

**Chapter 26.12 RCW
FAMILY COURT**

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Dissolution of marriage, legal separation, declarations concerning validity of marriage: Chapter 26.09 RCW.

RCW 26.12.010 Jurisdiction conferred on superior court—Family court proceeding defined. Each superior court shall exercise the jurisdiction conferred by this chapter and while sitting in the

exercise of such jurisdiction shall be known and referred to as the "family court." A family court proceeding under this chapter is: (1) Any proceeding under this title or any proceeding in which the family court is requested to adjudicate or enforce the rights of the parties or their children regarding the determination or modification of parenting plans, child custody, visitation, or support, or the distribution of property or obligations, or (2) concurrent with the juvenile court, any proceeding under Title 13 or chapter 28A.225 RCW. [1999 c 397 s 6; 1994 sp.s. c 7 s 537; 1991 c 367 s 11; 1983 c 219 s 1; 1949 c 50 s 1; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-30.]

Finding—Intent—Severability—1994 sp.s. c 7: See notes following RCW 43.70.540.

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.020 Designation of judge—Number of sessions. In counties having more than one judge of the superior court the judges of such court shall annually, in the month of January, designate one or more of their number to hear all cases under this chapter. The judge or judges so designated shall hold as many sessions of the family court in each week as are necessary for the prompt disposition of matters before the court. [1949 c 50 s 2; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-31.]

RCW 26.12.030 Transfer of cases to presiding judge. The judge of the family court may transfer any case before the family court pursuant to this chapter to the department of the presiding judge of the superior court for assignment for trial or other proceedings by another judge of the court, whenever in the opinion of the judge of the family court such transfer is necessary to expedite the business of the family court or to insure the prompt consideration of the case. When any case is so transferred, the judge to whom it is transferred shall act as the judge of the family court in the matter. [1949 c 50 s 3; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-32.]

RCW 26.12.040 Substitute judge of family court. In counties having more than one judge of the superior court the presiding judge may appoint a judge other than the judge of the family court to act as judge of the family court during any period when the judge of the family court is on vacation, absent, or for any reason unable to perform his or her duties. Any judge so appointed shall have all the powers and authority of a judge of the family court in cases under this chapter. [2011 c 336 s 692; 1949 c 50 s 4; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-33.]

RCW 26.12.050 Family courts—Appointment of assistants. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, in each county the superior court may appoint the following persons to assist the family court in disposing of its business:

(a) One or more attorneys to act as family court commissioners, and

(b) Such investigators, stenographers and clerks as the court shall find necessary to carry on the work of the family court.

(2) The county legislative authority must approve the creation of family court commissioner positions.

(3) The appointments provided for in this section shall be made by majority vote of the judges of the superior court of the county and may be made in addition to all other appointments of commissioners and other judicial attaches otherwise authorized by law. Family court commissioners and investigators shall serve at the pleasure of the judges appointing them and shall receive such compensation as the county legislative authority shall determine. The appointments may be full or part-time positions. A person appointed as a family court commissioner may also be appointed to any other commissioner position authorized by law. [1993 c 15 s 1; 1991 c 363 s 17; 1989 c 199 s 1; 1965 ex.s. c 83 s 1; 1949 c 50 s 5; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-34.]

Effective date—1993 c 15: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately [April 12, 1993]." [1993 c 15 s 3.]

Purpose—Captions not law—1991 c 363: See notes following RCW 2.32.180.

Court

clerks, reporters, and bailiffs: Chapter 2.32 RCW.

commissioners and referees: Chapter 2.24 RCW.

RCW 26.12.060 Court commissioners—Duties. The court commissioners shall: (1) Make appropriate referrals to county family court services program if the county has a family court services program or appoint a guardian ad litem pursuant to RCW 26.12.175; (2) order investigation and reporting of the facts upon which to base warrants, subpoenas, orders or directions in actions or proceedings under this chapter; (3) exercise all the powers and perform all the duties of court commissioners; (4) make written reports of all proceedings had which shall become a part of the record of the family court; (5) provide supervision over the exercise of its jurisdiction as the judge of the family court may order; (6) cause the orders and findings of the family court to be entered in the same manner as orders and findings are entered in cases in the superior court; (7) cause other reports to be made and records kept as will indicate the value and extent of reconciliation, mediation, investigation, and treatment services; and (8) conduct hearings under Title 13 and chapter 28A.225 RCW, as provided in RCW 13.04.021. [1999 c 397 s 7; 1993 c 289 s 3; 1991 c 367 s 12; 1988 c 232 s 4; 1949 c 50 s 6; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-35.]

