

RCW 9.94A.655 Parenting sentencing alternative. (1) An offender is eligible for the parenting sentencing alternative if:

(a) The high end of the standard sentence range for the current offense is greater than one year;

(b) The offender has no prior or current conviction for: A felony sex offense; a serious violent offense; or a felony offense where the offender was armed with a firearm or deadly weapon in the commission of the offense;

(c) The offender has no current conviction for a violent offense;

(d) The offender signs any release of information waivers required to allow information regarding current or prior child welfare cases to be shared with the department and the court; and

(e) The offender is:

(i) A parent with physical custody of a minor child;

(ii) An expectant parent;

(iii) A legal guardian of a minor child; or

(iv) A biological parent, adoptive parent, custodian, or stepparent with a proven, established, ongoing, and substantial relationship with a minor child that existed at the time of the offense.

(2) Prior juvenile adjudications are not considered offenses when considering eligibility under this section, except for any sex offense, serious violent offense, or felony offense where the offender was armed with a firearm or deadly weapon in the commission of the offense.

(3) To assist the court in making its determination, the court may order the department to complete a risk assessment report, including a family impact statement, or a chemical dependency screening report as provided in RCW 9.94A.500 prior to sentencing.

(4) If the court is considering this alternative, the court shall request that the department contact the department of children, youth, and families to determine if the agency has an open child welfare case or prior substantiated referral of abuse or neglect involving the offender or if the agency is aware of any substantiated case of abuse or neglect with a tribal child welfare agency involving the offender.

(a) If the offender has an open child welfare case or child abuse or neglect investigation, the department will provide the release of information waiver and request that the department of children, youth, and families or the tribal child welfare agency provide a report to the court. The department of children, youth, and families shall, within seven business days of the request: Provide a copy of the most recent court order entered in proceedings under chapter 13.34 or 13.36 RCW pertaining to the offender, and provide a report regarding whether the offender has been cooperative with services ordered by the court in those proceedings; or, if there is no court order or there has not been court involvement, provide a report that includes, at the minimum, the following:

(i) Legal status of the child welfare case or child protective services response;

(ii) Length of time the department of children, youth, and families has had an open child welfare case or child protective services response involving the offender; and

(iii) Any special needs of the child.

(b) The department shall report to the court if the offender has been convicted of a crime against a child.

(c) If a report is required from a tribal child welfare agency, the department shall attempt to obtain information that is similar to

what is required for the report provided by the department of children, youth, and families in a timely manner.

(d) If the offender does not have an open child welfare case with the department of children, youth, and families or with a tribal child welfare agency but has prior involvement, the department will obtain information from the department of children, youth, and families on the number and type of past substantiated referrals of abuse or neglect and report that information to the court. If the department of children, youth, and families has never had any substantiated referrals or an open case with the offender, the department will inform the court.

(e) The existence of a prior substantiated referral of child abuse or neglect or of an open child welfare case does not, alone, disqualify the parent from applying or participating in this alternative. The court shall consider whether the child-parent relationship can be readily maintained during parental incarceration, and whether, due to the existence of an open child welfare case, parental incarceration exacerbates the likelihood of termination of the child-parent relationship.

(5) If the sentencing court determines that the offender is eligible for a sentencing alternative under this section and that the sentencing alternative is appropriate and should be imposed, the court shall waive imposition of a sentence within the standard sentence range and impose a sentence consisting of twelve months of community custody. The court shall consider the offender's criminal history when determining if the alternative is appropriate. The court shall also give great weight to the minor child's best interest.

(6) When a court imposes a sentence of community custody under this section:

(a) The court may impose conditions as provided in RCW 9.94A.703 and may impose other affirmative conditions as the court considers appropriate.

(b) The department may impose conditions as authorized in RCW 9.94A.704 that may include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Parenting classes;
- (ii) Chemical dependency treatment;
- (iii) Mental health treatment;
- (iv) Vocational training;
- (v) Change programs;
- (vi) Life skills classes.

(c) The department shall report to the court if the offender commits any violations of his or her sentence conditions.

(7) The department shall provide the court with quarterly progress reports regarding the offender's progress in required programming, treatment, and other supervision conditions. When an offender has an open child welfare case, the department will seek to coordinate services with the department of children, youth, and families.

(8) (a) The court may bring any offender sentenced under this section back into court at any time during the period of community custody on its own initiative to evaluate the offender's progress in treatment, or to determine if any violations of the conditions of the sentence have occurred.

(b) At the commencement of such a hearing, the court shall advise the offender sentenced under this section of the offender's right to assistance of counsel and appoint counsel if the offender is indigent.

(c) If the offender is brought back to court, the court may modify the conditions of community custody or impose sanctions under (d) of this subsection, including extending the length of participation in the alternative program by no more than six months.

(d) The court may order the offender to serve a term of total confinement within the standard range of the offender's current offense at any time during the period of community custody, if the offender violates the conditions or requirements of the sentence or if the offender is failing to make satisfactory progress in treatment.

(e) An offender ordered to serve a term of total confinement under (d) of this subsection shall receive credit for any time previously served in confinement under this section.

(f) An offender sentenced under this section is subject to all rules relating to earned release time with respect to any period served in total confinement.

(9) The state and its agencies, officers, agents, or employees are not liable for the acts of offenders participating in the sentencing alternative under this section unless the state or its agencies, officers, agents, or employees act with willful disregard of a known risk of immediate harm.

(10) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Expectant parent" means a pregnant or other parent awaiting the birth of his or her child, or an adoptive parent or person in the process of a final adoption.

(b) "Minor child" means a child under the age of eighteen. [2020 c 137 s 2; 2018 c 58 s 45; 2010 c 224 s 2.]

Effective date—2018 c 58: See note following RCW 28A.655.080.