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**HOUSE BILL 1970**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives McClintock, Couture, Waters, Graham, Cheney, Sandlin, Harris, and Caldier

AN ACT Relating to improving communication between the department of children, youth, and families and caregivers; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

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

The department shall establish a caregiver communication specialist position within the department for the purpose of improving communication between the department and caregivers. The caregiver communication specialist position established in this section is responsible for:

(1) Assisting caseworkers in promptly communicating with caregivers of children receiving child welfare services;

(2) Developing policies for sharing appropriate and timely information with caregivers of children receiving child welfare services; and

(3) Supporting coordination between existing caregiver engagement teams, constituent relations, communications specialists, and child welfare field offices.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) By October 1, 2025, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department of children, youth, and families shall submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and the governor describing:

(a) How the department of children, youth, and families could implement an automated notification system that would provide electronic or telephonic notifications to caregivers of children receiving child welfare services regarding upcoming changes in placements for the child, court hearings, or other relevant and appropriate information;

(b) Any statutory, policy, or funding changes needed to accomplish the automated notification system described in (a) of this subsection; and

(c) Recommendations regarding improving communications between the department of children, youth, and families and caregivers. The department shall consult with the caregiver communication specialist established in section 1 of this act, current and former caregivers, and youth who received or are receiving child welfare services regarding the recommendations required under this subsection.

(2) This section expires April 1, 2026.

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