

**Chapter 74.14C RCW**  
**FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES**

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**RCW 74.14C.005 Findings and intent.** (1) The legislature believes that protecting the health and safety of children is paramount. The legislature recognizes that the number of children entering out-of-home care is increasing and that a number of children receive long-term foster care protection. Reasonable efforts by the department to shorten out-of-home placement or avoid it altogether should be a major focus of the child welfare system. It is intended that providing up-front services decrease the number of children entering out-of-home care and have the effect of eventually lowering foster care expenditures and strengthening the family unit.

Within available funds, the legislature directs the department to focus child welfare services on protecting the child, strengthening families and, to the extent possible, providing necessary services in the family setting, while drawing upon the strengths of the family. The legislature intends services be locally based and offered as early as possible to avoid disruption to the family, out-of-home placement of the child, and entry into the dependency system. The legislature also intends that these services be used for those families whose children are returning to the home from out-of-home care. These services are known as family preservation services and intensive family preservation services and are characterized by the following values, beliefs, and goals:

- (a) Safety of the child is always the first concern;
- (b) Children need their families and should be raised by their own families whenever possible;
- (c) Interventions should focus on family strengths and be responsive to the individual family's cultural values and needs;
- (d) Participation should be voluntary; and
- (e) Improvement of family functioning is essential in order to promote the child's health, safety, and welfare and thereby allow the family to remain intact and allow children to remain at home.

(2) Subject to the availability of funds for such purposes, the legislature intends for these services to be made available to all eligible families on a statewide basis through a phased-in process. Except as otherwise specified by statute, the department shall have the authority and discretion to implement and expand these services as provided in RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100. The department shall

consult with the community public health and safety networks when assessing a community's resources and need for services.

(3) It is the legislature's intent that, within available funds, the department develop services in accordance with RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100.

(4) Nothing in RCW 74.14C.010 through 74.14C.100 shall be construed to create an entitlement to services nor to create judicial authority to order the provision of preservation services to any person or family if the services are unavailable or unsuitable or that the child or family are not eligible for such services. [2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 510; 1995 c 311 s 1; 1992 c 214 s 1.]

**Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 ss 102, 104-115, 201-227, 301-337, 401-419, 501-513, 801-803, and 805-822:** See note following RCW 43.216.025.

**Conflict with federal requirements—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6:** See RCW 43.216.908.

**RCW 74.14C.010 Definitions.** Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Community support systems" means the support that may be organized through extended family members, friends, neighbors, religious organizations, community programs, cultural and ethnic organizations, or other support groups or organizations.

(2) "Department" means the department of children, youth, and families.

(3) "Family preservation services" means in-home or community-based services drawing on the strengths of the family and its individual members while addressing family needs to strengthen and keep the family together where possible and may include:

(a) Respite care of children to provide temporary relief for parents and other caregivers;

(b) Services designed to improve parenting skills with respect to such matters as child development, family budgeting, coping with stress, health, safety, and nutrition; and

(c) Services designed to promote the well-being of children and families, increase the strength and stability of families, increase parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, promote a safe, stable, and supportive family environment for children, and otherwise enhance children's development.

Family preservation services shall have the characteristics delineated in RCW 74.14C.020 (2) and (3).

(4) "Family resource center" means a unified single point of entry where families, individuals, children, and youth in communities can obtain information, an assessment of needs, referral to, or direct delivery of family services in a manner that is welcoming and strength-based.

(a) A family resource center is designed to meet the needs, cultures, and interests of the communities that the family resource center serves.

(b) Family services may be delivered directly to a family at the family resource center by family resource center staff or by providers who contract with or have provider agreements with the family resource

center. Any family resource center that provides family services shall comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding the delivery of such family services, unless required waivers or exemptions have been granted by the appropriate governing body.

(c) Each family resource center shall have one or more family advocates who screen and assess a family's needs and strengths. If requested by the family, the family advocate shall assist the family with setting its own goals and, together with the family, develop a written plan to pursue the family's goals in working towards a greater level of self-reliance or in attaining self-sufficiency.

(5) "Imminent" means a decision has been made by the department that, without intensive family preservation services, a petition requesting the removal of a child from the family home will be immediately filed under chapter 13.32A or 13.34 RCW, or that a voluntary placement agreement will be immediately initiated.