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.070 Probation officers—Powers and duties. The probation officer in every county shall give such assistance to the family court as may be requested to carry out the purposes of this chapter and to that end the probation officer shall, upon request, make investigations and reports as requested, and in cases pursuant to this chapter shall exercise all the powers and perform all the duties granted or imposed by the laws of this state relating to probation or to probation officers. [1949 c 50 s 7; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-36.]

Indeterminate sentences: Chapter 9.95 RCW.

Probation officers—Appointment—Powers—Compensation: RCW 13.04.040.

RCW 26.12.080 Protection of privacy of parties. Whenever the court before whom any matter arising under this chapter is pending, deems publication of any matter before the court contrary to public policy or injurious to the interests of children or to the public morals, the court may by order close the files or any part thereof in the matter and make such other orders to protect the privacy of the parties as is necessary. [1989 c 375 s 22; 1949 c 50 s 8; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-37.]

RCW 26.12.160 When and where court may be convened. For the purpose of conducting hearings pursuant to this chapter the family court may be convened at any time and place within the county and the hearing may be had in chambers or otherwise. [1949 c 50 s 16; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-45.]

RCW 26.12.170 Authority of family court judges and court commissioners to order or recommend services—Report by court of child abuse or neglect. To facilitate and promote the purposes of this chapter, family court judges and court commissioners may order or recommend family court services, parenting seminars, drug and alcohol abuse evaluations and monitoring of the parties through public or private treatment services, other treatment services, the aid of physicians, psychiatrists, other specialists, or other services or may recommend the aid of the pastor or director of any religious denomination to which the parties may belong.

If the court has reasonable cause to believe that a child of the parties has suffered abuse or neglect it may file a report with the proper law enforcement agency or the department of social and health services as provided in RCW 26.44.040. Upon receipt of such a report the law enforcement agency or the department of social and health services will conduct an investigation into the cause and extent of the abuse or neglect. The findings of the investigation may be made available to the court if ordered by the court as provided in RCW 42.56.210(2). The findings shall be restricted to the issue of abuse and neglect and shall not be considered custody investigations. [2005 c 274 s 241; 1994 c 267 s 3; 1991 c 367 s 13; 1983 c 219 s 5; 1971 ex.s. c 151 s 2; 1949 c 50 s 17; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-46.]

Effective date—1994 c 267: See note following RCW 26.09.191.

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.172 Parenting seminars—Rules. Any court rules adopted for the implementation of parenting seminars shall include the following provisions:

(1) In no case shall opposing parties be required to attend seminars together;

(2) Upon a showing of domestic violence or abuse which would not require mutual decision making pursuant to RCW 26.09.191, or that a parent's attendance at the seminar is not in the children's best interests, the court shall either:

(a) Waive the requirement of completion of the seminar; or

(b) Provide an alternative, voluntary parenting seminar for battered spouses or battered domestic partners; and

(3) The court may waive the seminar for good cause.

(4) Cases filed as a minor guardianship under chapter 11.130 RCW are exempt from requirements of parenting seminar attendance. [2022 c 243 s 3; 2008 c 6 s 1046; 1994 c 267 s 5.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Effective date—1994 c 267: See note following RCW 26.09.191.

RCW 26.12.175 Appointment of guardian ad litem—Independent investigation—Court-appointed special advocate program—Background information—Review of appointment. (1)(a) The court may appoint a guardian ad litem to represent the interests of a minor or dependent child when the court believes the appointment of a guardian ad litem is necessary to protect the best interests of the child in any proceeding under this chapter. The court may appoint a guardian ad litem from the court-appointed special advocate program, if that program exists in the county. The court shall attempt to match a child with special needs with a guardian ad litem who has specific training or education related to the child's individual needs. The family court services professionals may also make a recommendation to the court regarding whether a guardian ad litem should be appointed for the child.

