

ESB 5379 - H COMM AMD

By Committee on Children & Family Services

ADOPTED 04/14/2003

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "Sec. 1. RCW 13.34.115 and 2000 c 122 s 12 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) All hearings ((may)) shall be public, and conducted at any time
6 or place within the limits of the county, ((and such cases may not be
7 heard in conjunction with other business of any other division of the
8 superior court. The public shall be excluded, and only such persons
9 may be admitted who are found by the judge to have a direct interest in
10 the case or in the work of the court. Unless the court states on the
11 record the reasons to disallow attendance, the court shall allow a
12 child's relatives and, if a child resides in foster care, the child's
13 foster parent, to attend all hearings and proceedings pertaining to the
14 child for the sole purpose of providing oral and written information
15 about the child and the child's welfare to the court)) except if the
16 judge finds that excluding the public is in the best interests of the
17 child.

18 (2) At the request of either parent, the court may exclude the
19 public if the judge finds that it is in the best interests of the
20 child.

21 (3) If the public is excluded from the hearing, the following
22 people may attend the closed hearing unless the judge finds it is not
23 in the best interests of the child:

24 (a) The child's relatives;

25 (b) The child's foster parents if the child resides in foster care;

26 and

27 (c) Any person requested by the parent.

28 (4) Stenographic notes or any device which accurately records the
29 proceedings may be required as provided in other civil cases pursuant
30 to RCW 2.32.200.

1 (5) The court may seal the court record if the judge determines it
2 is in the best interests of the child.
3 (6) Any electronic record of the proceedings may not be released or
4 opened for public inspection."

EFFECT: (1) Changes the exception when the court may close the hearing to allow closure when it is in the best interests of the child rather than if the open hearing would jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of the child.

(2) Allows either parent to request the hearing be closed and the public will be excluded if it is in the best interests of the child.

(3) Permits certain people to attend the hearing regardless of whether the court has excluded the general public.

(4) Permits the court to seal the court record if the court finds it is in the best interests of the child.

(5) Prohibits public access to any electronic recording of the proceeding.

--- END ---