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**ENGROSSED SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5908**

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

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators C. Wilson, Frame, Billig, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Lovelett, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Stanford, Trudeau, and Valdez)

AN ACT Relating to the provision of extended foster care services to youth ages 18 to 21; amending RCW 13.34.267, 74.13.031, and 74.13.336; reenacting and amending RCW 13.34.030 and 74.13.020; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature recognizes that the extended foster care program strives to help hundreds of young Washingtonians in foster care prepare for adulthood and to prevent them from experiencing homelessness.

The legislature finds that extended foster care can reduce homelessness, receipt of public assistance, use of medical emergency departments, diagnosis of substance abuse and treatment, criminal convictions, and involvement of children in the child welfare system. An analysis from the department of social and health services found that, at age 18, 41 percent of youth exiting the foster care system experienced homelessness or housing instability compared to 23 percent of youth in extended foster care.

The legislature finds that the Washington state institute for public policy's benefit-cost analysis found that the extended foster care program produces $3.95 of lifetime benefits for each $1 invested. Furthermore, of the total benefits, 40 percent represents savings and revenue that would accrue to state, local, and federal governments.

However, the legislature recognizes that young people in foster care still experience barriers to accessing the program: In 2022, 27 percent of young people leaving foster care did not participate in extended foster care. The legislature intends to improve outcomes for youth in the foster care system by improving access to the foster care program.

Therefore, the legislature resolves to reduce barriers that young people currently experience when seeking to participate in extended foster care and to make the transition from foster care to extended foster care as seamless as possible, such that all dependent youth are aware of the program when they turn 18 and all youth who want to participate are able to participate.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.030 and 2021 c 304 s 1 and 2021 c 67 s 2 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Abandoned" means when the child's parent, guardian, or other custodian has expressed, either by statement or conduct, an intent to forego, for an extended period, parental rights or responsibilities despite an ability to exercise such rights and responsibilities. If the court finds that the petitioner has exercised due diligence in attempting to locate the parent, no contact between the child and the child's parent, guardian, or other custodian for a period of three months creates a rebuttable presumption of abandonment, even if there is no expressed intent to abandon.

(2) "Child," "juvenile," and "youth" mean:

(a) Any individual under the age of eighteen years; or

(b) Any individual age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 to ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years who is eligible to receive and who elects to receive the extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031. A youth who remains dependent and who receives extended foster care services under RCW 74.13.031 shall not be considered a "child" under any other statute or for any other purpose.

(3) "Current placement episode" means the period of time that begins with the most recent date that the child was removed from the home of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian for purposes of placement in out-of-home care and continues until: (a) The child returns home; (b) an adoption decree, a permanent custody order, or guardianship order is entered; or (c) the dependency is dismissed, whichever occurs first.

(4) "Department" means the department of children, youth, and families.

(5) "Dependency guardian" means the person, nonprofit corporation, or Indian tribe appointed by the court pursuant to this chapter for the limited purpose of assisting the court in the supervision of the dependency.

(6) "Dependent child" means any child who:

(a) Has been abandoned;

(b) Is abused or neglected as defined in chapter 26.44 RCW by a person legally responsible for the care of the child;

(c) Has no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child, such that the child is in circumstances which constitute a danger of substantial damage to the child's psychological or physical development; or

(d) Is receiving extended foster care services, as authorized by RCW 74.13.031.

(7) "Developmental disability" means a disability attributable to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or another neurological or other condition of an individual found by the secretary of the department of social and health services to be closely related to an intellectual disability or to require treatment similar to that required for individuals with intellectual disabilities, which disability originates before the individual attains age eighteen, which has continued or can be expected to continue indefinitely, and which constitutes a substantial limitation to the individual.

(8) "Educational liaison" means a person who has been appointed by the court to fulfill responsibilities outlined in RCW 13.34.046.

(9) "Experiencing homelessness" means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including circumstances such as sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, fleeing domestic violence, or a similar reason as described in the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act (Title 42 U.S.C., chapter 119, subchapter I) as it existed on January 1, 2021.

