012 c 52: "Since 2006, under a program known as "foster care to 21," the Washington state legislature has provided services to young adults transitioning out of foster care in order for them to enroll in and complete their postsecondary educations. In 2008, the United States congress passed the fostering connections to success and increasing adoptions act of 2008, which allows states to receive a federal match for state dollars expended in supporting youth transitioning out of foster care. In 2011, the Washington state legislature opted to create the "extended foster care program," in order to receive the federal match for youth completing high school. It is the intent of this act to enable the state to receive the federal match to offset costs expended on supporting youth seeking postsecondary education. This act would result in these youth being served under the extended foster care program, for which there is a federal match, instead of the foster care to 21 program, which relies solely on state dollars. It is the intent of the legislature to allow all youth currently enrolled in the foster care to 21 program for the purposes of postsecondary education to remain enrolled until they turn twenty-one, are no longer otherwise eligible, or choose to leave the program. Within three years of June 7, 2012, the "foster care to 21" program will cease to operate, and youth seeking a postsecondary education will be solely served by the extended foster care program." [2012 c 52 § 1.]

Intent—2011 c 330: See note following RCW 13.04.011.

Findings—2011 c 160: "The legislature finds that foster parents are a critical piece of the dependency system. The legislature further finds that the majority of foster parents provide excellent care to children in the dependency system, many of whom have suffered serious damage in their families of origin. It is the legislature's belief that through the selfless dedication of many foster parents that abused and neglected children are able to heal and go on to lead productive lives. The legislature also believes that some foster parents act in ways that are damaging to the children in their care and it is the department of social and health services' responsibility to make sure all children in care are safe. The legislature finds that unannounced visits to caregivers' homes is another method by which the department of social and health services can make sure the children in foster care are safe." [2011 c 160 § 1.]

Effective date—2009 c 235 § 2: "Section 2 of this act takes effect October 1, 2010." [2009 c 235 § 7.]

Expiration date—2009 c 235 § 4: "Section 4 of this act expires October 1, 2010." [2009 c 235 § 8.]

Findings—Intent—2009 c 235: "(1) The legislature finds that the federal fostering connections to success and increasing adoptions act of 2008 provides important new opportunities for the state to use federal funding to promote permanency and positive outcomes for youth in foster care and for those who age out of the foster care system.

(2) The legislature also finds that research regarding former foster youth is generally sobering. Longitudinal research on the adult functioning of former foster youth indicates a disproportionate likelihood that youth aging out of foster care and those who spent several years in care will experience poor outcomes in a variety of areas, including limited human capital upon which to build economic security; untreated mental or behavioral health problems; involvement in the criminal justice and corrections systems; and early parenthood combined with second-generation child welfare involvement. The legislature further finds that research also demonstrates that access to adequate and appropriate supports during the period of transition from foster care to independence can have significant positive impacts on adult functioning and can improve outcomes relating to educational attainment and postsecondary enrollment; employment and earnings; and reduced rates of teen pregnancies.

(3) The legislature intends to clarify existing authority for foster care services beyond age eighteen and to establish authority for future expansion of housing and other supports for youth aging out of foster care and youth who achieved permanency in later adolescence." [2009 c 235 § 1.]

Effective date—2008 c 267 § 6: "Section 6 of this act takes effect December 31, 2008." [2008 c 267 § 14.]

Severability—2007 c 413: See note following RCW 13.34.215.

Construction—2006 c 266: "Nothing in this act shall be construed to create:

(1) An entitlement to services;

(2) Judicial authority to extend the jurisdiction of juvenile court in a proceeding under chapter 13.34 RCW to a youth who has attained eighteen years of age or to order the provision of services to the youth; or

(3) A private right of action or claim on the part of any individual, entity, or agency against the department of social and health services or any contractor of the department." [2006 c 266 § 2.]

Adoption of rules—2006 c 266: "The department of social and health services is authorized to adopt rules establishing eligibility for independent living services and placement for youths under this act." [2006 c 266 § 3.]

Study and report—2006 c 266: "(1) Beginning in July 2008 and subject to the approval of its governing board, the Washington state institute for public policy shall conduct a study measuring the outcomes for foster youth who have received continued support pursuant to RCW 74.13.031(10). The study should include measurements of any savings to the state and local government. The institute shall issue a report containing its preliminary findings to the legislature by December 1, 2008, and a final report by December 1, 2009.

(2) The institute is authorized to accept nonstate funds to conduct the study required in subsection (1) of this section." [2006 c 266 § 4.]

Finding—2006 c 221: See note following RCW 13.34.315.

Effective date—2004 c 183: See note following RCW 13.34.160.

Findings—Intent—Severability—1999 c 267: See notes following RCW 43.20A.790.

Application—Effective date—1997 c 386: See notes following RCW 13.50.010.

Effective date—1997 c 272: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 1997." [1997 c 272 § 8.]

Effective date—1987 c 170 §§ 10 and 11: "Sections 10 and 11 of this act shall take effect July 1, 1988." [1987 c 170 § 16.]

Severability—1987 c 170: See note following RCW 13.04.030.

Severability—1981 c 298: See note following RCW 13.32A.040.

Effective dates—Severability—1977 ex.s. c 291: See notes following RCW 13.04.005.

Severability—1967 c 172: See note following RCW 74.15.010.

Declaration of purpose—1967 c 172: See RCW 74.15.010.

Abuse of child: Chapter 26.44 RCW.

Licensing of agencies caring for or placing children, expectant mothers, and individuals with developmental disabilities: Chapter 74.15 RCW.