

RCW 13.34.130 Order of disposition for a dependent child, alternatives—Petition seeking termination of parent-child relationship—Placement with relatives, foster family home, group care facility, qualified residential treatment program, or other suitable persons—Placement of an Indian child in out-of-home care—Contact with siblings. If, after a fact-finding hearing pursuant to RCW 13.34.110, it has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the child is dependent within the meaning of RCW 13.34.030 after consideration of the social study 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 that maintains the child in 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 determining the disposition, the court should choose services to assist the parents in maintaining the child in the home, including housing assistance, if appropriate, that least interfere with family autonomy and are adequate to protect the child.

(b) (i) Order the child to be removed from his or her home and into the custody, control, and care of a relative or other suitable person, the department, or agency responsible for supervision of the child's placement. If the court orders that the child be placed with a caregiver over the objections of the parent or the department, the court shall articulate, on the record, his or her reasons for ordering the placement. The court may not order an Indian child, as defined in RCW 13.38.040, to be removed from his or her home unless the court finds, by clear and convincing evidence including testimony of qualified expert witnesses, that the continued custody of the child by the parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the child.

(ii) The department has the authority to place the child, subject to review and approval by the court (A) with a relative as defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a), (B) in the home of another suitable person if the child or family has a preexisting relationship with that person, and the person has completed all required criminal history background checks and otherwise appears to the department to be suitable and competent to provide care for the child, or (C) in a foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW.

(iii) The department may also consider placing the child, subject to review and approval by the court, with a person with whom the child's sibling or half-sibling is residing or a person who has adopted the sibling or half-sibling of the child being placed as long as the person has completed all required criminal history background checks and otherwise appears to the department to be competent to provide care for the child.

(2) Absent good cause, the department shall follow the wishes of the natural parent regarding the placement of the child in accordance with RCW 13.34.260.

(3) The department may only place a child with a person not related to the child as defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a), including a placement provided for in subsection (1)(b)(iii) of this section, when the court finds that such placement is in the best interest of the

child. Unless there is reasonable cause to believe that the health, safety, or welfare of the child would be jeopardized or that efforts to reunite the parent and child will be hindered, the child shall be placed with a person who is willing, appropriate, and available to care for the child, and who is: (I) Related to the child as defined in RCW 74.15.020(2)(a) with whom the child has a relationship and is comfortable; or (II) a suitable person as described in subsection (1)(b) of this section. The court shall consider the child's existing relationships and attachments when determining placement.

(4) If the child is placed in a qualified residential treatment program as defined in this chapter, the court shall, within sixty days of placement, hold a hearing to:

(a) Consider the assessment required under RCW 13.34.420 and submitted as part of the department's social study, and any related documentation;

(b) Determine whether placement in foster care can meet the child's needs or if placement in another available placement setting best meets the child's needs in the least restrictive environment; and

(c) Approve or disapprove the child's placement in the qualified residential treatment program.

(5) When placing an Indian child in out-of-home care, the department shall follow the placement preference characteristics in RCW 13.38.180.

(6) Placement of the child with a relative or other suitable person as described in subsection (1)(b) of this section shall be given preference by the court. 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, specifying the services, including housing assistance, that have been provided to the child and the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, and that prevention services have been offered or provided and have failed to prevent the need for out-of-home placement, unless the health, safety, and welfare of the child cannot be protected adequately in the home, and that:

(a) There is no parent or guardian available to care for such child;

(b) The parent, guardian, or legal custodian is not willing to take custody of the child; or

(c) The court finds, by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence, a manifest danger exists that the child will suffer serious abuse or neglect if the child is not removed from the home and an order under RCW 26.44.063 would not protect the child from danger. The court shall give great weight to the lethality of high-potency synthetic opioids and public health guidance from the department of health related to high-potency synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, when deciding whether a manifest danger exists.

(7) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section, the court shall consider whether it is in a child's best interest to be placed with, have contact with, or have visits with siblings.

(a) There shall be a presumption that such placement, contact, or visits are in the best interests of the child provided that:

(i) The court has jurisdiction over all siblings subject to the order of placement, contact, or visitation pursuant to petitions filed under this chapter or the parents of a child for whom there is no jurisdiction are willing to agree; and

(ii) There is no reasonable cause to believe that the health, safety, or welfare of any child subject to the order of placement, contact, or visitation would be jeopardized or that efforts to reunite the parent and child would be hindered by such placement, contact, or visitation. In no event shall parental visitation time be reduced in order to provide sibling visitation.