(10) "Extended foster care services" means residential and other support services the department is authorized to provide under RCW 74.13.031. These services may include placement in licensed, relative, or otherwise approved care, or supervised independent living settings; assistance in meeting basic needs; independent living services; supervised independent living subsidy; medical assistance; and counseling or treatment.

(11) "Guardian" means the person or agency that: (a) Has been appointed as the guardian of a child in a legal proceeding, including a guardian appointed pursuant to chapter 13.36 RCW; and (b) has the legal right to custody of the child pursuant to such appointment. The term "guardian" does not include a "dependency guardian" appointed pursuant to a proceeding under this chapter.

(12) "Guardian ad litem" means a person, appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in a proceeding under this chapter, or in any matter which may be consolidated with a proceeding under this chapter. A "court-appointed special advocate" appointed by the court to be the guardian ad litem for the child, or to perform substantially the same duties and functions as a guardian ad litem, shall be deemed to be guardian ad litem for all purposes and uses of this chapter.

(13) "Guardian ad litem program" means a court-authorized volunteer program, which is or may be established by the superior court of the county in which such proceeding is filed, to manage all aspects of volunteer guardian ad litem representation for children alleged or found to be dependent. Such management shall include but is not limited to: Recruitment, screening, training, supervision, assignment, and discharge of volunteers.

(14) "Guardianship" means a guardianship pursuant to chapter 13.36 RCW or a limited guardianship of a minor pursuant to RCW 11.130.215 or equivalent laws of another state or a federally recognized Indian tribe.

(15) "Housing assistance" means appropriate referrals by the department or other agencies to federal, state, local, or private agencies or organizations, assistance with forms, applications, or financial subsidies or other monetary assistance for housing. For purposes of this chapter, "housing assistance" is not a remedial service or family reunification service as described in RCW 13.34.025(2).

(16) "Indigent" means a person who, at any stage of a court proceeding, is:

(a) Receiving one of the following types of public assistance: Temporary assistance for needy families, aged, blind, or disabled assistance benefits, medical care services under RCW 74.09.035, pregnant women assistance benefits, poverty-related veterans' benefits, food stamps or food stamp benefits transferred electronically, refugee resettlement benefits, medicaid, or supplemental security income; or

(b) Involuntarily committed to a public mental health facility; or

(c) Receiving an annual income, after taxes, of ((~~one hundred twenty-five~~)) 125 percent or less of the federally established poverty level; or

(d) Unable to pay the anticipated cost of counsel for the matter before the court because his or her available funds are insufficient to pay any amount for the retention of counsel.

(17) "Nonminor dependent" means any individual age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 to ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years who is participating in extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031.

(18) "Out-of-home care" means placement in a foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW or placement in a home, other than that of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, not required to be licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW.

(19) "Parent" means the biological or adoptive parents of a child, or an individual who has established a parent-child relationship under RCW 26.26A.100, unless the legal rights of that person have been terminated by a judicial proceeding pursuant to this chapter, chapter 26.33 RCW, or the equivalent laws of another state or a federally recognized Indian tribe.

(20) "Prevention and family services and programs" means specific mental health prevention and treatment services, substance abuse prevention and treatment services, and in-home parent skill-based programs that qualify for federal funding under the federal family first prevention services act, P.L. 115-123. For purposes of this chapter, prevention and family services and programs are not remedial services or family reunification services as described in RCW 13.34.025(2).

(21) "Prevention services" means preservation services, as defined in chapter 74.14C RCW, and other reasonably available services, including housing assistance, capable of preventing the need for out-of-home placement while protecting the child. Prevention services include, but are not limited to, prevention and family services and programs as defined in this section.

(22) "Qualified residential treatment program" means a program that meets the requirements provided in RCW 13.34.420, qualifies for funding under the family first prevention services act under 42 U.S.C. Sec. 672(k), and, if located within Washington state, is licensed as a group care facility under chapter 74.15 RCW.

