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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1223**

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**State of Washington**

**58th Legislature**

**2003 Regular Session**

**By** House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Kagi, Chase, Cody and Lovick)

READ FIRST TIME 03/05/03.

1       AN ACT Relating to placing jurisdiction over deceased minors with  
2 the county coroner; amending RCW 68.50.010 and 68.50.105; and adding a  
3 new section to chapter 68.50 RCW.

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

5       **Sec. 1.** RCW 68.50.010 and 1963 c 178 s 1 are each amended to read  
6 as follows:

7       The jurisdiction of bodies of all deceased persons who come to  
8 their death suddenly when in apparent good health without medical  
9 attendance within the thirty-six hours preceding death; or where the  
10 circumstances of death indicate death was caused by unnatural or  
11 unlawful means; or where death occurs under suspicious circumstances;  
12 or where a coroner's autopsy or post mortem or coroner's inquest is to  
13 be held; or where death results from unknown or obscure causes, or  
14 where death occurs within one year following an accident; or where the  
15 death is caused by any violence whatsoever, or where death results from  
16 a known or suspected abortion; whether self-induced or otherwise; where  
17 death apparently results from drowning, hanging, burns, electrocution,  
18 gunshot wounds, stabs or cuts, lightning, starvation, radiation,  
19 exposure, alcoholism, narcotics or other addictions, tetanus,

1 strangulations, suffocation, or smothering; or where death is due to  
2 premature birth or still birth; or where death is due to a violent  
3 contagious disease or suspected contagious disease which may be a  
4 public health hazard; or where death results from alleged rape, carnal  
5 knowledge, or sodomy, where death occurs in a jail or prison; where a  
6 body is found dead or is not claimed by relatives or friends; or where  
7 the deceased is a minor, is hereby vested in the county coroner, which  
8 bodies may be removed and placed in the morgue under such rules as are  
9 adopted by the coroner with the approval of the county commissioners,  
10 having jurisdiction, providing therein how the bodies shall be brought  
11 to and cared for at the morgue and held for the proper identification  
12 where necessary.

13 **NEW SECTION.** **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 68.50 RCW  
14 to read as follows:

15 The coroner, medical examiner, or person acting in that capacity  
16 shall promptly notify the department of social and health services of  
17 any instances in which the coroner, medical examiner, or person acting  
18 in that capacity has received notice of a minor's death.

19 **Sec. 3.** RCW 68.50.105 and 1987 c 331 s 58 are each amended to read  
20 as follows:

21 (1) Reports and records of autopsies or post mortems shall be  
22 confidential, except that the following persons may examine and obtain  
23 copies of any such report or record: The personal representative of  
24 the decedent as defined in RCW 11.02.005, any family member, the  
25 attending physician, the prosecuting attorney or law enforcement  
26 agencies having jurisdiction, public health officials, the department  
27 of social and health services in cases involving the death of any minor  
28 where abuse or neglect of the child may have caused or contributed to  
29 his or her death or in cases involving any minor for whom the  
30 department has an open case or has had an open case in the year  
31 preceding the death of the child, or to the department of labor and  
32 industries in cases in which it has an interest under RCW 68.50.103.

33 (2) If a death investigation is initiated by the department of  
34 social and health services, the department may share coroner's or  
35 medical examiner's documents with the investigators as part of the  
36 investigation process.

1       (3) The coroner, the medical examiner, or the attending physician  
2 shall, upon request, meet with the family of the decedent to discuss  
3 the findings of the autopsy or post mortem. For the purposes of this  
4 section, the term "family" means the surviving spouse, or any child,  
5 parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, or sister of the decedent, or  
6 any person who was guardian of the decedent at the time of death.

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