

**RCW 71.05.010 Legislative intent.** (1) The provisions of this chapter apply to persons who are eighteen years of age or older and are intended by the legislature:

(a) To protect the health and safety of persons suffering from behavioral health disorders and to protect public safety through use of the *parens patriae* and police powers of the state;

(b) To prevent inappropriate, indefinite commitment of persons living with behavioral health disorders and to eliminate legal disabilities that arise from such commitment;

(c) To provide prompt evaluation and timely and appropriate treatment of persons with serious behavioral health disorders;

(d) To safeguard individual rights;

(e) To provide continuity of care for persons with serious behavioral health disorders;

(f) To encourage the full use of all existing agencies, professional personnel, and public funds to prevent duplication of services and unnecessary expenditures; and

(g) To encourage, whenever appropriate, that services be provided within the community.

(2) When construing the requirements of this chapter the court must focus on the merits of the petition, except where requirements have been totally disregarded, as provided in *In re C.W.*, 147 Wn.2d 259, 281 (2002). A presumption in favor of deciding petitions on their merits furthers both public and private interests because the mental and physical well-being of individuals as well as public safety may be implicated by the decision to release an individual and discontinue his or her treatment. [2020 c 302 s 1; 2016 sp.s. c 29 s 203; 2015 c 269 s 1; 1998 c 297 s 2; 1997 c 112 s 2; 1989 c 120 s 1; 1973 1st ex.s. c 142 s 6.]

**Short title—2016 sp.s. c 29:** "This act may be known and cited as Ricky Garcia's act." [2016 sp.s. c 29 s 801.]

**Right of action—2016 sp.s. c 29:** "This act does not create any new entitlement or cause of action related to civil commitment under this chapter, and cannot form the basis for a private right of action." [2016 sp.s. c 29 s 802.]

**Effective dates—2016 sp.s. c 29:** See note following RCW 71.05.760.

**Effective date—2015 c 269 ss 1-9 and 11-13:** "Sections 1 through 9 and 11 through 13 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect immediately [May 14, 2015]." [2015 c 269 s 20.]

**Effective dates—1998 c 297:** "This act takes effect July 1, 1998, except for sections 18, 35, 38, and 39 of this act, which take effect March 1, 1999." [1998 c 297 s 53.]

**Severability—1998 c 297:** "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." [1998 c 297 s 58.]

**Intent—1998 c 297:** "It is the intent of the legislature to: (1) Clarify that it is the nature of a person's current conduct, current mental condition, history, and likelihood of committing future acts that pose a threat to public safety or himself or herself, rather than simple categorization of offenses, that should determine treatment procedures and level; (2) improve and clarify the sharing of information between the mental health and criminal justice systems; and (3) provide additional opportunities for mental health treatment for persons whose conduct threatens himself or herself or threatens public safety and has led to contact with the criminal justice system.

The legislature recognizes that a person can be incompetent to stand trial, but may not be gravely disabled or may not present a likelihood of serious harm. The legislature does not intend to create a presumption that a person who is found incompetent to stand trial is gravely disabled or presents a likelihood of serious harm requiring civil commitment." [1998 c 297 s 1.]