(23) "Relative" includes persons related to a child in the following ways:

(a) Any blood relative, including those of half-blood, and including first cousins, second cousins, nephews or nieces, and persons of preceding generations as denoted by prefixes of grand, great, or great-great;

(b) Stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister;

(c) A person who legally adopts a child or the child's parent as well as the natural and other legally adopted children of such persons, and other relatives of the adoptive parents in accordance with state law;

(d) Spouses of any persons named in (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection, even after the marriage is terminated;

(e) Relatives, as named in (a), (b), (c), or (d) of this subsection, of any half sibling of the child; or

(f) Extended family members, as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, a person who has reached the age of ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 and who is the Indian child's grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece or nephew, first or second cousin, or stepparent who provides care in the family abode on a ((~~twenty-four~~)) 24 hour basis to an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903(4).

(24) "Shelter care" means temporary physical care in a facility licensed pursuant to RCW 74.15.030 or in a home not required to be licensed pursuant to RCW 74.15.030.

(25) "Sibling" means a child's birth brother, birth sister, adoptive brother, adoptive sister, half-brother, or half-sister, or as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe for an Indian child as defined in RCW 13.38.040.

(26) "Social study" means a written evaluation of matters relevant to the disposition of the case that contains the information required by RCW 13.34.430.

(27) "Supervised independent living setting" includes, but is not limited to, apartment living, room and board arrangements, college or university dormitories, and shared roommate settings. Supervised independent living settings must be approved by the department or the court.

(28) "Supervised independent living subsidy" means a foster care maintenance payment.

(29) "Voluntary placement agreement" means, for the purposes of extended foster care services, a written voluntary agreement ((~~between~~)) by a ((~~nonminor dependent~~)) youth who agrees to ((~~submit to the care and authority of the department for the purposes of participating in the extended foster care program~~)) participate in extended foster care. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement to participate in extended foster care within six months of the youth's 18th birthday, in which case the agreement will take effect on the youth's 18th birthday. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement or agreement to participate in extended foster care at any time after turning 18. The youth may withdraw consent to participate, at any time, including prior to their 18th birthday. A voluntary placement agreement may be signed by a dependent child or eligible youth over the age of 18 electronically.

**Sec.**  RCW 13.34.267 and 2021 c 210 s 10 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) In order to facilitate the delivery of extended foster care services, the court, upon the agreement of the youth to participate in the extended foster care program, shall maintain the dependency proceeding for any youth who is dependent at the age of ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 years ((~~and who, at the time of his or her eighteenth birthday,~~)) until the youth turns 21 or withdraws their agreement to participate.

(2) For the purposes of pursuing federal reimbursement only, the department may request judicial findings that a youth is:

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

(b) Enrolled and participating in a postsecondary academic or postsecondary vocational program, or has applied for and can demonstrate that he or she intends to timely enroll in a postsecondary academic or postsecondary vocational program;

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

(d) Engaged in employment for ((~~eighty~~)) 80 hours or more per month; or

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

((~~(2) If~~)) (3) When the court maintains the dependency proceeding of a youth pursuant to subsection (1) of this section, the youth is eligible to receive extended foster care services pursuant to RCW 74.13.031, subject to the youth's continuing ((~~eligibility and~~)) agreement to participate.

((~~(3)~~)) (4) A dependent youth receiving extended foster care services is a party to the dependency proceeding. The youth's parent or guardian must be dismissed from the dependency proceeding when the youth reaches the age of ((~~eighteen~~)) 18.

((~~(4)~~)) (5) The court shall dismiss the dependency proceeding for any youth who is a dependent and who, at the age of ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 years, ((~~does not meet any of the criteria described in subsection (1)(a) through (e) of this section or~~)) does not agree to participate in the program.

((~~(5)~~)) (6) The court shall order a youth participating in extended foster care services to be under the placement and care authority of the department, subject to the youth's continuing agreement to participate in extended foster care services. The department may establish foster care rates appropriate to the needs of the youth participating in extended foster care services. The department's placement and care authority over a youth receiving extended foster care services is solely for the purpose of providing services and does not create a legal responsibility for the actions of the youth receiving extended foster care services.