(b) The court may also order placement, contact, or visitation of a child with a stepbrother or stepsister provided that in addition to the factors in (a) of this subsection, the child has a relationship and is comfortable with the stepsibling.

(8) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section and placed into nonparental or nonrelative care, the court shall order a placement that allows the child to remain in the same school he or she attended prior to the initiation of the dependency proceeding when such a placement is practical and in the child's best interest.

(9) If the court has ordered a child removed from his or her home pursuant to subsection (1)(b) of this section, the court may order that a petition seeking termination of the parent and child relationship be filed if the requirements of RCW 13.34.132 are met.

(10) 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 or other suitable person, the child shall remain in foster care and the court shall direct the department 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 or other person 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 or other suitable persons, pursuant to this section, shall be contingent upon cooperation by the relative or other suitable person 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, sibling 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 or other suitable person's home, subject to review by the court. [2024 c 328 s 104; 2019 c 172 s 12; 2018 c 284 s 10; 2013 c 254 s 1. Prior: 2011 c 309 s 27; 2011 c 292 s 1; 2010 c 288 s 1; prior: 2009 c 520 s 27; 2009 c 491 s 2; 2009 c 397 s 3; prior: 2007 c 413 s 6; 2007 c 412 s 2; 2003 c 227 s 3; 2002 c 52 s 5; 2000 c 122 s 15; prior: 1999 c 267 s 16; 1999 c 267 s 9; 1999 c 173 s 3; prior: 1998 c 314 s 2; 1998 c 130 s 2; 1997 c 280 s 1; prior: 1995 c 313 s 2; 1995 c 311 s 19; 1995 c 53 s 1; 1994 c 288 s 4; 1992 c 145 s 14; 1991 c 127 s 4; prior: 1990 c 284 s 32; 1990 c 246 s 5; 1989 1st ex.s. c 17 s 17; prior: 1988 c 194 s 1; 1988 c 190 s 2; 1988 c 189 s 2; 1984 c 188 s 4; prior: 1983 c 311 s 5; 1983 c 246 s 2; 1979 c 155 s 46; 1977 ex.s. c 291 s 41.]

Findings—Intent—2024 c 328: See note following RCW 13.34.050.

Effective date—2019 c 172 ss 3, 4, and 10-15: See note following RCW 13.34.420.

Severability—2007 c 413: See note following RCW 13.34.215.

Intent—2003 c 227: "It is the intent of the legislature to recognize the importance of emotional ties formed by siblings with each other, especially in those circumstances which warrant court intervention into family relationships. It is the intent of the legislature to encourage the courts and public agencies which deal with families to acknowledge and give thoughtful consideration to the quality and nature of sibling relationships when intervening in family relationships. It is not the intent of the legislature to create legal obligations or responsibilities between siblings and other family members whether by blood or marriage, step families, foster families, or adopted families that do not already exist. Neither is it the intent of the legislature to mandate sibling placement, contact, or visitation if there is reasonable cause to believe that the health, safety, or welfare of a child or siblings would be jeopardized. Finally, it is not the intent of the legislature to manufacture or anticipate family relationships which do not exist at the time of the court intervention, or to disrupt already existing positive family relationships." [2003 c 227 s 1.]

Intent—2002 c 52: See note following RCW 13.34.025.

Findings—Intent—Severability—1999 c 267: See notes following RCW 43.20A.790.

Short title—Purpose—Entitlement not granted—Federal waivers—1999 c 267 ss 10-26: See RCW 74.15.900 and 74.15.901.

Severability—1999 c 173: See note following RCW 13.34.125.

Finding—Effective date—1990 c 284: See notes following RCW 74.13.250.

Severability—1990 c 246: See note following RCW 13.34.060.

Legislative finding—1983 c 311: See note following RCW 13.34.030.

Effective date—Severability—1979 c 155: See notes following RCW 13.04.011.

Effective dates—Severability—1977 ex.s. c 291: See notes following RCW 13.04.005.