
HOUSE BILL 2493

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Stearns, Taylor, Simmons, Davis, Scott, Reeves, Doglio, Goodman, Ormsby, Hill, Reed, and Parshley

Read first time 01/15/26. Referred to Committee on Community Safety.

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting crime victims and witnesses by
2 promoting victim-centered, trauma-informed responses; amending RCW
3 70.125.030, 70.125.110, and 43.10.801; adding new sections to chapter
4 7.69 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that over 500,000
7 women in the United States are at risk of or have undergone female
8 genital mutilation, including 25,000 women and girls in Washington
9 state. The legislature further finds that the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue
10 metro is among the five highest rates of impacted and at-risk
11 communities in the United States, making addressing female genital
12 mutilation and other sexual violence critical.

13 It is the intent of the legislature to expand the rights of
14 survivors of sexual assault to survivors of all acts of sexual
15 violence, including female genital mutilation. The legislature
16 further intends to extend the life cycle of the SAFE advisory group
17 and expand its duties to include researching and making
18 recommendations on trauma-informed, culturally sensitive policies to
19 prevent and address female genital mutilation and other acts of
20 sexual violence.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 7.69 RCW
2 to read as follows:

3 (1) In any case involving sexual assault or domestic violence in
4 which the defendant is proceeding pro se, at the request of the
5 prosecutor or plaintiff, the court may appoint a representative of
6 the pro se defendant solely for the purpose of conducting the direct
7 questioning of the victim or survivor during trial preparation and at
8 trial.

9 (2) The court-appointed representative may ask only those
10 questions submitted by the pro se defendant. The court will permit
11 reasonable recesses to allow the pro se defendant to submit written
12 follow-up questions to the court-appointed representative, ensuring
13 the defendant retains full rights to examination of the witness.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 7.69 RCW
15 to read as follows:

16 Any minor age 13 years or older may consent to a forensic
17 examination conducted for the purposes of gathering evidence for
18 possible prosecution for domestic violence assault involving nonfatal
19 strangulation.

20 **Sec. 4.** RCW 70.125.030 and 2012 c 29 s 10 are each amended to
21 read as follows:

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

24 (1) "Community sexual assault program" means a community-based
25 social service agency that is qualified to provide and provides core
26 services to victims of sexual assault.

27 (2) "Core services" means those services that are victim-centered
28 community-based advocacy responses to alleviate the impact of sexual
29 assault, as delineated in the Washington state sexual assault
30 services plan of 1995 and its subsequent revisions.

31 (3) "Department" means the department of commerce.

32 (4) "Female genital mutilation" has the same meaning as in RCW
33 9A.36.175.

34 (5) "Law enforcement agencies" means police and sheriff's
35 departments and tribal law enforcement departments or agencies of
36 this state.

1 ~~((5))~~ (6) "Personal representative" means a friend, relative,
2 attorney, or employee or volunteer from a community sexual assault
3 program or specialized treatment service provider.

4 ~~((6))~~ (7) "Services for underserved populations" means
5 culturally relevant victim-centered community-based advocacy
6 responses to alleviate the impact of sexual assault, as delineated in
7 the Washington state sexual assault services plan of 1995 and its
8 subsequent revisions.

9 ~~((7))~~ (8) "Sexual assault" means one or more of the following:

- 10 (a) Rape or rape of a child;
11 (b) Assault with intent to commit rape or rape of a child;
12 (c) Incest or indecent liberties;
13 (d) Child molestation;
14 (e) Sexual misconduct with a minor;
15 (f) Custodial sexual misconduct;
16 (g) Crimes with a sexual motivation;
17 (h) Sexual exploitation or commercial sex abuse of a minor;
18 (i) Promoting prostitution; or
19 (j) An attempt to commit any of the aforementioned offenses.

20 ~~((8))~~ (9) "Specialized services" means those services intended
21 to alleviate the impact of sexual assault, as delineated in the
22 Washington state sexual assault services plan of 1995 and its
23 subsequent revisions.

24 ~~((9))~~ (10) "Victim" means any person who suffers physical,
25 emotional, financial, and psychological impact as a proximate result
26 of a sexual assault.