(6) "Intensive family preservation services" means community-based services that are delivered primarily in the home, that follow intensive service models with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing or avoiding the need for unnecessary imminent out-of-home placement, and that have all of the characteristics delineated in RCW 74.14C.020 (1) and (3).

(7) "Out-of-home placement" means a placement in a foster family home or group care facility licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW or placement in a home, other than that of the child's parent, guardian, or legal custodian, not required to be licensed pursuant to chapter 74.15 RCW.

(8) "Paraprofessional worker" means any individual who is trained and qualified to provide assistance and community support systems development to families and who acts under the supervision of a preservation services therapist. The paraprofessional worker is not intended to replace the role and responsibilities of the preservation services therapist.

(9) "Preservation services" means family preservation services and intensive family preservation services that consider the individual family's cultural values and needs.

(10) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department. [2021 c 39 s 2. Prior: 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 511; 1996 c 240 s 2; 1995 c 311 s 2; 1992 c 214 s 2.]

**Intent—Findings—2021 c 39:** "(1) This act is intended to provide a common definition for family resource centers across Washington state in an effort to establish a core set of principles for existing and newly forming family resource centers.

(2) The legislature finds that family resource centers are effective in supporting communities when adhering to the following principles:

- (a) Equality;
- (b) Mutual respect;
- (c) Families are resources to other families and the community;
- (d) Strengthening families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities;
- (e) Embedding programs in the community;
- (f) Fairness;
- (g) Responsiveness;
- (h) Accountability;

- (i) Mobilization of formal and informal resources; and
- (j) Flexibility.

(3) The legislature further finds that families and parents are primarily responsible for supporting children's development and well-being at all ages and stages, and for preparing a child for success in school and life. However, many families may benefit from voluntary preventative or enriching support. (4) The legislature finds that family resource centers play a critical role in:

- (a) Preventing child abuse and neglect;
- (b) Strengthening children and families;
- (c) Connecting family-impacting agencies and programs;
- (d) Creating opportunities for community-level coordination; and
- (e) Creating connections to resources and support systems." [2021 c 39 s 1.]

**Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 ss 102, 104-115, 201-227, 301-337, 401-419, 501-513, 801-803, and 805-822:** See note following RCW 43.216.025.

**Conflict with federal requirements—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6:** See RCW 43.216.908.

**RCW 74.14C.020 Preservation services.** (1) Intensive family preservation services shall have all of the following characteristics:

- (a) Services are provided by specially trained service providers who have received at least forty hours of training from recognized intensive in-home services experts. Service providers deliver the services in the family's home, and other environments of the family, such as their neighborhood or schools;
- (b) Caseload size averages two families per service provider unless paraprofessional services are utilized, in which case a provider may, but is not required to, handle an average caseload of five families;
- (c) The services to the family are provided by a single service provider who may be assisted by paraprofessional workers, with backup providers identified to provide assistance as necessary;
- (d) Services are available to the family within twenty-four hours following receipt of a referral to the program; and
- (e) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, duration of service is limited to a maximum of forty days, unless paraprofessional workers are used, in which case the duration of services is limited to a maximum of ninety days. The department may authorize an additional provision of service through an exception to policy when the department and provider agree that additional services are needed.

(2) Family preservation services shall have all of the following characteristics:

- (a) Services are delivered primarily in the family home or community;
- (b) Services are committed to reinforcing the strengths of the family and its members and empowering the family to solve problems and become self-sufficient;
- (c) Services are committed to providing support to families through community organizations including but not limited to school, church, cultural, ethnic, neighborhood, and business;

(d) Services are available to the family within forty-eight hours of referral unless an exception is noted in the file;

(e) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, duration of service is limited to a maximum of six months, unless the department requires additional follow-up on an individual case basis;

(f) Caseload size no more than ten families per service provider, which can be adjusted when paraprofessional workers are used or required by the department; and

(g) Support and retain foster families so they can provide quality family-based settings for children in foster care.

(3) Preservation services shall include the following characteristics:

(a) Services protect the child and strengthen the family;

(b) Service providers have the authority and discretion to spend funds, up to a maximum amount specified by the department, to help families obtain necessary food, shelter, or clothing, or to purchase other goods or services that will enhance the effectiveness of intervention;

(c) Services are available to the family twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week;

(d) Services enhance parenting skills, family and personal self-sufficiency, functioning of the family, and reduce stress on families; and

(e) Services help families locate and use additional assistance including, but not limited to, the development and maintenance of community support systems, counseling and treatment services, housing, child care, education, job training, emergency cash grants, state and federally funded public assistance, and other basic support services.