(b) The guardian ad litem's role is to investigate and report factual information regarding the issues ordered to be reported or investigated to the court. The guardian ad litem shall always represent the best interests of the child. Guardians ad litem under this title may make recommendations based upon his or her investigation, which the court may consider and weigh in conjunction with the recommendations of all of the parties. If a child expresses a preference regarding the parenting plan, the guardian ad litem shall report the preferences to the court, together with the facts relative to whether any preferences are being expressed voluntarily and the degree of the child's understanding. The court may require the guardian ad litem to provide periodic reports to the parties regarding the status of his or her investigation. The guardian ad litem shall file his or her report at least sixty days prior to trial.

(c) The parties to the proceeding may file with the court written responses to any report filed by the guardian ad litem. The court shall consider any written responses to a report filed by the guardian ad litem, including any factual information or recommendations provided in the report.

(d) The court shall enter an order for costs, fees, and disbursements to cover the costs of the guardian ad litem. The court may order either or both parents to pay for the costs of the guardian ad litem, according to their ability to pay. If both parents are indigent, the county shall bear the cost of the guardian, subject to appropriation for guardians' ad litem services by the county legislative authority. Guardians ad litem who are not volunteers shall provide the parties with an itemized accounting of their time and billing for services each month.

(2)(a) If the guardian ad litem appointed is from the county court-appointed special advocate program, the program shall supervise any guardian ad litem assigned to the case. The court-appointed special advocate program shall be entitled to notice of all proceedings in the case.

(b) The legislative authority of each county may authorize creation of a court-appointed special advocate program. The county legislative authority may adopt rules of eligibility for court-appointed special advocate program services that are not inconsistent with this section.

(3) Each guardian ad litem program for compensated guardians ad litem and each court-appointed special advocate program shall maintain a background information record for each guardian ad litem in the program. The background information record shall include, but is not limited to, the following information:

(a) Level of formal education;

(b) General training related to the guardian ad litem's duties;

(c) Specific training related to issues potentially faced by children in dissolution, custody, paternity, and other family law proceedings;

(d) Specific training or education related to child disability or developmental issues;

(e) Number of years' experience as a guardian ad litem;

(f) Number of appointments as a guardian ad litem and county or counties of appointment;

(g) The names of any counties in which the person was removed from a guardian ad litem registry pursuant to a grievance action, and the name of the court and the cause number of any case in which the court has removed the person for cause;

(h) Founded allegations of abuse or neglect as defined in RCW 26.44.020;

(i) The results of an examination that shall consist of a background check as allowed through the Washington state criminal records privacy act under RCW 10.97.050 and the Washington state patrol criminal identification system under RCW 43.43.832 through 43.43.834. This background check shall be done through the Washington state patrol criminal identification section; and

(j) Criminal history, as defined in RCW 9.94A.030, for the period covering ten years prior to the appointment.

The background information record shall be updated annually. As a condition of appointment, the guardian ad litem's background information record shall be made available to the court. If the appointed guardian ad litem is not a member of a guardian ad litem

program the person appointed as guardian ad litem shall provide the background information record to the court.

Upon appointment, the guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate program or guardian ad litem program, shall provide the parties or their attorneys with a copy of the background information record. The portion of the background information record containing the results of the criminal background check and the criminal history shall not be disclosed to the parties or their attorneys. The background information record shall not include identifying information that may be used to harm a guardian ad litem, such as home addresses and home telephone numbers, and for volunteer guardians ad litem the court may allow the use of maiden names or pseudonyms as necessary for their safety.

(4) When a court-appointed special advocate or volunteer guardian ad litem is requested on a case, the program shall give the court the name of the person it recommends. The court shall immediately appoint the person recommended by the program.

(5) If a party in a case reasonably believes the court-appointed special advocate or volunteer guardian ad litem is inappropriate or unqualified, the party may request a review of the appointment by the program. The program must complete the review within five judicial days and remove any appointee for good cause. If the party seeking the review is not satisfied with the outcome of the review, the party may file a motion with the court for the removal of the court-appointed special advocate or volunteer guardian ad litem on the grounds the advocate or volunteer is inappropriate or unqualified. [2011 c 292 s 6; 2009 c 480 s 3; 2000 c 124 s 6; 1996 c 249 s 15; 1993 c 289 s 4; 1991 c 367 s 17.]

Grievance rules—2000 c 124: See note following RCW 13.34.100.

