

*In Partnership with The Office of Family & Children's Ombuds, The WA State Office of Public Defense Parents Representation Program, WA State Parent Ally Committee, Partners for Our Children, Breakthrough, The WA State Office of Civil Legal Aid, Patrick & Associates and The Institute for Family Development*

## **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 may disqualify 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. <sup>1</sup>
- Children in kinship care show improvement in their behavioral symptoms compared to children in non-kinship foster care. <sup>2</sup>
- 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)).

---

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

**Contact:** Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children, [laurielippold@gmail.com](mailto:laurielippold@gmail.com) 206-221-3135  
Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development-Associate Director, [mfischer@institutefamily.org](mailto:mfischer@institutefamily.org) 360-701-5917  
Jill May, WACF Executive Director, [jillmay@wachildrenandfamilies.org](mailto:jillmay@wachildrenandfamilies.org) 425-292-0617