
SECOND SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 3085

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Dickerson, Orcutt, Shabro, Pettigrew, Darneille and Morrell)

READ FIRST TIME 02/10/04.

1 AN ACT Relating to family decision meetings; adding a new section
2 to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that engaging
5 families in decision making when their children are involved in the
6 child welfare system generally improves the outcomes for children. By
7 involving families in the decision-making process, it is anticipated
8 that the number of out-of-home placements can be reduced, as well as
9 the incidence of behavioral, physical, and mental health problems for
10 individual children. For those children in out-of-home placements, the
11 number of placements for individual children, the likelihood of placing
12 individual children with siblings, and successful reunifications are
13 expected to improve as a result of family engagement. Based on the
14 experience in the state where families have been engaged in decision
15 making, these improved outcomes will result in cost savings to the
16 state as fewer and less costly services and supports for children and
17 families are needed.

18 (2) It is the intent of the legislature to encourage and support
19 meaningful family involvement in the decision making related to

1 planning for children involved in the child welfare system, in those
2 instances where family is available and family involvement is in the
3 best interest of the child.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) By January 1, 2005, the department shall:

7 (a) Consider options for the use of family decision meetings in
8 cases in which a child is involved in the child welfare system;

9 (b) Develop strategies for implementing a policy of meaningful
10 family involvement throughout the state within existing resources; and

11 (c) Present implementation recommendations to the appropriate
12 committees of the legislature regarding (a) and (b) of this subsection.

13 (2) For the purposes of this section, "family decision meeting"
14 means a family-focused intervention facilitated by dedicated
15 professional staff that is designed to build and strengthen the natural
16 caregiving system for the child. Family decision meetings may include,
17 but are not limited to, family group conferences, family mediation,
18 family support meetings, or other professionally recognized
19 interventions that include extended family and rely upon the family to
20 make shared decisions about planning for its children. The purpose of
21 the family decision meeting is to establish a plan that provides for
22 the safety and permanency needs of the child.

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