HOUSE BILL 2519

State of Washington 63rd Legislature 2014 Regular Session

By Representatives Senn, Walsh, Kagi, Hunter, Roberts, Tharinger, Haigh, Goodman, and Freeman

Read first time 01/20/14. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

AN ACT Relating to connecting children involved in the child welfare system to quality early care and education programming; amending RCW 43.215.405; adding new sections to chapter 26.44 RCW; and adding a new section to chapter 43.215 RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. A new section is added to chapter 26.44 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The family assessment response worker shall assess for child safety and child well-being when collaborating with a family to determine the need for child protective services child care or early learning services.

(2) The family assessment response child care program shall only subsidize child care or early learning programs that are enrolled in the early achievers program described in RCW 43.215.100 and rate at level three, four, or five unless one of the following conditions is met:

(a) The family lives in an area with no local programs that rate at level three, four, or five in the early achievers program; or
(b) The local child care and early learning programs that rate at level three, four, or five in the early achievers program are not able to meet the needs of the child.

(3)(a) Child care and early learning service referrals provided by the family assessment response worker shall prioritize the following programs:

(i) Programs located in close proximity to the child's home of origin;

(ii) Licensed child care programs that receive state subsidy pursuant to RCW 43.215.135;

(iii) Early childhood education and assistance programs;

(iv) Head start and early head start programs;

(v) Programs that offer full workday child care and early learning opportunities;

(vi) Programs that have existing relationships with local child welfare offices; and

(vii) Programs with the capacity to provide child care or early learning services to the child after the closure of the family assessment response case.

(b) The family assessment response worker must document when a referral is made to a child care or early learning program that does not meet the characteristics of a prioritized program described in this section. The documentation must include the name of the child care or early learning program and the reason the program was selected.

(4) At least fifteen days prior to closing the family assessment response case, the family assessment worker shall meet with the child's parent or caregiver to discuss child care and early learning services. If the family plans to use child care or early learning services, the family assessment worker shall work with the family to complete the following activities:

(a) Contact the child's early learning or child care provider to secure the service;

(b) Complete eligibility processes for a state subsidized child care or early learning program; and

(c) Confirm that the child was determined eligible for the program.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 26.44 RCW to read as follows:
(1) The department shall collaborate with the department of early learning to complete two reports that examine child care and early learning services provided during family assessment response cases. Data collection must commence with the first cohort of families receiving family assessment response services. The report must include information specific to only family assessment response cases and document the following:

(a) The number of children receiving child care or early learning services;
(b) The reason why a referral was made to child care or early learning services;
(c) The child care or early learning program type a child attended;
(d) The early achievers rating for the program;
(e) The child's attendance;
(f) The duration of attendance during the open family assessment response case;
(g) The duration of attendance after the closure of the family assessment response case;
(h) The number of families electing to not use child care or early learning programming after the closure of the family assessment response case.

(2) The first report is due to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 2, 2015. The second report is due to the appropriate committees of the legislature by January 2, 2016.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. A new section is added to chapter 43.215 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Children who received family assessment response services pursuant to RCW 26.44.260 are eligible for the working connections child care program described in RCW 43.215.135 for a twelve-month enrollment period and may not be deemed ineligible due to any change in circumstance.

(2) Eligibility begins the day the family assessment response case is closed by the department of social and health services, children's administration.

(3) Parents or caregivers must redetermine eligibility for the working connections child care program described in RCW 43.215.135
after twelve months from the time the family assessment response case closed.

Sec. 4. RCW 43.215.405 and 2013 2nd sp.s. c 16 s 4 are each amended to read as follows:

Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout RCW 43.215.400 through (43.215.450, 43.215.455, 43.215.456,) 43.215.457(,) and 43.215.900 through 43.215.903.

(1) "Advisory committee" means the advisory committee under RCW 43.215.420.

(2) "Approved programs" means those state-supported education and special assistance programs which are recognized by the department as meeting the minimum program rules adopted by the department to qualify under RCW 43.215.400 through 43.215.450 and 43.215.900 through 43.215.903 and are designated as eligible for funding by the department under RCW 43.215.430 and 43.215.440.

(3) "Comprehensive" means an assistance program that focuses on the needs of the child and includes education, health, and family support services.

(4) "Department" means the department of early learning.

(5) "Eligible child" means a child not eligible for kindergarten whose family income is at or below one hundred ten percent of the federal poverty level, as published annually by the federal department of health and human services, and includes a child whose family is eligible for public assistance, and who is not a participant in a federal or state program providing comprehensive services; children whose parent or caregiver has completed family assessment response services outlined in RCW 26.44.260 are eligible; a child who is eligible for special education due to disability under RCW 28A.155.020; and may include children who are eligible under rules adopted by the department if the number of such children equals not more than ten percent of the total enrollment in the early childhood program. Priority for enrollment shall be given to children from families with the lowest income, children (in foster care) involved in the child welfare system, or to eligible children from families with multiple needs.
(6) "Family support services" means providing opportunities for parents to:
   (a) Actively participate in their child's early childhood program;
   (b) Increase their knowledge of child development and parenting skills;
   (c) Further their education and training;
   (d) Increase their ability to use needed services in the community;
   (e) Increase their self-reliance.

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