
HOUSE BILL 2362

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By Representatives Kagi, O'Brien, Dickerson, Schual-Berke, Boldt and Morrell

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1 AN ACT Relating to family team decision meetings; adding new
2 sections to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that families of
5 children who are involved in the child welfare system should play an
6 integral role in the decision-making process surrounding planning for
7 those children. It is anticipated that involving families in decision
8 making will result in better outcomes for children, specifically by
9 reducing the number of out-of-home placements, reducing the incidence
10 of behavioral, physical, and mental health problems for individual
11 children, and, for those children in out-of-home placements, reducing
12 the number of placements for individual children, increasing the
13 likelihood of placing individual children with siblings, and increasing
14 successful reunifications.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
16 to read as follows:

17 The definitions in this section apply throughout sections 2 through
18 6 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

1 (1) "Family member" means any person to whom the child is related
2 by blood, adoption, or marriage, including marriages that have been
3 dissolved, or any other individual to whom the child is not related but
4 who has been identified as having a significant relationship with the
5 child. "Family member" includes, but is not limited to: Parents;
6 stepparents; any person denoted by the prefix "grand" or "great";
7 siblings, whether full, half, or step; aunts and uncles; nephews and
8 nieces; and cousins. "Family member" includes a child twelve years of
9 age or older or, when appropriate, a child younger than twelve years of
10 age.

11 (2) "Family team decision meeting" means a family-focused
12 intervention facilitated by dedicated professional staff that is
13 designed to build and strengthen the natural caregiving system for the
14 child. Family team decision meetings may include family group
15 conferences, family unity meetings, family mediation, or other
16 professionally recognized interventions that include extended family
17 and rely upon the family to make decisions about planning for its
18 children. The purpose of the family team decision meeting is to
19 establish a plan that provides for the safety, attachment, and
20 permanency needs of the child.

21 (3) "Reasonable inquiries" means efforts that involve reviewing the
22 case file for relevant information, contacting the parents or guardians
23 of the child, and contacting additional sources of information that may
24 lead to ascertaining the whereabouts of family members, if necessary.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
26 to read as follows:

27 (1) The department of social and health services shall establish as
28 a goal the use of a family team decision meeting in each case in which
29 a child is involved in the child welfare system.

30 (2) When the department determines that the use of a family team
31 decision meeting is appropriate, an initial meeting shall be held as
32 soon as possible following a child's involvement in the child welfare
33 system with subsequent meetings being held at key decision points
34 relating to the child, as appropriate.

35 (3) If the department elects not to conduct a family team decision
36 meeting, the reasons for that decision shall be clearly documented in
37 the written service plan of the child developed by the department.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
2 to read as follows:

3 (1) If the department of social and health services determines that
4 the use of a family team decision meeting is appropriate, the
5 department shall conduct and document reasonable inquiries to promptly
6 locate and notify the parents, grandparents, and any other family
7 members who have a significant relationship with the child.

8 (2) All family members notified by the department may attend the
9 meeting unless the department determines that the safety of any
10 attendee will be compromised by the attendance of any family member.

11 (3) Any family member who the department deems a safety risk may
12 provide written statements that address the subject of any family team
13 decision meeting, including the determination of placement of the child
14 or components of a service plan for the child and family members.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
16 to read as follows:

17 (1) If the department of social and health services conducts a
18 family team decision meeting, the meeting shall result in the
19 development of a written family plan that may include service
20 recommendations, placement recommendations, and a permanency plan. The
21 family plan shall include the following:

22 (a) The expectations of the parents of the child and other family
23 members;

24 (b) Services the department will provide;

25 (c) Timelines for implementation of the plan;

26 (d) The benefits of compliance with the plan;

27 (e) The consequences of noncompliance with the plan; and

28 (f) A schedule of subsequent meetings, if appropriate.

29 (2) Any family member participating in a family team decision
30 meeting shall sign a written acknowledgment of the content of the
31 family plan developed at the family team decision meeting and that
32 family member's attendance at the meeting.

33 (3) The department shall incorporate the family plan developed at
34 the family team decision meeting into the department's service plan for
35 the child to the extent that the family plan protects the child, builds
36 on family strengths, and is focused on achieving permanency for the
37 child within a reasonable time.

1 (4) If the family plan is not incorporated into the department's
2 service plan for the child, the department shall document the reasons
3 in the service plan.

4 (5) The department shall send a copy of the family plan to the
5 family participants, including those family members who participated by
6 written statement pursuant to section 4(3) of this act, no later than
7 twenty-one days after the conclusion of the family team decision
8 meeting.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
10 to read as follows:

11 Family team decision meetings shall be conducted in accordance with
12 sections 2 through 5 of this act throughout the state by January 1,
13 2005.

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