
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1204

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By House Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Eslick, Leavitt, Bateman, Kloba, Reed, Simmons, Doglio, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, McEntire, Davis, and Pollet; by request of Department of Children, Youth, and Families)

1 AN ACT Relating to implementing the family connections program;
2 amending RCW 74.13.715; providing an effective date; and declaring an
3 emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 74.13.715 and 2021 c 334 s 990 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) (~~Beginning September 1, 2020~~) Within available funding, the
8 department shall contract with an external organization or
9 organizations with experience serving youth or families receiving
10 out-of-home care services to implement and operate the family
11 connections program, which facilitates interaction between a parent
12 of a child found to be dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and in
13 out-of-home care and the individual with whom the child is placed.

14 (2) The external organization or organizations contracted to
15 implement and operate the family connections program shall implement
16 and operate the family connections program in one or more locations
17 west of the crest of the Cascade mountains, and one or more locations
18 east of the crest of the Cascade mountains.

19 (3) Families may be referred to the family connections program in
20 any manner determined to be appropriate by the family connections
21 program, including but not limited to a referral by ((a)):

- 1 (a) A caseworker(~~(an)~~);
- 2 (b) An attorney(~~(a)~~);
- 3 (c) A guardian ad litem as defined in RCW 13.34.030(~~(a)~~);
- 4 (d) A parent ally(~~(an)~~);
- 5 (e) An office of public defense social worker(~~(or the)~~);
- 6 (f) The court; or
- 7 (g) The parent or caregiver.

8 (4) After receiving a referral, the family connections program
9 shall determine whether an in-person meeting between a parent of a
10 child found to be dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and in out-
11 of-home care and the individual with whom the child is placed is
12 appropriate. If the family connections program determines that such a
13 meeting is appropriate, the family connections program shall then
14 determine whether:

15 (a) The parent of a child found to be dependent pursuant to
16 chapter 13.34 RCW and in out-of-home care and the individual with
17 whom the child is placed are willing to participate in an in-person
18 meeting; and

19 (b) Safety concerns exist such that an in-person meeting should
20 not occur.

21 (5) If the family connections program determines that an in-
22 person meeting should occur following the analysis required by
23 subsection (4) of this section, the family connections program shall
24 provide a referral to the family connections program team. The family
25 connections program team shall include a parent ally and an
26 experienced caregiver. After receiving a referral, the family
27 connections program team shall:

28 (a) Ensure that the parent ally contact the parent to prepare for
29 an in-person meeting between the parent and caregiver;

30 (b) Ensure that the experienced caregiver contact the caregiver
31 to prepare for an in-person meeting between the parent and caregiver;

32 (c) Convene an in-person meeting between the parent and
33 caregiver; and

34 (d) Provide ongoing support to the parent and caregiver following
35 the in-person meeting.

36 (6) If the family connections program determines that an in-
37 person meeting should not occur following the analysis required under
38 subsection (4) of this section, the family connections program team
39 shall facilitate the exchange of information between the parent and
40 caregiver in an appropriate manner that does not include an in-person

1 meeting. The format of this exchange of information may include
2 written messages, phone calls, or videoconferencing. The family
3 connections program shall routinely reevaluate whether an in-person
4 meeting should occur using the analysis required under subsection (4)
5 of this section.

6 (7) The department shall collect data and measure outcomes for
7 families engaging in the family connections program. By September 1,
8 2021, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department shall
9 submit a report to the relevant committees of the legislature that
10 details:

11 (a) Data collected for the family connections program;

12 (b) Outcomes for families engaging in the family connections
13 program; and

14 (c) The department's plan on how to expand the family connections
15 program statewide.

16 (8) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
17 section:

18 (a) "Experienced caregiver" means:

19 (i) An individual who is or has received a foster family home
20 license pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW or an equivalent license from
21 another state; or

22 (ii) An individual who cared for a child who was removed from his
23 or her parent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW and who has a kin
24 relationship to that child pursuant to RCW 74.13.600.

25 (b) "Parent ally" has the same meaning as provided in RCW
26 2.70.060.

27 (~~(9) This section expires June 30, 2023.~~)

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act is necessary for the immediate
29 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
30 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
31 effect June 30, 2023.

--- END ---