

NEW SECTION. Sec. 23. 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.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 24. Except for section 19, this act shall take effect January 1, 1989. Section 19 of this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately.

Passed the House March 7, 1988.

Passed the Senate March 4, 1988.

Approved by the Governor March 22, 1988.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 22, 1988.

CHAPTER 189

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill No. 6207]

FOSTER CARE—PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH RELATIVE

AN ACT Relating to foster care; amending RCW 13.34.130; reenacting and amending RCW 74.15.030; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The department shall immediately establish an advisory task force to examine current procedures regarding the use of out-of-home placements with relatives, identify barriers to increased and early placement of children with relatives, and recommend procedures to encourage immediate placement of children with relatives, when appropriate, if removal from parental custody is necessary. The task force shall prepare a report which sets forth findings and recommendations and the results of any department innovations or programs which have been implemented to encourage placement of children with relatives. The final report shall be submitted to the legislature prior to December 15, 1988.

Sec. 2. Section 4, chapter 188, Laws of 1984 and RCW 13.34.130 are each amended to read as follows:

If, after a fact-finding hearing pursuant to RCW 13.34.110, as now or hereafter amended, it has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is dependent within the meaning of RCW 13.34.030(2); after consideration of the predisposition report prepared pursuant to RCW 13.34.110 and after a disposition hearing has been held pursuant to RCW 13.34.110, the court shall enter an order of disposition pursuant to this section.

(1) The court shall order one of the following dispositions of the case:

(a) Order a disposition other than removal of the child from his or her home, which shall provide a program designed to alleviate the immediate danger to the child, to mitigate or cure any damage the child has already

suffered, and to aid the parents so that the child will not be endangered in the future. In selecting a program, the court should choose those services that least interfere with family autonomy, provided that the services are adequate to protect the child.

(b) Order that the child be removed from his or her home and ordered into the custody, control, and care of a relative or the department of social and health services or a licensed child placing agency for placement in a foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW or in a home not required to be licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW. ((Such)) Unless there is reasonable cause to believe that the safety or welfare of the child would be jeopardized or that efforts to reunite the parent and child will be hindered, such child shall be placed with a grandparent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, uncle, aunt, or first cousin with whom the child has a relationship and is comfortable, and who is willing and available to care for the child. An order for out-of-home placement may be made only if the court finds that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from the child's home and to make it possible for the child to return home and that:

- (i) There is no parent or guardian available to care for such child;
- (ii) The child is unwilling to reside in the custody of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian;
- (iii) The parent, guardian, or legal custodian is not willing to take custody of the child;
- (iv) A manifest danger exists that the child will suffer serious abuse or neglect if the child is not removed from the home; or
- (v) The extent of the child's disability is such that the parent, guardian, or legal custodian is unable to provide the necessary care for the child and the parent, guardian, or legal custodian has determined that the child would benefit from placement outside of the home.

(2) Whenever a child is ordered removed from the child's home, the agency charged with his or her care shall provide the court with a specific plan as to where the child will be placed, what steps will be taken to return the child home, and what actions the agency will take to maintain parent-child ties.

(a) The agency plan shall specify what services the parents will be offered in order to enable them to resume custody and what requirements the parents must meet in order to resume custody.

(b) The agency shall be required to encourage the maximum parent-child contact possible, including regular visitation and participation by the parents in the care of the child while the child is in placement.

(c) A child shall be placed as close to the child's home as possible, preferably in the child's own neighborhood, unless the court finds that placement at a greater distance is necessary to promote the child's or parents' well-being.

(d) The agency charged with supervising a child in placement shall provide all reasonable services that are available within the agency, or within the community, or those services which the department of social and health services has existing contracts to purchase. It shall report to the court if it is unable to provide such services.

(3) If there is insufficient information at the time of the disposition hearing upon which to base a determination regarding the suitability of a proposed placement with a relative, the child shall remain in foster care and the court shall direct the supervising agency to conduct necessary background investigations as provided in chapter 74.15 RCW and report the results of such investigation to the court within thirty days. However, if such relative appears otherwise suitable and competent to provide care and treatment, the criminal history background check need not be completed before placement, but as soon as possible after placement. Any placements with relatives, pursuant to this section, shall be contingent upon cooperation by the relative with the agency case plan and compliance with court orders related to the care and supervision of the child including, but not limited to, court orders regarding parent-child contacts and any other conditions imposed by the court. Noncompliance with the case plan or court order shall be grounds for removal of the child from the relative's home, subject to review by the court.

