

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1509

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Human Services, March 31, 2025  
Ways & Means, April 8, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to family reconciliation services.

**Brief Description:** Concerning family reconciliation services.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Taylor, Dent, Davis, Reed and Hill).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/11/25, 93-2.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 3/24/25, 3/31/25 [DP-WM].

Ways & Means: 4/05/25, 4/08/25 [DP].

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies that the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is to provide Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) to families or youth where the youth is: (1) in a county juvenile detention center and family conflict exists, upon request by the youth, family, or juvenile detention center, or (2) identified through Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis Pilot Program (HSYNC), upon request by the youth, family or HSYNC.
- Directs DCYF to offer a contract or contracts to provide community-based FRS in at least one location that is already providing community-based FRS by July 1, 2025.
- Directs DCYF to make data about the use of community-based FRS available on its website.
- Provides that the act is null and void if specific funding is not provided in the omnibus appropriation act.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Christian, Ranking Member; Orwall and Warnick.

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Dozier, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Muzzall, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C..

**Staff:** Josh Hinman (786-7281)

**Background:** Family Reconciliation Services. Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) are voluntary services for runaway adolescents and youth in conflict with their families. The purpose of FRS is to increase the safety of children through the preservation of families and the provision of assessment, treatment, and placement services. The program targets adolescents between ages 12 through 17. FRS are meant to resolve temporary crisis situations and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placement. The goal is to return the family to a precrisis state and to work with the family to identify alternative methods of handling similar conflicts. If longer-term service needs are identified, FRS will help facilitate getting the youth and their family into ongoing services.

FRS requested by a family or youth is subject to appropriation.

FRS may include, but are not limited to short-term family counseling; crisis residential center services; referrals for substance abuse treatment, or counseling, or both; referrals for behavioral health services; short-term placement; and family assessments in conjunction with juvenile court services.

DCYF makes data about the use of FRS available on its website, including:

- the number of requests and referrals made for FRS;
- the demographic profile of families and youth accessing FRS including race, ethnicity, housing status, child welfare history, existence of an individualized education plan, eligibility for services under 29 U.S.C. 701 or eligibility for other disability-related services;
- the nature of the family conflict;

- the type and length for the FRS offered; and
- family outcomes after receiving FRS.

Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis. Housing Stability for Youth in Crisis (HSYNC) Pilot Program was established by the Legislature in 2022. HSYNC, which is subject to appropriations, is intended to serve as a prevention tool for youth homelessness by identifying youth at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness within existing processes in juvenile court systems and referring youth and their families to appropriate prevention and housing services. HSYNC is operational in King, Kitsap, Okanogan, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane counties. The Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) is to provide a report to the Legislature and the Governor by October 1, 2025, that includes an evaluation of HSYNC and recommendations for improving and expanding the HSYNC Program. The HSYNC Pilot Program expires on July 1, 2026.

**Summary of Bill:** All family reconciliation services are subject to appropriations.

DCYF or a designated DCYF contractor must offer FRS to families or youth where the youth is:

- in a county juvenile detention center and family conflict exists, upon request by the youth, family, or juvenile detention center; or
- identified through HSYNC, upon request by the youth, family or HSYNC.

By July 1, 2025, subject to appropriations, DCYF shall offer a contract or contracts to provide community-based FRS in at least one location that is already providing community-based FRS.

DCYF is to make the following data about the use of FRS available on its website:

- the number of requests for community-based reconciliation services; and
- the number of referrals made to community-based FRS programs.

Community-based family reconciliation services means family reconciliation services that are provided by a community-based entity under contract with DCYF.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Human Services):** PRO: Families often don't trust CPS and the foster care system which is why having community-based FRS will allow

trusted organizations that are culturally responsive and embedded in the community to also provide this service to help families navigate the system. In fact, to access these services you need to call the CPS line and select the option to report child abuse and neglect in order to request FRS. It would be much more effective to access these services through the community. This bill will improve services for youth and families experiencing conflict which in turn prevents involvement in the child welfare system which in turn reduces the risk that young people will experience homelessness and prevents other negative outcomes. Under this bill there is the opportunity to invest in this prevention model where it is currently being piloted, at the Cocoon House in Everett. The Raikes Foundation has approved financial support for an evaluation of this model, assuming the Legislature funds it which would make this pilot a true public-private partnership. The Raikes Foundation believes this model holds incredible promise not only to prevent youth homelessness, but also to help with many other positive outcomes for young people and their families. Especially in tough budget times we need to ensure that our state's resources are having the greatest impact. This bill is a small ask in a tight budget year, one that will truly help families in need of services. While a more robust investment in FRS is needed, this request has been dialed back in light of the state's budget situation.

**Persons Testifying (Human Services):** PRO: Representative Jamila Taylor, Prime Sponsor; Kim Justice, Partners for Our Children; Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates; Casey Trupin, Raikes Foundation; Samuel Martin, Washington Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy; Joseph Alonzo, Cocoon House.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Human Services):** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: Partners for Our Children supports House bill 1509. This bill is about making sure that our state resources are used in the most effective way. In its current form, Family Reconciliation Services is not reaching families who need help, especially families of color. As you might imagine, families experiencing conflict can be reluctant to seek help from the same agency that investigates cases of child abuse and neglect. It would be much more effective if these services were delivered by trusted community-based organizations who provide culturally relevant services embedded within the communities that they serve.

The long-term benefits of this community based model are aimed at decreases in at-risk youth homelessness, substance misuse, out-of-home placement, and criminal justice system involvement. It's estimated that funding for this program is likely to result in \$3 to \$4 million in taxpayer savings across the youth's lifetime. Especially in tough budget times, we need to ensure that our state's resources are having the greatest impact.

The testifier's foundation has partnered with the state to support interventions that will strengthen families and prevent young people from experiencing homelessness. We feel a community-based FRS program, as operating in Everett, will do these things and save the state money. We've had tremendous success in previous public-private partnerships that

have helped dramatically reduce youth homelessness.

Vice President of Cocoon House in Snohomish County is the state's current community-based FRS provider and supports HB 1509. Cocoon House was selected to pilot the community-based FRS model in collaboration with the Everett DCYF office. We are seeing the results of this funding every single day. We strongly believe that providing FRS services through a community-based FRS model is not only a more effective model, but also prevents later, more costly, interventions with families, such as family separation and youth homelessness.

We are seeing that this community-driven approach to FRS ensures family receive timely, effective, and stigma-free support, and will be connected to valuable local resources. People have told us that they hesitate to seek this kind of support through the current FRS model with fears of child welfare involvement and social stigma. Community-based FRS eliminates these concerns by providing voluntary, culturally relevant services outside of the formal state system.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Casey Trupin, Raikes Foundation; Rachel Mathison, Cocoon House; Kim Justice, Partners for Our Children.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.