



SUPPORT A CERTIFICATE OF PARENTAL IMPROVEMENT

SB 5533/HB 1645

REQUEST

Establish a Certificate of Parental Improvement for individuals who have a founded finding of abuse or neglect.

BACKGROUND

- Many individuals with a past founded finding of child abuse or neglect (CAN) have changed their lives and are not a danger to children.
- Currently a past founded finding of CAN permanently denies individuals opportunities to be a foster parent, kinship care provider, volunteer at a school, or be an employee in an agency serving children or vulnerable adults.
- Families of color are overrepresented in our child welfare system, and the consequences of a finding of CAN has a disparate impact.
- This disparate impact increases the problem of placing African American and Native American children in non-relative foster care.¹
- Children in kinship care show improvement in their behavioral symptoms compared to children in non-kinship foster care.²
- Child and family services providers need to be able to hire individuals who have experienced and overcome problems faced by client families.

DETAILS

- School districts or other agencies that serve children or vulnerable adults shall not deny a volunteer or employment application based on a founded finding of abuse or neglect if that finding is accompanied by a certificate of parental improvement.
- DCYF shall not deny a foster license or approval of unsupervised access to children solely based on a founded finding of CAN if that finding is accompanied by a certificate of parental improvement.
- If an individual has been denied a Certificate of Parental Improvement, the individual may request departmental review and/or an adjudicative hearing of this decision.

CONSIDERATIONS

The DCYF may not issue this certificate if:

1. Fewer than five years have passed since the applicant's last founded finding of abuse or neglect as defined in RCW 26.44.020; or
2. The applicant has any conviction or pending criminal action listed as a permanent disqualifier according to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (42 USC S. 671(a)(20)).

¹ Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Washington State, 2016, <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/2015DisproportionalityReport-CA.pdf>

² Rubin, D. M., Downes, K. J., O'Reilly, A. L. R., Mekonnen, R., Luan, X. Q., & Localio, R. (2008). Impact of kinship care on behavioral well-being for children in out-of-home care. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 162(6), 550-556.