(4) The status of all children found to be dependent shall be reviewed by the court at least every six months at a hearing in which it shall be determined whether court supervision should continue.

(a) A child shall not be returned home at the review hearing unless the court finds that a reason for removal as set forth in this section no longer exists. The parents, guardian, or legal custodian shall report to the court the efforts they have made to correct the conditions which led to removal. If a child is returned, casework supervision shall continue for a period of six months, at which time there shall be a hearing on the need for continued intervention.

(b) If the child is not returned home, the court shall establish in writing:

(i) Whether reasonable services have been provided to or offered to the parties to facilitate reunion;

(ii) The extent to which the parents have visited the child and any reasons why visitation has not occurred or has been infrequent;

(iii) Whether the agency is satisfied with the cooperation given to it by the parents;

(iv) Whether additional services are needed to facilitate the return of the child to the child's parents; if so, the court shall order that reasonable services be offered; and

(v) When return of the child can be expected.

(c) The court at the review hearing may order that a petition seeking termination of the parent and child relationship be filed.

Sec. 3. Section 3, chapter 172, Laws of 1967 as last amended by section 14, chapter 486, Laws of 1987 and by section 13, chapter 524, Laws of 1987 and RCW 74.15.030 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

The secretary shall have the power and it shall be the secretary's duty:

(1) In consultation with the children's services advisory committee, and with the advice and assistance of persons representative of the various type agencies to be licensed, to designate categories of facilities for which separate or different requirements shall be developed as may be appropriate whether because of variations in the ages, sex and other characteristics of persons served, variations in the purposes and services offered or size or structure of the agencies to be licensed hereunder, or because of any other factor relevant thereto;

(2) In consultation with the children's services advisory committee, and with the advice and assistance of persons representative of the various type agencies to be licensed, to adopt and publish minimum requirements for licensing applicable to each of the various categories of agencies to be licensed.

The minimum requirements shall be limited to:

(a) The size and suitability of a facility and the plan of operation for carrying out the purpose for which an applicant seeks a license;

(b) The character, suitability and competence of an agency and other persons associated with an agency directly responsible for the care and treatment of children, expectant mothers or developmentally disabled persons. In consultation with law enforcement personnel, the secretary shall investigate the conviction record or pending charges and dependency record information under chapter 43.43 RCW of each agency and its staff seeking licensure or relicensure. The secretary shall use the information solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for a license and for determining the character, suitability, and competence of those persons or agencies, excluding parents, not required to be licensed who are authorized to care for children, expectant mothers, and developmentally disabled persons. Criminal justice agencies shall provide the secretary such information as they may have and that the secretary may require for such purpose;

(c) The number of qualified persons required to render the type of care and treatment for which an agency seeks a license;

(d) The safety, cleanliness, and general adequacy of the premises to provide for the comfort, care and well-being of children, expectant mothers or developmentally disabled persons;

(e) The provision of necessary care, including food, clothing, supervision and discipline; physical, mental and social well-being; and educational, recreational and spiritual opportunities for those served;

(f) The financial ability of an agency to comply with minimum requirements established pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13-.031; and

(g) The maintenance of records pertaining to the admission, progress, health and discharge of persons served;

(3) To investigate any person, including relatives by blood or marriage except for parents, for character, suitability, and competence in the care and treatment of children, expectant mothers, and developmentally disabled persons prior to authorizing that person to care for children, expectant mothers, and developmentally disabled persons. However, if a child is placed with a relative under RCW 13.34.060 or 13.34.130, and if such relative appears otherwise suitable and competent to provide care and treatment the criminal history background check required by this section need not be completed before placement, but shall be completed as soon as possible after placement;

(4) On reports of child abuse and neglect, to investigate agencies in accordance with chapter 26.44 RCW, including day care centers and family day care homes, to determine whether the abuse or neglect has occurred, and whether child protective services or referral to a law enforcement agency is appropriate;

(5) To issue, revoke, or deny licenses to agencies pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031. Licenses shall specify the category of care which an agency is authorized to render and the ages, sex and number of persons to be served;

(6) To prescribe the procedures and the form and contents of reports necessary for the administration of chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13-.031 and to require regular reports from each licensee;

(7) To inspect agencies periodically to determine whether or not there is compliance with chapter 74.15 RCW and RCW 74.13.031 and the requirements adopted hereunder;

(8) To review requirements adopted hereunder at least every two years and to adopt appropriate changes after consultation with the children's services advisory committee; and

(9) To consult with public and private agencies in order to help them improve their methods and facilities for the care of children, expectant mothers and developmentally disabled persons.

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Passed the House March 2, 1988.

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