

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1938

As of March 23, 2009

Title: An act relating to children's interests in maintaining postadoption contact with their siblings.

Brief Description: Concerning postadoption contact with siblings.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health & Human Services Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Roberts, Kagi, Angel, Walsh, Dunshee, Pettigrew, Green, Goodman, Haler and Kenney).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/09, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 3/26/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: Washington's adoption statute requires a pre-adoption home study report be submitted to the court. The report must include verification that discussions with prospective adoptive parents includes topics relating to:

- the concept that adoption is a lifelong developmental process;
- the potential for the child to experience identity confusion and feelings of loss regarding separation from birth parents;
- the potential for the child to have questions about birth parents and relatives; and
- the relevance of the child's racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage.

Open adoption agreements must be reviewed and approved by the court. The statute authorizing agreements for postadoption contact between a child adoptee and that child's family includes no references to siblings of the child being adopted or the potential benefit of providing for a continuation of the child's relationship with his or her siblings through an adoption agreement or informal agreement.

Summary of Bill: The relevance of the child's relationship with siblings and the potential benefit of facilitating postadoption contact is included in the list of issues that must be considered during the permanency planning process for children in foster care and discussed with prospective adoptive parents.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The family law court reviewing and approving an adoption agreement must encourage the consideration of the adoptive child's relationship with known siblings. If a child being adopted from foster care or that child's siblings are represented by a guardian ad litem (GAL) or an attorney in an adoption proceeding or in a dependency matter, the court reviewing the adoption agreement must inquire of the attorneys and guardians regarding the potential benefit of continued contact between the siblings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.