

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SSB 5486

C 117 L 15

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating the parents for parents program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Frockt, O'Ban, Darneille, Fraser, Miloscia, Rolfes, Hargrove, Billig, Ranker, Hewitt, Kohl-Welles and McAuliffe).

Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health & Housing
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) or any person may file a petition in court to determine if a child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, or because there is no parent or custodian capable of caring for the child. If the court determines that the child is dependent, then the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations about the child's placement and the parents' progress in correcting parental deficiencies. Under certain circumstances, the court may order the filing of a petition for the termination of parental rights.

The Parents for Parents Program was created to increase the number of family reunifications, where appropriate, while decreasing the length of time needed to establish permanence. The program currently operates under DSHS and exists in seven counties: Grays Harbor/Pacific, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Thurston/Mason.

Summary: The Parents for Parents Program provides peer mentoring for families in the dependency court system increasing parental engagement, and contributes to family reunification. Subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose, the program is funded through the Office of Public Defense and is centrally administered through a pass-through to a Washington State nonprofit lead organization.

The program's outreach and support to parents is provided by a "child welfare parent mentor," which means a parent who has successfully resolved the issues that led the parent's child into the care of the juvenile dependency court system, resulting in family reunification or another permanency outcome, and who has an interest in working collaboratively to improve the lives of children and families. Components of the Parents for Parents Program, provided by child welfare parent mentors, must include the following:

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.

- outreach and support to parents at dependency-related hearings, beginning with the Shelter Care Hearing;
- a class that educates parents about the dependency system they must navigate in order to have their children returned, empowers them with tools and resources they need to be successful with their case plan, and provides information that helps them understand and support the needs of their children;
- ongoing support to help parents overcome barriers to success in completing their case plan; and
- structured, curriculum-based peer support groups.

Each local program contract with the lead organization, and each local program must be locally administered by the county superior court or a nonprofit organization that serves as the host organization. A child welfare parent mentor lead provides program coordination and maintains local program information. The lead organization provides ongoing training to the host organizations, statewide program oversight and coordination, and maintains statewide program information.

Subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose, a report must be conducted on the program. A preliminary report on the program must be provided to the Legislature by December 1, 2016, and must contain, at a minimum, statistics showing rates of attendance at court hearings; compliance with court-ordered services and visitation; and whether participating in the program affected participants' overall understanding of the dependency court process. A subsequent report must be provided to the Legislature by December 1, 2019, and must also include statistics demonstrating the effect of the program on reunification rates and lengths of time families were engaged in the dependency court system before achieving permanency.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0
House	83	14

Effective: July 24, 2015