
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 3085

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Dickerson, Orcutt, Shabro, Pettigrew, Darneille and Morrell)

READ FIRST TIME 02/06/04.

1 AN ACT Relating to family decision meetings; adding new sections to
2 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.** (1) The legislature finds that engaging
5 families in decision making when their children are involved in the
6 child welfare system generally improves the outcomes for children. By
7 involving families in the decision-making process, it is anticipated
8 that the number of out-of-home placements can be reduced, as well as
9 the incidence of behavioral, physical, and mental health problems for
10 individual children. For those children in out-of-home placements, the
11 number of placements for individual children, the likelihood of placing
12 individual children with siblings, and successful reunifications are
13 expected to improve as a result of family engagement. Based on the
14 experience in the state where families have been engaged in decision
15 making, these improved outcomes will result in cost savings to the
16 state as fewer and less costly services and supports for children and
17 families are needed.

18 (2) It is established as the policy of the state of Washington to
19 encourage and support meaningful family involvement in the decision

1 making related to planning for children involved in the child welfare
2 system, in those instances where family is available and family
3 involvement is in the best interest of the child.

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

6 The definition in this section applies throughout sections 3
7 through 5 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

8 "Family decision meeting" means a family-focused intervention
9 facilitated by dedicated professional staff that is designed to build
10 and strengthen the natural caregiving system for the child. Family
11 decision meetings may include, but are not limited to, family group
12 conferences, family mediation, family support meetings, or other
13 professionally recognized interventions that include extended family
14 and rely upon the family to make shared decisions about planning for
15 its children. The purpose of the family decision meeting is to
16 establish a plan that provides for the safety and permanency needs of
17 the child.

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

20 (1) The department of social and health services shall establish as
21 a policy the use of family decision meetings in cases in which a child
22 is involved in the child welfare system.

23 (2) The department shall develop written policies and protocols
24 identifying the key decision points at which family decision meetings
25 shall be held including, but not limited to, a change in a child's
26 placement.

27 (3) When the department determines that the use of a family
28 decision meeting is appropriate, and the child's parent or parents and
29 other family members agree to the meeting, an initial meeting shall be
30 held as soon as possible following the family's agreement to
31 participate.

32 (4) If the department elects not to conduct a family decision
33 meeting or the family does not agree to the meeting, the reasons for
34 not conducting a family decision meeting shall be clearly documented in
35 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 conducts a
4 family decision meeting, the meeting shall result in the development of
5 a written family plan that may include service recommendations,
6 placement recommendations, and a permanency plan.

7 (2) The department shall incorporate the family plan developed at
8 the family decision meeting into the department's service plan for the
9 child to the extent that the family plan protects the child, builds on
10 family strengths, and is focused on achieving permanency for the child
11 within a reasonable time.

12 (3) If the family plan is not incorporated into the department's
13 service plan for the child, the department shall document the reasons
14 in the service plan.

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

17 The department of social and health services shall develop policies
18 for conducting family decision meetings in accordance with sections 3
19 and 4 of this act throughout the state by January 1, 2005.

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