Intent—1996 c 249: See note following RCW 2.56.030.

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.177 Guardians ad litem—Training—Registry—Subregistry—Selection—Substitution—Exceptions. (1) All guardians ad litem appointed under this title must comply with the training requirements established under RCW 2.56.030(15), prior to their appointment in cases under Title 26 RCW, except that volunteer guardians ad litem or court-appointed special advocates may comply with alternative training requirements approved by the administrative office of the courts that meet or exceed the statewide requirements. In cases involving allegations of limiting factors under RCW 26.09.191 or 26.09.192, the guardians ad litem appointed under this title must have additional relevant training under RCW 2.56.030(15) when it is available.

(2)(a) Each guardian ad litem program for compensated guardians ad litem shall establish a rotational registry system for the appointment of guardians ad litem under this title. If a judicial district does not have a program the court shall establish the rotational registry system. Guardians ad litem under this title shall be selected from the registry except in exceptional circumstances as determined and documented by the court. The parties may make a joint

recommendation for the appointment of a guardian ad litem from the registry.

(b) In judicial districts with a population over one hundred thousand, a list of three names shall be selected from the registry and given to the parties along with the background information record as specified in RCW 26.12.175(3), including their hourly rate for services. Each party may, within three judicial days, strike one name from the list. If more than one name remains on the list, the court shall make the appointment from the names on the list. In the event all three names are stricken the person whose name appears next on the registry shall be appointed.

(c) If a party reasonably believes that the appointed guardian ad litem is inappropriate or unqualified, charges an hourly rate higher than what is reasonable for the particular proceeding, or has a conflict of interest, the party may, within three judicial days from the appointment, move for substitution of the appointed guardian ad litem by filing a motion with the court.

(d) Under this section, within either registry referred to in (a) of this subsection, a subregistry may be created that consists of guardians ad litem under contract with the department of social and health services' division of child support. Guardians ad litem on such a subregistry shall be selected and appointed in state-initiated paternity cases only.

(e) The superior court shall remove any person from the guardian ad litem registry who has been found to have misrepresented his or her qualifications.

(3) The rotational registry system shall not apply to court-appointed special advocate programs. [2025 c 166 s 8; 2011 c 292 s 7; 2009 c 480 s 4; 2007 c 496 s 305; 2005 c 282 s 30; 2000 c 124 s 7; 1997 c 41 s 7; 1996 c 249 s 18.]

Part headings not law—2007 c 496: See note following RCW 26.09.002.

Intent—1996 c 249: See note following RCW 2.56.030.

RCW 26.12.180 Guardian ad litem, special advocate, or investigator—Information discoverable—Confidentiality. All information, records, and reports obtained or created by a guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator under this title shall be discoverable pursuant to statute and court rule. The guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator shall not release private or confidential information to any nonparty except pursuant to a court order signed by a judge. The guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator may share private or confidential information with experts or staff he or she has retained as necessary to perform the duties of guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator. Any expert or staff retained are subject to the confidentiality rules governing the guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to authorize disclosure of guardian ad litem records in personal injury actions. [2000 c 124 s 8.]

RCW 26.12.183 Guardian ad litem or investigator—Fees. Except for guardians ad litem appointed by the court from the subregistry created under RCW 26.12.177(2)(d), the court shall specify the hourly rate the guardian ad litem or investigator under this title may charge for his or her services, and shall specify the maximum amount the guardian ad litem or investigator under this title may charge without additional court review and approval. The court shall specify rates and fees in the order of appointment or at the earliest date the court is able to determine the appropriate rates and fees and prior to the guardian ad litem billing for his or her services. This section shall apply except as provided by local court rule. [2000 c 124 s 15.]

RCW 26.12.185 Guardian ad litem, special advocate, or investigator—Release of information. A guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator under this title appointed under this chapter may release confidential information, records, and reports to the office of the family and children's ombuds for the purposes of carrying out its duties under chapter 43.06A RCW. [2013 c 23 s 41; 2000 c 124 s 9; 1999 c 390 s 4.]