((~~(6)(a) The~~)) (7)(a) If a youth does not already have counsel, the court shall appoint counsel to represent a youth, as defined in RCW 13.34.030(2)(b), in dependency proceedings under this section. Subject to amounts appropriated, the state shall pay the costs of legal services provided by an attorney appointed pursuant to this subsection based on the phase-in schedule outlined in RCW 13.34.212, provided that the legal services are provided in accordance with the rules of professional conduct, the standards of practice, caseload limits, and training guidelines adopted by the children's representation work group established in section 9, chapter 210, Laws of 2021.

(b) In cases where the statewide children's legal representation program provides funding and where consistent with its administration and oversight responsibilities, the statewide children's legal representation program should prioritize continuity of counsel for children who are already represented at county expense when the statewide children's legal representation program becomes effective in a county. The statewide children's legal representation program shall coordinate with relevant county stakeholders to determine how best to prioritize continuity of counsel.

((~~(7)~~)) (8) The case plan for and delivery of services to a youth receiving extended foster care services is subject to the review requirements set forth in RCW 13.34.138 and 13.34.145, and should be applied in a developmentally appropriate manner, as they relate to youth age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 to ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years. Additionally, the court shall consider:

(a) Whether the youth is safe in his or her placement;

(b) ((~~Whether the youth continues to be eligible for extended foster care services;~~

~~(c)~~)) Whether the current placement is developmentally appropriate for the youth;

((~~(d)~~)) (c) The youth's development of independent living skills; and

((~~(e)~~)) (d) The youth's overall progress toward transitioning to full independence and the projected date for achieving such transition.

((~~(8)~~)) (9) Prior to the review hearing, the youth's attorney shall indicate whether there are any contested issues and may provide additional information necessary for the court's review.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.13.020 and 2020 c 270 s 4 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Case management" means convening family meetings, developing, revising, and monitoring implementation of any case plan or individual service and safety plan, coordinating and monitoring services needed by the child and family, caseworker-child visits, family visits, and the assumption of court-related duties, excluding legal representation, including preparing court reports, attending judicial hearings and permanency hearings, and ensuring that the child is progressing toward permanency within state and federal mandates, including the Indian child welfare act.

(2) "Certificate of parental improvement" means a certificate issued under RCW 74.13.720 to an individual who has a founded finding of physical abuse or negligent treatment or maltreatment, or a court finding that the individual's child was dependent as a result of a finding that the individual abused or neglected their child pursuant to RCW 13.34.030(6)(b).

(3) "Child" means:

(a) A person less than eighteen years of age; or

(b) A person age eighteen to twenty-one years who is eligible to receive the extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031.

(4) "Child protective services" has the same meaning as in RCW 26.44.020.

(5) "Child welfare services" means social services including voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and adoption services which strengthen, supplement, or substitute for, parental care and supervision for the purpose of:

(a) Preventing or remedying, or assisting in the solution of problems which may result in families in conflict, or the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or criminal behavior of children;

(b) Protecting and caring for dependent, abused, or neglected children;

(c) Assisting children who are in conflict with their parents, and assisting parents who are in conflict with their children, with services designed to resolve such conflicts;

(d) Protecting and promoting the welfare of children, including the strengthening of their own homes where possible, or, where needed;

(e) Providing adequate care of children away from their homes in foster family homes or day care or other child care agencies or facilities.

"Child welfare services" does not include child protection services.

(6) "Child who is a candidate for foster care" means a child who the department identifies as being at imminent risk of entering foster care but who can remain safely in the child's home or in a kinship placement as long as services or programs that are necessary to prevent entry of the child into foster care are provided, and includes but is not limited to a child whose adoption or guardianship arrangement is at risk of a disruption or dissolution that would result in a foster care placement. The term includes a child for whom there is reasonable cause to believe that any of the following circumstances exist:

(a) The child has been abandoned by the parent as defined in RCW 13.34.030 and the child's health, safety, and welfare is seriously endangered as a result;

(b) The child has been abused or neglected as defined in chapter 26.44 RCW and the child's health, safety, and welfare is seriously endangered as a result;

(c) There is no parent capable of meeting the child's needs such that the child is in circumstances that constitute a serious danger to the child's development;

(d) The child is otherwise at imminent risk of harm.

