

CHAPTER 285

[House Bill No. 2602]

ADOPTION

AN ACT Relating to adoption; amending RCW 74.04.005, 26.33.020, 74.13.109, and 74.13.130; adding a new section to chapter 26.33 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 74.13 RCW; and creating new sections.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) The legislature finds that each year less than five percent of pregnant teens relinquish their babies for adoption in Washington state. Nationally, fewer than eight percent of pregnant teens relinquish their babies for adoption.

(2) The legislature further finds that barriers such as lack of information about adoption, inability to voluntarily enter into adoption agreements, and current state public assistance policies act as disincentives to adoption.

(3) It is the purpose of this act to support adoption as an option for women with unintended pregnancies by removing barriers that act as disincentives to adoption.

Sec. 2. Section 816, chapter 9, Laws of 1989 1st ex. sess. and RCW 74.04.005 are each amended to read as follows:

For the purposes of this title, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) "Public assistance" or "assistance"—Public aid to persons in need thereof for any cause, including services, medical care, assistance grants, disbursing orders, work relief, general assistance and federal-aid assistance.

(2) "Department"—The department of social and health services.

(3) "County or local office"—The administrative office for one or more counties or designated service areas.

(4) "Director" or "secretary" means the secretary of social and health services.

(5) "Federal-aid assistance"—The specific categories of assistance for which provision is made in any federal law existing or hereafter passed by which payments are made from the federal government to the state in aid or in respect to payment by the state for public assistance rendered to any category of needy persons for which provision for federal funds or aid may from time to time be made, or a federally administered needs-based program.

(6) (a) "General assistance"—Aid to persons in need who:

(i) Are not eligible to receive federal-aid assistance, other than food stamps and medical assistance; however, an individual who refuses or fails to cooperate in obtaining federal-aid assistance, without good cause, is not eligible for general assistance;

(ii) Are either:

(A) Pregnant: PROVIDED, That need is based on the current income and resource requirements of the federal aid to families with dependent children program: PROVIDED FURTHER, That during any period in which an aid for dependent children employable program is not in operation, only those pregnant women who are categorically eligible for medicaid are eligible for general assistance; or

(B) Incapacitated from gainful employment by reason of bodily or mental infirmity that will likely continue for a minimum of sixty days as determined by the department. Persons who are unemployable due to alcohol or drug addiction are not eligible for general assistance. Persons receiving general assistance on July 26, 1987, or becoming eligible for such assistance thereafter, due to an alcohol or drug-related incapacity, shall be referred to appropriate assessment, treatment, shelter, or supplemental security income referral services as authorized under chapter 74.50 RCW. Referrals shall be made at the time of application or at the time of eligibility review. Alcoholic and drug addicted clients who are receiving general assistance on July 26, 1987, may remain on general assistance if they otherwise retain their eligibility until they are assessed for services under chapter 74.50 RCW. This subsection (6)(a)(ii)(B) shall not be construed to prohibit the department from granting general assistance benefits to alcoholics and drug addicts who are incapacitated due to other physical or mental conditions that meet the eligibility criteria for the general assistance program;

(iii) Are citizens or aliens lawfully admitted for permanent residence or otherwise residing in the United States under color of law; and

(iv) Have furnished the department their social security account number. If the social security account number cannot be furnished because it has not been issued or is not known, an application for a number shall be made prior to authorization of assistance, and the social security number shall be provided to the department upon receipt.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (6)(a)(i), (ii), and (c) of this section, general assistance shall be provided to the following recipients of federal-aid assistance:

(i) Recipients of supplemental security income whose need, as defined in this section, is not met by such supplemental security income grant because of separation from a spouse; or

(ii) To the extent authorized by the legislature in the biennial appropriations act, to recipients of aid to families with dependent children whose needs are not being met because of a temporary reduction in monthly income below the entitled benefit payment level caused by loss or reduction of wages or unemployment compensation benefits or some other unforeseen

circumstances. The amount of general assistance authorized shall not exceed the difference between the entitled benefit payment level and the amount of income actually received.

(c) General assistance shall be provided only to persons who are not members of assistance units receiving federal aid assistance, except as provided in subsection (6) (a)(ii)(A) and (b) of this section, and will accept available services which can reasonably be expected to enable the person to work or reduce the need for assistance unless there is good cause to refuse. Failure to accept such services shall result in termination until the person agrees to cooperate in accepting such services and subject to the following maximum periods of ineligibility after reapplication:

(i) First failure: One week;

(ii) Second failure within six months: One month;

(iii) Third and subsequent failure within one year: Two months.