RCW 26.12.187 Guardian ad litem, special advocate, or investigator—Ex parte communications—Removal. A guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator shall not engage in ex parte communications with any judicial officer involved in the matter for which he or she is appointed during the pendency of the proceeding, except as permitted by court rule or statute for ex parte motions. Ex parte motions shall be heard in open court on the record. The record may be preserved in a manner deemed appropriate by the county where the matter is heard. The court, upon its own motion, or upon the motion of a party, may consider the removal of any guardian ad litem, court-appointed special advocate, or investigator who violates this section from any pending case or from any court-authorized registry, and if so removed may require forfeiture of any fees for professional services on the pending case. [2000 c 124 s 12.]

RCW 26.12.188 Appointment of investigators—Training requirements. (1) The court may appoint an investigator in addition to a guardian ad litem or court-appointed special advocate under RCW 26.12.175 and 26.12.177 to assist the court and make recommendations. (2) An investigator is a person appointed as an investigator under RCW 26.12.050(1)(b) or any other third-party professional ordered or appointed by the court to provide an opinion, assessment, or evaluation regarding the creation or modification of a parenting plan. (3) Investigators who are not supervised by a guardian ad litem or by a court-appointed special advocate program must comply with the training requirements applicable to guardians ad litem or court-appointed special advocates as provided under this chapter and court rule. [2011 c 292 s 5.]

RCW 26.12.190 Family court jurisdiction as to pending actions—Use of family court services. (1) The family court shall have jurisdiction and full power in all pending cases to make, alter, modify, and enforce all temporary and permanent orders regarding the following: Parenting plans, child support, custody of children, visitation, possession of property, maintenance, contempt, custodial interference, and orders for attorneys' fees, suit money or costs as may appear just and equitable. Court commissioners or judges shall not have authority to require the parties to mediate disputes concerning child support.

(2) Family court investigation, evaluation, mediation, treatment, and reconciliation services, and any other services may be used to assist the court to develop an order as the court deems necessary to preserve the marriage or the domestic partnership, implement an amicable settlement, and resolve the issues in controversy. [2008 c 6 s 1025; 1991 c 367 s 14; 1983 c 219 s 7; 1949 c 50 s 19; Rem. Supp. 1949 s 997-48.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.205 Priority for proceedings involving children. The family court shall give proceedings involving children priority over cases without children. [1991 c 367 s 16.]

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.215 Revision by the superior court. All acts and proceedings of the court commissioners shall be subject to revision by the superior court as provided in RCW 2.24.050. [1991 c 367 s 18.]

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.220 Funding family court or family court services—Increase in marriage license fee authorized—Family court services program—Fees. (1) The legislative authority of any county may authorize family court services as provided in RCW 26.12.230. The legislative authority may impose a fee in excess of that prescribed in RCW 36.18.010 for the issuance of a marriage license. The fee shall not exceed eight dollars.

(2) In addition to any other funds used therefor, the governing body of any county shall use the proceeds from the fee increase authorized by this section to pay the expenses of the family court and the family court services under chapter 26.12 RCW. If there is no family court in the county, the legislative authority may provide such services through other county agencies or may contract with a public or private agency or person to provide such services. Family court

services also may be provided jointly with other counties as provided in RCW 26.12.230.

(3) The family court services program may hire professional employees to provide the investigation, evaluation and reporting, and mediation services, or the county may contract for these services, or both. To facilitate and promote the purposes of this chapter, the court may order or recommend the aid of physicians, psychiatrists, or other specialists.

(4) The family court services program may provide or contract for: (a) Mediation; (b) investigation, evaluation, and reporting to the court; and (c) reconciliation; and may provide a referral mechanism for drug and alcohol testing, monitoring, and treatment; and any other treatment, parenting, or anger management programs the family court professional considers necessary or appropriate.

(5) Services other than family court investigation, evaluation, reconciliation, and mediation services shall be at the expense of the parties involved absent a court order to the contrary. The parties shall bear all or a portion of the cost of parenting seminars and family court investigation, evaluation, reconciliation, and mediation services according to the parties' ability to pay.

(6) The county legislative authority may establish rules of eligibility for the family court services funded under this section. The rules shall not conflict with rules of the court adopted under chapter 26.12 RCW or any other statute.

(7) The legislative authority may establish fees for family court investigation, evaluation, reconciliation, and mediation services under this chapter according to the parties' ability to pay for the services. Fees collected under this section shall be collected and deposited in the same manner as other county funds are collected and deposited, and shall be maintained in a separate account to be used as provided in this section. [1994 c 267 s 4; 1991 c 367 s 15; 1980 c 124 s 1.]