(7) "Department" means the department of children, youth, and families.

(8) "Extended foster care services" means residential and other support services the department is authorized to provide to dependent children. These services include, but are not limited to, placement in licensed, relative, or otherwise approved care, or supervised independent living settings; assistance in meeting basic needs; independent living services; medical assistance; supervised independent living subsidy; and counseling or treatment.

(9) "Family assessment" means a comprehensive assessment of child safety, risk of subsequent child abuse or neglect, and family strengths and needs that is applied to a child abuse or neglect report. Family assessment does not include a determination as to whether child abuse or neglect occurred, but does determine the need for services to address the safety of the child and the risk of subsequent maltreatment.

(10) "Medical condition" means, for the purposes of qualifying for extended foster care services, a physical or mental health condition as documented by any licensed health care provider regulated by a disciplining authority under RCW 18.130.040.

(11) "Nonminor dependent" means any individual age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 to ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years who is participating in extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031.

(12) "Out-of-home care services" means services provided after the shelter care hearing to or for children in out-of-home care, as that term is defined in RCW 13.34.030, and their families, including the recruitment, training, and management of foster parents, the recruitment of adoptive families, and the facilitation of the adoption process, family reunification, independent living, emergency shelter, residential group care, and foster care, including relative placement.

(13) "Performance-based contracting" means the structuring of all aspects of the procurement of services around the purpose of the work to be performed and the desired results with the contract requirements set forth in clear, specific, and objective terms with measurable outcomes. Contracts shall also include provisions that link the performance of the contractor to the level and timing of reimbursement.

(14) "Permanency services" means long-term services provided to secure a child's safety, permanency, and well-being, including foster care services, family reunification services, adoption services, and preparation for independent living services.

(15) "Prevention and family services and programs" means specific mental health prevention and treatment services, substance abuse prevention and treatment services, and in-home parent skill-based programs that qualify for federal funding under the federal family first prevention services act, P.L. 115-123. For purposes of this chapter, prevention and family services and programs are not remedial services or family reunification services as described in RCW 13.34.025(2).

(16) "Primary prevention services" means services which are designed and delivered for the primary purpose of enhancing child and family well-being and are shown, by analysis of outcomes, to reduce the risk to the likelihood of the initial need for child welfare services.

(17) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department.

(18) "Supervised independent living setting" includes, but is not limited to, apartment living, room and board arrangements, college or university dormitories, and shared roommate settings. Supervised independent living settings must be approved by the department or the court.

(19) "Supervised independent living subsidy" means a foster care maintenance payment.

(20) "Unsupervised" has the same meaning as in RCW 43.43.830.

((~~(20)~~)) (21) "Voluntary placement agreement" means, for the purposes of extended foster care services, a written voluntary agreement between a ((~~nonminor dependent~~)) youth who agrees to submit to the care and authority of the department for the purposes of participating in the extended foster care program. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement to participate in extended foster care within six months of the youth's 18th birthday, in which case the agreement will take effect on the youth's 18th birthday. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement or agreement to participate in extended foster care at any time after turning 18. The youth may withdraw his or her consent to participate, at any time, including prior to their 18th birthday. A voluntary placement agreement may be signed by a dependent child or eligible youth over the age of 18 electronically.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.13.031 and 2023 c 221 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(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~~)) eligible youth who ((~~are~~)) request extended foster care. The department shall develop policies and procedures to ensure that dependent youth aged 15 and older are informed of the extended foster care program.

(b) The department shall pursue federal reimbursement, where appropriate, when a youth is:

(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)~~)) (b)(i) through (iv) of this subsection due to a documented medical condition.

((~~(b)~~)) (c) To be eligible for extended foster care services, the ((~~nonminor dependent~~)) youth must have been dependent at the time that he or she reached age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 years. If the dependency case of the ((~~nonminor dependent~~)) youth 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~~)) youth whose dependency case was dismissed by the court may request extended foster care services before reaching age ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years. Eligible ((~~nonminor dependents~~)) youths may unenroll and reenroll in extended foster care through a voluntary placement agreement an unlimited number of times between ages ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 and ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21.

