

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5908

C 192 L 24
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing extended foster care services to youth ages 18 to 21.

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

Senate Committee on Human Services

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: Extended Foster Care (EFC) in the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) provides an opportunity for young adults who were a dependent of Washington State at age 18, to voluntarily agree to continue receiving foster care services, including placement services, while working on their goals towards independence. The dependency action will continue if the eligible youth elects to participate in the program on their 18th birthday. Eligible youth who do not elect to participate in EFC on their 18th birthday will have until their 21st birthday to voluntarily request to participate in EFC. Eligible youth may enter and exit the program as needed between the ages of 18 to 21 years old.

Extended foster care services means residential and other support services DCYF is authorized to provide. Services may include, but are not limited to, placement in a licensed, relative, or otherwise approved care, or supervised independent living settings; assistance in meeting basic needs; independent living services; medical assistance; and counseling or treatment.

To be eligible for EFC, youth must meet the following criteria on their 18th birthday:

- be dependent and enrolled in high school or a high school equivalency program;
- enrolled, applied for, or can show intent to timely enroll in a post-secondary academic or post-secondary vocational certification program;

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- participating in a program or activity designed to promote or remove barriers to employment, including part-time employment;
- employed 80 hours or more a month; or
- unable to engage in any of the above activities due to a documented medical condition.

Summary: Extended Foster Care. A number of changes are made to the EFC program, including:

- DCYF must provide continued EFC services to nonminor dependents who request EFC;
- EFC services includes a supervised independent living subsidy;
- DCYF must develop policies and procedures to ensure dependent youth ages 15 and older are informed of the EFC program;
- DCYF may not create additional eligibility requirements;
- DCYF shall develop and implement rules and policies designed to provide age-appropriate social work support for youth in EFC through a codesign process that includes those with lived experience in the foster care system;
- a voluntary placement agreement can be signed within six months of the youth's 18th birthday and any time after their 18th birthday;
- a youth enrolled in EFC 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 they are living independently, whichever occurs first;
- if the youth is not residing in an approved supervised independent living setting, DCYF is to work with the youth to help identify an appropriate living arrangement until the youth is living in a safe location approved by DCYF or the court, and during this time, DCYF shall continue to pay the monthly supervised independent living subsidy; and
- DCYF is to pursue federal reimbursement where appropriate, including when a youth is residing in an approved supervised independent living setting.

The court shall maintain the dependency proceeding for any youth who is dependent at the age of 18 until the youth turns 21 or withdraws their agreement to participate.

DCYF is to develop a program to make incentive payments to youth in extended foster care who participate in qualifying activities. The program design is to include stakeholder engagement from impacted communities. Subject to appropriations, DCYF is to make incentive payments to qualifying youth, in addition to supervised independent living subsidies, by July 1, 2025.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate 37 12

House 57 38 (House amended)

Senate 38 11 (Senate concurred)

Effective: June 6, 2024