
HOUSE BILL 2011

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Ormsby, Gregerson, and Macri

Read first time 02/21/25. Referred to Committee on Appropriations.

1 AN ACT Relating to developing a schedule for court appointment of
2 attorneys for children and youth in dependency and termination
3 proceedings; and amending RCW 13.34.212.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 13.34.212 and 2024 c 25 s 1 are each amended to read
6 as follows:

7 (1)(a) The court shall appoint an attorney for a child in a
8 dependency proceeding six months after granting a petition to
9 terminate the parent and child relationship pursuant to RCW 13.34.180
10 and when there is no remaining parent with parental rights.

11 (b) The court may appoint one attorney to a group of siblings,
12 unless there is a conflict of interest, or such representation is
13 otherwise inconsistent with the rules of professional conduct.

14 (c) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
15 specific purpose, the state shall pay the costs of legal services
16 provided by an attorney appointed pursuant to (a) of this subsection
17 if the legal services are provided in accordance with the rules of
18 professional conduct, the standards of practice, caseload limits, and
19 training guidelines adopted by the statewide children's
20 representation work group pursuant to section 5, chapter 180, Laws of
21 2010 until such time that new recommendations are adopted by the

1 children's representation work group established in section 9,
2 chapter 210, Laws of 2021.

3 (d) The office of civil legal aid is responsible for
4 implementation of (c) of this subsection as provided in RCW 2.53.045.

5 (e) Legal services provided by an attorney pursuant to (a) of
6 this subsection do not include representation of the child in any
7 appellate proceedings relative to the termination of the parent and
8 child relationship.

9 (2)(a) The court may appoint an attorney to represent the child's
10 position in any dependency action on its own initiative, or upon the
11 request of a parent, the child, a guardian ad litem, a caregiver, or
12 the department.

13 (b)(i) If the court has not already appointed an attorney for a
14 child, or the child is not represented by a privately retained
15 attorney:

16 (A) The child's caregiver, or any individual, may refer the child
17 to an attorney for the purposes of filing a motion to request
18 appointment of an attorney at public expense; or

19 (B) The child or any individual may retain an attorney for the
20 child for the purposes of filing a motion to request appointment of
21 an attorney at public expense.

22 (ii) Nothing in this subsection changes or alters the
23 confidentiality provisions of RCW 13.50.100.

24 (c) The department and the child's guardian ad litem shall each
25 notify a child of the child's right to request an attorney and shall
26 ask the child whether the child wishes to have an attorney. The
27 department and the child's guardian ad litem shall notify the child
28 and make this inquiry immediately after:

29 (i) The date of the child's 12th birthday; or

30 (ii) Assignment of a case involving a child age 12 or older.

31 (d) The department and the child's guardian ad litem shall repeat
32 the notification and inquiry at least annually and upon the filing of
33 any motion or petition affecting the child's placement, services, or
34 familial relationships.

35 (e) The notification and inquiry is not required if the child has
36 already been appointed an attorney.

37 (f) The department shall note in the child's individual service
38 and safety plan, and the guardian ad litem shall note in his or her
39 report to the court, that the child was notified of the right to

1 request an attorney and indicate the child's position regarding
2 appointment of an attorney.

3 (g) At the first regularly scheduled hearing after:

4 (i) The date of the child's 12th birthday; or

5 (ii) The date that a dependency petition is filed pursuant to
6 this chapter on a child age 12 or older;

7 the court shall inquire whether the child has received notice of his
8 or her right to request an attorney from the department and the
9 child's guardian ad litem. The court shall make an additional inquiry
10 at the first regularly scheduled hearing after the child's 15th
11 birthday. No inquiry is necessary if the child has already been
12 appointed an attorney.

13 (3) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
14 specific purpose:

15 (a) Pursuant to the phase-in schedule set forth in (c) of this
16 subsection (3), the court must appoint an attorney for every child in
17 a dependency proceeding as follows:

18 (i) For a child under the age of eight, appointment must be made
19 for the dependency and termination action upon the filing of a
20 termination petition. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed
21 to limit the ability of the court to appoint an attorney to represent
22 the child's position in a dependency action on its own initiative, or
23 upon the request of a parent, the child, a guardian ad litem, a
24 caregiver, or the department, prior to the filing of a termination
25 petition.

26 (ii) For a child between the ages of eight through 17,
27 appointment must be made upon the filing of a new dependency petition
28 at or before the commencement of the shelter care hearing.

29 (iii) For any pending or open dependency case where the child is
30 unrepresented and is entitled to the appointment of an attorney under
31 (a)(i) or (ii) of this subsection, appointment must be made at or
32 before the next hearing if the child is eligible for representation
33 pursuant to the phase-in schedule. At the next hearing, the court
34 shall inquire into the status of attorney representation for the
35 child, and if the child is not yet represented, appointment must be
36 made at the hearing.

37 (b) Appointment is not required if the court has already
38 appointed an attorney for the child, or the child is represented by a
39 privately retained attorney.

1 (c) The statewide children's legal representation program shall
2 develop a schedule for court appointment of attorneys for every child
3 in dependency proceedings that will be phased in on a county-by-
4 county basis over ~~((a seven-year))~~ an 11-year period. The schedule
5 required under this subsection must not add more than 1,250 cases
6 each fiscal year and:

7 (i) To the extent practicable, prioritize implementation in
8 counties that have:

9 (A) No current practice of appointment of attorneys for children
10 in dependency cases; or

11 (B) Significant prevalence of racial disproportionality or
12 disparities in the number of dependent children compared to the
13 general population, or both;

14 (ii) Include representation in at least:

15 (A) Three counties beginning July 1, 2022;

16 (B) Eight counties beginning January 1, 2023;

17 (C) Fifteen counties beginning January 1, 2024;

18 (D) Twenty counties beginning January 1, 2025;

19 (E) Thirty counties beginning January 1, ~~((2026))~~ 2030;

20 (F) Thirty-six counties beginning ~~((in))~~ January 1, ~~((2027))~~
21 2031; and

22 (iii) Achieve full statewide implementation by January 1,
23 ~~((2028))~~ 2032.

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

33 (e) The statewide children's legal representation program is
34 responsible for the recruitment, training, and oversight of attorneys
35 providing standards-based representation pursuant to (a) and (c) of
36 this subsection as provided in RCW 2.53.045 and shall ensure that
37 attorneys representing children pursuant to this section provide
38 legal services according to the rules of professional conduct, the
39 standards of practice, caseload limits, and training guidelines

1 adopted by the children's representation work group established in
2 section 9, chapter 210, Laws of 2021.

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