

WSR 23-02-043
EMERGENCY RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

[Filed December 29, 2022, 4:48 p.m., effective December 29, 2022, 4:48 p.m.]

Effective Date of Rule: Immediately upon filing.

Purpose: The department of children, youth, and families (DCYF) will be making changes to the child welfare WAC in chapter 110-50 WAC and WAC 110-80-0260 regarding referrals to the division of child support when children are placed into DCYF's care. Currently, DCYF refers all children, unless good cause exists to not pursue collection. DCYF wants to revise the types of cases being referred and the good cause criteria to minimize the number of referrals made to the division of child support. These changes are being made to help to alleviate financial hardship and other barriers families often experience, which in turn helps reunify and stabilize children and their families sooner. In addition, the governor's office has included minimized referrals as a cost-savings in the 2022 budget proposal.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Repealing WAC 110-50-0310; and amending WAC 110-80-0260, 110-50-0300, and 110-50-0320.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 74.20.040.

Under RCW 34.05.350 the agency for good cause finds that immediate adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule is necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, and that observing the time requirements of notice and opportunity to comment upon adoption of a permanent rule would be contrary to the public interest.

Reasons for this Finding: Children and youth have not exited DCYF care as quickly as they did before the pandemic. New COVID[-19] variants are always a possibility, such as the emergence of the BA.5 strain this summer. The ongoing emergence of new COVID-19 variants can, and has, caused COVID[-19]-related backlogs of court cases and postponed DCYF services to children and families, including, but not limited to, parental education, drug and alcohol treatment, and domestic violence counseling. DCYF's child support payment process, in existence long before the pandemic, can lead to prolonged debt and prevent parents' ability to maintain or obtain suitable housing or other resources needed for family reunification. In late 2021, families lost the financial security provided by the state's COVID[-19]-related eviction moratorium, causing additional financial hardships for families already financially challenged by child support collection. Immediate changes to the child support payment process will alleviate some of the COVID[-19]-related financial hardships families can face and allow family reunification to occur sooner. Furthermore, the governor's 2022 budget supports these changes, which are included as a cost savings. This emergency rule making was initially filed under WSR 22-18-061 on September 1, 2022. Since the first emergency filing, a public hearing has been scheduled for December 27, 2022, under WSR 22-23-093.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 1.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: December 29, 2022.

Brenda Villarreal
Rules Coordinator

OTS-4046.2

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 18-14-078, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18)

WAC 110-50-0300 ((What)) When will cases ((must)) be referred to the division of child support (DCS)? ((Each case where the department participates in the payment of foster care must be referred to the division of child support, except when:

(1) ~~Collection would not be cost effective, including placements of seventy-two hours or less;~~
 (2) ~~Collection is exempt by law; or~~
 (3) ~~A child with developmental disabilities is eligible for admission to or discharged from a residential habilitation center as defined by RCW 71A.10.020(8), unless the child is placed as a result of an action taken under chapter 13.34 RCW.))~~

(1) The department will refer cases to DCS when a court has made a finding of abandonment as defined in RCW 13.34.030, unless good cause exists.

(2) Nothing in this section prohibits a parent, guardian, or relative from pursuing child support by contacting DCS directly.

[WSR 18-14-078, recodified as § 110-50-0300, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.08.090, 2004 c 183, 74.20.040, and 74.13.020. WSR 05-06-091, § 388-25-0225, filed 3/1/05, effective 4/1/05. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.13.031. WSR 01-08-047, § 388-25-0225, filed 3/30/01, effective 4/30/01.]

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 18-14-078, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18)

WAC 110-50-0320 What constitutes good cause for not pursuing the collection or establishment of child support or paternity? ((Child-
 ren's administration uses the following criteria to determine whether sufficient good cause exists for requesting that DCS not pursue col-
 lection or establish child support or paternity on foster care ca-
 ses:)) Good cause for not pursuing the collection of child support or establishing paternity exists when:

(1) It is not in the child's or youth's best interest; and

(2) The parent or ~~((other legally obligated person))~~ guardian, or the ~~((parent or other person's))~~ parent's or guardian's child or youth, spouse, or spouse's child or youth was the victim of the offense for which the child or youth was committed to the custody of the juvenile rehabilitation ~~((administration (JRA)))~~ division (JRD) and the child or youth is being placed directly into foster care from a ~~((JRA))~~ JRD facility until this placement episode closes;

(3) Adoption proceedings for the child or youth are pending in court or the custodial parent or guardian is being helped by a private or public agency to decide if the child or youth will be placed for adoption;

(4) The child or youth was conceived as a result of incest or rape ~~((and establishing paternity would not be in the child's best interest))~~;

(5) The juvenile or tribal court in ~~((the))~~ dependency proceedings or the department finds that the parents or guardians will be unable to comply with an agreed reunification plan with the child or youth due to ~~((the))~~ financial hardship caused by paying child support ~~((The social worker also may determine that financial hardship caused by paying child support will delay or prevent family reunification; or))~~;

(6) The custodial parent ~~((and/or))~~ or guardian or the child or youth may be placed in danger as a result of the presence of or potential for domestic abuse perpetrated by the ~~((person that the division of child support))~~ individual that DCS would be pursuing for collection action;

(7) The child support obligation would result in a financial hardship for parents or guardians because the child's or youth's household was low income at the time of removal; or

(8) The parent of a newborn child abandons the child by transferring the child to a qualified individual at an appropriate location, per RCW 26.20.030.

[WSR 18-14-078, recodified as § 110-50-0320, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.08.090, 2004 c 183, 74.20.040, and 74.13.020. WSR 05-06-091, § 388-25-0227, filed 3/1/05, effective 4/1/05.]

REPEALER

The following section of the Washington Administrative Code is repealed:

WAC 110-50-0310	Does children's administration refer foster care cases to the division of child support where good cause exists?
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OTS-4047.2

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 18-14-078, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18)

WAC 110-80-0260 What are the consequences of an adopted child being placed in foster care? (~~((1) If a child is on active status with Washington state's adoption support program and the department places the child in foster care, the department is required to refer the case to the division of child support and the program may report that good cause exists for not pursuing collection of support payments.~~

(2)) The department may review the adoption support agreement and may renegotiate the amount of any cash payments to the adoptive parent during the child's out-of-home placement.

[WSR 18-14-078, recodified as § 110-80-0260, filed 6/29/18, effective 7/1/18. Statutory Authority: 42 U.S.C. § 671-675, RCW 26.33.340, 74.13A.020, 74.13A.030, 74.13A.040, 74.13A.045, 74.13A.047, 74.13A.060, 74.13A.075, 74.13A.085, 74.13A.100, 74.15.020, 45 C.F.R. § 1356.40. WSR 18-14-008, § 388-27-0265, filed 6/21/18, effective 7/22/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 74.13.031. WSR 01-08-045, § 388-27-0265, filed 3/30/01, effective 4/30/01.]