Effective date—1994 c 267: See note following RCW 26.09.191.

Severability—Effective date—Captions not law—1991 c 367: See notes following RCW 26.09.015.

RCW 26.12.230 Joint family court services. (1) Any county may contract under chapter 39.34 RCW with any other county or counties to provide joint family court services.

(2) Any agreement between two or more counties for the operation of a joint family court service may provide that the treasurer of one participating county shall be the custodian of moneys made available for the purposes of the joint services, and that the treasurer may make payments from the moneys upon proper authorization.

(3) Any agreement between two or more counties for the operation of a joint family court service may also provide:

(a) For the joint provision or operation of services and facilities or for the provision or operation of services and facilities by one participating county under contract for the other participating counties;

(b) For appointments of members of the staff of the family court including the supervising counselor;

(c) That, for specified purposes, the members of the staff of the family court including the supervising counselor, but excluding the judges of the family court and other court personnel, shall be considered to be employees of one participating county;

(d) For other matters as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

(4) The provisions of this chapter relating to family court services provided by a single county are equally applicable to counties which contract, under this section, to provide joint family court services. [1986 c 95 s 3.]

RCW 26.12.240 Courthouse facilitator program—Fee or surcharge.

A county may create a courthouse facilitator program to provide basic services to pro se litigants in family law cases. The legislative authority of any county may impose user fees or may impose a surcharge of up to twenty dollars on only those superior court cases filed under Title 26 RCW, or both, to pay for the expenses of the courthouse facilitator program. Fees collected under this section shall be collected and deposited in the same manner as other county funds are collected and deposited, and shall be maintained in a separate account to be used as provided in this section. [2005 c 457 s 15; 1993 c 435 s 2.]

Intent—2005 c 457: See note following RCW 43.08.250.

RCW 26.12.260 Program to provide services to parties involved in dissolutions and legal separations—Fees. (1) After July 1, 2009, but no later than November 1, 2009, a county may, and to the extent state funding is provided to meet the minimum requirements of the program a county shall, create a program to provide services to all parties involved in proceedings under chapter 26.09 RCW. Minimum components of this program shall include: (a) An individual to serve as an initial point of contact for parties filing petitions for dissolutions or legal separations under chapter 26.09 RCW; (b) informing parties about courthouse facilitation programs and orientations; (c) informing parties of alternatives to filing a dissolution petition, such as marriage or domestic partnership counseling; (d) informing parties of alternatives to litigation including counseling, legal separation, and mediation services if appropriate; (e) informing parties of supportive family services available in the community; (f) screening for referral for services in the areas of domestic violence as defined in RCW 7.105.010, child abuse, substance abuse, and mental health; and (g) assistance to the court in superior court cases filed under chapter 26.09 RCW.

(2) This program shall not provide legal advice. No attorney-client relationship or privilege is created, by implication or by inference, between persons providing basic information under this section and the participants in the program.

(3) The legislative authority of any county may impose user fees or may impose a surcharge of up to twenty dollars on only those superior court cases filed under this title, or both, to pay for the expenses of this program. Fees collected under this section shall be collected and deposited in the same manner as other county funds are collected and deposited, and shall be maintained in a separate account

to be used as provided in this section. The program shall provide services to indigent persons at no expense.

(4) Persons who implement the program shall be appointed in the same manner as investigators, stenographers, and clerks as described in RCW 26.12.050.

(5) If the county has a program under this section, any petition under RCW 26.09.020 must allege that the moving party met and conferred with the program prior to the filing of the petition.

(6) If the county has a program under this section, parties shall meet and confer with the program prior to participation in mediation under RCW 26.09.016. [2021 c 215 s 136; 2008 c 6 s 1047; 2007 c 496 s 201.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

Effective date—2008 c 6 s 1047: "Section 1047 of this act takes effect July 1, 2009." [2008 c 6 s 1306.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Effective dates—2007 c 496 ss 201, 202, 204, and 501: "(1) Sections 201 and 204 of this act take effect July 1, 2009.

(2) Section 202 of this act takes effect January 1, 2008.

