
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2361

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, O'Brien, Kenney, Wood, Dickerson, Schual-Berke, Boldt, Morrell and Darneille)

READ FIRST TIME 02/03/04.

1 AN ACT Relating to visitation for children in foster care; adding
2 a new section to chapter 13.34 RCW; and creating new sections.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that contact between
5 children in foster care and their biological families is an important
6 component of the well-being and successful development of children.
7 Visitation can help to alleviate the fears and anxieties that many
8 children in foster care experience, and thereby can improve relations
9 and interactions between the children and both their foster and
10 biological families. Visitation can also improve the likelihood of
11 successful, lasting reunifications by providing the framework for the
12 development of appropriate parent-child relationships.

13 In all cases, the best interest of the child shall be the primary
14 concern in planning visitation with families. When planning visitation
15 with families, appropriate levels of visitation should be determined
16 for each family, taking into consideration their individual
17 circumstances, including parental follow-through and the parent-child
18 bond, among other factors, and consistent with the health, safety, and

1 welfare of the child. Under no circumstances should visitation be used
2 as a sanction for a parent's failure to engage in other court-ordered
3 services.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 13.34 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 The department of social and health services shall develop
7 consistent policies and protocols, based on current relevant research,
8 concerning visitation for children in foster care to be implemented
9 consistently throughout the state. The department shall develop the
10 policies and protocols in consultation with researchers in the field,
11 community-based agencies, court-appointed special advocates, and court
12 representatives. The policies and protocols shall include, but not be
13 limited to: The structure and quality of visitations; and training for
14 caseworkers, visitation supervisors, and foster parents related to
15 visitation.

16 The policies and protocols shall be consistent with the provisions
17 of this chapter and implementation of the policies and protocols shall
18 be consistent with relevant orders of the court.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of social and health services
20 shall report on the policies and protocols required under section 2 of
21 this act to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 1,
22 2005.

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