27 **Sec. 5.** RCW 70.125.110 and 2025 c 124 s 3 are each amended to
28 read as follows:

29 (1) In addition to all other rights provided in law, a sexual
30 ~~(assault)~~ violence survivor has the right to:

31 (a) Receive a medical forensic examination at no cost;

32 (b) Receive written notice of the right under (a) of this
33 subsection and that he or she may be eligible for other benefits
34 under the crime victim compensation program, through a form developed
35 by the office of crime victims advocacy, from the medical facility
36 providing the survivor medical treatment relating to the sexual
37 assault;

38 (c) Receive a referral to an accredited community sexual assault
39 program or, in the case of a survivor who is a minor, receive a

1 connection to services in accordance with the county child sexual
2 abuse investigation protocol under RCW 26.44.180, which may include a
3 referral to a children's advocacy center, when presenting at a
4 medical facility for medical treatment relating to the assault and
5 also when reporting the assault to a law enforcement officer;

6 (d) Consult with a sexual (~~assault~~) violence survivor's
7 advocate throughout the investigatory process and prosecution of the
8 survivor's case, including during: Any medical evidentiary
9 examination at a medical facility; any interview by law enforcement
10 officers, prosecuting attorneys, or defense attorneys; and court
11 proceedings, except while providing testimony in a criminal trial, in
12 which case the advocate may be present in the courtroom. Medical
13 facilities, law enforcement officers, prosecuting attorneys, defense
14 attorneys, courts and other applicable criminal justice agencies,
15 including correctional facilities, are responsible for providing
16 advocates access to facilities where necessary to fulfill the
17 requirements under this subsection. The right in this subsection
18 applies regardless of whether a survivor has waived the right in a
19 previous examination or interview;

20 (e) Be informed in writing of policies governing the collection
21 and preservation of a sexual assault kit;

22 (f) Be informed, upon the request of a survivor, of when the
23 forensic analysis of his or her sexual assault kit and other related
24 physical evidence will be or was completed, the results of the
25 forensic analysis, and whether the analysis yielded a DNA profile and
26 match, provided that the disclosure is made at an appropriate time so
27 as to not impede or compromise an ongoing investigation;

28 (g) Upon written request of a survivor, be granted further
29 preservation of his or her sexual assault kit or its probative
30 contents, without charge;

31 (h) Upon written request of a survivor, receive written
32 notification from the appropriate official with custody of his or her
33 sexual assault kit not later than 60 days before the date of the
34 intended destruction or disposal of his or her sexual assault kit;

35 (i) Receive a copy of the police report related to the
36 investigation without charge;

37 (j) Review his or her statement before law enforcement refers a
38 case to the prosecuting attorney;

1 (k) Receive timely notifications from the law enforcement agency
2 and prosecuting attorney as to the status of the investigation and
3 any related prosecution of the survivor's case;

4 (l) Be informed by the law enforcement agency and prosecuting
5 attorney as to the expected and appropriate time frames for receiving
6 responses to the survivor's inquiries regarding the status of the
7 investigation and any related prosecution of the survivor's case; and
8 further, receive responses to the survivor's inquiries in a manner
9 consistent with those time frames;

10 (m) Access interpreter services where necessary to facilitate
11 communication throughout the investigatory process and prosecution of
12 the survivor's case; and

13 (n) Where the sexual (~~assault~~) violence survivor is a minor,
14 have:

15 (i) The prosecutor consider and discuss the survivor's requests
16 for remote video testimony under RCW 9A.44.150 when appropriate; and

17 (ii) The court consider requests from the prosecutor for
18 safeguarding the survivor's feelings of security and safety in the
19 courtroom in order to facilitate the survivor's testimony and
20 participation in the criminal justice process.

21 (2) A sexual (~~assault~~) violence survivor retains all the rights
22 of this section regardless of whether the survivor agrees to
23 participate in the criminal justice system and regardless of whether
24 the survivor agrees to receive a forensic examination to collect
25 evidence.

26 (3) If a survivor is denied any right enumerated in subsection
27 (1) of this section, he or she may seek an order directing compliance
28 by the relevant party or parties by filing a petition in the superior
29 court in the county in which the sexual assault occurred and
30 providing notice of such petition to the relevant party or parties.
31 Compliance with the right is the sole remedy available to the
32 survivor. The court shall expedite consideration of a petition filed
33 under this subsection.

34 (4) Nothing contained in this section may be construed to provide
35 grounds for error in favor of a criminal defendant in a criminal
36 proceeding. Except in the circumstances as provided in subsection (3)
37 of this section, this section does not grant a new cause of action or
38 remedy against the state, its political subdivisions, law enforcement
39 agencies, or prosecuting attorneys. The failure of a person to make a
40 reasonable effort to protect or adhere to the rights enumerated in

1 this section may not result in civil liability against that person.
2 This section does not limit other civil remedies or defenses of the
3 sexual ~~((assault))~~ violence survivor or the offender.

4 (5) For the purposes of this section:

5 (a) "Law enforcement officer" means a general authority
6 Washington peace officer, as defined in RCW 10.93.020, or any person
7 employed by a private police agency at a public school as described
8 in RCW 28A.150.010 or an institution of higher education, as defined
9 in RCW 28B.10.016.

