

RCW 74.14C.005 Findings and intent. (1) The legislature believes that protecting the health and safety of children is paramount. The legislature recognizes that the number of children entering out-of-home care is increasing and that a number of children receive long-term foster care protection. Reasonable efforts by the department to shorten out-of-home placement or avoid it altogether should be a major focus of the child welfare system. It is intended that providing up-front services decrease the number of children entering out-of-home care and have the effect of eventually lowering foster care expenditures and strengthening the family unit.

Within available funds, the legislature directs the department to focus child welfare services on protecting the child, strengthening families and, to the extent possible, providing necessary services in the family setting, while drawing upon the strengths of the family. The legislature intends services be locally based and offered as early as possible to avoid disruption to the family, out-of-home placement of the child, and entry into the dependency system. The legislature also intends that these services be used for those families whose children are returning to the home from out-of-home care. These services are known as family preservation services and intensive family preservation services and are characterized by the following values, beliefs, and goals:

- (a) Safety of the child is always the first concern;
 - (b) Children need their families and should be raised by their own families whenever possible;
 - (c) Interventions should focus on family strengths and be responsive to the individual family's cultural values and needs;
 - (d) Participation should be voluntary; and
 - (e) Improvement of family functioning is essential in order to promote the child's health, safety, and welfare and thereby allow the family to remain intact and allow children to remain at home.
- (2) Subject to the availability of funds for such purposes, the legislature intends for these services to be made available to all eligible families on a statewide basis through a phased-in process. Except as otherwise specified by statute, the department shall have the authority and discretion to implement and expand these services as provided in RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100. The department shall consult with the community public health and safety networks when assessing a community's resources and need for services.
- (3) It is the legislature's intent that, within available funds, the department develop services in accordance with RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100.
- (4) Nothing in RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100 shall be construed to create an entitlement to services nor to create judicial authority to order the provision of preservation services to any person or family if the services are unavailable or unsuitable or that the child or family are not eligible for such services. [2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 § 510; 1995 c 311 § 1; 1992 c 214 § 1.]

Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 §§ 102, 104-115, 201-227, 301-337, 401-419, 501-513, 801-803, and 805-822: See note following RCW 43.216.025.

Conflict with federal requirements—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6: See RCW 43.216.908.