(d) The department shall adopt by rule medical criteria for general assistance eligibility to ensure that eligibility decisions are consistent with statutory requirements and are based on clear, objective medical information.

(e) The process implementing the medical criteria shall involve consideration of opinions of the treating or consulting physicians or health care professionals regarding incapacity, and any eligibility decision which rejects uncontroverted medical opinion must set forth clear and convincing reasons for doing so.

(f) Recipients of general assistance based upon a finding of incapacity from gainful employment who remain otherwise eligible shall not have their benefits terminated absent a clear showing of material improvement in their medical or mental condition or specific error in the prior determination that found the recipient eligible by reason of incapacitation. Recipients of general assistance based upon pregnancy who remain otherwise eligible and who are not eligible to receive benefits under the federal aid to families with dependent children program shall not have their benefits terminated until six weeks following the birth of the recipient's child.

(7) "Applicant"—Any person who has made a request, or on behalf of whom a request has been made, to any county or local office for assistance.

(8) "Recipient"—Any person receiving assistance and in addition those dependents whose needs are included in the recipient's assistance.

(9) "Standards of assistance"—The level of income required by an applicant or recipient to maintain a level of living specified by the department.

(10) "Resource"—Any asset, tangible or intangible, owned by or available to the applicant at the time of application, which can be applied toward meeting the applicant's need, either directly or by conversion into money or its equivalent: PROVIDED, That an applicant may retain the

following described resources and not be ineligible for public assistance because of such resources.

(a) A home, which is defined as real property owned and used by an applicant or recipient as a place of residence, together with a reasonable amount of property surrounding and contiguous thereto, which is used by and useful to the applicant. Whenever a recipient shall cease to use such property for residential purposes, either for himself or his dependents, the property shall be considered as a resource which can be made available to meet need, and if the recipient or his dependents absent themselves from the home for a period of ninety consecutive days such absence, unless due to hospitalization or health reasons or a natural disaster, shall raise a rebuttable presumption of abandonment: PROVIDED, That if in the opinion of three physicians the recipient will be unable to return to the home during his lifetime, and the home is not occupied by a spouse or dependent children or disabled sons or daughters, such property shall be considered as a resource which can be made available to meet need.

(b) Household furnishings and personal effects and other personal property having great sentimental value to the applicant or recipient, as limited by the department consistent with limitations on resources and exemptions for federal aid assistance.

(c) A motor vehicle, other than a motor home, used and useful having an equity value not to exceed one thousand five hundred dollars.

(d) All other resources, including any excess of values exempted, not to exceed one thousand dollars or other limit as set by the department, to be consistent with limitations on resources and exemptions necessary for federal aid assistance.

(e) Applicants for or recipients of general assistance may retain the following described resources in addition to exemption for a motor vehicle or home and not be ineligible for public assistance because of such resources:

(i) Household furnishings, personal effects, and other personal property having great sentimental value to the applicant or recipient;

(ii) Term and burial insurance for use of the applicant or recipient;

(iii) Life insurance having a cash surrender value not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars; and

(iv) Cash, marketable securities, and any excess of values above one thousand five hundred dollars equity in a vehicle and above one thousand five hundred dollars in cash surrender value of life insurance, not exceeding one thousand five hundred dollars for a single person or two thousand two hundred fifty dollars for a family unit of two or more. The one thousand dollar limit in subsection (10)(d) of this section does not apply to recipients of or applicants for general assistance.

(f) If an applicant for or recipient of public assistance possesses property and belongings in excess of the ceiling value, such value shall be used

in determining the need of the applicant or recipient, except that: (i) The department may exempt resources or income when the income and resources are determined necessary to the applicant's or recipient's restoration to independence, to decrease the need for public assistance, or to aid in rehabilitating the applicant or recipient or a dependent of the applicant or recipient; and (ii) the department may provide grant assistance to persons who are otherwise ineligible because of excess real property owned by such persons when they are making a good faith effort to dispose of that property, but the recipient must sign an agreement to dispose of the property and repay assistance payments made to the date of disposition of the property which would not have been made had the disposal occurred at the beginning of the period for which the payments of such assistance were made. In no event shall such amount due the state exceed the net proceeds otherwise available to the recipient from the disposition, unless after nine months from the date of the agreement the property has not been sold, or if the recipient's eligibility for financial assistance ceases for any other reason. In these two instances the entire amount of assistance paid during this period will be treated as an overpayment and a debt due the state, and may be recovered pursuant to RCW 43.20B.630.