((~~(c)~~)) (d) The department shall ((~~develop and implement rules regarding youth eligibility requirements~~)) not create additional eligibility requirements for extended foster care. The department shall develop and implement rules and policies designed to provide age-appropriate social work support for youth in extended foster care through a codesign process that includes those with lived experience in the foster care system.

((~~(d)~~)) (e) 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)~~)) (f) The department shall allow ((~~a~~)) eligible 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~~)).

(g) A youth enrolled in extended foster care may elect to receive a licensed foster care placement or may live independently. A youth who is not in a licensed foster care placement is eligible for a monthly supervised independent living subsidy effective the date the youth signs the voluntary placement agreement, agrees to dependency, or informs their social worker that they are living independently, whichever occurs first.

(h) The department shall pursue federal reimbursement, where appropriate, when a youth is residing in an approved supervised independent living setting. If the youth is not residing in an approved supervised independent living setting, the department is to work with the youth to help identify an appropriate living arrangement until the youth is living in a safe location approved by the department or the court. During this time, the department shall continue to pay the monthly supervised independent living subsidy.

(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~~)) are:

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

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

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

(d) Engaged in employment for 80 hours or more per month; or

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

(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~~)) 18 through ((~~twenty~~)) 20 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.

**Sec.**  RCW 74.13.336 and 2018 c 34 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A youth who has reached age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 years may request extended foster care services authorized under RCW 74.13.031 at any time before he or she reaches the age of ((~~twenty-one~~)) 21 years if:

(a) The dependency proceeding of the youth was dismissed pursuant to RCW 13.34.267((~~(4)~~)) (5) at the time that he or she reached age ((~~eighteen~~)) 18 years; or

(b) The court, after holding the dependency case open pursuant to RCW 13.34.267(1), has dismissed the case because the youth became ineligible for extended foster care services.

(2)(a) Upon a request for extended foster care services by a youth pursuant to subsection (1) of this section, a determination that the youth is eligible for extended foster care services, and the completion of a voluntary placement agreement, the department shall provide extended foster care services to the youth.

(b) In order to continue receiving extended foster care services after entering into a voluntary placement agreement with the department, the youth must agree to the entry of an order of dependency within ((~~one hundred eighty~~)) 180 days of the date that the youth is placed in extended foster care pursuant to a voluntary placement agreement.

(3) A youth may enter into a voluntary placement agreement for extended foster care services. A youth ((~~may transition among the eligibility categories identified in RCW 74.13.031 while under the same voluntary placement agreement, provided that the youth remains eligible for extended foster care services during the transition~~)) becomes eligible for extended foster care services as of the date the youth either signs an extended foster care agreement or voluntary placement agreement or turns 18, whichever occurs later. A youth who is not in a licensed foster care placement upon signing an extended foster care agreement or voluntary placement agreement, and who has turned 18 years old, shall receive their first supervised independent living subsidy within one month.

(4) The department shall develop a program to make incentive payments to youth in extended foster care who participate in qualifying activities described in RCW 74.13.031(12)(b) (i) through (v). This program design must include stakeholder engagement from impacted communities. Subject to appropriations for this specific purpose, the department shall make incentive payments to qualifying youth in addition to the supervised independent living subsidy, beginning by July 1, 2025.

(5) "Voluntary placement agreement," for the purposes of this section, means a written voluntary agreement between a ((~~nonminor dependent~~)) youth who agrees to submit to the care and authority of the department for the purposes of participating in the extended foster care program. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement or an agreement to participate in extended foster care anytime within six months of the youth's 18th birthday, in which case the agreement will take effect on the youth's 18th birthday. A youth may sign a voluntary placement agreement or agreement to participate in extended foster care at any time after turning 18. The youth may withdraw his or her consent to participate, at any time, including prior to their 18th birthday. A voluntary placement agreement may be signed by a dependent child or eligible youth over the age of 18 electronically.

**--- END ---**