
**Human Services, Youth, & Early
Learning Committee**

HB 1970

Brief Description: Improving communication between the department of children, youth, and families and caregivers.

Sponsors: Representatives McClintock, Couture, Waters, Graham, Cheney, Sandlin, Harris and Caldier.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to establish a caregiver communication specialist position within the DCYF for the purpose of improving communication between the DCYF and caregivers caring for children receiving child welfare services.
- Requires the DCYF to submit a report describing how to implement an automated notification system that would provide electronic or telephonic notification to caregivers of children receiving child welfare services and providing recommendations regarding improving communications between the DCYF and caregivers.

Hearing Date: 1/17/24

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

Child welfare services refer to an array of services, including voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and adoption services, which strengthen, supplement, or substitute for, parental care and supervision for the purpose of preventing or remedying problems

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which may result in family conflict, neglect, or abuse, and providing adequate care for children away from their homes in foster homes, day care, or other child care agencies or facilities. The investigation into whether child abuse or neglect occurred, referred to as child protective services, is not considered a child welfare service.

Caregivers caring for a child receiving child welfare services could include parents, relatives, or other suitable persons, foster parents, and group homes.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must establish a caregiver communication specialist position within the DCYF for the purpose of improving communication between the DCYF and caregivers. The caregiver communication specialist position is responsible for:

- assisting caseworkers in promptly communicating with caregivers of children receiving child welfare services;
- developing policies for sharing appropriate and timely information with such caregivers; and
- supporting coordination between existing caregiver engagement teams, constituent relations, communications specialists, and child welfare field offices.

By October 1, 2025, the DCYF must submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor describing:

- how the DCYF could implement an automated notification system that would provide electronic or telephonic notification to caregivers of children receiving child welfare services regarding upcoming changes in placement, court hearings, or other relevant information;
- any statutory, policy, or funding changes needed to accomplish this notification system; and
- recommendations regarding improving communications between the DCYF and caregivers. The DCYF must consult with the caregiver communication specialist, current and former caregivers, and youth who received or are receiving child welfare services regarding these recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2024.

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