
Children, Youth & Families Committee

HB 1897

Brief Description: Repealing requirements for parent payment of the cost of their child's support, treatment, and confinement in juvenile rehabilitation residential facilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Harris-Talley, Goodman, Morgan, Simmons, Peterson, Ormsby, Dolan, Fitzgibbon, Shewmake, Walen, Ramel, Kloba, Taylor, Frame, Riccelli, Fey, Davis, Bateman, Macri, Valdez and Pollet; by request of Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Repeals the requirement for parents or other legally obligated persons to pay a portion of the cost of their child's support, treatment, and confinement in Department of Children, Youth, and Family's Juvenile Rehabilitation residential facilities.
- Cancels all outstanding debts or other obligations including interest charges owed by the parents or other legally obligated persons.
- Terminates all pending actions or proceedings against the parents or other legally obligated persons to recover the debt owed.

Hearing Date: 1/19/22

Staff: Lena Langer (786-7192).

Background:

Juvenile Rehabilitation Institutions.

On July 1, 2019, the Juvenile Rehabilitation division (JR) transferred from the Department of Social and Health Services to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). The DCYF's JR operates three juvenile institutions for juveniles who are convicted of crimes and

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sentenced to more than 30 days of confinement.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Community Facilities.

Community facilities allow youth to begin transitioning back to the community. These facilities provide treatment, education, and vocational services. To be eligible for community facility placement, a youth must be placed on minimum security status. Minimum security status is based on risk and behavior assessments and requires that the individual served 10 percent of their aggregate minimum disposition or 30 days, whichever is greater, and all placement assessment requirements have been met. Individuals who attempt to escape or escape, individuals who are eligible for civil commitment, and individuals who meet other criteria are not eligible for minimum security status.

RCW 13.40.220.

The court may order the parents or other legally obligated persons to pay a reasonable sum representing in whole or in part the costs of support, treatment, and confinement of a child, provided that:

- legal custody of the child is vested in someone other than the child's parents, and not vested in the DCYF;
- due notice has been given to the parents or other persons legally obligated to care for and support the child; and
- a hearing has taken place.

Parents or other persons legally obligated to care for and support the child are liable for the costs of support, treatment, and confinement of the child when the child's legal custody is vested in the DCYF. The costs are in accordance to the DCYF's cost schedule reimbursement. The court may proceed against the parent or other legally obligated person for contempt if that person willfully fails or refuses to pay the sum.

The DCYF must serve the parents or other persons legally obligated to care for and support the child a notice and finding of financial responsibility. If the parents or other legally obligated persons object, an application for an adjudicative hearing may be filed within 20 days of the notice's date of service. Once the application for an adjudicative hearing is filed, the presiding or reviewing officer must determine the past liability and responsibility, if any, of the parents or other legally obligated persons and the amount of periodic payments to be made in the future.

If the parents or other legally responsible persons fails to file an application within 20 days, the notice and finding of financial responsibility becomes a final administrative order. These debts are subject to collection action without further action by the presiding or reviewing officer and may be collected by the DCYF.

Payment exemptions must be made in certain circumstances for parents receiving various adoption support and a parent or other legally obligated person when the parent or other legally obligated person, or such person's child, spouse, or spouse's child, was the victim of the offense for which the child was committed.

Summary of Bill:

The requirement for the parents or other legally obligated persons to pay a portion of the cost of their child's support, treatment, and confinement in the DCYF's JR residential facilities is removed.

All pending actions or proceedings to recover debt owed by a parent or other person legally obligated to care for and support a child must be terminated with prejudice including, but not limited to, tax refund intercepts, federal and state benefit intercepts, wage garnishments, payment plans, and automatic bank account deductions.

All outstanding debts or other obligations including, but not limited to, interest charges owed by a parent or other person legally obligated to care for and support a child must be canceled with prejudice, rendered null and void, and considered paid in full.

Any assignment of collection authority for debt owed that was reported to a collection agency, whether in or out of state, must be recalled and terminated, and any outstanding debt must be rendered null and void and considered paid in full.

This bill applies prospectively. Any money collected from a parent or other person legally obligated to care for and support a child before this bill's effective date will not be refunded to that person. Any money paid to the DCYF prior to this bill's effective date is not affected.

This bill does not create a cause of action against the State of Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2022.

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