

2361-S

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

Brief Description: Requiring development and implementation of
policies concerning visitation for children in foster care.
Revised for 1st Substitute: Requiring development of policies
concerning visitation for children in foster care.

HB 2361-S - DIGEST

(AS OF HOUSE 2ND READING 2/12/04)

Finds that contact between children in foster care and their biological families is an important component of the well-being and successful development of children. Visitation can help to alleviate the fears and anxieties that many children in foster care experience, and thereby can improve relations and interactions between the children and both their foster and biological families.

Requires that, in all cases, the best interest of the child shall be the primary concern in planning visitation with families. When planning visitation with families, appropriate levels of visitation should be determined for each family, taking into consideration their individual circumstances, including parental follow-through and the parent-child bond, among other factors, and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the child. Under no circumstances should visitation be used as a sanction for a parent's failure to engage in other court-ordered services.

Directs the department of social and health services to develop consistent policies and protocols, based on current relevant research, concerning visitation for children in foster care to be implemented consistently throughout the state. The department shall develop the policies and protocols in consultation with researchers in the field, community-based agencies, court-appointed special advocates, and court representatives.

Requires the department of social and health services to report on the policies and protocols required under this act to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 1, 2005.