(11) "Income"—(a) All appreciable gains in real or personal property (cash or kind) or other assets, which are received by or become available for use and enjoyment by an applicant or recipient during the month of application or after applying for or receiving public assistance. The department may by rule and regulation exempt income received by an applicant for or recipient of public assistance which can be used by him to decrease his need for public assistance or to aid in rehabilitating him or his dependents, but such exemption shall not, unless otherwise provided in this title, exceed the exemptions of resources granted under this chapter to an applicant for public assistance. In determining the amount of assistance to which an applicant or recipient of aid to families with dependent children is entitled, the department is hereby authorized to disregard as a resource or income the earned income exemptions consistent with federal requirements. The department may permit the above exemption of earnings of a child to be retained by such child to cover the cost of special future identifiable needs even though the total exceeds the exemptions or resources granted to applicants and recipients of public assistance, but consistent with federal requirements. In formulating rules and regulations pursuant to this chapter, the department shall define income and resources and the availability thereof, consistent with federal requirements. All resources and income not specifically exempted, and any income or other economic benefit derived from the use of, or appreciation in value of, exempt resources, shall be considered in determining the need of an applicant or recipient of public assistance.

(b) If, under applicable federal requirements, the state has the option of considering property in the form of lump sum compensatory awards or related settlements received by an applicant or recipient as income or as a resource, the department shall consider such property to be a resource.

(12) "Need"—The difference between the applicant's or recipient's standards of assistance for himself and the dependent members of his family, as measured by the standards of the department, and value of all nonexempt resources and nonexempt income received by or available to the applicant or recipient and the dependent members of his family.

(13) For purposes of determining eligibility for public assistance and participation levels in the cost of medical care, the department shall exempt restitution payments made to people of Japanese and Aleut ancestry pursuant to the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and the Aleutian and Pribilof Island Restitution Act passed by congress, P.L. 100-383, including all income and resources derived therefrom.

(14) In the construction of words and phrases used in this title, the singular number shall include the plural, the masculine gender shall include both the feminine and neuter genders and the present tense shall include the past and future tenses, unless the context thereof shall clearly indicate to the contrary.

***Sec. 3. Section 2, chapter 155, Laws of 1984 and RCW 26.33.020 are each amended to read as follows:**

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Alleged father" means a person whose parent-child relationship has not been terminated, who is not a presumed father under chapter 26.26 RCW, and who alleges himself or whom a party alleges to be the father of the child. It includes a person whose marriage to the mother was terminated more than three hundred days before the birth of the child or who was separated from the mother more than three hundred days before the birth of the child.

(2) "Child" means a person under eighteen years of age.

(3) "Adoptee" means a person who is to be adopted or who has been adopted.

(4) "Adoptive parent" means the person or persons who seek to adopt or have adopted an adoptee.

(5) "Court" means the superior court.

(6) "Department" means the department of social and health services.

(7) "Agency" means any public or private association, corporation, or individual licensed or certified by the department as a child placing agency under chapter 74.15 RCW or as an adoption agency.

(8) "Parent" means the natural or adoptive mother or father of a child, including a presumed father under chapter 26.26 RCW. It does not include

any person whose parent-child relationship has been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction.

(9) "Legal guardian" means the department, an agency, or a person, other than a parent or stepparent, appointed by the court to promote the child's general welfare, with the authority and duty to make decisions affecting the child's development.

(10) "Guardian ad litem" means a person, not related to a party to the action, appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a party who is under a legal disability.

(11) "Relinquish or relinquishment" means the voluntary surrender of custody of a child to the department, an agency, or prospective adoptive parents.

(12) "Birth parent" means the biological mother or father of a child, including a presumed father under chapter 26.26 RCW, if the parent-child relationship has been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction. "Birth parent" does not include a biological mother or biological or alleged father, including a presumed father under chapter 26.26 RCW, if the parent-child relationship was terminated because of a conviction of rape of a child in the first, second, or third degree or child molestation in the first, second, or third degree as defined in chapter 9A.44 RCW.

