

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2525

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Establishing the family connections program.

Sponsors: House Committee on Human Services & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Corry, Eslick, Springer, Orwall, Ortiz-Self, Shewmake, Goodman, Senn, Caldier, Dent, Leavitt, Davis, Doglio, J. Johnson and Pollet).

House Committee on Human Services & Early Learning
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

If an individual suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, that abuse or neglect may be reported to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Protective Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. There are many individuals who are required to report suspected abuse or neglect.

The CPS must then determine whether the report of child abuse or neglect is credible and whether the report meets the sufficiency screening criteria. If the report meets the screening criteria, the CPS must assign either: (1) a 24-hour response that includes an investigation; or (2) a family assessment response for low to moderate risk allegations that requires a 72-hour response.

The DCYF, or anyone else, may file a court petition alleging that the child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because no parent, guardian, or custodian is capable of adequately caring for the child. A court must hold a shelter care hearing following removal of a child from his or her home within 72 hours. At this hearing, the court must determine if the child can return home safely.

Child Welfare Parents for Parents Program.

The Parents for Parents (PFP) program provides outreach and support to parents at dependency-related hearings, beginning with the shelter care hearing from other parents who have 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.

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.

Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program.

The DCYF must establish a child welfare housing assistance pilot program (CWHAPP) by July 1, 2020, that provides housing support to eligible families. For the purposes of the pilot, the DCYF must consult with a stakeholder group to create eligibility criteria, including creating a definition of homelessness for the purposes of the program.

Summary:

The DCYF is required, beginning September 1, 2020, to contract with an external organization or organizations with experience serving youth or families receiving out-of-home care services to implement and operate the Family Connections Program (FCP) in:

- one location west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains; and
- one location east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains.

The FCP must facilitate interaction between a parent of a child found to be dependent and in out-of-home care and the individual with whom the child is placed. The FCP must also determine whether an in-person meeting between a parent of a child found to be dependent and in out-of-home care and the individual with whom the child is placed is appropriate by considering whether:

- the parent of a child found to be dependent and in out-of-home care and the individual with whom the child is placed are willing to participate in an in-person meeting; and
- safety concerns exist such that an in-person meeting should not occur.

If the FCP determines that an in-person meeting should occur, the FCP must provide a referral to the FCP team, which must:

- ensure that the parent ally contact the parent to prepare for an in-person meeting between the parent and caregiver;
- ensure that the experienced caregiver contact the caregiver to prepare for an in-person meeting between the parent and caregiver;
- convene an in-person meeting between the parent and caregiver; and
- provide ongoing support to the parent and caregiver following the in-person meeting.

The DCYF must collect data and measure outcomes for families engaging in the FCP and provide a report to the Legislature that includes a plan for expanding the program by September 1, 2021.

The term "child welfare parent mentor" as it pertains to the PFP program and the CWHAPP is replaced with the term "parent ally."

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0
Senate	47	0

Effective: June 11, 2020