(4) The department may offer or provide family preservation services or preservation services to families as remedial services pursuant to proceedings brought under chapter 13.34 RCW. If the department elects to do so, these services are not considered remedial services as defined in chapter 13.34 RCW, and the department may extend the duration of such services for a period of up to fifteen months following the return home of a child under chapter 13.34 RCW. The purpose for extending the duration of these services is to, whenever possible, facilitate safe and timely reunification of the family and to ensure the strength and stability of the reunification. [2019 c 172 s 9; 1996 c 240 s 3; 1995 c 311 s 3; 1992 c 214 s 3.]

**RCW 74.14C.030 Department duties.** (1) The department shall be the lead administrative agency for preservation services and may receive funding from any source for the implementation or expansion of such services. The department shall:

(a) Provide coordination and planning with the advice of the community networks for the implementation and expansion of preservation services; and

(b) Monitor and evaluate such services to determine whether the programs meet measurable standards specified by this chapter and the department.

(2) The department may: (a) Allow its contractors for preservation services to use paraprofessional workers when the department and provider determine the use appropriate. The department may also use paraprofessional workers, as appropriate, when the department provides preservation services; and (b) allow follow-up to

be provided, on an individual case basis, when the department and provider determine the use appropriate.

(3) In carrying out the requirements of this section, the department shall consult with qualified agencies that have demonstrated expertise and experience in preservation services.

(4) The department may provide preservation services directly and shall, within available funds, enter into outcome-based, competitive contracts with social service agencies to provide preservation services, provided that such agencies meet measurable standards specified by this chapter and by the department. The standards shall include, but not be limited to, satisfactory performance in the following areas:

(a) The number of families appropriately connected to community resources;

(b) Avoidance of new referrals accepted by the department for child protective services or family reconciliation services within one year of the most recent case closure by the department;

(c) Consumer satisfaction;

(d) For reunification cases, reduction in the length of stay in out-of-home placement; and

(e) Reduction in the level of risk factors specified by the department.

(5) (a) The department shall not provide intensive family preservation services unless it is demonstrated that provision of such services prevent out-of-home placement in at least seventy percent of the cases served for a period of at least six months following termination of services. The department's caseworkers may only provide preservation services if there is no other qualified entity willing or able to do so.

(b) Contractors shall demonstrate that provision of intensive family preservation services prevent out-of-home placement in at least seventy percent of the cases served for a period of no less than six months following termination of services. The department may increase the period of time based on additional research and data. If the contractor fails to meet the seventy percent requirement the department may: (i) Review the conditions that may have contributed to the failure to meet the standard and renew the contract if the department determines: (A) The contractor is making progress to meet the standard; or (B) conditions unrelated to the provision of services, including case mix and severity of cases, contributed to the failure; or (ii) reopen the contract for other bids.

(c) The department shall cooperate with any person who has a contract under this section in providing data necessary to determine the amount of reduction in foster care. For the purposes of this subsection "prevent out-of-home placement" means that a child who has been a recipient of intensive family preservation services has not been placed outside of the home, other than for a single, temporary period of time not exceeding fourteen days.

(6) The department shall adopt rules to implement this chapter. [1996 c 240 s 4; 1995 c 311 s 4; 1992 c 214 s 4.]

**RCW 74.14C.032 Preservation services contracts.** The initial contracts under \*RCW 74.14C.030(3) shall be executed not later than July 1996 and shall expire June 30, 1997. Subsequent contracts shall be for periods not to exceed twenty-four months. [1995 c 311 s 13.]

**\*Reviser's note:** RCW 74.14C.030 was amended by 1996 c 240 s 4, changing subsection (3) to subsection (4).

**RCW 74.14C.040 Intensive family preservation services—**

**Eligibility criteria.** (1) Intensive family preservation services may be provided to children and their families only when the department has determined that:

(a) The child has been placed out-of-home or is at imminent risk of an out-of-home placement due to:

(i) Child abuse or neglect;

(ii) A serious threat of substantial harm to the child's health, safety, or welfare; or

(iii) Family conflict; and

(b) There are no other reasonably available services including family preservation services that will prevent out-of-home placement of the child or make it possible to immediately return the child home.