*Sec. 3 was vetoed, see message at end of chapter.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 26.33 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit the parties to a proceeding under this chapter from entering into agreements regarding communication with or contact between child adoptees, adoptive parents, and a birth parent or parents.

(2) Agreements regarding communication with or contact between child adoptees, adoptive parents, and a birth parent or parents shall not be legally enforceable unless the terms of the agreement are set forth in a written court order entered in accordance with the provisions of this section. The court shall not enter a proposed order unless the terms of such order have been approved in writing by the prospective adoptive parents, any birth parent whose parental rights have not previously been terminated, and, if the child is in the custody of the department or a licensed child-placing agency, a representative of the department or child-placing agency. If the child is represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem in a proceeding under this chapter or in any other child-custody proceeding, the terms of the proposed order also must be approved in writing by the child's representative. An agreement under this section need not disclose the identity of the parties to be legally enforceable. The court shall not enter a proposed order unless the court finds that the communication or contact between the child adoptee, the adoptive parents, and a birth parent or parents as agreed

upon and as set forth in the proposed order, would be in the child adoptee's best interests.

(3) Failure to comply with the terms of an agreed order regarding communication or contact that has been entered by the court pursuant to this section shall not be grounds for setting aside an adoption decree or revocation of a written consent to an adoption after that consent has been approved by the court as provided in this chapter.

(4) An agreed order entered pursuant to this section may be enforced by a civil action and the prevailing party in that action may be awarded, as part of the costs of the action, a reasonable amount to be fixed by the court as attorneys' fees. The court shall not modify an agreed order under this section unless it finds that the modification is necessary to serve the best interests of the child adoptee, and that: (a) The modification is agreed to by the adoptive parent and the birth parent or parents; or (b) exceptional circumstances have arisen since the agreed order was entered that justify modification of the order.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 74.13 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department of social and health services shall establish, within funds appropriated for the purpose, a reconsideration program to provide medical and counseling services through the adoption support program for children of families who apply for services after the adoption is final. Families requesting services through the program shall provide any information requested by the department for the purpose of processing the family's application for services.

(2) A child meeting the eligibility criteria for registration with the program is one who:

(a) Was residing in foster care funded by the department immediately prior to the adoptive placement;

(b) Had a physical or mental handicap or emotional disturbance that existed and was documented prior to the adoption; and

(c) Resides in the state of Washington with an adoptive parent who lacks the necessary financial means to care for the child's special need.

(3) If a family is accepted for registration and meets the criteria in subsection (2) of this section, the department may enter into an agreement for services. Prior to entering into an agreement for services through the program, the medical needs of the child must be reviewed and approved by the department's office of personal health services.

(4) Any services provided pursuant to an agreement between a family and the department shall be met from the department's medical program. Such services shall be limited to:

(a) Services provided after finalization of an agreement between a family and the department pursuant to this section;

(b) Services not covered by the family's insurance or other available assistance; and

(c) Services related to the eligible child's identified physical or mental handicap or emotional disturbance that existed prior to the adoption.

(5) Any payment by the department for services provided pursuant to an agreement shall be made directly to the physician or provider of services according to the department's established procedures.

(6) The total costs payable by the department for services provided pursuant to an agreement shall not exceed twenty thousand dollars per child.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. The department of social and health services shall report to the 1991 legislature regarding the applications for the program established under section 5 of this act. The report shall contain information regarding the requests for financial assistance, both those that qualify and those that do not, and shall include the estimated cost for providing the services requested.

Sec. 7. Section 4, chapter 63, Laws of 1971 ex. sess. as last amended by section 135, chapter 7, Laws of 1985 and RCW 74.13.109 are each amended to read as follows:

The secretary shall issue rules and regulations to assist in the administration of the program of adoption support authorized by RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13.100 through 74.13.145.

Disbursements from the appropriations available from the general fund shall be made pursuant to such rules and regulations and pursuant to agreements conforming thereto to be made by the secretary with parents for the purpose of supporting the adoption of children in, or likely to be placed in, foster homes or child caring institutions who are found by the secretary to be difficult to place in adoption because of physical or other reasons; including, but not limited to, physical or mental handicap, emotional disturbance, ethnic background, language, race, color, age, or sibling grouping.

Such agreements shall meet the following criteria:

(1) The child whose adoption is to be supported pursuant to such agreement shall be or have been a child hard to place in adoption.

