

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2785

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services

Title: An act relating to providing the list of foster parent rights and responsibilities to prospective and current foster parents.

Brief Description: Providing the list of foster parent rights and responsibilities to prospective and current foster parents.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Senn, McCaslin, Kagi, Goodman, Klippert, Lovick, Eslick, Griffey, Caldier, Reeves, Hargrove, Valdez, Frame and Steele.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/31/18, 2/2/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes a provision requiring the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to provide foster parents with a list of foster parent rights and responsibilities at the time of licensure to also require the list to be provided to foster parents before licensure and at renewal.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Klippert, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Nate Hickner (786-7290).

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created by legislation passed in 2017. The stated intent of the agency is to improve the delivery of government services relating to early learning, child welfare, and juvenile justice by consolidating the administration of these services into the same agency.

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.

On July 1, 2018, the functions performed by the Department of Early Learning are transferred to the DCYF. These functions include the administration of a variety of programs relating to early child care and education.

On July 1, 2018, the child welfare functions of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are transferred to the DCYF. These include functions pertaining to adoption, child emancipation, child abuse intervention, foster care, and other services.

On July 1, 2019, the juvenile justice functions of the DSHS Juvenile Rehabilitation division are transferred from the DSHS to the DCYF. These include the administration of juvenile rehabilitation facilities, vocational industries programs, and community reentry and parole services.

Additionally, beginning on July 1, 2018, the DCYF must:

- lead ongoing collaborative work to minimize or eliminate systemic barriers to effective, integrated services in collaboration with state agencies serving children, youth, and families;
- identify necessary improvements and updates to statutes relevant to their responsibilities and propose legislative changes to the Governor no less than biennially;
- help create a data-focused environment in which there are aligned outcomes and shared accountability for achieving those outcomes;
- lead the provision of state services to adolescents, focusing on key transition points for youth; and
- create and annually update a list of the rights and responsibilities of foster parents in partnership with foster parent representatives. The list of foster parent rights and responsibilities must be posted on the department's website and provided to foster parents in writing at the time of licensure.

Summary of Bill:

The requirement that the DCYF provide foster parents with a list of foster parent rights and responsibilities on the DCYF website and in writing at the time of licensure is modified to also require the list to be provided to foster parents at orientation before licensure and at license renewal.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) At a time when Washington has a shortage of foster parents and is struggling with recruiting new ones, it is important to make sure that foster parents have clarity and aligned support from the DCYF as to their rights and responsibilities. The amount of paperwork responsibilities placed on foster parents can sometimes be frustrating, and making sure that parents know what they can and cannot do would be a good thing. House Bill 2785 will improve the relationship between foster parents and the DCYF and will offer Washington the opportunity to join with other states offering a foster parent bill of rights. It will set a positive course for the new department and create a unified approach for all people involved with caring for foster children.

The Washington foster care system will be greatly improved through science-based, outcome-driven, data-informed, and collaborative services for children and families served by the DCYF. Having work plans and metrics within the DCYF will provide transparency and strengthen relationships between licensed foster parents and the DCYF. Sections of the bill that are most promising are those directed toward improving permanency for children in out-of-home care, including reducing length of stay, licensing more homes for children needing out-of-home placement, reducing the amount of children that reenter out of home placement, increasing stability in out-of-home placement, and recognizing foster parents when making permanency in placement decisions. House Bill 2785 will greatly improve the foster care environment for foster parents and especially for the children.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dent; Connie Lambert-Eckert, Department of Social and Health Services; Brittany Clark; and Zachary Palmer.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.