10 (b) "Sexual ~~((assault))~~ violence survivor" means any person who
11 is a victim, as defined in RCW 7.69.020, of sexual assault or female
12 genital mutilation. However, if a victim is incapacitated, deceased,
13 or a minor, sexual ~~((assault))~~ violence survivor also includes any
14 lawful representative of the victim, including a parent, guardian,
15 spouse, or other designated representative, unless the person is an
16 alleged perpetrator or suspect.

17 (c) "Sexual ~~((assault))~~ violence survivor's advocate" means any
18 person who is defined in RCW 5.60.060 as a sexual assault advocate,
19 or a crime victim advocate.

20 **Sec. 6.** RCW 43.10.801 and 2023 c 197 s 1 are each amended to
21 read as follows:

22 (1)(a) The ~~((sexual assault forensic examination best practices))~~
23 SAFE advisory group is established within the office of the attorney
24 general for the purpose of ~~((reviewing best practice models for~~
25 ~~managing all aspects of sexual assault investigations and for~~
26 ~~reducing the number of untested sexual assault kits in Washington~~
27 ~~state))~~ recommending actionable, trauma-informed, victim-centered
28 policies related to preventing and addressing sexual violence.

29 (i) The caucus leaders from the senate shall appoint one member
30 from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.

31 (ii) The caucus leaders from the house of representatives shall
32 appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house
33 of representatives.

34 (iii) The attorney general, in consultation with the legislative
35 members of the advisory group, shall appoint:

36 (A) One member representing each of the following:

37 (I) The Washington state patrol;

38 (II) The Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs;

39 (III) The Washington association of prosecuting attorneys;

1 (IV) The Washington defender association or the Washington
2 association of criminal defense lawyers;

3 (V) The Washington association of cities;

4 (VI) The Washington association of county officials or the
5 Washington state association of counties;

6 (VII) The ~~((Washington coalition of sexual assault programs))~~
7 designated statewide sexual assault coalition;

8 (VIII) The office of crime victims advocacy;

9 (IX) The Washington state hospital association;

10 (X) The office of the attorney general; and

11 (XI) The criminal justice training commission;

12 (B) ~~((Two))~~ Three members representing survivors of sexual
13 ~~((assault))~~ violence;

14 (C) One member who is a sexual assault ~~((nurse))~~ forensic
15 examiner;

16 (D) Two members who are law enforcement officers, one from a
17 rural area and one from an urban area of the state;

18 (E) One member who is a prosecuting attorney serving in a county
19 in a rural area of the state; and

20 (F) Two members who are community-based advocates, one from a
21 rural area and one from an urban area of the state.

22 (b) When appointing members under (a)(iii)(D) of this subsection,
23 the office of the attorney general shall solicit recommendations from
24 statewide labor organizations representing law enforcement officers.

25 (2) The duties of the advisory group include, but are not limited
26 to:

27 (a) Researching ~~((the))~~ and advancing best practice models both
28 in state and from other states for collaborative responses to victims
29 of sexual ~~((assault from the point the sexual assault kit is~~
30 ~~collected to the conclusion of the))~~ violence related to accessing
31 medical forensic examinations and community-based support services,
32 enhancing investigation and prosecution of a case, and providing
33 recommendations regarding any existing gaps in Washington and
34 resources that may be necessary to address those gaps;

35 (b) Researching and making recommendations on opportunities to
36 increase access to, and availability of, critical sexual assault
37 ~~((nurse))~~ forensic examiner services and enhancing statewide
38 coordination of forensic services;

39 (c) Monitoring the testing ~~((of the backlog of sexual assault~~
40 ~~kits and the supply chain and distribution))~~, supply chain, and

1 distribution of sexual assault and nonfatal strangulation evidence
2 collection kits;

3 (d) Monitoring implementation of state and federal legislative
4 changes;

5 (e) Collaborating with the legislature, state agencies, medical
6 facilities, and local governments to implement reforms (~~(pursuant to~~
7 ~~federal grant requirements)~~); and

8 (f) Making recommendations for institutional reforms necessary to
9 prevent sexual (~~assault~~) violence and improve the experiences of
10 (~~sexual assault~~) survivors in the criminal justice system, with
11 special focus on, but not limited to, Black, indigenous, and other
12 populations disproportionately impacted by sexual violence.

13 (3) The office of the attorney general shall administer and
14 provide staff support to the advisory group.

15 (4) Legislative members of the advisory group must be reimbursed
16 for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative
17 members, except those representing an employer or organization, are
18 entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW
19 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

20 (5) The advisory group must meet no less than twice annually.

21 (6) The advisory group shall report its findings and
22 recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature and
23 the governor by December 15th of each year.

24 (7) This section expires July 1, (~~2026~~) 2028.

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