(2) Such agreement must relate to a child who was or is residing in a foster home or child-caring institution or a child who, in the judgment of the secretary, is both eligible for, and likely to be placed in, either a foster home or a child-caring institution.

(3) Such agreement shall provide that adoption support shall not continue beyond the time that the adopted child reaches eighteen years of age, becomes emancipated, dies, or otherwise ceases to need support, provided that if the secretary shall find that continuing dependency of such child after such child reaches eighteen years of age warrants the continuation of support pursuant to RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13.100 through 74.13.145 the secretary may do so, subject to all the provisions of RCW 26.33.320 and

74.13.100 through 74.13.145, including annual review of the amount of such support.

(4) Any prospective parent who is to be a party to such agreement shall be a person who ~~(, while having))~~ has the character, judgment, sense of responsibility, and disposition which make him or her suitable as an adoptive parent of such child ~~((, lacks the financial means fully to care for such hard-to-place child))~~.

Sec. 8. Section 11, chapter 63, Laws of 1971 ex. sess. as last amended by section 142, chapter 7, Laws of 1985 and RCW 74.13.130 are each amended to read as follows:

~~(If the secretary determines that a prospective adoptive parent or parents cannot, because of limited financial means, pay the cost or the full cost of an adoption proceeding for the adoption of a hard to place child who would be eligible for support under RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13.100 through 74.13.145, the secretary may authorize the payment from the appropriations available from the general fund of all or part a reasonable attorney's fee to be determined by the superior court hearing the adoption and court costs. The clerk of the court shall furnish the secretary with a certified copy of the decree of adoption containing the finding as to such attorney's fee.~~

In evaluating any such prospective parent's ability to pay the secretary may use the same criteria for evaluating ability to pay which are to be used by him in waiving, reducing, or deferring fees pursuant to RCW 74.13.103 plus the burdens likely to be assumed by such parent even after adoption support is provided pursuant to RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13.100 through 74.13.145)) The secretary may authorize the payment, from the appropriations available from the general fund, of all or part of the nonrecurring adoption expenses incurred by a prospective parent. "Nonrecurring adoption expenses" means those expenses incurred by a prospective parent in connection with the adoption of a difficult to place child including, but not limited to, attorneys' fees, court costs, and agency fees. Payment shall be made in accordance with rules adopted by the department.

This section shall have retroactive application to January 1, 1987. For purposes of retroactive application, the secretary may provide reimbursement to any parent who adopted a difficult to place child between January 1, 1987, and one year following the effective date of this act, regardless of whether the parent had previously entered into an adoption support agreement with the department.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. If specific funding for the purposes of this act, referencing this act by bill number, is not provided by June 30, 1990, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act shall be null and void.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 10. If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or

the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

Passed the House March 8, 1990.

Passed the Senate March 8, 1990.

Approved by the Governor March 29, 1990, with the exception of certain items which were vetoed.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 29, 1990.

Note: Governor's explanation of partial veto is as follows:

"I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 3, Engrossed House Bill No. 2602 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to adoption."

Section 3 of Engrossed House Bill No. 2602 defines "birth parent" for the purposes of adoption statutes. This definition is in conflict with section 1 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6494 which has already been enacted. Because the definition in that measure is more inclusive and contains additional changes to existing law, I have vetoed section 3 of this bill.

With the exception of section 3, Engrossed House Bill No. 2602 is approved."

CHAPTER 286

[House Bill No. 2413]

MATHEMATICS, ENGINEERING, AND SCIENCE—MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

AN ACT Relating to educational opportunities; amending RCW 28A.03.432; and creating a new section.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

Sec. 1. Section 2, chapter 265, Laws of 1984 as amended by section 2, chapter 66, Laws of 1989 and RCW 28A.03.432 are each amended to read as follows:

A program to increase the number of people from groups underrepresented in the fields of mathematics, engineering, and the physical sciences in this state shall be established by the University of Washington. The program shall be administered through the University of Washington and designed to:

(1) Encourage students in the targeted groups in the common schools, with a particular emphasis on those students in middle and junior high schools and the ~~((ninth))~~ sixth through twelfth grades, to acquire the academic skills needed to study mathematics, engineering, or related sciences at an institution of higher education;

(2) Promote the awareness of career opportunities including the career opportunities of teaching in the fields of science and mathematics and the skills necessary to achieve those opportunities among students sufficiently early in their educational careers to permit and encourage the students to acquire the skills;