

RCW 26.12.260 Program to provide services to parties involved in dissolutions and legal separations—Fees. (1) After July 1, 2009, but no later than November 1, 2009, a county may, and to the extent state funding is provided to meet the minimum requirements of the program a county shall, create a program to provide services to all parties involved in proceedings under chapter 26.09 RCW. Minimum components of this program shall include: (a) An individual to serve as an initial point of contact for parties filing petitions for dissolutions or legal separations under chapter 26.09 RCW; (b) informing parties about courthouse facilitation programs and orientations; (c) informing parties of alternatives to filing a dissolution petition, such as marriage or domestic partnership counseling; (d) informing parties of alternatives to litigation including counseling, legal separation, and mediation services if appropriate; (e) informing parties of supportive family services available in the community; (f) screening for referral for services in the areas of domestic violence as defined in RCW 7.105.010, child abuse, substance abuse, and mental health; and (g) assistance to the court in superior court cases filed under chapter 26.09 RCW.

(2) This program shall not provide legal advice. No attorney-client relationship or privilege is created, by implication or by inference, between persons providing basic information under this section and the participants in the program.

(3) The legislative authority of any county may impose user fees or may impose a surcharge of up to twenty dollars on only those superior court cases filed under this title, or both, to pay for the expenses of this program. Fees collected under this section shall be collected and deposited in the same manner as other county funds are collected and deposited, and shall be maintained in a separate account to be used as provided in this section. The program shall provide services to indigent persons at no expense.

(4) Persons who implement the program shall be appointed in the same manner as investigators, stenographers, and clerks as described in RCW 26.12.050.

(5) If the county has a program under this section, any petition under RCW 26.09.020 must allege that the moving party met and conferred with the program prior to the filing of the petition.

(6) If the county has a program under this section, parties shall meet and confer with the program prior to participation in mediation under RCW 26.09.016. [2021 c 215 § 136; 2008 c 6 § 1047; 2007 c 496 § 201.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

Effective date—2008 c 6 § 1047: "Section 1047 of this act takes effect July 1, 2009." [2008 c 6 § 1306.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Effective dates—2007 c 496 §§ 201, 202, 204, and 501: "(1) Sections 201 and 204 of this act take effect July 1, 2009.

(2) Section 202 of this act takes effect January 1, 2008.

(3) Section 501 of this act takes effect January 1, 2009." [2007 c 496 § 805.]

Part headings not law—2007 c 496: See note following RCW 26.09.002.