(3) Section 501 of this act takes effect January 1, 2009." [2007 c 496 s 805.]

Part headings not law—2007 c 496: See note following RCW 26.09.002.

RCW 26.12.270 Address confidentiality program. The court shall act in accordance with the requirements of the address confidentiality program pursuant to chapter 40.24 RCW in the course of all proceedings under this title. A court order for information protected by the address confidentiality program may only be issued upon completing the requirements of RCW 40.24.075. [2012 c 223 s 8.]

RCW 26.12.800 Family court pilot program—Legislative recognition. The legislature recognizes the increasing incidence of concurrent involvement of family members in multiple areas of the justice system. Analysis shows significant case overlap in the case types of juvenile offender, juvenile dependency, at-risk youth, child in need of services, truancy, domestic violence, and domestic relations. Also recognized is the increased complexity of the problems facing family members and the increased complexity of the laws affecting families. It is believed that in such situations, an efficient and effective response is through the creation of a unified court system centered around the family that: Provides a dedicated, trained, and informed judiciary; incorporates case management practices based on a family's judicial system needs; enables multiple case type resolution by one judicial officer or judicial team; provides coordinated legal and social services; and considers and evaluates the needs of the family as a whole. [1999 c 397 s 1.]

RCW 26.12.802 Family court pilot program—Created. The administrative office of the courts shall conduct a unified family court pilot program.

(1) Pilot program sites shall be selected through a request for proposal process, and shall be established in no more than three superior court judicial districts.

(2) To be eligible for consideration as a pilot project site, judicial districts must have a statutorily authorized judicial complement of at least five judges.

(3) The administrative office of the courts shall develop criteria for the unified family court pilot program. The pilot program shall include:

(a) All case types under Title 13 RCW, chapters 26.09, 26.12, 26.18, 26.19, 26.20, 26.26A, 26.26B, 26.27, and 28A.225 RCW, and domestic violence protection order cases under chapter 7.105 RCW;

(b) Unified family court judicial officers, who volunteer for the program, and meet training requirements established by local court rule;

(c) Case management practices that provide a flexible response to the diverse court-related needs of families involved in multiple areas of the justice system. Case management practices should result in a reduction in process redundancies and an efficient use of time and resources, and create a system enabling multiple case type resolution by one judicial officer or judicial team;

(d) A court facilitator to provide assistance to parties with matters before the unified family court; and

(e) An emphasis on providing nonadversarial methods of dispute resolution such as a settlement conference, evaluative mediation by attorney mediators, and facilitative mediation by nonattorney mediators.

(4) The administrative office of the courts shall publish and disseminate a state-approved listing of definitions of nonadversarial methods of dispute resolution so that court officials, practitioners, and users can choose the most appropriate process for the matter at hand.

(5) The administrative office of the courts shall provide to the judicial districts selected for the pilot program the computer resources needed by each judicial district to implement the unified family court pilot program.

(6) The administrative office of the courts shall conduct a study of the pilot program measuring improvements in the judicial system's response to family involvement in the judicial system. The administrator for the courts shall report preliminary findings and final results of the study to the governor, the chief justice of the supreme court, and the legislature on a biennial basis. The initial report is due by July 1, 2000, and the final report is due by December 1, 2004. [2021 c 215 s 137; 2019 c 46 s 5023; 2005 c 282 s 31; 1999 c 397 s 2.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

RCW 26.12.804 Family court pilot program—Rules. The judges of the superior court judicial districts with unified family court pilot programs shall adopt local court rules directing the program. The

local court rules shall comply with the criteria established by the administrative office of the courts and shall include:

(1) A requirement that all judicial officers hearing cases in unified family court:

(a) Complete an initial training program including the topic areas of childhood development, domestic violence, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, and mental illness; and

(b) Subsequent to the training in (a) of this subsection, annually attend a minimum of eight hours of continuing education of pertinence to the unified family court;

(2) Case management that is based on the practice of one judge or judicial team handling all matters relating to a family;

(3) An emphasis on coordinating or consolidating, to the extent possible, all cases before the unified family court relating to a family; and

(4) Programs that provide for record confidentiality to protect the confidentiality of court records in accordance with the law. However law enforcement agencies shall have access to the records to the extent permissible under the law. [2005 c 282 s 32; 1999 c 397 s 3.]