(2) The department shall refer eligible families to intensive family preservation services on a twenty-four hour intake basis. The department need not refer otherwise eligible families, and intensive family preservation services need not be provided, if:

(a) The services are not available in the community in which the family resides;

(b) The services cannot be provided because the program is filled to capacity and there are no current service openings;

(c) The family refuses the services;

(d) The department, or the agency that is supervising the foster care placement, has developed a case plan that does not include reunification of the child and family; or

(e) The department or the service provider determines that the safety of a child, a family member, or persons providing the service would be unduly threatened.

(3) Nothing in this chapter shall prevent provision of intensive family preservation services to nonfamily members when the department or the service provider deems it necessary or appropriate to do so in order to assist the family or child. [1995 c 311 s 6; 1992 c 214 s 5.]

**RCW 74.14C.042 Family preservation services—Eligibility**

**criteria.** (1) Family preservation services may be provided to children and their families only when the department has determined that without intervention, the child faces a substantial likelihood of out-of-home placement due to:

(a) Child abuse or neglect;

(b) A serious threat of substantial harm to the child's health, safety, or welfare; or

(c) Family conflict.

(2) The department need not refer otherwise eligible families and family preservation services need not be provided, if:

(a) The services are not available in the community in which the family resides;

(b) The services cannot be provided because the program is filled to capacity;

(c) The family refuses the services; or

(d) The department or the service provider determines that the safety of a child, a family member, or persons providing the services would be unduly threatened.

(3) Nothing in this chapter shall prevent provision of family preservation services to nonfamily members when the department or the service provider deems it necessary or appropriate to do so in order to assist the family or the child. [1995 c 311 s 7.]

**RCW 74.14C.060 Funds, volunteer services.** For the purpose of providing preservation services the department may:

(1) Solicit and use any available federal or private resources, which may include funds, in-kind resources, or volunteer services; and

(2) Use any available state resources, which may include in-kind resources or volunteer services. [1995 c 311 s 10; 1992 c 214 s 7.]

**RCW 74.14C.065 Federal funds.** Any federal funds made available under RCW 74.14C.060 shall be used to supplement and shall not supplant state funds to carry out the purposes of this chapter. However, during the 1995-97 fiscal biennium, federal funds made available under RCW 74.14C.060 may be used to supplant state funds to carry out the purposes of this chapter. [1995 2nd sp.s. c 18 s 922; 1992 c 214 s 11.]

**Severability—Effective date—1995 2nd sp.s. c 18:** See notes following RCW 19.118.110.

**RCW 74.14C.090 Reports on referrals and services.** Each department caseworker who refers a client for preservation services shall file a report with his or her direct supervisor stating the reasons for which the client was referred. The caseworker's supervisor shall verify in writing his or her belief that the family who is the subject of a referral for preservation services meets the eligibility criteria for services as provided in this chapter. The direct supervisor shall report monthly to the regional administrator on the provision of these services. The regional administrator shall report to the secretary quarterly on the provision of these services for the entire region. The secretary shall post on the department's website a semiannual report on the provision of these services on a statewide basis. [2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 s 513; 1995 c 311 s 8.]

**Effective date—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 ss 102, 104-115, 201-227, 301-337, 401-419, 501-513, 801-803, and 805-822:** See note following RCW 43.216.025.

**Conflict with federal requirements—2017 3rd sp.s. c 6:** See RCW 43.216.908.

**RCW 74.14C.100 Training and consultation for department personnel—Training for judges and service providers.** (1) The department shall, within available funds, provide for ongoing training and consultation to department personnel to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Such training may:

(a) Include the family unit as the primary focus of service; identifying family member strengths; empowering families; child, adult, and family development; stress management; and may include parent training and family therapy techniques;

(b) Address intake and referral, assessment of risk, case assessment, matching clients to services, and service planning issues in the context of the home-delivered service model, including strategies for engaging family members, defusing violent situations, and communication and conflict resolution skills;

(c) Cover methods of helping families acquire the skills they need, including home management skills, life skills, parenting, child development, and the use of community resources;

(d) Address crisis intervention and other strategies for the management of depression, and suicidal, assaultive, and other high-risk behavior; and

(e) Address skills in collaborating with other disciplines and services in promoting the safety of children and other family members and promoting the preservation of the family.

(2) The department and the administrative office of the courts shall, within available funds, collaborate in providing training to judges, and others involved in the provision of services pursuant to this title, including service providers, on the function and use of preservation services. [2005 c 282 s 48; 1995 c 311 s 12.]